

Images, Knowledge and Empire: Depicting Cassowaries in the Qing Court

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Introduction: Where the new Qing history meets art history

The new Qing history studies have been one of the most widely noticed and fruitful developments in the last decade or so of Chinese historical research.¹ The Qing was previously seen as an extension of Chinese dynastic rule, but the new Qing history studies stress that despite being the ruling house of China, the dynasty was established and led by the Manchus. The importance of research into “Sinicisation” is greatly deemphasised; in its place is a focus on the difference of Manchu rule.² Examples include the martial culture of the Qing and their policies toward the border regions of Tibet, Mongolia, and Central Asia. Of particular interest is the fast expansion of the Qing Empire, which nearly tripled its territory in one short century (1660-1760). On this basis, the writers of the new Qing history have raised a challenge to the description of the Qing in traditional historical writing as a closed, stagnant victim of western imperialism. From the perspective of comparative and global history, they have drawn comparisons between the Qing and other modern empires such as the Russian, the British, and the Ottoman. They have attempted to argue that the dynasty, particularly the high Qing, was an expansionist colonial empire in the modern sense.³ In other words, the expansion and rule of the

1 For more on this historiographical movement, see Evelyn S. Rawski, “Re-envisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (November, 1996): 829-850; Evelyn S. Rawski, “Re-imagining the Ch’ien-lung Emperor: A Survey of Recent Scholarship,” *Gugong xueshu jikan* 21, no. 1 (Fall, 2003): 1-29; Joanna Waley-Cohen, “The New Qing History,” *Radical History Review* 88 (Winter, 2004): 193-206.

2 Most clearly seen in Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology*, and Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: th Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*.

3 The history of the Qing expansion has become one of the most celebrated topics in the new Qing history, but in a break with past historical practice, the new Qing historians examine it in the framework of a colonial empire. The work of Peter C. Perdue places the Qing Empire in the context of contemporary



Qing is intimately connected with the global history of the 18th century. It is a world historical event, and thus has implications for global history.

However, the new Qing history has not been entirely without its critics. In particular, as so many of the new Qing historians have relocated the Qing period from the “late imperial” to the “early modern”, one of the key issues for research is the “modernity” of the Qing Empire, and how it contributed to the formation of a globalised world. The concept of a “modern empire” signifies more than armed conquest and territorial expansion. It also involves the levels of administration and symbolism: how the empire was understood, perceived, and investigated in a relatively “scientific” way. Are the similarities or parallels between the Qing and other early modern empires just a coincidence? Or is it indeed one more node linked into a global network of interconnections? Did the Qing really play a role in the formation of the modern, globalised world?

In the first major work of the new history, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology*, Pamela Kyle Crossley discusses how Qing “emperorship” evolved away from its earliest Central Asian model as the Qing territory expanded and their subject peoples became more diverse. By the 18th century, Qianlong had developed a “simultaneous emperorship” that encompassed and transcended all cultures and ideologies. Like Louis XIV, Qianlong styled himself a universal monarch, ruler of multiple worlds.⁴ Crossley lists many interesting details to illustrate this point: the use of male and female figures to represent each nation or ethnicity in the *Huang Qing zhixian tu* 皇清職貢圖 (Illustrated Tributaries of the Qing Empire) was an import from Europe; Qing “cabinets of many treasures (*duobao ge* 多寶格)” seem to be a reflection of European “curiosity cabinets”.⁵ However, the sources for many of these arguments are not given, and this is one of the criticisms that the book has faced.⁶ Even more fervent discussion has followed Laura

global history, comparing and contrasting it with recent European empires. See, among others, James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864*; Peter C. Perdue, *China Marching West: The Qing Conquest of Central Asia*; C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: the Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier*; John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700*.

4 See Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, particularly ch. 5.

5 Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 37-38, 276-277, 281-282.

6 For example, James A. Millward writes in a review: “The arguments here are ingenious, if complex, and will certainly make a mark on the fields of Qing and modern Chinese history. However, given that many arguments are based on philology and/or close reading of ideological rhetoric, one would have liked in many places a closer tethering to sources.” Millward, “Review: *A Translucent Mirror*”. See, Millward, review of *A Translucent Mirror*, by Crossley, *The American History Review* 106, no. 3 (June, 2001), 953-954.

Hostetler's *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China*. That book attracted at least ten reviews, and the criticisms raised reveal the level of scepticism faced by the new Qing historians.⁷ Using the examples of Qing map-making and the production of the *Miao man tuce* 苗蠻圖冊 (Miao albums), Hostetler attempts to show that the close linkage between imperial expansion and the development of ethnography and modern cartography is not a phenomenon that is limited to early modern (1500-1800) Europe; and that the Qing's use of new maps and ethnography show that it was not merely a part of the early modern world, but acutely aware of its position in the global order, and actively pursuing technologies and knowledge that could contribute to the construction of empire. Many scholars agree with Hostetler's attempt to place cartography and ethnography in the context of the often-ignored exchanges of technology between China and Europe, but there are also a significant number of authors who question exactly what the links between Chinese and European technology are. For example, C. Patterson Giersch suggests in his review that the link with Europe is clear for the new Qing maps, but not so for Chinese ethnography.⁸ And both L. J. Newby and Mark C. Elliott wonder, if visual representation or ethnographic description and depiction were important parts of the Qing colonial enterprise, why there are no ethnographic works other than the *Miao albums*?⁹

Were there no similar works outside of the *Miao albums*? How should we link the Qing court with Europe, and how does the Qing Empire fit into the global order? The Qing court, and Qianlong's court in particular, produced many pictures of the tributes and gifts of precious objects and animals that flowed to the court from all over the world. More importantly, many illustrated cyclopaedias were created. As well as the *Illustrated Tributaries of the Qing Empire* discussed by Crossley, there are the encyclopaedic *Niao pu* 鳥譜 (Album of Birds)¹⁰, the zoological *Shou pu* 獸譜 (Album of Beasts)¹¹, and the

7 This book is one of the most reviewed works of Qing history in recent years, with at least ten reviews published. A few examples include: Millward, review of *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, by Laura Hostetler, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33, no. 2 (Autumn, 2002), 347-348; Elliott, review of *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, by Hostetler, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 46, no.4 (2003), 547-549; Rawski, "Early modern ethnography in an Asian setting," *Current Anthropology* 47, no. 2 (April, 2006), 389-390; Giersch, review of *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, by Laura Hostetler, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 2 (May, 2002), 699-700; L. J. Newby, review of *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, by Laura Hostetler, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9, no 1 (March, 2003), 159-160.

8 Giersch, review of *Qing Colonial Enterprise*.

9 Elliott, review of *Qing Colonial Enterprise*; Newby, review of *Qing Colonial Enterprise*.

10 The *Album of Birds* has 12 volumes, of which the first four are in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, and the remaining eight in the Palace Museum in Beijing.

11 Preserved at the Palace Museum in Beijing.

Jiachan jianxin 嘉產薦馨 (Fine Produce and Excellent Flavours)¹² detailing the plants found around the old capital of Mukden (Shenyang). These works are very different to the traditional leishu (book by category) encyclopaedias that had been compiled before: the compilation process involved first-hand accounts and the dispatching of court and local officials to gather information. These were significant innovations.

The scepticism of historians towards Hostetler's research, and Hostetler's failure to answer the question of exactly what form the exchange between China and Europe took, reflect the partitioning of disciplines in modern academic practice. Historians are increasingly directing their attention towards images and what they tell us about the construction of empire, and cultural exchanges; but limitations in their knowledge and analysis of images mean that historians' expositions are often somewhat piecemeal. On the other side of the partition, art historians' work on the Qing court and its interest in introducing European elements is often stuck on the level of stylistic analysis. It contents itself with ascribing influence on a painter's work to an abstract "West".

In fact, the resources and limitations of history and art history are complementary for a research trying to determine exactly how different cultures relate to each other. Within the discipline of art history, there is a strand of research dedicated to western styles found in Qing court art; but its relevance to other areas of research has never been explored. If this research is re-examined in the context of global history, and integrated with work on cultural history, trade history, environmental history, and history of technology, then we may achieve a more dynamic picture of the Qing court and its relationship with the outside world.

With this objective in mind, this essay discusses a series of Qing court paintings of birds labelled *emo* birds. It demonstrates that the birds are in fact cassowaries, a creature which was much celebrated during the European Age of Discovery. Attached to those images is a text by the Qianlong emperor, *Yuzhi emo niao tuji* 御製額摩鳥圖記 (Imperial Inscription for the Picture of Emo Birds). I give a close reading of this text and trace its European source material, referred to in the text as a "western book", a work of natural history commissioned by the king of *Folangji* 佛朗機 (France, see below). From this starting point, I explore a number of questions. How did images and information from the European voyages of discovery come to the Qing court? Why was Qianlong so interested in this bird? What exactly was the "western book" from which Qianlong's knowledge of cassowaries came? These apparently disparate and inconsequential questions take us from the

12 Preserved at the National Palace Museum in Taipei.

Qing court to the land of *Galaba* (Indonesia, see below) where the emo birds lived, and on to Folangji or France, Qianlong's source of information. In the process, the links amongst these distant regions gradually emerge. If we can trace all of these linkages, we can shine a light on a small thread which knits into the larger cloth of global history.

It is worth mentioning that this small thread is in some ways representative of global flows of information in this period of history. The paintings of cassowaries in the Qing palace are not an isolated example: it was common during the Qing to paint exotic tribute creatures in a western-influenced style.¹³ European historians have also made some important findings in recent years on how images of rhinos, cassowaries, and even exotic plants circulated in Europe the time of the Renaissance through to the Age of Discovery.¹⁴ This European research discusses how flora and fauna from the new world came to Europe, and how they were understood, interpreted, imagined, and collected by European elites; and it has also revealed how these exotic findings and the depiction of nature are inextricably linked with the representation of empire.¹⁵ Images and representations of exotic fauna are not simply of zoological interest; they are an important artefact in cultural history. They reveal modes of cultural influence, acceptance, and transfer; and they lead into complex issues in the construction of empire, representation of power, and regimes of knowledge.¹⁶ The paintings of the emo bird in the court of Qianlong are part of a dialogue with the cassowary, a new world animal newly discovered and imagined by Europe. By examining the texts of Qianlong, we can gain insight into how Qianlong understood new world animals as interpreted and imagined by "the West". More precisely, we can compare images and texts of the emo bird in at the Qing court with their European source materials to gain a clearer understanding of how Europe constructed and imagined the new world; and

13 For more information on western style in the Qing court, see Yang Boda, *Qingdai yuanhua*; Nie Chongzheng, *Gong ting yishu de guanghui: qingdai gongting huihua luncong and Qing gong huihua yu "xi hua dongjian"*.

14 E.g. Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen, *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe*; Miguel de Asúa and Roger French, *A New World of Animals: Early Modern Europeans on Creatures of Iberian America*; Harold J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age*.

15 Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*; Londa Schiebinger and Claudia, *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World*.

16 Related research in China has focused in the past on the history of astronomy and calendars; recent research has also noted connections with Europe in the natural history of the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly in the context of imperialist history. See Fan Fa-ti, *British Naturalists in Qing China: Science, Empire and Cultural Encounter*.

how these images of the new world came to the Qing court from Europe; and how the Qing court received and transformed them.

This essay is divided into six sections, with an introduction and conclusion. The first four sections discuss the literature and the texts themselves; the final two sections address the images. The first section reconstructs a series of texts and images about the emo bird created at the Qing court. For this, I rely mainly on the *Zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qing dang* 造辦處各作成作活計清檔 (Archives of the workshop of the Imperial Household Department) (*the Archives*), a daily record of the work carried out in each of the court workshops. These disjointed records of processes and pieces give us a window on the complexity of the creation of paintings in the Qing workshops. Court painting cannot be adequately described by the traditional artist-centred approach to art history; and the relationship of a finished picture to its subject is not captured by a simple dichotomy of “accurate life-drawing” or not. Court records allow us to see how a single work goes through a series of distinct editing processes as it passes from craftsman to craftsman and from one space to another. Each of these craftsmen works on the painting within their own function, and as the image evolves, its meaning changes. An image created this way thus contains the potential for multiple meanings.

Section two introduces a textual analysis of the emperor’s writings. I find evidence that the bird referred to as emo is in fact the celebrated cassowary, and that Qianlong’s *Inscription* is in fact made up of translated extracts from an anatomical report published between 1671-76 by Claude Perrault (1613-1688), a member of the French Royal Academy of Sciences. A comparison of the documents shows how the *Inscription* rewrites and restructures its European source, and what this rewriting means in the context of Qianlong’s court.

Section three places Qianlong’s source text in the context of European writing on cassowaries, and discusses its position in the history of science in Europe. Section four returns to the Qing court, and addresses why Qianlong selected Perrault’s texts out of the many European writings on the cassowary. Which natural history books from Europe were available to the Qing court? And how did Qianlong’s selection and editing of European texts create a dialogue with his European counterparts?

The first four sections together demonstrate the European origins and the scope of these imperial texts. However, the question remains of how Qianlong saw the images that accompany the texts. To address this issue, sections five and six discuss the images, focusing on the two extant images of emo birds: the last two pages of the *Album of Birds*, and *Yang Dazhang’s* 楊大章 scroll

Emo niao tu 額摩鳥圖 (Emo Birds). The addition of the cassowary to the *Album of Birds* supported Qianlong's effort to construct a comprehensive reference work encompassing universal knowledge; and this is closely connected to the "western" nature of the *emo* bird text and image. But there are multiple levels of meaning to Qing paintings of *emo* birds, and Yang Dazhang's *Emo Birds* reflects another level these images. The final section of this essay locates this painting within the tradition of Chinese paintings of auspicious signs. I examine how Qianlong created a new narrative of auspicious signs using the imported *emo* bird texts and the fashionable, western-fusion illusionistic style of painting.

By carefully uncovering the details of this specific historical moment, this essay seeks to demonstrate that the court of Qianlong had a certain level of understanding of the knowledge and images created in the European Age of Discovery. The Qing court was fully engaged in the flow of global history, and was adept at adapting and integrating European knowledge into its own context, drawing it into a dialogue with the propositions of Chinese tradition.

Painting and writing emo birds in the Qing court

Beginning in the second half of the 4th lunar month of the year Qianlong 39 (1774), the Qing court began the production of a series of images of *emo* birds and the compilation of accompanying texts. The emperor himself started this project with an imperial poem. Qianlong's imperial texts are *Yong emo niao shiyun* 詠額摩鳥十韻 (Ten Rhymes on the *Emo* Bird) (below, *Ten Rhymes*) and the *Imperial Inscription for the Picture of Emo Birds* (below, *Inscription*), both written at approximately the same time. Judging from their placement in *Yuzhi shiji* 御製詩集 (Collected Imperial Poetry), they were completed between the 18th and 20th of the 4th month, 1774.¹⁷ Qianlong's *emo* bird texts were later compiled in the "Kunchong caomu lue" 昆蟲草木略 (Flora and fauna) volume of the *Huangchao tongzhi* 皇朝通志 (Comprehensive History of the Empire) completed in 1787. The extant pictures of *emo* birds are the Yang Dazhang scroll *Emo Birds* (fig. 1), now kept in the National Palace Museum in Taipei; and leaves 31-32 of the 12th volume of the *Album of Birds* (fig.2), now kept in the Palace Museum in Beijing. Both pictures include both the *Ten Rhymes* and the *Inscription* texts. These two paintings were not the only images of *emo* birds produced by the Qing court. Qianlong seems to have been very interested in this creature, and commanded the production of at least four images of *emo* birds: one wall painting, album leaf and two hanging scrolls.

17 In *The Collected Imperial Poetry*, in the year "Jia Wu" (1774), *Six Poems on Night Rain* is marked with the date "18th of the 4th month", and appears two pages before the *Ten Rhymes*; a few pages after the *Ten Rhymes* comes the date "20th of the 4th". Assuming that *Yuzhi shiji* is arranged strictly by date, the *Ten Rhymes* was composed sometime between the 18th and the 20th. See *Yuzhi shiji*, IV, *Juan* 21, 32a-b, in *Jingyin wenyuange siku quanshu* (below, *Siku*), vol. 1307, 616.



Fig. 2: Yu Sheng余省 and Zhang Weibang張為邦. *Album of Birds* vol. 12, leaves 31 & 32. 1774. Album leaves, colour on silk. 41.1 x 44.1cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

The following is a reconstruction of the production of *emo* bird paintings by the court workshops. The most important evidence comes from the *Arc hives*. In the *Archives*, the first mentions of paintings of *emo* birds are found on the 16th of the 4th, 1774. The lead painter was the Jesuit Ignaz Sichelbarth (1709-1780, Chinese name 艾啟蒙) of Bohemia (modern Czech Republic).¹⁸

18 Recorded in Pfister, *Zai hua yeshuishi liezhuan ji shumu*, vol. 2, 864-867.

Received an assignment book from Degui, Gentleman of the Interior, containing an imperial order transmitted on the 16th day of the 4th month by the eunuch Hu Shijie. Artists Ignaz Sichelbarth and Fang Cong are to paint an *emo* bird on white silk as refined as the *Peacock* painted by Giuseppe Castiglione for Xiuqing village. When complete it is to be hung on the west wall of the East Hall of the Sunset Glory Sunset Glory Building. By order of the Emperor.¹⁹

接得郎中德魁押帖一件，內開四月十六日太監胡世傑傳旨，著艾啟蒙、方琮用白絹畫額麼鳥一幅，其細緻仿照秀清村、郎世寧孔雀畫一樣，得時貼染霞樓東邊殿內西牆，欽此。

There is a very close coincidence of timing between the imperial writing of the 18th-20th of the 4th, and the order to Ignaz Sichelbarth for a painting of an *emo* bird on the 16th. This picture is therefore probably the first painting of an *emo* bird done at the Qing court.

The painting was done by Ignaz Sichelbarth and Fang Cong on white silk; Qianlong also ordered them to make it as detailed and refined as the painting *Peacock* (孔雀畫) done by Giuseppe Castiglione for Xiuqing village (in the Gardens of Perfect Brightness, now known as the Old Summer Palace), and indicated that the painting would be hung on the west wall of the East Hall of the Sunset Glory Building (染霞樓). There are two possibilities for the *Peacock* mentioned: Qianlong Viewing a Peacock Spreading its Tail (乾隆觀孔雀開屏圖), a wall painting now stored in the Palace Museum in Beijing (fig. 3) or the hanging scroll *Peacocks Spreading their Tails* (孔雀開屏圖) by Giuseppe Castiglione, stored in the National Palace Museum in Taipei (fig. 4).²⁰ Both the Beijing and Taipei paintings show two peacocks which were born of birds presented in the annual tribute from Hami (哈密). They mark the moment that the chicks grow to maturity and are able to spread their fans in display.²¹

19 “Ruyi guan (如意館)” in *Huojidang* (活計檔). See First Historical Archives, Art Museum, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, eds. *Qing gong neiwufu zaobanchudang’an zonghui* (below, *Zonghui*), vol. 37, 131.

20 See Nie Chongzheng, *Qingdai gongting huihua*, 192.

21 See *Yuzhi shiji*, II, *Juan* 79, 15a-b, in *Siku*, vol. 1304, 461



Fig. 3: Giuseppe Castiglione et al. *Qianlong guan kongque kaiping tu* 乾隆觀孔雀開屏圖 (*Qianlong Viewing a Peacock Spreading its Tail*). Tieluo (Wall painting). 1758. Colour on paper. 340 x 537cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 4: Giuseppe Castiglione. *Kongque kaiping tu* 孔雀開屏圖 (*Peacock Spreading its Fan*). Hanging Scroll. 1758. Colour on silk. 328 x 282cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Just as the *Peacock* was painted for a building in the Garden of Perfect Brightness, the emo bird wall painting was to be hung in the Sunset Glory Building. This building is one of the highlights of the Garden of Peaceful Ripples (安瀾園) in the Garden of Perfect Brightness.²²

Two months after the command issued on the 16th of the 4th, we find a note in the *Archives* on the 27th of the 6th: four pages of “emo bird images and text” (額摩鳥圖說), completed on the 22nd of the 6th, had been added to the *Album of Birds*.²³ This is consistent with a note in the *Shiqu baoji xubian* 石渠寶笈續編 (Sequel to Precious Book Box of the Stone Drain), which says that at the end of the 12th volume of the Album of Birds were “emo birds added in Qianlong 39 [1774]”.²⁴ The last two leaves of volume 12 describe the emo bird. The first leaf has a painting of the emo bird on the right hand side, and the Inscription on the left. The second leaf contains Qianlong’s *Ten Rhymes* in both Chinese and Manchu translation. These four pages match the “four pages of images and text” (圖說四張) described in the Archives.

