A STUDY OF HOW PACKAGING REVEALS CATEGORISATION AND STATUS IN THE QIANLONG EMPEROR'S COLLECTION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the practice of packaging at the imperial court of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), in particular the agency of packaging in the Qianlong Emperor's (1711-99) art collection. It discusses the functions of packaging in the imperial collection and provides a new perspective to examine it. It fills an important gap in our understanding of Chinese art history.

The thesis analyses the collection and relevant archives to explore the role of Qianlong's packaging. It argues that packaging was the way Qianlong handled his collection in order to convey essential information about those items. Applying the existing theory of secrecy to study the imperial collection, it demonstrates that, the emperor used packaging to create a sense of secretiveness to the objects. The thesis also shows that Qianlong made use of the objects' secretiveness to redefine the objects'

histories (definition), as well as to develop a relationship with his officials. The findings of the thesis call for a reconsideration of the widely accepted view that simply equates owning the imperial collection to having the sovereignty to rule.

A close look at the collection shows that Qianlong utilised different forms of packaging to engage himself with the objects. By doing so, his engagement was materialised and integrated to become part of the objects' histories. He must have been conscious of the power of packaging as he actively participated with the imperial workshops in the design and production of packaging the imperial collection. Qianlong's ideas of packaging are best realised in the curio box, an assemblage of many different objects in various packaging devices. It is the packaging, rather than the actual objects, that makes the assemblage a curio item. Much effort was thus made in devising the structure of the curio boxes.

Packaging in the imperial collection comes in a large diversity of forms. Such a diversity indicates the importance of packaging and the necessity to understand it, especially how Qianlong designed it to affect our perception of the collection, and of his sovereignty. Unlike the traditional studies which have long neglected the packaging of the imperial collection or considered it as subsidiary to its contents, this thesis uses

a new approach to examine the imperial packaging and objects enclosed.

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION: A DEFINITION OF THE IMPERIAL PACKAGING

This thesis proposes that the Qianlong Emperor (born Aisin Gioro Hongli 愛新覺羅弘曆, r. 1736-95) utilised packaging to frame his art collection. The imperial collection has been an essential part of Chinese culture and history. Qianlong was one of the greatest art collectors in Chinese history,[1] and during his reign the Qing empire reached its largest extent.[2] This allowed the emperor to greatly expand the imperial collection. He utilised packaging to not only interpret this history but to have himself become part of it. Therefore, as he collected more objects, he was more capable of placing himself in a wider context.

[1] Following the abdication of the last Qing emperor, the imperial family was forced to leave the Forbidden City on 15 November 1924. The National Government then established the Caretaker Committee for Rehabilitation of Qing Imperial Possessions (*Qingshi shanhou weiyuanhui* 清室善後委員會), the predecessor of the National Palace Museum (NPM) in Taipei and the Palace Museum in Beijing, to inventory the Qing imperial household's collection. The committee produced a 28-volume inventory in 1925, which showed that the collection left in the Qing imperial storehouse numbered more than 1.17 million objects. These objects included paintings and calligraphy, porcelain, bronze vessels, jades, enamelware, lacquerwork, gold and silverwares, gold and bronze religious statues, textiles, furniture, and imperial robes, as well as numerous relics made from bamboo, wood, ivory, horn, and gourds. They were objects of different periods and areas. In addition, there were eight million literary works and documents, and half million rare books. See the Caretaker Committee, 1925–6, *Gugong wupin diancha baogao* 故宮物品點查報告 (The palace items auditing inventory), Beijing: Thread-Binding Books Publishing House. However, this was just the vestiges of the original imperial collection. A great number of the imperial treasures were plundered by Western powers and Japan during the last years of Xianfeng's reign, and numerous collectables were sold by the last emperor Xuantong (r. 1908–12) or stolen by his retinue before he was expelled from the Forbidden City. Thus, Qianlong's original collection will have been even larger.

[2] The vast dominions and administrative districts of modern China are founded on those of the Qing dynasty.

Great attention was paid to packaging in China since ancient times. There is a story that:

> Once upon a time, a man from the state of *Chu* 楚 planned selling a precious pearl in the state of *Zheng* 鄭. He carefully packaged his pearl to fetch a good price. He made a box out of rare magnolia wood, which he further scented with elegant fragrances of cinnamon and Chinese prickly ash. The box was then studded with decorative pearls and jade, decorated with red gems, and ornamented with kingfisher's feathers. A man of *Zheng* noticed the exquisite box and purchased it with a high price, but he returned the pearl inside. People ridiculed the man of *Chu*, saying he was certainly an expert at selling boxes but he was an amateur in selling pearls.[3]

This is a fable of the Legalist school from the third century BC. The moral is that one should not do things in the wrong order, and people should make sound judgement in determining what really matters. The audience is reminded that excessive packaging tends to conceal what really matters. This story thus implies that packaging was superfluous and detracted from its contents,[4] which further clouds the recipients'

[3] '楚人有賣其珠於鄭者，為木蘭之櫃，薰以桂椒，綴以珠玉，飾以玫瑰，輯以翡翠，鄭人買其櫝而還其珠，此可謂善賣櫝矣，未可謂善鬻珠也。' Han Fei 韓非, 1983-6, *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 (The writings of Master Han Fei), reprinted in *Jingyin wenyuange sikuquanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (The complete library in four treasures of the Wenyuange edition), Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, vol. 729, p. 87.

[4] This fable was developed into an idiomatic phrase of purchasing the box but returning the pearl inside

judgement on the issue about which was really valuable. This thesis demonstrates that, contrary to these ideas, Qianlong's packaging acted as the complex framework by which items were understood and managed.

1.1. The Roles of Qianlong's Packaging

This thesis examines Qianlong's collection to argue that its objects were defined by their packaging. The imperial packaging controlled the identity of objects. The objects in themselves represented rich and sophisticated systems of Chinese visual culture and history, which referred to the objects' stories and biographies, including their authors, previous collectors, and history of circulation. Qianlong was attempting to incorporate himself into and to further reform the system through the packaging. Instead of analysing the collection's objects, already the subjects of multiple studies, the focus here is on their packaging because this both defined and expanded the system. Packaging provided a practical and effective means of contextualizing these objects, which enabled Qianlong to build relations with the objects. These relationships established both his identity in the collection and the history it represented. By defining the objects, Qianlong further defined himself. By defining himself, he stopped letting others define who he was, and decided that he would be in the driving seat.

(*Maidu huanzhu* 買櫝還珠), which led to the teaching of putting the cart before the horse.

