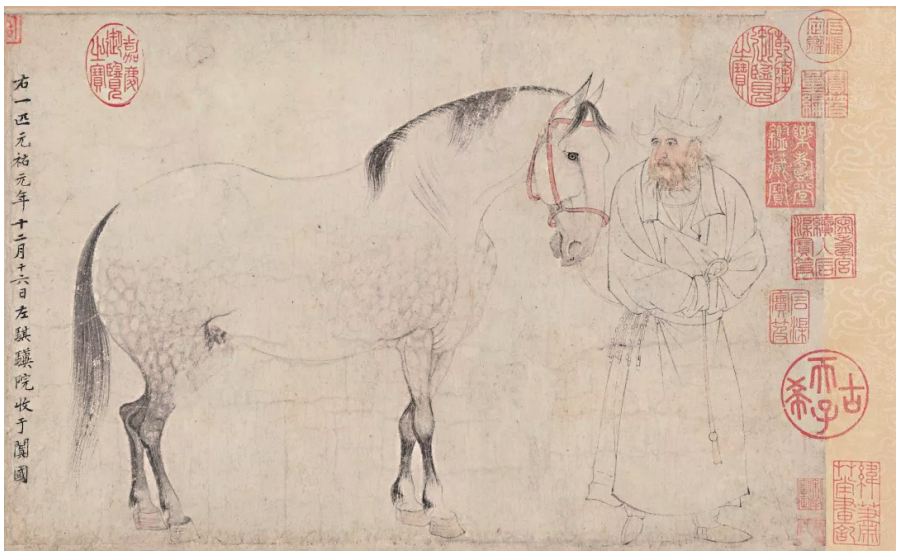


Anonymous, *Dutchmen Offering Oxen and Horses*, 1667, ink and color on silk, 207.8x161.3cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

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Li Gonglin (1049-1106), *Five Horses*, light color on paper, 29.3x225cm, private collection, Japan.



African leading a bull, north wall, tomb of Li Daojian (d. 732), Fuping, Shaanxi.

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Heavenly Horses from Holland: A Tribute Painting of "Dutch Attendants, Oxen, and Horses" at the Kangxi Court of 1667 and a Failed Dutch Embassy*

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Abstract: The tribute painting "Dutch Attendants, Oxen, and Horses" commissioned by the young Kangxi Emperor in 1667 after a visit of a Dutch embassy to the Kangxi court is basically the sole information we have on the Chinese side of this visit. This visit is surrounded with mysteries. The Dutch hoped and expected to obtain better trade privileges for their help in subduing the Ming loyalist and pirate Koxinga in the previous years, and even though they were already informed before their departure from Fuzhou to Beijing that their request was denied, they embarked on their journey anyway, only to be denied again in the end. Why did the Manchu rulers and Chinese officials allow the journey to continue and did they receive the Dutch in Beijing? Why would the Kangxi Emperor commission the painting? What does the painting say, if anything, about Kangxi's attitude toward the Dutch? Would a tribute painting of the Dutch presenting horses not mean that Kangxi considered the Dutch a tribute state? Why then did the Kangxi court deny the Dutch better trade privileges? Modern studies have thus far glossed over or have failed to answer these questions satisfyingly. This study uses the painting as a starting point and the horses as a leitmotiv to investigate, firstly, the painting and its imperial commission; secondly, the disproportionate attention on the Chinese and Manchu side to the horses during the journey and eventually during the court audience in Beijing and even long after that; thirdly, the possible motives behind Kangxi's passion for horses and his commissioning of the painting, by presenting an art historical study of tribute horse paintings; and fourthly and lastly, the possible reasons for the denial of the trade privileges to the Dutch. The study argues that the Kangxi Emperor ordered the dispatch of another Dutch embassy seemingly for the sole purpose of obtaining the horses. In the eyes of the Chinese, the horses represent Heavenly Horses with a tradition dating back to the Han dynasty, which as tribute and as paintings thereof have become symbols of imperial legitimation and divine sanction. The denial of the trade privileges, however, was probably strategically motivated to ensure Manchu control over the southern sea border.

Keywords: tribute painting, horse painting, Heavenly Horse, Kangxi Emperor, Dutch embassy

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Introduction

In the Summer of 1667, a Dutch embassy headed by Pieter van Hoorn visited the court of the thirteen-year old Kangxi Emperor in Beijing.[1] The Manchus had invaded China and toppled the Ming dynasty proclaiming the new Qing dynasty in 1644. With this regime change, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) saw a new chance for establishing trade relations with China – their primary but still unattainable goal since they had arrived in the South China Sea waters in the first years of the seventeenth century.[2] They had sent a previous embassy in 1657.[3] This embassy had failed, because of Jesuit meddling they believed. But after helping the Manchu armies defeat the remaining forces of the pirate-rebel and Ming loyalist Koxinga in Fujian, reducing the fortresses to rubble with their powerful canons in 1663, a new opportunity presented itself when they were granted a biennial trade privilege, provided that they would send another embassy to the Kangxi court.[4] After an arduous journey travelling from Fuzhou to Beijing over rivers, roads, and mountain passes, the embassy delegates arrived at the court with high expectations for a successful outcome. Yet, they were received with long interrogations, which seemingly and repeatedly only focused on formalities, such as: where the horses they brought as presents were from, and why they had come through Fuzhou and not through Canton, as regulations for tributary states had stipulated. Worst of all, they were sent off with a sealed letter that they were allowed to open only after their return to Batavia, the VOC headquarters in Asia, and which, against all expectations, refuted the earlier promise of biennial trade and only

1. This embassy is extensively discussed in John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 38-81; as well as in a number of other studies, for example John E. Wills, *Pepper, Guns, and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1622-1681* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 136-144; Leonard Blussé, "Peeking into the Empires: Dutch Embassies to the Courts of China and Japan," *Itinerario*, 37 (2013), pp. 13-29; and Michael Keevak, *Embassies to China: Diplomacy and Cultural Encounters Before the Opium Wars* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 65-89.
2. Leonard Blussé, "Brief Encounter at Macao," *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1988), pp. 647-664.
3. Leonard Blussé and Reindert Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655-1657* (Middelburg: Stichting VOC Publicaties, 1987); Henriette Rahusen-de Bruyn Kops, "Not Such an 'Unpromising Beginning': The First Dutch Trade Embassy to China, 1655-1657," *Modern Asian Studies,* vol. 36, no. 3 (2002), pp. 535-578.
4. John E. Wills, *Pepper, Guns, and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1622-1681*, pp. 29-104; Tonio Andrade, "An Accidental Embassy: How Two Minor Dutch Administrators Inaugurated an Alliance with the Qing Dynasty of China, 1661-1662," *Itinerario*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2011), pp. 77-96.

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kept intact the "privilege" of sending an embassy every eight years, the same privilege already granted during the previous embassy.

The Dutch embassy has been, for its time, profusely documented in text and image for the Dutch side of the encounter. Pieter van Hoorn's day-to-day journal as well as sketches made during the journey have been the source for Olfert Dapper's (1636-1689) *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf* (Memorable Affair) in 1670, and served as the basis for many modern studies, starting with John E. Wills' groundbreaking work in this field.[5]

This is unfortunately hardly the case for the Chinese side of the story. No memorials or court records have surfaced thus far on the Dutch visit, and the few surviving descriptions of the Dutch, which curiously relate all to the presents the Dutch brought along for the Kangxi Emperor and his ministers, include a pictorial record in the form of a painting titled "Dutch Attendants, Oxen, and Horses," made during their stay in Beijing.[6] This painting also happens to be our earliest datable depiction of the Dutch in Chinese art, almost seven decades after their first arrival. Because we have no further records on Kangxi's views on the Dutch or his reasons for refusing trade privileges, the painting and its inscription are essentially our sole source of information representing the Chinese side of the story.

This study presents an art-historical as well as a cultural-historical investigation into the possible motives of the young Kangxi for commissioning the painting of Dutch attendants,

5. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische maetschappye, op de kuste en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina: behelzende het tweede gezandschap aen den onder-koning Singlamong en veldheer Taising Lipoui; door Jan van Kampen en Konstantyn Nobel. Vervolgt met een verhael van het voorgevallen des jaers zestien hondert drie ein vier en zestig, op de kust van Sina, en ontrent d'eilanden Tayowan, Formosa, Ay en Quemuy, onder 't gezag van Balthasar Bort: en het derde gezandschap aen Konchy, Tartarsche keizer van Sina en Oost-Tartarye: onder beleit van Zijne Ed. Pieter van Hoorn. Beneffens een beschryving van geheel Sina. Verciert doorgaens met verscheide kopere platen* (Amsterdam: J. van Meurs, 1670). The work is accessible online, see https://archive.org/details/gedenkwaerdigbed00dapp (accessed on 15 October 2018); John E. Wills, *Pepper, Guns, and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1622-1681* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); and *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).
6. The painting and gifts are discussed in Wang Ching-ling 王靜靈, "Tuxiang zhengshi: *Helanguo ren yi niuma tu* suotan 圖像證史：《賀蘭國人役牛馬圖》瑣談," *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊, 366 (2011), pp. 88-99; Wang Ching-ling 王靜靈, "De Nederlandse ambassade naar het hof van de Keizer Kangxi in 1667," in Thijs Weststeijn and Menno Jonker eds., *Barbaren & Wijsgeren: Het beeld van China in de Gouden Eeuw* (Nijmegen: Van Tilt, 2017), pp. 39-45; and Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann, "Scratching the Surface: The Impact of the Dutch on Artistic and Material Culture in Taiwan and China," in Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann and Michael North eds., *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), pp. 205-238.

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oxen, and horses, and what this may tell us about his view on the Dutch embassy and the Dutch at that time, hopefully finding an answer to the failed Dutch mission. Thus far, the painting has been the subject of two studies. Wang Ching-ling offers an ethnological explanation, arguing that because of Kangxi's personal background as a Manchu, he loved horses and therefore commissioned the painting.[7] Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann, alternatively, gives a cultural explanation, arguing that Kangxi viewed the horses, oxen, and Dutch attendants as curiosities and therefore, similar to European trends at the time, as exotic.[8] Kangxi's motivations may not have been so straightforward. This study argues that his ideas on the painting were strongly embedded in a long, and very much Chinese, tradition of tribute horses, and that the paintings were commissioned to commemorate those events and the often-overlooked but extremely important symbolism of the horses as Heavenly Horses for legitimizing a Chinese emperor's rule. The study ultimately demonstrates that the two parties, the Dutch embassy and the Kangxi court, had two completely different views on the goals and intentions of the embassy. Whereas the Dutch believed they were on a trading mission, the Chinese saw the embassy in terms of a Chinese tradition of divine legitimation dating back more than two thousand years. Moreover, they viewed the trade privileges requested by the Dutch in a purely pragmatical, strategical sense, resulting in a failed Dutch embassy.

In order to arrive at these theses, this study first gives an analysis of the painting and its inscription, which provides us with important clues to re-viewing the embassy through Chinese eyes. Secondly, this study investigates the Chinese fascination for the horses of the Dutch embassy as witnessed in the contemporary Dutch sources, summarized in Olfert Dapper's work and contextualized in Wills' meticulous study, as well as some unique Chinese references. Thirdly, this study explores the Kangxi Emperor's possible motivation for commissioning the painting by looking into the tradition of tribute horse paintings and the symbolism of the horse in that context, usually referred to as a Heavenly Horse. Finally, we look at the wider historical context of the event in order to find explanations for the Chinese refusal of Dutch trade privileges, and ultimately, for the failed Dutch embassy of 1667.

I. A Tribute Painting of "Dutch Attendants, Oxen, and Horses," 1667

Tribute paintings (*zhigong tu* 職貢圖) depict foreign envoys bringing "tribute" (*gong* 貢) or gifts to the Chinese emperor in a ritual procession or court audience. The theme has a long

7. Wang Ching-ling, "Tuxiang zhengshi: *Helanguo ren yi niuma tu* suotan," p. 12.
8. Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann, "Scratching the Surface: The Impact of the Dutch on Artistic and Material Culture in Taiwan and China," p. 224.

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tradition in Chinese art and two types can be distinguished. The first type focuses on foreign figures while the second type centers on tribute offerings. In this study, we deal with a rare example of the second type.

Preserved in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, a large painting on silk titled "Dutch Attendants, Oxen, and Horses" (*Helanguo renyi niuma tu* 賀蘭國人役牛馬圖) depicts eight Dutchmen leading four horses and four small oxen against an open background (**Fig. 1**).[9] Small inscriptions next to the figures indicate the height of the horses and oxen, as well as their colors. A long inscription on top of the painting recalls its genesis and provides a date of 1667:

> On the first day of the fifth lunar month of the sixth year of the reign of [Emperor] Kangxi (June 21, 1667), the Dutch came and presented four horses and four oxen. On the fifth day of the sixth lunar month of the same year (July 25), [the Emperor] issued an order to make and present a preparatory painting of the horses, oxen, and the attendants leading them for personal inspection by the Emperor. On the sixth day of the same month (July 26), [painters of] the Department of Palace Works began the painting task. After the preparatory painting was completed on the third day of the seventh month (August 31), it was respectfully offered to the Emperor for inspection.
> 康熙陸年伍月初壹日，荷蘭國進到馬四匹，牛肆隻。本年陸月初伍日，奉旨著將進到馬牛，並摔馬牛人役，畫圖樣呈覽，欽此。該內工部於本月初捌日開工畫起，至柒月拾參日畫完，謹將畫完圖樣，恭呈御覽。

This inscription reveals interesting facts about the painting. First, the painting is a preparatory painting or model, in the inscription called a *tuyang* 圖樣, which means that this painting is not the final product, but a model or design that was first made for inspection, after which the finished or complete painting was made.[10] This important observation was unfortunately missed by Wang Ching-ling in his study of the painting.[11] The present painting is therefore not the final painting, which may have looked entirely different. Furthermore, whether or not a final painting was actually executed cannot be ascertained, either. The Kangxi Emperor may for example have deemed the preparatory model unsatisfactory. That this actually may have been the case can be deduced from the fact that the painting, either the model or

9. A zoomable image of this painting can be found on the website of the National Palace Museum: https://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh107/ExpeditiontoAsia/ch/selectionZoom/img1_1.html (accessed on 13 December 2019).
10. For a discussion on preparatory designs and their uses, see Lennert Gesterkamp, *The Heavenly Court: Daoist Temple Painting in China, 1200-1400* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 218-224.
11. Wang Ching-ling, "Tuxiang zhengshi: *Helanguo ren yi niuma tu* suotan," pp. 3-5.

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the final product, is not mentioned in the imperial catalogue of paintings and calligraphies in the collection of the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1735-1796), the *Shiqu baoji chupian* 石渠寶笈初編 (1745) or the *Shiqu baoji xubian* 石渠寶笈續編 (1793). The preparatory model is only mentioned in the *Shiqu baoji sanbian* 石渠寶笈三編 (1816), a much later sequel by the Jiaqing Emperor (r. 1796-1821). This means that no such finalized painting existed during the time of Qianlong, and that the preparatory model did not enter the imperial collection until more than one and a half centuries later.[12]

Secondly, the painting's status as a preparatory model can further explain its mediocre quality and patterned representation of the human figures and horses and oxen. Except for differences in the color of costumes and saddles, and in the color of the horses and oxen, the figures are identical, as if they were painted by means of a cartoon, or at least were drafted from the same, single sketch. The inscription can shed further light on why this may have happened. First, it notes correctly that the Dutch offered their tribute on June 21, 1667, as confirmed by modern studies,[13] when the Dutch on the first day of the their arrival in the capital Beijing, on June 20, were ordered to hastily prepare the horses and their saddles and the oxen with their carts for special inspection by the young Kangxi Emperor, thirteen years of age, the next day, on June 21. However, the inscription then mentions that the imperial commission for the painting was issued one month later, on July 25. The Dutch would eventually leave Beijing on August 5. This two-week interval could have given the painters time to observe the Dutch and the horses and oxen. Yet, judging from the date of commission, it is impossible that the painting represents a real-life depiction of the event of offering the horses and oxen, and in fact should represent an imaginary reconstruction. The painting was only finished on August 31, almost a month after the Dutch had left Beijing. Although textual sources make mention of ox-carts, they are not depicted. This is not an error as we will see later in this study. As for the tiny oxen, John Wills argued that they are from Bengal, and Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann further identified them as zebu from India; the horses are Persian, as we will also see in the Dutch documentation examined in later sections.[14]

12. Wang Ching-ling, "Tuxiang zhengshi: *Helanguo ren yi niuma tu* suotan," p. 8. Wang does not give a footnote with a reference to the precise location in the text Shiqu baoji sanbian. I have not been able to find it.
13. John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, pp. 38-81, esp. 69-73.
14. Wills mentions only two oxen, but Chinese sources (see below) have four, as in the painting. See John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, p. 53; Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann, "Scratching the Surface: The Impact of the Dutch on Artistic and Material Culture in Taiwan and China," p. 224.

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Thirdly, the identification of the painting as a preparatory model made a month after the event may also provide a reason for its abnormally large size, measuring 207.8 by 161.3 centimeters, or almost four square meters. The commission came not with a description of the subject matter to be painted, but apparently it was intended as a huge painting (assuming that the silk for the painting was given to the painters). The eight patterned motives of figures and animals are at odds with the large size of the painting, and may suggest either that the painters were at a loss about what to depict, or that an entirely different subject matter was intended or expected. After all, the final painting does never seem to have been commissioned, perhaps understandably. During their stay in the capital, the members of the Dutch embassy were kept isolated in a residence especially destined for foreign envoys, and only occasionally had contact with the outside world during official visits or during sales of goods and exchange of presents. Therefore, the painters of the Department of Palace Works may never have been able to see the Dutch, and unable to make use of the large space of the silk. The intended subject matter for a magnificent tableau was lost on them, leaving a set of patterned figures and animals painted against a blank space. Moreover, the mentioning of the Department of Palace Works indicates that the work was painted before the establishment of the Manufacturing Office of the Internal Household Department (neiwufu zaobianchu 內務府造辦處) a few decades later,[15] which on the one hand makes the painting a rare example of an early imperial commission, but on the other hand explains its shoddy execution when no official structure was in place yet for the enlisting, examination, and training of artisans for imperial commissions.