The painting of *emo* birds that Qianlong had ordered from Sichelbarth on the 16th of the 4th was not completed until the 22nd of the 9th. The *Archives* states:

22nd, Storehouse Managers Side and Wude and clerk Fuqing came to report: eunuch Hu Shijie delivered a large painting of *emo* birds on silk (for Garden of Peaceful Ripples), 12 western paintings on silk (for the back of Nine-screens Peak in the lower part of Star Anise Building at Harmonic Pleasures), two paintings of festivals on rice paper by Yao Wenhan (for Palace of Double Glory). Imperial order to western paintings and one Yao Wenhan painting mounted on paper; other Yao Wenhan painting to be mounted with silk brocade border and jade decorations and to be hung for Chinese New Year. By order of the Emperor.²⁵

二十二日庫掌四德五德筆帖式福慶來說，太監胡世傑交絹畫額摩鳥大畫一張（安瀾園），絹畫西洋畫十二張（諧奇趣西八方樓下九屏峯背面），宣紙姚文瀚節畫二張（重華宮），傳旨將絹畫西洋畫並姚文瀚節畫一張，俱托貼，其餘姚文瀚畫一張，配錦邊璧子，年節掛，欽此。

22 The Old Summer Palace had had gardens named for famous areas of natural beauty in the south since even before Qianlong conducted his tour of the southern provinces, for example, the San Tan Ying Yue (三潭映月), the famous scene of the West Lake. See Guo Daiheng, *Qianlong Yupin Yuanmingyuan*, 187-89.

23 “Ruyi guan” in *Huojidang*, 1774, 27th of the 6th, reprinted in *Zonghui*, vol. 37, 140.

24 Ruan Yuan, *Jingyin midian zhulin shiqu baoji xubian*, vol. 4, 1891-93.

25 “Xiabiao zuo (匣裱作)” in *Huojidang*, 1774, 22nd of the 9th, in *Zonghui*, vol. 37, 306-7.

The *Archives* does not indicate the artist of the “large painting of *emo* birds on silk” delivered by Hu Shijie, but there is a note in smaller characters saying that it is for the Garden of Peaceful Ripples. This is the location of the Sunset Glory Building, where Qianlong indicated that Ignaz Sichelbarth’s painting would hang, so it is likely that this large painting was indeed the same one that was ordered from Sichelbarth and Fang Cong on the 16th of the 4th.

To this date, there is no record of the painting *Emo Birds* by Yang Dazhang. However, there is more information to come on Sichelbarth’s work. On the 14th of the 11th, Qianlong 41 (1776), Qianlong sent an order to Sichelbarth to paint a version of the *Emo Birds* in the Garden of Peaceful Ripples for mounting as a hanging scroll. The *Archives* records:

21st, assignment book received from Tu Aming, Gentleman of the Interior, containing imperial order transmitted on on the 14th by the eunuch Rong Shitai, artist Ignaz Sichelbarth to produce one painting of each of the following: black ape; monkey; mountain cat; sleeping tiger. Artist Fang Cong to draw the background. Ape, monkey, cat & tiger to be procured from the palace menagerie. By order of the Emperor.

Order transmitted on this day by the eunuch Chang Ning, artist Ignaz Sichelbarth to produce one copy of the *emo* birds painting in the Garden of Peaceful Ripples for mounting as a hanging scroll. By order of the Emperor.

17th, Ignaz Sichelbarth delivered five paper sketches of black ape, monkey, mountain cat, sleeping tiger, *emo* bird to be presented to the throne. The Emperor ordered the picture of the tiger to be lengthened by 5 inches, broadened by 2 inches, artist Yang Dazhang to paint a Chinese parasol tree, with plenty of flowers on the ground; the painting of the black ape to be lengthened by 1 foot, broadened by 5 inches; artist Fang Cong to paint trees & rocks on the paintings of the black ape, monkey, mountain cat, *emo* bird; artist Yang Dazhang to complete their backgrounds and flowers. By order of the Emperor.²⁶

二十一日，接得郎中圖明阿押帖，內開十四日太監榮世泰傳旨，著艾啟蒙將黑猿、猴兒、山貓、睡虎各畫一張，著方琮佈景，其猿猴貓虎向養生處要，欽此。

於本日太監常寧傳旨，著艾啟蒙照安瀾園現貼的額摩鳥畫一張，裱掛軸，欽此。

於十七日，艾啟蒙起得黑猿、猴兒、山貓、睡虎、額摩鳥紙稿五張呈覽，奉旨睡虎高添五寸，寬添二寸，著楊大章畫梧桐樹，地景多畫些

26 “Ruyi guan” in *Huoqidang*, 1776, 21st of the 11th, in *Zonghui*, vol. 39, 802.

花卉，黑猿高一尺，寬五寸，黑猿、猴兒、山貓、額摩鳥樹石俱著方琮畫，其他地景並花卉，亦著楊大章畫，欽此。

This entry for the 21st of the 11th says that on the 14th, Qianlong ordered Sichelbarth to paint a black ape, monkey, mountain cat and a sleeping tiger, and on the same day commissioned him to repaint the *Emo Birds* in the Garden of Peaceful Ripples for a hanging scroll. As with the painting of the original, Qianlong indicated that Sichelbarth should work with Fang Cong. This record notes particularly that Sichelbarth may obtain models for his drawing from the imperial menagerie (養生處, most likely a variant of 養牲處). The *Guo chao gong shi* 國朝宮史 (History of the Imperial House and Court) records that the menagerie had one director and three eunuchs attached to it. It was responsible for “rearing and keeping livestock, fowl and beasts” (專司畜養禽獸坐更等事).²⁷ We see that when Sichelbarth drew his images of apes, monkeys, cats and tigers, he was able to draw from life. Qianlong did not order Sichelbarth to obtain an emo bird from the menagerie, perhaps because he had a drawing to work from, and perhaps because the menagerie no longer had the bird. Three days later, on the 17th of the 11th, Sichelbarth had completed his five drawings. The orders from Qianlong give rather precise instructions on changes to the size of the images, and also detail exactly who was to fill in the backgrounds: Yang Dazhang was to put a Chinese parasol tree and flowers in the painting of the sleeping tiger, while Fang Cong was responsible for the backdrop. This record is the first time we see Yang Dazhang’s name linked to a painting of an emo bird; in this case, he was responsible only for painting the ground and flowers.

This order took about ten months to complete. Sichelbarth submitted three paintings on the 22nd of the 9th the following year, 1777: the mountain cat, the tiger and the monkey. About three weeks later, on the 13th of the 10th, he delivered the *emo* bird and the black ape.²⁸ There is a note that these paintings were on rice paper, unlike the *Emo Birds* in the Garden of Peaceful Ripples, which is on silk. The paper *Emo Birds* was then worked on by the other artists for about a month. On the 28th of the 11th, the five complete, mounted scrolls were delivered to the Palace for Enlightenment on Good Fortune to be packaged in cases.²⁹

There is then a break in records mentioning Sichelbarth and *emo* birds. It is not until the 11th month of Qianlong 47 (1782) that the *Archives* mentions *emo* birds again:

27 See Yu Minzhong et al. ed., *Guochao gongshi*, Juan 21, 26a-b, in *Siku*, vol. 657, 444.

28 See “Ruyi guan” in *Huoqidang*, 1777, 29th of the 9th and 3rd of the 11th, in *Zonghui*, vol. 40, 309.

29 “Ruyi guan” in *Huoqidang*, 1777, 12th of the 12th, in *Zonghui*, vol. 40, 318-19.

Assignment book received on the 7th from Baocheng, Gentleman of the Interior. Dong Wujing, Staff Supervisor, delivered on the 19th of the 10th one upper inscription of imperial poem *Ten Rhymes* on the *Emo Bird* written by the emperor, and one lower inscription written by Liang Guozhi. Deliver to Palace for Enlightening on Good Fortune. When Yang Dazhang's one hanging scroll of an *emo* bird is complete, upper and lower inscriptions to be added to the painting. By order of the Emperor.³⁰

初七日接得郎中保成押帖，內開十月十九日首領董五經交御筆額摩鳥詠十韻詩堂字一張，梁國治寫下詩堂一張，傳旨交啟祥宮，俟楊大章畫得額摩鳥裱掛軸，安詩堂，欽此。

On the 19th of the 10th, nearly five years after the last reference to Sichelbarth and his *Emo Birds*, the Palace for Enlightening on Good Fortune received a copy of the emperor's writing of *Ten Rhymes* on the *Emo Bird* and an inscription written by Liang Guozhi, and was instructed to await a painting of *emo* birds from Yang Dazhang, mounting it as a hanging scroll and attaching the inscriptions. This is the exact arrangement that we find on the extant Yang Dazhang painting *Emo Birds*, so we can assume that the work referred to here in the *Archives* is in fact the *Emo Birds* by Yang Dazhang, held in the National Palace Museum in Taipei.³¹

In conclusion, the production of paintings of *emo* birds probably began with Qianlong's writing the *Ten Rhymes* and *Inscription* between the 18th and 20th of the 4th, 1774. A few days earlier, Ignaz Sichelbarth had been ordered to produce a large painting on silk, for installation in the Sunset Glory Building in the Garden of Peaceful Ripples. This painting was completed on the 22nd of the 9th, and during the intervening six months, four pages on *emo* birds were completed for inclusion in the *Album of Birds* (22nd of the 6th). Two years later, on the 14th of the 11th, 1776, Qianlong ordered Sichelbarth to copy his own painting in the Garden of Peaceful Ripples onto paper for mounting as a hanging scroll. This scroll was completed, with its mounting, on the 28th of the 11th, 1777. Yang Dazhang's *Emo Birds* appears five years later, with a record of instructions for its mounting on the 19th of the 10th, 1782. The actual painting must have been done around this time. This work is recorded in the *Sequel to*

30 "Ruyi guan" in *Huojidang*, 1782, 7th of the 11th, in *Zonghui*, vol. 45, 676.

31 This painting itself is undated; it is signed "Humbly painted at the order of the Emperor by courtier Yang Da-zhang" (臣楊大章奉勅恭繪) with the seals "Yang Da-zhang" and "humbly painted". On the upper inscription, *Ten Rhymes* on the *Emo Bird*, there is a date: "Qianlong jia wu" (1774). This makes the painting easily be mis-dated as being made in 1774, and this date has been cited even in my own previous works. See Lai Yuzhi (Lai Yu-chih), "Cong Yinni dao Ouzhou yu Qinggong: tan yuancang Yang Dazhang emo niao tu," *Gugong wenwu yuekan*, no. 297 (2007): 24-37.

Precious Book Box of the Stone Drain as being in the “Emperor’s Library” (御書房), so we can be sure that it had been hung or stored in Qianlong’s collection by the date of this work (1791).³²

Thus the narrative we see emerging is Qianlong writing an imperial poem on *emo* birds in 1774, then commissioning the production of four images: one wall painting, one album leaf, and two hanging scrolls. It was not uncommon for multiple paintings of the same theme to be created in the Qing court,³³ but the relatively large number of works and the level of detailed instruction from the emperor that went into the *emo* bird paintings are unmatched. In particular, nowhere else do we find Qianlong quoting and translating as he does here from “images and writing on the *emo* bird by westerners” (西洋人所記〈額摩鳥圖說〉). It raises the question: what exactly are these *emo* birds? Why was Qianlong so interested in them? And what was the western text which Qianlong quoted and translated?

Qianlong’s *emo* bird texts: structure and European sources

To determine exactly what kind of a bird this was, and its relationship with Qianlong, the most direct approach is first to read Qianlong’s own writing on the subject, the *Ten Rhymes* and the *Inscription*. The *Ten Rhymes* tells us that the bird comes from *Gabala*, but that it is rare even there; it was brought to China on the boats of foreigners; and Qianlong ordered pictures to be made. The poem says that the people of *Folangji* know about this bird, and have written much about it. An annotation to the text in the version in *Collected Imperial Poetry* says that the *Folangji* work “records the appearance and the anatomy of this bird in great detail” (載此鳥形質及其臟腑，系說甚詳)³⁴ and points out that the book was “commissioned by the King of *Folangji*, and subsequently conveyed here” (佛朗機亞國王所命圖，以流傳者也)³⁵. The poem goes on to describe the habits and appearance of the *emo* bird. The final passage begins with: “Despite having no wings, it has arrived here; does it not have some purpose?” (訝成無翼至，曾匪有心干). Qianlong wonders if the coming of a flightless bird to China might not have some deeper meaning. He then proceeds to compare the *emo* bird with the shile bird (世樂鳥) (bird of

32 Ruan Yuan, *Jingyin midian zhulin shiqu baoji xubian*, vol. 4, 2254-55.

33 See Qiu Shihua, “Qing Gaozong ‘ji da cheng’ xunlian kecheng: fuzhi qingyang,” *Gugong wenwu yuekan*, no. 268 (2005): 24-35; Ma Yazhen (Ma Ya-chen), “Qingdai gongting hua ma yuhui de zhuanhuan yu yiyi: cong Lang Shining de ‘Bai jun tu’ tan qi,” *Gugong xueshu jikan* 27, no. 3 (Spring, 2010): 103-38.

34 *Yuzhi shiji*, IV, Juan 21, 32a-b, in *Jingyin wenyuange siku quanshu* (below, *Siku*), vol. 1307, 616.

35 *Ibid.*

worldly happiness) (fig. 5), a mythical bird which is described in the *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms) as symbolising peace and plenty. He finds the birds to be similar in appearance because of the *emo* bird's crest. However, he thinks that there is no record of the *emo* bird in ancient literature, and it cannot reproduce in China, so he calls it an unexplainable oddity. Though he ends with this apparent dismissal, there are numerous subtleties in his discussion in the last passage. This text will be discussed in more detail below.



Fig. 5: *Shile niao* 世樂鳥 (Bird of worldly happiness). From *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms*, p. 2158.

The *Galaba* referred to in the poem is probably the same as the “Kalaba” (咖喇吧國) found in the *Illustrated Tributaries* painted by Xie Sui in the National Palace Museum in Taipei. The country is described thus: “Kalaba, formerly Java, colonised by the Netherlands, many Chinese traders here” (咖喇吧, 本爪哇故土, 為荷蘭兼併, 華人貿易者多流聚於此).³⁶ Kalaba was also written variously as Kelaba (噶喇吧) and Keliuba (噶留巴). It is a transliteration of the Indonesian “Kalapa”, which was the name of what is now Jakarta. It is therefore fair to assume that *Galaba* refers to Indonesia, as it is called today.³⁷ However, the meaning of *Folangji* is harder to determine. Historians have

36 See Zhuang Jifa, *Xie Sui 'Zhigong tu' manwen tushuo jiaozhu*, 107.

37 See Chen Guodong, “Daoyan: jindai chuqi yazhou de haiyang maoyi wangluo” in *Dongya haiyu yiqian nian*, 15.

determined that the Folangji referred to in the *Ming Shi* 明史 (Ming History) is Portugal.³⁸ However, in the *Illustrated Tributaries*, it is used interchangeably with Falanxi, which is more likely to be France.³⁹ And there are many indications that discussions in the mid-Qing of Folangji and Falanxi often confuse the two countries.⁴⁰ Therefore we cannot be certain whether the *Folangji* referred to in the poem is Portugal or France. Further evidence is needed.

The poem, simply put, describes that the bird comes from the area that is modern Indonesia; that it was brought by ship to China, and that Qianlong did not only command pictures to be made of it, he read a book about it made by the French or Portuguese. So what was this “western book” that Qianlong had seen? The *Ten Rhymes* includes the line “[these birds] gathered on Great Red Island, [the western book] contains both pictures and text” (大紅海島攢，具圖還具說). Attached to this line is an annotation in the version in *Collected Imperial Poetry* which reads: “Westerners have an illustrated book which describes this bird’s appearance and anatomy in great detail. The King of *Folangji* ordered the creation and circulation of the book, which reads as follows.” (西洋人有圖冊，載此鳥形質及其臟腑，系說甚詳，即佛朗機國王所命圖，以流傳者也，圖說附錄於後). What follows in the text is the *Inscription*, so we may assume that the *Inscription* is in fact extracts from this western book.

To give a brief summary of the *Inscription*: First it discusses the records of the bird. *Emo* birds are not recorded in the literature of the West stretching back to antiquity. Only in 1597, Wanli 25 in the Ming dynasty, did the red hairs (i.e. the Dutch) find this bird in Indonesia, and take it back to the West. Six years later, the Dutch again caught two *emo* birds, but were unable to keep them alive in captivity. In Kangxi 10, 1671, the chief of the island of *Sheng laolengzuo* (勝老楞佐海島) bought one from an Indian vessel, and gave it to the King of *Folangji*. This *emo* bird survived for four years, and the king ordered his artists to paint it. The paintings subsequently circulated throughout the world. So where exactly

38 Zhuang Shen, “Folangji kao,” *Dalu zazhi* 8, no.5 (1954): 19-21; Yu Huamin, “‘Folangji’ minghao yuanliu kaolue,” *Wenshi zazhi* 27 (1986): 195-205; Liang Jiabin, “Ming shi folangji zhuan kaozheng,” *Wen Shi Xue Yanjiusuo Yuekan* 2, no. 3-4 (1934): 93-142; Huang Qichen and Deng Kaisong, “Ming qing shiqi Aomen duiwai maoyi de xingshuai,” *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 3 (1984): 55-69.

39 See Zhuang Jifa, *Xie Sui ‘Zhigong tu’ manwen tushuo jiaozhu*, 83.

40 During research into the *Gewu qiongli yuan* (i.e. the French Royal Academy of Sciences), Han Qi found a reference to the *Gewu qiongli yuan* in *Fulangjiya guo* (昔富朗濟亞國之格物窮理院) – indicating that by the time of Kangxi, the term *Fulangjiya* 富朗濟亞 was being used for France. However, it is not certain that *Fulangjiya* is the same term as Folangji. See Li Huachuan for discussion of confusion between Portugal and France in the mid-Qing. See Han Qi “‘Ge wu qiong li yuan’ yu mengyang zhai: 17, 18 shiji zhi Zhong Fa kexue jiaoliu,” *Faguo hanxue* 4 (1999): 317; Li Huachuan, “Qing zhong qian qi guoren dui Faquo de renzhi,” in Huang Aiping and Huang Xingtao, *Xixue yu qingdai wenhu*, 3-9.

is the island of *Sheng laolengzuo*? It appears in Giulio Aleni's *Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀 (Record of What is Beyond the Tributaries), published in the late Ming dynasty. Contemporary researchers believe that it is a transliteration of San Lorenzo, which is an old name for Madagascar.⁴¹

Next, the *Inscription* goes on to describe the appearance of the bird. The *emo* bird was about five feet, five inches tall. Its head was green, the neck jade, and it had a hard crest. Under its crop it had two red-purple wattles. Its eyes were similar to a lion's, and bright like diamonds. The tongue extended into the throat. The wings are short, with five large feathers, black like a bear. The legs are like those of a goose, three toed, with strong claws. The description, and the pictures in the *Album of Birds* and Yang Dazhang's *Emo Birds*, suggests that the *emo* is the cassowary (fig. 6), a large flightless bird similar to the African ostrich, the South American rhea and the Australian emu. This bird was only named cassowary in later literature. Until the middle of the 18th century, it was referred to by Europeans using the Indonesian word *emeu*,⁴² and that is why Qianlong claims in the *Inscription* that "this bird is named *emo* in *Galaba*," (此鳥在嘎拉巴名額摩) and used this name in his writings.

But what was the western book that Qianlong used? A reading of the European writings on the subject of the cassowary indicates that the best fit for Qianlong's text is a collection of reports on animal anatomy published by Claude Perrault (1613-1688) between 1671 and 1676. Perrault was a French architect, anatomist and natural historian.⁴³ As an architect, Perrault is best known for beating the Italian Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) in the competition to design a new wing of the Louvre for Louis XIV. The eastern face of the new wing is known as Perrault's colonnade (built between 1667-70), and is one of the defining works of French classical architecture. As a natural historian, Perrault's major achievement was to introduce anatomy to the study of animals. Previous natural historians had concentrated on describing only their external features. Perrault was at the forefront of comparative anatomy, examining the organs

41 See Zhao Rushi, Ai Rulue (Giulio Aleni), *Zhu fan zhi jiao yi Zhifang waiji jiao yi*, 118.

42 *Emeu*, emu or *eme*. According to Levinus Hulsius in his record of a Dutch expedition to Java, the word comes from an "Indian language". Levinus Hulsius (d. 1606), native of Ghent, published a series of travel journals in Nuremberg beginning in 1598. The first journal covers a Dutch expedition to the East Indies in 1595-7. See Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. II, book one, 95, 183.

43 Perrault, *Mémoires Pour Servir*. Here I make use of an English translation published in 1688: Perrault, *Mémoirs for a Natural History of Animals*. The images are taken from the version printed in Académie Royale des Sciences ed., *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, 1666-1699*, Tom. 3, part. 2, II partie, PL 56, pag 155 & PL 57, pag 156.