Secrecy and concealment are essential elements of the practice of packaging. They served as a means of control and Qianlong exercised further control by restricting access to his collection. I argue that The Forbidden City (the Palace) itself—the imperial palace of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties—acted as a large box for the imperial collection,[5] which rendered the collection invisible to the public. Concealment represents the first essential step of the operation of secrecy, which is designed for the revelation that will follow. The ultimate aim of secrecy is not *concealing* but *revealing* a secret to an intended audience, which is usually a limited number of persons.[6] Qianlong hid his collection through the practice of packaging. The form of such packaging was unique, and was achieved by exploiting and modifying the Palace's pre-existing spatial structure. By doing so, the emperor was able to restrict the audience to a small circle of his political associates. He therefore had the power to dictate who approached the objects, which objects were approached, and how they were approached. Packaging was how Qianlong took full control of the imperial collection's formation and definition. Staging the collection visibly by encouraging more people to engage in it would have jeopardised his control over the definition and his image as

[5] This concept will be illustrated in Chapter 3.

[6] This theory was first proposed by Georg Simmel (1858-1918), who argued that the logic of secrecy worked as a measure of people's relationships. The closer a relationship is, in which more information is revealed. The ideas have been widely discussed and developed in almost all fields of humanities and social politics, including anthropology, sociology, and political science. See Simmel, Georg, 1906, 'The sociology of secrecy and of secret societies', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 441-98.

well.

Given that imperial collections in China consistently carried strong political and cultural overtones, Qianlong's vast collection has been previously interpreted as a symbol of either dynastic legitimacy or the legitimacy of the emperor's claim to the role of universal ruler.[7] The restricted nature of the imperial collection, however, renders such arguments problematic, because Qianlong apparently had no inclination to exhibit it to the public.[8] How did he thus legitimise his rule and demonstrate command over the empire through the imperial collections when the public he endeavoured to govern were ignorant of it? A certain level of visibility would have been necessary for the collection to be used as an instrument of legitimisation. To resolve this issue, some critical questions must be answered: why did Qianlong (and Chinese emperors generally) believe that the possession of objects on a massive scale could serve as political propaganda, and in what way could the imperial collections achieve this?

The Qing curio box (*duobaoge* 多寶格) is another good example of this issue. These boxes are considered to be Qianlong's political propaganda, since they are interpreted

[7] This point will be illuminated in the section 1.3.2. later in this chapter.
[8] The secrecy of Qianlong collection was related to the placement of those objects within the Forbidden City, which will be discussed in the chapter three regarding the construction of imperial space.

as the imperial collection in miniature. The curio box is, however, more secretive than any other objects in Qianlong's collection. Its characteristics were built on the emperor's innovative ideas about packaging, and were so unique that no other object shared them and no one was familiar with it but Qianlong himself. Consequently, they were even less likely to perform the role of a publicly visible piece of propaganda. The brilliance and beauty of the curio box was achieved by its unpacking procedure, which was designed for only a very small audience.

1.2. The Imperial Packaging in Eighteenth-century China

This section introduces the contents of Qianlong's collection and its packaging. Qianlong collected in order to shape his own identity and that of his collection, as well as history and knowledge accumulation. Most importantly, the organisation and characteristics of the imperial collection were moulded by the modes of packaging used.

1.2.1. Qianlong's Collection

Qianlong's catalogues are a helpful way of viewing his collection as he saw it. The emperor was obsessed with collecting Chinese artworks and exotic objects. As his life spanned almost the whole of the eighteenth century, he accumulated and created thousands of objects. This, coupled with the vast imperial collections that he inherited

from previous Chinese dynasties, created a collection of unprecedented size.[9] Though an astonishing number of artworks had already been amassed by previous imperial families, it was the Qing emperors who organised the collection. Among them, Qianlong played an especially prominent role in forming the remarkable imperial collection that exists today.

In order to sort out his vast collection, Qianlong assessed certain objects and catalogued them. These catalogues did not document the whole collection, but they provided a means for Qianlong to create the general structure of his collection by categorising and grading different sub-collections. Thus, the catalogues allow us to glimpse into the emperor's collection and to interpret his definition of Chinese culture and history. Qianlong and a group of civil officials compiled catalogues for four kinds of objects in his collection: paintings and calligraphy, bronze vessels, rare books, and inkstones.

Shiqu baoji 石渠寶笈 (The precious collection of the stone moat pavilion) was the catalogue for paintings and calligraphy,[10] with *Midian zhulin* 秘殿珠林 (The pearl

[9] The collection of the imperial storehouse in China has been developed by different dynasties in succession. To be specific, the main body of the imperial collection by the Ming dynasty was inherited from the previous Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), while the latter was taken over from the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) and so onwards. For the Qing dynasty, the last imperial dynasty of China, the imperial household possessed an enormous number of art treasures, no less than ten million pieces of objects at a rough estimate.

[10] Zhang Zhao 張照 et al., 1983-6, *Shiqu baoji* 石渠寶笈, reprinted in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 824-5.

forest of the secret hall) exclusively describing those with Buddhist and Daoist subjects.[11] Nearly 13,000 works were recorded in total.[12] The catalogues for ancient bronze vessels were the *Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑 (Appreciation of bronzes compiled in the apartments of western clarity, 1755),[13] *Ningshou jiangu* 寧壽鑒古 (Appreciation of bronzes in tranquil longevity, 1765-81), *Xiqing xujian jiabian* 西清續鑑甲編 (The first volume of a supplement to appreciation in the apartments of western clarity, 1781-93), and *Xiqing xujian yibian* 西清續鑑乙編 (The second volume of a supplement to appreciation in the apartments of western clarity, 1781-93); these books were collectively known as 'Xiqing sijian' 西清四鑑 (The four appreciations of the apartments of western clarity). Over 4,000 bronzes were documented, dating from the Han (206 BC-AD 220) to the Tang dynasty (618-907).[14]

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[11] Zhang Zhao et al., 1983-6, *Midian zhulin* 秘殿珠林, reprinted in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 823.

[12] Each catalogue has three editions that were compiled in the eighth and ninth years of Qianlong's reign (1743-4), the fifty-eighth year of Qianlong's reign (1793), and the twenty-second year of Jiaqing's reign (1817). The works in these two catalogues were documented so systematically and in such detail that their artists, periods, sources, ranks, sizes, formats, the quality of materials, inscriptions, and stamps are all known. As a result, they have become the greatest painting and calligraphy inventory in Chinese history, and the means by which Qianlong's knowledge of painting has been revealed. The study of this catalogue has so far appeared mainly in reference books that aim to establish the authenticity of Chinese paintings and calligraphy: Gulik, Robert Hans van, 1958, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur*, Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente; The National Palace Museum, 1965, *Gugong shuhua lu* 故宮書畫錄 (Catalogue of paintings and calligraphy from the National Palace Museum), Taipei: The National Palace Museum; Wang Yikun 王以坤, 1981, *Shuhua jianding jianshu* 書畫鑒定簡述 (A concise introduction to appreciating Chinese paintings and calligraphy), Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House; Xu Bangda 徐邦達, 1982, *Gushuhua jianshang gailun* 古書畫鑑賞概論 (An introduction to appreciating ancient Chinese paintings and calligraphy), Taipei: Xuehai Publication.

