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# Uncovering the garden of the richest man on earth in nineteenth century Guangzhou: Howqua's garden in Henan, China.

## Abstract

Gardens in Lingnan, particularly those located in and around Guangzhou (Canton), were among the first Chinese gardens to be visited by Westerners, as until the Opium Wars, movements of foreigners were restricted to the city of Guangzhou, with the exception of a few missionaries who were able to enter Beijing. Thus Guangzhou gardens, and more specifically the Hong (or merchant) gardens of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have largely informed Western understanding of Chinese gardens at a time when Suzhou gardens were inaccessible to foreigners. However, despite its historical importance the Lingnan region has been little explored by Western scholars, and research in China has only seen local exposure. This paper will present a conjectural reconstruction of Co-Hong merchant Howqua's gardens, built at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the suburbs of Guangzhou. This reconstruction is based on Western diaries, records and photographs, as well as Chinese sources such as gazetteers and export paintings.

## Introduction

During almost a century, Guangzhou (Canton) was the only harbour opened to Westerners<sup>1</sup> wanting access to China: Qianlong emperor (1735-1796) was at the origin of this policy, usually referred to as the Canton Trade period (1757-1842)<sup>2</sup>. This restriction was instituted in part to prevent ambitious foreigners to reach other Chinese harbours north of Guangzhou; these were located much closer to the capital Beijing, and a foreign presence in these parts would have jeopardised Chinese imperial security. Throughout the Canton Trade period merchants wanting to make business with China were also obliged to use specific intermediaries during their transactions: this group of men was named the Co-Hong or Hong, and hand picked among the wealthiest of Cantonese traders. One of the most respected Hong merchants, Howqua, had the reputation of being the richest man on earth at the peak of his career just before the first Opium War (1839-42). His fortune was evaluated between 15-25 million dollars<sup>3</sup>, in any case so important as to guarantee the security of the whole of Hong merchants' solvency<sup>4</sup>. As the head of the Hong, Howqua had accumulated a fortune that allowed him to build some of the most talked about gardens of nineteenth century China.

Unfortunately there are no remains of this once flourishing gardens visited by both Chinese elites and Western traders. Careful research in both Chinese and Western written and pictorial sources appears as the only mean to obtain an idea of their appearance. This task is rendered considerably arduous because of the multiplicity of languages in which relevant records are written, as well as the fact that these pictures, paintings and books are scattered across the world in countless museums, libraries and private collections. However the current trend for libraries and museums to scan their collections and make them available to the public has made it now possible to reconstitute large portions of the gardens through the processing of these diverse materials, as will be exposed in this paper. It appears timely as the bulk of Chinese garden studies has been overly focused on most well known examples located around Suzhou and Beijing, and offers an alternative vision of the Chinese gardens as Westerners first encountered it<sup>5</sup>.

Howqua, richest man on earth in the first half of the nineteenth century

Howqua or Wu Bingjian 伍秉鑑 (1769— 1843), was in fact the second Howqua in name: Howqua<sup>6</sup> was the title of his father Wu Guoying 伍國瑩(1731—1800). Howqua I had created the Yihe Company in the 1780s, which his son Howqua II - designated as Howqua in this paper - had inherited in 1801. In the hands of the son, the company soon proved highly profitable<sup>7</sup> and thus Howqua became the richest man on earth at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Numerous reports on Howqua's character can be found in contemporary newspapers in Western languages, which reported him as not to be trusted for government matters, but perfectly trustworthy as to commercial affairs<sup>8</sup>. He was admired for his shrewd sense of commerce, his effectiveness and refined intellect; but his conservative personality<sup>9</sup> was sometimes regretted. However he was, paradoxically, also considered to be exceptionally open-minded<sup>10</sup> as well as being well disposed towards foreigners, which is why he occasionally invited a privileged few of them in his gardens.

Hong merchants, aware of their role as the only intermediaries that Western traders could use for their transactions, took great care to entertain cordial relationships with their foreign counterparts. This friendly attitude was contrasted with a very tense atmosphere laid upon the city of Guangzhou at the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: local Chinese's despise of foreigners grew to unprecedented highs as opium smuggling intensified, adding to the constant threat that foreign ship's crews represented to the Chinese - many newspapers reported homicides - and culminating with their bombing of the city during the first Opium War (1839-42). Until this date, during trade season<sup>11</sup> Western visitors had been confined to a small number of locations in the city; including the factories where trade was conducted and a handful of local landmarks for recreation purposes. Therefore it is understandable that, when the opportunity of visiting Howqua's gardens arose<sup>12</sup>, the lucky guests kept precise observations in their diaries, and later purchased views of the gardens as souvenirs: consequently making the study of Howqua's gardens possible even long after its actual destruction.

## The Wu Residence in Henan Island

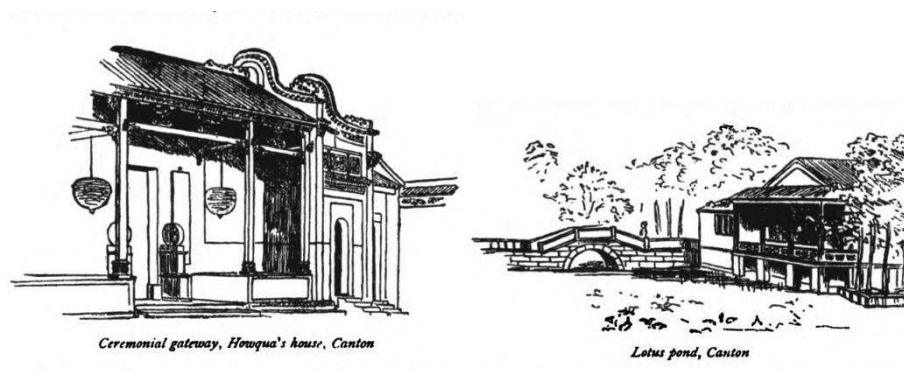
As the leader of the Hong merchants, the owner of the Yihe Company and the head of the Wu family 伍家, Howqua was in charge of a considerable household, which he had to house in appropriate style fitting to his rank. The origin of the Howqua residence's location is linked to the Wu family's quest for local legitimacy: originated from Fujian province, the Wu had moved to Guangdong under emperor Kangxi's reign (1661-1722), which made them foreigners in the eyes of local Cantonese. First the lead of the family, Wu Chaofeng (1613-93) settled in Xiguan, a suburb located directly to the west of Guangzhou city walls (Figure 1). As the city of Guangzhou became wealthier as a harbour, so was the price of the land getting more expensive. However in 1783, his great-grandson Wu Guoying could afford to purchase land<sup>13</sup> in Henan 河南, on the southern bank of the Pearl River<sup>14</sup> opposite the city of Guangzhou. The Wu estate was conveniently located on the opposite side of the river from the Factories (or Hong): established between the city walls and the northern bank of the river, the Thirteen Factories were warehouses where the foreign trade was taking place, with each trading nation attached in name to one specific building.