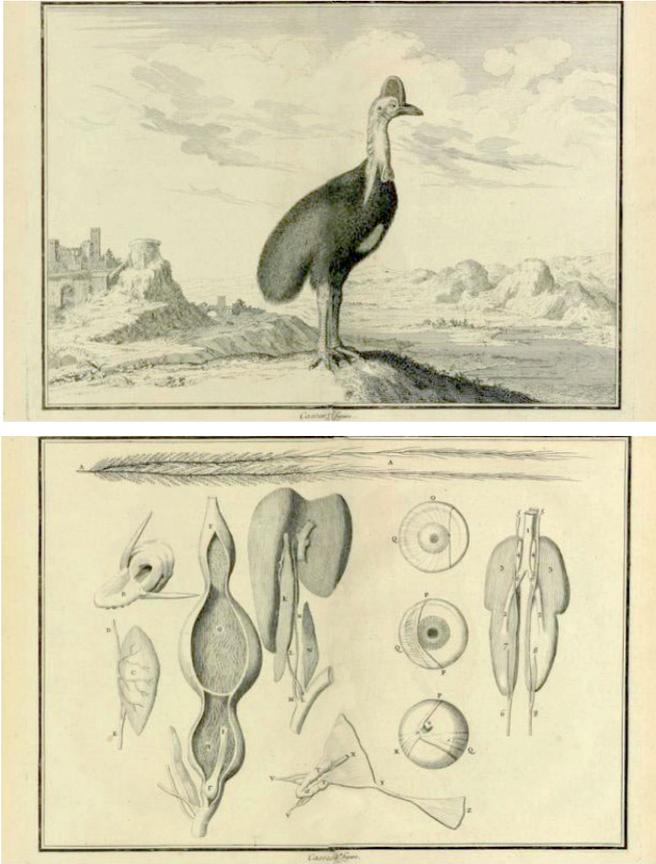


Fig. 7: From *Académie Royale des Sciences ed., Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences*, vol. Tom 3 Part 2 (1666-1699), II partie, PL 56, pag 155 & PL 57, page 156.

All of the details in the European records above are consistent with what Qianlong writes in the Inscription: the first capture of an *emo* bird by the Dutch in 1597; the death of two others while being transported to Europe six years later; and most importantly, the giving of the cassowary that Perrault would later dissect to the King of France in 1671, and its surviving four years in Versailles. A direct comparison of the texts (Appendix 1) shows that the text Qianlong translated was a part of Perrault's anatomical report.

In fact, Qianlong's information about the European history of cassowaries - the passage from the beginning of the essay to "it died after four years" (蓄之

四年死) - is a word for word translation of the first paragraph of Perrault's report. Thus, it is clear that the *Folangji* referred to in the *Inscription* is not the same as the *Folangji* in Ming Dynasty literature - Portugal. Instead, it must be *Falanxi*, France. The king who ordered the drawings of the cassowary is therefore Louis XIV. *Galaba* is most likely the island of Java.

Following the background information, Perrault's description of the cassowary begins with its external appearance: height, length of neck, limbs, wings; shape and dimensions of the head, beak, eyes, nostrils, wattles, chest, and legs; etc. The description is exhaustive, and mixed into the text are Perrault's comments on the work of past anatomists: Charles de l'Écluse (also known as L'Escluse or Carolus Clusius, 1526-1609) of Flanders, the most important natural historian of the 16th century; and the Italian aristocrat Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605). Next, Perrault describes the internal organs of the cassowary, including their size, functions, and the relationships between the organs. He covers the oesophagus, the crop, appendix, pyloric sphincter, intestines, liver, spleen, pancreas, kidneys, testes, lungs, heart, tongue, eyes, etc. The observations are comprehensive and exhaustive. They include references to previous research on cassowaries, and comparisons with other birds. Most importantly, in Perrault's descriptions of the bird's organs, he takes pains to note how the organs interacted. For example, he is most proud of having discovered two muscles which control the lungs, which he believes explain the process of breathing. He thought that this discovery would have been much more difficult in a bird of smaller volume. Another point of pride for Perrault is his explanation of the function of the cassowary's inner eyelid. He infers that it stops the bird's corneas drying out. Regardless of whether Perrault's conclusions are correct, his reports demonstrate his efforts to go beyond mere description and to use dissection and anatomy to discover the mechanisms of life. So it is interesting to see that Qianlong's *Inscription* limits itself to excerpts from Perrault's account of the history of the cassowary and its external appearance. Despite the note in the *Ten Rhymes* that the western book "records the appearance and the anatomy of this bird in great detail," Qianlong appears to have been uninterested in Perrault's descriptions of anatomical structures and biological functions.

But the *Inscription* does offer a relatively full and faithful translation of the sections which deal with the bird's history and its appearance. For example, from the phrase "The king ordered his artists to prepare careful drawings of it" (國王命工詳圖其狀) to the section on the *emo* bird's dimensions and appearance, the *Inscription* is a close to word-for-word translation of Perrault's text (see comparison in Appendix 1). The bird's height, "five foot and a half" is translated to "高五尺五寸" (height of five *chi* and five *cun*); "The head and

neck were a foot and a half together” becomes “自頂至頸一尺五寸” (from neck to head one *chi* five *cun*). Where the Perrault text speaks of half a foot, the *Inscription* converts it to “five *cun*”. It also translates “It was covered with a crest three inches high” as “冠高三寸” (height of the crest three *cun*). Almost every phrase in the *Inscription* can be traced to a corresponding sentence in Perrault’s text. However, it significantly simplifies Perrault’s description. For example, Perrault’s account of the bird’s colouration is highly complex, but the *Inscription* offers only “The head is green, the neck jade; the place where it adjoins the body and the wattle are purple-red” (頭綠頸翠，其連背處下及喙皆紅紫色). Moreover, the initial phrase, “head is green, the neck jade,” is a formulaic phrase that better describes common Chinese waterfowl like mandarin ducks than it does the cassowary. The *Inscription* also adapts the Perrault text in several small ways. For example, Perrault compares the cassowary to the ostrich several times, and in each case the *Inscription* replaces that comparison with the crane, a more common Chinese bird. That is why we find the phrases “尻形如鶴” (tail like the crane) and “似鶴脛” (lower legs like the crane), which do not appear in the Perrault text.

Some small differences may be attributable to the inevitable additions and losses of translation or to misunderstanding of the text. But the most puzzling discrepancy between the texts occurs in the last section, describing observations of the cassowary’s behaviour. This section does not seem to correspond to anything in Perrault’s text at all: “Very tame in character; when you stroke it, it leans against you.” (性極馴，以手撫之，輒依人而立)，followed by “Must raise its head to swallow. Cannot take grain with its tongue because the tongue is in its throat.” (飲啄必仰首而吞。蓋以舌在喉間，不能舐取耳)。Most striking is that the last two lines of the *Inscription*, concerning the cassowary’s diet, are not only not found in the source, they are at odds with the opinions of both Perrault and the text of Clusius to which he referred. The *Inscription* claims, “Will eat anything, but its usual diet is vegetables and grain. It also likes to eat fish” (與以諸物皆就食，而常飼則惟蔬穀，亦愛食魚)，while Perrault says that it feeds mainly on pulses and bread,⁴⁷ and Clusius claims its diet to be floury foods or bread.⁴⁸ In fact, Perrault makes a particular note that “this animal...feeds not on flesh”, quite the opposite of the claim in the *Inscription*. This change, from pulses and bread to vegetables, grain and fish, is unlikely to be simply an artefact of translation. It is not a shade of meaning, but a complete reversal, a replacement of bread, which was unknown in China, with vegetables, grain and fish. The only possible explanation is that

47 “[T]his animal, which feeds not on flesh, but Pulse and Bread...” See Perrault, *Memoir’s for a Natural History of Animals*, 244.

48 See Appendix 1.

this information came not from the European source text, but from first-hand experience of rearing the cassowary in the Qing court.

Structurally, the first section of *Inscription*, up to “it died after four years” (蓄之四年死), and the section about the history of cassowaries in Europe, are a sentence by sentence translation of the first paragraph of Perrault’s report. The second paragraph of Perrault’s report begins with Clusius’s account that the bird is called “eme” in India. He goes on to explain that he does not know why the bird is called a “casuel” or “gasuel” in France; then says that among birds, its size and weight are second only to the ostrich; then mentions the four cassowaries previously brought to Europe and described by Clusius, and that his report concerns the fifth cassowary to be brought to Europe. This entire section is omitted by the *Inscription*, which has only a single sentence covering the name issue: “This bird is named emo in *Gabala*; in *Folangji* it is named *gesuer*” (此鳥在嘎拉巴名額摩，在佛朗機名格素爾). This sentence appears almost at the end of the *Inscription*, followed only by the section on the bird’s temperament, which, as noted above, I believe to be an addition based on observations in China, not a translation. The second paragraph of Perrault’s report goes on to describe the size of the bird: height, length of leg, length of neck, thumb, etc., ending with a discussion of the cassowary’s almost vestigial wings. The third paragraph of the report discusses the distinctive features of the cassowary’s plumage. It then devotes one paragraph to each organ or part of its body: neck, wings, head, beak, eyes, colouration on either side of the head, wattle below the neck, chest, thighs; then moves onto a description of the oesophagus and other internal organs. After its translation of the first paragraph, about the history of the bird, the *Inscription* skips over Perrault’s discussion of Clusius, and most of the second and third paragraphs. It includes only the information on the bird’s size, then moves directly to a condensed version of Perrault’s description of the bird’s appearance in the fourth part. This concludes with the description of the cassowary’s leg from the 12th paragraph. The *Inscription* ignores the subsequent discussion of the internal organs, and significantly alters the order of the information about the bird’s appearance. Perrault sees the cassowary’s “double” feathers as being an important feature of this species, and devotes a considerable amount of text to their description. He also places this passage on feathers near the beginning of the description of the bird’s organs, just after the section on its head. However, the *Inscription* follows a roughly top-to-bottom order in its description, and omits passages with names that Chinese readers would not know, such as Clusius and Aldrovandi.

The structure of the *Inscription* is therefore as follows. First, it translates Perrault’s opening on the history of the cassowary; a revised version of

Perrault's description of its appearance; but alters the structure and order of the text so it no longer reflects Perrault's consideration of features distinctive to the species. Names which would be meaningless in Chinese have been deleted; Perrault's conjectures about the cassowary's name have been replaced by a single apparently authoritative statement, which is placed at the end of the text, where it functions much like the conclusion that one would expect to find in a Chinese essay. Finally, some observations made at the Qing court are tacked onto the end of the translation.

To summarise: Qianlong's imperial poem *Ten Rhymes* begins with the arrival of the *emo* bird; then describes the knowledge that the people of Folangji have of the bird, its appearance and behaviour; and finally marvels that a flightless bird could come to China, and compares it with the mythical "bird of worldly happiness" from the *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms*. The Inscription translates extracts from an anatomical report by Perrault, detailing the discovery of the cassowary by Europeans and its external appearance, adding a little first-hand experience from the rearing of a cassowary at the Qing court.

It is worth noting that there were in fact already existing Chinese records of the cassowary and its cultivation. There are records dating back to the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) of a great walking fowl from the Seleucid Empire (條支國) and the Parthian Empire (安息國) known as a *daque* (大雀). From the Northern Wei dynasty (467-499 CE) through the Tang (618-907) and Yuan dynasties (1271-1368) there were reports of *tuoniao* (駝鳥) (in modern Chinese, this word refers to ostriches). In the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), tribute from Southeast Asia included *tuoji* (駝雞) and *huoji* (火雞). Researchers believe that *tuoji* were probably ostriches, and *huoji* may have been cassowaries.⁴⁹ Had the distinction been drawn between ostriches and cassowaries? The answer to this question is not clear. *Tuoniao*, *tuoji* and *huoji* had become general terms for large birds delivered in tribute. But it is interesting to note that Qianlong chose to jettison this tradition and use instead a transliteration of the word found in the European literature, "emu". This suggests that he was interested in borrowing the European tradition to frame the production of texts, images and meaning around this bird in the Qing court. This choice means that the cassowary links the Qing court to the intellectual traditions of Europe, and to the European voyages of discovery and the rearing of cassowaries by European royalty (particularly the king of *Folangji*). To better understand the texts which Qianlong used, we must recall the history of

49 Wang Ting, "Tiaozhi daque: Zhongguo zhong jin gu jizai zhong de daxing zouqin," in *Xiyu nanhai shi di yanjiu*, 39-56

texts and images of cassowaries in Europe. This will also help us to recreate the borrowing of these texts and their use and meaning within the context of the Qing court.

The cassowary in European natural history

The “discovery” of the cassowary, like that of the rhino and the dodo, was one of the major events in the process of eastward exploration by European nations. The first European encounter with the bird was on a Dutch expedition to Java between 1595 and 1597, which brought back a live cassowary to Europe. This voyage was led by the explorer Cornelis de Houtman (1565-1599). Supported by a group of merchants, he took four vessels and made the first contact between Holland and the Far East. This expedition also laid the foundation for the future trade in spices with the Dutch East Indies.

Houtman’s trading fleet left Amsterdam in February 1595, and arrived in Banten, an important trading port in the northwest of Java, on July 27th. From there he went on to Madura and to Bali. Fierce clashes with the Portuguese and Indonesians meant that by the time they returned to the Netherlands in 1597, only 87 people survived of the 249 who had set out on the expedition.⁵⁰ The primary objective of the traders was to find spices, but they also picked up a number of other valuable imports, including one large bird known as an “emeu”. The year after their return, one of the Dutch members of the expedition, Willem Lodewycksz, published his diary of the expedition, written in Dutch.⁵¹ The book says that on December 4th, 1596, the prince of Sidayu, a district of Java, gave a bird named “emeu” to Schellinger, captain of one of the ships. This bird was said to have come from the Island of Banda.⁵² The book includes 30 pictures, and dramatically describes the cassowary and other exotic birds and animals found in Southeast Asia. This historic expedition, then, was the first encounter between Europe and the cassowary (fig. 8).⁵³

50 For a reconstruction of this voyage and the literature about it, see E. M. Beekman, “The First Voyage to the East Indies (1595-1597) and the Beginning of Colonial Literature,” in *Troubled Pleasures: Dutch Colonial Literature from the East Indies, 1600-1950*, 39-79; Jennifer Speake ed., entry on “Lodewycksz, Willem (d. 1604),” *Literature of Travel and Exploration: An Encyclopedia*, 734-736. For modern reprints of contemporary records of this expedition, see Beekman, “The First Voyage to the East Indies (1595-1597) and the Beginning of Colonial Literature,” note 1, 75.

51 Willem Lodewycksz, *D’eerste Boeck: Historie van Indien waer inne Verhaelt is de Avontueren die de Hollandtsche Schepen Bejeghent zijn*. Reprinted in G. P. Rouffaer and J. W. Ijzerman, *De Eerste Schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Cornelis de Houtman, 1595-1597--Journalen, Documenten en andere Bescheiden*.

52 See Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. II, book one, 182, 183.

53 Rouffaer and Ijzerman, *De Eerste Schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Cornelis de*

Plaat 30.

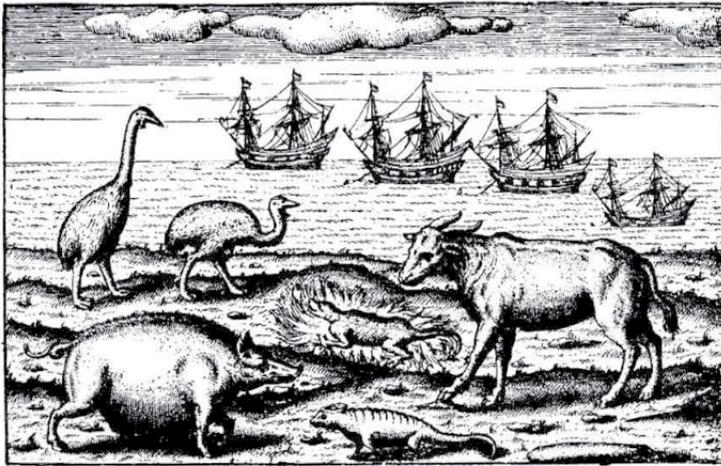


Fig. 8: From G. P. Rouffaer and J. W. Ijzerman, *De eerste schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Cornelis de Houtman, 1595-1597--journalen, documenten en andere bescheiden*, Plaat 30, p. 13.

The first writer to process the information contained in the diary, and to try to incorporate it into the existing knowledge of ornithology, was the Italian nobleman and renowned natural historian Ulisse Aldrovandi.⁵⁴ However, he had never actually seen the cassowary, and drew his information solely from the published diary. He seems to have been working from the picture published by Lodewycksz when he made his own description and drawing (fig. 9). In fact, Lodewycksz's diary became well known throughout Europe. Latin⁵⁵ and German⁵⁶ editions were published within the same year, and the German edition, by L. Hulsius, achieved particularly wide circulation.

Houtman, 1595-1597, plaat 30, 136; online version, 240.

54 Ulisse Aldrovandi, "Eme," *Ornithologiae, Hoc Est De Avibus Historiae, Libri XIX-XX*, 541.

55 *Diarium Nauticum itineris Batavorum in Indiam Orientalem, Cursuum, Tractuum, Variorumque Eventuum, qui ipsis contigerunt, diligenter descriptum. His accedunt, narratio Historica nationum, regionum, & civitatum, quas adnavigarunt.*

56 Levinus Hulsius, *Erste Schiffahrt in die Orientalische Indien so die Holländische Schiff, im Martio 1595 Ausgefahren, und im Augusto 1597 Widerkommen, Verricht*. For a comprehensive bibliography on Hulsius, see Adolph Asher, *Bibliographical Essay on the Collection of Voyages and Travels Edited and Published by Levinus Hulsius and his Successors, at Nuremberg, and Francfort from Anno 1598 to 1660*, 117. I have not seen the original drawings for the Hulsius volume, but am working from information given by Asher and Lach. See next note.

The German engraver Johann Sibmacher (c. 1560-1621) made engravings specifically for the Hulsius translation (fig. 10).⁵⁷ The Sibmacher engraving cassowary appears from its posture to be a direct copy of the right-hand bird drawn by Lodewycksz. However, this bird does not have the cassowary's distinctive triangular crest, which has led some to wonder whether the emeu that Houtman brought back really was a cassowary.



Fig. 9: From Ulisse Aldrovandi, "Eme," *Ornithologiae, Hoc Est de Avibus Historiae, Libri XIX-XX*, p. 541.

57 See Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. II, book one, fig. 141.



Fig. 10: From Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. II, book one, fig. 141.

Luckily, the bird was bought by Count Georg Eberhard von Solms and given to Ernest of Bavaria, Elector of Cologne (1554-1612). At Cologne, it was observed first-hand by the famous Flemish doctor, horticulturalist and natural historian Clusius.⁵⁸ Clusius gave a description and account of his observations of the bird in a book published in 1605 about the marvels of the new world.⁵⁹ The book states: “Starting from the middle of the crop to the top of the head, there is a horny crest, about three inches high,”⁶⁰ which makes it certain that this bird is indeed a cassowary. Clusius also includes a drawing of the cassowary in his book (fig. 11). He states that the woodcut was produced by first painting the bird from life in oils, then shrinking the picture for printing.⁶¹ The bird

58 Most of the literature on Clusius is in Dutch; there are very few monographs on him in English. For more information on his life and his contribution, see references in general works on the history of natural history during the Renaissance: Brian W. Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing: Natural History in Renaissance Europe*, chapter 2; Cook, *Matters of Exchange*, chapter 3; de Asúa and French, “Exotic Animal: Knowledge and Interests. Clusius and his *Exotica*,” *A New World of Animals*, 109-114.

59 Carolus Clusius (L’Écluse, Charles de), *Exoticorum libri decem*, 97-99.

60 See Appendix 1.

61 See Appendix 1.

was finally requested by and given to the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612). It arrived in Rudolf's court menagerie in Prague in August 1601. Fortunately two drawings of this cassowary survive in two codices compiled near the end of Rudolf II's life, the *Museum* and the *Bestiaire* (fig. 12).⁶²

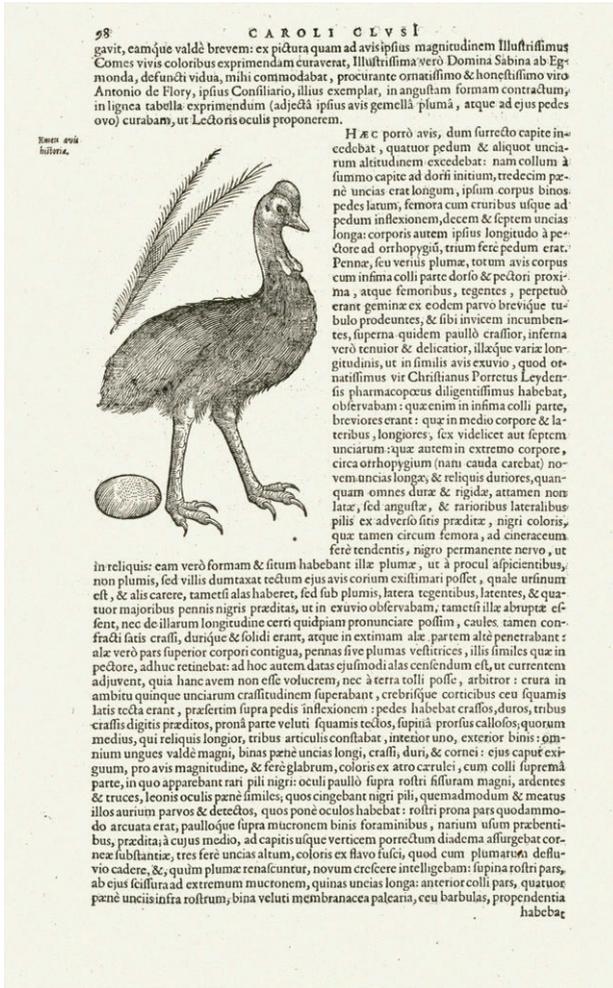


Fig. 11: From *Carolus Clusius, Exoticorum Libri Decem*, p.78.

