

# IN THE NAME OF GOD, BY THE MEANS OF ART: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ITALIAN PAINTING TO THE QING IMPERIAL ART AS SEEN THROUGH THE WORKS OF GIUSEPPE CASTIGLIONE

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## ABSTRACT

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A group of Catholic priests and lay brothers known as the Jesuits arrived in China in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the mission to convert the Emperor and the nation. One of their foremost methods to achieve this was by means of art. Amongst the Jesuits in China, Giuseppe Castiglione, an Italian painter/lay brother, was one of the most recognised personalities. He arrived in Beijing in 1715 CE and worked as a court artist for three consecutive Emperors of the Qing dynasty until his death. Castiglione adapted the traditional Chinese style of painting and integrated it with his background in European painting, which resulted in a new idiom of courtly art. This paper outlines Castiglione's influence and contribution to the imperial Chinese art of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century through the analysis of styles and techniques in some of his notable works, which are then compared with a number of European and Chinese paintings of different periods and genres. The result demonstrates that the Chinese art during the Qing period acquired a new style through the significant artistic innovation spearheaded by Castiglione and his associates, while still remaining in tune with the Emperors' taste and formidable courtly traditions. And though the Jesuits captured the Emperors' attention with their artistic skills, the history has proven that their principle mission at converting the nation had not achieved quite the same result.

**Keywords:** Art history; Chinese art; Jesuits; paintings

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Society of Jesus, whose members are known as Jesuits, was formed in 1540 CE by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) (Ryan, 1964). The founding mission of this religious order was generally to proselytise the Catholic faith far and wide in accordance with the Pope's Counter Reformation policy. This was carried out through different strategies, but mostly by means of education and the adopting of the local culture. Francis Xavier was the first missionary to land on the shores of China in 1552 CE, but the monks weren't allowed to

reside on the mainland until 1583 CE when the permission was obtained by Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) (Standaert, 2008). Ricci, together with Alessandro Valignano (1536-1606), put together a plan to propagate their faith in China, which consisted of four strategies: 1) to accommodate, adopt and adapt the Chinese culture and language 2) to evangelise “from the top down” (i.e. starting with the Emperor and the elites) 3) to employ indirect propagation through European science, technology and art 4) to complement the existing social doctrine with Catholic theology, particularly Confucianism, which they perceived to be based on natural law rather than being a religious ideology.

In the area of the visual arts, four Jesuit artists worked their way up the echelons of the Qing court to become court painters as part of their mission. Amongst them, Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), a Jesuit lay brother-cum-artist was the most notable. Trained in Milan, Castiglione arrived in Beijing in 1715 CE, was given the name Lang Shining (Musillo, 2016), and employed in the courts of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors. Castiglione’s oeuvre is characterised by the blending of his training in techniques and genres of European painting with Chinese methods (Chongzheng, 1997) to portray Chinese subjects, keeping the results agreeable to the imperial palate at the time. This, in turn, contributed to a new idiom of courtly painting that certainly became an important feature of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Qing paintings. How this was achieved, will be demonstrated in this paper through a few examples of Castiglione’s works.

## 2. THE SYNTHESIS OF STYLES

A glimpse into Castiglione’s past training and early repertoire before his arrival in China provides a vital clue as to how the style of 18<sup>th</sup>-century painting was partly influenced by his early works. Like that of most of the artists of his time, many of Castiglione’s works in this period depict Christian narratives from both the Old and the New Testaments, which were painted in the form of altarpieces for the churches in Genoa, where the artist took vows as a lay brother at the age of nineteen. According to Musillo (2016), Castiglione’s works in this phase display two distinctive features. First is the use of *chiaroscuro*, interacting with smoother, more dispersed lighting. Second is the use of geometry in landscape painting: the perception of space and distance is created by geometric relationships within a painting by two means: by the *contrapposto di macchia* or the juxtaposing of natural features such as shrubs and plants on the ground, and through the delineation of elements in the foreground, which includes both plants and animals. Musillo (2016) is of the opinion that Castiglione inherited the latter technique particularly from another Milanese artist, Carlo Antonio Tavella (1668-1796) who, in turn, was taught by Pieter Mulier (1637-1701), a Dutch painter, more commonly known as Cavalier Pietro Tempesta, who had moved to Italy in 1656 CE. This can be seen through the artists’ renditions on the same subject: *Tobias and the Angel* (1707-1709), which were, however, painted some years apart; by Tempesta in ca. 1684 (Figure 1), by Tavella (date unknown) (Figure 2) and by Castiglione between 1707-1709 (Figure 3). The most obvious indication is the placement in Tobias and the Angel, which is nearly identical in all the three paintings, but the use of light and shadows on the two figures in the foreground is much more prominent in Castiglione’s work. The arrangement of trees in the background in Castiglione’s Tobias and the Angel is also recognisable in his *One Hundred Horses* (1728) (Figure 4), painted some twenty years later in China, but without the *chiaroscuro*. Additionally, the compositional settings in both of these works are similar; he employed the same spatial construction in both, whereby the foreground, middle ground and background are linked by figures of humans, animals and trees.



