

Great Britain: Chinese Junk Keying

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Form: Circular

By: T. Halliday, Birmingham

Date: 1848

Ref: BHM: 2324; Laidlaw: 0248j;

Variations:

Size	Metal Mass	Value
24.3 mm	Brass 5.0 gm	\$110

Edge: Reeded.

Obverse: Port broadside view of the Junk Keying, no sails set. In the exergue: "CHINESE JUNK / KEYING".

Reverse: Across: "(ornamental line) / LENGTH 33 FEET / BURDEN 750 TONS / DEPTH 16 FEET". Legend above: "SAILED FROM HONG KONG 1846" and below between stops: "ARRIVED IN ENGLAND 1848".

Notes: The given length of 33 feet is clearly incorrect. Probably should have been breadth 33 feet.

The Keying was a three-masted, 800-ton Foochow Chinese trading junk which sailed from China around the Cape of Good Hope to the United States and then to Britain between 1846 and 1848. The junk was purchased in August 1846 by a group of British businessmen who equipped the ship as a floating exhibition of Chinese culture. The Keying was named after the mandarin Qiying, appointed by the Emperor to supervise the transaction. The Emperor had given his tacit approval to the purchase despite a prohibition on the sale of Chinese ships to foreigners.

The vessel left Hong Kong on the 6 December 1846 under the command of Captain Charles A. Kellett with a crew of 30 Cantonese and 12 English seamen. On board were two Chinese passengers, Mandarin He Sing and the artist Sam Sin. On a voyage of three months she rounded the Cape of Good Hope on 6 March 1847. She then made for St Helena, put in there on 17 April where she remained for six days. The intention was to sail for England but adverse weather forced the junk westward to the United States. On 9 July she arrived in New York and remained there for four months on exhibit to the public. She then sailed for Boston, arriving there on the 18 November for a similar exhibition which lasted for three months. She departed England on 17 February 1848 and, despite severe storm damage, reached Jersey in the Channel Islands after a voyage of 477 days. After a short stay she left on the final stage of her journey and arrived in London 27 March 1848, 477 days after leaving Canton. The exhibit attracted much attention and revenue from the public for several years but this came to an end in 1851 when the junk was towed to Liverpool and dismantled for research and eventually scrapped.