[13] Liang Shizheng 梁詩正 et al., 1983-6, *Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑, reprinted in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 841-2.

[14] Each vessel was illustrated in detail and had a full description of its size, form, weight, and any accompanying inscription. These catalogues have been highly valued for studying Chinese bronzes. The study of these catalogues is usually related to epigraphy, in which Qianlong's catalogues are compared with previous catalogues of bronzes: Rong Geng 容庚, 1940, *Xiqing yiqi shiyi* 西清彝器拾遺 (A remedy for Xiqing bronzes), Beijing: Archaeological Society; Liu Yu 劉雨, 1989, *Qianlong sijian*

Another catalogue listed 429 sets of rare books and was entitled *Tianlu linlang shumu* 天祿琳琅書目 (The catalogue of resplendent jewel bestowed by heaven, 1775).[15] *Xiqing yanpu* 西清硯譜 (The inkstone manual of the apartments of western clarity, 1778) was the imperial catalogue for inkstones,[16] in which 240 items were recorded that date from the Han to the Qing dynasty.[17] Each of them was illustrated by Men Yingzhao 門應兆, a court painter, and include descriptions of their appearance, material, source, and quality.[18]

There were also several illustrated catalogues of other objects produced during the Qianlong reign according to the records of the imperial archives. Some of them are still

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zonglibiao 乾隆四鑑綜理表 (A comprehensive collation of Qianlong's bronze catalogues), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company; Yu, Hui-Chun, 2007, *The Intersection of Past And Present: The Qianlong Emperor and His Ancient Bronzes*, PhD, Princeton University; Cheng, Yen-Wen, 2010, *Tradition and Transformation: Cataloguing Chinese Art in the Middle and Late Imperial Eras*, PhD, University of Pennsylvania; Zhu Shuai 朱帥, 2013, *Xiqing gujian yanjiu* 西清古鑑研究 (Research on the 'Xiqing gujian'), MA, China Academy of Art.

[15] Yu Minzhong 于敏中 et al., 1968, *[Qinding] Tianlu linlang shumu* [欽定]天祿琳琅書目 ([Imperially endorsed] catalogue of resplendent jewel bestowed by heaven), Taipei: Kwangwen Book Company. The study of this collection will be discussed in a section of the chapter 3 regarding the housing of those rare books.

[16] Yu Minzhong et al., 1983-6, *Xiqing yanpu* 西清硯譜, reprinted in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 843.

[17] Almost none of academic works concerning this catalogue, only a related exhibition at the NPM in 1997: *The National Palace Museum's Ancient Inkstones Illustrated in the Imperial Catalogue*. However, Dorothy Ko's new book concerning Chinese inkstones reveals the fashion in inkstones at the Qing court during the reigns of Kangxi and Yongzheng. See Ko, Dorothy, 2017, *The Social Life of Inkstones: Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China*, Seattle: University of Washington Press.

[18] The motive for compiling the inkstone catalogue was given by Qianlong himself in the catalogue's preface: 'The inkstones obtained by the court are quite large in quantity. One group was inherited from previous dynasties, whilst the rest are contemporary, like the one engraved with "Yulan tang" from the Jin dynasty and the doughnut-shaped inkstone. Both have been displayed at the East and West Pavilions of the Palace of Heavenly Purity for a long time. It is disquieting that the inkstones are so abundant and the palace is so vast, so that the inkstones are scattered at different pavilions. Records should be made for the works, lest we lose track of the traditional art, which would be distressing. 內府硯頗夥，或傳自勝朝，或出自國初，如晉玉蘭堂硯，璧水硯，久陳之乾清宮東西暖閣，因思物繁地博，散置多年，不有以薈綜粹記，或致遺佚失傳，為可惜也。' See Yu 1983-6, vol. 843, p. 361.

in existence, such as four illustrated catalogues of porcelain objects: *Taoci puce* 陶瓷譜冊 (Fig. 1), *Jingtao yungu* 精陶韞古, *Jiaogong zhangse* 矯功彰色, and *Kanzhi liuguang* 堪植流光.[19] However, the whereabouts of many of the catalogues are unknown. These catalogued objects make up the core of Qianlong's collection.

1.2.2. Qianlong's Packaging for His Collection

The imperial packaging not only served to organise objects, but it also was taken as an opportunity for Qianlong to present his own interpretation of the history behind the objects. Qianlong tended to add his own or other people's compositions to the packaging. This enabled him to express his views on the objects that were packaged. The communication or connection between himself and his collectables was hereby established, and packaging thus became a device to express his contact with and usage of history.

[19] Each catalogue comprises ten porcelains, and every work comes with a diagram, size, features, and assessments from previous owners, and reviews from the Emperor Qianlong himself. Yu Peijin 余佩瑾, a researcher of the National Palace Museum, is the expert of Qianlong's porcelain collection and its illustrated catalogues. Her recent studies concerning this subject are mainly published in the NPM journal: Yu, 2004, 'Pinjianzhiqu—shiba shiji de taocituce jiqi xiangguan wenti 品鑑之趣：十八世紀的陶瓷圖冊及其相關問題 (The appeal of connoisseurship: eighteenth century ceramic manuals and related questions, *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 133-66; 2006, 'Tangying yu yonggian zhiji guanyao de guanxi—yi qinggong falancaici de huizhi yu shaozao weili 唐英與雍乾之際官窯的關係--以清宮琺瑯彩瓷的繪製與燒造為例 (The relationship between Tang Ying and imperial kilns of the Yongzheng and Qianlong time period: taking the painting and manufacture of falang porcelain as an example)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 1-44; 2013b, 'Taoyetuce suojian gianlonghuangdi de lixiang guanyao《陶冶圖冊》所見乾隆皇帝的理想官窯 (Qianlong's ideal imperial kiln, as seen in the illustrated album of ceramics making)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 185-235.