Additionally, Henan had been a popular location for garden making since the Ming dynasty, reaching its peak during the transition between 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Such a propitious location meant that the Wu cohabited with their direct rivals, the Pan family 潘家, also powerful in the maritime trade and originated from Fujian. The Pan and Wu estates were located on each side of a narrow watercourse named the Longxi Stream 龙溪涌 near the Ocean's Banner Temple 海幢寺 in the proximity of the Pearl River. This Buddhist institution was one of the largest centres of piety in local Cantonese society and coincidentally one of the few locations that foreign traders were allowed to visit before 1842. Consequently, the temple was abundantly described in writing as well as paintings from both Chinese and Western origins, and descriptions of the temple came usually together with that of the adjoining Howqua's garden<sup>15</sup>. The Wu estate occupied a roughly triangular piece of land positioned between the temple on the west, and the Pan estate on the east (Figure 1); although the latter was located beyond the narrow Longxi Stream.



(FIGURE 1) Simplified map of Guangzhou, adapted by L.Feng from Plan of the city and suburbs of Canton compiled by the Quarter-master generals department Chinese expeditionary force. Map dated of October 1857 and kept in Cambridge University Library. Legend: 1. Conjectural location of the Fuyinyuan in Huadi; 2. Wu Residence in Henan; 3. Pan Residence in Henan; 4. Ocean's Banner Temple; 5. Thirteen Factories; 6. Conjectural location of the Wu's house in Xiguan.

The layout of the Wu family's residence in Henan, including its garden, reflected the different functions required by a high standing family in late Imperial China. More specifically, the Howqua garden exemplified the contemporary characteristics of Guangzhou's lifestyle, somewhat different from that of northern Chinese cities' located closer to the Imperial Court. The similarities and the singularities of Howqua's garden and residence will appear gradually as its layout is described: any visitor wishing to access the Wu's estate had first to pass its gate opening on Fuchang Street 福场路. According to a number of diaries<sup>16</sup>, it was a simple gateway pierced through a monumental wall, on which doors were painted two gods to ward off evil spirits. Passed the first gate, the visitor would soon be in the vicinity of the Wu family's Ancestral Hall, which gate was more imposing. The American zoologist and orientalist Edward S. Morse made a drawing of that second gate which is reproduced below (Figure 2 a), with the following comment: "The whole effect was quite imposing, and architecturally very beautiful. The sketch does but slight justice to its stately appearance, though the outlines and proportions are in the main correct."<sup>17</sup>



(FIGURE 2) Sketches drawn by Morse during his 1880s journeys to China. A) Ceremonial gateway, Howqua's house, Canton. B) Lotus pond, Canton. Reproduced from Morse, *Glimpses of China and Chinese homes*, p.153.

As the main residence of the Wu family, it was necessary for Howqua to emphasise his lineage by a monumental building in order to reaffirm his local legitimacy in the tradition of his clan. Indeed the first Wu to settle in Guangzhou, Wu Chaofeng, had started by transferring the coffin of his father so that he would be reinterred outside Guangzhou, a definitive move in terms of lineage. The following generation, Wu Guoying or Howqua I, erected a shrine to his father, probably in the residence of Henan; and furthermore his first son Wu Bingyong, Howqua's elder brother, compiled a genealogy of the Wu family, underlining furthermore their establishment in Guangzhou. These efforts from the Wu family to "recast themselves as a Cantonese lineage"<sup>18</sup> all called for an imposing Ancestor's Hall; and according to the impression it made on Morse, it had been achieved successfully. Immediately next to the estate's entrance was also located Howqua's governmental office, linked to his official business as a maritime merchant. As the head of the Wu family he had sensibly chosen a layout that was both practical and powerful symbolically.

After passing through the Ancestral Hall, the visitor would encounter a series of shrines. On the north was a tall building dedicated to the god of learning and culture, Wenchang 文昌, as well as a shrine to the local deity. The Wenchang tower, by its elevation, was believed to bring a beneficial *fengshui* to the residence as a whole. These towers were frequently built in Guangzhou and its surroundings: Howqua was observing local religious rituals as much to justify his local status as to display his wealth. The adjacent Ocean's Banner Temple also regularly benefited from Howqua's patronage, and in return was opened to him to host literati gatherings in the temple, inviting scholars from both the city and its surroundings in an effort to reinforce his cultural standing.

In that part of residence were also located rooms to receive visitors, as well as the Main Hall, notably used for banquets given in the honour of guests. However the most impressive anecdote about this building is that, at the occasion of a Wu grandmother's funeral, it was rumoured to have contained a thousand Buddhist monks.<sup>19</sup>

### Entering Howqua's garden

Besides these first elements, as well as a number of residential rooms, most of the Wu estate was occupied by the garden proper. The visitor would be getting his first view of the garden after leaving behind the Ancestor's Hall. The immediate scenery was composed of a lotus pond crossed by a low stone bridge, which was fortunately described in another of Morse's sketches as reproduced above (Figure 2 b). Contrarily to the fashion in Beijing and Suzhou, this pond did not adopt a natural shape but a geometrical one, and was walled in with bricks<sup>20</sup>. The scene was named the 'Half-Moon Pool' and was separated from one of the shrines by a few steps and a small hill.<sup>21</sup> Along the pond, narrow stone paths with red railings led to a pavilion to appreciate the freshness of the water, bordered with bamboos planted so as to form the 'Decorated Bamboo Dam' 修篁埭.

After this first scenery, the visitor would reach a door labelled “Garden of the Ten Thousand Pines” or ‘Wansongyuan’ 万松园. To determine the exact location of that door would require additional research; however the part of the garden beyond that point is mentioned in the Chinese sources as ‘a garden inside the garden’, created in 1835 after the completion of the Ancestral Hall<sup>22</sup>. As such it was the most elegant part of the residence, which allowed for intimate gatherings. Westerners’ records did mention the ‘Wansongyuan’ and although some writers did seem to realise that they had entered a more recluse part of the garden<sup>23</sup>, the refined layout was often left unnoticed.