62 These codices were created in about 1610, and include 180 gouache drawings on sheepskin. They are kept in the National Library Vienna, and have been reprinted in Herbert Haupt et al., *Le Bestiaire de Rodolphe II*, no. 118, 119.



Fig. 12: From Herbert Haupt, Eva Irblich, Manfred Staudinger and Thea Vignau-Wilberg, *Le Bestiaire de Rodolphe II*, no. 118, 119.

Because a printed image can be easily reproduced, Clusius's print became much more widely known than the drawings done at the court of Rudolf II. The print became virtually the standard image of a cassowary, known throughout Europe. Clusius's account included not just details from the 1598 diary of Lodewycksz, but also details of what happened to the bird up till 1605. Combined with his careful measurements and description of the bird's appearance, this text became the authoritative European text on the cassowary for some period of time. For example, the cassowary (under the name *emeu*) is included in both the natural history written by the Spanish Jesuit Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (1595-1658)⁶³ and in the ornithological work published in 1650 by the Polish scientist Johannes Johnstone (or Jan Jonston, 1603-1675),⁶⁴ but in both cases the books simply reproduce Clusius' text without any additions. The images are similarly reproductions: Nieremberg reprints Clusius' print, and also includes Aldrovandi's earlier drawing (fig. 13). As noted above, the Aldrovandi drawing is a reproduction of a drawing by Lodewycksz, but Nieremberg fails to note in his book that the second image is by Aldrovandi.

63 Juan Eusebio Nieremberg, *Historia Natvrae maxime Peregrinae, libris XVI. Distincta*, 218-219.

64 Johannes Johnstone, *Historiae Naturalis de Avibus libri VI. Cum Aeneis Figuris*, 172-174.

This caused Johnstone, who used the same two images (fig. 14), to assume that there were two cassowaries in Europe: one depicted in the 1605 Clusius print, the other shown for the first time in the 1635 Nieremberg book. He was unaware that the two images both show the single bird retrieved in 1597 by Houtman.



Fig. 13: From Juan Eusebio Nieremberg, *Historia Naturæ, Maxime Peregrinæ, Libris XVI. Distincta*, p. 218.

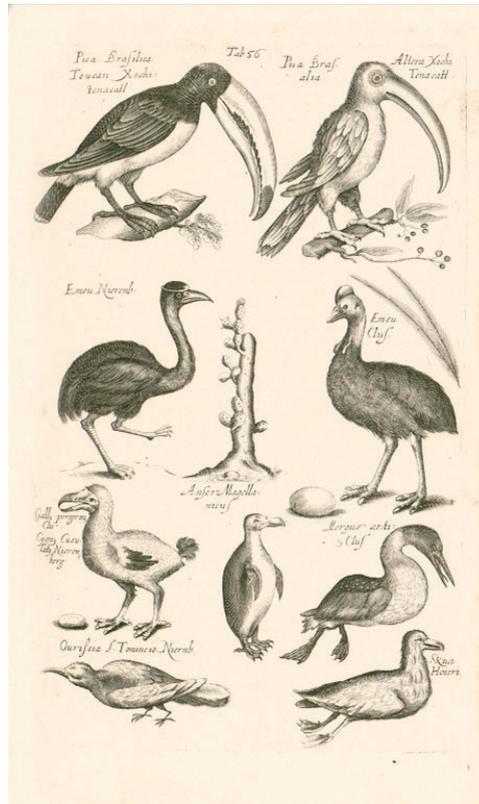


Fig 14: From Johannes Johnstone, *Historiae Naturalis de Avibus Libri VI. Cum Aeneis figuris, Tab 56*.

In order to understand why authors in Europe raced to reproduce this information on cassowaries, we must look back over the development of natural history in Europe. Before the 16th century, there was no such thing as zoology or botany in the modern sense in Europe. The only works available were Aristotle's zoological treatise *Historiae Animalium* and Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*.⁶⁵ Aristotle's work espouses a natural philosophy which holds that if one can understand the fundamental elements of living entities, then we can understand their myriad nature. Pliny was writing at a time when the Roman

65 For more on early European natural history, see Roger French, *Ancient Natural History*, especially chapter 3; Miguel de Asúa and Roger French, "Introduction," in *A New World of Animals*, xiii-xvi.

Empire was at its height, and is a hugely ambitious work which seeks to give a full history of everything in nature; animals play a very important role in this history. These two traditions form the basis for European zoology and botany. When Europe encountered the new world in the 16th century, a style of writing emerged which combined the two traditions, aiming to describe both “the natural and moral histories of the New World”.⁶⁶ The authors of these new works wanted to comprehend both the human and natural history of the new continents. The exemplar of this approach was Konrad Gessner (1516-1565), a doctor and natural historian from Zurich. His approach to natural history was to comprehensively survey the extant literature. This “philological” approach produced a monumental four-volume work on zoology, the *Historiae Animalium*, between 1551-58. This work included practically all that was known about animals at the time, and gave bibliographic references to all kinds of literature, observations, documentation, and images.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, Europe’s first cassowary arrived only in 1597, so it was not included in Gessner’s encyclopaedic work.

This 16th century outpouring of writing, recording and research into natural history is a part of the same historical movement as the European exploration of the new world, and the competitive collection of curiosities among the European nobility (*Kunstkammers* or cabinets of art and curios). The mid-16th century witnessed a fever for *Kunstkammers* among European nobility. In conceptual terms, *Kunstkammers* represent a desire to recreate the macrocosm through the collection of objects of every type and material. A collection would typically contain two types of object: one was *Kunst*, or art; the other *Wunder*, or curios. One was man-made; the other made by God. Curios were natural objects: animals, plants, minerals. Art was any artificial object: art, antiquities, scientific instruments, weapons, and anthropological finds. These collections often also included libraries, botanical nurseries, and menageries. They are a part of the encyclopaedic desire for knowledge and the theological natural history of Renaissance Europe: Europeans hoped to gain a clearer understanding of the intentions of the Creator by first understanding His creation, every plant and tree, every constant and variant. In this enterprise, knowledge came from explorations of God’s world, and also from explorations of the human world.⁶⁸

66 One of the best examples is *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* by the Jesuit priest José de Acosta (1540-1600). See de Asúa and French, “Aristotle and the new World. José de Acosta and his *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*,” and “The natural histories of the new world,” in *A New World of Animals*, 76-84, 88-89.

67 Miguel de Asúa and Roger French, “Animals in a Jungle of Words: Gesner’s *Historiae Animalium*” in *A New World of Animals*, 190-196; Sachiko Kusukawa, “Konrad Gessner: The Beginnings of Modern Zoology,” in *The Great Naturalists*, 71-75.

68 For the history of collections in Europe, see Lach, “Collections of curiosities,” in *Asia in the Mak-*

And that human world was becoming vastly more complex in the Age of Discovery. New discoveries seemed to be rewriting old frameworks on a regular basis. The objects kept in collections reflected this ever-expanding knowledge. Of course, not everyone had access to curios from the new world. Curio collections were mostly kept by the royalty of Europe. Collections were a way of demonstrating control over the new world; they were an integral part of the expression of royal power. The giving and exchange of curios was one of the important mechanisms by which royals and nobility expanded their own collections, built networks and cultivated their reputations. The House of Hapsburg, the Austrian ruling house of the Holy Roman Empire, was particularly adept at this practice.⁶⁹ As the owners of important collections themselves, they were continually appropriating new curios from all over the world. They also sponsored natural history projects: Gessner's four-volume *Historiae Animalium* was presented to a famous Hapsburg collector, the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I (1503-1564). Europe's first cassowary also ended up in the menagerie of a grandson of Ferdinand, Rudolf II. Rudolf II was renowned for his encyclopaedic collection of marvels, and was also the most important sponsor of the natural historian Clusius. Many scholars from around Europe travelled to research in his collection.

Following Gessner, the most important encyclopaedia of natural history was probably the *Historia Animalium*, edited by Ulisse Aldrovandi. Aldrovandi himself maintained a remarkable museum of animal and plant specimens, paintings and prints. He saw a collection as a "theatre of nature" (*teatro ni natura*): it was an attempt to recreate all of nature within a confined space. This closed microcosm should reflect the macrocosm - the world - and the animals of the new world were an important part of recreating the world. So it comes as no surprise that Aldrovandi should reprint the information on the cassowary from Loewycksz.⁷⁰

ing of Europe, vol. II, book one, 7-45; Horst Bredekamp, trans. Allison Brown, *The Lure of Antiquity and Cult of the Machine: The Kunstkammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art and Technology*, particularly ch. 4; Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor eds., *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*; Patrick Mauries, *Cabinets of Curiosities*; Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "From Mastery of the World to Mastery of Nature: *The Kunstkammer*, politics, and science," in *The Mastery of Nature: Aspects of Art, Science, and Humanism in the Renaissance*, 174-195; Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 1150-1150.

69 The most important research on the import of marvels to European collections and exchanges between European royal houses was done for the 2000 exhibition held in Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien "Exotica: Portugals Entdeckungen im Spiegel Fürstlicher Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Renaissance" and the accompanying seminar. See Helmut Trnek and Sabine Haag eds., *Exotica: Portugals Entdeckungen im Spiegel Fürstlicher Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Renaissance*, particularly Almudena Pérez de Tudela and Annemarie Jordan Gschwend, "Luxury Goods for Royal Collectors: Exotica, Princely Gifts and Rare Animals Exchanged Between the Iberian Courts and Central Europe in the Renaissance (1560-1612)" (*ibid.*, 1-22).

70 Miguel de Asúa and Roger French, "New World Animals Play a Role in the Theatre of Nature: Aldrovandi and his *Historia Animalium*" in *A New World of Animals*, 197-203.

In the 17th century, the most important and most comprehensive work of natural history was the *Historiae Naturalis* compiled by Johannes Johnstone. This book represents a continuation of the tradition of Gessner and Aldrovandi. Its images are also the two images from Aldrovandi and Clusius, even though they are in fact drawings of the same bird. However, even as Johnstone's five-volume work was being published, between 1650-53, European natural history was already taking a new turn.

In the second half of the 17th century, a new type of text began to emerge. This new genre stressed the importance of first-hand observation and autopsy. The philological approach of Gessner was almost completely replaced by the new, observation-based writing. It was a scientific revolution.⁷¹ For the cassowary, this meant that scientists were no longer content to repeat the views of Clusius. They believed that close description of an animal's appearance would enable understanding, and their writing stressed empirical research and observations, including dissection. Contemporary with this scientific revolution of anatomy and objective description was a shift in emphasis away from individual scholars studying pieces in private collections. The second half of the 17th century saw the establishment of many of the formal research organisations of the modern era.⁷² The British Royal Society was founded in 1666; its French counterpart, the Royal Academy of Sciences, was founded in the same year by Louis XIV. Incidentally, these institutions very quickly attempted to learn about China. Members of the French Royal Academy of Sciences arrived as missionaries in Beijing in 1688.⁷³ Jean de Fontaney (1643-1710),⁷⁴ Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730), Claude de Visdelou (1658-1737), Louis le Comte (or Louis-Daniel Lecomte, 1655-1728), and Jean-François Gerbillon (1654-1707) had been appointed "King's Mathematicians" and made rapporteurs to the Royal Academy before they left for China. They maintained close links with the Academy, and in addition to their missionary work in China, they were commissioned by the Academy to discover

71 The best-known example is Edward Tyson (1650-1708), the British pioneer of modern comparative anatomy. See Miguel de Asúa and Roger French, "New World Animals and the 'Scientific Revolution,'" in *A New World of Animals*, 209-229.

72 Miguel de Asúa and Roger French, *A New World of Animals*, 209-229.

73 For information on their activities in China, see de Bossierre, *Jean-François Gerbillon*; Claudia Collani, *Joachim Bouvet*. Mme Yves de Thomaz, *Luyi shisi pai wang Zhongguo de wu wei shuxuejia zhi yi*; Claudia Collani, *Yesuishi Bai Jin de shengping yu zhuzuo*.

74 Scholars often took Jean de Fontaney's Chinese name as Hong Ruohan (洪若翰); Han Qi points out that only the name Hong Ruo (洪若) appears in the literature from the reign of Kangxi. In other words, Jean de Fontaney's Chinese name should be Hong Ruo. See Han Qi, Wu Min, *Xi chao zong zheng ji, xi chao ding an (wai san zhong)*, 381.

and survey Chinese flora and fauna and Chinese science and technology.⁷⁵

Perrault's dissection of a cassowary for the Royal Academy of Sciences was a product of this new trend in scientific writing. His report was published by a professional research organisation, not supported by a private sponsor; his intention was to dissect the cassowary in order to understand its internal biological functions. However, the sourcing of the cassowary from a royal menagerie, and the history of cassowary studies which Perrault recapitulates, are relics of the older form of European natural history and research based on curios. Thus we can see that Qianlong's source material is representative of a transition point in the development of European natural history, as it progressed from description of "curiosities" into professional, empirical, modern science. It is interesting to note that European knowledge of the cassowary had not stopped with the findings of Perrault. Perrault published between 1671-76; Qianlong wrote the Inscription in 1774. In the intervening century, a large number of new studies on the cassowary appeared in Europe. The most important of these was in the system of classification proposed by Linnaeus in 1735. The Linnaean system is a milestone in the history of western biology, and it also provided a standardised classification and name to the cassowary. One cannot but be curious as to why Qianlong chose a text by Perrault as his primary source? To explore this question, we must understand two issues. First, what access did the Qing court have to European literature on natural history? Second, did Qianlong have any real choice in his source? And how did he make his choice?

European books in the Qing court and Qianlong's choice

In terms of access, copies of western works of natural history certainly were available to the Qing court. As early as Kangxi 17 (1678), the Portuguese ambassador Bento Pereira de Faria, introduced by Ferdinand Verbiest, had presented the Emperor with a live African lion.⁷⁶ The Jesuit missionary Ludovico Buglio (1606-1682) wrote a text to accompany it titled *Shizi shuo* 獅子說 (On Lions), describing the lion's appearance and temperament. The following year, at the command of the Emperor, Buglio wrote *Jincheng ying shuo* 進呈鷹說 (Treatise on Hawks), later renamed *Ying lun* 鷹論 (On Hawks) and reproduced in the *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (Complete

75 For information on the activities of the "king's mathematicians" and the French Royal Academy of Sciences in China, see Han Qi, "'Gewu qiongli yuan' yu mengyang zhai – 17, 18 shiji zhi Zhong Fa kexue jiaoliu," *Faguo hanxue* 4 (1999): 302-324; Han Qi, "Kangxi chao Faguo yesuishi zai hua de kexue huodong," *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 2 (1998): 68-75.

76 Giuliano Bertuccioli, "A Lion in Peking: Ludovico Buglio and the Embassy to China of Bento Pereira de Faria in 1678," *East and West* 26: 1-2 (1976): 223-240.

Collection of Illustrations and Writings from the Earliest to Current Times), an encyclopaedia completed in 1725, during the reign of Yongzheng.⁷⁷ Both of these works were translations of entries in the *Historia Animalium* of Aldrovandi.⁷⁸

Another example will illustrate how European works of natural history came to the Qing court, and how they were used there. At the beginning of 1682, the Jesuit missionary Ferdinand Verbiest recorded in a letter his experience of a tour of the eastern provinces with the Emperor Kangxi. He mentions that on their return journey, as they passed through a city named “Xin-jam”, a group of Koreans presented the Emperor with a live seal. Kangxi called for Verbiest to examine the animal, and asked if there were any records of such a “fish” in European books? Verbiest responded that his library in Beijing did indeed contain a book with an image and description very similar to this “fish”, and that the information was gleaned from first-hand observation. Kangxi wished to see this book immediately, and sent a messenger by fast horse to retrieve two western books from the Jesuit library in Beijing. After looking at the book, Kangxi agreed that the gift from the Koreans was indeed the “seal” recorded in the European books. Highly satisfied, he ordered his messengers to take the seal back to Beijing with the greatest of care.⁷⁹ Kangxi’s grandson, Qianlong, also turned to missionaries and their libraries for answers when presented with unknown objects. A French missionary, Joseph-Marie Amiot (1718-1793), wrote in a letter back to Europe: “...If people bring back some unknown precious object from some country in the world, then he will also instruct us to find out about it, as if being a Frenchman or European in the service of His Majesty means that one knows everything about everything that comes from a foreign country...”⁸⁰

We do not know what European books were in the possession of the Qing court itself, but we do know that each of the four large churches in Beijing (the Church of the Saviour (Beitang), Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Nantang), St. Joseph’s Church (Dongtang) and Church of Our Lady of Mount

77 See Jiang Tingxi, *Gujin tushu jicheng*, vol. 63, bowu huibian qinchong dian, *juan*. 12, ying bu, 125-133.

78 See Fang Hao, *Zhong xi jiaotong shi*, vol. 2, 552-554. Fang names the book Aldrovandi’s *Sheng-wuxue* 生物學, which I believe to be the *Historia Animalium*, a massive work in 13 volumes.

79 The letter was written in Dutch. Here I refer to an English version in an appendix to Pierre Joseph d’Orléans, *Histoire des deux cConquérants Tartares qui ont Subjugué la Chine* (1688). See Joseph d’Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors of China*, 111.

80 See “Letter from Father Amiot to Father de la Tour of this church (Beijing, Oct. 17, 1754)”, in Jean-Baptiste ed., *Yesuishi Zhongguo shujian ji*, vol. 2, 52.

Carmel (Xitang)) had a substantial library. Like his grandfather, Qianlong could easily have seen, translated and read these books through the agency of the missionaries who served him. To determine what books were available, our most useful resource is the Beitang collection held at the National Library of China in Beijing. The Beitang collection is not just the library of the old Beitang. It holds books from Nantang and Dongtang, run by Portuguese Jesuits; the French Jesuit Beitang; the Lazarist Xitang; and other collections from private churches and lesser-known missionaries. The oldest volumes in the collection can be traced back to the late Ming, originating in the library of Matteo Ricci or the collection of 7,000 European books brought to Beijing by Nicolas Trigault (1577-1629).⁸¹ The Beitang collection was catalogued in 1949 by H. Verhaeren, C. M.; this catalogue is the most complete record presently available of the books in the collection.⁸²

The Beitang catalogue lists several volumes with references to cassowaries. These include Clusius' 1605 *Exoticorum Libri Decem*⁸³, and a note by the catalogue entry reads "Bibl. Trig", indicating that it was part of the library imported by Trigault and kept originally at Nantang. There are records of ten works on natural history by Aldrovandi,⁸⁴ all of them annotated with "P P Gallor SJ Pekin" and stamped with "VICARIAT APOSTOLIQUE de PEKIN & TCHE-LY NORD Bibliothèque du PÉ-TANG". The annotation is a contraction of "Patrum Gallorum Societatis Jesu Pekin", which is the mark applied to books which were in the library of the old Beitang.⁸⁵ That collection also housed other works on natural history, including those of Johannes Johnstone.⁸⁶ There is no individual catalogue entry for the Perrault dissection reports, but a letter written on September 23, 1732 by the Beitang librarian, Fr. Gaubil, indicates that Beitang has a set of the *Meimoires de l'Academie Royale des Sciences*. However, he indicates that they do not have the complete series, and requests a Fr. Souciet to purchase the missing numbers of the

81 Fang Hao, "Mingji xi shu qiqian bu liuru Zhongguo kao," in *Fang Hao liushi nan ziding gao*, 39-54.

82 There are two extant versions, one in French, kept at National Taiwan University, and one in English, kept at the National Library of China in Beijing. See Lazarist Mission, Peking, *Catalogue of the Pei-T'ang Library*; Mission Catholique des Lazaristes à Pékin, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque du Pé-T'ang*.

83 Mission Catholique des Lazaristes à Pékin, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque du Pé-T'ang* no. 2000, 586.

84 *Ibid.*, 209-210.

85 Lazarist Mission, Peking, *Catalogue of the Pei-T'ang Library*, xvii.

86 Mission Catholique des Lazaristes à Pékin, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque du Pé-T'ang* no. 1877, 552.

Meimoires.⁸⁷ Perrault's reports were not printed by the French Royal Academy of Sciences until 1733-34, so this letter does not offer conclusive evidence, but it is clear that the intention of Fr. Gaubil was to maintain a complete set of the *Meimoires de l'Academie Royale des Sciences*. We can therefore be reasonably certain that even though there is no record of Perrault's own volume, published between 1671-76, the reprint in the *Meimoires* would have been available to Qianlong when he wanted to read about the *emo* bird in 1774. If we accept that the Beitang collection was available to the emperor, then Qianlong had access to most of the 17th century European literature on the cassowary.