Fourthly and lastly, the inscription reveals important information about the present title. The present title "Dutch Attendants, Oxen, and Horses" (*Helanguo renyi niuma tu* 賀蘭國人役牛馬圖) is derived from the inscription, although in a much garbled fashion. First of all, the characters for Holland (*Helan*) are different, using 賀蘭 instead of 荷蘭 of the inscription. Different characters for he are found in Chinese sources describing the Dutch, and the modern transliteration actually uses the one used on the painting, 荷蘭. Furthermore, the inscription speaks of "horses and oxen" twice, and in this order, but the present title inversed them into "oxen and horses," assumingly attaching more importance to the oxen. Lastly, because the inscription writes of "horses, oxen, and their attendants" (*ma niu renyi* 馬牛人役), we know that the title, although in a different order, should be read similarly, and not for example, "Dutchmen attending oxen and horses," even though the grammar would allow for such an interpretation. Considering all these changes, the title must have been added at a later time. It is not known when, but it probably first appeared in the *Shiqu baoji sanbian*. The editors then would have

15. Wang Ching-ling, "Tuxiang zhengshi: *Helanguo ren yi niuma tu* suotan," p. 8.

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chosen a title from the inscription. One salient feature of the title and the inscription is that it makes no mention of "tribute" (*gong* 貢) or a "tribute painting" (*zhigong tu* 職貢圖). The inscription speaks however of "presenting" (*jin* 進) the horses and oxen, which may imply tribute (*jingong* 進貢). It goes too far to seek a deeper meaning behind these word choices, for example that the painting is not a tribute painting, the horses and oxen not tribute, or the Dutch not a tribute state.[16] As we will see, the theme, composition, and contents of the painting fall in this long tradition in Chinese painting, and are therefore perhaps another indication of the misinterpretation and shallow knowledge of the Chinese painting tradition of horses on the part of the makers.

That the young Kangxi Emperor probably had something different in mind when he commissioned the painting of the Dutch horses, oxen, and their attendants, can be gleaned from his fascination for the Dutch horses, which is amply described in historical records. Looking into these sources a bit further will give us an opportunity to understand not only why Kangxi commissioned the painting, but also how the painting should be viewed (and in extension the Dutch depicted in them) in the context of that time and Chinese art history.

II. A Chinese Fascination for Horses and the Dutch Embassy of 1667

Young Kangxi's fascination for the Dutch horses is borne out vividly by several anecdotes of the event recorded in both Chinese and Dutch sources. The special attention of the Chinese, and at its climax the Emperor, to the four horses emerged long before their presentation at court. The journey of the embassy and the horses to Beijing can be reconstructed from the Dutch archives. The Dutch journals of the embassy stood at the basis of Olfert Dapper's *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf* (Memorable Affair) published a few years later in 1670, and more recently have been meticulously researched by John Wills.[17] I have found no discrepancies between the two works, except that Dapper's version at the end is strongly abbreviated, perhaps to disguise the rather unfortunate outcome of the embassy. Wills' exquisite study remedies this shortcoming. The following reconstruction is therefore based on these two complementary works, and supplemented with Chinese references where possible.

Wills' research gives a comprehensive time frame for the adventures of the Dutch in

16. Official edicts sent to the Dutch before and after the embassy all use the word "tribute," cf. John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, pp. 52, 76.
17. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*; John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*.

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Fuzhou, in which the horses and oxen also figure prominently. Before the embassy was allowed to leave Fuzhou for Beijing, it was held up in Fuzhou for almost half a year negotiating about the conditions and permissions to trade with China and the official visit to the Emperor in Beijing, as well as waiting for the wintry months to pass when it would have been too cold and inconvenient for the party to travel in the north. After arriving off the coast of Fuzhou on August 5, 1666, the presents, including the horses and oxen and the trading goods, had to be re-loaded from the Dutch to the Chinese ships for transport, which happened during August 18-19. Only after the horses and oxen were seen, during re-loading Wills suspects, and Ambassador Van Hoorn had shown his official letter to the Emperor to the Feudal Prince Geng Jimao 耿繼茂 (d. 1671) on August 26, the Feudal Prince sent a memorial to Beijing. The horses and oxen were then officially shown on September 9 and again on October 14 when five imperial envoys from Beijing had arrived, apparently dispatched specifically to inspect the horses and oxen and other presents. The official decisions from the Ministry of Rites, reached already on October 11 and 13 (that is, before the arrival of the special envoys), were reported to the Dutch only one month later on November 11 and 18, granting permission for an embassy to Beijing (one in eight years) and trade (every two years).[18] The sequence of events as well as the pride of place given to the horses and oxen in this sequence, suggest that the horses and oxen were somehow an essential element in the decision of the Chinese to grant the Dutch a trade permission.

In Dapper's *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, the horses and oxen[19] appear on almost every few pages from beginning to end of the description of the journey, forming a peculiar leitmotiv in the Dutch saga of sending an embassy to the Chinese court in 1667.[20] From Fuzhou to Beijing, at every stop on the route, the local officials and commanders appeared only to be occupied by one concern, and that was seeing the horses and oxen, often accompanied, according to the description, by a glass of Spanish wine and occasionally a musical orchestra, after which the Chinese were always "very much pleased" and "full of praise."[21] Even though the Chinese in Fuzhou initially did not wish to ship the oxen, the oxen got a special treatment during the journey when the ships on which they travelled could not sail any further, and special chairs were made to carry the oxen across a mountain pass.[22] The Dutch must also have noticed the

18. John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, pp. 54-60.
19. Because Dapper uses the word "osjes," lit. "small oxen," we know that the animals were castrated and therefore oxen and not bulls (which are uncastrated and less docile).
20. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, pp. 224-349.
21. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, pp. 232-234, 238, 243-245, 268, 275, 303, 319, 336, 346.
22. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, pp. 227, 291-292.

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special attention the Chinese harbored to the horses and oxen, because when the embassy was stalled twice during the last legs of the journey, Pieter van Hoorn, the Ambassador, wrote letters to the Chinese officials using the horses and oxen as leverage, arguing that the delay caused the horses and oxen to suffer, and therefore the problems needed to be resolved quickly.[23]

As soon as the party arrived in Beijing on June 20, 1667, the numerous mentions of the horses and oxen in the description of the ensuing events seem to suggest even more emphatically that the entire embassy, to the Chinese, revolved around the horses and oxen and nothing else. Having set one foot in the city, the imperial gifts (the horses, oxen, and some other items) had to be unloaded and separated for inspection, after which the Ambassador was invited by the Ministry of Rites (*libu* 禮部) and promptly quizzed about, one need not guess, the horses and oxen: Where did the horses and oxen come from? What age were they? How many miles can one horse travel a day? As well as some other questions.[24] First in the afternoon, they were told to prepare the horses and oxen for inspection by the Emperor. By midnight, again someone was sent to order the Dutch to immediately prepare themselves. Even though the official would leave it up to the Dutch to bring one or more horses and oxen, or bring oxen with or without carts, the Dutch took care to prepare them all. By three o'clock in the morning, the horses and oxen were collected by officials of the Ministry of Rites and led away for imperial inspection together with the First Counselor Konstantyn Nobel and the Secretary Van Does (as well as the attendants for the horses and oxen). Because the ox-carts could not pass the gateway, they were detached and left behind.[25]

The party returned at nine o'clock in the morning at the Dutch quarters, and Olfert Dapper gives a detailed description of Nobel's report of their encounter with the young Emperor Kangxi in the past hours, who again seems to have been interested in nothing but the horses and oxen. I translate here Dapper's passage on the meeting with Kangxi in full:[26]

> We first passed three strong gates and were guided through a fourth gate, followed the walls of the palace for a distance of a quarter of a mile, and entered a fifth gate into the inner court.
> There, the horses and oxen were first inspected by the first *Zoutaizin* or Regent [Oboi]. He was a brown Tartar with one eye and a white moustache, about sixty years old, and of whom they said, governed almost the entire empire because of his esteem, awe, and ingenuity. He

23. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, pp. 329, 336.
24. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, pp. 347-348.
25. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, pp. 348-349.
26. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, pp. 349-350. For a synopsis of these events, based on the original Dutch reports, see John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, pp. 68-69.

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told Nobel and the Secretary to take a few steps back, and to bow when the Emperor in person came out to inspect the horses and oxen. The horses remained on the same spot, because they were being inspected by the aforementioned first *Zoutaizin*, together with the four Dutchmen, who held them, and two [Dutchmen] for the oxen, who were removed about twenty steps from the place where the Emperor arrived. They were also ordered to kneel as soon as the Emperor came outside. After a short while, four horses saddled with yellow saddles were guided through the gates of the inner court, on one of which the Emperor came riding in just outside the central gate of the inner court.

According to the words of Nobel and the Secretary, he was a person of average height, fairly white[-skinned], and about sixteen years old. He was not extraordinarily dressed, [wearing] a blue damask dress with some few embroideries on his front, back, and shoulders, and yellow boots. He viewed the horses intensely without turning his eyes from them. He constantly laughed, and talked with the aforementioned first Counselor [Oboi] about the horses, from which we alleged that his Majesty must have been very much pleased with them. Thereupon, his Majesty had Commissioner Berkman (who was there as well) prepare two horses for him [for a ride], and after that had [Berkman] bring one horse and one ox near to him for closer inspection.

Having done this, the horses and oxen were moved backward, and his Imperial Majesty descended from his horse, and sat on a low stool at the place where the horse had stood. The two first Zoutaizins or Regents seated themselves on their dresses four or six steps to the left of his Majesty. The first of the two was the one who had inspected the horses and oxen; the second one was another Tartar. When bean soup was served on his Majesty's order, we also received a bowl, which we drank with one knee on the ground. Next, the Emperor ordered to ask: How far is Holland from Batavia, and how far is Batavia from Fuzhou? As well as, who had sent the lord Ambassador? On which we replied: Batavia was eight months [sailing from Holland] and from Batavia to Fuzhou was one month sailing; and that the lord Ambassador was sent by the Governor-General of Batavia on order of our Prince in Holland. Without asking anything else, they took the horses and oxen from the attendants on the order of the Emperor and brought them to the stable opposite of the gate at the inner court. While the Emperor remained seated all the time, we were also ordered to leave (after we had the pleasure of seeing the Emperor for half an hour) and were led away the same way we had come.

Shortly after the return of Nobel, the Secretary, and the others, a Mandarin came to request on the Emperor's behalf [the assistance of] two Dutchmen, one to feed the horses and one to feed the oxen, and to instruct the stable master on their care, which the Ambassador immediately ordered.

After their return, the party was soon invited to present all their gifts to the court, and carts were

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sent in to collect them. The Ambassador and his retinue were brought to the inner court where the presents were already arranged. After some waiting, the Ambassador, kneeling on one knee, was questioned again in front of the four Regents who were seated on their robes:[27]

> Thereupon, the Regents let the Ambassador ask [through an interpreter]: Whether the four horses are from Persia, and the four oxen from Bengal; whether we are at peace and live as brothers with the Kings of Persia and Bengals; on which the Ambassador replied in general with "yes," and that we had lived as brothers and honest friends for many long years. They also asked what kind of grains grew in Holland, to which also was answered appropriately and in truth. Then the oxen had to be attached to the carts, and the Ambassadors came to him [the Emperor] to show his respects.
>
> After this, the present-goods were all taken away, except for the lanterns, which the Emperor wanted to inspect. The Ambassador was notified to leave, which he did immediately, returning to his bad housing.
>
> Meanwhile, Putmans and Ruwenoort had remained at the court to detach the lanterns, which the Emperor was inspecting again after the Ambassador had left. [He inspected] also the oxen and the cart, in which he let two of his retinue take a seat to be driven around by the oxen, and Putmans and Nobel were very much pleased they had been able to see the Emperor. After this all, they were treated with food and drink.

Indeed, these reports inevitably give the extremely strong suggestion that the Chinese in general and the Emperor in particular were very much fascinated, if not obsessed, with the horses and oxen sent as a gift by the Dutch, and almost to the detriment of everything else of the embassy.

Interestingly, Dapper's description gives us a clue on the red-haired figure depicted in the painting. Dapper provides the name of the Dutchman in charge of attending the horses and oxen, who was also present, with some other Dutch attendants, during the presentation of the horses and oxen to the Kangxi Emperor. This Dutchman was called Niklaes Berkman.[28] Because the painting was painted a month after the event, it would be difficult to accept the red-haired figure as a direct portrait of Berkman but rather his intended portrait. Nevertheless, the possibility that we can actually link the figure of the first known depicted Dutchman in Chinese art to the name of a historical person participating in the Dutch embassy mission to the Chinese court, is extraordinary to say at the least.

27. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, pp. 350-351.
28. Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, pp. 225, 349, 384.

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Kangxi's fascination for the Dutch horses and oxen was also shared by his officials. Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634-1711), an official at the Ministry of Rites during the Dutch embassy's visit to the Kangxi court, wrote in his *Chibei outan* 池北偶談 (1701) twice about the horses and oxen. The first reference is as part of a short list of the most remarkable tribute items presented by the Dutch: [29]

> In the summer of the *dingwei*-year of the Kangxi reign (1667), the Dutch prince of Batavia Johan Maetsuycker (1606-1678) dispatched his envoy Pieter van Hoorn to present tribute. Among [the tribute] were eight swords, pliable as fingers; four trunks of sandalwood, each over six meters long; four small white oxen from the western seas, [which are] about fifty centimeters high and seventy centimeters long, very strange; their white skin has spots and stripes, and on their necks they have a flesh hump; four Dutch horses, [which have] sharp heads and pointed ears; their form and posture are absolutely extraordinary; [the tribute] furthermore [included] items such as glass boxes, cloves (?), and cotton.
> 康熙丁未夏，荷蘭國甲婁吧王油煩嗎綏極遣陪臣卑獨攀呵閏等入貢，內有刀劍八枚，其柔繞指；旃檀樹四株，各長二丈許；西洋小白牛四，高一尺七寸，長二尺有奇，白質斑文，項有肉峰；荷蘭馬四，銳頭卓耳，形態殊異；又玻璃箱、牡丁香、哆囉尼絨之屬。

The four items listed are Dutch swords, sandalwood, the horses, and the oxen. Judging from his description of the horses, it becomes clear that the horses differed from the ones usually encountered in China. They had sharper heads and pointy ears, and were of exquisite shape. The little oxen were of course even more curious, and judging from the measurements given by Wang Shizhen, they must have indeed been very tiny. Interestingly, Wang Shizhen describes a hump on their neck, and this feature is also seen depicted in the painting of the little oxen (**Fig. 1**). The size of the oxen, when compared with that of the human figures in the painting, also appears to be in the correct proportions. Even though the painting was executed after the event, the painters must have made real-life observations of the animals first. We may argue therefore that the horses in the painting were painted after sketches drawn according to real-life observations.

Fascinated by the extraordinary horses and little oxen, Wang Shizhen acted as a true scholar and searched for references to such animals in ancient texts. Here is his other writing on

29. Wang Shizhen 王士禎, *Chibei outan* 池北偶談 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan 臺灣商務印書館, 1983), ch. 4, *tan gu* 談故 4.

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the horses and oxen:[30]

> When I was serving at the Ministry of Rites, I saw small oxen from the western seas that the Dutch had presented as tribute, and they were very strange. I checked what the *Illustrations on the Royal Assembly* wrote about them, and it has [the phrase] "multiple *mei*-oxen from Chu." Its commentary says: "*Mei*-oxen are small oxen." The *Illustrations of the Royal Assembly* also has [the phrase], "the Yu people [presented] *sui*-horses." Its commentary says: "Sui-horses have one horn, and if the horn is big, the horse is called a *lin*-horse [unicorn]." According to the *Erya*: "A *xi*-horse is like a horse but with a horn; but without a horn, it is called a *qi*-horse."
> 予在禮部，見荷蘭所進西洋小牛，異之。考《王會圖》所載，有數楚之每牛。註：每牛，牛之小者。《王會圖》又有俞人之雖馬。註：雖馬一角，大者曰麟。按《爾雅》：騶，如馬，一角，不角者騏。

Wang Shizhen found relevant references to small oxen and special horses, termed *mei*-oxen and *sui*-horses, which according to the commentaries are small oxen and a kind of unicorns, horses with or without a horn. The textual source is very interesting. Wang credits both references to the *Wanghui tu* 王會圖 or *Painting of the Assembly of Kings*. Wang Shizhen here mixes up the title of a painting with that of a text. The painting is titled Wanghui tu, and is a painting of the early Tang dynasty (618-907) now lost. The *Wanghui jie* 王會解 or *Explanations on the Assembly of Kings*, is a chapter from the *Yizhoushu* 逸周書 or *Remnants of the Book of Zhou*, and Wang Shizhen is actually quoting from this text. Both, however, deal with foreign envoys presenting tribute, which probably explains the mix-up.[31] Importantly, to Wang Shizhen, the oxen and horses could be related to China's glorious past, and the horses even possessed mythological and fabulous properties.

The horses and oxen re-emerged in the writings of the Jesuits in the years after the Dutch embassy had left. According to the letters of the Jesuit and court astronomer Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (1623-1688), the young Kangxi was paying a visit to the horses and oxen on the morning of August 25, 1667, the same day he took over the rule of the Chinese empire from the

30. Wang Shizhen, *Chibei outan, ch*. 21, *tan yi* 談異 2.
31. Kong Chao 孔晁 compiled, *Yizhoushu* 逸周書 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan 臺灣商務印書館, 1983), ch. 59. For the painting, see Tang Kai-jian 湯開建, "Tang *Wanghui tu* zakao 唐《王會圖》雜考," *Minzu yanjiu* 民族研究, 1 (2011), pp. 77-85. A Song copy of a painting attributed to Tang painter Yan Liben with this title is in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

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Regents.[32] Interestingly, the painting of "Dutch Attendants, Oxen, and Horses" was completed a few days after this important event.[33] Two years later on October 31, 1669, the Kangxi Emperor took a group of Jesuits, among whom were Ferdinand Verbiest and Gabriel de Magalhães (1609-1607), to show them one of the horses the Dutch had given him.[34]

The above chronicle of Chinese imperial fascination for the Dutch horses and oxen stands in sharp contrast with the political background of the story. First of all, the Dutch embassy mission was an absolute failure. The Dutch received the official imperial decision on August 4, revoking the Dutch biennial trading rights they had won in 1664 for helping the Chinese defeat the forces of Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (Koxinga, 1624-1662) and which moreover had been confirmed in October the previous year.[35] The Chinese fascination for the horses was clearly not translated into their political support, or as accepting the "submission" of the Dutch as "a vasal state," in the rhetoric of Chinese tribute policies.[36] Even more astonishing is the fact that the Dutch apparently had already been informed of the Chinese decision to revoke the biennial trading rights on January 9, before their departure from Fuzhou.[37] The Dutch never received an

32. Ferdinand Verbiest, H. Josson, L. Willaert, *Correspondance De Ferdinand Verbiest De La Compagnie De Jésus (1623-1688), Directeur De L'observatoire De Pékin* (Bruxelles: Palais Des Académies, 1938), p. 121. See also John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, p. 100.
33. We will return to the possible connection between the inauguration and the painting in the next section on the Heavenly Horse.
34. Mentioned in John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, pp. 114, 270n94. Most curiously, after the inauguration, one of the first edicts Kangxi issued was on exempting Macao from the coastal evacuations, see John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, p. 100. The Portuguese embassy arriving a few years after the Dutch was as unsuccessful, but the exemption runs contrary to any wisdom or policy on the side of the Manchus (see the last section of this article), and practically granted the Portuguese (and the Jesuit mission) a unique access to China in the decades to come, of which the Dutch could only dream. Even though Wills suggests it was the hefty bribes that perhaps persuaded Kangxi, it is more likely that Verbiest had a significant influence on the fourteen-year-old Emperor (or was Kangxi somehow under the influence of Verbiest?). The Empress-Dowager may also have played a role in this curious change of fate. The Dutch horses were again a leitmotiv in this other saga that warrants further study.
35. *Kangxi huidian* 康熙會典 ch. 72, in Lo-shu Fu, *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations, 1644-1820* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1966), p. 33.
36. See the memorial of 1653 with the Dutch request for opening trade relations with China. Lo-shu Fu, *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations, 1644-1820*, p. 11.
37. John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, pp. 61-62. The decree from the Kangxi huidian ch. 72 is summarized in Lo-shu Fu, *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations, 1644-1820*, p. 39.