Due to the enormous breadth of object types, Qianlong's court was well served with diversified forms of packaging to manage his collection. The necessity of a multiplicity of packaging methods in the imperial collection is evident in several specific instances. Each act of packaging had its own characteristics and aims, depending on whether it contained one single work, several works, large compositions etc. For example, a cover of the hand scroll of 'A Powerful Bow Shooting a Deer' was made of apricot brocade (Fig. 2-a). The inside of the cover was lined with white damask on which was mounted a coloured landscape painting entitled 'Autumnal Scenery' by Yongrong 永瑢 (1744-90), the sixth son of Qianlong who was adept in both literature and art. Qianlong often required his sons' assistance in his packaging.[20] On the right side of the cover was a piece of pale blue damask, on which the title of the scroll (*weihu huolu* 威弧獲鹿) was written in clerical script. The scroll painting itself depicts Qianlong hunting on horseback (Fig. 2-b), which was a Manchu tradition. Qianlong deliberately packaged the painting with his son's work rather than that of a court painter or random textile, which not only to demonstrate that equestrian archery was an important aspect of Manchu culture but also to link the practice to the next generation.[21] In addition,

[20] The First Historical Archives of China and the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong eds., 2005, *Qinggong neiwufu zaobanchu dangan zonghui* 清宮內務府造辦處檔案總匯 (The crafts archives of the Qing imperial workshop), Beijing: People's Publishing House, vol. 46, pp. 656-7.

[21] Qianlong had repeatedly instructed that, 'Riding, archery, and the Manchu language are the roots of Manchuria and key tasks for the bannermen. 騎射國語，乃滿洲之根本，旗人之要務。' Ji Huang 嵇璜 and Liu Yong 劉墉 et al., 1983-6, *Qinding huangchao tongdian* 欽定皇朝通典 (Qing imperial regulations), reprinted in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 643, p. 531.

Yongrong's painting the autumn landscape (*qiujing shanshui* 秋景山水) corresponded with the theme of the scroll painting: The autumn hunt at Mulan was an important annual imperial event held near the imperial summer resort in Rehe 熱河.[22]

Packaging several pieces of work together required Qianlong to be even more creative. Such packaging usually combined different forms of packaging in an overarching system of wrapping. A red carved lacquerware set is composed of three scroll-shaped containers, two rectangular containers, and one base (Fig. 3). The emperor was very fond of scroll and book types of packaging, and these were used to package various objects. The three scroll-shaped containers on top of the set could be opened, and accommodated three scrolls by court painters. The rectangular container was in fact two separate compartments, which accommodated Qianlong's 'A Hundred-Rhymed Imperial Poems of the Summer Resort of Chengde' (*Yuzhi bishu shanzhuang baiyunshi* 御製避暑山莊百韻詩). This packaging ingeniously combined scrolls and rectangular albums, or painting and calligraphy, in one complex.

The organisation of the imperial collection was built on its packaging, which gave

[22] Mulan was Manchu language meaning deer calling (*shaolu* 哨鹿), which was a Manchu tradition. For the imperial hunting activity, see Hou Jinlang 侯錦郎 and Pirazzoli, Michèle, 1979, 'Les chasses d'automne de l'empereur Qianlong à Mulan', *T'oung Pao*, vol. 65, pp. 13-50.

Qianlong a means to define the status of objects. As part of this, he developed schemes to place selected items in specific halls of the palace. The reorganisation of the collection of portraits of the emperors, empresses, Confucian sages, and officials from past Chinese dynasties during the twelfth year of his reign (1747) is a case in point. During an inspection of the imperial household's storerooms, Qianlong discovered that these precious portraits were being damaged by insects. The imperial artisans were therefore commissioned to remount the paintings and to make fabric covers and wooden cases for each of them.[23]

The covers for portraits of emperors and empresses were made of yellow satin with *moiré* patterns (Fig. 4), whilst those for portraits of officials were made of red satin.[24] This established a rigid hierarchy between subjects through the colour of the covers. Moreover, portraits of emperors and empresses were moved to the Hall of South Wind (*Nanxun dian* 南薰殿)—a five-bay hall located in the southeast corner of the Forbidden City—where each partition had a vermilion cabinet with five shelves. The portraits of emperors were placed in the middle three partitions of the hall and arranged

[23] The reorganisation effort for this group of paintings is detailed by Hu Jing 胡敬 (1769–1845), a Hanlin scholar who compiled information for Jiaqing's court. See Hu Jing 胡敬, 1971, *Nanxun dian tuxiang kao* 南薰殿圖像考 (Study of the portrait paintings of the Hall of South Wind), recorded in *Hushi shuhua kao sanzhong* 胡氏書畫考三種, Taipei: Han and Chinese Culture Enterprise.

[24] See *Shilu guan* 實錄館 (Office for the compilation of the veritable records), 1964, *Daqing gaozong chun huangdi shilu* 大清高宗純皇帝實錄 (Veritable records of the Qianlong Emperor), Taipei: Hualian Press, vol. 6, *juan* 301, p. 4361.

in chronological order, while the portraits of empresses were placed in the east partition with the identical arrangement. The west partition stored imperial seals of the Ming emperors and empresses. The paintings of officials, however, remained in the original storeroom after being repaired.[25] Qianlong deliberately separated the portraits of emperors and empresses from those of officials and sages after the restoration. The collection of imperial portraits of past Chinese dynasties were thus repackaged and arranged as 'The assemblage of portraits in the Hall of South Wind' (*Nanxun dian tuxiang* 南薰殿圖像).[26] Qianlong did not add the Qing imperial portraits to this collection, however, and some paintings were removed from it during the reorganisation. As a result, his role as the one who repackaged the portraits gave him the authority to interpret the meaning of this collection—and the merits of its subjects by extension—through the inclusion and exclusion of works, and by categorising and ranking them through packaging.

Qianlong's packaging was a serious mechanism for constructing his collection. He

[25] Many scholars mistakenly regard the portrait paintings of officials as part of the collection at the Hall of South Wind. The hall only stored the imperial portraits and objects.

[26] In 1749, Qianlong wrote 'Imperial notes on storing the portraitures in the Hall of South Wind with great respect' (*Yuzhi nanxundian fengcang tuxiang ji* 御製南薰殿奉藏圖像記) to commemorate the scheme. See Yu Minzhong et al., 1964, *Guochao gongshi* 國朝宮史 (Imperial history of the Qing dynasty), Taipei: Student Book Co., Ltd., vol. 11, pp. 345-7. In addition, it has been argued that the 'the assemblage of portraits in the Hall of South Wind' was a means for Qianlong to demonstrate his imperial power and to seek validation by Han Chinese. See Lai Yuzhi 賴毓芝, 2009, 'Wenhua yichan de zaizao: Qianlong huangdi duiyu Nanxun dian tuxiang de zhengli 文化遺產的再造：乾隆皇帝對於南薰殿圖像的整理 (Remaking cultural heritage: the Qianlong Emperor's reorganisation of imperial portraits from previous dynasties)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 75-110.

developed various forms of wrapping to not only put objects in order, but to use them as media materials for his interaction with objects. The roles of imperial packaging varied with the emperor's understanding of different objects.