In the second half of the 18th century the situation changed somewhat. There was less interest in European countries in sending religious missions to China. In 1760, government of Portugal banned the Jesuits, and in 1773 the Pope dissolved the order. In China, proselytising had been banned since the Yongzheng reign (1722-1735), so the activity of missionaries in Qianlong's court inevitably declined.⁸⁸ In the 5th month of Qianlong 46 (1781), the *Shilu* 實錄 (Veritable Records) records:

There have always been Westerners willing to take up positions in the capital, which the responsible official should always report. Very few such people have come to the capital in recent years. I have ordered the supervision official that if they encounter a Westerner willing to come to the capital, he should report it to me and give them a position, and place no impediments in their path” 向來西洋人有情願赴京當差者，該督隨時奏聞；近年來，此等人到京者絕少，曾經傳諭該督，如遇此等西洋人情願來京，即行奏聞，遣令赴京當差，勿為阻拒。⁸⁹

The lack of missionaries was a problem for the Qianlong court, and it likely slowed the flow of books from Europe to China, so Qianlong actually had less access to up-to-date European materials than Kangxi. For example, the first edition of Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* was published in 1735, but the copy that appears in the Beitang collection catalogue is from the 13th edition, which was not published until 1767-70. It is marked as being collected by Mgr Alex. De Gouvea, Bishop of Beijing from 1785-1808. In other words, the book had

87 Lazarist Mission, Peking, *Catalogue of the Pei-T'ang Library*, xiv.

88 See Joachim Bouvet, "Ouzhou Yesuhui zhi jiesan dui Beijing Yesuhui zhi yingxiang" in Bouvet, *Qing Kang Qian liang di yu tianzhujiao chuanjiao shi*; Huang Yinong, "Ming mo Qing chu tianzhujiao de 'di tian shuo' ji qi suo yinfa de lunzheng," *Gugong xueshu jikan* 14, no. 2 (1996): 66-74; Li Tiangang, *Zhongguo liyi zhi zheng: lishi, wenxian he yiyi*.

89 See *Qing shilu*, *Juan* 1130, 9b-10a, vol. 23, 104.

not yet reached Beijing by the time Qianlong was writing the *Inscription* in 1774,⁹⁰ so it was most likely not available as a reference for Qianlong.

The second issue we have to consider is how Qianlong selected from among the several European books available to him on the cassowary. As the example recounted by Verbiest shows, the book most likely came to Qianlong through recommendation by one of the missionaries at his court. Interestingly, though Qianlong may have lacked the knowledge to select for himself among the different texts available, he did make selections and edits within the text. As we have seen, Qianlong's *Inscription* translates extracts only from Perrault's report. It completely omits the sections on the anatomy of the cassowary and the investigations into its biological functions, completely ignoring the scientific importance of these sections. In place of this scientific content, Qianlong focuses on the history of the cassowary at European courts and a description of its outward appearance. One could say that Perrault's report contains material of two types: one part is the latest style of new scientific investigation; the other part is in the old Renaissance tradition of describing collected curios from the Hapsburg troves. Qianlong's editing makes very clear that he is much more interested in the material from the older tradition. This material records how the cassowary's history brought it into contact with various royal houses each time it appeared in Europe. The interest among European collectors in owning this exotic bird was still strong even in the 18th century: The renowned French animal painter Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686-1755) painted portraits of the stars of Louis XV's Versailles menagerie. His series of nine life-sized portraits of Versailles animals includes one cassowary (fig. 15).⁹¹ This cassowary portrait was later used in a variety of formats: woven into a rug,⁹² and even incorporated into building decoration. In 1743, the French architect Alexandre-François Desportes (1661-1743) placed the cassowary and other exotic birds in a mural over the lintel of a door in Château de Choisy, one of the royal family's residences not far from Paris.⁹³ The cassowary was thus not just a subject for scientific illustrators. It became a motif widely appreciated in Europe, and with strong historical connections to royalty.

90 Mission Catholique des Lazaristes à Pékin, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque du Pè-T'ang* no. 2050, 599.

91 The cassowary kept by Louis XIV was dead by this time. It is not known whether Oudry drew from a preserved specimen or whether Louis XV had obtained another live cassowary. See Morton, *Oudry's Painted Menagerie: Portraits of Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 119-123, 136-137.

92 See Morton, *Oudry's Painted Menagerie*, 136.

93 Xavier Salmon, "The Duke and the Cassowary: the Animals by Jean-Baptiste Oudry," in *The Magazine of Franco Maria Ricci* 126 (2004): 69-86.



Fig. 15: From Mary Morton ed., *Oudry's Painted Menagerie: Portraits of Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 137.

Ever since the first cassowary arrived in Europe in 1597, it had been an important part of the collections of the greatest European monarchs; and research on the cassowary traces out the course of the major trends in European scientific thinking. The links with royalty did not weaken with the changes in scientific approach: in the 18th century the cassowary remained a favourite royal motif. Qianlong would have known a certain amount of this history, so bearing this in mind, we cannot but be curious about the relationship between this tradition and the images of the *emo* bird produced at the Qing court: a wall painting, an album leaf and two hanging scrolls. For his text, Qianlong chose a European source; so what factors affected his choice of images? Was there a connection with Europe in the images as well? And what meaning did this connection have in the context of the Qing court?

The construction of universal scientific knowledge

The Qing court produced at least four images of cassowaries, but only two remain extant: a two leaf addition to the *Album of Birds*, completed on the 22nd of the 6th, 1774, and inserted into the book on the 27th; and the scroll *Emo Birds* painted

by Yang Dazhang around the 19th of the 10th, 1782. In this section we address the images themselves: how did the European source materials relate to images produced in a different context? The answer to this question will offer us a window on how knowledge from Europe was transformed and used in the Qing court.

The two leaf insert for the *Album of Birds* completed on the 22nd of the 6th, 1774, was the first image of an *emo* bird produced in the Qing court, finished even before the painting by Ignaz Sichelbarth commissioned on the 16th of the 4th, 1774. In the image, the cassowary is in the foreground, drawn from the side. Its feet are slightly parted, clearly showing the two thick legs and claws. Its head and body are held almost upright, and there are no additional signs of movement or unusual posture. The cassowary appears calm, rational and orderly - much more so than the riot of flowers on the right and the weeds in the background behind a rock on the left. This choice is very much at odds with all of China's traditional genres: bird paintings, encyclopaedia figures, and illustrations of herbal materia medica. An example is *Six Cranes* (fig. 16),⁹⁴ a painting of the *Six Cranes* theme created by Huang Quan, a five dynasties-era painter. This painting is attributed to the Song emperor Huizong. In order to capture the spirit of the crane, the painting shows it in six separate poses. The second pose, *jinglu* 警露 (alert for cold weather), is similar to our *emo* bird in its *Album of Birds* entry, but the crane's head is raised, its beak slightly open, its legs slightly bent. It looks like a bird in motion, quite unlike the feeling of stillness in our *emo* bird. Qianlong compared the cassowary with the *shile* bird from the *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms*, so it is also instructive to look at that image. The painter frames a space for the *shile* bird with a tree on the left and a rock beneath it. These background objects seem very flat and lifeless; the dynamic element in this picture is the *shile* bird itself, raising its left leg. This mobile, dynamic feel is the focus of the picture. Or compare the picture of a *tuoniao* (fig. 17) in the *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (Compendium of Materia Medica) (reproduced in the Four Treasuries):⁹⁵ the artist has attempted to depict this bird, which he had never seen, by drawing massive legs and a bird's body. This peculiar creature seems to be an impossible combination of features, but the vivid sketching and the wings apparently just spreading make it feel quite lifelike. This technique of using posture and movement to convey a lifelike feel were typical in the Ming-Qing tradition of bird paintings. The tradition had started much earlier: from Huang Quan's six crane postures to

94 For more information on the six crane motif, see Ogawa Hiromitsu 小川裕充. "Kō Sen rokkaku-zu hekiga to sono keifu (ue)(ge)- Setsu Shoku, Kō Sen, Kō Kyosai kara Ku-ron ichigō Ryōbo Sen-kakuzu hekiga o hete Kisō, Chō Hakushuku, Mokukeyi, Ō Shinhō, Setsu ha, Sesshu, Kano ha made," *Kokka*, vol. 1165 (1992); 1297 (2003): p. 7-22; 7-25

95 See Li Shizhen, *Bencao gangmu*, juan 2-2, 3a, in *Siku*, vol. 772, 276

the Ming Dynasty *Lingmao pu* 翎毛譜 (Album of Plumage) by Gao Song, with its *Birds in Eleven Postures*, *Songbird in Nine Postures*, *Sleeping Bird in Twelve Postures*, *Birds Feeding in Fourteen Postures*, *Flocking Birds in 23 Postures*, etc.⁹⁶ Birds are represented and differentiated not so much by their physical characteristics as by their postures. During the Ming-Qing, natural history illustrators drew on this painting tradition, so their illustrations shared with the earlier paintings a variety of posture and movement.⁹⁷

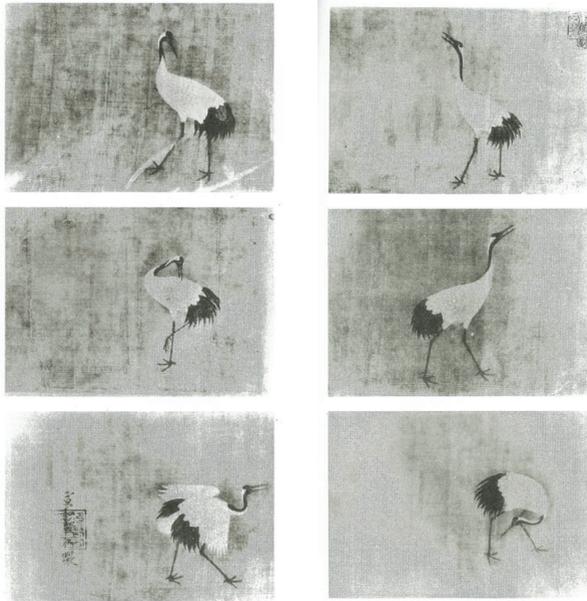


Fig. 16: After Song Huizong, *Liu he tu* 六鶴圖 (Six Cranes). Hand Scroll. Reproduced as fig. 4 in Ogawa Hiromitsu

96 Gao Song, *Lingmao pu*, in Wu Shuping, *Zhongguo lidai huapu huibian*, vol. 13, 371-484

97 Historians have found that prior to the Tang Dynasty, there was no clear division between illustrations and artistic paintings. Even in the Ming-Qing, many official writings on materia medica were produced by court painters. They developed a style which has been called “artistic illustration”, and which remained closely linked to prevailing styles of painting. See Zheng Jinsheng, “Bencao chatu de yanbian: jian tan bencao chatu zhong de xieshi yu yishu wenti”, in *Yao lin waishi*, 219-251; Zheng Jinsheng, “Lun bencao shu zhong de xieshi chatu yu yishu chatu”, in Wan Shumin and Luo Weiqian (Lo, Vivienne), *Xingxiang zhongyi: Zhongguo lishi tuxiang yanjiu*, 83-89.



Fig. 17: From *Compendium of Materia Medica*, p. 291.

The calm and closely observed depiction of the cassowary in the *Album of Birds* differs from the traditions of bird paintings and illustrations. However, it is not unique among Qing court drawings. In fact, this style had already appeared in the *Album of Birds* itself. For example, in volume one, the illustrator of the common crane (fig. 18)⁹⁸ places the crane in the extreme foreground, and has a stream in the background disappearing into the distance. This composition creates a depth to the picture. The background is also noticeably livelier than the crane itself, with wild flowers and grass sprouting in all directions, while the crane seems relatively still. The focus of the picture is on rendering the texture and physical details of the bird's body. The common crane and a group of similar "new style" images in the *Album of Birds* are very different to the more traditional style images which make up the bulk of the book. The entries for phoenix (fig. 19), *luan* (another mythical bird), crane and many other birds show their subjects with raised heads and open mouths, or drinking water, or interacting in pairs... These images and their composition mainly follow the

⁹⁸ *Album of Birds*, vol. 1, 30

format of the bird drawings in the *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms* (fig. 20) and the *Compendium of Materia Medica*. Despite being in colour, they do little to indicate texture, depth, or light and shade. By contrast, the new style images in the *Album of Birds* show the birds in poses reminiscent of the style of zoological illustrations in 17th century Europe. For example, Perrault reports on a bird named the *Demoiselle de Numidie* (fig. 21). The artist draws the bird in the extreme foreground, while the background is greatly shrunken in perspective to create a great sense of depth. The image is monochrome, but the volume and texture of the bird's body is suggested through use of chiaroscuro, giving the picture a tactile quality, almost to the level of a trompe l'oeil. Returning to the cassowary in the *Album of Birds*, its rounded crest and hanging wattles remind us of the illustration by Clusius. That picture was reprinted in Johnstone's volume on birds, which was very widely circulated. Both Clusius' and Johnstone's books were in the Beitang library. Though there may well have been a live model for some stage of the drawing of the cassowary, the composition and schema of the picture were probably based closely on the picture by Clusius.

A second notable feature of the Qing court's images of cassowaries is the technique used. All of the new style pictures in the *Album of Birds* are painted using the a European fusion technique developed at the Qing court under Giuseppe Castiglione. It is a style that incorporates elements of European painting into Chinese practice, characterised by rich and intensive rendering of colour and texture to create a high visual impact. In the picture of the cassowary, the brush marks are almost invisible. The silky white feathers on the bird's rounded head seem to shine; the wattles are a high-gloss red; the cylindrical neck is a bright blue, speckled with white to represent its sheen; the body is covered in fluffy feathers and its shape closely described. Even the legs are precisely drawn, with light and shade indicating the knobby joints and the roughness of the skin. This "realist" image is highly physical and textured; it has volume; it is even tactile. Regardless of whether the image was drawn from life, or whether it is one hundred percent accurate, the level of detail and the use of chiaroscuro mean that the image conveys much more information than would be possible with text alone. For example, the text of the *Inscription* says merely that the "head is green, the neck jade"; the term *jade* (cui 翠) in Chinese is ambiguous between green and blue. But the painting precisely recreates the cassowary's distinctive cobalt blue neck, even though the artist(s) failed to realise that the bird's neck is bare, and drew blue feathers rather than the rough skin that actually carries the blue colour. Similarly, the bird's body is described in the text as having feathers "like a bear's or a boar's, several inches long" (彷彿熊豕長數寸), but the artist shows them as very realistic down, soft as a child's toy. This may not be strictly

accurate - in reality, cassowaries have long, hard feathers - but it demonstrates that the representation in the painting differs from that in the text. Thus the use of “realist” western technique to paint the cassowary means that the picture offers a physical description of the cassowary which goes beyond what the text provides. It makes a reader who has never seen a cassowary in the flesh feel as though they can gain a real sense of its appearance, feel and volume. It makes this creature “real” in a visual way.

Painting natural history illustrations in this style was revolutionary. A glance at the shile bird in the *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms* (fig. 5), cited as a comparison by Qianlong, reveals the differences. The woodcut of the shile bird shows it in profile, like the cassowary; and it is also placed against a simple background to highlight the appearance of this exotic fowl. However, the image of the shile bird is monochrome; its feathers are represented only symbolically, using a scale pattern; the outcropping on its head is drawn like an auspicious cloud symbol. Were it not for the explanatory text (“It is multi-coloured, with a ochre beak and scarlet head, and has a crest” (其狀五色，丹喙赤首，有冠)), a reader looking only at the image would never realise that the bird’s beak and head are red, and that the form on its head is a crest. The image here is not an independent medium for conveying information; it is merely an extension or addendum to the text.⁹⁹ This observation is consistent with recent conclusions by some historians researching illustrations in traditional medical texts.¹⁰⁰ They argue that traditional natural history illustrations primarily served the purpose of distinguishing between various materia medica. Therefore, it did not matter how abstract or how simplified the images were as long as they showed some conventionalised characteristics or easily recognized canonical features. The truth of these kinds of images lies in their philological relationship with the traditional images or texts, rather than their visual relationship with reality.¹⁰¹

99 This is consistent with the findings of Hui Side. See Hu Side (Roel Sterckx), “Chatu de juxian: cong Guo Pu dao Li Shizhen de dongwu chatu,” in Wan Shumin, and Luo Weiqian ed., *Xingxiang zhongyi*, 79.

100 There has been increasing interest in the illustration of materia medica among medical historians in recent years. For information on the development of materia medica illustrations, see Zheng Jinsheng, “Bencao chatu de yanbian”, in *Yaolin Waishi*, 219-251; “Lun bencao shu zhong de xieshi chatu yu yishu chatu,” 83-89; Zheng Jinsheng, “Mingdai huajia caise bencao chatu yanjiu,” 65-117; Georges Métaillé, “The Representation of Plants: Engravings and Paintings,” in Francasca Bray, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, Georges Métaillé eds., *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China: The Warp and the Weft*, 487-520. For discussion of the relationship between materia medica illustrations and reality, see Hu Side, “Chatu de juxian,” in Wanand Luo, *Xingxiang zhongyi*, 70-82; Wang Shumin, Vivienne Lo *Xingxiang zhongyi: Jhongguo lishih tustiang yanjiu*; Chen Yuenpeng, “Chuantong bowu zhishi li de ‘zhenshih’ yu ‘xiangxiang’: yi xijiao yu xiniu wei zhuti de gean yanjiu,” *Guoli zhengzhi daxue lishixue bao*, no.33 (May, 2010) 1-82.

101 See Chen Yuenpeng, “Chuantong bowu zhishi li de ‘zhenshih’ yu ‘xiangxiang,’” 50.



Fig. 18: Yu Sheng 余省 and Zhang Weibang 張為邦. *Xiao hui he* 小灰鶴 (Common Crane), *Album of Birds* vol. 1, leaf 7. 1761. *Album Leaves*, colour on silk. 41.1 x 44.1cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 19: Yu Sheng 余省 and Zhang Weibang 張為邦. *Feng* 鳳 (Phoenix), *Album of Birds* vol. 1, leaf 7. 1761. *Album Leaves*, colour on silk. 41.1 x 44.1cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 20: Feng 鳳 (Phoenix). From *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms*, p. 2155.

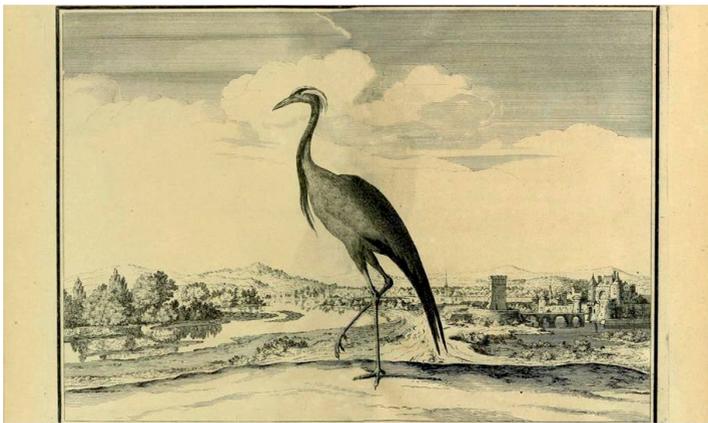


Fig. 21: From *Académie Royale des Sciences ed., Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences*, vol. Tom 3 Part 2 (1666-1699), II partie, PL 35, page 1.

The new “realist” style natural history illustration took a different stance. The reality this approach references is the text-external real world, not the established textual tradition. Of course, illustrators were not always successful at achieving a perfect representation of the real world, but the switch from text-oriented illustration to external reality-oriented illustration brought a change in the information that pictures communicated. Realist images have a much greater information density, and this forced illustrators to seek or create further sources of information, which they could then depict and convey through their images. Realist images give the reader a sense of seeing the subject with their own eyes, and convey much information that is not, or could not be, encoded in text. Thus the images become independent of the text, sources of information in their own right. They became important tools for the construction of knowledge.

Is the image of the *emo* bird in the *Album of Birds* really a construction of knowledge? To fully understand the image, we must consider not just the features of the image itself, but also the image in its context in the *Album of Birds*. When Qianlong decided to insert the *emo* bird into the book, it had been complete for thirteen years. Qianlong’s determination to add the *emo* bird must be connected to the original reasons for compiling the *Album of Birds*. Therefore, we must understand the purpose of the *Album of Birds* before we can properly discuss the nature of the *emo* bird image.

The full title of the *Album of Birds* is: *Yu Sheng Zhang Weibang he mo Jiang Tingxi niao pu* 余省張為邦合摹蔣廷錫鳥譜 (Album of Birds by Yu Sheng and Zhang Weibang after Jiang Tingxi). It is in 12 volumes, of which the first four are preserved at the National Palace Museum in Taipei, the subsequent eight in Beijing. Each volume has 30 leaves, except the last, which has 32. Each leaf has an image on the right and text on the left, with text in both Chinese and Manchu. A total of 361 birds are described. However, the original plan for the *Album of Birds* included just 360 birds. The book was ordered by Qianlong in Qianlong 15 (1750), and was completed in 1761 after 11 years of compilation. When Qianlong decided in 1774 to insert the cassowary into the book, it became the 361st bird in its contents, and the only addition to the volume since this eleven year project was completed.