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explanation, and we do not know whether they had understood the decision; or that they perhaps saw the embassy as a chance to sway the Emperor's opinion. However, according to the reports and studies of the Dutch stay in Fuzhou, the Dutch never had a choice of aborting the embassy mission. Namely, the Chinese authorities in Fuzhou refused to let any Dutch ship leave the harbor, or conduct any trade for that matter. Essentially, the Dutch were forced on an embassy mission which was doomed to fail from the start.

Here we arrive at the conundrum of the entire Dutch embassy saga: if the embassy was doomed from the beginning but the horses and oxen remained the main (and only?) focal point of Chinese attention throughout the Dutch mission, does it not give the highly discomforting impression that the Dutch embassy was forced to Beijing for the sole purpose of delivering the horses and oxen to the Kangxi Emperor? All signs point to an affirmative answer even though there is no textual evidence to prove such a theory. At least, the questions posed to Ambassador Van Hoorn whether the Persian horses were indeed from Persia and whether Holland was on friendly terms with Persia were probably no trivial matters but serious questions probing the possibility of obtaining authentic Persian horses, questions which the Dutch seemed to have failed to answer persuasively.

III. The Heavenly Horse in Chinese Art and History

How are we to understand Kangxi's fascination for the Dutch horses and oxen? Kangxi's background and upbringing as a Manchu may have influenced his love for horses, as Wang Ching-ling has argued,[38] but Chinese history and mythology on horses, and to some extent oxen, may actually have been much more instrumental in triggering his fervent fascination. The Persian provenance of the Dutch tribute horses, which was verified by the Chinese officials during the embassy mission more than once, is the most significant detail. The history-myth of the horses is closely linked to the countries of Central Asia, which for millennia had been trading horses for silk with China. Therefore, in order to understand Kangxi's fascination, we need to take a deeper look at the history-myth of the horse in China.[39]

Although the equine history-myth may have originated long before the Han dynasty, the earliest textual and pictorial sources documenting the various stories associated with horses date

38. Wang Ching-ling, "Tuxiang zhengshi: *Helanguo ren yi niuma tu* suotan," p. 12.
39. For overviews of the history of the horse in Chinese art, see Robert E. Harrist, Jr., with Virginia Bower, *Power and Virtue: The Horse in Chinese Art* (New York: China Institute Gallery, 1997); Hou-mei Sung, *Decoded Messages: The Symbolic Language of Chinese Animal Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 171-206.

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from this period. The history-myth developed over time, mostly elaborating on the legends of Han times (although often set in classical pre-Han times), adding multiple layers of metaphors and meanings to the image of the horse. Besides the standard representation of the horse for transport, hunting, sports, or battle, I here want to focus on one specific image or stereotype of the horse in Chinese history, literature, and art, namely that of the horse as a representation of a divine and auspicious creature, which has since ancient times been referred to as the "Heavenly Horse" (*tianma* 天馬).

The Chinese had domesticated horses since the late Neolithic period, but the Chinese got used to riding horses, as cavalry for military purposes, only relatively late in the late fourth century BC. In addition, the original Chinese horses were comparatively short, while military horses needed to be tall and excel in speed and strength. These kinds of horses were specifically bred (and were not a different strain) in Inner Asia in the region north of Iran, traditionally referred to as Turan covering present Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, and Kirghizstan. Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 141-87), who after having been defeated by the Xiongnu (Huns) on their agile and powerful horses, sent out an envoy to look for the "Heavenly Horses" of the Western Regions in 139 BC. After more than a decade, the envoy returned and suggested to broker a deal with the Wusun 烏孫 in the Gansu area, thus obtaining several tens of horses.[40]

Against this background of Xiongnu pressure and steppe warfare, the quest for horses took on a more "divine" dimension when in 120 BC a horse was found "born" (like a dragon, which lives in water and rises to the skies, transforming into clouds and rain) from the Wowa 渥洼 river in present Dunhuang in Gansu Province and presented to the Han court. It was promptly eulogized in a song. In Richard Edwards' translation, the eulogy reads:

> Taiyi has given the horse of heaven,
> Moist with crimson sweat, foaming russet spittle.
> A will and spirit wondrous and strange,
> Trampling the floating clouds, darkened it races aloft.
> And oh this horse has lept ten thousand *li*,
> And with what can it be paired?
> The dragon its companion.

40. In the first century AD, horses obtained from Central Asia measured seven *chi* 尺 (23.2 cm) or sixteen hands in height or 162.4 cm. Chinese horses generally measured below thirteen hands or 131.9 cm. H. G. Creel, "The Role of the Horse in Chinese History," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 70, no. 3 (1965), pp. 648-661.

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Written in 120 B. C. on the occasion of the horse rising from the waters of the Wowa.[41]

The song contains several idioms or ideas that would become defining elements of the Heavenly Horse, and obviously the song had a lasting influence on later writings and images of the Heavenly Horse. These elements are the blood-sweating ("moist with crimson sweat"), the thousand *li* distance or ca. 300 km ("lept ten thousand *li*), as well as the representation of a dragon on earth ("trampling the floating clouds," "the dragon its companion"). In 107 BC, the Wusun sent a thousand horses as "tribute" to the Han court in exchange for a princess bride, sealing the alliance between the Han and the Wusun against the Xiongnu further.[42]

Before obtaining the Wusun horses in 107 BC however, Emperor Wu had already heard of blood-sweating horses with tiger-markings on their backs from Dayuan 大宛, or Ferghana in eastern Uzbekistan. Desperate for the horses, which instead of the Gansu horse he now termed the "Heavenly Horse," the emperor first dispatched envoys to Ferghana with gold to buy the horses. When that failed, he dispatched quite obsessively several costly military expeditions consisting of tens of thousands soldiers to obtain the horses by force. Lying at a distance of about three thousand kilometers from the Han capital Chang'an (Xi'an), the first two expeditions of 104 and 102 BC ended in disaster. In 101 BC, having prepared an army consisting of sixty-thousand soldiers, thirty thousand horses, and one hundred thousand cattle, as well as large stocks of weapons and armories, this third expedition was successful, even though only half of it reached Ferghana. At an extreme cost, they eventually brought back a few dozen of the best horses and about a thousand lesser horses.[43]

41. Richard Edwards, "The Cave Reliefs at Ma Hao," *Artibus Asiae*, 17: 1 (1954), pp. 15-16. The song is recorded in *Hanshu* 漢書 ch. 22, and an abbreviated version exists in *Shiji* 史記 ch. 24. Ban Gu 班固compiled, *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1970); Sima Qian 司馬遷 compiled, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1973).
42. Richard Edwards, "The Cave Reliefs at Ma Hao," p. 15.
43. Richard Edwards, "The Cave Reliefs at Ma Hao,"; H. G. Creel, "The Role of the Horse in Chinese History," pp. 662-663. The expeditions are described in *Hanshu* chapter 61 and *Shiji* chapter 123. The episode and the Fergana horse have been the subject of many other studies, for example in Eduard Erkes, "Das Pferd im alten China," *T'oung Pao*, 36 (1942), pp. 26-63; Homer H. Dubs, "The Blood-Sweating Horses of Ferghana," in Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, vol. 2 (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1944), pp. 132-135; Arthur Waley, "The Heavenly Horses of Ferghana: A New View," *History Today*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1955), pp. 95-103; and Augusto Azzaroli, *An Early History of Horsemanship* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp. 97-109. On the military campaigns of Emperor Wu, see Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti," in Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank eds., *Chinese Ways in Warfare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 67-122.

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Although the practical purpose of obtaining the Ferghana horses may have been to breed a better warrior-horse able to compete with the Xiongnu horses,[44] this is not how they are remembered and celebrated in Chinese history. Rather, the horses were perceived as divine, and described as such from the beginning. That same year, Emperor Wu conducted the rituals to Heaven and Earth, the most important rituals of the empire and performed by the emperor himself, to reinstate the bond between the emperor (as the Son of Heaven) and Heaven and Earth, and thus to legitimate his rule by divine sanction. In these sacred rituals, the Heavenly Horses from Ferghana also played an important role. One of the nineteen ritual songs was dedicated especially to the Heavenly Horse. In the translation of Richard Edwards again, it reads:

> The Horse of Heaven has come,
> From the regions of the West,
> Trampling shifting sands,
> And barbarians of the nine directions have submitted.
>
> The horse of heaven has come,
> Out of the waters of springs,
> Like a tiger's spine, double,
> Like a spirit, transforming itself.
>
> The horse of heaven has come,
> Crossing grassless tracts,
> He has traversed a thousand *li*,
> To follow the way of the East.
>
> The horse of Heaven has come,
> As he must in the time *zhixu*,
> He will shake himself and rear,
> Who knows when.

44. The entire campaign for the Ferghana horses may alternatively have been a mytho-religious excuse for waging war with the nomads of the Western Regions and subjugating them, which Emperor Wu eventually did, "pacifying" the region, expanding the Chinese empire further West, and making large inroads to the present Xinjiang region where the Xiongnu or Hun, the military and cultural opponents of the Chinese, lived. On the Han and Xiongnu relations, see Sophia-Karin Psarras, "Hand and Xiongnu: A Reexamination of Cultural and Political Relations (I)," *Monumenta Serica*, no. 51 (2003), pp. 55-236.

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The horse of heaven has come,
Open the far gates,
Raise up my body,
I go to Kunlun.

The horse of heaven has come,
Mediator for the dragon,
He travels to the Gate of Heaven,
And looks on the Terrace of Jade.[45]

The images the Heavenly Horse conjured up in this ritual song move from the geographical to the cosmological, and from the historical to the mythological. Importantly, the associations these images make instruct us on how the Heavenly Horse was viewed. Some of these associations are already known from the aforementioned song of 120 BC, such as rising from the water, transforming itself, and being able to travel a thousand li. These characteristics are expressions of its dragon-nature of which the Heavenly Horse is a terrestrial counterpart. Other associations are new, although clearly understood in the same line of its dragon-nature. The first stanza for example glorifies the Heavenly Horse for having submitted the barbarians in the nine (four?) directions, suggesting that its arrival signals the Chinese victory and hegemony over its surrounding enemies. The last two stanzas mention the Heavenly Horse in connection to Mt. Kunlun 昆崙山 and the Gate of Heaven (*changhe* 閶闔 or *tianmen* 天門), which should be understood in respect to Emperor Wu's personal endeavors to achieve immortality, such as searching for the Isles of the Blessed in the eastern seas where immortals are believed to roam, which all firmly belong to the realm of Daoism. In this Daoist cosmology, Mt. Kunlun is a sacred mountain located in the northwest which forms an axis between the heavenly and earthly realms.[46] In this capacity, Mt. Kunlun is also the location of the Gate of Heaven, providing access to a Heavenly Court, here identified as the Terrace of Jade, governed by a divine ruler and a celestial bureaucracy similar to the emperor in his palace on earth.[47]

45. Adopted with slight modifications from Richard Edwards, "The Cave Reliefs at Ma Hao," p. 17.
46. On Mt. Kunlun, see Lennert Gesterkamp, "The Synthesis of Daoist Sacred Geography: A Textual Study of Du Guangting's Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji (901)," *Daoism: Religion, History and Society*, no. 9 (2017), pp. 1-39.
47. On the Gate of Heaven, see for example Zhao Dian-zeng 趙殿增 and Yuan Shu-guang 袁曙光, ""Tianmen" kao: jianlun Sichuan Han huaxiang zhuan (shi) de zuhe zhuti 「天門」考— 兼論四川漢畫像磚（石）的組合和主題," *Sichuan wenwu* 四川文物, no. 6 (1990), pp. 3-11; and Lennert Gesterkamp, *The Heavenly Court: Daoist Temple Painting in China, 1200-1400*, pp. 151-152, 195-197.

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Notably, Dayuan or Ferghana lies in a northwestern direction seen from the Han capital Chang'an (Xi'an), and hence the cosmological location of Mt. Kunlun and its Gate of Heaven coincidentally overlaps with the origin of the Heavenly Horses. It is possible that the horses became "heavenly" precisely because of their association with the northwestern direction. Namely, according to Sima Qian (fl. 145-68 BC) in his *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian), Emperor Wu began his search for the Heavenly Horse after he had received a prognostication from the *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes) that "the divine horse will come from the northwest" 神馬當從西北來.[48] To Emperor Wu, the northwest notably indicated the location of Mt. Kunlun and the access to an immortal life, as can be ascertained from Sima Qian's scathing commentary on the military expeditions for the Heavenly Horses in his chapter on Ferghana (*Dayuan* 大宛):[49]

> "The Grand Scribe comments: The *Personal Record of Yu* states that "the Yellow River springs from Mt. Kunlun. Mt. Kunlun is more than 2500 li high; it is where the sun and moon conceal their rays of light. On its top are the Sweet Springs and the Jesper Pool." Now, since envoy Zhang Qian (d. 114 BC) has returned from Khotan, and has exhausted the source of the Yellow River, where can we see this forsaken Mt. Kunlun mentioned in the Personal Record? That is why I would say that the Nine Provinces and mountains and rivers of the *Book of Documents* are much closer [in description of reality]. Concerning all those weird creatures mentioned in the *Personal Record of Yu* and *Classic of Mountains and Seas,* I do not dare to discuss them any further."
> 太史公曰：《禹本紀》言「河出崑崙。崑崙其高二千五百餘里，日月所相避隱為光明也。其上有醴泉、瑤池」。今自張騫使大夏之後也，窮河源，惡睹本紀所謂崑崙者乎？故言九州山川，《尚書》近之矣。至《禹本紀》、《山海經》所有怪物，余不敢言之也。

Thus, obtaining a horse stemming from the northwest, equaled obtaining a horse from Mt. Kunlun and, importantly, a portent of Emperor Wu's imminent immortality. Richard Edwards came to a similar conclusion, arguing that the possession of a Heavenly Horse "is a seal or sign of the cosmic power that resides in heaven and earth."[50] Essentially, the arrival of the Ferghana horses was understood as a token of the Heavenly Mandate (*tianming* 天命) or heaven's

48. Sima Qian compiled, *Shiji*, ch. 123, Richard Edwards, "The Cave Reliefs at Ma Hao," p. 15.
49. Sima Qian compiled, *Shiji*, ch. 123, *Dayuan lizhuan* 大宛列傳.
50. Richard Edwards, "The Cave Reliefs at Ma Hao," p. 18.

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sanctioning of the emperor's divine rule, which included not only the achievement of his immortality but also the (voluntary) submission of his enemies.

Besides associations with dragons, submission of enemies, achieving immortality, and divine rule sanctioned by the Heavenly Mandate, Emperor Wu's ideas on the Heavenly Horse may also have been influenced by another famous legend (or myth) of King Mu of Zhou 周穆王 (10th cent. BC), in which he visits the Queen Mother of the West on Mt. Kunlun riding eight steeds in his quest for immortality.[51] Although earlier versions of this legend may have been known to Emperor Wu, the current evidence points rather to ancient texts such as the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas) as the main source for his endeavors.

Regardless of the actual motivations, King Mu's legend as well as Emperor Wu's Heavenly Horse and its many Han-period associations have in turn become the basis for similar events and a great number of literary encomiums in succeeding dynasties, especially in the Tang dynasty (618-907). All the various images and associations of the Heavenly Horse were blended together, to which new ones were added along the way. For example, because dancing horses acquired from Ferghana or as tribute from the Western Regions were often used to entertain the emperor or used in horse shows at court at least from the third century onward, the Heavenly Horse was added with a new attribute of being able to dance. Besides the entertainment and status value, a possible reason of so many exquisite horses performing for the emperor may have had a mythological reference also in the *Shanhai jing* (chapter 7), which records that the sage ruler Yu 禹, who established the Xia 夏, the first dynasty according to Chinese historical reckoning, had horses named *Jiudai* 九代 which were dancing to the music played during his enthronement.[52] Clearly the association of the Heavenly Horse with dancing should be seen in the light of its symbolic function as a portent of the Heavenly Mandate, which in this case was further extended to signifying the inauguration of a ruler.

It also became common practice to depict the horses obtained from the Western Regions in paintings and in sculptures. In these cases, the painting served as a documentation or "evidence"

51. The present textual version of the legend, the *Mutianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳 dates to the fourth century AD. For a study, see Gu Shi 顧實, *Mutianzi zhuan xizheng jiangshu* 穆天子傳西征講疏 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian 上海書店, 1991). The legend is however based on older traces already found in the Qin and Han dynasties, see Li Kai 李凱, "Xianqin Qin Han wenxian youguan Zhou Muwang xixun zhi shi bianxi 先秦秦漢文獻有關周穆王西巡之事辨析," *Shixue shi yanjiu* 史學史研究, no. 3 (2010), pp. 113-115. The *Mutianzi zhuan* served as a model for another work in which Emperor Wu travels to Mt. Kunlun to visit the Queen Mother of the West, the *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳, see Kristofer Schipper, *L'Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste*: Han Wou-ti Nei-tchouan (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1965).