When researching traditional Chinese gardens, the Imperial gardens of Beijing or the elegant private gardens of Suzhou are the classical examples coming to mind. In both, one of the outstanding elements is the presence of rocks as a crucial part of the layout. In the most important Chinese treaty on gardens, the *Yuanye* or *Craft of gardens*, the importance of a rock’s shape is emphasised as crucial to avoid vulgarity in the layout<sup>24</sup>. The monetary value of standing rocks and rockworks made them a crucial part of the expense occurred in the creation of a new garden. Although Guangzhou was considered as a peripheral provincial city of the Chinese empire at the time, it was still its third city and producing the most wealth in terms of wealth. As such, even if the practicalities must have been considerable, Howqua had a *Taihu* rock<sup>25</sup> installed in his garden, befitting his immense wealth. Wu Chuoyu 伍绰余 described his sibling’s garden in these terms: “There is a *Taihu* rock<sup>26</sup> towering inside the door, with a cloudy head and a rainy foot”<sup>27</sup>. This poetic description referred to a type of rock large on top and with a thin base, so as to seem to float on the ground; and is generally accepted as one of the most elegant shape for a rock. Behind the precious rock stood a round door on which was an inscribed horizontal tablet with the words “Cangchun shenchu” 藏春深处 (Hidden spring in the depth). From the Chinese sources it appears that this door further led to the quarters of one of Howqua’s concubines. In Chinese residences and gardens, women’s quarters were traditionally located in one of the most inaccessible parts of the house, and therefore the ‘Wansongyuan’ was effectively one of the most private parts of the garden.





(FIGURE 3) *Howqua's garden*. Gouache on paper, c.1855, by Tingqua also named Guan Lianchang (1809-1870c.). Kept in the Peabody Essex Museum.

### The 'pool with water kiosk' scenery

The transition between this round door marking the beginning of the 'Wansongyuan' and the next known scenery is not clearly established yet. The following part, according to written source, contained a pool on the middle of which an elegant kiosk was built, hence its unofficial name of 'pool with water kiosk' scenery. The spectacle was constructed around the reflections of the kiosk and its surroundings in the water<sup>28</sup>.

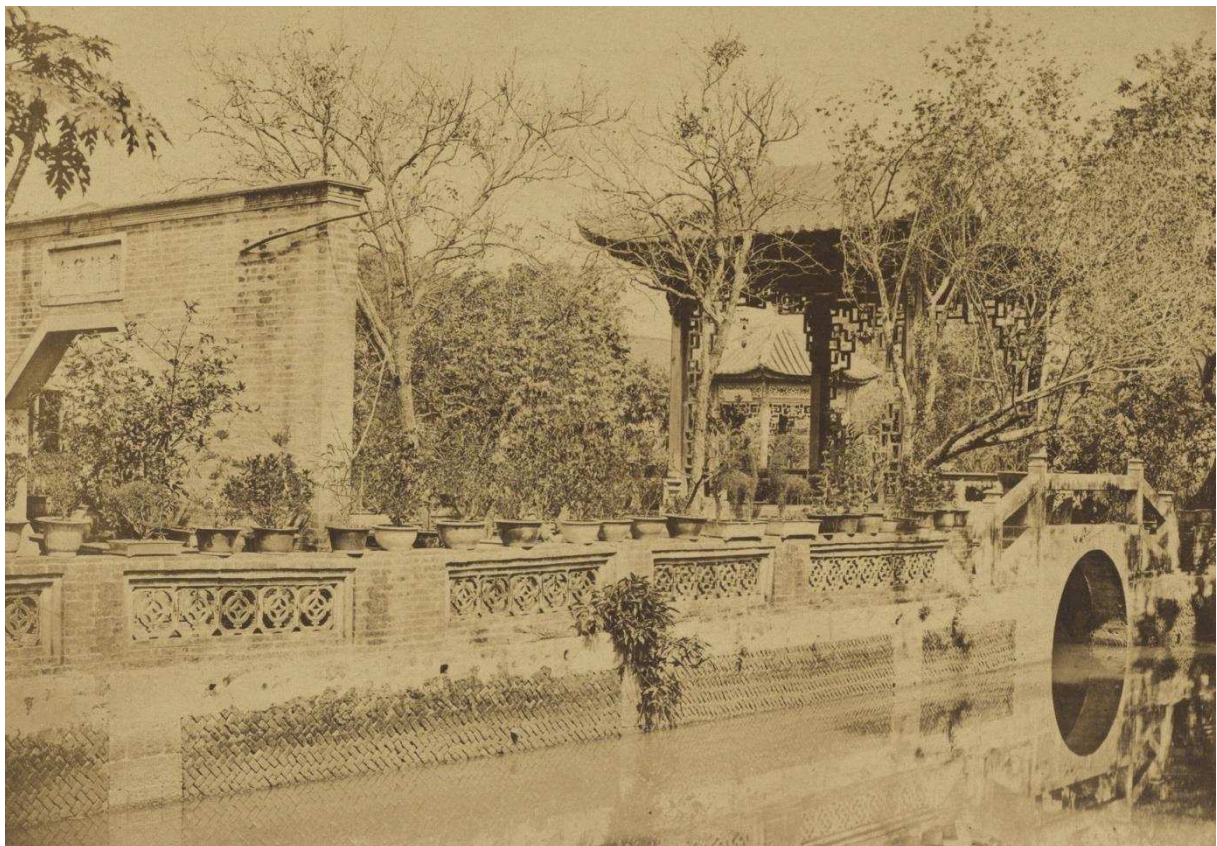
In order to illustrate the 'Wansongyuan', scholars usually bring forward a number of Chinese 'export paintings' made by Cantonese artists especially for the use of foreigners wanting to obtain a souvenir to bring home. These paintings<sup>29</sup> have general titles such as 'Howqua's garden' and were produced in series with small differences in colours and details. However unreliable these sources could seem, it has been possible to match some of the most frequent views of Howqua's garden with the other available descriptions, thus partly validating their authenticity. It is however difficult to determine which of Howqua's gardens is represented in the diverse pictorial sources available for the following scene, and even written description rarely give precisions regarding the location. For the sake of argument, the most popular hypothesis has been chosen here and this scene included in Howqua's Henan garden's description.