1.3. The Interrelation between Packaging and the Imperial Collection

This thesis examines packaging in Qianlong's collection as a means to understand his perception of his collecting enterprise and intentions for the objects. It is argued that the imperial packaging was the framework of the collection, where Qianlong created narratives of its objects and Chinese history was interpreted. This framework thus reflects the emperor's thoughts about China's history, through which he defined himself.

This section presents an outline of the existing research on this topic. Studies of packaging are first presented to explore the role of identification in the imperial collection. For context, reference is made to the many studies of Qianlong's art collection, which have been prolific since the establishment of the two Palace Museums in Taiwan and Mainland China. Finally, particular attention is devoted to the Qing curio box as a new form of packaging that Qianlong personally created, and how its uniqueness shows much about the emperor's methods for demonstrating control over his collection.

1.3.1. The Importance of Understanding the Imperial Packaging from Different Perspectives

Packaging is the way in which objects are protected and presented,[27] though protection is the primary function of packaging. Packaging is also an act of self-expression which reveals, one's thoughts about objects inside.

Among various types of packaging, the packaging of merchandise and gifts lays great emphasis on appearance. Appearances matter because the world defines objects by the way they look. Its packaging is the subject's first encounter with the object. This quality is echoed in Qianlong's practice of packaging. In today's world the packaging of merchandise is a commercial practice which serves to promote packaged products. It enhances the attractiveness of products and to express ideas that producers want customers to believe about the contents. Forms are what really matter to this packaging. At the same time, wrapping allows producers to add information about the goods inside such as the brand name or logo, materials used, provenance, and price. In other words, packaging establishes and reveals the identity of contents for merchandise packaging.

[27] This definition is derived from the practice of Japanese packaging, whose principle states that presentation is everything in Japanese society. See Oka Hideyuki 岡秀行, 1967, *How to Wrap Five Eggs: Traditional Japanese Packaging*, New York: Weatherhill.

That is why brand-building normally works on packaging as packaging is the image—value, status, and idea—of the product.[28]

The similarity between Qianlong's packaging and modern concepts of brand-building was first proposed in an exhibition entitled 'Story of a Brand Name: The Collection and Packaging Aesthetics of Emperor Qianlong in the Eighteenth Century'. This exhibition that ran from 2017 to 2018 at the National Palace Museum (NPM) attempted to move beyond the idea that imperial packaging was mere a reflection of the imperial household's magnificent style. It centred on numerous storage methods for Qianlong's collection, with the curators presenting creative and ingenious packaging devices in a way that suggested they echo modern concepts of brand establishment to sell products. The argument was that imperial packaging was how the emperor created a brand for his collection.[29]

This is a stimulating perspective by which to view Qianlong's collection. Having said that, there are differences between commercial packaging today and what we see in the

[28] Zhang Chengyou 張丞佑, 2019, *Shangpin baozhuang tuxiang fengge dui xiaofeizhe goumai yiyuan yingxiang zhi yanjiu* 商品包裝圖像風格對消費者購買意願影響之研究 (Research on the effect of packaging graphic design style on consumer purchasing intention), MA, National Taiwan Normal University.

[29] Yu Peijin 余佩瑾 ed., 2017, *Pinpai de gushi- Qianlong huangdi de wenwu shoucang yu baozhuang yishu* 品牌的故事：乾隆皇帝的文物收藏與包裝藝術 (Story of a brand name: the collection and packaging aesthetics of Emperor Qianlong in the eighteenth century), Taipei: The National Palace Museum.

Qianlong emperor's collection. Modern branding is a commercial practice, with its focus on ensuring the packaging attracts customers. In contrast, the housing for Qianlong's collection rendered it almost invisible, since access to the collection was limited to himself and a small court circle.[30] The role of packaging in the imperial collection was thus quite the opposite from anything used for brand building. The fact that both types of packaging were carefully designed and thought about in great detail does not mean that commercial packaging and imperial packaging were used for the same purpose.

The exhibition's suggestion that Qianlong's use of packaging was equivalent to modern notions of creating a brand image was influenced by the generally accepted view that the imperial collection represented the legitimacy of imperial authority. This view will also be reconsidered and adjusted in this thesis, as the secret nature of Qianlong's collection made it unlikely to perform the task of such public political propaganda.[31] Crucially, there is nothing about the imperial collection's packaging that can be identified as 'Qianlong's brand', which seems to have been no more than a different way of referring to Qianlong's aesthetic tastes, something often emphasised in studies

[30] Such packaging is related to spatial relationships between objects in the imperial palace and will be elaborated in Chapter 3.
[31] There are various issues with this view, not least in the Chinese imperial collection. These are discussed in detail in the ensuing section.

of the imperial collection.[32] Thus, there was no examination of the intentions or definitions underpinning 'Qianlong's brand', so the connection between the emperor's act of packaging and his collection was not supported by any exposition of his intentions or goals.

It is more likely that the imperial packaging served to create an image for both the collection and for Qianlong himself. A red sandalwood box of an ink holder and a brush container in Hindustan jade is a case in point (Fig. 5).[33] The top of the box was inscribed with Qianlong's poem 'Ode to the ink holder and brush container of Hindustani jade' (*Yong Hendousitan yu moping bishi* 詠痕都斯坦玉墨瓶筆室),[34] which was carved on the ink holder as well. The four sides were inscribed with eight essays by eight courtiers.[35] The jade set was from the Mughal Empire (1526-1857), and all the compositions emphasized that the objects were treasures from remote

[32] Ibid.

[33] Hindustan was a place under the jurisdiction of the Mughal Empire that is now part of India north of the Deccan Plateau. The term 'Hindustani jade' was created by Qianlong and generally referred to the 'jade of the Mughals' and jades from the Ottoman Turkish Empire (1299–1923). For a detailed study of Hindustani jade, see Deng Shuping 鄧淑蘋 et al., 2015, *Yueguo Kunlun shan de zhenbao: yuancang Yisilan yuqi tezhan* 越過崑崙山的珍寶：院藏伊斯蘭玉器特展 (Treasures from across the Kunlun Mountains: Islamic jades in the National Palace Museum collection), Taipei: The National Palace Museum.

[34] This imperial poem was composed in the thirty-third year of Qianlong's reign (1768). See Aisin Gioro Hongli 愛新覺羅弘曆, 1983–6, *Qing Gaozong yuzhishi sanji* 清高宗御製詩三集 (The third collection of Qianlong's poetry), *juan* 72, recorded in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 1306.