52. Paul W. Kroll, "The Dancing Horses of T'ang," *T'oung Pao*, vol. 67, vol. 3-5 (1981), p. 256.

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of the arrival of such a divine portent signaling the Heavenly Mandate and divine rule of the governing emperor, the defeat or submission of a foreign enemy, inauguration, or any other auspicious outcome or blessing associated with the Heavenly Horse. During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-756), an official was looking for medical minerals in Shandong for the emperor. He met an old man (obviously an immortal) predicting that he would find a dragon-horse near the rivers Qi and Lu. The old man explained the importance of his prognostication: first, the emperor will enjoy life for myriad years without relying on medicines (which the official was gathering); and second, the horse is a talisman of Great Peace, heralding an era of perfect harmony according to Daoist legend and lore, as well as a token that surpasses other animals such as the unicorn, phoenix, tortoise, and dragon in auspiciousness. In 741, in a river in Shandong, a dragon-horse was procured from a mare which gave birth to it without having mated with a stallion (and hence the newborn was fathered by a dragon we assume). In appearance, it resembled a dragon: "Its coloring was a mixed blue-black and white; its two flanks had fish-scale plating; its mane and tail were like the tufted bristles of a dragon; its whinnying call had truly the tone of a hollow flute; and in one day it could gallop three hundred li." The horse was presented to Emperor Xuanzong who was greatly pleased and, significantly in the context of our study, "commanded painters to depict its form, to be published and revealed both within [the court] and without."[53]

Although the story behind the horse's discovery may be apocryphal, as with the horse born from the Wowa River presented to Emperor Wu of the Han, it emphatically places the discovery within the context of the ancient Han lore of the Heavenly Horse and imperial legitimation. The original painting of the Tang dragon-horse is long lost, but an early painting of a different topic that clearly adopts the same kind of mythological framework has survived. It depicts a steed literally rising from the water, from which it was apparently born (Fig. 2). It is attributed to China's most famous horse painter, the Tang painter Han Gan 韓幹 (fl. 740-756), but it is probably of a slightly later date.[54]

Another theme in painting inspired by or relevant to the Heavenly Horse, was the favorite battle horses of Tang emperors. Best known are the four tomb relief sculptures of the originally six steeds of Tang Emperor Taizong (r. 626-649), which once stood at his Zhaoling 昭陵 Mausoleum near Xi'an, and of which two are now in the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia (**Fig. 3**), and two in the Beilin Museum of Xi'an. The Six Steeds are a direct

53. Paul W. Kroll, "The Dancing Horses of T'ang," pp. 253-254.

54. The painting depicts the Jin dynasty monk Zhidun (314-366), who was given a white horse, after a story in the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, *yanyu* 言語 chapter. Xu Zhuo-ren 徐卓人, "*Shenjun tu* shang de gaoseng Zhidun 《神駿圖》上的高僧支遁," *Wenhua jiaoliu* 文化交流, no. 6 (2007), pp. 53-55.

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reference to the eight steeds of King Mu of Zhou, turning not only the steeds into Heavenly Horses, but Emperor Taizong also into a latter-day King Mu of Zhou with all his symbolic trappings of military power, dynastic legitimacy, immortality-seeking, and divine assistance.

Later, Emperor Xuanzong also had one favorite horse from the Western Regions, called Night-Shining White (*zhaoyebai* 照夜白). This horse "could perform military maneuvers and dance while holding a goblet of wine in its mouth," and was immortalized in paint by Han Gan 韓幹 (fl. 740-756), now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 4). These images are all well-known and widely published.[55]

The horses as well as their first images became models for later paintings and literary expressions in prose and poetry.[56] The poets may not have seen the actual horse, but rather only saw a painting of the horse or horses. For example, the "six steeds" (*liujun* 六駿) in painting or poetry would almost always be a reference to Tang Emperor Taizong's six beloved steeds. In these literary encomiums, the six steeds almost always served as an allusion to the military prowess associated with the Heavenly Horse from Ferghana. These poetic endeavors should in most cases be understood as thinly veiled celebrations of the emperor's military prowess and the Heavenly Horse, painting or real, as a symbol of the emperor.

The Heavenly Horse became further related to the theme of the "eight steeds" (*bajun* 八駿), which, in contrast, evolved from a literary trope to a major theme in painting. As mentioned above, King Mu of Zhou rode on a carriage with eight steeds to visit the Queen Mother of the West at Mt. Kunlun located in the far northwest. Although based on earlier stories, the complete version of the tale, called *Mutianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳 (Biography of Mu, the Son of Heaven), at least as known today, was only recorded in the fourth century in the *Shiyi ji* 拾遺記 (Record of Retrieved Stories). In this legendary tale, the eight steeds figure prominently, each with his own exotic name (although the names changed in later times). Around the same time, Shi Daoshuo 史道碩 is credited with having first painted the eight steeds. According to Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (815-907) in his *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (Record of Famous Painters through the Ages, chapter 9), they were all depicted with "dragons' horns, necks, and bodies, and [galloping fast like] shooting arrows and flashing lightning; they were not the shape of horses" 皆螭頸龍體，矢激電馳，非馬之狀也. The "eight steeds" would become a fixture of many horse

55. Robert E. Harrist, Jr., with Virginia Bower, *Power and Virtue: The Horse in Chinese Art*, pp. 78-79; Hou-mei Sung, *Decoded Messages: The Symbolic Language of Chinese Animal Painting*, pp. 176-177; Suzanne Cahill, "Night-Shining White: Traces of a T'ang Dynasty Horse in Two Media," *T'ang Studies*, no. 4 (1986), pp. 91-94.

56. For the literary expressions on horses in the Tang, see Paul W. Kroll, "The Dancing Horses of T'ang,"; and Madeline K. Spring, "Fabulous Horses and Worthy Scholars in Ninth-Century China," *T'oung Pao*, vol. 74, no. 4-5 (1988), pp. 173-210.

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paintings in later periods, with or without reference to the original King Mu of Zhou story, but always in connection to the Heavenly Horse of Ferghana and its association with divine rulership and military prowess.[57]

For our study of the Kangxi court painting of the Dutch horses and oxen, the most important association between the Heavenly Horse and the motifs in Chinese horse painting is the theme of tribute horses. This kind of painting is, in Chinese language studies, referred to as a "tribute horse painting" (*gongma tu* 貢馬圖) or "painting of offering a horse [as tribute]" (*xianma tu* 獻馬圖). Iconographically speaking, it constitutes a different theme than the previous examples of imperial horses. Because the horse is offered as tribute or gift from a western region, it is always depicted together with its foreign groom. The groom's foreign identity is readily recognizable from his bushy beard, big nose, large deep-sunken eyes, a waist belt, trousers, and boots, or a selection thereof, but unmistakably not part of the traditional Chinese dress or Chinese physiognomy. Interestingly, the painting of the "Divine Steed" (**Fig. 2**) includes, characteristically we may assume, a foreigner (the horse groom?) on the far right, visually underscoring the ideological association between the Heavenly Horse and its foreign origin in the Western Regions or Ferghana.

The earliest textual reference suggests that possibly the first painting of this kind was made in the early Tang dynasty in 629 for Emperor Taizong (r. 626-649). That year, the Four Barbarians (*siyi* 四夷), i.e. the foreign peoples of the four directions surrounding the Middle Kingdom, China, came to the Tang court to present tribute. This event was recorded in a painting by Yan Lide 閻立德 (d. 656) on the suggestion of the official Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581-645), who likened the event of "myriad countries coming to make a court audience" (*wanguo laichao* 萬國來朝) to all the barbarian tribes offering tribute to the first king of Zhou, King Wu (d. 1043 BC), as described in the chapter *Wanghui* 王會 (Assembly of Kings) of the Zhou annals.[58]

Most interestingly, this is exactly the same text we already encountered in previous passages and which the Minister of Rites Wang Shizhen quoted to identify the horses presented

57. For a study of the references to these paintings in classical sources, see Zhang Chang-hong 張長虹, "Mu jun tianmajun, houren ai zhi xie wei tu: Tangdai *Bajun tu* huihua ticai yanjiu 穆駿天馬駒，後人愛之寫為圖——唐代《八駿圖》繪畫題材研究," in Luo Hong-cai 羅宏才 (ed.), *Shi yuanxiao meishu kaogu yanjiu wenji* 十院校美術考古研究文集 (Shanghai: Shanghai daxue chubanshe 上海大學出版社, 2014), pp. 32-51.

58. Liu Xu劉昫compiled, *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1975), ch. 197. For the identification of Yan Lide as the painter, see Tang Kai-jian, "Tang Wanghui tu zakao," pp. 77-79. The term *wanguo laichao* 萬國來朝 is also the title of four large hanging scrolls painted many centuries later for the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736-1795) of the Qing dynasty and now in the Palace Museum in Beijing. This set of painting has arguably taken their title, as well as their meaning, from this Tang reference.

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by the Dutch to the Kangxi Emperor as sui-horses. The ancient annals to which Yan Shigu refers are the *Yizhoushu*, and the *Wanghui jie* chapter describes the alleged offering of exotic gifts by numerous foreign envoys. This particular chapter is apocryphal and probably dates to the Han dynasty, befitting the time and worldview of Han Emperor Wu, whose exploits in the Western Regions I already discussed.[59]

A slightly later Tang text mentions that a Kirgiz (*xiajiasi* 黠戛斯) chieftain presented two "supreme horses" (*liangma* 良馬) to Emperor Taizong,[60] and an early Song poem describes the painting as depicting horses:

> In the "Painting of the Assembly of Kings,"
> jade-white horses are displayed;
> In the ritual procession of Han officials,
> flags with dragons and the sun and moon are raised.[61]

Also of interest is the uniform description of the Kirgiz chieftain in Tang and Song sources: he was very tall, had a white face, red hair, and green eyes.[62] This is one of the very few mentions of people with red hair in Chinese sources. The numerous references to this curious feature underscores it rarity.

A thousand years later, the Dutch would be termed the Red Haired Barbarians (*hongmaofan* 紅毛番) by the Ming Chinese who were similarly astounded by this feature. Although there is no direct connection between the Dutch and the Kirgiz, it is most remarkable to find that both have been painted presenting horses as tribute to the Chinese emperors. Although we have no record of Kangxi's ideas about this gift, Tang Emperor Taizong purportedly asked

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59. Huang Huai-xin 黃懷信, "*Yizhoushu* 逸周書," in *Zhongguo da baike quanshu* 中國大百科全書, *Zhongguo lishi* 中國歷史 (Beijing: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe 中國大百科全書出版社, 1992), vol. 3, pp. 1406-1407; Edward L. Shaughnessy, "I Chou shu 逸周書 (Chou shu)," in Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), pp. 229-232.
60. *Xiajiasi chaogongtu zhuan xu* 黠戛斯朝貢圖傳序 (Preface to the Biography and Painting of the Kirgiz Presenting Tribute at Court), by Li De-yu 李德裕 (787-850), in *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1983), ch. 707.
61. 王會圖中陳璧馬，漢官儀裏濕旂常. From *Yuanri hemen baibiao yu Xue Chengyong shu* 元日閤門拜表遇雪呈永叔 (Meeting Uncle Xue Chengyong while Presenting a Memorial at the Imperial Gate on the First Lunar Day), by Mei Yao-chen 梅堯臣 (1002-1060), in Zhang Dong-run 張東潤 (ann.), *Mei Yaochen ji biannian jiaozhu* 梅堯臣集編年校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1980), ch. 55.
62. Tang Kai-jian, "Tang *Wanghui tu* zakao," pp. 83-84.

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his officials why the foreigners would come from afar to see him. To which they answered that "they have come to Your court from different regions because the Middle Kingdom is governed in peace and your Majesty's virtue has reached so far."[63] In the eyes of the Tang Chinese, it is the manifestation of the Heavenly Mandate, when a peaceful and harmonious rule results in the arrival of foreigners of faraway regions presenting tribute of divine horses and other precious gifts. This Tang event may well be applied to the Kangxi court and the arrival of the Dutch as well, and can serve as a strong indication for the interpretation of the Kangxi painting.

The Tang painting by Yan Lide is an elaboration on an existing tradition of painting horses and foreign grooms, the traces of which are abundantly found in Tang tombs. At least, an early sixth-century tomb from Jiuyuangang 九原崗 near Xinzhou 忻州 in northern Shanxi depicts on both corridor walls horses with foreign figures. Chinese archaeologists have termed the scene however as a "painting of horse trade" instead of a tribute painting, probably because a Chinese official, in red dress and with official cap, is depicted near the horse among the foreigners (**Fig. 5**).[64] The scene may refer to special outposts at the frontier especially designated for horse trade, and where foreigners would trade their horses in exchange for Chinese products such as silk.[65] Perhaps the tomb host was related to such affairs. Tribute or trade painting, the theme of a horse and a foreigner accompanying the horse remains essentially the same.

The same format of a horse attended by a foreigner is witnessed in several other tombs from the Tang period. The most impressive one is undoubtedly the horses and camels depicted in the tomb murals of Lady Tang (died 693, reburied 708), a consort of Tang Emperor Ruizong (r. 684-690 and 710-712), near Luoyang in Henan (**Fig. 6**).[66] The scenes appear on the same location at the beginning of the corridor leading to the tomb chamber as in the Jiuyuangang tomb murals, pointing to a two-century old pictorial tradition in northern China.

Another Tang image of horses and foreign attendants is included, for example, in the murals of the tomb of Lady Wei 韋 (597-665, buried 666), a concubine of Emperor Taizong,

63. 殊域來朝者，中國又安，帝德遐被所致也. From *Xiajiasi chaogongtu zhuan xu*, in *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文, ch. 707.

64. Zhang Qing-jie 張慶捷 et al., "Shanxi Xinzhou Jiuyuangang Beichao bihua mu 山西忻州市九原崗北朝壁畫墓," *Kaogu* 考古, no. 7 (2015), pp. 51-74.

65. Ma Jun-min 馬俊民 and Wang Shi-ping 王世平, *Tangdai mazheng* 唐代馬政 (Xi'an: Xibei daxue chubanshe西北大學出版社, 1995); Bao Hong-biao 保宏彪, "Tangdai mazheng yu Guyuan mamu zhi diwei 唐代馬政與固原馬牧之地位," *Ningxia shizhi* 寧夏史志, no. 2 (2014), pp. 33-37.

66. Yang Zhi-qiang 楊誌強, "Luoyang Tangdai Anguo Xiangwang Ruren Tang shi mu bihua tanxi 洛陽唐代安國相王孺人唐氏墓壁畫探析," *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan gankan* 中國國家博物館館刊, no. 12 (2016), pp. 28-37.

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at his Zhaoling Mausoleum.[67] The image vividly depicts the emotions of the attendants as well as the horse, with one foreigner heavily frowning and backing away, while the other trying to bridle the snorting and angry-looking horse. Both men are characteristically dressed in foreign costume and have big noses and deep sunken eyes (**Fig. 7**). Because the Zhaoling Mausoleum for Emperor Taizong was designed by Yan Lide,[68] the painter of the aforementioned "Assembly of Kings" of the Kirgiz chieftain and horses, this remarkably expressive painting is possibly the closest example, besides the Six Steeds sculptures, of a painting by Yan Lide and his "Assembly of Kings." The Lady Wei tomb mural is also a direct precursor of Han Gan's "Night Shining White" for Emperor Xuanzong a century later, which shows a similar evocative display of distress and anger in the horse's facial expression and posture after being tied to a pole (**Fig. 4**). We could positively argue that these traits are the characteristics of the mythical Heavenly Horse of Ferghana, fierce and fearless, exactly the kind of characteristics that suited a warrior horse and, in extension, a Tang warrior emperor. In extension, we may assume that these characteristics made a similar appeal to the young Kangxi Emperor, possibly accounting for his deep fascination for the Persian horses offered by the Dutch.

Depicting horses with foreigners, often in the context of a tribute embassy to the Chinese, remained a popular theme in Chinese painting of horses in the centuries after the Tang dynasty. The precise background of many of these paintings still awaits research, for example whether they represent an actual event, copies of earlier paintings, or otherwise. An early example of a tribute horse painting is Zhao Yan's 趙嚴 (d. 923) "Taming a Horse" in the Shanghai Museum (**Fig. 8**).[69] It shows a horse in three-quarter view from the rear raising its head and lifting its left rear leg to counter the impending jerk of the rope by the foreign groom. Its sharp ears are pointed upwards; the eyes pierce at the groom, showing that the horse is keenly aware of what is going to happen. The groom, in contrast, is depicted with a dull look on his face and not paying any attention to the horse behind him or anything else for that matter. Such an excellent Heavenly Horse would of course be a perfect gift befitting an emperor, an exchange in which the horse becomes a symbol for the ruler. Zhao Yan was the son-in-law of Emperor Taizu (907-912) of the

67. Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiuyuan 陝西省考古研究院, Zhaoling bowuguan 昭陵博物館 eds., *Tang Zhaoling Wei guifei mu fajue baogao* 唐昭陵韋貴妃墓發掘報告 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe 科學出版社, 2017); Gao Chun-hong 高春鴻, "Tang Zhaoling Wei guiji mu bihua zuozhe tantao 唐昭陵韋貴妃墓壁畫作者探討." *Wenwu shijie* 文物世界, no. 3 (2003), pp. 40-42.

68. Xiong Cunrui (Victor), *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), p. 734.

69. Wang Xiao-jun 王曉君, "Wudai Liang Zhao Yan hua ma 五代梁趙嵓畫馬," *Zhongwen zixiu* 中文自修, no. 7 (2014), p. 53. I here follow the attribution to Zhao Yan, but I have been unable to verify this. A Qing copy of the painting is in the Freer Gallery in Washington.

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Later Liang (907-923), and he may have painted a horse from life, which was sent to the court as tribute from the Western Regions. Interestingly, the horse is spotted, which we can now interpret as "dragon scales" in the light of the mythology of the Heavenly Horse.

Probably the most famous horse painting in Chinese history is "Five Horses" by Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049-1106) (Fig. 9a-f). The painting has been assumed lost somewhere in Japan, until it suddenly and most excitingly resurfaced in a large, especially dedicated exhibition in the National Museum of Tokyo, Japan, in January and February 2019. The recent publication and subsequent studies of the painting by Huang Xiaofeng 黃小峰 and Itakura Masāki 板倉聖哲 have brought a lot of new aspects of the painting to light, which are greatly helpful to our present study.[70] Because of its recent discover and the importance of the painting for our topic, as well as the revealing of so much new information (in non-Western sources), I will deal with this painting and the two studies in slightly more detail.

The painting depicts five different horses and their grooms, of whom three are foreign and two are Chinese as distinguished by their facial features and costumes. It has a colophon by the Song calligrapher and friend of Li Gonglin, Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105), which however nowhere speaks of five horses, but most interestingly for our present research, only of Heavenly Horses (*tianma* 天馬) (**Fig. 9f**). The first four horses also have a short inscription indicating that they were presented as tribute in the Yuanyou period of Song Emperor Zhezong (r. 1085-1100), as well as providing details of their names, height, color, and provenance. The colophons are usually believed to have been written by Huang Tingjian as well.