**Figure 1:** *Tobias and the Angel* by Tempesta



**Figure 2:** *Tobias and the Angel* by Tavella

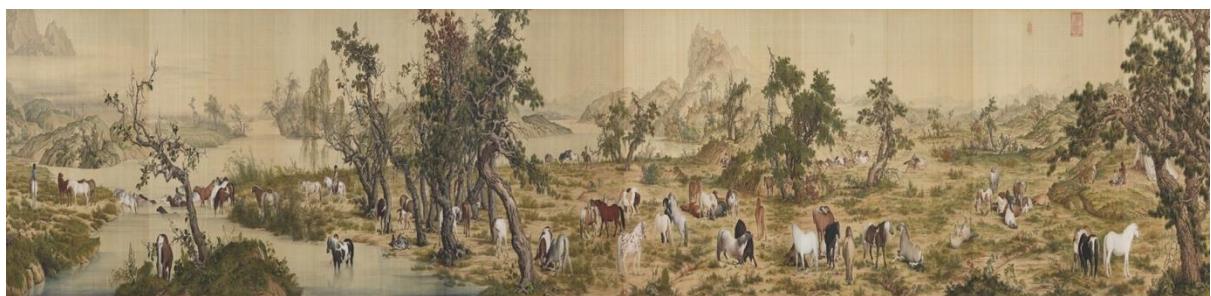


**Figure 3:** *Tobias and the Angel* by Castiglione

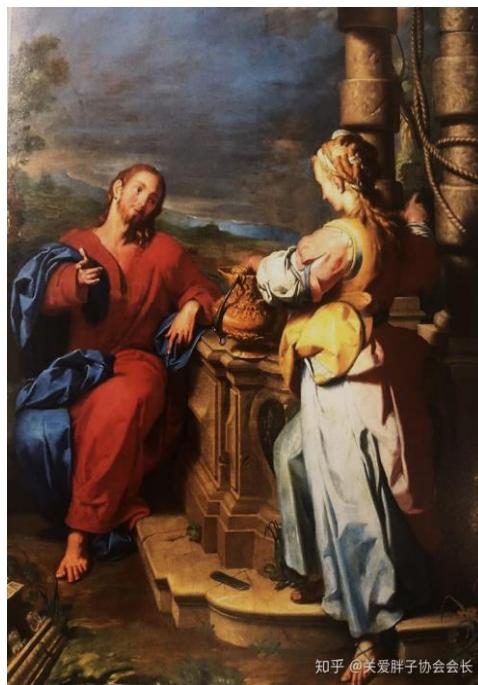
Castiglione was also the first painter to introduce oil painting to China and he successfully combined the use of oil paints with Chinese ink and pigments in many of his works (Boda, 1988). His use of colours tends to be bright and metallic with strong geometric contours (Musillo, 2008), which evidently also came from his Milanese background. I have observed that these features can be seen in his *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman* (Figure 5), painted in Italy and *Portrait of Xiangfei*<sup>1</sup> (Figure 6), painted in China, but in a purely European style. Both comprise the aforesaid colour scheme as well as sharp outlines of the figures. When it comes to his later imperial commission, these techniques are clearly observable in *Qianlong Emperor in Ceremonial Armour on Horseback* (1739) (Figure 7). In this near-life-sized portrait of his last patron, Castiglione used extremely bright oil colours to paint the saddle pad, the quiver, the horse's plumes and the emperor's marigold-coloured robe. Each motif appearing on the robe is articulated with distinct outlines and looks almost photographic. Similarly, the Emperor's iron helmet, decorated with gilt Tibetan syllabic mantras, banded with open filigree work and accented with beads of coral, pearl and turquoise, is painted in metallic colours, which give a realistic shiny surface, rarely seen before that in Chinese paintings. Furthermore, *contrapposto di macchia* is also employed in the Qianlong equestrian portrait: the foliage is depicted in juxtaposition and with varying degrees of light to