It is likely that the brightly coloured gouache on paper titled "Howqua's garden" made by Chinese painter Tingqua 关联昌 (active 1830s-1870s in Guangzhou) and kept in the



Peabody Essex Museum of Salem is a representation of the 'pool with water kiosk' scenery (Figure 3). The foreground is occupied by a venerable tree surrounded by potted flowers; to the left of which a hall opens on a geometrical bricked pond. The waterscape contains indeed a kiosk on the far left, linked to the opposite side of the scene by a low bridge without fence. The background is occupied by a straight promenade protected by a low brick and ceramic balustrade covered in potted flowers; this promenade borders the side of the pond and is covered in its middle by a square pavilion on a low bridge. On the other side of the promenade is probably a second section of the pond, although its relative size is impossible to evaluate from this painting alone.

This colourful waterscape depiction offers a vivid rendering of Howqua's garden, however its authenticity could be doubtful if it was not confirmed quite coincidentally by one of the first photographic representations of a Chinese garden. Felice Beato's "Howqua's gardens" is an albumen picture taken in 1860 of what appears as the same part of the garden, but from a different angle: it depicts a geometrical bricked pond bordered with low balustrades lined with potted flowers, and a bridge surmounted by a square pavilion on one side (Figure 4).

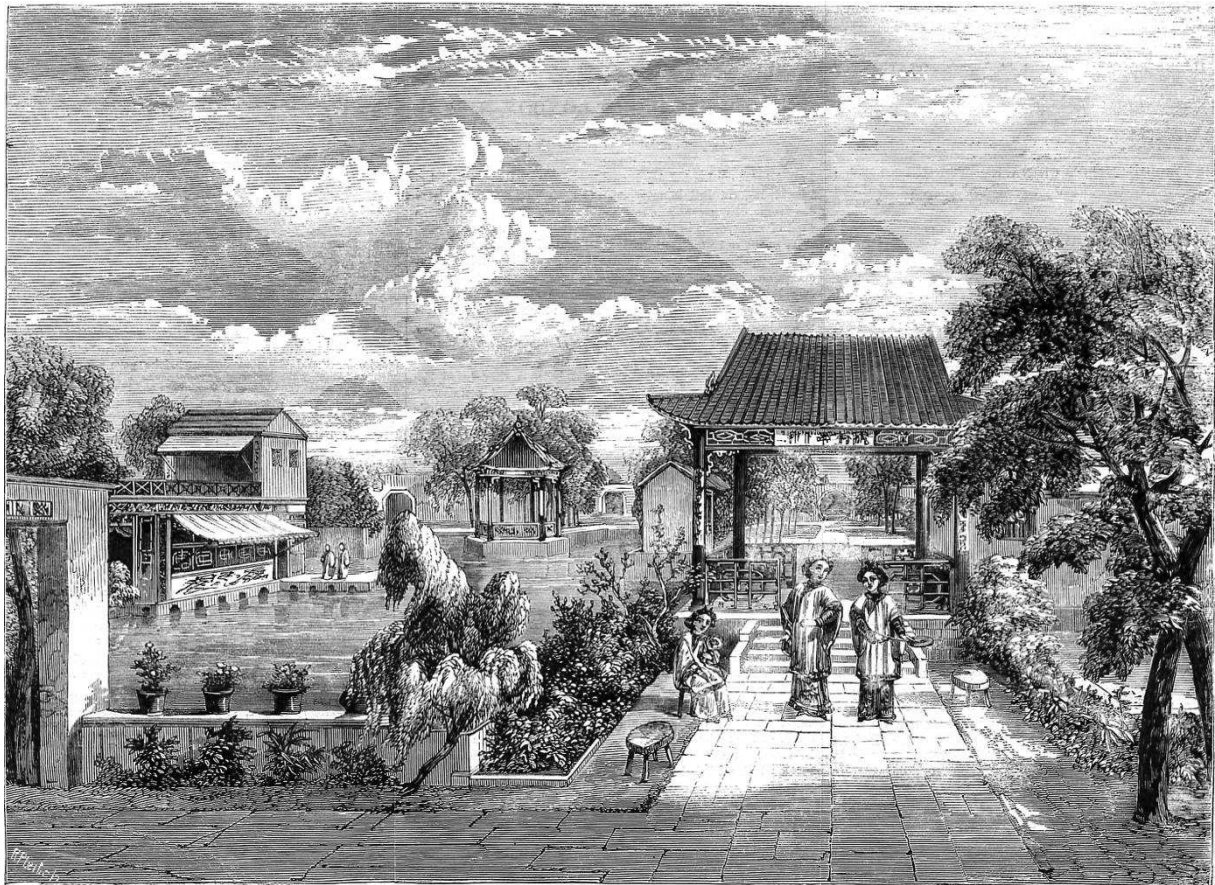


(FIGURE 4) *Howqua's gardens*, Canton. Albumen print, 1860, by Felice Beato (1832-1909). Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

Photography as a technology was developed in the 1840s, just in time to be used to provide pictorial evidence of some of the greatest Guangzhou gardens before their disappearance. Western traders brought with them the first commercialised cameras in China, such as the daguerreotype models. Their first stop in China was usually Guangzhou, still an important trade harbour even after other Treaty Ports were opened

following the Treaty of Nanjing (1842). As their movements were less restricted than under the Canton Trade (1757-1842), they visited the city more leisurely and took pictures of its most famous views; among the most exquisite sights were the gardens of Hong merchants Howqua and Puankhequa, which one could access easily after the first Opium War. Thus the existence of photographs such as Beato's can be used to determine the appearance of Howqua's garden, although these were taken at a period passed the garden's prime glory after the death of his owner.

As previously noted, in Tingqua's painting (Figure 3), the low zig-zag bridge linking the water-based kiosk is clearly visible; while a hall-type building with a covered corridor opened on the pond on the foreground. In Beato's picture (Figure 4), the promenade is ended by a screen wall, itself pierced by an octagonal door that is not represented on Tingqua's painting. Both pictorial sources contain the low bridge surmounted with a square pavilion and potted flowers lined on the balustrades, however in Beato's the water-based kiosk can be seen in the background, behind the promenade rather than in front of it. Therefore Beato's view was probably taken from the opposite side of the bridge than depicted in Tingqua's painting, and provides us with an idea of the size of this second half of the pond. Furthermore, through the octagonal door can be seen a small part of a building which could correspond with the hall depicted in Tingqua's painting (Figure 3).