However, exquisite research into the details of these inscriptions and the horse paintings

70. At the time of writing this article, Li Gonglin's painting was still lost. It was believed to have disappeared or destroyed during the Second World War somewhere in Japan. During the reviewing process however, "Five Horses" astonishingly and miraculously re-emerged, after having been assumed lost for over seven decades. An anonymous reviewer was most kind in pointing me to two important valuable publications that had appeared on the subject in the meantime, for which I want to express my deepest gratitude. The first is Itakura Masāki 板倉聖哲 ed., *Ri Kōrin "Gobazu"* 李公麟《五馬図》 (Tōkyō: Hatori Shoten 羽鳥書店, 2019); and the other is Huang Xiao-feng 黃小峰, "Chongfang "Wuma tu" 重訪《五馬圖》," *Meishu yanji*u 美術研究, 4 (2019), pp. 81-89. Foo an online edition of this article with better images, see https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/P-GL6nDAK32aEAamXgMCvw (accessed on 8 November 2019). The latter was first presented at a conference at the Palace Museum in Beijing in 2015, the proceedings of which are still forthcoming in a publication titled 2015 *Nian Shiju baoji guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 2015年《石渠寶笈》國際學術研討會論文集. Most unfortunately, I have been unable to find a copy of Itakura's book in the Netherlands while revising this article and had to rely on an interview with him published on the Chinese website *thepaper.cn* 澎湃新聞: https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_3239310 (accessed on 8 November 2019).

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by Huang Xiaofeng have shown that this attribution is highly improbable.[71] The calligraphy of the inscriptions shows at least two different hands, and the details are not uniform and in most cases do not correlate to the horses depicted. Significantly, the dates for the tribute embassies and their provenances do not match with the Song records. Moreover, the exotic names given in the inscriptions to some of the horses, including Night Shining White for the fourth horse for example (**Fig. 9e**), are names of Tang horses. A similar Tang date is indicated by the dress of the first two foreigners (**Figs. 9a-b**), whose peculiar hats can be witnessed in several Tang depictions of foreigners. The split robe and typical *futou* 幞頭-hats worn by the three other grooms are the standard dress of Chinese officials of the Tang period (**Figs. 9c-e**), and similarly point to a Tang date. Interestingly, the third groom is a bearded foreigner with an aquiline nose and sunken eyes dressed but in Chinese official cap and dress, which he has tied up to his waist and one shoulder bared, indicating he has been washing the horse while standing in water (**Fig. 9c**). The groom holds a horse-brush in his left hand. This portrayal is different from that of the other grooms, and together with the other two Chinese grooms and their horses (**Figs. 9d-e**), would place it outside the ritual format of tribute painting.

All in all, the idea that Li Gonglin's "Five Horses" is a historical depiction of tribute horse presentation, including the underlying assumption that Li Gonglin personally witnessed the horses and painted them from real-life, is therefore a misconception. The inscriptions should have been added at a later date (but prior to the early Yuan period when the scroll was first recorded), using semi-historical data, perhaps gleaned from writings on Li Gonglin's horse paintings. Namely, Huang Xiaofeng shows masterfully that Li Gonglin had made a copy of a painting of "Three Horses" by the Tang master Han Gan, mentioned earlier in our study, which he had in his possession. Others in his circle, such as Huang Tingjian and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), wrote encomiums on the original painting or otherwise Li Gonglin's copy. From these poems we know that the names of the first two horses of the present "Five Horses" painting match those of the Han Gan painting, making it highly probable that these first two horses are actually derived from this copy of the Han Gan horses (**Figs. 9a-b**). The third horse by Han Gan is purportedly long lost. By contrast, Huang Tingjian and Su Shi's other poems link a painting by Li Gonglin of a horse, which bears the same name as the third horse attended by the washing-groom (**Fig. 9c**), to the event of a Turfan horse first being traded to the military and then presented to the court for its remarkable appearance and exceptional height (some six foot, from foot to shoulder) — an event for which Li Gonglin was commissioned to make a painting. Similar written records can be associated with the fourth horse (Night Shining White) (Fig. 9d), but curiously nothing on the fifth horse (**Fig. 10e**).

71. Huang Xiao-feng, "Chongfang "Wuma tu"," pp. 81-82.

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The pastiche-like composition of the scroll is also borne out by its materiality. The five horses are all painted on single sheets of paper and not on one scroll, further testifying to the fact that the painting is neither a historical event nor intended as a tribute painting. Detailed research by Itakura Masāki has further shown that the paper for the first four sheets is indeed the highly praised *chengxintang* 澄心堂-paper, as Li Gonglin was known to have used, and that these four sheets all have small differences in fiber and color. The fifth sheet, which depicts a horse with a Chinese groom and is left without an inscription, is curiously of a different type of paper and evidently of a lower quality. Itakura Masāki rather associates the style of this fifth painting with Yuan dynasty horse painting.[72]

I would like to add that the coloring also sets the paintings apart. The first three horse paintings are all subtly colored, and these colorings are an essential part of the typical identities of the horses and grooms. For example, the first groom has a tanned face and a blond-red beard (**Fig. 9a**). This correlates to descriptions of the Kirgiz chieftain with his red hair mentioned earlier, who visited Tang Emperor Taizong and bestowed on him two supreme horses.[73] By contrast, color is absent or plays no such identifying role in the remaining two horse paintings and their grooms (**Figs. 9d-e**). The use of color is even more noteworthy, since Li Gonglin is best known as the originator of the so-called *baimiao* 白描 or "white-drawing" (i.e. no color) style which would become the hallmark of literati painting in later times, of which Li Gonglin and especially his horse painting is seen as one of the greatest exponents. Most curiously, this *baimiao* concept must even have influenced our own study and representation of the "Five Horses" painting. Hitherto it was only known from a photograph, of which two versions existed, one in black-and-white, and one with the paintings in black-and-white but all the seals in red, thus suggesting that the original painting was entirely in *baimiao*. With the discovery of the original scroll, these ideas of *baimiao* and its association with Li Gonglin and the emergence of literati painting should be revisited. The fact that the two last horse paintings in the scroll, which are the least documented, are in *baimiao* may be considered suspect in this context.

The new information that has come to light in these studies has direct bearing on our study of the Heavenly Horse, and may even help to reveal some other yet unnoticed aspects of the "Five Horses" painting. Namely, if the first two horses indeed represent tribute paintings after a Tang original by Han Gan, they gloriously bear the markings of a Heavenly Horse (**Figs. 9a-b**). The second horse, for example, has a patch of dark spots on its shoulder, prominently

72. Itakura Masāki ed., *Ri Kōrin "Gobazu";* see also his interview published on *thepaper.cn* 澎湃新聞: https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_3239310.

73. Because the Kirgiz chieftain is recorded to have had green eyes, it would be interesting to know the color of the first groom's eyes too. The reproductions I have seen are unfortunately not detailed enough.

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visible to the viewer. Huang Xiaofeng has not only identified strangely similar patches on horses in other horse paintings,[74] but has also been able to identify the specific name of this type of pattern in Chinese written sources (**Fig. 9b**). Although these markings may seem insignificant, they were part of an official policy of categorizing horses, which was used to rank their value and status. The second horse is named in the inscription as "Brocade Shoulder Piebald Horse" (*jinbo cong* 錦膊驄), which should refer to the typical patch on the horse's shoulder. According to Huang Xiaofeng's research, Song texts refer to this type of marking as an "eagle wing" (*yingbang* 鷹膀), "purple shoulder" (*zibo* 紫膊), or "embroidered shoulder" (*xiubo* 繡膊). In the same context, as Huang Xiaofeng points out, Huang Tingjian describes one of the three Han Gan horses in his poem as being "a piebald horse from Xihe (in Gansu) decorated with grape brocade" (*Xihe cong zuo putao jin* 西河驄作葡萄錦). The markings on its legs are a similar subject of categorization in Song texts. The horse can be further specified as a dun horse, best identified by its dorsal stripe running over its back to its tail and, as observed by Huang Xiaofeng, also depicted in the second painting with a long, coarse, dark brush line, which is absent in the other horse paintings. Horses with such markings on shoulders, legs, and body were deemed among the best in the Chinese classification.

Considering the above investigations in the Heavenly Horse, we should now be able to easily identify such markings as pertaining to the attributes of the Heavenly Horse. After all, the Heavenly Horse is a terrestrial dragon, and the "brocade wing" can be identified as the wings of a dragon. Also, the markings of its legs make them look suspiciously a lot like dragon legs. The second tribute horse was considered a Heavenly Horse, thus explaining its high rank in the Chinese classification.

In the same vein, we can look at the first horse (**Fig. 9a**). Huang Xiaofeng indicates that the first horse is named as "Wind Head Piebald Horse" (*fengtou cong* 風頭驄) in the inscription, and Su Shi also refers to the first horse of Han Gan's "Three Horses" as "wind breast" (*fengying* 風膺) in his poem on the painting, both using traditional terms associated with speed in Chinese poetry and literature. In the context of our study of the Heavenly Horse, these kinds of terms are of course an attribute of the Heavenly Horse and its dragon nature, likening its speed to that of the wind. If we further look at its markings, we can see that the lower half of the horse's body is covered with soft, round spots, which could easily be interpreted as dragon scales. Therefore, the typical markings of this first horse, similar to the second horse, link it directly to the dragon nature of the Heavenly Horse. The first two tribute horses in Li Gonglin's painting are Heavenly Horses!

74. These paintings are Zhao Mengfu's 趙孟頫 (1254-1322) "Washing Horses" 浴馬圖, and Qiu Ying's 仇英 (fl. 1494-1522) "Presenting Tribute" 職貢圖, both in the Beijing Palace Museum. See Huang Xiao-feng, "Chongfang "Wuma tu"," p. 83.

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The third horse, although not a standard tribute painting, may also be interpreted through the prism of the Heavenly Horse (**Fig. 9c**). Its name in the inscription, written in a different hand, is "Loving to be Ahead Red" (*haotouchi* 好頭赤). Huang Xiaofeng has identified a possible source for the painting in a painting of a "sweating blood horse" (*hanxue ma* 汗血馬) done by Li Gonglin on a commission for the Song emperor Zhezong. The horse was presented to the court from Turfan after having been discovered in a military trading post. Sweating blood, as we have seen in our research, is a characteristic of the Heavenly Horse, and we may therefore assume that the Song emperor coveted the horse so much, besides its exceptional height, for this particular reason. In Li Gonglin's painting, the third horse is colored in a peculiar red, in contrast to the other horse paintings which are white or only with slight coloring. Since the name, albeit apocryphal, also specifically identifies this red aspect, it is very well possible that this painting is depicting the Heavenly Horse from Turfan presented to the Song court and painted by Li Gonglin. However, Huang Xiaofeng points to several discrepancies in the dates of the tribute offering and the records on Li Gonglin's painting.[75] In order to account for such discrepancy, it may well be possible that Li Gonglin painted the horse several years after the actual event. We will see that a similar circumstance applied to the Kangxi painting of the Dutch horses.

Evidently, the legend and lore of the Heavenly Horse were of great influence to later Chinese painting of horses, from Han Gan to Li Gonglin, and we now know that it even was codified into the classification of horses in the Song dynasty. Although the symbolism and sacred devotion of the Heavenly Horse are nowhere explicitly mentioned in these Song sources, the depictions of the horses and the poems written on them indicate without doubt that all involved were deeply aware of the symbolic trappings of the Heavenly Horse.

It of course remains a question whether Kangxi had possibly seen Li Gonglin's painting of the "Five Horses." At least, we know from his inscription and seals filling the scroll, that his grandson, the Qianlong Emperor, had the scroll in his collection, and we may therefore assume that Kangxi had seen it as well. For example, while the inscriptions accompanying the details of the horses in the Li Gonglin painting are scarcely seen in other horse tribute paintings, they are prominently present in the Kangxi painting of the Dutch horses, perhaps indicating that it follows Li Gonglin's example. On the other hand, a closer scrutiny of the seals may reveal the scroll's whereabouts during Kangxi's reign and that it was more likely in private hands.[76]

75. Huang Xiao-feng, "Chongfang "Wuma tu"," pp. 83-84.

76. Unfortunately I have been unable to check the information regarding the seals in Itakura Masāki ed., *Ri Kōrin "Gobazu."* I suspect it was in private hands, as most famous paintings were in Qianlong's collection.

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A much lesser known painting, but certainly of far greater historical value for our present study, is a painting of a tribute horse made a few centuries later at the end of the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1260-1368). The painting is the earliest known record of a European tribute mission to the Chinese court, and therefore a direct precedent of the Dutch embassy and the Kangxi painting of horses and oxen. In 1336, the Mongol Emperor Toghon Temür (Emperor Shun, r. 1330-1368), only sixteen years old, sent a "Frank" (*folangji* 佛郎機, i.e. European) together with fourteen others as an embassy to Europe with a letter for the Pope inviting an envoy and missionaries to China, and requesting, most interestingly, a horse and precious gifts. In 1338, Pope Benedict XII (1285-1342) sent the Italian Prelate and Franciscan priest Giovanni de' Marignolli (1290-1360) together with three others, providing them with a letter as well as a French horse. Their journey from Avignon in southern France (where the Pope had moved his court at that time) to the Mongol emperor took them four years to complete. In the Autumn of 1342, they were received by the Mongol emperor who was greatly delighted with the gift of the horse. The Emperor had his officials compose eulogies on the horse, and ordered two painters, Zhou Lang 周郎 and the Daoist priest Zhang Yanfu 張彥輔, to record the event in painting. Although Zhang Yanfu's painting is lost, Zhou Lang's painting has survived, probably in a copy, together with a long eulogy written by the great Yuan poet and Hanlin scholar Jie Xisi 揭傒斯 (1274-1344). It is now in the collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing and titled "France Presenting a Horse" (*folangguo xianma tu* 佛郎國獻馬圖) or alternatively "Heavenly Horse" (*tianma tu* 天馬圖) (**Fig. 10**).[77] It depicts a foreigner leading a black stallion with a white belly and white socks, followed on the left by two tall foreigners dressed in a mixed costume of

77. I translate *folangguo* 佛郎國 "country of the Franks" literally as "France," but "Europeans" would be more correct, as no differentiation was made between European countries and France and such was not known to the Chinese. From the correspondence between the Mongol Khan and the Pope, it seems that the Khan understood the Pope as the ruler of this "France" or Europe. For studies on the painting, see Xu Ying 徐英, "Cong Folangji guo xian tianma shi kan Mengguren de shang ma qingjie 從佛郎國獻天馬事看蒙古人的尚馬情結," *Zhongyang minzu daxue xuebao (Zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 中央民族大學學報(哲學社會科學版), vol. 33, no. 2 (2006), pp. 74-78; Wang Da-fang 王大方, "Yuandai *Folangguo gongma tu* shilüe 元代《拂郎國貢馬圖》識略," *Neimenggu wenwu kaogu* 內蒙古文物考古, no. 2 (2007), pp. 104-106; Ye Xin-min 葉新民, "Yuandai Zhongguo yu Ouzhou youhao wanglai de yiduan jiahua: Zhou Lang *Tianma tu* xiaokao 元代中國與歐洲友好往來的一段佳話——周朗《天馬圖》小考," *Neimenggu daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 內蒙古大學學報(社會科學版), no. 6 (2013), pp. 5-7. Marignolli has left a journal of his travels, which has been translated and studied in Henry Yule, "John de' Marignolli and his Recollections of Eastern Travel" in Henry Yule and Henri Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, vol. V (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 309-394, and Brian E. Colless, "Giovanni de' Marignolli: An Italian Prelate at the Court of the South-East Asian Queen of Sheba," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1968), pp. 325-341.

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western and Asian provenances. The foreigner leading the horse wears a missionary costume and may therefore represent Giovanni de' Marignolli. The Mongol emperor is seated to the right on a bench in a Mongol costume made of wild animal fur and is surrounded by officials, court ladies, and attendants. The painting is followed by a long colophon by Jie Xisi, recording the event and praising the Heavenly Horse. According to some scholars, the painting is a Ming copy.[78] Despite the lack of a precise date, the painting's documentary and historic value is not diminished.

The numerous textual records surrounding the event make this painting a prime subject for a study of early East-West interactions and early Chinese and Mongolian views of Europeans. But for the purpose of this study, I will limit myself here to some direct observations of the foreigners, the horse, and to some telling references and allusions to the legendary lore of the Heavenly Horse, in which they must have viewed the gift. The Franks are described as having "yellow beards and green eyes, wearing tight clothes, and speaking an unknown language," and the horse as being "lacquer black and its rear legs entirely white" (curiously there is no mention of a white belly), one *zhang* one foot and three inches long, and six foot and four inches high.[79] It was much taller than the average Mongolian or Chinese horse, so that " when it stood in a herd of horses, it rather looked as if a camel stood among a flock of sheep," and the Frankian horse quickly rose to great fame.[80]

The Mongol emperor soon invited scholars at court to eulogize the horse, or rather, the painting of the horse. A great number of poems have survived, making the Frankian horse an exalted symbol of the emperor. Most interesting for our study here is that the poems all allude or refer directly to the history-myth of the Heavenly Horse of the Han period. They dress the

78. Xu Ying, "Cong Folangji guo xian tianma shi kan Mengguren de shang ma qingjie," pp. 77-78. Some studies assume the painting to be a Ming copy, while others argue that the colophon by Jie Xisi is a Ming copy (and concluding that the painting is also a Ming copy?). Hou-mei Sung, *Decoded Messages: The Symbolic Language of Chinese Animal Painting*, pp. 188-190, points to a difference in style in the depiction of the ladies when compared with another painting by Zhou Lang, "Portrait of Miss Du Qiu" (*Du Qiu nian tu* 杜秋娘圖), in the Palace Museum in Beijing. The horse painting is however in *baimiao* fine line drawing and may rather point to a completely different purpose of the painting, e.g. a study or design for a later painting, rather than a copy. In that sense, it is very similar to our Kangxi painting. The date and attribution to Zhou Lang therefore awaits further study.

79. Ye Xin-min, "Yuandai Zhongguo yu Ouzhou youhao wanglai de yiduan jiahua: Zhou Lang *Tianma tu* xiaokao," p. 1. In the Chinese classification, horses measuring between four feet and two inches and four feet and six inches were considered tall and deemed sufficiently excellent to enter the military, see Huang Xiao-feng, "Chongfang "Wuma tu."" The horse of the Kirgiz chieftain was six feet tall and the French horse with six feet and four inches is in the Chinese view extremely high.

80. Xu Xiao-hong 徐曉鴻, "Yuandai shige yu jidujiao: Folangguo xian tianma yu Tianma tushi (yi) 元代詩歌與基督教——「佛郎國獻天馬」與「天馬圖詩」（一）," *Tianfeng: Zhongguo jidujiao zazhi* 天風：中國基督教雜誌, no. 7 (2009), p. 40.

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eulogy of the horse by now well-known trappings, titling their poems "Heavenly Horse" or adopting by now idiomatic expressions such as "dragon," "born from water," "Wowa River," "Ferghana," "longevity," "King Mu of Zhou," "eight steeds," "Gate of Heaven," "Mt. Kunlun," "Great Peace," "ten thousand countries all at peace," or "ten thousand countries return home (submit themselves) to the benevolent and saintly Son of Heaven."[81] As allusions to imperial legitimacy and divine sanction, these expressions no longer need explanation.

