



**A Picturesque Voyage to India
by Way of China**

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Artists Thomas and William Daniell, uncle and nephew, are best known for their monumental work, *Oriental Scenery* (1795-1808), a collection of 144 elephant-folio size aquatints illustrating scenes of India from their eight-year sojourn there.

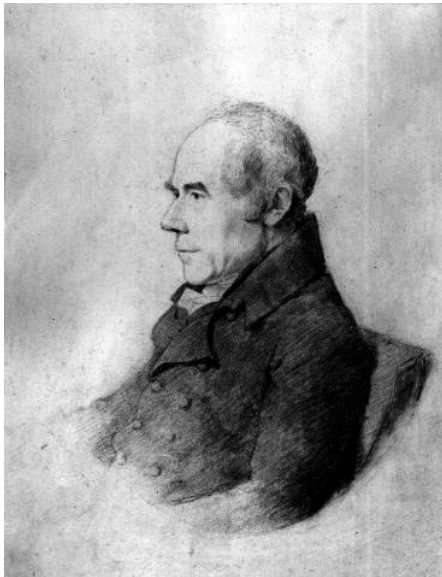


Fig. 1: Thomas Daniell, by George Dance



Fig. 2: William Daniell, by Richard Westall

Many of those aquatints were used by potters in the 1820s as sources for Indian patterns on transferware. However, in order to get to India, the Daniells had to travel on East India Company ships first to China and then back-track to India. It is not recorded how long they remained in China, or for that matter, how long they were in China at the end of their journey waiting for a ship back to England.

Making the most of their layovers, though, they published in 1810 a smaller book, *A Picturesque Voyage to India by the Way of China*, of fifty aquatints showing scenes of their voyage to China as well as sights they observed while in and around Canton and finally in Calcutta. This book didn't escape resourceful potters in the 1820s either, and the Transferware Collectors Club database contains at least ten patterns with elements "adopted" from these prints. What hasn't been shown in the database is the text that accompanies these prints, and in these days of political correctness, much of it is shocking.

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME, PATERNOSTER-ROW; AND
WILLIAM DANIELL, NO. 9, CLEVELAND-STREET, FITZROY-SQUARE.
BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

1810.

Fig. 4: A typical East India Company ship, *The Mellish*, many of which were heavily armed.

Fig. 5: East India Company trading routes.



Fig. 6: Print *Malays of Java*.



Fig. 7: *Malay Beach Scene* pattern.

MALAYS OF JAVA.

THE Malays of Sumatra have nothing to distinguish them from those of Java, in their dress or deportment: the same expression of craft and ferocity is observable in their countenance; they are equally prone to idleness and mischief, to sloth and sensuality, yet are capable of being roused by the hopes of profit to occasional efforts of industry and activity: for their intervals of leisure, they have neither useful nor agreeable occupations, and have no resource but in gaming, to escape from the oppressive melancholy incident to a state of indolent vacuity. The group of loungers in the annexed plate are in this predicament. The neat palisade of bamboos, with a roof of thatch over the entrance, leads to the residence of the Dutch serjeant. In the distance are the two small but celebrated islands of the Cap and Button.

Fig. 8: Text accompanying *Malays of Java* print.

Read “Chinese Lady” (#1) (where the women are said to be “reared in ignorance and imbecility”) and “Chinese Lady” (#2) (where the lady “appears to have no use for her fingers”) for descriptions of the life of an upper-class woman in China. “Chinese Lady” (#2) is just one of three prints used for the mis-named “Opium Smoker” pattern. In that pattern the pipe is just an ordinary tobacco pipe, not an opium pipe.



Figs. 9 and 10: Print and pattern, *Chinese Lady* (#1).

CHINESE LADY.

ARTIFICIAL rocks are common in Chinese gardens, and when skilfully formed and judiciously introduced have a natural and picturesque effect; through these scenes water is often conducted with great taste, and their light bridges add both convenience and beauty. A lady of quality is here represented seated, with no better occupation than that of languidly moving her fan: her dress, though composed of richer materials, is not more elegant than that of her homely attendant: the hair is smoothed with oil, and confined in plaits to the crown of the head with a silver bodkin; on the forehead descends a peak of velvet, to which in full dress is added some ornament of diamonds or artificial flowers: she wears a vest of taffeta, and over it a loose robe with long sleeves. The changes and caprices of fashion are here unknown; the ladies live in seclusion, and when they go abroad are carefully concealed in their sedans. The wife never sits at the same table with her husband, and is rarely indulged with his society. The women are all reared in ignorance and imbecility; and women of rank have the additional misery of existing without even those feminine occupations which employ the lower orders. To a lady of quality it appears almost equally disgraceful to use her feet or her fingers: the common resource is smoking; and it is not unusual to see girls of nine or ten years of age furnished with a pipe, and wearing at their side a silk purse containing tobacco.