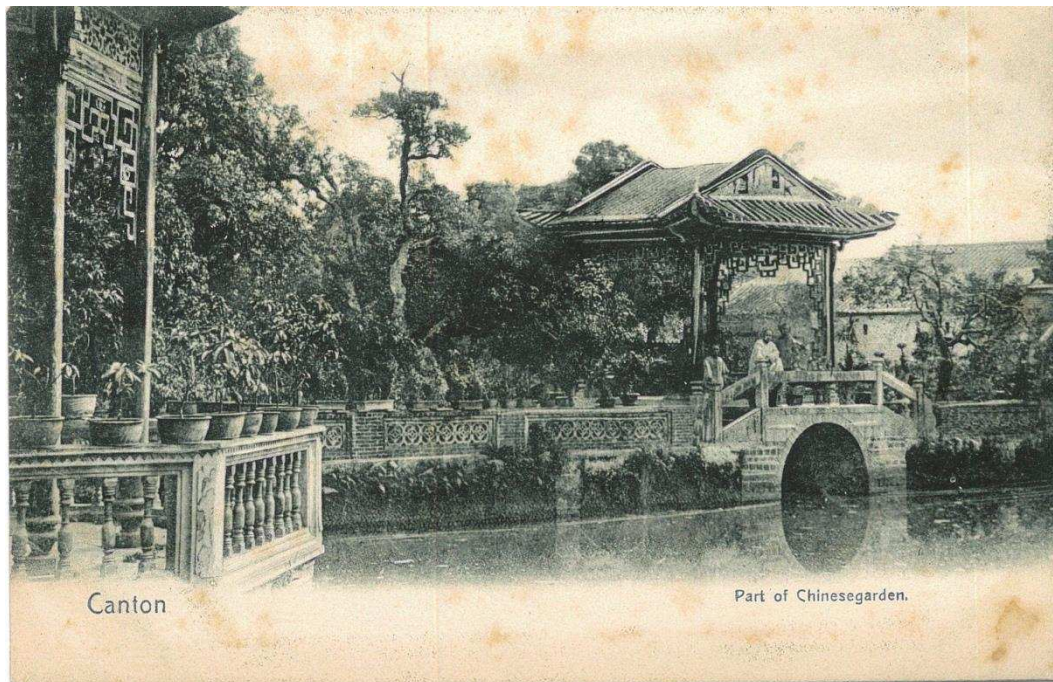


HOWQUA GARDEN, NEAR CANTON.—FROM MR. ALBERT SMITH'S "CHINA."

(FIGURE 5) Howqua garden, near Canton. Reproduced from Illustrated London News, 1859, citing Smith, To China and back: being a diary kept, out and home.



Interestingly, in several additional pictorial sources depicting this scenery<sup>30</sup>, the half of the pool containing the (probably octagonal) kiosk is bordered with a boat hall or *chuanting* 船厅 (Figure 5). This type of building is usually shaped as a long rectangle with a two-storied back room, so as to imitate those of Chinese boats used for leisure lake transportation as seen nowadays in Hangzhou. By definition these boat halls are towering over the water<sup>31</sup>. Although there are boat halls inside gardens across China, Cantonese gardens have a greater number of these and their shape and position tend to be more consistent. The most interesting feature is that in Guangzhou the first floor is rarely linked directly with the ground floor but reached by a complex set of stairs, so as to make it a particularly private building with a vantage view of the garden. In two surviving gardens outside of Guangzhou<sup>32</sup>, boat halls' first floor was used for the women quarters. It is thus not too surprising although possibly coincidental that in several of the export paintings titled "Howqua's garden", the stone paths surrounding the pool are depicted as populated by women, and sometimes children; thus confirming the intimate nature of the spot. The boat hall could correspond to the building described at the foreground in Tingqua's painting (Figure 3).



(FIGURE 6) Canton, Part of Chinese garden. Postcard produced by M. Sternberg & Co. in Hong Kong, around 1909, from earlier photograph of unknown date.

The composition of this scene is confirmed by the existence of a postcard representing the water kiosk from yet another point of view (Figure 6). This postcard is labelled "Canton – Part of Chinese garden" and was produced by M. Sternberg & Co. in Hong Kong<sup>33</sup>. There is little doubt that this Cantonese garden is in fact Howqua's garden, when compared to Beato's picture (Figure 4). In this composition, the bridge covered by a pavilion is again the focus, however the position of the photographer has changed. This time the picture was taken from a position opposite to the covered bridge, probably from the boat hall described in Figure 5. The water kiosk is standing on the left – that is if the picture was not reversed as it happened frequently at the time. There is no sight of the zig-zag bridge, however the other half of the pond is revealed to be abundantly planted with vegetation.

The layout of the ‘pool with water kiosk’ scenery would find its confirmation if the authentication of a traditional Chinese painting kept at the Guangdong Provincial Museum in Guangzhou could be obtained (Figure 7). This painting depicts a pond in which a kiosk stands, linked by an emphatically long zig-zag bridge to the banks. The other third of the pond is separated from this kiosk by a promenade in the centre of which is located a bridge with a pavilion very similar to the one depicted by Beato’s picture. Similarly, the end of the promenade is screened by an octagonal door, this time clearly located on the side of the pond closest to the riverside where the entrance is located. On the right bank stands a hall - possibly a stylised boat hall - and on the left bank profuse vegetation is represented, in accordance with the postcard (Figure 6).



(FIGURE 7) Fuyinyuan. Date and medium unknown, by Tianyu (active c.1851-75), kept in the Guangdong Provincial Museum.

The lack of information on the painter, date and format make the source potentially unreliable, thus further research is underway<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, although describing a garden’s layout in all points similar to the ‘pool with water kiosk’ scenery, this painting is the only source to attribute this specific layout to another of Howqua’s gardens located approximately three kilometers from the ‘Wansongyuan’: the ‘Fuyinyuan’ 馥荫园 in Huadi (see Figure 1). Therefore solving this dilemma would cast a new light on the study of Howqua’s gardens, and potentially give a definite answer to the previously mentioned issue of matching descriptions with locations of the two main gardens owned by Howqua<sup>35</sup>. Although the uncertain location of the scene is challenging for the scholar, it however does not alter the analysis of its layout; additionally both gardens were ultimately propriety of the same owner and located in a similar area in the southern suburbs of Guangzhou.