Curiously, there is not a word about the foreigners in these poems, let alone about Christianity, which was the prime mission of Marignolli's embassy. The Vatican had been trying to gain access to the Mongol empire since the early thirteenth century and had failed over and over fantastically.[82] The parallels with the Dutch embassy more than three hundred years later are startling: the Dutch had been attempting to trade with China for more than six decades at the time of the embassy; the horses did elicit a similar attention and fascination from the Kangxi Emperor and the Chinese, although mainly manifested en route and not that much in poetry (with the exception of Wang Shizhen perhaps because less people saw the horses and not a completed painting about the Dutch presentation of the horses was in circulation); and finally the embassy was an utter failure.

To leave the topic of the horses for the moment and return to the Kangxi painting, which also depicts oxen. Interestingly, there is also a connection, albeit far more tenuous, between oxen and foreigners in Chinese painting history. Possibly the earliest depictions of oxen and foreigners date to the late Han dynasty and are found on stone slab carvings. They belong to the peculiar theme of a "foreigner castrating a bull." Although foreigners were better known for castrating stallions in ancient China, making them more docile and controllable, the scene depicted here may also be part of an acrobatic act, as the playing or fighting of the other wild animals in the composition suggests (**Fig. 11**).[83] The deep sunken eyes, high nose, high hat, trousers, and boots readily identify the figure as a foreigner.

81. Xu Xiao-hong, "Yuandai shige yu jidujiao: Folangguo xian tianma yu Tianma tushi (yi)," pp. 40-42; Xu Xiao-hong 徐曉鴻, "Yuandai shige yu jidujiao: Folangguo xian tianma yu Tianma tushi (er) 元代詩歌與基督教——「佛郎國獻天馬」與「天馬圖詩」（二）," *Tianfeng: Zhongguo jidujiao zazhi* 天風：中國基督教雜誌, no. 8 (2009), pp. 30-31; and Xu Ying, "Cong Folangji guo xian tianma shi kan Mengguren de shang ma qingjie," pp. 74-75.

82. Michael Keevak, *Embassies to China: Diplomacy and Cultural Encounters Before the Opium Wars*, ch. 2.

83. Wang Yu 王煜, "Han mu huren xishou huaxiang yu Xiwangmu xinyang, yi lun Han huaxiang zhong huren de yiyi 漢墓胡人戲獸畫像與西王母信仰--亦論漢畫像中胡人的意義," *Zhongyang wenhua yanjiu* 中原文化研究, 5 (2014), pp. 102-107.

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Another ox painting is worth mentioning. Dating from the mid-Tang dynasty, there is an extremely rare tomb mural depicting an African man leading a bull (**Fig. 12**).[84] Although more dark-skinned people must have populated South and Southeast Asia, the groom is recognizably African, as distinguished by his near black skin, and the strongly accentuated muscles on his torso, arms and legs, as well as by his great, black curly hairdo, which must be one of the world's earliest depictions of an Afro. The host of this particular tomb is Li Daojian 李道堅 (d. 732), a great-grandson of the first emperor Gaozong of the Tang dynasty, and the mural should date to this time. Considering the inclusion of foreigners leading a camel or horse in other imperial Tang tomb murals (**Figs. 5-7**), we may infer that this particular image is also related to tribute offerings or trade with foreigners. If so, the mural is a unique visual testimony of Tang interaction with the African continent. It is of course difficult to find out whether the bull was also considered African and a tribute offering, but the designer of the tomb at least regarded them as a pair sufficiently "foreign," akin to the camels and horses, to be depicted in the mural. The African groom and bull are depicted on the north wall, usually considered to be the most honorable wall. On the left is another cartouche with an image of a standing crane, which is considered a symbol of immortality, and believed to accompany the host to heaven. The inclusion of the African and bull is therefore even more remarkable, suggesting that it was of great importance or significance to the host and to the overall design. The symbolism of the African and bull is however not entirely clear. A bull is an important sacrificial animal, and in Chinese traditional culture considered a holy animal whose meat was not eaten, out of respect for the bull's hard labor and its value to agriculture. Therefore, if the mural indeed represents a tribute offering, the foreign bull was perhaps related to this sphere of sacrifice and holiness. On the other hand, if seen as tribute, it may represent the alliance and "submission" of a foreign country to the Tang court, celebrating its universal greatness and harmonious reign. The other murals in the tomb (a group of foreign musicians and courtesans, a lion, servants, and the earliest known landscape screen painting) however do not support such a view.

China's most famous painting of oxen, "Five Oxen" (*wuniu tu* 五牛圖), is attributed to Han Huang 韓滉 (723-787), a Tang Prime Minister who began painting after his retirement and

84. On the tomb and its murals, see for example Jing Zeng-li 井增利 and Wang Xiao-meng 王小蒙, "Fuping xian xin faxian de Tang mu bihua 富平縣新發現的唐墓壁畫," *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物, 4 (1997), pp. 8-11. Interestingly, the same mural on the north wall contains a portrait of the painter, assumingly the painter of the murals, standing between the screen paintings of the bull on the left and cranes on the right. The tip of his brush is just visible on the right in Figure 12. This must also be one of the earliest depictions of a painter in Chinese art, if not in Asian art.

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achieved fame for his depiction of oxen (**Fig. 13**).[85] If the attribution is correct, this would mean that "Five Oxen" was painted only a few decades after the Fuping tomb mural (**Fig. 12**). The dry meandering brushwork of the outline would however suggest a much later date or a copy. The fact that the painting is done on paper, which in fact would make it the oldest surviving painting on paper in China, is not common for the Tang period, either. The difference in horns also suggests a different type of ox. The attribution to Han Huang is made in an inscription of 1291 by Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322) who saw the painting at the Mongol court. No prior record exists of a painting of five oxen by Han Huang. Interestingly, despite the absence of foreign grooms, the theme of five oxen each depicted in a different posture is strongly reminiscent of Li Gonglin's (composite painting of) "Five Horses" of the late eleventh century (**Fig. 9**). That painting is also done on paper. A late Northern Song or perhaps Southern Song date seems therefore more likely but this awaits further study. The thematic similarity would further suggest that the painting depicts tribute oxen and is essentially a tribute painting, akin to the Kangxi painting. The fifth ox on the left wears a red-colored bridle very reminiscent in shape of the ox in the Fuping tomb mural, further underscoring the possibility that the "Five Oxen" is indeed a tribute painting.

However, whereas the tribute paintings of the Heavenly Horse pertain to its divine, dragon-like character and harmonious rule, tribute paintings of oxen rather appear to relate to their sacred and holy status as sacrificial animals and pillars of the agricultural state.[86] The Kangxi painting of the Dutch horses and oxen depict both, but it is doubtful whether the oxen were understood in the pictorial tradition of earlier tribute oxen and their sacrificial or holy nature. Rather, stemming from Bengal, the little oxen must have appealed to the same kind of foreign tribute framework as the Persian horses, serving as heavenly portents sanctifying Kangxi's benevolent rule.

85. Yin Wen 尹文, "Han Huang *Wuniu tu* ji shiwen tiba xushuo 韓滉《五牛圖》及詩文題跋敘說," *Dongnan daxue xuebao: Zhexue shehui kexue ban* 東南大學學報：哲學社會科學版, vol. 6, no. 2 (2004), pp. 77-81; Shu Zhe 舒哲, "Da shuhuajia zaixiang Han Huang 大書畫家宰相韓滉," *Wenshi tiandi* 文史天地, no. 8 (2007), pp. 29-32. Because the bull's testicles can be clearly seen, unlike in for example Han Guang's "Five Oxen" discussed afterwards, we know the animal is a bull and not an ox.

86. On these sacrifices, see Hai Ri-han 海日寒 and Wang Shi-zhuang 王石莊, "*Niu zhi ji* 牛之祭," *Minzu wenxue* 民族文學, no. 4 (2011), pp. 114-115; Zhang Wen-jie 張聞捷, "*Handai 'teniu' zhi li yu Mawangdui bohua Zhong de jidian tuxiang* 漢代'特牛'之禮與馬王堆帛畫中的祭奠圖像," *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊, no. 2 (2017), pp. 112-121; and more generally, Jean Lévi, "La rite, la norme, le dao: Philosophie du sacrifice et transcendance du pouvoir en Chine ancienne," in John Lagerwey ed., *Religion et société en Chine ancienne et médiévale* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), pp. 165-239.

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In the above discussion of the Heavenly Horse, I have attempted to provide an archaeology of the possible meanings a tribute painting of horses and oxen might have had to the young Kangxi Emperor. These meanings are wide-ranging and may have evolved over time, but the circumstances for commissioning such paintings and the many eulogies written for both the horses and the paintings suggest the existence of a uniform and shared cultural knowledge on the Heavenly Horse and its symbolism. This history-myth, as I called it above, developed in roughly two stages and afterwards became a consistent subject-matter. The first stage was during the Western Han period, when the Heavenly Horse of Ferghana became equated in the imagination of the emperor and his entourage not only with military prowess, but also with more mythological or magical properties, such as a dragon not in the sky but on land; born form water (like a dragon), in particular the water of the Wowa River; having scales or striped markings; blood-sweating; being able to travel a thousand li; an association through Ferghana with Mt. Kunlun in the northwest; and the sacrificial ritual to Heaven and hence the Heavenly Mandate, to name the most important ones. The second stage was in the Tang dynasty during the reign of Emperor Taizong, when the Han history-myth was expanded and accrued several additional properties, such as an association with the first Zhou King Mu and his Eight Steeds; a visit to the Queen Mother of West on Mt. Kunlun; being able to dance; signifying the ascendance and inauguration of a new ruler; a heavenly sign of benevolent and harmonious rule termed Great Peace; the voluntary submission of foreign enemies resulting from this harmonious rule, which are basically all signs of the Heavenly Mandate. During the Tang dynasty, the depiction of the Heavenly Horse in painting, notably in tribute paintings pairing the foreign horse with a foreign attendant or groom, also became a standard theme in court painting and in imperial tomb murals. The painting of the "Assembly of Kings" became in particular a point of reference for visually documenting the divinely sanctioned and newly inaugurated harmonious rule of an emperor.

Because of these divine properties, the Heavenly Horse became a de facto symbol of the emperor himself, and eulogies and paintings of the Heavenly Horse should be understood as celebrations of the emperor and his rule. However, this imperial allusion somehow became less obvious from the Song dynasty onwards, when the Heavenly Horse became a symbol of foreign submission to Chinese superior rule rather than divine legitimation. In those times however, as the many invasions of the Jurchen, Khitan, and later Mongols demonstrate, such depictions of foreign submission were often more an ideal than a historical reality in later dynasties. Curiously, up to the Song period, foreigners are generally referred to in Chinese texts (and their modern studies) as *huren* 胡人, while from the Song period onward, the term *yi* 夷 appears more frequently.[87] The first is more neutral and the second more negative. The social realities as well

87. This is a general observation I made studying Chinese sources on foreigners and needs further study.

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as the government policies for foreigners in those two millennia were also different, being more inclusive and open in the pre-Song period, while more exclusive and hostile in the post-Song period. Perhaps this change in attitude is related to Neo-Confucian ideas related to foreigners emerging in the Song dynasty, but this needs further study.[88]

The Kangxi Emperor would almost certainly have been aware of the cultural symbolism and the history-myth surrounding the Heavenly Horse. He similarly may have been familiar with the artistic tradition surrounding its depiction, especially with regard to the custom of creating a "tribute painting" as a visual documentation of a foreign visit and its imperial symbolism. His Manchu background could partly explain his love for horses, as Wang Ching-ling has suggested, but certainly not the constant fascination for and attention to the horses during the embassy's journey, or the stream of questions posed at court concerning the horses.

Rather, the mythological properties of the Heavenly Horse can be directly applied to the situation of the Kangxi Emperor in the early Qing period. From the above discussion on the Heavenly Horse, we can argue that the horses were seen as a token from heaven signifying the granting of the Heavenly Mandate, or the right to rule, to the young emperor, including all the historical and symbolical trappings that come with this token from heaven. Significantly, the Dutch embassy arrived just before the official inauguration of Kangxi as the new ruler of the Chinese empire and the Son of Heaven on August 25, 1667. The symbolical, mythological, and religious properties associated with the Heavenly Horse had direct bearing on the Kangxi Emperor. The tribute gift of horses from Persia, which in the Chinese geographical imagination differed not very much from the Han-period Ferghana, was readily identified as Heavenly Horses in the Chinese imagination. This could explain not only the Chinese interest for the horses at the beginning and during the embassy's journey, but also the questions posed to the

88. Trade with the Western Regions in the Song dynasty had greatly diminished compared to the Tang dynasty, and the Song court was under constant threat of first the Khitan, later Jurchen, and eventually the Mongols, which all established their own Chinese-style empires. Furthermore, the "inclusive" policies of the Han-Tang period seem to have been informed by Daoism, while the "exclusive" policies seem to conform to Neo-Confucianist ideals, implementing the strict views of the Confucian classics in state policy, for example, with regard to foreigners, those expressed in the "Tribute of Yu" (*yugong* 禹貢) chapter in the *Book of Documents* (*shujing* 書經). For example, commentaries on this chapter grew exponentially from the Southern Song dynasty, see Zhang Qiong, *Making the New World Their Own: Chinese Encounters with Jesuit Science in the Age of Discovery* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 114. For an example of an "inclusive" and "Daoist" approach to foreigners in the policy of the early Han period and earlier, see Kim Hyun Jin, *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China* (London: Duckworth, 2009), esp. pp. 59-69 and 85-98; and for the early Tang period, see Wang Zhen-ping, "Ideas concerning Diplomacy and Foreign Policy under the Tang Emperors Gaozu and Taizong," *Asia Major*, vol. 22, no. 1 (2009), pp. 239-285.

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Dutch, such as whether the horses were from Persia and how far they could run, probably assuming that they could run a hundred *li a day*.

Interestingly, the time frame for the production of the painting also parallels the date of the inauguration on August 25. The inscription, translated at the beginning of this study, details the dates of the painting's production in the following time sequence: July 25, ordering the painting; July 26, painters start working on the painting; August 31, painters complete the painting and offer it for inspection by the emperor. This means that the Kangxi Emperor ordered the painting a month before his inauguration ceremony on August 25, while the Dutch were still in Beijing (they left on August 5). Such an order, as we have seen, had many precedents in Chinese history and Kangxi may have known them, or even the paintings and eulogies, and hence commissioned the painting. It should also be noted that, possibly, a Chinese courtier or high scholar-official at court, such as Wang Shizhen, suggested the commission and the painting's symbolic meanings to the Kangxi Emperor. Arguably, the Emperor would however not have ordered the painting if he did not share the same kind of ideas and beliefs. Kangxi was undoubtedly aware of the deeper meanings behind such a painting, from announcing a new ruler, to documenting the divine approval of a new rule, to the voluntary submission of foreigners to Kangxi's benevolent regime. By such an act, Kangxi mirrored himself to Tang Emperor Taizong if not other famed emperors before and after him.

Because the painting is designated as a "design" and does not represent the final product, we can infer that the Kangxi Emperor was not pleased with the painting (**Fig. 1**). We have already noted its mediocre qualities at the beginning of this study. When compared with the best paintings of horses and oxen by celebrated painters in Chinese history, of which Kangxi may have seen examples himself because some of these were in the collection of his grandson Qianlong, the quality of the painting measures astonishingly far below the level of quality and the range of compositions of earlier works. The large size probably also suggested a much different composition than the eventual result. None of the four horses exhibit any of the markings of a Heavenly Horse, such as those for example found on Li Gonglin's "Five Horses," including "dragon scale" spots, "dragon wings" on their shoulders, or "dragon legs." The painters were poorly informed on the tradition of Heavenly Horse paintings and even worked from the same single cartouche to depict the horses, grooms, and little oxen. We may therefore conclude that the painting was a far cry from what Kangxi may have expected, and being rightly disappointing, the project was aborted, no final painting was ordered, and the preparatory painting was stored away without any further mention.

IV. Reconsidering the Chinese Refusal of Dutch Trade Privileges

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In the light of such a glowing tradition of the Heavenly Horse in Chinese art and history, how can we explain the Chinese refusal of the Dutch trade privileges? Despite the low quality of the painting, it puts the Dutch in a positive light, making them ceremonially at least a tributary or vassal state of the great Chinese empire, and it squarely adopts them in the traditional artistic framework of tribute paintings of foreigners presenting gifts. This is no small honor. In addition, the painting inscription calls the Dutch by their country name, *Helanguo* 荷蘭國, as does Wang Shizhen, the Ministry of Rites official. This appellation is far more respectful than the vernacular-derived "red-haired barbarian" (*hongmaofan* 紅毛番), or one of its derivatives (*hongyi* 紅夷, *hongmaogui* 紅毛鬼), which had been the standard term to designate the Dutch from the beginning of the seventeenth century.[89]

The positive view on the Dutch in the painting stands in stark contrast with the reality of the final outcome of the Dutch embassy, namely that they were sent home empty-handed and that all their requests for open trade were denied. The most curious feature about the denial is not the final outcome, but the fact that the Dutch were already informed of the refusal before they embarked on their journey to Beijing. We do not know if the Dutch had understood the refusal or that they perhaps thought to have a chance to persuade the Emperor to change his mind during their visit, but whether the Dutch came or not, the Chinese on their side had already made up their minds long before the Dutch embassy had arrived.

Thus far, no official records on the Chinese refusal of the Dutch proposals for trade privileges are known. Other studies however have hinted at possible reasons for the refusal. John Wills has offered three different suggestions at various places in his studies on the Dutch embassies. One suggestion he makes for the Chinese refusal is the Dutch plundering of Putuoshan in 1665, a Buddhist pilgrimage site dedicated to Guanyin near Shanghai.[90] Although this event may indeed have angered the Buddhist Manchu court, it is not clear if it still had an impact a year later. There are also no indications that the matter was brought up during the embassy.

A second reason suggested by Wills was the Dutch failure to grasp the Chinese obsession with bureaucratic regulations and ritual formalities.[91] Indeed, the Dutch were left completely

89. See Lennert Gesterkamp, "The *Dongxi yangkao* (1617) and its Portrayal of the Dutch in China," in Thijs Weststeijn ed., *Foreign Devils and Philosophers: Cultural Encounters between the Chinese, the Dutch, and Other Europeans, 1590-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), forthcoming.

90. John E. Wills, *Pepper, Guns, and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1622-1681*, p. 121.

91. John E. Wills, *Pepper, Guns, and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1622-1681*, pp. 105-106.

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in the dark about all the Chinese formalities, and severely lacked a good translator. Although it certainly did not help, this must have been a common occurrence during all visits of foreign envoys at the Chinese court (and still is), and cannot explain the specific Dutch case. It should be noted that the opacity of Chinese ceremonies and formalities is mostly by design, as anyone familiar with Chinese bureaucracy and its management styles can confirm.