Fig. 11: Text accompanying *Chinese Lady #1* print.



Fig. 12: Print, *Chinese Lady* (#2).



Fig. 13 *Opium Smoker* pattern.

CHINESE LADY.

IN this plate is represented a lady presiding in her garden retreat: she is precluded by her exalted rank from any occupation but smoking; and, except in holding her silk purse, or occasionally waving the fan, appears to have no use for her fingers. The dignity of her birth is sufficiently attested by the Lilliputian shoe. The practice of compressing the female foot is peculiar to the Chinese, and its origin has hitherto baffled all the efforts of industry and curiosity: it has been commonly attributed to jealousy; but that passion is at least equally powerful in Turkey and Hindostan, where it has produced no analogous absurdity. The liberty of the Chinese ladies in reality is not abridged by their lameness; they can saunter in the garden; they are permitted to go abroad in palanquins; and are in general even less restricted than other Asiatic females. It would, perhaps, be more reasonable to suppose that the compression of the female foot has originated in pride and arrogance than in cruelty and suspicion; and that it wants not defenders even in the sex who suffers as a badge of gentility, a constant line of demarcation between the noble and the vulgar. It is, however, remarkable that this custom has never been adopted by the Tartars, and, to whatever principle it may be referred, was unknown even in China in the tenth century.

Fig. 14: Text accompanying *Chinese Lady #2* print.

In the text for “Chinese Gentleman”, the source for the “opium” smoker, the Daniells state that in China “Literature is seldom cultivated for amusement, and authors are said to be more numerous than readers”.



Fig. 15: Print *Chinese Gentleman*.



Fig. 16: *Opium Smoker* pattern.

CHINESE GENTLEMAN.

A CHINESE gentleman is here presented in his ordinary dress. He wears a jacket, and under it a loose vest descending to the ankles; his head is covered with a cap made of bamboo, and ornamented with red silk: the boots are large and of a peculiar shape; they are composed of satin; the soles of paper, very thick, made from the bamboo. In the right hand he holds a pipe, and suspends from one of his fingers a silk purse, containing the never-to-be-forgotten tobacco. This garden is like the former, embellished with an artificial rock, and relieved by trees of various foliage. On the terrace are ranged pots of the most rare and curious plants. Near the steps leading to an upper terrace is placed a seat made of porcelain. The building to the right is a part of the mansion; the small pagoda to the left is an ornamental object. The leisure of a Chinese gentleman is commonly devoted to smoking and chewing betel, to which is sometimes added the use of opium. The pleasures of society are here subordinate to the gratification of appetite: the table is loaded with delicacies, but elegant pleasures are wholly unknown. Literature is seldom cultivated for amusement, and authors are said to be more numerous than readers.

Fig. 17: Text accompanying *Chinese Gentleman* print.

They express surprise, though, in the text for “View in a Chinese Garden” at the beauty of gardens “in a country where good taste appears to be almost unknown”. Note that in the transferware pattern both of these elements are shown in reverse.



Fig. 18: Print *View in a Chinese Garden*.



Fig. 19: *Opium Smoker* pattern.

VIEW IN A CHINESE GARDEN.

IT is curious to remark, that in a country where good taste appears to be almost unknown, it should be so conspicuously displayed in the art of dressing the surface of the earth. It must nevertheless be acknowledged, that while in every other liberal or elegant art the taste of the Chinese is either puerile or barbarous in the extreme, in ornamental gardening they have shewn themselves capable of instructing nations greatly their superiors in every other species of intellectual culture. With them it would seem to be a general principle to suppress every sentiment, as well as to disguise every appearance, of nature; but in the arrangement and embellishment of grounds appropriated to elegant pleasures they take an opposite course, and wisely considering nature as their only true guide, aim only to follow her example, and to imitate or preserve her beauties; therefore, if we except their ridiculous attachment to artificial rocks, a Chinese garden presents few objects that good sense and good taste will not approve.

This plate gives only a glance into one of these luxurious scenes, where groves, and pavilions, and water are combined, not only to produce the charms of beauty and variety, but the comforts of coolness and shade.

Fig. 20: Text accompanying *View in a Chinese Garden*.

“A Chinese of Rank” is treated more kindly, with no obvious sarcasm in the text. Years ago, when a transferware pattern based on this print was first identified, it was erroneously called “Chinaman of Rank”, and that error has been perpetuated in some reference works.