#### The river entrance to Howqua’s garden

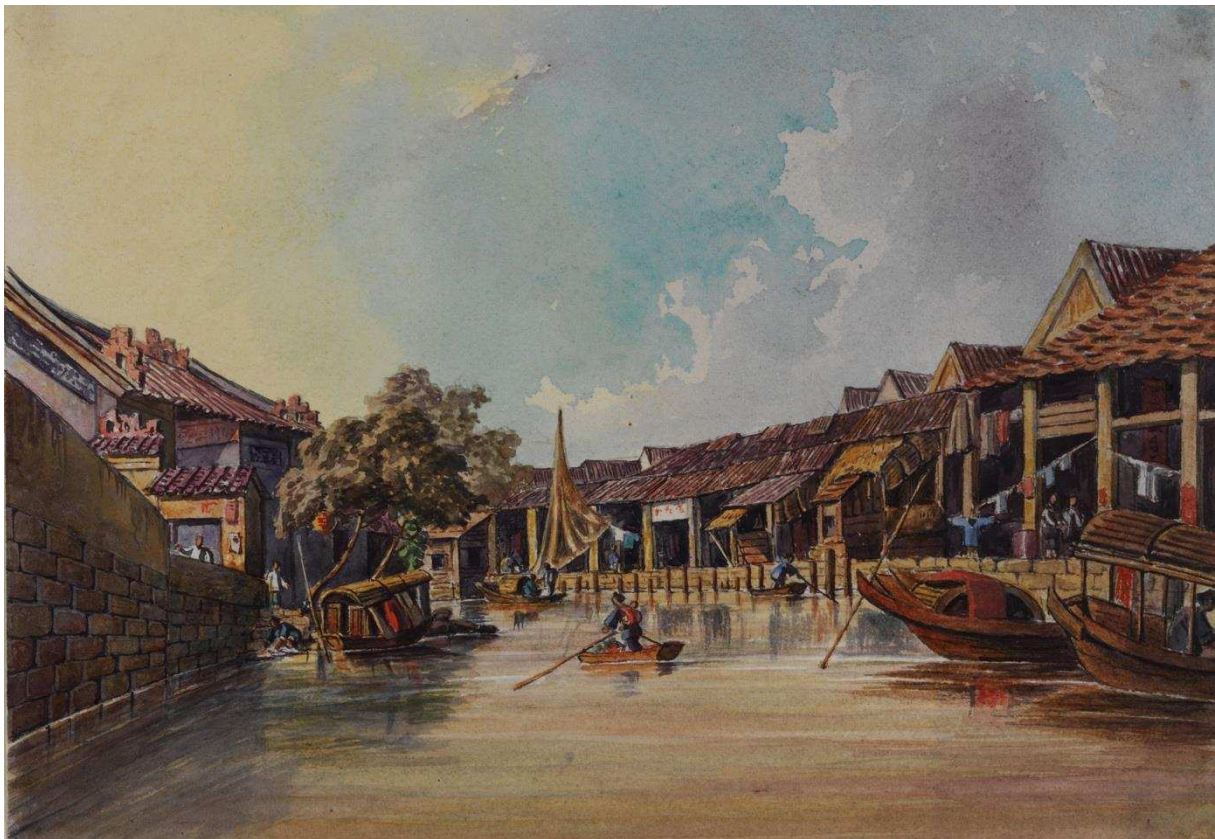
The octagonal door pierced through the screen wall of the “pond divided by a bridge” scenery was leading to another entrance of the garden, as this description by Scottish Botanist Robert Fortune suggests:



“The view from the entrance is rather pleasing, and particularly striking to a stranger who sees it for the first time. Looking "right ahead," as sailors say, there is a long and narrow paved walk lined on each side with plants in pots. This view is broken, and apparently lengthened, by means of an octagon arch which is thrown across, and beyond that a kind of alcove covers the pathway. Running parallel with the walk, and on each side behind the plants, are low walls of ornamental brickwork, latticed so that the ponds or small lakes which are on each side can be seen. Altogether the octagon arch, the alcove, the pretty ornamental flower-pots, and the water on each side, has a striking effect, and is thoroughly Chinese.”<sup>36</sup>

Fortune’s description could be attributed to both gardens. In Henan this additional entrance was probably located next to the Shuzhu Bridge 漱珠桥 crossing the Longxi Stream to the north of Wu estate, next to the river bank (Figure 1). Written Chinese sources mention that the waterscapes of the Henan garden were linked to the Longxi Stream by a lock that could be opened to let Flower Boats enter from the river. These ‘pleasure boats’ were used for intimate gatherings often accompanied by courtesans and musicians, and used by scholars, merchants and foreign traders alike. During the Dragon Boat Festival, the lock also allowed the teams participating on the race to parade with their boats on one of Howqua’s ponds. Howqua would reward the winners with generous rewards, thus demonstrating his status publically.<sup>37</sup> At the proximity of the Shuzhu Bridge was located a two-storied lodge named “Gleaming reflections on the Pearl Sea” 珠海波光, from which a good view of the river and the garden could be obtained, as mentioned by Austrian explorer Ida Pfeiffer:

“(…) on the first floor (were) magnificent terraces, which were also decorated with flowers, and afforded a most splendid view over the animated scene on the river, the enchanting scenery around, and the mass of houses in the villages situated about the walls of Canton.”<sup>38</sup>



(FIGURE 8) *Approach to Howqua's gardens, Guangzhou*. Watercolour on paper, c.1875, by Marciano Antonio Baptista (1826-1896), kept in the Hong Kong Museum of Art.

This water entrance was a common feature among Cantonese gardens, and as such Howqua's garden in Huadi also possessed one. It is possible to obtain an idea of this part of both gardens through a watercolour painted by Marciano Antonio Baptista (1826-1896) around 1875 and kept in the Hong Kong Museum of Art (Figure 8). It represents the entrance gate to a walled property bordering a watercourse, probably a branch of the Pearl River although the title is once again vague. The convenience of the location near the river is demonstrated by the small boat anchored near the gate, and the animated scene of the river noted by Pfeiffer is underlined by the fact that the painter<sup>39</sup> appeared to be himself seated in a boat while painting this view.

Howqua's gardens as a representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century Cantonese gardens

As this overview of Howqua's gardens has demonstrated, the aesthetic function was important as Howqua needed an impressive background to host events. The large scale of the Henan garden allowed for partitions; with some sceneries adapted to different seasons of the year.<sup>40</sup> Several sceneries are alluded to in additional sources and completed the landscape, but only elements mentioned in more than a single source were presented here. Howqua's garden contained elements of traditional Chinese gardens as much as specifically Cantonese ones.