<sup>1</sup> Xiangfei was one of Qianlong's consorts.

create a sense of difference in space and distance, which I argue is also employed in *One Hundred Horses*, which exhibits a similar subject and colour tonality. However, the Qianlong equestrian portrait also embodies Chinese elements that are obviously absent in Castiglione's early works, but which subsequently became one of the artist's notable hallmarks in his later works in China. Here, although the body of the Emperor is slightly turned, he is fully lit from the front to depict clear facial features, unlike the technique of the artist's Genoese works, which are lit from one side to achieve a three-dimensional illusion by means of a strong *chiaroscuro*. This is because a half-lit face was considered unacceptable in China and it was seen as a bad omen to have shadow falling on one's face (Musillo, 2008). It was said that Qianlong thought that shadows looked dirty and he didn't want them on his face (Chongzhen, 1997). The Emperor's preference seems to have extended to figures of animals, too. In fact, all of Castiglione's horses lack shadows including the horse figure in the aforementioned equestrian portrait; this gives the impression that the horse is somewhat floating and disjoined from the natural surroundings. I argue, however, that the portrayal of the horse in such a way is a typical Chinese device, seen since the Tang, Song and Yuan periods. For example, portraits of horses on handscrolls attributed to Han Gan (Figure 8), Li Gonglin (Figure 9) and Zhao Mengfu (Figure 10) depict the animals in the same manner, which was probably intentional, as the animal figures look more "celestial", befitting the status of the imperial steeds. It is plausible that Qianlong, who was known to be fascinated with antiquities, and who preferred Castiglione to other Academy<sup>2</sup> painters, for the painting of horses (Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, 2007), may still have preferred his horses to be depicted in the same way.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 4:** *One Hundred Horses* by Castiglione



**Figure 5:** *Jesus and the Samaritan* by Castiglione

<sup>2</sup> Qianlong established the Imperial Painting Academy in 1736, comprising many talented artists from all over China.

<sup>3</sup> Court records, letters and memorandums reveal that Qianlong had a firm grip on the way he wanted things to be depicted in his paintings. See Kobayashi, 2006.



**Figure 6:** *Portrait of Xiangfei* by Castiglione



**Figure 7:** *Qianlong Emperor in Ceremonial Armour on Horseback* by Castiglione



**Figure 8:** *Night-Shining White* attributed to Han Gan



Figure 9: *Portrait of a Horse* attributed to Li Gonglin



Figure 10: *Mounted Official* attributed to Zhao Mengfu

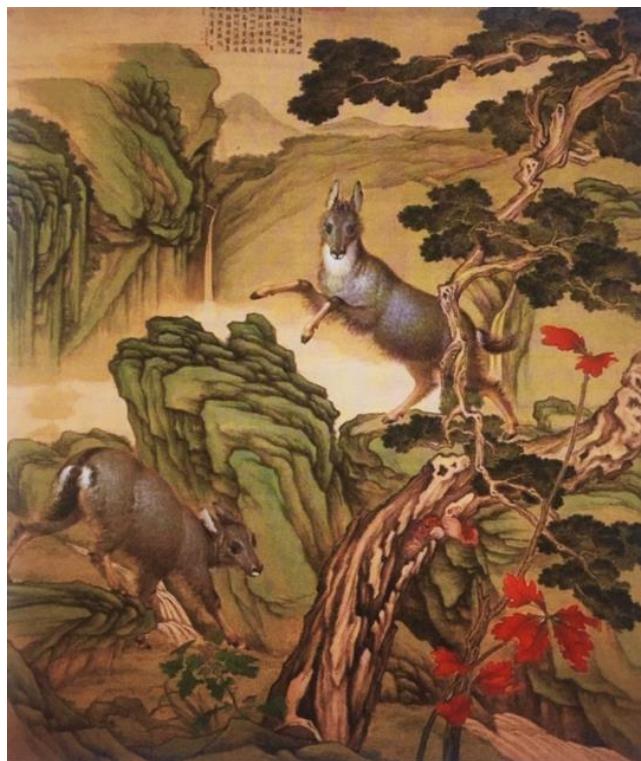
With regards to the use of colours, it is evident in the exchange between Qianlong, Attiret<sup>4</sup> and Castiglione, recorded by Jean-Joseph-Marie Amiot that 'the Emperor did not like the glistening of the oils or the shadows that looked, he said, like stains.' The Emperor also remarked to Attiret that 'the Chinese water colour is more elegant, and that he [Attiret] must paint with water colours like the others, except for portraits, which he can use oil', before turning to Castiglione and said 'try to teach him' [water colour] (Musillo, 2015). Thus, we can infer from this report that Castiglione, who had already been working at the court for twenty-four years before Attiret's arrival in 1739, was competent in using both types of colours and was entrusted by the Emperor to guide other imperial artists.

