The Qing Empire in the Maritime World (Hong Kong/online, 12–13 Dec 26)

City University of Hong Kong, Dec 12–13, 2026
Deadline: Aug 15, 2026

Lianming Wang

Interdisciplinary Workshop - The Qing Empire in the Maritime World: Towards a Braided History of Art, Material Culture, and Ecology.

Over the past decades, the field of Qing history has been dominated by the debate over the empire's Inner Asianness versus Sinicization, leaving underexamined what Ronald C. Po terms its "maritime consciousness." This interdisciplinary workshop proceeds from the conviction that the Manchus were part of the entangled material and visual cultures connected by the sea, enjoying the same privileged access to global materials as the Ottomans, the Mughals, and European royalty. A key tenet of this approach is to look beyond the center–periphery dichotomy in analyzing the relationship between the Qing empire, the chain of tropical Southeast Asian islands, and the wider maritime world.

This workshop aims to correlate the ecological degradation with the empire's increasing reliance on imported goods, framing its maritime expansion within the historical context of resource depletion. It further inverts the conventional "center–periphery" model, arguing that Beijing was artistically and materially dependent on coastal hubs, which were themselves nodes in a vast web of interaction stretching from the Mediterranean to Asian waters. Last but not least, the workshop analyzes Manchu self-fashioning by showing how these maritime materials shaped a distinct Qing imperial identity, positioning court art and material culture within a larger maritime framework to inform new, interconnected histories.

Proposals may address, but also go beyond, the following topics:

- The Qing empire’s turn to and access to Insular Southeast Asia and the wider maritime world
- The correlation between ecological degradation and the import of maritime goods
- The Qing empire’s knowledge of and measures toward the maritime world
- The Qing empire and the seaborne economy
- Art and material culture connected by the sea

This workshop is organized by Lianming Wang (City University of Hong Kong) in collaboration with Christine Kleiter (Universität Basel), with generous funding from the Metropolitan Center for Far Eastern Art Studies and the Department of Chinese and History at City University of Hong Kong. The keynote lecture will be delivered by Professor Ronald C. Po (LSE London).

We welcome presentations (approx. 25 minutes) from all disciplines, delivered in English, Chi-

nese, or Japanese (passive English proficiency is required for non-English presenters). Priority will be given to emerging scholars, as well as to works in progress that push disciplinary boundaries. Invited speakers will receive international airfare coverage (eco class) and three nights of accommodation at CityU Lodge. The workshop organizers plan to edit a peer-reviewed volume afterwards. Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words, along with a short bio (150 words), to lianming.wang@cityu.edu.hk and c.c. christine.kleiter@unibas.ch by 15 August 2026.

Reference:

CFP: The Qing Empire in the Maritime World (Hong Kong/online, 12-13 Dec 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 2, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52614>.