

Power that Exalts the Glory of the Empire: A New Inquiry into the European-style Artillery Guns Made during the Reign of Emperor Kangxi

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Abstract

The reign of Qing Emperor Kangxi marked a transformative period of Chinese history in the use of artillery, with breakthrough development in both technical knowledge and military application of cannonry. A people on horseback known for their archery skills, the Manchus nevertheless attached no less importance on artillery fire, and so did Emperor Kangxi. When the Riot of Three Vassal States erupted in 1673, the emperor appointed Ferdinand Verbiest to make artillery guns more than once to fight against the heavy cannons of the rebellious feudal lords, and consequently suppressed the rebellion. Further manufacture of varieties of firearms followed afterwards, and great emphasis was placed on the equipment and training of the Eight-Banner troops, thus laying the foundation for the heyday of the imperial empire. Based on the *Da Qing Hui Dian* (《大清會典》) of Emperors Kangxi's and Yongzheng's reigns, and coupled with archive documents, official records, and missionary writings, the present article attempts to reconstruct the historical facts regarding the making of the European-style artillery under the reign of Kangxi and discusses briefly the extant artifacts.

Keywords: Emperor Kangxi, Johann Adam Schall von Bell, Ferdinand Verbiest, artillery history, Gunpowder Empire