

# **Recording the Grandeur of the Qing: Lesson Guide to Exploring the Southern Inspection Tours Scroll Web Module**

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**The five sections of the Guide follow those of the Web module:**

- I. The Grandeur of the Qing Emperors**
- II. The Grandeur of the Qing State**
- III. The Grandeur of the Qing Economy**
- IV. The Grandeur of Qing Art**
- V. The Southern Inspection Tour Scrolls**

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## **I. The Grandeur of the Qing Emperors**

This section introduces the Qing emperors who commissioned the scrolls that are the basis of the web module and provides background on each of the emperors: the Kangxi Emperor, who reigned from 1662-1722 and was a contemporary of Louis XIV of France, and his grandson, the Qianlong Emperor, who reigned from 1736-1796 and was a contemporary of King George III of England (of American Revolution fame).

### **Study Questions:**

1. Explain who the Kangxi Emperor and the Qianlong Emperor are.
  - a. How are they related to one another?
  - b. What are the dates of their reign years? (that is, what dates did each serve as emperor of China)
  - c. Who else served as emperor in the time between them? What was his reign name? How was he related to the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors?
  - d. Why were the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors important?
2. On a map, identify the following places and explain their significance as you read the text of this section:
  - a. Manchuria
  - b. Beijing
  - c. Suzhou
3. Look at the map of China's borders under the Qing. Explain the significance of the change that took place between the Ming dynasty and the Qing.
4. Why and how did the Qianlong Emperor portray himself as a "Universal Ruler"?
5. For what else is the Qianlong Emperor famous?

6. How are the dates of the Qianlong Emperor and that of George Washington similar?
7. Compare and contrast the “tours of the realm” made by the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors with those that the text notes were made by previous emperors.
8. Why did each of these two emperors choose to have a tour recorded? What was the method used to record the tour?

**Class discussion question:**

Discuss how the Qing dynasty worked to create a “multiethnic state.”

- Was this the first time in Chinese history when different groups of peoples were incorporated into the Chinese state? If no, what is significant about this period? (*Consider the early expansion of China southward during the Han dynasty, the multiple groups ruling in China between the Han and Tang dynasties, and the relationship between the Tang dynasty and peoples in the area of Chang An (today, Xian), the Tang capital.*)
- What were the implications of this “multiethnic state” for China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it worked to create a “national identity” as a “modern” state?
- What are the implications for China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## **II. The Grandeur of the Qing State**

**Study Questions:**

1. Explain the concept of the “Mandate of Heaven.”
  - a. How did this differ from the concept of the “divine right of kings” in Western Europe, for example?
  - b. What are the pros and cons of the two concepts in terms of their implications for political power?
2. How did the Qing use the concept of the “Mandate of Heaven” to justify their overthrow of the Ming dynasty?
  - a. Can you explain why the Qing continued to pay homage to the Ming emperors through ritual veneration?
  - b. How did this reinforce the concept of the Mandate of Heaven?
3. Look at the scroll depiction of the Kangxi emperor arriving at Mt. Tai.
  - a. What is the significance of Mt. Tai?
  - b. What is the significance of the Kangxi Emperor’s stop at the mountain?
  - c. How is it related to the concept of the “Mandate of Heaven”?

[Imperial Legitimacy and the Cosmic Order: The Kangxi Emperor's Visit to Mt. Tai](#)



4. Look at the portion of the scroll where the Qianlong Emperor is depicted inspecting work done along the banks of the rivers:  
[Controlling the Waters: The Qianlong Emperor's Inspection of Water Control Measures at Huai and Yellow Rivers](#)
  - a. Why would the Emperor have chosen to make a stop at this site?
  - b. What is the significance of his being depicted overseeing the work?
5. Explain how a hierarchically structured bureaucracy works. How do you think this supports centralized control by the imperial government in Beijing?
6. What is a “meritocracy”?
  - a. How does it differ from an “aristocracy”?
  - b. What would be the implications for government?
7. What function did the “examination system” serve in China?
8. Explain how a Chinese bureaucratic might have “two loyalties” or two orientations when serving in the government.
  - a. What are the pros and cons of this for the empire?
  - b. How was the “rule of avoidance” related to this issue?
9. Which European and American theorists were impressed by the Chinese system of government as they learned more about it?
  - a. How was it similar to and different from government in Europe at this time?
  - b. When were “civil service examinations” introduced in England? In France? In the United States?
10. How much did the Chinese population increase during the period of the Qing dynasty?
  - a. Did the size of the bureaucracy governing the country also increase?
  - b. What were the implications of this?
11. Explain the innovation in tax policy that occurred during the Qing.
  - a. How did
  - b. Would you expect that the Chinese government would tax commerce and trade?
    - i. Why?
    - ii. Are you right or wrong?