A third reason presented by Wills are the power struggles and transitions at the Manchu court, which took place exactly in the period when the Dutch embassy arrived in China and visited Beijing.[92] Oboi was one of the four Manchu Regents governing the empire for the young Kangxi from 1661. During the time of the Dutch embassy, he had Sunahai arrested, the Secretary of the Minister of War and one of the masterminds of the coastal policies, and had him executed on 20 December 1666. Because the Dutch were notified in January 1667 of the refusal of trade privileges (before their departure to Beijing, we remember), we may surmise that the two events were related. Although Oboi is known as a fierce protagonist of Manchu culture, and indeed continued his power grab, also framing his other main opponent, the Regent Suksaha, whom he had executed in September 1667, it is doubtful whether such power struggles at court had any influence on the coastal policies of depopulation, limiting foreign presence (e.g. Macao), and defeating the Zheng family sovereignty in Fujian, amongst others, which had remained unchanged for the entire period of the Dutch visit and Oboi's power grab.[93]

Lastly, John Keevak provides an illuminating summary of the various possible motives behind the Chinese refusal, as guessed by the perplexed Dutch, and by the modern historian in hindsight:

> The Dutch went away, then, convinced that they had been tricked or misled, that the Canton viceroys were two-faced and overly greedy, and that their designs had been jealously thwarted by their Catholic rivals. As an afterthought, Nieuhof wondered whether "a few presents more [een kleene Bezending]" to the Emperor might not help matters, but the reality was that there were many factors in the Chinese refusal that had nothing to do with the Dutch at all, including internal power struggles at the beginning of a new dynasty, which was also considered foreign; because of tensions between the court and rulers in Canton, whose power was considerable;

92. John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, pp. 62, 96; Robert B. Oxnam, *Ruling from Horseback: Manchu Politics in the Oboi Regency, 1661-1669* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 174-175. For a chronological (but very poorly edited) description of this period and translations of related memorials, see Hing-Ming Hung, *The Brilliant Reign of the Kangxi Emperor: China's Qing Dynasty* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2017), pp. 75-80.

93. On the coastal policies, see K. C. Hsieh, "Removal of Coastal Population in Early Tsing Period," *Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, 15 (1932), pp. 559-596.

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> and because the central government was not disposed toward any further opening of sea trade while Zheng Chenggong had remained a threat.[94]

Keevak repeats some of the arguments presented by Wills, but adding an important new one, namely that there were strong military reasons for not establishing trade with the Dutch.

Actually, the various sources and studies discussed in this study would strongly suggest that military and strategic motives were the main reason behind the Chinese refusal, or to be more precise: the Qing court feared that collusion between the so-called Three Feudatories (*sanfan* 三藩) along the Chinese southeast coast and the Dutch sea power might fuel an uprising and overthrow the still fragile Qing empire. The Three Feudatories were ruled not by Manchus but by three Chinese warlords who had helped the Manchu defeat the Ming in South China and were rewarded with near autonomous rulership over their own fiefdoms covering the provinces Yunnan, Guangdong, and Fujian. In fact, the Dutch had already established very friendly relationships in the previous decade with the Viceroy of Fujian, Geng Jimao 耿繼茂 (d. 1671). Konstantyn Nobel, the first counselor of the Dutch embassy, had been a regular guest in Fuzhou and had become on very good terms with Geng Jimao.[95]

The Chinese, furthermore, must have been aware of this cozy relationship between Geng Jimao and the Dutch, as well as the prospects of a possible collusion. In John Wills' painstaking reconstruction of events,[96] we read that the Grand Empress Dowager Xiaozhuang 孝莊, or Kangxi's grandmother, had secretly sent a private agent, a spy we may assume, to Fuzhou to check upon the situation. Because he was interrogated and maltreated by Geng Jimao's men, Geng Jimao was fined in May 1667. The same month, two Fuzhou commanders, who had become close allies and trade partners of the Dutch, were suspended and also put under investigation. The Manchu authorities were greatly suspicious of their Chinese warlords on the southern borders, and wanted to prevent any close contact with foreign entities, especially any powerful nations such as the Dutch.

In the eyes of the Manchu court, collusion had already been happening in Fuzhou. This may also explain their curious and repeated interest during the questioning of ambassador Pieter van Hoorn by the Ministers of the Board of Rites for the Dutch's particular choice for arriving

94. Michael Keevak, *Embassies to China: Diplomacy and Cultural Encounters Before the Opium Wars*, p. 87.

95. John E. Wills, *Peppers, Guns, and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1622-1681*, ch. 2; John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, p. 48.

96. John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, pp. 62-63.

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in Fuzhou rather than Canton, the officially designated city for foreign envoys. Van Hoorn was asked this question multiple times at different hearings, which to Van Hoorn or Olfert Dapper may have seemed typical of the Chinese attention to regulations and formalities, but was in reality the result of deep suspicions harbored by the Manchu occupiers to their Chinese warlords, local investigations in Fuzhou, and long-term strategic planning at the central court such as the coastal policies. What the Dutch saw as a new possibility for a trade deal, the Manchu saw as a potentially dangerous intrusion in their conquest and control of China, in particular the southern provinces bordering the South China Sea.

In less than a decade, the Chinese suspicion proved ultimately correct when in 1673 the three Viceroys rose together against the Manchu court, the so-called "Revolt of the Three Feudatories" (*sanfan zhi luan* 三藩之亂). This revolt almost overthrew the empire and was only quelled eight years later in 1681 after heavy losses on the Manchu side.[97] Although hypothetical, we can rightly imagine what would have happened if the Dutch indeed have had obtained their trade privileges and entered Fuzhou every year (rather than every eight), establishing a welcome trade port on Chinese ground, especially when Taiwan had already been lost to the Dutch. The Fuzhou Feudal Prince (or Viceroy as he is called in Dutch sources) and his Feudatory would undoubtedly not only have prospered from the trade and risen in wealth and power, the Dutch would almost certainly have sided with the Feudal Prince, as a longtime ally and a source of Dutch income, rather than with the Manchus, in case of any conflict.

At the same time, the Zheng family sovereignty, which was still one of the main enemies and threats of the Manchu regime, was still safe in Taiwan. The Zheng family had expelled the Dutch from Taiwan in 1662, who had been pushed back to their headquarters in Batavia. The Zheng on Taiwan were only defeated in 1683, two years after the quelling of the "Revolt of the Three Feudatories." If the Dutch were allied to the Feudal Prince, the outcome of the revolt as well as the ouster of the Zheng from Taiwan would undoubtedly have been far less favorable to the Manchus. Obviously, during the visit of the Dutch embassy in 1667, the Qing court had not yet consolidated its authority along the southern provinces, let alone in the South China Sea, and it therefore could not afford the Dutch having a foothold on Chinese territory.

Despite all the good intentions of the Dutch for establishing trade with China, hoping to become a tributary state of the Chinese, while at the same time being naively blind to the long-term Manchu interests, the Qing court could not strategically permit itself any trade relations

97. Kai-fu Tsao, "The Rebellion of the Three Feudatories against the Manchu Throne in China, 1673-1681: Its Setting and Significance," (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1965).

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with the Dutch when the South China Sea area was not yet under its full control.[98] Under these circumstances, it may not come as a surprise that the Kangxi court opened China for free trade to all foreigners as soon as the Zheng family in Taiwan was defeated in 1683.

This change came too late for the Dutch VOC, which had become largely dependent on the junk trade and private trade between Batavia and China, and failed to capitalize on the newly offered opportunities, even when a new embassy was sent in 1685.[99] Believe it or not, the embassy again entered China through Fuzhou, whereas the regulations had stipulated that they should enter through Canton. The matter was not even raised at the Kangxi court.

Conclusions

There is a curious discrepancy between the acts of having a foreign embassy's picture painted and having them fail the mission, all at the same time. A meticulous study of the painting's production process, background, theme, and symbolism however reveals that the Chinese ruler viewed the embassy in entirely different terms than the foreign embassy itself. In the case of the Dutch embassy, the Chinese mind was already made-up concerning the issue of Dutch trade privileges before the Dutch arrival for strategic reasons to preserve Manchu dominance in the South East China Sea region. The Chinese were most interested, nonetheless, in the Persian horses the Dutch brought along as tribute presents, and from this study's reconstruction of the available sources, it appears that the main and probably only intention, on the Chinese side, for allowing the Dutch embassy to embark on a tributary mission to Beijing, was to have them bring the four Persian horses, which had been observed, examined, and checked from the moment they arrived in the Fuzhou harbor to their arrival at the Manchu court, and even afterwards.

Therefore in the Chinese view, the embassy was not about negotiating trade relations between China and the Dutch, or about discussing the kinds of goods to be imported and exported, or about finding, maintaining, and repaying allies in wars against foes. Rather, I would argue from the importance of the horse in Chinese history, literature, and art, as a recurring theme

98. It also appears that the Dutch had nothing of value or importance to trade to the Chinese, signifying another problem on the part of the Dutch, namely that they were poorly informed on the needs and demands of the Chinese and the Chinese market. The strategic issues of trading with the Dutch under the given circumstances would in any way have prevented such a trading pact.

99. On this embassy led by Vincent Paats, see John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*, ch. 5. On the changing trade patterns in the South China Sea at the end of the seventeenth century, see Leonard Blussé, "No Boats to China. The Dutch East India Company and the Changing Pattern of the China Sea Trade, 1635-1690," *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1996), pp. 51-76.

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since the early Han dynasty, that the Dutch embassy was entirely conceived in all the historical, literary, mythological, and religious trappings of the Heavenly Horse. The presenting of a tribute horse from the fabled regions of Ferghana conjured up in the Chinese (and interestingly the Manchu) mind grand images of the Heavenly Mandate, imperial inauguration, and divine sanction of a new emperor's rule, if not victorious supremacy over foreign neighbors submitting themselves voluntarily to the benevolent and harmonious rule of the Chinese sovereign.

All these aspects applied directly to the young Kangxi Emperor, who would assume the throne just a few weeks after the Dutch arrived with their gift of Heavenly Horses, and who was still facing hostile threats along the southern borders from multiple foreign nations, pirates, as well as the Chinese Feudal Princes. The Dutch horses were seen by the Kangxi Emperor and his courtiers, as confirmed at least by Wang Shizhen, as a sign from Heaven sanctioning and blessing Kangxi's rule. Because the Heavenly Horse was also regarded as a symbol of a dragon on earth, the Dutch horses may have further reverberated personally with the Kangxi Emperor as his own avatar and superior model of military prowess.

The contradiction between tribute painting and failed embassies even had a remarkable historical precedent in the Yuan dynasty. The Mongol Khan simply requested a western horse from the Pope, and when he received one, he also had the event recorded in paint, but then sent the missionary envoy back to Europe without making any concessions. One wonders if the Mongol Khan may also have been solely fixated on the horse and its symbolic and mythological meanings. Again, what may seem a regular tribute mission to the foreign nation, was interpreted entirely differently on the Chinese (or Mongol) side. They had no need for Christianity and a few centuries later they had no need for the Dutch goods, which were mostly not even from the Netherlands but from other Asian countries.[100]

The painting "Dutch Attendants, Oxen, and Horses" shares however one dubious connection with the Dutch embassy. It is never completed, painted on a too large a canvas for its composition, and the painters were too unaware or uneducated of the rich painting tradition of the Heavenly Horse in China. Similar objections can be made against the Dutch embassy as well: it did not achieve its intended goals, China was too big a country to impress with the small plan the Dutch had, and they were wholly unprepared culturally for negotiating with China. The Kangxi painting of "Dutch, Attendants, Oxen, and Horses" can therefore be seen as a glaring symbol of the failed Dutch embassy.

（責任編輯：陳珀愉）

100. One can only wonder what the Chinese response would have been if the Dutch had brought oil paintings, prints, books, and musical instruments.

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III. Internet Resources

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Xiaolin 小林

2019"Riben xuezhe Masaaki Itakura tan Li Gonglin *Wumatujuan* zhenji xianshen shimo (A Full Account of the Appearance of the Authentic Work of Li Gonglin's Scroll Painting *Five Tribute Horses* by Japanese Scholar Masaaki Itakura) 日本學者板倉聖哲談李公麟《五馬圖卷》真跡現身始末," *The Paper* 澎湃新聞 (Pengpai News), https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_3239310 (accessed on 8 November 2019)

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Fig. 6 Horse and foreign attendant, east corridor wall, tomb of Lady Tang, 708, Luoyang. From: Yang Zhi-qiang 楊誌強, "Luoyang Tangdai Anguo Xiangwang Ruren Tang shi mu bihua tanxi 洛陽唐代安國相王孺人唐氏墓壁畫探析," *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan gankan* 中國國家博物館館刊, 12 (2016), p. 34.

Fig. 7 Two foreigners presenting a horse, tomb of Lady Wei, 666, Liquan, Shaanxi, Zhaoling Museum. From: Gao Chun-hong 高春鴻, "Tang Zhaoling Wei guiji mu bihua zuozhe tantao 唐昭陵韋貴妃墓壁畫作者探討," *Wenwu shijie* 文物世界, 3 (2003), p. 41.

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Fig. 12 African leading a bull, north wall, tomb of Li Daojian (d. 732), Fuping, Shaanxi. From: https://k.sina.cn/article_1868046487_p6f58209702700cybq.html (accessed 2 December 2019).

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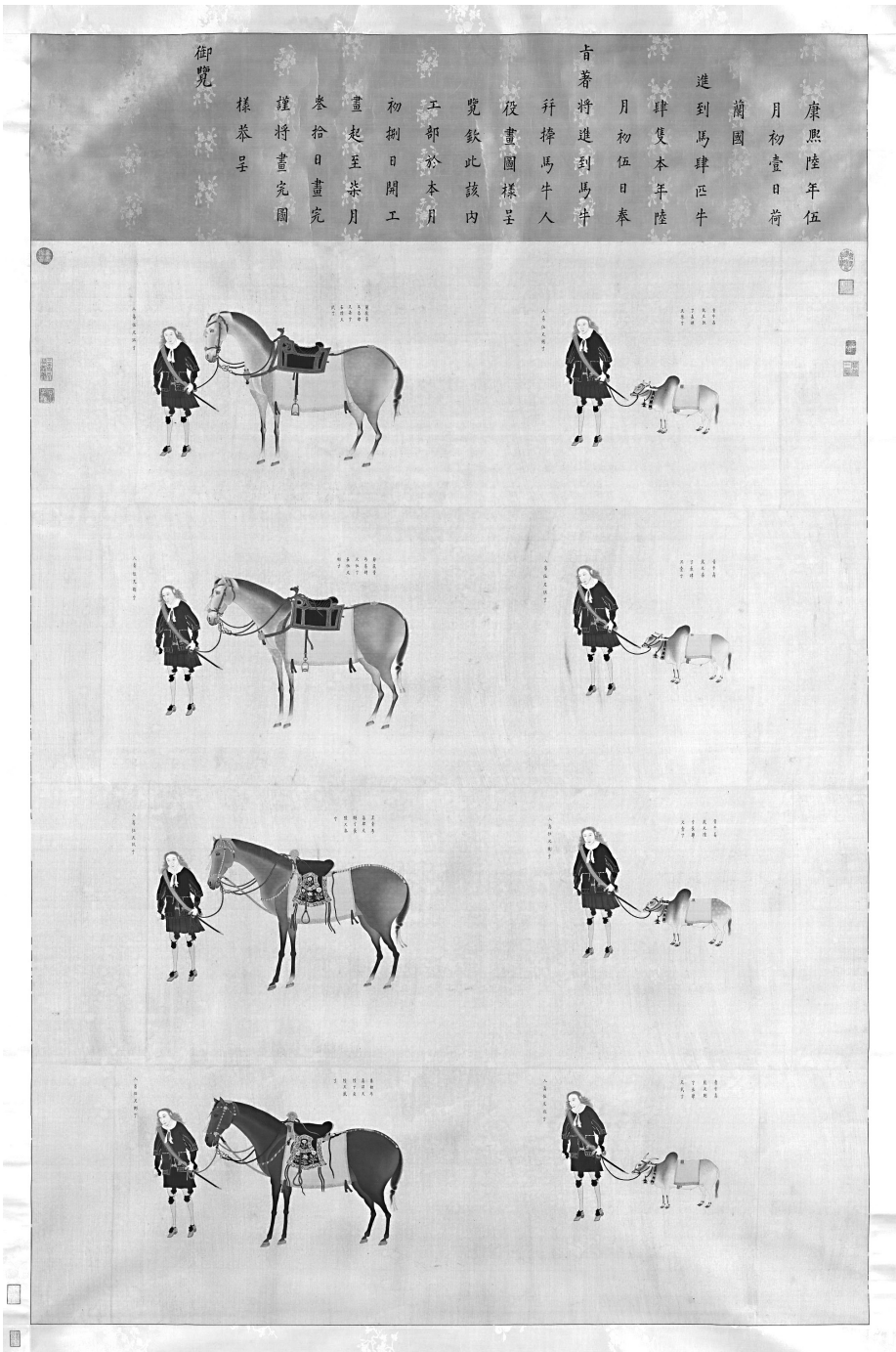


Fig. 1 Anonymous, *Dutchmen Offering Oxen and Horses, 1667*, ink and color on silk, 207.8x161.3cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

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Fig. 2 Han Gan (fl. 740-756) (attr.), *Divine Steed,* ink and color on silk, 27.5 x 122 cm, 10th cent., Liaoning Provincial Museum.

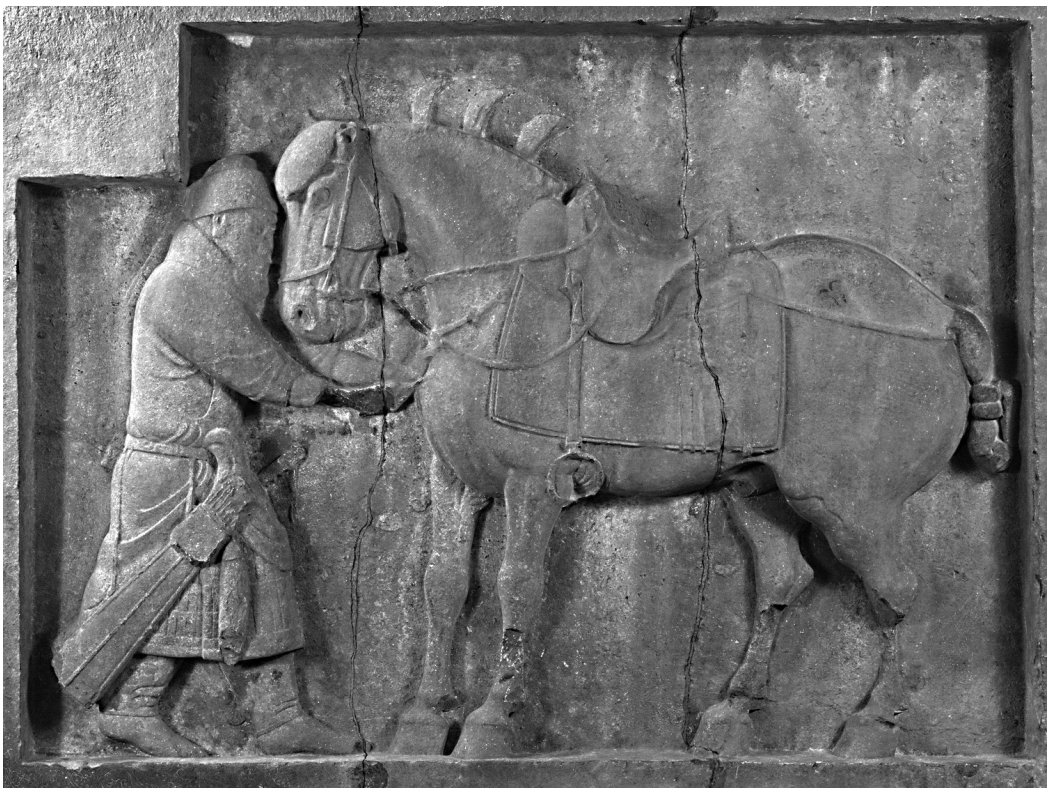


Fig. 3 Saluzi, one of the Six Steeds of Tang Emperor Taizong from the Zhaoling Mausoleum, dated 649, 172.7x207x43.2cm, University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia.