The final volume of the *Album of Birds* has an afterword signed by several of the senior courtiers of Qianlong’s day: Fuheng 傅恆, Liu Tongxun 劉統勛, Zhaohui 兆惠, Arigun 阿里衮, Liu Lun 劉綸, Shu Hede 舒赫德, Agui 阿桂, and Yu Minzhong 于敏中.¹⁰² This afterword states that the intention for the *Album*

102 Ruan Yuan ed., *Jingyin midian zhulin shiqu baoji xubian*, vol. 4, 1893-1894.

of *Birds* was that it should contain all birds from the highest heavens down to the sea, and that it “groups them by type” (各以類聚). It goes on to say that the bird’s features (shape, feathers, calls, diet, etc.) are identified in order to record the “produce of the tributaries” (職方之產). When complete, the book was to be “a resource for ordering and tending the world; an aid to gathering knowledge” (對時育物之資，博考洽聞之助). The term “tributaries” (zhifang, 職方) comes from a job title named in the *Offices of Summer* section of the *Rites of Zhou*: “Overseer of Feudatories” (職方氏). The duties of this position were:

Responsible for maps of the world under heaven, so that one may better control the world under heaven; identifying the boroughs and townships of its kingdoms and principalities and the four Yi peoples, the eight Man, the seven Min, the nine Mo, the five Rong, and the six Di; and the quantities and importance of their commodities, the nine grains, and six livestock; fully understanding their interests and their threats.¹⁰³

掌天下之圖，以掌天下之地，辨其邦國都鄙四夷、八蠻、七閩、九貉、五戎、六狄之人民，與其財用九穀、六畜之數要，周知其利害

That is to say, the officers of the tributaries were tasked with comprehending all of the information in the “world under heaven” which the Son of Heaven ruled: its lands, its products, its peoples, its creatures, etc., etc. The *Album of Birds* is a record of the “produce of the tributaries”: information was to be collected on all birds found in the world, so that the ruler could “fully understand their needs and their problems”, and to serve as a reference for the “ordering and tending the world” and a tool for “gathering knowledge”. Thus, the *Album of Birds* is not an arbitrary collection of birds. On some level, its contents were to reflect the scope and the features of the “world under heaven” ruled by Qianlong. Qianlong needed this information to understand the things in his world, and thus “order and tend the world” and rule as a true sage.

The *Album of Birds* was based on an older version kept at the court, the *Album of Birds* by Jiang Tingxi. However, “It has been carefully read so that every single error of naming and mistake in the sounds has been found and meticulously corrected, from beginning to end” (凡名之譌者，音之舛者，悉於幾餘，披閱舉示，復詳勘釐說正並，識其始末); and great courtiers such as Fuhen were invited to “translate the text into Manchu” (以國書譯圖說). It would take a separate monograph to give a full account of the production of Qianlong’s *Album of Birds*, from the planning, the use of the old Album,

103 Zheng Xuan (Han), Jia Gongyan (Tang) ed., *Zhou li zhu shu*, Juan 33, 13a, in *Siku*, vol. 90, 601.

and the selection and editing of material to the execution and involvement of each court department. However, it is clear that the form of the *Album of Birds* represents some notable innovations in terms of the ordering and categorisation of its subjects. These innovations arose out of a critique of the existing Chinese tradition of zoological writing. For example, the afterword explicitly criticises the “lacunae” (闕疑莫考) in the chapter on birds in the *Erya* 爾雅, an encyclopaedia dating from the pre-Han; it also complains that works such as Lu Ji’s 陸機 *Shi shu guangyao* 詩疏廣要 (Various Commentaries on the Book of Odes) and Zhang Hua 張華’s annotated *Qin jing* 禽經 (Book of Fowl) are often simply copies of earlier writings. Such copies, it says, are “buried in the mud of antiquity; they cannot be applied in our time” (蓋泥於古，則無以證今). For the editors of the *Album of Birds*, these traditional works of natural history “do not capture the likeness” (肖形未備), and reveal a “lack of close observation” (格致無徵).¹⁰⁴ These criticisms demonstrate that empirical examination of real birds is extremely important in the *Album of Birds*. This is further backed up by information in the *Archives* on the production of the *Album of Birds*.

Reading the *Archives*, we discover that beginning in Qianlong 15 (1750), Minister Fuhén, scholar of the Hall of Preserving Harmony (保和殿) and Grand Secretary of the Grand Council (軍機處), began collecting specimens of birds from around the empire and delivering them to the Department of Painting (畫院處) “so that their likeness can be painted and included in the *Album of Birds*” (照樣畫下入《鳥譜》). Fuhén used the authority of the Grand Council to accomplish this.¹⁰⁵ On the 8th of the 5th, 1753, the *Archives* for the Department of Painting tells us that the model supplied for a painting is a “bird skin” (鳥皮); this very likely means that the painting was done from life. The *Album of Birds* was not the first work to employ this empirical approach, nor was this the first time the machinery of state had been used to collect subjects and specimens. During the Tang Dynasty, when the emperor Gaozong commissioned Xu Jingzong and others to compile the *Xin xiu bencao* 新修本草 (Newly Revised Materia Medica), he commanded them to “collect the medicines produced in all the shires and counties of the world, and draw pictures of them” (徵天下郡縣所出藥物，並書圖之).¹⁰⁶ The *Bencao tu jing* 本草圖經 (Book of Illustrations of Material Medica), completed in 1061 by the Northern Song official Su Song, was similarly supported: an order was

104 See note 102.

105 See “Hauyuan chu (畫院處)”, *Huojidang*, 1750, 21st of the 4st; 26st of the 6st; 1753, 8st of the 5st; 4th of the 6st. In *Zonghui*, vol. 17, 329, 330, 331; vol. 19, 499, 501.

106 Wang Pu, *Tang hui yao*, Juan 82, 21b-22a, in *Siku*, vol. 607, 253-254.

sent from the court for specimens and drawings to be delivered from around the empire to Beijing, “to serve as models for materia medica drawings for the compilation of a book of illustrations” (以憑照證，畫成本草圖，並別撰圖經).¹⁰⁷ However, by the Ming Dynasty, this tradition had petered out. Only one book on material medica was produced by the Ming court: the *Yu zuan bencao pinhui jingyao* 御纂本草品彙精要 (Emperor’s Essential Categories of Materia Medica) in 42 volumes, completed in 1505. There was no nationwide call for specimens or images for this book. It was simply a product of collaboration between the court physicians, court pharmacists and court painters. It was produced over the course of just a year and a half by copying and editing the illustrations in the Song Dynasty *Book of Illustrations of Material Medica*, with the addition of only a few new drawings.¹⁰⁸ Thus the *Album of Birds* can be seen as a revival of the older, Tang-Song tradition of using state resources and empirical observation.

However, it is important to note that the use of models and life drawing does not necessarily imply that an image will be an independent construction capable of conveying information, like the birds drawn in the “new style” in the *Album of Birds*. Even when materia medica illustrations were drawn from life, the primary purpose of illustrations was to allow the pharmacist to distinguish between different medicinal plants, so the illustrations tended to focus on only part of the plant; with the result that the proportions of the full plant are often inaccurate. Unless the artist possesses a considerable level of draughtsmanship, the drawing inevitably became a mere annex to the text.

The only work that bears real comparison with the *Album of Birds* are the paintings by Huizong’s Painting Academy documenting auspicious objects and signs: for example, *Wu se yingwu* 五色鸚鵡 (Five-coloured Parakeet) (fig. 22), *Xiang long shi* 祥龍石 (Auspicious Dragon Rock), and *Rui he tu* 瑞鶴圖 (Auspicious Cranes). These paintings feel extremely physical, both in their intensive renderings and texture, an effect used here to convey the sense that these auspicious events really did happen.¹⁰⁹ The paintings have no background or text, but the highly memetic technique developed by Huizong’s Department of Painting is sufficient to produce a sense that the objects depicted are “real.”

107 See Su Song, “Tu jing bencao zou chi,” in *Congxiu zhenghe jing shi zheng lei beiyong bencao*, vol. 30, 548..

108 For research on the sources of images in the *Yu Zuan Bencao Pinhui Jingyao* (Emperor’s Essential Categories of Materia Medica), see Zheng Jingsheng, “Mingdai huajia caise bencao chatu yanjiu”, *Xin shixue* 14, no.4 (February, 2003): 65-117.

109 For information on the context of realist painting during the Huizong reign, see Wang Zhenghua (Wang Chenghua), “Tingqin tu de zhengzhi yihan: Huizong chao yuanhua fengge yu yi yi wangluo,” *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 5 (1998): 77-122.



Fig. 22: Song Huizong 宋徽宗. *Wu se yingwu* 五色鸚鵡 (*Five-coloured Parakeet*). Hand Scroll. Colour on silk. 53.3 x 125.1cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

There are differences between the Huizong paintings and the illusionistic style used in the *Album of Birds*, but the mechanisms for creating reality in images are extremely similar. What is unusual is that the Qing court applied this illusionistic style to the painting of illustrations in a work of natural history. Early works of natural history such as the *Bo wu zhi* 博物志 (Records of Myriad Things), written by Zhang Hua 張華 during the Western Jin, or *Book of Fowl*, attributed to Shi Kuang 師曠, active in the Spring and Autumn period, did not have illustrations. Li Shihens' *Compendium of Materia Medica*, written during the Ming Dynasty, only had illustrations added later – and not by the author, but by his publishers, for marketing purposes.¹¹⁰ Unlike those works, the images in the *Album of Birds* are given equal space on the page with the text. In combination with the mimetic style of illustration, this means that the images play an unprecedentedly important role in conveying information and constructing the reader's knowledge of the birds.¹¹¹

Another important innovation in the *Album of Birds* is in its structure. Like many other traditional Chinese encyclopaedias, the *Album of Birds* begins with the phoenix and the *luan*, two mythical birds symbolising the emperor and his consort, the origin, and the pinnacle of the social hierarchy. But these myths aside, the Japanese researcher Akira Yanagisawa has found that the *Album of Birds* categorises real birds by their external appearance and their distinctive features. Many related species of bird are grouped together. For

110 See Georges Métaillé, "The Representation of Plants: Engravings and Paintings," in Francesca Bray et al. ed., *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China: The Warp and the Welf*, 487-520.

111 For discussion of the place of images in construction of knowledge in China, see Francesca Bray, *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China: The Warp and the Welf*.

example, magpies are shown in two entries: the northern magpie and the (southern) magpie. Four different types of crested myna are identified and distinguished from one another by their colouration. This categorisation based on appearance is conceptually very close to the modern scientific practice of labelling animals by species, subspecies and variant.¹¹² It is not a practice seen in traditional Chinese natural histories or leishu reference works, nor is it seen in manuals on bird painting. For example, traditional painting manuals such as the Ming Dynasty *Album of Plumage* by Gao Song group birds according to their posture. The use of the more objective criteria of the birds' appearance and distinctive features is referred to in the afterword, which tells us that the book "groups them by type".

The text in the *Album of Birds* also gives descriptions of unprecedented length and detail. There are philological references to past literature, but most of the text is devoted to original descriptions of the birds' external appearance. Comparison with traditional natural histories (*Records of Myriad Things* by Zhang Hua; *Book of Fowl* by Zhou Shikuang; *Compendium of Materia Medica* by Li Shizhen; *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms* by Wang Qi) shows that the *Album of Birds* presents a better-supported categorisation of its subject; wide ranging quotation of existing literature; and descriptions of some birds which go into far more detail than previous traditional works.

The *Album of Birds* represents an attempt to adumbrate all birds in the "world under heaven", so that the sage king could "order and tend" it. The "world under heaven" which the book aimed to cover was not an abstract concept. While the Grand Council collected specimens from throughout the empire, they also took care to include birds from other countries which had been brought to China by boat or sent as tribute. This was in stark contrast to traditional literature, which shows no interest at all in the barbarian lands beyond the borders of civilisation.¹¹³

Recent scholars have suggested that the introduction of western knowledge of geography during the Ming and Qing rocked the traditional China-centric view of the world; Chinese thought underwent a classic transition from seeing a single "world under heaven" (天下) to recognising a "myriad nations" (萬國).¹¹⁴ This change is reflected in the *Album of Birds*: where the *Collected*

112 Akira Yanagisawa, "Kokyūhakubutsuin kura Mitsuru Kan gappeki "Choufu" ni tsuite," *Manzoku-shi kenkyū*, 3 (2004): 18-39.

113 For discussion of the traditional Chinese cosmology, see Gan Huaizhen (Kan Huai-chen) ed. *Dongya lishi shang de tianxia yu zhongguo gainnian*, particularly the introduction.

114 See Ge Zhaoguang, "Zuwei sixiangshi de gu yutu", particularly the section 'Cong tianxia dao

Illustrations of the Three Realms represents the traditional view of “all the birds under heaven” without attempting to distinguish between different geographical regions, the *Album of Birds* presents instead the “birds of the myriad nations”. Unlike previous natural histories, this book is not an ethical representation of the world, divided into China and the barbarian; nor is it a random collection of information; rather, it is systematic account of birds, focusing on the birds of China, but also including information on those species which had come to China from other countries.

At the same time, it does not uncritically accept all the imaginary birds ascribed to foreign lands in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (Book of Mountains and Oceans, an ancient mythic geography). There is no three headed, six legged *changfu* 鶩鳩,¹¹⁵ no one legged *tuofei* 橐蜚 with a bird’s body and a human face.¹¹⁶ With the exception of the phoenix and the luan 鸞, the information collected in the *Album of Birds* emphasises empirical, first-hand description. Using images which are independent sources of information gives the reader the sense that these birds exist beyond the textual tradition. The book presents a world of birds which exists in reality, and which can be comprehended.

Of course, we know today that the number and types of birds listed in the *Album of Birds* fall far short of a comprehensive description of our planet’s birds. And it is true that the ultimate purpose of the book was to support the emperor’s ethical goal of perfect rule. But if we look at the *Album of Birds* within its context, we see many innovations in its attempt to give a complete account of the “produce of the tributaries”. The categorisation by objective criteria; the images with information independent of the text; the criticism of past literature; the external orientation and use of first-hand observation... These features make the *Album of Birds* an attempt to construct knowledge which transcends ethical approaches, and give a systematic overview of the birds of the myriad nations.

But what special features did the emo bird have which made it imperative in 1774 to insert it into a book that had been completed thirteen years previously? *The Album of Birds* already had several entries similar to the emo bird pages. There are entries in which the style and composition of the illustrations was a strongly western-hybrid; and there are entries describing imported species such

wanguo’, in Kan Huaichen ed., *Dongya lishi shang de tianxia yu zhongguo gainnian*, 217-254; Jin Guantao, Liu Qingfeng, “Cong ‘tianxia’, ‘wanguo’ dao ‘shijie’: wan Qing minzuzhuyi xingcheng de zhongjian huanjie”, *Ershiyi shiji shuangyuekan* 94 (2006): 40-53.

115 Guo Pu, *Shanhai jing*, *Juan* 1, 3a, in *Siku*, vol. 1042, 5.

116 See note 115.

as the “foreign green parrot” (洋綠鸚鵡), the “foreign chicken” (洋雞), and the “foreign duck” (洋鴨). The only unique feature of the *emo* bird entry is its translated text from Europe. The other foreign birds, even though from foreign lands, are all described with information and knowledge produced in China. If we accept that the purpose of the *Album of Birds* was to create comprehensive knowledge of every living bird under a sage king’s rule, then apparently, for the Qianlong Emperor and his team, not only birds from the West, but also knowledge from the West, played an indispensable part in forming this scope. Most importantly, by adding the leaves on the *emo* bird, even just for one single entry, the knowledge and information produced in the European Age of Discovery entered the Qing Chinese court and broadened the scope of Qianlong’s “resource for ordering and tending the world” symbolically and significantly to a global level.

Signs of heaven’s favour: a new narrative

If the *emo* bird entry in the *Album of Birds* represents an almost modern, scientific approach to “knowledge”, then the *Emo Birds* painted eight years later by Yang Dazhang is a reintegration of this apparently “objective,” “scientific” construction of reality with the Chinese pictorial tradition of paintings and descriptions of auspicious signs – semi-miraculous events that demonstrate heaven’s endorsement of the emperor’s rule. This is the other side of the image of the *emo* bird.

The painting is 149.8cm high, 101cm wide. At the top is a text border of 36.5cm, containing Qianlong’s *Ten Rhymes*; at the bottom, in a 33.1cm border, is the *Inscription*, written to imperial order by Liang Guozhi 梁國治. The courtiers involved in the creation of the painting were the leading lights of the day.¹¹⁷ Yang Dazhang, the artist, was a court painter. We do not know much about his life,¹¹⁸ but a note in the *Archives* for the 4th month 1765 tells us that he came from Anhui; that Qianlong met him on his fourth southern tour, when

117 Liang Guozhi was a Scholar of East Court and member of the Grand Council, and was one of Qianlong’s chief writers. He had been one of the editors of the *Four Treasuries*, and was one of the “three Liangs” (with Liang Tongshu, Liang Yan), three courtiers of the same surname who worked on many of Qianlong’s major literature projects. For example, Liang Guozhi contributed to the account of the authentication of Qianlong’s two copies of the celebrated Yuan Dynasty painting *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, by Huang Gongwang. His co-authors on that account were other senior courtiers: Liu Yong, Cao Wenzhi, Peng Yuanrui, Wang Jie, Jin Shisong, and Dong Gao. See *Gugong shuhua tulu*, vol. 17, 289-296.

118 In the *Guochao hua zhenglu*, he is listed only as “painting people, objects, flowers, and birds” (工人物花鳥). See Zhang Geng, *Guochao hua zhenglu*, reprinted in Chou Chunfu ed., *Qingdai zhuanji congkan*, vol. 71, 281.

Yang received the emperor in Yangzhou,¹¹⁹ and subsequently awarded him a position in the Hall of Fulfilment 如意館; and that he was granted the same compensation as Jin Tingbiao 金廷標, an artist who had entered court service in 1757. Jin Tingbiao had won plaudits from the emperor in 1763 for integrating Chinese and western styles: “developing an unprecedentedly perfect style which combines (Giuseppe) Castiglione and Li (Gonglin)” (以郎 (世寧) 之似合李 (公麟) 格, 爰成絕藝).¹²⁰ The order to give Yang Dazhang the same level of pay as Jin Tingbiao indicates that the emperor thought very highly of him indeed. Thus the decision to use Liang Guozhi and Yang Dazhang for the painting of *Emo Birds*, and the inclusion of a long imperial poem, demonstrates the importance of this painting to Qianlong. This was no less a work than the specially inserted entry on the *emo* bird in the *Album of Birds*.

The painting shows two large birds in a garden with magnolia and peonies. The birds have pointed crests, and oval white faces perched on top of brightly-coloured long necks. The necks are blue, decorated with elongated red spots. In the centre of each spot, and along the edge of the necks, white is used to suggest a glossy texture. Under the necks hang folds of bright red wattle. The birds' beaks are pointed, with one of the nares clearly visible. The bodies of both birds are covered by short, brown feathers. The bodies are rounded, with apparently vestigial wings, indicated only by black lines in the wings' location. These lines represent the flight feathers, one of the cassowary's defining characteristics. The painting is a riot of colour: red, yellow and purple peonies bloom; the magnolia is in full flower; the rocks are tinged with gold. Swallows dart overhead, a sparrow pecks on the ground, and wild flowers are everywhere. It is a sumptuous image. The painter has placed these exotic birds from the jungle in a beautiful Chinese garden, with blossoming flowers and skilful rockeries. Every bird in the picture is in a pair. The peony and magnolia represent a homophonic pun for wealth and splendour (玉堂富貴); the swallows and sparrows are conventional symbols for advancement and success in the imperial examinations. The picture shows a world full of symbolism and meaning.

It is interesting to note that when Qianlong wrote the *Ten Rhymes* in 1774, he specifically included the phrase “Here I will not mention the auspicious meaning of the *shile* bird” (世樂休徵瑞), and added a note to the line:

119 “Jishi lu (記事錄)” in Huoji dang, 1765, 23rd of the 4th, *Zonghui*, 29, 449-450.

120 See “Ming Jin Tingbiao mo Li Gonglin Wuma tufa hua Aiwuhan sijun yin die qianyun zuo ge” 命金廷標樵李公麟五馬圖法畫愛烏罕四駿因疊前韻作歌 (A poem in the classic style on Jin Tingbiao's painting of *Afghan Four Steeds* in the style of Li Gonglin's *Five Horses*), *Yuzhi shiji*, Juan 31, 10b-11a, in *Siku*, vol. 1305, 722.