Another important characteristic of Castiglione's work in the Qing court is his ability to adapt traditional Chinese brushwork along with the use of Western technique. We learn through his paintings in China that he had acquired the skills of using Chinese pigments/colours, which are very different from oil colours being runnier and drying extremely fast. Using Chinese pigments meant that Castiglione had, as well, to master Chinese brushwork techniques, which he undoubtedly did. Moreover, he had to learn how to paint on raw silk and other surfaces, which he certainly would not have done during his years in northern Italy. It is evident in *Two Young Goats* (*Qingyang*) (before 1744) (Figure 11) that Castiglione used his newly-acquired technique to depict the figures of the animals on a silk scroll: every single hair of the goats is executed with a very fine, single stroke, so that collectively the coats' sheen seem almost real, while a more fluid brushwork is used for the muzzles and the hooves, which have a different texture. A similar style is seen seven centuries earlier in Cui Bai's monochrome hanging scroll, *Magpies and Hare* (1061) (Figure 12) in which short and fine, single strokes are used to create the shiny and furry texture of the hare's coat and the fineness of the whiskers in a very realistic manner. Moreover, Castiglione also used the Chinese technique of the dotting stroke to depict vegetation and the calligraphic stroke to create the outlines of the rocks in the *Two Young Goats*. On the other

<sup>4</sup> A French Jesuit painter at Qianlong's court, Jean Denis Attiret started working for the Emperor in 1739.

hand, the artist's use of Western technique is also apparent in *Paired Cranes in the Shade with Flowers* (*Huayinshuanghe tu*) (1723-1735) (Figure 13) (Musillo, 2016). I argue that Castiglione used a mixture of the Chinese *gongbi*<sup>5</sup> technique and the Western technique to depict the cranes; this can be seen in the cranes' plumage. Castiglione first sketched the outline of the plumage and filled it with black, white and red but, instead of using colour washes, he brushed over them with single, thick brushstrokes to create a glossy texture, which is in contrast with the plain, yellowish background. But for the baby cranes in the foreground, he resorted to the Chinese technique, using fine-single and dotting strokes to create the soft texture of the growing feathers. The use of fine and calligraphic strokes meant that *ripensamenti*<sup>6</sup> could not be used in these works and, thus, Castiglione's full mastery of the Chinese technique is demonstrated. Heavier brushwork is evident on the wings of the cranes in *Paired Cranes* that certainly gives a realistic feeling of the plushness and thickness of the feathers of mature birds (Musillo, 2016). Additionally, a parallel can be seen between Castiglione's *Paired Cranes* and Shen Quan's *Pine, Plum and Cranes* (1759) (Figure 14). The subject, composition, perspective and choice of colours are remarkably similar. Because of this Shen Quan was often mistaken for a court painter (Chongzhen, 1997), although in reality he had nothing to do with the court. Chongzhen (1997) states that it is obvious that painters in the Qing period influenced and also discriminated against one another. It is quite plausible that Shen Quan and Castiglione may have influenced one another in some way. But through close observation of the artists' works on the same subject: cranes, it is noticeable that the technique they use is different. While Castiglione's cranes are painted with the heavy brushwork of the European school, Shen Quan's birds are depicted with minute and meticulous brushwork, which accentuated every layer of feathers.