[35] The eight courtiers were Liu Tongxun 劉統勳 (1698–1773), Liu Lun 劉綸 (1711–73), Yu Minzhong (1714–79), Wang Jihua 王際華 (1717–76), Cao Wenzhi 曹文埴 (1735–98), Peng Yuanrui 彭元瑞 (1731–1803), Shen Chu 沈初 (1735–99), and Dong Gao 董誥 (1740–1818). They were all close officials of Qianlong at the imperial court.

foreign lands. The box was more than a protector for the jade, Qianlong used it to create space to connect himself with the jade articles that epitomised a foreign land and culture. Inscriptions on the box indicated that the emperor wielded a great deal of power in reaching the distant lands that enabled him to acquire the precious material. Such a way of inscribing verses on packaging was Qianlong's usual tactic, a very effective way to shape the identity of the objects within. It will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2. As shown by the box for this jade, the goal of the imperial packaging was similar to that of merchandise packaging: to develop or reflect the value of the packed object.

With respect to purposes of different packaging systems, recipients or audience is another element that connects and also differentiates them. This element usually involves the act of unwrapping, since this is generally carried out by the recipient. The packaging represents the giver's or packer's image of the object, and is the first element that forms the recipient's understanding of both the object and the giver. Accordingly, poor packaging might damage the givers' reputation, or even relationships between givers and recipients.[36] Building on this knowledge, the process of unpacking would be taken into packers' consideration since the process dominates the recipient's first impression—or even the overall perception (if it is well served)—of the packed objects.

[36] Hendry, Joy, 1993, *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation and Power in Japan and Other Societies*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 8-26; Daniels, Inge, 2009, 'The "social death" of unused gifts: surplus and value in contemporary Japan', *The Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 385-408.

This encourages the packer to take active measures to induce pleasure in the process of unpacking and wonderment or excitement when the contents come into view. A relatable example for people from the United States or many countries in Europe would be the expectation and the thrill of unpacking Christmas gifts.

Given the monopolisation of the imperial collection, Qianlong was usually both the packer and the audience of the imperial packaging. The superior packaging was therefore required to reflect the emperor's status and his relationship with the objects. Also, unpacking involved the way his objects were revealed, which was an important part of the operation of secrecy. In this respect, he also gave much thought to their unpacking. His packaging of two jade articles underlined the unpacking of the items (Fig. 6-a). Their album-style cases were deceptive, and the uninformed audience could not know the contents without opening it, or even know whether or not they were containers. After turning over the wooden 'pages', two penannular jade pendants were found inlaid in the left sides of leaves (Fig. 6-b), whilst the right sides were Qianlong's paintings of a pine tree and bamboo with rocks. The themes of pines and bamboo were rich in high moral character in Chinese culture, which matched Qianlong's perception of jade, that it represented moral integrity for monarchs.[37] Pine trees and bamboo were

[37] Qianlong was an avid jade collector, for his collection and appreciation of jade, see Wang Yiwen 王怡文, 2013, *Qianlongchao gongting yuqi de zaiquanshi* 乾隆朝宮廷玉器的再詮釋 (The re-

thus often the motifs for the emperor's packaging and interpreting of the jade.[38] The wooden cases were intended to create a subtle effect of surprise and an enjoyment of the presentation of the jade articles. The pleasure of unpacking such album-style boxes or cases was fashioned at Qianlong's court. This design was at its most effective in his packaging of the bronze mirrors.[39] Moreover, the art of unpacking flourished in the curio box where Qianlong turned the process into a brilliant performance, which will be the topic of the last chapter.

However, considering the functional role of packaging, the packaging itself is mostly considered to be of secondary importance to the contents, as shown in the fable at the very beginning. This is as much the case with Chinese packaging as with any packaging in general. Accordingly, there are very few works that are devoted to the packaging of Qianlong's collection, as it has long been deemed inconsequential and extrinsic to the artefacts that constitute the imperial collection.[40] Most relevant exhibitions have

interpretation of jade in the Qianlong empire), MA, the Graduate Institute of Art History, National Taiwan University.

[38] ZBCDAZH, vol. 29, pp. 540-1.

[39] The imperial packaging of bronze mirrors will be illustrated in the chapter 3.

[40] Packaging was not treated as an independent discipline in either China or the West before the program established at the Department of Forest Products, Michigan State University (MSU), in the USA. The packaging program at MSU was developed in response to millions of dollars of ammunition and supplies being wasted due to faulty packaging during the two World Wars, which has since become the School of Packaging (available at: http://www.packaging.msu.edu), focusing on issues of permeability and migration, shelf life, food packaging, etc. However, packaging in this context is only relevant to industrial applications, thus studies focus on modern packaging technologies with the aim of improving current packaging practices. Such research has an objective that is markedly different to that in this thesis, as this thesis is concerned with the culture of packaging as related to collecting activities and objects that were treated appreciatively, such as those presented as tribute.

encouraged this view that packaging is simply a decorative design element, lacking wider significance. This is precisely what this thesis will argue against. Packaging is much more than materials used to protect or decorate goods. It concerns how the contents were organised and reveals much about the ideas of the individuals who did the packaging.

The first exhibition that is directly relevant to imperial packaging to date was *The Imperial Packing Art of the Qing Dynasty*, an exhibition held at the Palace Museum in Beijing (*Gugong bowuyuan* 故宮博物院) in 1999 and at the Macao Museum of Art (*Aomen yishu bowuguan* 澳門藝術博物館) in 2000. The exhibition aimed to present the sumptuous packaging artistry of the Qing court and demonstrate its superb craftsmanship and fine materials.[41] The exhibition catalogues defined 'packaging' in a narrow sense, limiting the definition to packaging that protects its contents from damage; hence in this definition ordinary containers like water containers were excluded. The imperial packaging required considerable effort on its material and decoration due to the users' high status. Yang Xin 楊新, one of the initiators of the

[41] The exhibition was divided into the following four categories according to the functions or features of the packaging's contents: packaging for paintings and calligraphic works; packaging for stationery and baubles; packaging for religious objects; and packaging for articles used daily and in recreation. These division were made based on the assumption that packaging was created solely for its contents, and the exhibits were selected from the collections of the Palace Museum of Beijing, Musée national des arts asiatiques-Guimet, and private collections belonging to Monsieur François Dautresme and Mr George Block.

exhibition, further explained that these exhibits had never been displayed to the public because the packing was marked as subsidiary to the objects enclosed within and they were not adequately treated until several delicate packing from the Qing court was recognised.[42]

The exhibition and scholars involved in it, therefore, suggest that packing itself is a culture with distinctive national and local features, since its meticulous design reflects an aesthetic pursuit and embodies the creativity of the artisans who made it. Although the scholars appear to recognise that packaging was integral to its content and thus deserved to be viewed in tandem with the object, packaging is still considered to be subordinate to the objects within, functioning merely in service to the contents. This view disregards packaging as valuable in and of itself and neglects the interaction between packaging and the greater milieu. In addition, though the value of imperial packaging has come to be appreciated in due course, researchers simply accentuate its magnificent technique and opulent decorations, rendering the packaging as simply an extension of elegant Qing imperial craftsmanship.