Fig. 21: Print *A Chinese of Rank*.



Fig. 22: *Chinese of Rank* pattern (jug).



Fig. 23 *A Chinese of Rank* pattern (plate).

A CHINESE OF RANK.

THIS plate presents an apartment in a Chinese mansion. The house, like all the habitations of the great, is surrounded with a high wall, over which the lofty trees of the garden are just visible; the floor is of stone, and corresponds with the columns supporting the edifice. In the compartments of the wall are hung frames of silk of various colours, with characters, which convey some moral axiom or religious precept. On the table are placed vases of porcelain, containing fruits and flowers: the lantern suspended near the window is used at night, when it is splendidly illuminated. The grave personage in the arm-chair is known by the beads on his neck to be a Mandarin of distinguished rank; and the badge worn on his breast, exhibiting the figure of a bird, intimates that he fills not a military but a civil department: the two attendants are ready to light his pipe, an operation frequently performed by a lens, or to replenish it with tobacco.

Fig. 24: Text accompanying *A Chinese of Rank* print.

The text for “Hotun on the Canton River”, the source of the pagoda on the right side of the “Canton River” pattern, presents a pretty description of the Chinese countryside near Canton but also mentions the constant threat of famine from failures of the rice crop.



Fig. 25: Print *Hotun on the Canton River*.



Fig. 26: Pattern *Canton River or Chinese Junk and Pagodas*.

HOTUN ON THE CANTON RIVER.

THE scenery near Hotun presents a specimen of the general aspect of the country on the Tigris, or Canton river. The bordering hills crowned with lofty trees; the gentle acclivities, whose lively verdure is insensibly lost in the deeper foliage of the woods; the solitary pagoda, encircled by trees; the rice fields stretching to the water's edge, and every where intersected by fertilizing streams; these are the general features of the country, and they are such as perpetually delight the eye by their variety, luxuriance, and amenity. Rice is the staff of life in China; it is liable to many accidents from drought and inundation, and is perpetually subject to the depredations of birds and locusts. A total failure in the crops is no rare occurrence, and to this cause, in general, may the frequency of famine be attributed. The pagoda is an object familiar to Chinese landscapes; it does not appear that these religious-looking edifices are consecrated to public or private worship, and they are often introduced for no other purpose than to embellish a fine prospect: it is however probable that these buildings had once a religious destination, but that the associations of thought and feeling connected with their origin have ceased to exist.

Fig. 27: Text accompanying *Hotun on the Canton River*.

In the text for “South-West View of Canton” a brief but accurate description of the foreign operations in Canton gives us a hint of the restrictions placed by the Chinese on foreign traders, while the picture shows the foreign “factories” (warehouses) in Canton. The boat in the right foreground of the picture is the only element from this print included in the “Canton River” pattern.



Fig. 25: Print *South-West View of Canton*.



Fig. 26: Pattern *Canton River* or *Chinese Junk and Pagodas*.

SOUTH-WEST VIEW OF CANTON.

THE vicinity of the mountains contributes materially to the salubrity of Canton, which, like Pekin, is several miles in circumference. It is the most considerable port in China, and almost the only place accessible to strangers. There is a large part even of Canton, called the Tartarean city, that no foreigner is permitted to enter: the streets, though narrow as alleys, are extremely straight, and flagged with round stones; the houses seldom exceed one story in height; the ground floor is laid out in a shop; and the loft above is merely a store; no accommodations are provided for the family, whose residence is always in another quarter. It is not usual to meet with either horses or carriages, but foot passengers are so numerous that it is not without difficulty even palanquins are carried through them. This sketch of Canton is taken from the south-west side of the river; the elegant row of buildings on the opposite bank consists of European factories, each distinguished by its national flag. The west fort, though destitute of strength, is a pleasing object. At night this scene appears to peculiar advantage: the water reflects a stream of light from the boats and houses, which are splendidly illuminated with lanterns. Fire works are often exhibited: a species of spectacle in which the Chinese eminently excel. In this animated scene it is pleasing to our countrymen to observe the superior elegance of the British factory; and so honourable is the character of the East India Company, that boxes of dollars bearing their stamp pass through China like bank notes in England. In such estimation is the commercial prosperity and probity of our country in that remote corner of the globe.

Fig. 27: Text accompanying *South-West View of Canton*.

In a coincidence of historic journeys, the Daniells returned to England in early 1794 by joining an East India Company convoy that included Lord Macartney's entourage, returning from a diplomatic mission to the Emperor of China which had failed to secure expanded trading rights and representation for the English.

References

Daniell, Thomas and William. *A Picturesque Voyage to India by the Way of China*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1810.

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