Castiglione's synthesis of the two styles resulted in the creation of a new style of Chinese painting technique known as *xianfa*, which is often described by art historians as the amalgamation of the Western *chiaroscuro* and the Chinese *gongbi* as I have attempted to explain in the previous paragraph. Boda (1988) observes that *xianfa* was mainly used to paint figures of animals, flowers and vegetation, which I would say is somewhat similar to European "still life" paintings. Boda further states that this particular style of painting, which was used to create the *trompe l'œil* effect, an imaginary space and distance that extended beyond the room where the painting was situated, was particularly admired by the Emperor. The *Paired Cranes* is a typical example of the *xianfa* style.



**Figure 11:** *Two Young Goats* by Castiglione

<sup>5</sup> A Chinese painting technique which starts with the sketching of the figure's outline with fine lines before it is filled in with washes of ink or colours in layers.

<sup>6</sup> Literally means "re-thinking"; since oil paint dries slowly, the artist has the possibility of altering or retouching the painting, contrary to Chinese tempera colours, which dry immediately. See Musillo, 2016.



**Figure 12:** *Magpies and Hare* by Cui Bai



**Figure 13:** *Paired Cranes in the Shade with Flowers* by Castiglione



**Figure 14:** *Pine, Plum and Cranes* by Shen Quan

The Chinese idea of perspective and distance (near, middle, far) is another element that Castiglione acquired in China, but his background in Western painting helped him to execute this technique in a manner unique to himself. If we look at Castiglione's Genoese works, most of them are composed only of foreground and background, the two spaces being quite distinct and most of the time not linked by any means. Additionally, the attention of the viewer is always focused on the figures in the foreground, while the background seems much less significant; sometimes it is merely decorative and not part of the narrative. This is not the case, however, in his Chinese paintings. Taking the *Two Young Goats* again, for example, the three distances are very clear. The trunk of a coniferous tree and a smaller plant with red leaves dominate the foreground, the goats on the rocks; the middle and the hill, slope and waterfall are set in the distance. Moreover, the three spaces can be viewed as a narrative as it is all part of single landscape from the audience's point of view. First, the audience's focus is on the tree and the plant with red leaves, then the playful goats on the rock, and it then takes a sharp drop into a body of water with a waterfall whose source is deep in the hills beyond. Nonetheless, the same cannot be said for the *Paired Cranes* as there is no landscape in this painting. Here, Castiglione's European training was put to good use and the spatial relationships are created by the heavy brushwork on the cranes, which creates a clear contrast with the plain, raw silk background as well as with the light *chiaroscuro* seen under the birds' feet, and the subtle geometrical positioning of the vegetation, the rose tree and the chicks.

It is interesting to observe that while Castiglione used *chiaroscuro* to create the three-dimensionality in the *Paired Cranes*, but he did not do so with the portraits that included horses or were of horses, except for *One Hundred Horses*, which is a narrative painting in which the *chiaroscuro* is used under the horses' hooves. Thus, it is plausible to speculate that Castiglione intentionally avoided using *chiaroscuro* for horse portraits in keeping with the tradition of the genre. Another possibility is that the horse portraits, especially the important ones such as the *Qianlong Emperor in Ceremonial Armour on Horseback*, were possibly retouched by the Emperor's order after the artist's death as a letter written by Giuseppe Panzi (1734-1812), the successor to Castiglione at Qianlong's court, clearly expressed to his superior in Genoa:

*[The Chinese] want paintings without chiaroscuro, that is, without a sense of volume. Because I am writing about this, I will report that the Emperor, who profoundly esteemed Castiglione for his paintings, has ordered his Chinese painters to retouch many of Castiglione's works. Qianlong ordered the removal of the powerful effect of shadows necessary for the impression of volume. Your Reverence can well see and believe, as we believe, that the Chinese painters have damaged Castiglione's painting very much.*

(Musillo, 2016, p. 157).

It is also arguable that *chiaroscuro* was used in *One Hundred Horses* because it was completed before Qianlong came to the throne and, therefore, Castiglione was probably more free to do what he liked. Musillo (2016) makes the interesting observation that the erasure of *chiaroscuro* in some of Castiglione's paintings proved that he was successful as it showed that his paintings were adaptable to a new interpretation without losing much of their aesthetic value.