An important aspect only barely mentioned through the whole description is that of the vegetation. Potted flowers and dwarf trees were omnipresent in Cantonese gardens, as shown in numerous export paintings. However old trees also grew in the garden as Tingqua's painting demonstrated (Figure 3). Robert Fortune mentioned a nursery and potting sheds on the ground of Howqua's garden and named a number of plants noticed along his visit: "Cymbidium sinense, Olea fragrans, oranges, roses, camellias, magnolias, etc." He made also several mentions of fruit trees growing in the garden, which were probably similar to those observed by Protestant missionary B.C. Henry in Huadi: "oranges, limes, loquats, citron, custard apples, lichees<sup>41</sup>". Additionally Fortune mentioned several notices attached to buildings exhorting visitors not to pick the flowers and fruits. One notice in particular he reproduced in his account, apparently originally written in English:

"In this garden the plants are intended to delight the eyes of all visitors: a great deal has been expended in planting and in keeping in order, and the garden is now beginning to yield some return. Those who come here to saunter about are earnestly prayed not to pluck the fruit or flowers, in order that the beauty of the place may be preserved."

The ready availability of potted exotic plants produced in the neighbouring 'Huadi' nurseries, explains partially why Howqua, as many local garden owners, possessed such a colourful collection of plants. As export paintings and early photographs demonstrate, in Cantonese gardens, flowerpots could potentially be arranged on any flat surface. Collecting precious specimen was incidentally a scholar's hobby across China.



In addition to the horticultural aspect, the omnipresence of water in Cantonese gardens deserves to be underlined. The water systems in the Wu estate were connected to the Pearl River in order to welcome visitors coming by boats and allow easy transportation between the complex maze of the Pearl River Delta's lands, notably in order to reach the Factories as was mentioned above. That Henan river banks were the location of an active boat transportation system is attested by Smith: "We now went back, down the stream, to Howqua's garden, which is on the Honan side of the river, on the way to Fatshan Creek. The boat-life here was extraordinary, and the majority appeared to be returning to Canton."<sup>42</sup>

Howqua's garden in Henan started to fall in disrepair shortly after his owner's death in 1843, although remnants could still be found before the Sino-Japanese war of 1937-45. After the war there were too scattered and difficult to distinguish and its last traces were erased after the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The Huadi garden did not survive either, although further research is needed to determine the exact circumstances.

## Conclusion

Although partial, this description of Howqua's gardens demonstrates the complexity of their layout: the presence of traditional Chinese landscape elements such as Taihu rocks and poetic couplets suggests that Hong merchants had obtained knowledgeable descriptions of Jiangnan or Beijing gardens. The combination of the Wu family's Fujian origins, Cantonese gardening elements, wealth produced by Western Trade in Guangzhou and traditional Chinese landscape design combine to make Howqua gardens worthy of further study. Socially as well as aesthetically, Howqua's gardens are a source of invaluable information on nineteenth century Guangzhou's elite tastes and lifestyle. A more complete view of the garden will prove possible with additional research through specialised libraries worldwide; comparison of its elements with Portuguese landscaping as seen in Macau could potentially bring interesting findings. The next task of the author will be to research the gardens of Howqua's rival: Pan family's extensive gardens in Henan and in the Western suburbs of Guangzhou. Both families were mentioned extensively by Westerners visiting Guangzhou in the nineteenth century, therefore unveiling these gardens' appearance would also reveal the background of some of the earliest sino-western encounters.

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<sup>1</sup> For practical reasons the term 'Westerners' will be used in this text, in reference to European traders such as British, French, etc. as well as North Americans.

<sup>2</sup> The Canton Trade or System was named "一口通商" (Single port commerce system) in Chinese: the imperial edict that reduced all foreign trade to the port of Guangzhou (except Russian trade confined to the northern borders and a few missionaries in Beijing). It was effective until 1842 when it was cancelled as part of the Treaty of Nanjing's clauses. See Graham Edwin Johnson and Glen Peterson, *Historical Dictionary of Guangzhou (Canton) and Guangdong*, Historical Dictionaries of Cities of the World; No. 6 (Lanham, Md; London: Scarecrow Press, 1999), Cambridge University Library, p.3; and Valery M Garrett, *Heaven Is High, the Emperor Far Away: Merchants and Mandarins in Old Canton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> 'China', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW, 2 March 1844), p. 3.