The *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms* records a *shile* bird living on a mountain near the sea. It is multi-coloured, with a ochre beak and scarlet head, and has a crest like clouds. The *emo* bird has a crest, similar to the *shile* bird, so the people of Guangdong call it the *taiping* (great peace) bird.”¹²¹

《三才圖會》載臨海山有世樂鳥，其狀五色，丹喙赤首，有冠雲茲。額摩鳥有冠，頗與世樂鳥彷彿，廣東人因亦以太平鳥名之

The entry on the *shile* bird in the *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms* reads: “It is intelligent and will protect and avenge its owner. It is no ordinary bird.” (心聰性辯，護主報主，尤非凡禽). Moreover, “When the ruler is virtuous and the world is peaceful, the *shile* will be seen on the earth.” (王者有明德，天下太平則見). Qianlong takes pains to stress in the *Ten Rhymes* that he is not going to talk about any cosmological or political implications of the *emo* bird. It is just a coincidence, he says, that the *emo* bird has a crest like the *shile* bird. The problem is that a glance at the pictures of the cassowary and the *shile* bird reveals that they are quite different in appearance. Really, the only similarity between them is the crest, and one wonders if Qianlong is not protesting a little too much. His real aim seems to have been mapping the image and connotations of the *shile* bird to the *emo* bird. In 1774, when Qianlong wrote the *Ten Rhymes* and created the cassowary entry for the *Album of Birds*, there was a clear move away from the Chinese traditions of symbolism and political discourse in images. But in 1782, when he orders Yang Dazhang to paint *Emo Birds*, the cassowaries are pictured in Chinese garden fecund with a politicised narrative: a marvellous exotic bird travels to China to confirm the virtue of the ruler. Those political symbols which Qianlong claimed to abjure with the apparently objective representation 1774’s *Album of Birds* blossom in Yang Dazhang’s painting into a world full of beauty and happiness because of the sage virtue of its ruler.

Among the many styles in the Chinese tradition, the elements and composition of this painting are highly reminiscent of bird and flower paintings of the Ming court: the placing of the bird under a central tree in a garden, with branches framing it; the shaped rocks; the symbolic flowers and small animals. An example of a very similar work would be Lu Ji’s 呂紀 *Xinhua kongque* 杏花孔雀 (Peacock and Apricot Blossoms) (fig. 23). Very similar templates were used in Ming paintings documenting politically auspicious events, such as the *Zouyu* 騶虞圖 painted during the Yongle reign (fig. 24).¹²² The *zouyu* (a

121 *Yuzhi siji*, III, *Juan* 21, 34b, In *Siku*, *Juan* 1307, 617.

122 Two copies of this painting are held at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. The Ming court probably produced multiple copies of paintings, like the Qing, for distribution or for specific functions.

mythical tiger) is pictured among vibrant wild flowers; with pairs of birds about it; in a cultivated forest setting; and with rocks picked out in gold. It looks not like the remote part of Henan where the *zouyu* was reportedly seen, but like an exquisitely cultivated imperial garden. Despite the striking similarities in composition between the Ming Dynasty paintings and Yang Dazhang's *Emo Birds*, there are important differences as well. *Zouyu* claims to depict a real event, and the artist has painstakingly rendered each white hair on the *zouyu*'s body. However, the picture looks more like a reference to other paintings than to any real animal. It is as if one of the standard tiger templates which were common in the Ming has been incorporated wholesale into the painting. By comparison, the bizarre creatures shown in *Emo Birds* seem much more "real", not because the viewer can verify the image against a real animal, but because of the pictorial detail. The artist has painted texture and used chiaroscuro to create volume, with the result that somehow these unbelievable birds seem more likely to exist than the fairly ordinary tiger in the Ming painting. This sense of reality is key to the effect of the painting, and key to its political meaning.



Fig. 23: Lu Ji 呂記. *Xinhua Kongque* 杏花孔雀 (Peacock and Apricot Blossoms). Ming Dynasty. Hanging Scroll. Colour on silk. 203.4 x 110.6cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 24: Anonymous. *Zouyu* 驪虞圖. 1404. Hand Scroll. Colour on silk. 51.9 x 125cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

The tradition of painting auspicious signs goes back a long way in China. As early as the Northern Song (960-1127), Emperor Huizong ordered the compilation of the *Xuanhe ruilan ce* 宣和睿覽冊 (Album of Auspicious Events in the Xuanhe Reign) to document all of the wondrous signs that had been seen during the Xuanhe period of his reign. *Auspicious Cranes* (fig. 25), now in Liaoning Provincial Museum, is from that album.¹²³ Similarly, the Ming Dynasty *Zouyu* claims to document a real *zouyu* which appeared in Junzhou, Henan, during the Yongle reign. The practice continued into the Qing Dynasty: particularly from the Yongzheng period onwards, the provinces would enthusiastically report various *ruiying* 瑞應 (auspicious signs that show heaven's approval of sage rule by the emperor). The First Historical Archives has a painting of *Ruigu tu* 瑞穀圖 (Auspicious Grain) on which the emperor himself has written a commentary (fig. 26). The style of paintings of auspicious events had changed over history, but two features remain constant: First, the subject of the painting must be rare; second, the painting must persuade the

123 For more information see Peter Sturman, "Cranes above Kaifeng: the Auspicious Image at the Court of Huizong." *Ars Orientalis*, 20 (1990): 37-42.

viewer that the event really did happen. This second feature is especially important. The exotic or unusual events, objects and creatures were supposed to be signs of enlightened governance by the ruler. If such a sign were to look fake, that would directly threaten the viewer's confidence in the sign, and would constitute a challenge to the implicit message of the emperor's virtue.



Fig. 25: Song Huizong 宋徽宗. *Rui he tu* 瑞鶴圖 (*Auspicious Cranes*). Hand Scroll. Colour on silk. 51 x 138cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum.



Fig. 26: Ruigu tu 瑞穀圖 (*Auspicious Grain*). 1727. Hand Scroll. First Historical Archives. Reproduced from *First Historical Archives, Qing History Through the Emperor's Orders and Writings: Key Documents and Records that Changed the Course of Qing History* (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003), 84-5.

This concern is apparent in Yongzheng's inscription on *Auspicious Grain*.¹²⁴ Yongzheng very clearly indicates that the reason this plant is an "auspicious grain" is because it has double or multiple ears, which is extremely "rare" (罕見). This "really is a sign" (確有明徵) that it is a gift from heaven. He called for "a painting to be made to show it to every provincial governor" (著繪圖須示各省督撫等) to prove that he was not merely boasting or "exaggerating it into an auspicious sign" (誇張以為祥瑞也).

It is relatively straightforward to determine what characterises an event as "rare". Anything which is not normally seen, or which varies from the normal form would count: albino deer would be an example, or an exotic import like a giraffe, or a crop with multiple heads, as in the example above. These are common themes for paintings of auspicious events. But how could one prove these hard-to-believe sights to be real? The painting *Auspicious Cranes* shows the extraordinary sight of a flock of cranes wheeling in the sky above the Gate of Proclaiming Virtue in Kaifeng, and it bears an inscription by Huizong. Peter Sturman's detailed research into the background of this painting concludes that it uses "naturalism" as a stylistic tool, to create a virtual "reality". It is not an example of "realism", as previous scholars had suggested. Wang Cheng-hua has taken the analysis further, and examines how the "visual reality" thus created helped Huizong to present the extraordinary and auspicious reports sent from around his empire. They were recreated in a coherent, multi-layered system of symbols that served to affirm the moral and political authority of the emperor.¹²⁵ In other words, *Auspicious Cranes* uses naturalism to create a "visual reality" which actually displaces "real reality". The correctness of this visual reality is endorsed by the authority of the imperial inscription, and thus the apparent polar opposites of "extraordinary event" and "reality" are successfully yoked together. For this auspicious narrative to work, the expressive capacity of the visual image is key.

Huizong's use of naturalism to communicate the reality of auspicious signs was not typical in the Chinese tradition, and by the Ming Dynasty this style of painting had fallen out of use. *Zouyu* is executed in a meticulous style, but the painting does not carry an inscription by the emperor, and the *zouyu* itself appears stiff and formalistic. The reality of the beast is established through a long essay giving accounts by many senior officials of witnessing the miraculous event. The essay takes up fifteen times as much space on the page as the image itself. Another work in the same genre is the *Ming ren ruying tu* 明人瑞應圖 (Pictures of the Auspicious Signs of the People of Ming) (fig. 27), which describes wondrous

124 See First Historical Archives ed., *Yubi Zhaoling shuo Qingshi: Yingxiang Qingchao lishi Jincheng de zhongyao dangan wenxian*, 84-85

125 See Wang Zhenghua (Wang Cheng-hua), "Tingqintu de zhengzhi yihan," 91-101

things seen at the Ming court, and is said to have been written at the commission of Zeng Qi 曾榮, Hanlin Expositor-in-waiting and Gentleman for Fostering Virtue (*Chengde lang* 6th class official). This hand scroll has five sections, each describing a wonder: white elephant, the Yellow River running clear, a unicorn (瑞麟), a white deer, and crops with multiple ears. Each section has a picture, but these pictures are very simple, almost diagrammatic, on a blank background. The text takes up far more space than the images, and it is the text that serves as the evidence for the reality of the strange event. The visual image plays only a supporting role in this document.

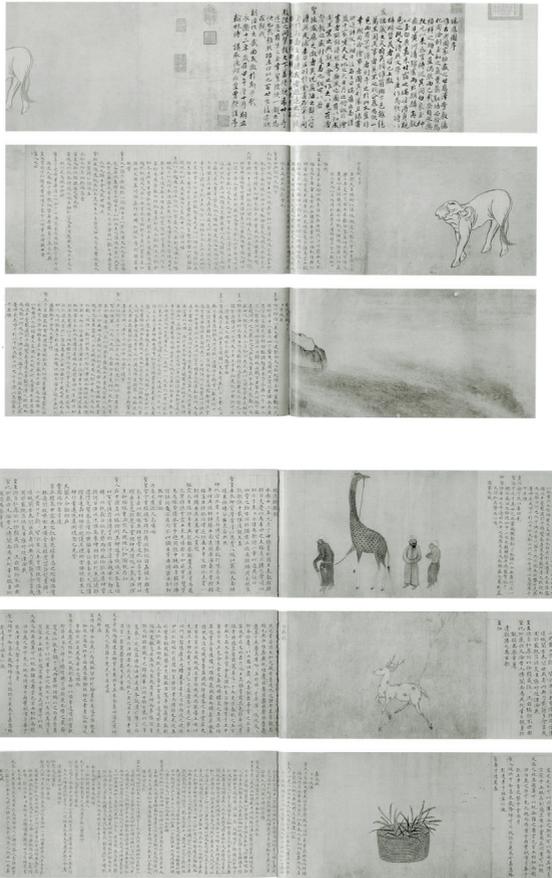


Fig. 27: Anonymous. *Ming ren ruiying tu* 明人瑞應圖 (*Pictures of the Auspicious Signs of the People of Ming*). 1414. Hand Scroll. Colour on paper: 30 x 686.3cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

By the time of the Qing Dynasty, the use of images to construct narratives of auspicious signs seems to have re-emerged. For example, we may compare the Auspicious Grain painted for Yongzheng with the section in *Pictures of the Auspicious Signs of the People of Ming* describing the same phenomenon. In *Auspicious Grain*, Castiglione's European fusion style gives each ear body and texture. The visual force of the image alone could convince viewers that they are looking at something real, almost without any textual support. The text takes up about as much room on the page as the image, and is devoted to a narrative which expresses the emperor's authority. This is all in stark contrast to the text-heavy Ming Dynasty version; in fact one could say that *Auspicious Grain* is very similar to *Auspicious Cranes*. The only difference is that the Chinese naturalist style of the Song work has been replaced by a western-influenced painting technique. Interestingly, Yongzheng makes explicit the point that the picture is evidence of the reality of the auspicious sign, that he has not "exaggerated".

Given this context, we may now return to inspect once again the *Emo Birds* of Yang Dazhang. We see the almost perfect ellipses of the cassowaries' heads; their beaks pointed like a raptor's; the neon-bright necks, twisted and with a striking contrast of red and blue; the deliberate depiction of a glossy surface on the neck, which is not present on real birds; the fluffy bodies; etc. They seem to be an unnatural combination of body parts stitched together. To a certain extent, the disjointed image of the cassowaries is a product of the highly collaborative court system for producing paintings. However, the image of a cassowary drawn for the *Album of Birds* (fig. 2) largely overcomes the problems of this system: artists coordinated to smooth the transitions between their respective contributions. For example, the white of the bird's head grades smoothly into the blue of its neck, so that the final image is fairly close to the appearance of the actual bird. Yang Dazhang seems to have deliberately adopted the opposite approach. The colours of each body part seem to be selected for maximum contrast. The red parts of the neck can be seen, on close inspection, to be made up of many tiny beads, each one of them shaded to create the impression of glossiness. The red is surrounded by an outline of blue beads. On the blue part of the neck, the artist has painted very fine rows of small feathers. The painting is full of such detail: close attention to light effects and texture, giving the image a dazzling physicality. What is puzzling is that these effects seem to have the objective of depicting "reality", yet they do not seem to correspond to any imaginable object in the physical world. For example, the shine on the birds' necks seems to be conveying to the viewer a clear sense of beaded projections; but why would a bird's neck be covered with blue and red knobbles? Yang Dazhang makes use of the western technique of chiaroscuro to create the impression of a wondrous thing that actually exists;

however, the result looks like “no ordinary bird” in the same way as the *shile* bird of the *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms*.

The remarkable appearance of the cassowaries painted by Yang Dazhang means that they fulfil the first condition of being an auspicious sign: they are certainly out of the ordinary. But how does the picture attempt to persuade us of the “reality” of this extraordinary creature?

Yang Dazhang’s *Emo Birds* follows *Auspicious Grain* in its use of western-influenced technique to create its visual effect. But it harks back to the Ming use of symbolic motifs in the background against which it places its subject. The confluence of these two stylistic approaches means that we have vivid, lively *emo* birds are placed against an ornate, artificial backdrop. While this backdrop is decorated with many auspicious symbols that thematically support the image, its artificiality perhaps detracts somewhat from the goal of showing the “reality” of the auspicious wonder.

Unusually, the *Archives* clearly recounts Qianlong’s instruction to frame the painting at top and bottom with his *Ten Rhymes* and *Inscription*. The *Ten Rhymes* is narrated in the voice of Qianlong himself, and explains how the cassowary came to the Qing court. The *Inscription* also speaks with imperial authority, but gives information about the cassowary drawn mainly from a European source. The European text was more than just another source to be quoted. Its objectivity as a third party lends credibility. The source is no longer just a book of mythology like the *Book of Mountains and Oceans*; nor is it a boastful exaggeration by the emperor.

So despite the strange appearance of the *emo* birds and their highly artificial setting, Yang Dazhang’s painting represents a convincing pictorial and textual “proof” (明徵) to any who might doubt the reality of this wonder, by using an illusionistic painting technique and also by quoting the information provided entirely by a third party. What we see here is the integration of a European text into the construction of a Chinese political discourse. Qianlong made use of a European text and European knowledge to construct a new, unassailable narrative of auspicious signs. This was a narrative that comprehended the traditional symbols and the marvellous event; and added scientific evidence from natural history. Where extraordinary birds once descended from the heavens, this detailed account has it arriving from a far-off land.

This approach brings to mind three scrolls housed in the Palace Museum in Beijing titled *Wan guo lai chao tu* 萬國來朝圖 (Myriad Nations Pay Tribute to the Court) (fig. 28). In place of the fanciful images in traditional paintings

of tributaries, these scrolls present detailed painting from life. The perspective composition shows identifiable real buildings, and the ceremonial details are consistent with records in the *Qin ding da qing hui dian* 欽定大清會典 (Imperially Endorsed Statutes of the Great Qing). The result is a painting that seems almost like a documentary recording, made on the spot as the emperor sat in state in the Hall of Supreme Harmony (太和殿) on his birthday or some other national event. Of course it cannot be a real recording: nowhere in the records can we find mention of so many foreign ambassadors visiting the palace at the same time. There are other indications of artificiality. Some of the tributes carried by the ambassadors are in fact mythical animals taken from the tradition of tribute paintings: the expanded detail (fig. 28) shows two ambassadors carrying two aos (獬, a kind of mythical creature), frequently shown in commercial copies of the popular Ming painting *Presenting Ao to the Throne*. So *the Myriad Nations Pay Tribute to the Court* presents an invented reality in which elements of reality and invention are blended together.



Fig. 28: Anonymous. *Wan guo lai chao tu* 萬國來朝圖 (*Myriad Nations Pay Tribute to the Court*). 1761. Hanging Scroll. Colour on silk. 299 x 207cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

Yang Dazhang's *Emo Birds* is a similar hybrid. The blending of reality and fiction extends into every detail: there is no binary opposition between

the two, simply multiple levels of interrogation. For example: Qianlong had indeed owned an *emo* bird; but did he have two? And were *emo* birds ever kept in a tended garden as depicted? The answers to these questions may never be known. But we can be sure that the function of the European text and the illusionistic painting style of *Emo Birds*, like the architectural accuracy of *Myriad Nations Pay Tribute to the Court*, were intended to make viewers believe in the “reality” of what it depicted. Thus the *emo* birds, like the ambassadors in *Myriad Nations Pay Tribute to the Court*, have come from afar to pay homage to Qianlong’s wise rule. In a ceremonial pair, they visit his imperial garden, where they find blemish-free blossoms, swallows and sparrows, all testament to the perfection of Qianlong’s empire. Using European fusion painting techniques, the Qing court painters created the kind of visual realism that Huizong’s academy painters had used; and they deployed a European text in a way that Huizong could never have imagined to bolster the effect. The successful conversion of the *emo* bird into a Chinese genre painting created a new kind of political narrative, unique to Qianlong.

It has been noted by recent historians that the emperors of the Northern Song would regularly take their courtiers and visiting ambassadors to view the palace’s collections of marvels, tribute objects, images and books.¹²⁶ These viewings created a space within which the political meaning of the objects could be communicated. Yongzheng’s inscription on *Auspicious Grain* also mentions that the painting will be “[show] every provincial governor that the sign has not been exaggerated into an auspicious sign”. Clearly Yongzheng’s officials were among the audience for *Auspicious Grain*. Given this context, it is safe to assume that Qianlong’s efforts to create a new style of auspicious image were not merely for his own amusement. So who was the intended audience? We do not have any direct information on who had access to *Emo Birds*, but we may consider the question on two levels: who saw the birds themselves, and who saw the images of them.

The collection and exhibition of exotic fauna occupied a very significant place in the activities of the Qing palace. For example, in 1780, the Korean ambassador Park Ji-won 朴趾源, visiting Qianlong on the occasion of his 70th birthday, wrote that carriages bearing the word “tribute” jammed the roads of the capital. These carriages were filled with treasures and rare amusements, including “precious and strange beasts from all over the world” (四海萬國奇珍怪獸). There were countless varieties of bear, fox and deer;

126 Tsukamoto Maromitsu. “Kaigaisho shōron: Hokusō sankan hikaku no bunbutsu shūshū no shiteki igi to mijutsu ni tsuite no ichi kō satsu,” *Yamato Bunka* 115 (2006): 25–40.

reindeer as large as horses and Russian dogs; and large birds, similar to the *emo* bird.¹²⁷ Rare creatures entered the palace as tribute; and the palace's matchless menagerie was often shown off in the course of diplomacy. During the reign of Kangxi, Gao Shiqi 高士奇 wrote that an aviary was kept next to the Purple Light Pavilion (紫光閣), housing all kind of "strange and exotic beasts and fowls, such as peacocks, *jinqianji*, five-coloured parakeets, cranes, pheasants, ferrets, shulisun (Eurasian lynx),¹²⁸ seals..."¹²⁹ (奇禽異獸如孔雀、金錢雞、五色鸚鵡、白鶴、文雉、貂鼠、舍狸、海豹之類). By Qianlong's time, Korean ambassadors saw this aviary as one of the wonders of the palace, and it is frequently mentioned in the various *Yeonhaeng-rok* (燕行錄) histories written by Korean missions.¹³⁰ Qianlong also wrote many poems on his menagerie, many of them still extant. This poetry shows clearly that the collection and exhibition of animals was highly political. In 1751, the Mongolian Bilig-un dalai lama 蒙古台吉必力滾達賴 (a Buddhist cleric) presented Qianlong with a white roe deer. In his poem on the occasion, Qianlong states explicitly that it is a "supernatural animal" (靈獸): "It is not necessary to look it up in the *Album of Beasts*, My poem on this beast proves that we are prosperous and peaceful."¹³¹ (無須稽《獸譜》，永此驗祥經). The presentation of animals to the Qing court, and the court's ownership of them, showed that the empire was happy and that the entire world bowed to the court.