Furthermore, although Castiglione occasionally collaborated with many Academy painters on different projects during his early days at the court, he increasingly made a practice of being more collaborative as he moved up the ranks of the Academy (Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, 2007). According to Berinstein (1999), the depiction of landscapes in some of Castiglione's works were painted with the help of other court painters, namely Shen Yuang, Tangdai and Wan Yuanqi, who were accustomed to painting in the Chinese style of landscapes.<sup>7</sup> The representation of classical Chinese landscapes in paintings was, in fact, very important, as it was used by Qing emperors to demonstrate their legitimacy to the throne by continuing the flow of the artistic tradition of past imperial eras. Moreover, paintings in the Qianlong period were becoming larger; some of them were probably commissioned to be displayed to a wider audience and meant for propaganda rather than to be viewed privately (Beurdeley, 1997). This meant that larger works were probably painted in a collaboration between Castiglione and his Chinese associates. In fact, Musillo (2011) suggests that the Chinese landscape in the background of the *Qianlong Emperor in Ceremonial Armour on Horseback* was painted by local artists, while the figures of the Emperor, the horse, the sky were done by Castiglione. He arrives at this conclusion based on the fact that the Emperor and the horse are totally disjointed from the rest of the work. But as I have argued earlier, this could have been intentional, executed to achieve the three-dimensionality of the figures; we also see this in Castiglione's other horse portraits such as the *Portrait of the horse Nieyunshi* (Figure 15) and the *Portrait of a Persian Steed* (Figure 16); despite the bare background, the figure of the horse still appears to be hovering above the background.

<sup>7</sup> Qianlong preferred Castiglione to paint portraits and figures of animals and plants, but not landscapes. See Kobayashi, 2006.



**Figure 15:** *Portrait of the Horse Nieyunshi* by Castiglione



**Figure 16:** *Portrait of a Persian Steed* by Castiglione

Additionally, as other Jesuits brought Western clocks, scientific inventions and classical music, Castiglione brought the European form of visual compositions to the court. For example, *Qianlong Emperor in Ceremonial Armour on Horseback* was certainly inspired by the European imperial trend of the time; it resembles many equestrian paintings of European monarchs that were popular during the Baroque period, as they demonstrate the ruler's military power, sovereignty and masculinity. Similarly, horses have long been depicted in China on paintings, vessels and textiles because they are a metaphor for the ability to recognise men of talent; superior horses were often compared to accomplished scholars (Hearn, 2008). Castiglione successfully captured the European court pageantry and translated it into a Chinese courtly idiom while keeping in line with long-standing courtly culture. The portrait, depicting the young Qianlong with full military regalia, wearing a Tibetan-themed helmet and seated on a Manchu pinto-coloured horse with left front leg raised as if performing European dressage, set against the backdrop of a classical Chinese lyrical landscape, presents the Emperor as the all-powerful ruler of China and her territories while also embodying the European courtly style.

### 3. THE TRANS-MEDIA APPLICATION ON QING COURT PAINTINGS

Looking at some of Castiglione's portrait paintings, it is evident that his exposure to courtly idiom and training in other media during his earlier days in China also contributed to the mature style later in his life. In the portraits of the Dowager Empresses Xiaozhuang (Figure 17) and Chongqing (Figure 18), for example, the geometric pattern of the ceramic tiles on the floor below the figures of the Empresses were probably derived from the cloisonné technique found on metal vessels, which was highly popular during the Qing period. Speaking of cloisonné, it is a type of enamel work done by affixing gold or silver wires to create patterns before filling the spaces with pieces of precious stones and other materials. The technique is mostly done on metal jewelleries, utensils, vessels and decorative objects found as far back as during the ancient Egypt and Byzantine periods and which subsequently became more common in Islamic artworks. The cloisonné technique most likely found its way to the Imperial Chinese court through objects and artists via the Silk Road network.

In Castiglione's portraits, the geometric pattern akin to the cloisonné art objects of the Qing court offer two functions in the paintings. First, it creates a three-dimensional effect to the painting, which is often absent in traditional painting due to the lack of shadow play or *chiaroscuro*. In the portrait of the Dowager Empress Chongqing, the geometric pattern of the tiles, together with traditional motifs on the imperial garment create the optical illusion that enables the figure of the Empress to stand out as if it is protruding from the canvas without the use of any shadow, which as mentioned earlier, perceived by the court as a taboo. Moreover, the auspicious royal motifs found on the attire of the Empress and the plush cushion on which she sits on also create an optical illusion, as two planes of colours and patterns from foreground to background and vice versa. In a similar fashion, the portrait of the Dowager Empress Xiaozhuang offer a similar optical illusion, but here, it is further enhanced by the juxtaposition of the throne, which turns at an angle while the geometric patterns on the floor still remains facing direct. This creates a spatial tension between three spaces: the throne together with the human figure – this time with a plain robe, the patterned floor and the bare background, thus cleverly creating a multi-dimensional effect to the painting without the use of any shadow play.