12. What was the “secret palace memorial system”?
  - a. What was its purpose?
  - b. Do you think this is a good system or not?
  - c. Can you think of other situations in contemporary times when such a system might be useful?
  - d. What role does a “free press” play in this regard?

**Class discussion question:**

Looking at the sidebar section on “The Chinese Notion of Political Legitimacy,” can you explain how the notion of the Mandate of Heaven still impacts people’s expectations of government in China today?

How might this influence people’s perceptions of their own roles as “citizens”?

### **III. The Grandeur of the Qing Economy**

**Study Questions:**

1. What are some of the reasons usually given by those who wish to argue that the government was “anti-merchant”?
  - a. Are these explanations correct?
  - b. Was the Chinese state historically “anti-merchant”?  
*See also Class Discussion below, Question B.*
2. Compare and contrast the geographic size of Europe in the 1700s and 1800s with that of China under the Qing dynasty.
  - a. How did the political organization of the two areas impact commercial organization?
  - b. Which of the two areas might best be described as a “vast continental market”? Why?
3. Discuss the growth in the number of markets during the Qing period.
  - a. Look at the interactive section of a street scene in Suzhou. How many different types of shops and merchants can you identify?
  - b. What does the growth of markets indicate?
  - c. What is meant by the term “merchant hierarchy”?
  - d. What role do “guild halls” play?
4. Why did “remittance banks” come into being and what role did they play?
5. What is the significance of the fact that people in China had to pay part of their taxes to the government in money (copper coins and silver), not goods?
  - a. What did this mean for the 80% of the population that were farmers?
  - b. What does it imply for the government’s need of metal and silver?

6. Looking at the map of China that shows the location of the Grand Canal:
  - a. In what direction do the rivers flow?
  - b. In what direction is the Grand Canal oriented?.
  - c. What types of products would have moved along the Grand Canal?
  - d. Discuss the importance of the Grand Canal to the central, imperial government in Beijing and to China.

[Silk, Commerce, and the Importance of Suzhou and the Grand Canal](#)

7. The city of Suzhou was very important in Qing dynasty China.
  - a. What are some of the reasons for this?
  - b. Both the Kangxi and the Qianlong emperors are depicted as staying at the home of the Silk Commissioner when they are in Suzhou.
    - i. What was the role of the Silk Commissioner?
    - ii. What was the importance of this for the imperial household?

[Silk, Commerce, and the Importance of Suzhou and the Grand Canal](#)

8. The term “laissez-faire” is a French term used by economists and others to describe behavior.
  - a. What does it mean?
  - b. Explain how it is possible to say that the Chinese government is “laissez-faire” toward trade?
9. What role did the government play in the salt trade? Why?

10. What was the significance of silver to the Chinese government at this time?  
*See also the Class Discussion Question A. In addition, the web module on “China and Europe, 1500-2000: What is Modern?” has a section on silver.*

11. Find the city of Canton on a map of China. Describe how the “Canton System” worked after it was instituted in 1760.
  - a. The conventional understanding of China’s foreign trade relations suggests that these relations were always conducted in terms of “the Canton System.” But this system was only implemented in 1760. How were Chinese merchants involved in foreign trade before this time?
  - b. What was the Chinese government’s involvement in foreign trade before 1760?
  - c. Why are some of the reasons scholars give to explain the motivations for the establishment of the Canton System in 1760?

**Class discussion question:**

- A. Would you argue that the Chinese government played an “active” or a “passive” role in the world trade in silver in the 1700s and 1800s?
  - a. Justify your answer.
  - b. How did the government play the role?
  - c. How does your textbook describe the flow of silver to China? Does it suggest an “active” or “passive” role?
  - d. Textbooks are often said to be behind current scholarship on issues. Would you say this was true of your textbook in this case?
  
- B. Note that some people today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, think of commercial activity as “new” to China.
  - a. Are they correct?
  - b. How might the policies of the People’s Republic of China, after its establishment by the Chinese Communist government in 1949, have affected this view – particularly during the period of Mao Zedong’s leadership, from 1949-1976.

**IV. The Grandeur of Qing Art**

**Study Questions:**

1. Explain the distinction made among the three groups of artists identified in this period:
  - a. Individualists
  - b. Orthodox School or “Traditionalists”
  - c. Professional Court Painters
  
2. Who were the “scholar-artists”?
  
3. Who was Wang Hui? (1632-1717)
  - a. Which of the three groups did he fit into?
  - b. What was his “genius”?
  
4. How did the Chinese value “realism” in their paintings?
  
5. What was the relationship between poetry and painting?
  
6. Look up the meaning of the term “colophon.”
  - a. How were colophons used in relation to Chinese paintings?
  - b. Could there be more than one on a painting?
  