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- <sup>4</sup> ‘Madras Extracts’, *The Sydney Herald* (NSW, 20 September 1832), p. 2.
- <sup>5</sup> William Chambers (1723-1796) for example could only visit Guangzhou, so his publications were created with the Cantonese gardens in mind, although earlier examples than Howqua’s. See Janine Barrier and others, *Aux jardins de Cathay: l’imaginaire anglo-chinois en Occident* (Besançon: Editions de l’imprimeur, 2004).
- <sup>6</sup> Howqua is the Westernised pronunciation of Wu Guoying’s business name, “Haoguan” 浩官.
- <sup>7</sup> Steven B. Miles, *The Sea of Learning: Mobility and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Guangzhou* (Cambridge, Mass.: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 35.
- <sup>8</sup> ‘English Extracts’, *The Australian* (Sydney, NSW, 19 November 1840), p. 4 (p. 4).
- <sup>9</sup> ‘The Senior Hong Merchant (From the Friend of China, Sept. 14.)’, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW, 26 March 1844), p. 4.
- <sup>10</sup> William C Hunter, *The ‘Fan Kwae’ at Canton before Treaty Days, 1825-1844* (Taipei: Ch’eng-wen Pub. Co., 1965), p. 40.
- <sup>11</sup> The trade season was generally from May to November, depending on Monsoon winds. Garrett, *Heaven Is High, the Emperor Far Away*, p. 82.
- <sup>12</sup> Most of the Western written sources date from after the first Opium War, at a time when access to the gardens would have been easier to obtain and the gardens’ appearance in an advanced state of disrepair.
- <sup>13</sup> Changxin Peng, ‘清末广州十三行行商伍氏浩官造园史录 (Review of Howqua’s gardens at Canton in late Qing dynasty)’, *Chinese Landscape Architecture*, 5 (2009), 91–95, p. 91.
- <sup>14</sup> The Pearl River 珠江 is the main distributary in the Pearl River Delta, and passes through the city of Guangzhou (Canton).
- <sup>15</sup> The British Library is in possession of a series of export paintings representing the Ocean’s Banner Temple. See also Cicheng Wang, Andrew H-B Lo and British Library, *大英圖書館特藏中國清代外銷畫精華 (Chinese Export Paintings of the Qing Period in The British Library)(Chinese and English bilingual edition), 8 volumes* (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 2011).
- <sup>16</sup> Edward S. Morse 莫士 (1838-1925), American zoologist and orientalist, wrote *Glimpses of China and Chinese homes* based on his 1880s journey to Japan and China: Edward Sylvester Morse, *Glimpses of China and Chinese Homes*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1902), p. 152. See also: Ida Pfeiffer, *A Woman’s Journey Round the World from Vienna to Brazil, Chili, Tahiti, China, Hindostan, Persia, and Asia Minor* (London: Office of the National Illustrated Library, 1852), p. 111.
- <sup>17</sup> Morse, *Glimpses of China and Chinese homes*, p.154.
- <sup>18</sup> Miles, *The Sea of Learning*, p.35.
- <sup>19</sup> See entry “Wu family’s garden” in this special edition of Guangzhou Zhuhai Gazetteer: Guangzhou Haizhu District Gazetteer and Hanxing Mai, *广州河南名园记 (Records of famous gardens in Henan, Guangzhou)* (Guangzhou: Guangdongsheng zhengfa guanli ganbu xueyuan, 1984), p. 4.
- <sup>20</sup> Morse, *Glimpses of China and Chinese homes*, p.159.
- <sup>21</sup> Mai, *Records of Famous Gardens in Henan, Guangzhou*, p.4.
- <sup>22</sup> Bozhi Mo, *莫伯治文集 (Collected Works of Mo Bozhi)* (Guangzhou: Guangdong keji chubanshe, 2003), pp.342-3.
- <sup>23</sup> Robert Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese: Inland, on the Coast, and at Sea. Being a Narrative of Scenes and Adventures during a Third Visit to China, from 1853 to 1856. Including Notices of Many Natural Productions and Works of Art, the Culture of Silk, & C; with Suggestions on the Present War.* (London: J. Murray, 1857), pp. 216–7.
- <sup>24</sup> The *Yuanye* 园冶 has been translated by Alison Hardie as “The Craft of gardens”. The treaty was written by Ji Cheng 计成 (1582 – c. 1642) in 1631. It contains poetic allusions to the adequate layout of gardens according to their location rather than technical gardening indications. See Cheng Ji, *The Craft of Gardens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
- <sup>25</sup> Taihu rocks are originated from the Tai Lake near Wuxi, and considered among the most elegant rocks by Chinese scholars, as their structure is often hollow making for naturally intricate shapes. See for example Kemin Hu, *Scholars’ Rocks in Ancient China: The Suyuan Stone Catalogue* (Trumbull, CT: Weatherhill, 2002).
- <sup>26</sup> This stone is now named “Fierce tiger turning its head” and located inside a pond in the Haichuang Park that is currently located on the Ocean’s Banner Temple grounds.

- <sup>27</sup> The “Random thoughts on the Wansongyuan” 《万松园杂感》 as cited by Peng, ‘Review of Howqua’s Gardens at Canton in Late Qing Dynasty’, p.92.
- <sup>28</sup> *Idem*.
- <sup>29</sup> See Craig Clunas, *Chinese Export Watercolours* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984).
- <sup>30</sup> Export paintings often appeared in series reproducing similar views with minor differences according to the artist. This engraving was found in ‘Howqua’s Garden near Canton, from Mr Albert Smith’s “China”’, *The Illustrated London News* (London, 26 March 1859).
- <sup>31</sup> Although some “dry” examples are known outside of Guangdong, most boat halls are located near water. See the section on boat halls in Qi Lu, *岭南园林艺术 (Art of Lingnan gardens) (Bilingual edition)* (Beijing: Zhonggyo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2004).
- <sup>32</sup> The Qinghuiyuan 清晖园 built in Shunde by Long Yingshi at the end of the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1735-1796) and the Yuyinshanfang 余荫山房 built by the scholar Wu Bin around 1867 in Panyu.
- <sup>33</sup> This postcard’s date can be estimated between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, production predating 1909, as Sternberg was known to use old pictures for his postcards. Arthur Hacker, *China Illustrated: Western Views of the Middle Kingdom* (Boston: Tuttle, 2004).
- <sup>34</sup> The Guangdong Provincial Museum graciously provided a colour photograph of the painting, which is not dated. According to the museum, the painter was named Tianyu 田豫, zi Shiyou 石友 and originated from Sichuan. He was active at some point during the reigns of Xianfeng (1850-61) and Tongzhi (1861-75) emperors, therefore after the death of Howqua at a time when the garden’s state was declining. The painting was first brought to our attention through Bozhi Mo, Changshi Xia and Zhaofen Zeng, *岭南庭园 (The Garden Courtyards of Lingnan)* (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2008), pp. 6-7.
- <sup>35</sup> The ‘Fuyinyuan’ was originally called the Six Pines Garden 六松园 and belonged to the Pan family which sold it to Howqua at an unknown point during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See the Six Pines Garden entry in roll 41 of Guangdong Provincial Gazetteer, *番禺县续志 (Supplement to the Panyu Provincial Gazetteer)* (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 2000).
- <sup>36</sup> Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese*, pp. 216-7.
- <sup>37</sup> Mai, *Records of Famous Gardens in Henan, Guangzhou*, p.4.
- <sup>38</sup> Pfeiffer, Ida Pfeiffer, *A Woman’s Journey Round the World*, p.111.
- <sup>39</sup> Marciano Antonio Baptista (1826-1896) was a Portuguese born in Macau and self-proclaimed student of George Chinnery (1774-1852).
- <sup>40</sup> Henry Ellis, *Journal of the Proceedings of the Late Embassy to China*. (Philadelphia: A. Small, 1818), p. 304.
- <sup>41</sup> B. C Henry, *Ling-Nam; Or, Interior Views of Southern China, Including Explorations in the Hitherto Untraversed Island of Hainan*, (London: S.W. Partridge, 1886), pp. 54-55.
- <sup>42</sup> Original version printed in 1858: Albert Smith, *To China and Back; Being a Diary Kept out and Home*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1974), p. 45.

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