Another painting that demonstrates Castiglione's mastery of optical and spatial illusion without employing the use of shadows is the portrait of the Empress Xiaoyichun with the future Emperor Jiaqin on a two-floored apartment (Figure 19). This is a large portrait, literally from floor to ceiling, commissioned for a private quarter of the Empress. To understand the mechanism of this painting, perhaps it is easier to first look at the background, which depicts a faint outline of a mountain range in the far distance, then coming closer – a bamboo grove and eventually, a cluster of a lyrical rock with peonies unrealistically growing on it (this is because flowers don't normally grow on rocks without soil). The composition of the background is Castiglione's typical style, which we have seen earlier in this article such as in the *Paired Cranes in the Shade with Flowers* and the *Two Young Goats*. In turn, the painting of a wooden structure with windows inside a royal palace is superimposed on top of the whole background. The structure itself has two floors; the Empress and her child are at the lower level. Half of the body of the Empress is camouflaged behind a glass window (painted in blue) with wooden decoration, while the other half isn't. At the opposite side, another glass window is open ajar, turning inwards at a forty-five degree. The aforesaid background can be seen behind the two human figures, framed by a wooden structure as if the background is in itself another painting. In the meantime, the ceiling is covered with a wall paper with circular patterns, which invite the eye to gaze at the distant lyrical landscape. Similarly, the upper level of the residence depicted in the painting demonstrates the use of similar mechanism in creating the depth of the space, but the absence of human figures. Firstly, the depth of the background landscape is created by the carved wooden railing and intricately carved wooden beam at the top. And like the technique used for the lower level, the brocaded ceiling and walls on either side of the room, which turn forty-five degrees inwards, lead the eyes to focus on the purplish curtains, trimmed with a black fabric at the top. On the curtains, however, Castiglione audaciously used *chiaroscuro*, creating a plush texture on the velvety fabric. In spite of this bold move, the artist did not technically break the court artistic etiquette because the shadow was not used on the human figures.



**Figure 17:** *Portrait of the Dowager Empress Xiaozhuang* by Castiglione



**Figure 18:** *Portrait of the Dowager Empress Chonqing* by Castiglione

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Driven by his mission's motto *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* ("For the Greater Glory of God"), Castiglione's thirty-seven years of artistic engagement in the Qing court were undoubtedly rooted in the Jesuit's evangelisation policy "from the top down". In order to achieve this, apart from enticing the Emperor with his novelty, Castiglione had to do what the emperors wanted and also to adhere to the often-unbending traditions of the imperial court. Thus, adaptation was the key to Castiglione's success. He adapted his Italian training to the Chinese media and adopted the use of Chinese materials, forms and techniques (such as the *gongbi*), which were then fused and translated into a new artistic idiom.

Although Castiglione's synthetisation of styles was favoured by the emperors, especially Qianlong, his works did not escape criticism. Some conservative Chinese artists criticised them as being stiff, strained and inharmonious (Chongzhen, 1997). Zou Yogui (1686-1772), for instance, remarked that while the geometry in the new style of paintings, which is probably owed to the artist exposure and extensive training in different courtly media is impressive, 'there is no method in the brushstrokes and though meticulously executed, their works are those of craftsmen and cannot be considered as paintings' (Chongzhen, 1997). But history made its own judgement; the new idiom did not disappear at Castiglione's death but was inherited by his students and other Jesuit painters, such as Panzi, and the use of styles, particularly the *xianfa*, became an important hallmark of late Qing paintings as well as being the catalyst that sparked the influx of other styles that were gradually adopted by Chinese artists over subsequent centuries. But ironically, while Jesuit artists were successful at convincing the Emperors with their artistic means, their mission at converting the nation to their faith achieved little success.



**Figure 19:** *Portrait of Empress Xiaoyichun and the Future Emperor Jiangqing in the Private Apartment* by Castiglione

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