There were also several exhibitions in the NPM connected with the art of Chinese

[42] Yang Xin 楊新 and Desroches, Jean-Paul 戴浩石 eds., 2000, *Qingdai gongting baozhuang yishu* 清代宮廷包裝藝術 (The imperial packing art of the Qing dynasty), Beijing: Forbidden City Press.

packaging. They clearly demonstrated that different forms of packaging developed in China for different object forms. Though some of them did not directly apply the word "packaging" or "packing" to justify the exhibits, they demonstrated how artworks were preserved in traditional China. This definition of packaging as the way in which artwork was preserved is part of the way packaging will be understood in this thesis. *The Art of Mounting Chinese Painting and Calligraphy* in 2008 introduced the unique Chinese mounting technique for paintings and calligraphy. Most exhibitions of Chinese paintings and calligraphy have centred on artists and their works. This exhibition, however, suggested that visitors pay attention to the skilful and diverse mounting formats.[43] This craft has been disregarded because its contribution to the main body of artworks is often undervalued, like packaging. Indeed mounting can be seen as a form of packaging. Focusing on mounting was an innovation that brought attention to the packaging art of Chinese paintings and calligraphy and its technical characteristics, foregrounding the manner in which artwork was displayed and stored. The mount was consistently perceived by Qianlong to be a key to organise objects in the palaces.

Following the mounting exhibition organised by the Department of Painting and Calligraphy, other departments of the NPM have paid more attention to such crafts

[43] Liu Fangru 劉芳如 ed., 2008, *Shuhua zhuangchi zhi mei* 書畫裝池之美 (The art of mounting Chinese painting and calligraphy), Taipei: The National Palace Museum.

previously regarded as an adjunct to artworks. In 2014 and 2015, *The Dao of Book Protection: Special Exhibition on the Art of Traditional Chinese Book Binding and Decoration* showed that books also had their own ways of preservation in China. The exhibition aimed to introduce "the art of book binding and decoration, as well as its derivative meanings" across the years.[44] It showed that books were inscribed on distinct materials and bound using dissimilar methods, as well as packed in various types of packaging throughout the evolution of Chinese text and printing technique. One of the displays, entitled "Attaining the Utmost Elegance," featured polished binding and intricate decorative book styles from the Qing imperial libraries. It was specifically during the reigns of Qianlong and his son the Jiaqing Emperor (r. 1796-1820) that the quality and quantity of the imperial book collection reached its apex. The Qing court not only sponsored library administration but also placed special importance on the physical appearance of books, resulting in sophisticated displays of imperial craftsmanship as seen in the design of the dust jackets, title labels, corner wrappers, and casing accessories produced from the Imperial Printing Workshop (*Wuyingdian xiushu chu* 武英殿修書處).

[44] Song Zhaolin 宋兆霖, 2014, *Huzhi youdao—guji zhuanghuang tezhan* 護帙有道—古籍裝潢特展 (The Dao of book protection: special exhibition on the art of traditional Chinese book binding and decoration), Taipei: The National Palace Museum.

Additionally, the exhibition *Reflection of the Emperor: The Collection and Culture of Mirrors at the Qing Court* in 2015 and 2016 further pointed out that Qianlong favoured book styles for his packaging of mirrors. The way he packaged the mirrors made the mirror look like a book. By this stage the emperor's packaging of the imperial collection had developed into an increasingly mature subject, and eventually led to the exhibition of 'Qianlong's brand' discussed above. This mirror exhibition showed how the Qing emperors handled their rich collection of antique bronze mirrors from the Han to Ming dynasties.[45] Although the exhibition did not focus on packaging art, it demonstrated that researchers have come to realise the important role of packaging and the need to take them into account. It argued that mirror packaging was collectively accomplished by the brothers and sons of Qianlong, his civil officials, and artisans, so that the intimate relationship between the emperor and his courtiers was reflected in the coverings as well as the emperor's own perceptions of his mirror collection.[46]

The majority of these museum exhibitions have concentrated primarily on the decorative and protective value of packaging rather than the fundamental principles and

[45] One section of this exhibition presented the storage and display of the ancient mirrors at the court, demonstrated the well-designed packaging of mirrors at Qianlong's instruction. Besides, the exhibition also displayed European glass mirrors brought by the Western missionaries during the Qing dynasty, showed the artistic exchange between Chinese Qing and Europe, and the employment of Western elements in refining imperial tastes.

[46] Wu Xiaoyun 吳曉筠 ed., 2015, *Huangdi de jingzi: Qinggong jingjian wenhua yu diancang* 皇帝的鏡子：清宮鏡鑑文化與典藏 (Reflections of the emperor: the collection and culture of mirrors at the Qing court), Taipei: The National Palace Museum.

spirit behind the notion of Chinese and Qing imperial packaging. There is some English language literature on packaging more broadly. Oka Hideyuki 岡秀行 was one of the first to touch upon the concept of packaging in his English photography book. The book *How to Wrap Five Eggs: Traditional Japanese Packaging* reveals the notions that presentation and appearance are an important form of non-verbal social interaction in Japan, and thus that *how* things are done matters more than *what* is done.[47] This insight is extremely useful for the study of Qianlong's packaging. Oka proposes that the ethos behind the practice of Japanese packaging is a consideration for the receiver of a package, and hence the Japanese are willing to take the trouble to package everything exquisitely, even objects of insignificance. Whilst Qianlong's packaging was not necessarily prepared for another individual to receive, Oka's key point is that packaging consequently becomes proprieties and takes on a world of its own.

Joy Hendry's book about Japanese wrapping culture is a response to Oka's ideas, as she considers the packaging practice a system of rules governing social intercourse in Japan.[48] She initially observes the nature of Japanese packaging in contrast to Western packaging, and argues that the West perceives the practice of wrapping gifts as an action to conceal the content, whilst the Japanese consider it an act of refining the

[47] Oka 1967.
[48] Hendry 1993.

object. Hendry then expands this wrapping concept to words, clothes, the arrangement of space and even events. It is striking that the metaphoric extension of "wrapping" can be observed in Japanese everyday practice. The body is wrapped with clothes in which identity and status can be revealed by different costumes. But Hendry mixes together evidence from distinct eras, which weakens her argument for cloth wrapping, since she provides no narrative of clothing habits from the Japanese perspective. This seems to be the tendency throughout the book. Though she provides a noticeable frame of reference in Japanese wrapping culture, there is little evidence to support her claims.