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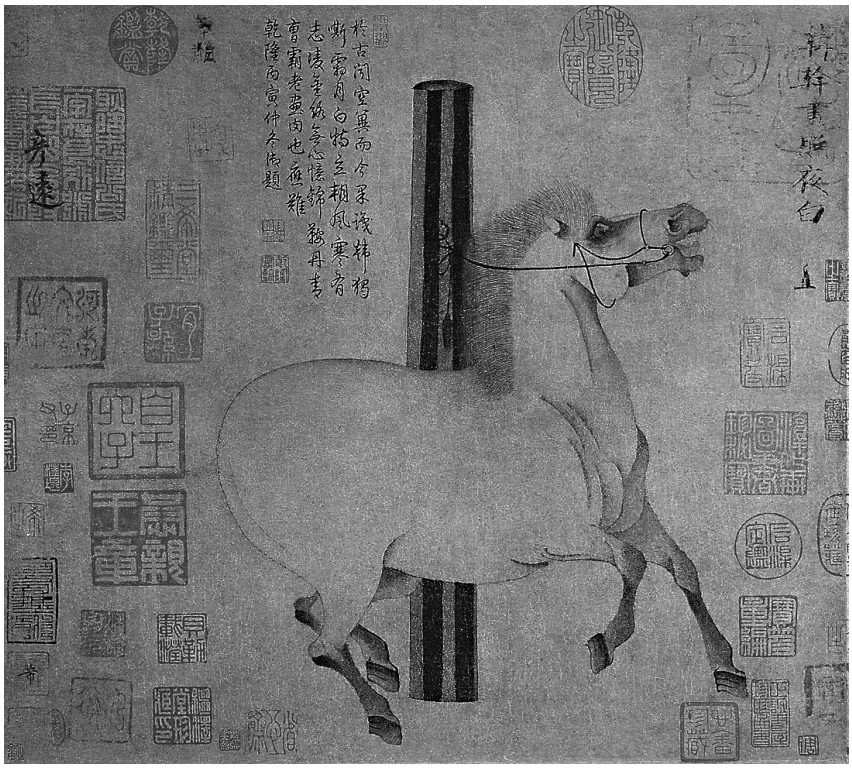


Fig. 4 Han Gan (fl. 740-756), *Night-Shining White*, ink on paper, 30.8x34cm, ca. 750, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 5 Horse trade, west corridor wall, Jiuyuangang tomb, first half 6th cent., Xinzhou, Shanxi.

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Fig. 6 Horse and foreign attendant, east corridor wall, tomb of Lady Tang, 708, Luoyang.



Fig. 7 Two foreigners presenting a horse, tomb of Lady Wei, 666, Liquan, Shaanxi, Zhaoling Museum.

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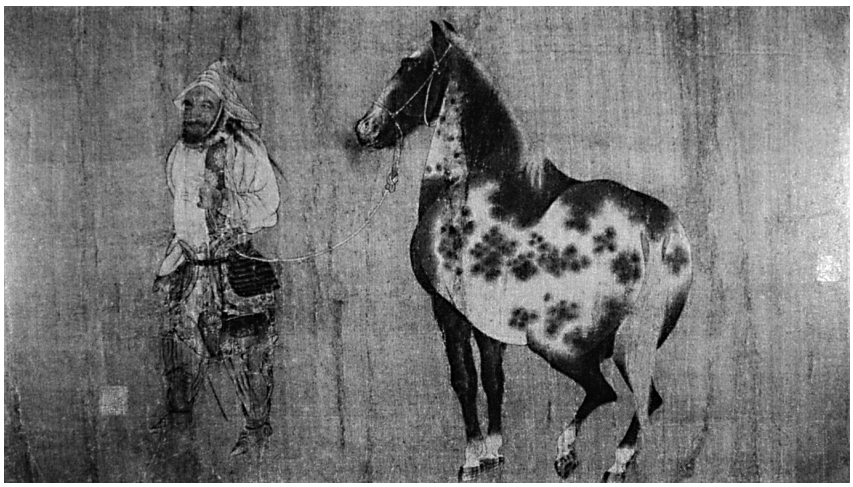


Fig. 8 Zhao Yan (d. 923), *Taming a Horse,* ink and color on silk, 29.5x49.4cm, Shanghai Museum.

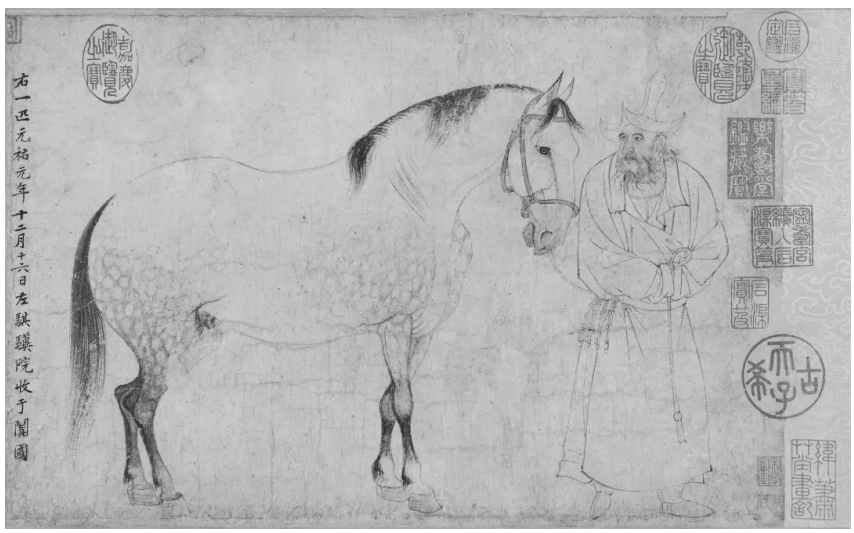


Fig. 9a

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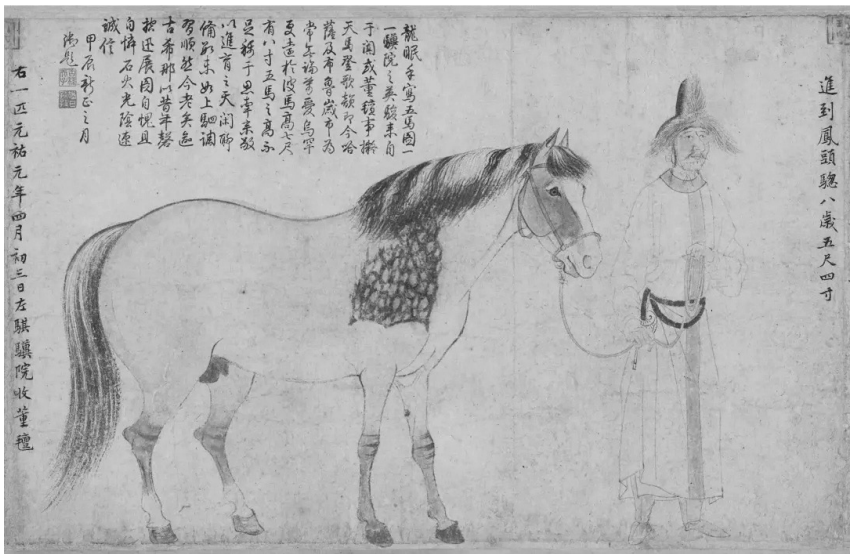


Fig. 9b

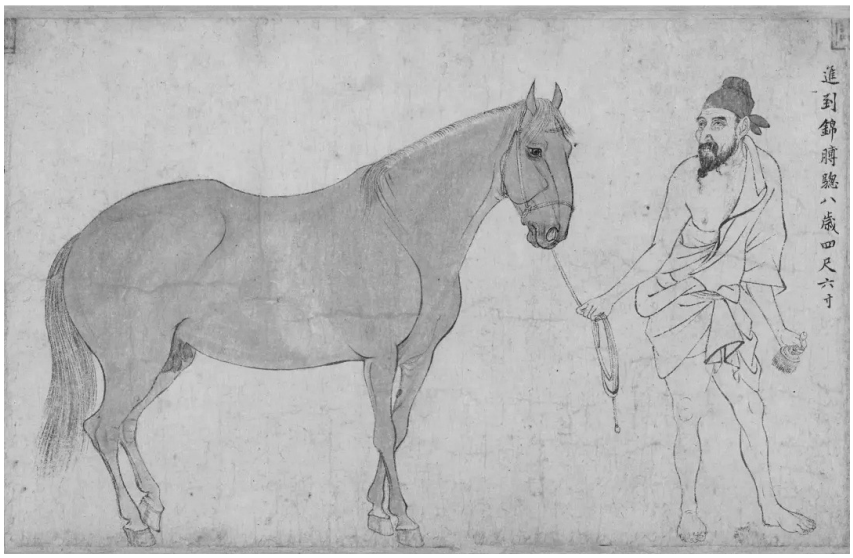


Fig. 9c

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Fig. 9d



Fig. 9e

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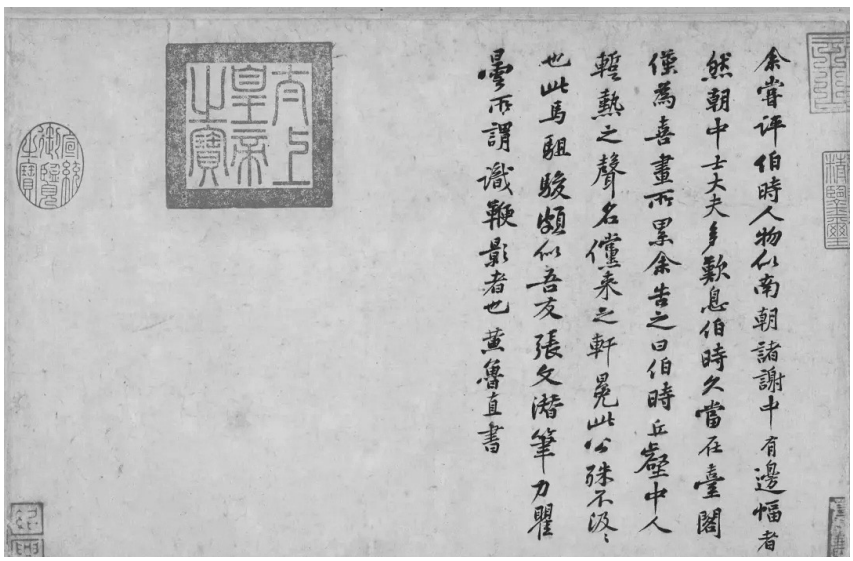


Fig. 9f

Fig. 9a-f. Li Gonglin (1049-1106), *Five Horses,* light color on paper, 29.3x225cm, private collection, Japan.

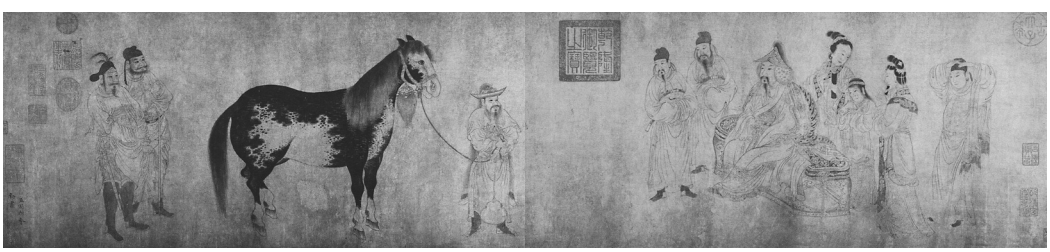


Fig. 10 Zhou Lang, *Franks Presenting a Horse as Tribute,* ink on paper, 30.1x134,5cm, 1342 (Ming copy?), Palace Museum, Beijing.

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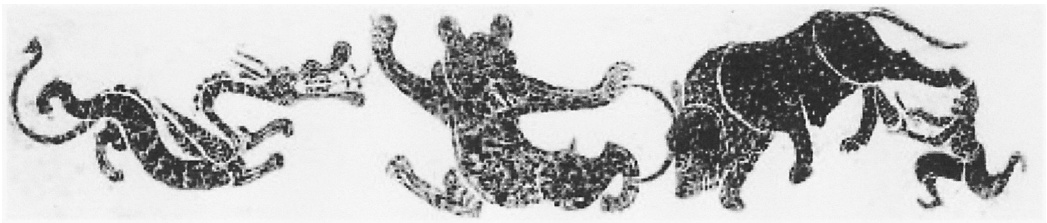


Fig. 11 Foreigner castrating a bull, stone slab carving, Eastern Han, Fangcheng Dongguan tomb, Henan.

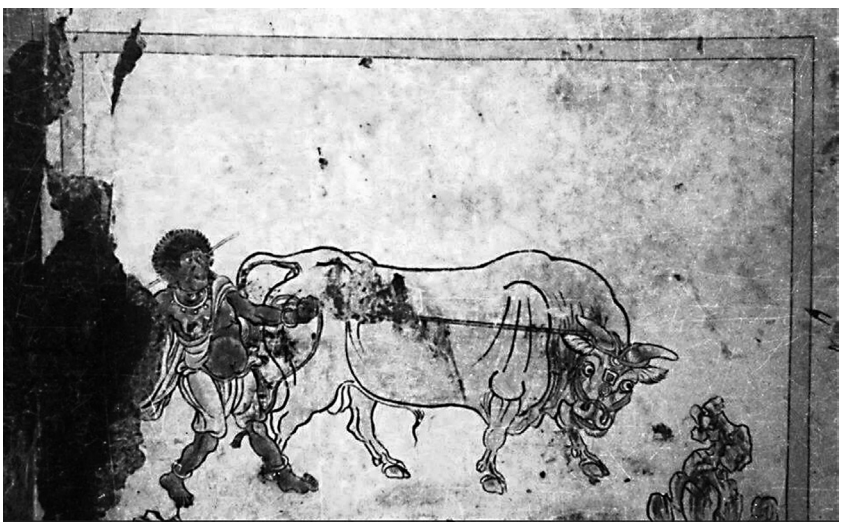


Fig. 12 African leading a bull, north wall, tomb of Li Daojian (d. 732), Fuping, Shaanxi.

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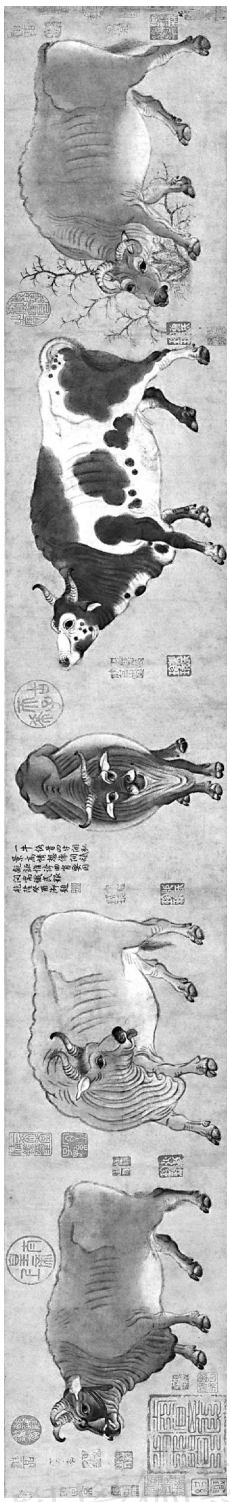


Fig. 13 Han Huang (723-787) (attr.), *Five Oxen,* ink and color on paper, 20.8x139.8cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.

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荷蘭天馬：1667年康熙宮廷的《賀蘭國人役牛馬圖》與荷蘭未成的使節團

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1667年，荷蘭使節團在北京朝覲之後，年輕的康熙皇帝訂做《賀蘭國人役牛馬圖》一幅，即基本上我們對此次荷蘭朝覲的唯一中方資料。這次朝覲充滿了神秘。因為前幾年荷蘭人幫助清軍打敗明朝海盜鄭成功的緣故，荷蘭人期望獲得更好的貿易特權。儘管從福州到北京出發之前已得知要求被拒，他們仍舊啟程前往朝覲，但最終再次遭拒。為什麼滿族統治者和中國官員允許旅程繼續並在北京接待荷蘭人？康熙皇帝為什麼訂做這幅畫？這幅畫可否說明康熙皇帝對荷蘭人的態度？一幅描繪荷蘭人進貢送馬的畫，是否意味著康熙皇帝把荷蘭當做中國的屬國？那麼，為什麼康熙朝廷拒絕給予荷蘭人更好的貿易特權呢？到目前為止，現代研究對這些問題不是迴避，便是未能提出令人滿意的回答。本研究將以這幅畫為出發點，以「馬」為主題，進行以下考察：其一，研究這幅畫及其御製背景；其二，研究中國人和滿族人這一方在荷蘭使節旅程期間、北京宮廷朝覲時，乃至荷蘭人離開甚久之後，對這四匹馬不成比例的關注；其三，通過對貢馬畫的藝術史研究，探討康熙皇帝對馬的熱情及訂做畫的可能動機；第四和最後，推斷清方拒絕給予荷蘭人貿易特權的可能原因。本研究認為，康熙皇帝允許荷蘭使節團朝覲的唯一目的，似乎是為了獲得荷蘭的馬匹。在古代中國人的心目中，此馬匹代表漢代以降流傳的「天馬」。這種傳統中的馬，無論是貢馬還是畫作，都是帝國合法化與天命的象徵。相比之下，清方可能出於戰略考量而拒絕給予貿易特權，以保滿族軍對中國南方海域的控制。

關鍵詞：職貢圖、馬畫、天馬、康熙皇帝、荷蘭使節團

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