7. Is it often said that a Chinese painting is “never quite finished.”
  - a. Can you explain in what sense this is true?
  - b. What are the implications of this for the nature of the work of art?

8. In European painting, artists used a “linear perspective” and a “vanishing point.”
  - a. Explain what a “linear perspective” is.
  - b. Explain what the “vanishing point” is.
  - c. What are the implications of using a “vanishing point”?
  
9. How did Chinese artists depict space in the Kangxi period?
  - a. How was the scroll format of Chinese painting, as opposed to the framed-picture format of European painting, related to this approach to the depiction of space?
  
10. Who was Giuseppe Castiglione? (1688-1766)
  - a. What was his impact on Chinese painting?
  - b. Why did the Qing emperor like some of the innovations introduced by Castiglione?
  - c. Did the court favor this as “high art”?
  - d. Why or why not?
  
11. Who was Xu Yang? (act. ca. 1750-after 1776)
  - a. Compare and contrast the style of Yang Yu with that of Wang Wei.
  - b. What are the implications of the differences in style between these two artists for the imperial scrolls they produced?
  
12. In Europe, artists also used a technique called “chiaroscuro.”
  - a. What does it mean?
  - b. Why did European artists use it?
  
13. Look at the scrolls painted for the Kangxi emperor and those painted for the Qianlong emperor. Compare and contrast the scrolls.
  - a. Does the artist painting the Kangxi scrolls use the technique of a “vanishing point”?
  - b. What is the approach to representing space in the Kangxi scrolls?
  - c. Now look at the Qianlong scrolls. Does the artist painting the Qianlong scrolls use the technique of a “vanishing” point?
  - d. How does the depiction of space differ between the two sets of scrolls?
  - e. What is the implication for how we “see” the buildings represented in the scroll?
    - i. Look particularly at the depiction of the Silk Commissioner’s house in Suzhou that is depicted in both sets of scrolls. Is there a difference in how it is painted in each of the scrolls?
    - ii. Can you describe the difference?
    - iii. What reason can you give for any difference?
  
14. Compare and contrast the way the figures of people are painted in each set of scrolls.
  - a. What differences can you see?
  - b. What techniques are responsible for the differences?

15. Porcelain was another major form of artistic expression in China.
  - a. Explain how porcelain was produced.
  - b. Why was the European demand for Chinese porcelain so great in the 1600s?
  - c. What is meant by the term “Chinese export porcelain”?
  - d. Why were the kilns at Jingdezhen especially important?
  - e. What was the impact of imperial control being reasserted over these kilns in the late 1600s?
  
16. The great expansion of porcelain production in China led to an increase in specialization.
  - a. How might this be compared to the growth in the textile production in England in the mid-1700s?
  - b. What might be the implications of this?

**Class discussion question:**

Using the following on-line exhibits at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Peabody Museum, what points can you say about China's

- a. commercial and technological expertise during the Qing?
- b. aesthetic sophistication?
- c. perception of Western tastes?

East and West: Chinese Export Porcelain  
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ewpor/hd\\_ewpor.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ewpor/hd_ewpor.htm)

The Copeland Collection: Chinese and Japanese Ceramic Figures  
(Peabody Museum)

<https://www.pem.org/exhibitions/the-copeland-collection-chinese-and-japanese-ceramic-figures>

Chinese Export Porcelain at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/objects?exhibitionId=f7eaa3c2-ff5e-4590-b1d3-3903718f1865&pkgids=105>



## V. The Southern Inspection Tour Scrolls

### Study Questions:

1. Discuss the relationship between the sets of scrolls we are drawing upon here and the inspection tours of the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors:
  - a. How many tours did each emperor make?
  - b. How many of these tours were recorded in paintings?
  
2. How many sets of scrolls are there?
  - a. How many scrolls are included in each set?
  - b. How big are the scrolls?
  - c. Is each scroll different from the one before it and after it?
  
3. Discuss how the scrolls were produced.
  - a. Did the artist travel with the emperor?
  - b. How did the artist conceive of the layout for the scrolls?
  - c. How did he execute the scrolls?
  
4. Discuss the hand scroll format.
  - a. What are its advantages?
  - b. How might it have evolved?
  - c. Why was this format favored in Chinese art?
  
5. What is the history of these sets of hand scrolls? That is
  - a. Where were they housed during the imperial period?
  - b. Were they viewed by many people? By ordinary people in China?
  - c. When were the sets broken up?
  - d. Do we know the location of all of the scrolls?
  - e. How many are we using here and where are they located?

### Class discussion question:

What was the emperor's ultimate purpose in having the scrolls painted? Do you think we are fulfilling that purpose?