When ambassadors were invited to view the menagerie, they also understood the implicit political message. In 1790, at the celebrations of his 80th birthday, Qianlong ordered the eunuchs to bring out a large white reindeer (麕) sent to him by Songchun, General of Mukden. Grand Councillor Agui was instructed to lead each ambassador forward to view the animal, and to ask on behalf of the emperor, "Do you have this animal in your country?" The Korean ambassador Seo Ho-su 徐浩修 gave the appropriate diplomatic response: "Our marginal bit of coast could not possibly have

127 Park Ji-won (樸趾源 박지원), *Yeolha ilgi*, 576-577

128 I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

129 See Gao Shiqi, *Jiniao tuishi biji*, Juan 1, 17a-b, in *Siku*, vol. 588, 401.

130 For example, when Seo Ho-su came to Beijing in 1790 to congratulate Qianlong on his 80th birthday, he wrote that the aviary contained "over 100 pairs of green and white parrots, and more than ten pairs of white rabbits" (綠白鸚鵡百餘雙，白兔十餘雙). He also describes the imperial walkway next to the aviary as being piled high with remarkable and precious objects sent in tribute. See Seo Hosu, *Yeonhaeng-gi Juan*, 2, in Im Kijung ed. *Yeonhaeng-rok Cheonjip*, vol. 51, 138.

131 This painting is now kept at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. For the attached poem, see *Yuzhi shiji*, II, Juan 30, 23a, in *Siku*, vol. 1303, 590.

such a marvellous creature; by the Emperor's grace I am seeing it for the first time" (海隅偏邦，安有如此奇獸，荷皇恩，今始見之).¹³²

Given the political importance of exotic creatures, and Qianlong's disingenuous efforts to connect the *emo* bird with the auspicious shile bird in the *Ten Rhymes*, it is fair to say that the presence of a cassowary at the Qing court had high political value. It is highly likely that Qianlong exhibited it at major events, as part of his political spectacle to demonstrate his central position in the world. If he did, then the audience for these exhibitions would have included Chinese nobility, courtiers, the palace servants and eunuchs; and also, crucially, diplomats from other nations.

We can find more support for this inference if we consider the second level of exhibition: exhibition of the image. An image offers a second way for an owner to display his objects. As discussed earlier, the first image of an *emo* bird ordered by Qianlong was a wall painting for the Sunset Glory Building in the Garden of Perfect Brightness. By the reign of Qianlong, the Garden of Perfect Brightness was one of the main venues for entertaining visiting missions. *Yuanmingyuan sishi jing* 圓明園四十景 (Forty Views of the Garden of Perfect Brightness), a book of paintings of the Garden of Perfect Brightness, was completed by 1745, and some of the scenic spots it includes were designed to entertain foreign emissaries.¹³³ The Korean ambassador Seo Ho-su reports in his *Record of Missions to Beijing* (燕行記) that he was aware of all the places depicted in the *Forty Views*, and had personally visited at least four of them.¹³⁴ The Sunset Glory Building is located within the compound of the Four Seasons Library, which happens to be one of the *Forty Views*. When Qianlong placed his first painting of an *emo* bird in that building, its expected audience would surely include foreign emissaries.

The placement of Yang Dazhang's *Emo Birds* was rather different. The painting is in the form of a portable hanging scroll, so that the place it was stored did not necessarily determine its target audience. However, we know that it was delivered to one of the palace's great stores of documents and paintings, the Emperor's Library (御書房) in the back building of the Palace of Great Brilliance (景陽宮). We also know that Qianlong had

132 See Seo Ho-su, *Yeonhaeng-gi*, Juan 2, in Im Ki-jung ed., *Yeonhaeng-rok Cheonjip*, vol. 51, 146-147.

133 See *Yuanmingyuan sishi jing shi tu*, *Shan juan*, in Liu Tuo, Meng Bai eds., *Qing dian ban hua hui kan*, 150.

134 See Seo Ho-su, *Yeonhaeng-gi*, Juan 2, in *Yeonhaeng-rok Cheonjip*, vol. 51, 147-164.

gone to significant effort to have a European book translated for the text of the *Inscription*; had had one of his most senior courtiers, Liang Guozhi, inscribe it; and had ordered it attached above the painting. Qianlong often had his senior writers work with him, so it seems likely that the emperor's immediate advisers were not only the producers of the political message in *Emo Birds*, they were also its recipients.

This was not unusual. The inner circle of the court was responsible for the actual exercise of imperial authority, and they were often the most immediate target audience for signals concerning the emperor's status. For example, in Kangxi 61 (1722), the Aohan lotus in Kangxi's inner gardens flowered, and Kangxi commissioned Jiang Tingxi to paint them (*Aohan Lotus*, fig. 29). Seven court writers were instructed to write inscriptions. These inscriptions ("Shenxian cao" 神仙草 (Plant of the Immortals); "Rui lian" 瑞蓮 (Auspicious Lotus), etc.) tell us that the court was invited not just to view the marvel of the flowering lotuses themselves, but also that they were instructed to help craft the message that would convey this auspicious sign. Sixty-three years later, when the lotuses in Qianlong's garden flowered, he called for this painting.¹³⁵ Seeing what his grandfather had done, he instructed seven of his courtiers, including his son Yongxing, to write new poems on the painting. This was somewhat unusual for Qianlong. Though he would often invite his courtiers to read and view paintings with him, he wrote most inscriptions himself. *Emo Birds* is a typical example, and there are relatively few paintings from Qianlong's collection with inscriptions signed by his courtiers. But whether they were writing in their own name, or copying an imperial inscription, the court's writers were the primary audience for images of auspicious events; they contributed to the formation of the images; and they helped to spread these images and their message beyond the walls of the palace.

135 See "Ti Jiang Tingxi Aohanlian yong tu zhong Zhang Zhao tiju yun" *Yuzhi shiji*, V, *Juan* 17, 26a-27b, in *Siku*, vol. 1309, 524



Fig. 29: Jiang Tingxi 蔣廷錫. *Aohan qianyelian* 敖漢千葉蓮 (Aohan Lotus). 1722. Hanging Scroll. Colour on silk. 215.7 x 96.5cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Conclusion: Qianlong's visual empire

Did the Qing Empire play a role in the formation of the globalised world? This essay began with a large question. However, from the minutiae of the day-to-day *Archives of the workshop of the Imperial Household Department*, we traced a single case study through the complex processes of image production in the Qing court. Qianlong was at the centre of all court activity. He dominated and managed every detail of the painting work: the selection of artists, the procedures, form of the images, reproductions, mounting, etc. The artist-centric approaches of traditional art history cannot adequately describe this process of art production, with its considerations of efficiency and production line-style processes. A piece of work which was claimed to be a document of reality, in a realist style, was not produced by a single individual who observed the reality and attempted to reproduce it. Rather, it was produced by assigning individual parts to different artists, and through the use of existing templates,

available to the Qing court, we discover that Qianlong certainly did not cut himself off from the rest of the world. In fact, he had direct knowledge of the voyages of discovery undertaken by European navigators, and of their findings.

Close reading of these texts suggests a new understanding of how the Qing court related to Europe. It was not, as the older understanding of Qing history had it, “a private affair between the emperors and the Western world”, in which Europeans served only as “sources of incidental knowledge and pleasure.”¹³⁶ Nor is the opposite extreme view accurate, exemplified by the new Qing historians who see European elements in the Qing court as evidence of the Qing’s similarity to contemporary European empires. Rather, the Qing court’s engagement with Europe had political meaning and objectives within its own imperial context.

One of the clearest examples of this is the emo bird images discussed here. Both extant images, the insert to the *Album of Birds* and Yang Dazhang’s *Emo Birds*, include Qianlong’s inscription, quoting from a European source text. The *Album of Birds* was produced to record the “produce of the tributaries” so that the ruler could “fully understand their interests and their threats”; it was a reference to help him “order and tend the world”, which is the core task for a sage king. Despite this overtly political rhetoric that defined the objective of the *Album of Birds*, the compilation of the book involved several revolutionary new practices. The most important were: first, an emphasis on first-hand collection and observation of specimens; and second, the use of visual images as an important means for transmitting and constructing knowledge. The authority of the Grand Council, one of the state’s central institutions of government, was used to collect specimens and first-hand images of birds from around the empire. Once collected, many birds were depicted using European fusion painting techniques to reproduce texture and volume. Where the Chinese tradition of natural history limits illustrations to depicting features already described in the text, the revolutionary use of illusionistic painting techniques in the *Album of Birds* allowed the images to carry and construct information independently of the text. These two innovative features meant that the book evolved from its original purpose of a symbolic and abstract description of “all the birds under heaven” to geographically mapping the “birds of the myriad nations.” It represents knowledge of the reality of the world beyond China’s borders.

136 Harold Kahn “A Matter of Taste: The Monumental and Exotic in the Qianlong Reign” in Chou Juhsi, Claudia Brown, *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor 1735-1798*, 301.

The late addition to the book of the emo bird entry, with its imperial inscription adapted from a western text, was an indispensable element for Qianlong's symbolic construction of a universal system of knowledge. With this addition, the *Album of Birds* now contained birds both from China and overseas; and texts originating in antiquity, in modern observation, and, most importantly, from foreign countries. This study shows that the use of images to understand and control empires is not unique to Europe. The *emo* bird entry shows us a Qianlong who was very much engaged with the world and was adept at using images to construct and represent his imperial image and ambitions.

Where the *Album of Birds* made use of western images and text to help construct a universal, comprehensive framework of knowledge, Yang Dazhang's *Emo Birds* takes its western source elements and converts them into Chinese political narrative: an auspicious sign showing heaven's endorsement of the emperor. *Emo Birds* incorporates into its composition symbolic birds and flowers reminiscent of the Ming court style; but it also adopts the European fusion style developed by Giuseppe Castiglione under Yongzheng and seen in paintings such as *Auspicious Grain*. The result is similar to the virtual-realist style used by the painters of Huizong's academy. In this sense, the auspicious signs paintings of Yongzheng and Qianlong represent a break with the Ming tradition and a return to that abandoned Song Dynasty canon. But the use of images was not enough for Qianlong. He ordered his poem describing the bird's arrival and his translated inscription to be added to the top and bottom of the image. The emperor's personal observations, and knowledge provided by a foreign third party, serve to further guarantee the "reality" of this marvellous, auspicious bird. Qianlong thus heads off any suspicion that he might have, in the words of Yongzheng, "exaggerated it into an auspicious sign". Qianlong wove both western text and a western-inspired painting style into a traditional narrative of imperial authority; and within that narrative, he visually represented the perfection of his empire.

In both Qianlong's construction of universalist knowledge and in his creation of political narrative, we have found images playing key roles. This was common in Qianlong's court. Like Huizong, Qianlong was an innovator in the use of visual technique to recreate or even replace "reality". In fact Qianlong took this practice much farther than Huizong, applied it more widely, and displayed even stricter control over objective "reality". Qianlong ordered documentary-style paintings with illusionistic effects to be made of almost all the marvellous creatures sent to the court as auspicious signs. For example, *Donghai xunlu* 東海馴鹿 (Northeastern Reindeer) (fig. 30)¹³⁷ shows a white

137 Preserved at the National Palace Museum in Taipei.

reindeer sent by General Balinga from the deer parks of the northeast in 1745; *Kuoerka xian xiang ma tu* 廓爾喀貢象馬圖 (The Tribute of Gurkhas) (fig. 31)¹³⁸ shows elephants and horses sent by the king of Gurkha (Nepal) after Qianlong conquered the country. The Qianlong court was also expert at producing perspective images showing celebrations and achievements befitting a mighty empire: examples include *Wan shou sheng dian tu* 萬壽盛典圖 (Imperial Birthday Celebrations) and *Pingding huaibu huibu desheng tu* 平定準部回部得勝圖 (Receiving the Surrender of the Ili). Sometimes Qianlong would enter into a dialogue with older texts, and demand first-hand reexamination of ancient sites to demonstrate his greater mastery of reality. In 1790, he sent Qin Chengen 秦承恩, governor of Shaanxi, to personally inspect the confluence of the Jing and Wei rivers, to check the accuracy of a classical saying: “The Wei is clear, the Jing muddy” (清渭濁涇). On receiving the governor’s report, he wrote an essay, created a painting to accompany it, and had them mounted as a scroll and reproduced in embroidery.¹³⁹



Fig. 30: Giuseppe Castiglione. *Donghai xunlu* 東海馴鹿 (Northeastern Reindeer). 1745. *Hanging Scroll*. Colour on silk. 211.8 x 215.4cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

138 Preserved at the Palace Museum in Beijing.

139 Both preserved at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. See *Yuzhi wenji*, III, *Juan* 14, Tzaju, 3b-9a, In Siku, vol. 1301, 660-663.



Fig. 31: Joseph Panzi, Louis de Poirot. *Kuoerka xian xiang ma tu* 廓爾喀貢象馬圖 (*The Tribute of Gurkhas*) (detail). 1793. Hand Scroll. Colour on paper. 40.6 x 318cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

In each of these examples, Qianlong introduced objective elements of reality into an artificially constructed world, either through the use of paintings with perspective in a European fusion style, or first-hand observations, or even the deployment of information from Europe. He created images which recreated the traditional ideal of sage king rule by incorporating elements of old and new. It would not be going too far to say that Qianlong's empire was built on visual splendour.

From the evidence presented here, the Qing Empire was beyond doubt a constituent part of the early modern world. However, there are many aspects of the Qing Empire which do not correspond exactly with other empires; and these differences meant that China and Europe perceived each other as if refracted through some multi-faceted prism. In the *emo* bird entry in the *Album of Birds*, we see how information and painting techniques from the West are appropriated into the court's construction of universal knowledge. In Yang Dazhang's *Emo Birds*, we see how information from the globalized world, manifested in the form of a cassowary, was rewritten into a Chinese political narrative; or to look at it from the other perspective, how Qianlong viewed the globalized world from within the perspective of the Chinese political rhetoric. These exchanges can be viewed either way; what is certain is that the globalized world ironically helped Qianlong to develop an unprecedentedly innovative renarration and reconstruction of the most traditional ideals of the Chinese world order.

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Appendix 1. Parallel cassowary texts

Text	〈御制額摩鳥圖記〉	Carolus Clusius (L' Écluse, Charles de, 1526-1609), <i>Exoticorum libri decem: quibus animalium, plantarum, aromatum aliorumque peregrinorum fructuum historiae describuntur</i> (Lugduni Batavorum, Ex Officina Plantiniana Raphelengij, 1605)	Perrault, Claude (1613-1688), <i>Memoir's for a natural history of animals: containing the anatomical descriptions of several creatures dissected by the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris</i> (London: Printed by J. Streater, and are to be sold by T. Basset [etc.], 1688)
History	西洋人所記額摩鳥圖說云：額摩鳥古今圖藉未載，西洋舊無此種，於其國一千五百九十七年，當明萬曆二十五年丁酉，紅毛國人始得自嚶拉巴海島，携來西洋，云即彼國亦罕觀也。後六年，紅毛國人復於嚶拉巴得二鳥，皆不能畜。當本朝康熙十年辛亥，有勝老楞佐海島頭目，自印度國估船購得，獻之佛朗機亞國王，畜之，四年死。	Anno nonagesimo septimo supra millesimum et quingentesimum a Christi nativitate, Batavi Amstelredamum reduces e prima Navigatione quam biennio ante in Indiam Orientalem instituebant, admirabilem Avem adferebant, in BAnda insula, Moluccarum una, ut aiebant, natam, et ab incolis Emeu, sive Eme, appellatam, qualem in tota Europa ante conspectam non fuisse arbitrator. (97)	Before the year 1579 this Bird was never seen in Europe; and no Author of the Ancients, or Modernes, has spoken thereof. The Hollanders brought one at the return of their first Voyage from India. It was given them as a Rarity by a Prince of the Isle of Java. Six years after (=1603) they brought two others, but they dyed on the way. That here described was sent to the King in 1671, by the Governour of Madagascar, who had bought it of the Marchants which returned from the Indies. It lived four years at Versailles. (241)
		Audio porro, illas naves quae anno a Christi nativitate millesimo sexecentesimo tertio ex Moluccis in Hollandiam redibant, binas similes aves quidem attulisse, sed in itinere mortuas, projecisse. (99)	

	國王命工詳圖其狀		
Height	鳥高五尺五寸	Haec avis...quatuor pedum et aliquot unciarum altitudinem excedebat. (98)	ours (sc. our cassowary) measured five foot and a half in length, from the end of the Beak to the extremity of the Tallons. (241)
Neck	自頂至頸一尺五寸	collum a summo capite ad dorsi initium, tredecim paene uncias erat longum. (98)	The Head and Neck were a foot and a half together (241)
Colour	俱無毛，惟腦後短毛甚稀，頭綠頸翠，其連脊處及喙皆紅紫色，	Eius caput... fere glabrum, coloris ex atro caerulei cum colli suprema parte, in quo apparebant rari pili nigri.	The Neck was without feathers.... The Head also had none. (242)
Wattles	喙下垂贅肉兩片，長寸二分，廣六分許，下圓如茄袋，亦紅紫色。	anterior colli pars, quatuor paene unciis infra rostrum, bina veluti membranacea palearia, ceu barbulae, propenduntia habebat duas uncias longa, coloris miniati.	there were two fleshy Appendices, like those which hang down at the lower Beak of Hen's. They were an inch and a half long, and nine lines broad, being rounded at the end. Their colour was like the rest of the Neck, partly red and partly blew. (243)
	嘴上下畧同他鳥		
Crest	頂冠高三寸骨自頂稜起至嘴左右三分如裂形色堅緻若牛角	a cuius medio, ad capitis usque verticem porrectum diadema assurgebat corneae substantiae, tres fere uncias altum.	It (sc. the head) was covered with a Crest three inches high, like the of a Helmet. ... It was every where smooth and shining like Horn; Its Circumference was like an edg, not exceeding three lines in that place. (242)
Nares	近嘴兩孔為鼻	paulloque supra mucronem binis foraminibus, narium usum praebentibus (p. 98)	The Interstices on each side (sc. of the Beak) had but one Membrane, in which were the holes of the Nostrills, very near the extremity of the Beak. (243).
Eyes	其目大六七分，睛正圓，外黃暈，類獅子睛，其光色如金剛石也	oculi paullo supra rostri fissuram magni, ardentis et truces, leonis oculis paene similes (98)	The Eye was large. Its Iris of a Topaze colour, almost as in the Lyon. (243)

Eye-rows	目上眉灣如月		There were likewise a row of black Hairs like a Demi-circle, at the top of the Eye, raised like an Eye-brow. (243)
Ears	兩耳孔大三四分，顯豁呈露其旁，微有黑毛	et meatus illos aurium parvos et detectos (sc. nigri pili cingebant.) (98)	The hole of the Ear was very great and bare, being only surrounded with black Hairs. (243)
Tongue	舌入喉間，長可五分許		The Tongue measured an Inch in length and eight Lines in breadth. It was indented all round like a Cocks Combe. (248)
Wings	翅藏兩脇毛下，甚小	alas haberet, set sub plumis latera tegetibus latentes. (98)	The Wing was so little, that it did not appear, being quite hid under the Feathers of the Back (241)
	有大管五，黑色而無翎，排次如人指，長約三四寸	Alas ... quatuor maioribus pennis nigris praeditas. (98)	and did each (sc. wing) cast forth five great Tubes or Stems without any Beards. ... they were of different length, according to the disposition, and proportion that the Fingers have in the Hand. The longest was eleven inches, being three lines Diameter towards the root, which was only a little bigger than the extemetiy, which went not pointing but did appear broken, or ragged. Their Colour was of a very shining black. (242)
Feathers	自背至膝上，毛皆麤散作黑絳色，彷彿熊家	Illae plumae, ut a procul aspicientibus non plumis sed villis duntaxat tectum eius avis corium existimari possit, quale ursinum est. (98)	those (sc. feathers) which do cover it (sc. the bird), do better resemble the Hair of a Bear or wild-Boar, than Feathers, or Down; so harsh, long, and thin are the Fibres which do compose the Beards of these Plumes. (241)

	毛長數寸，兩毛生一管中，不類他鳥翎羽，故僅足蔽體，無助飛騰也	Pennae seu verius plumae ... perpetuo erant geminae, ex eodem parvo brevique tubulo prodeuntes. (98) ... quia hanc avem non esse volucrem, nec a terra tolli posse arbitror. (98)	All these Plumes were of one sort, different from Birds which fly, where there are some feathers for flight, and others only for covering the Skin. Our Cassowar had only the last sort. They were most double, having two long Tubes or Stems proceeding from another very short one, which was fastened to the Skin. (242)
	尻形如鶴而不生長翎	nam cauda carebat. (98)	There was no Tail; the feathers which did cover the Rump ... not being different from the others nor otherwise disposed. (242)
Legs	脛以下皮如鱗甲，圓徑寸許，似鶴脛	Crura in ambitu quinque unciarum crassitudinem superabant, crebrisque corticibus seu squamis latis tecta erant. (98)	The Leggs ... had some Scales. ... towards the bottom and fore-part of the Leg they contained even an inch. (243)
	而大足三趾無距	Pedes habebat crassos, duros, tribus crassis digitis preditos. (98)	The Toes ... were but three in number, having none behind. (243-4)