In recent years, there has also been an increasing number of studies on wrapping across different regions and periods. This culminated in two conferences, one at the University of Durham in 2009 and one at University College London in 2010,[49] which resulted in a symposium *Wrapping and Unwrapping Material Culture: Archaeological and Anthropological Perspectives*.[50] The theme of this symposium was to explore 'the role of wrapping in human cultures through ages,'[51] and it mainly focused on Europe and Africa.[52] Scholars argued that wrapping or packaging contents transform or modify its

[49] The first conference 'Wrapping Objects' was organised by the Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) at Durham University in December 2009; the second one, 'Wrapping and Unwrapping the Body: Archaeological and Anthropological Perspectives', took place at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London in May 2010

[50] Harris, Susanna, and Douny, Laurence eds., 2014, *Wrapping and Unwrapping Material Culture: Archaeological and Anthropological Perspectives*, California: Left Coast Press.

[51] Harris and Douny 2014, p. 11.

[52] The symposium covered three subjects: costume, burial, and other objects, individually represented in the themes 'wrapping and unwrapping the living', 'wrapping and unwrapping the dead', and 'the

identity and characters. Thus, wrappings are vested with meaning and power. By examining the use and purposes of wrapping, the interplay between wrapping, the wrapped, and the individual or group who did the wrapping would be revealed. This insightful concept of wrapping or packaging was extended to various disciplines and cultures by various scholars.

1.3.2. The Political Significance of Qianlong's Collection and Contemporary European Royal Collections

Packaging is a subject that has been gaining attention in the humanities around the world. This thesis contributes to this by examining packaging as a key means by which to interpret Qianlong's collection. The imperial collection has been broadly discussed in the past few decades and many remarkable studies were made.[53] The research has

materiality of wrapping'. The scholars in the first theme illuminate how distinct dressing performed social functions in divergent cultures; for example, 'Aspects of Baby Wrapping' argue that swaddling clothes helped infants, 'move from a transitional state to viable personhood'; See Russell 2014, p. 43. Scholars discussing 'wrapping the dead' investigate wrapping practices in graves in prehistoric Europe, chiefly relating to the use of the shroud. The last part of the book, the 'materiality of wrapping', addresses wrapping topics that do not fit into the preceding two, including materials, places, and objects. The contributors to this section conclude that, 'wrappings acquire meanings that are embedded in their materiality through both the transformative process of specific materials and their relationships with the places, bodies, and objects with which they are in contact.' See Harris and Douny 2014, p. 34.

[53] There are a great number of studies related to Qianlong's vast collection. Selected major works include: Zhou Rushi 周汝式, and Brown, Claudia eds., 1985, *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735–1795*, Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum; Fong Weng 方聞, and Watt, James C.Y. eds., 1996, *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Hearn, Maxwell K., 1996, *Splendors of Imperial China: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Pierson, Stacey ed., 2000, *Collecting Chinese Art: Interpretation and Display*, London: SOAS, Percival David Foundation; Zhang Hongxing 張弘星, 2002, *The Qianlong Emperor: Treasures from the Forbidden City*, Edinburgh: The National Museums of Scotland; Butz, H., Bügener, A., Magone, R., and Mende, E., 2003, *Bilder für die 'Halle des Purpurglanzes': Chinesische Offiziersporträts und Schlachtenkupfer der Ära Qianlong (1736-1795)*, Berlin: SMB, Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst; Bronson, Bennet and Ho, Chuimei eds., 2004, *Splendors of China's Forbidden City: The Glorious Reign of Emperor Qianlong*, London: Merrell

primarily embraced the political perspective of legitimacy, universality, and absolute monarchy, since the imperial collection in China has always reflected political values. However, in recent years some scholars have recognised the concealed nature of the imperial collections in China, and have thus argued against this well accepted view.[54] This new proposal reconsiders the definition of Qianlong's collection in light of its original context, indicating that a certain distinction between the objects of the state and the imperial household was clearly made by the imperial court. The 'actual collection' possessed by the imperial household,[55] though still majestic in scale, was not as monumental as shown in previous studies. More importantly, since the collection was hidden away from public view, the way it may have been used to claim the emperor's authority needs to be illuminated and further studies.

Publishers Ltd; Rawson, Jessica, and Rawski, Evelyn S. eds., 2005, *China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795*, London: Royal Academy of Arts; Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, Michèle, 2008, 'La collection impériale sous Yongzheng (1723-1735) et Qianlong (1736-1795), son impact sur la création artistique et sur l'histoire de l'art chinois', in: M. Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens and A. Kerlan-Stephens eds., *Autour des collections d'art en Chine au XVIIIe siècle*, Genève: Librairie Droz, pp. 3–27; Yu Peijin 余佩瑾, 2012, *Dejiaqu: Qianlong huangdi de taoci pinwei* 得佳趣：乾隆皇帝的陶瓷品味 (Obtaining refined enjoyment: the Qianlong Emperor's taste in ceramics), Taipei: The National Palace Museum; He Chuanxin 何傳馨 ed., 2013, *Shiquan Qianlong: Qing Gaozong de yishu pinwei* 十全乾隆: 清高宗的藝術品味 (The all-complete Qianlong: the aesthetic tastes of the Qing emperor Gaozong), Taipei: The National Palace Museum; and Chen Baozhen 陳葆真, 2014, *Qianlong huangdi de jiating shenghuo yu neixin shijie* 乾隆皇帝的家庭生活與內心世界 (Emperor Qianlong's family life and his innermost world), Taipei: Rock Publishing Intl.

[54] Nicole T.C. Chiang first brought this argument in her PhD thesis, which was further expanded in her publications. See Chiang, Nicole T. C., 2012, *Reconsidering the Collection of the Qing Imperial Household during the Qianlong Reign*, PhD, SOAS University of London; Chiang, 2014, 'Redefining an imperial collection: problems of modern impositions and interpretations', *the Journal of Art Historiography*, vol. 10, pp. 1-22; Chiang, 2019, *Emperor Qianlong's Hidden Treasures: Reconsidering the Collection of the Qing Imperial Household*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

[55] Chiang 2019, p. 6.

At present, the academic consensus is that Qianlong's vast accumulation of art treasures was propaganda for his emperorship. In his book *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes*, Harold Kahn first proposed the idea that the wide variety of Qianlong's collectables reflected his legitimacy to govern the mighty empire and reinforced his claim of sovereignty over the world.[56] His interpretation of monarchy under Qianlong is founded on the assumption that the Confucian ideal had been deeply rooted in the emperor's character through his education. As such, Qianlong was adept in and appreciated traditional Chinese fine arts such as paintings, calligraphy, and poetry and presented himself as the ideal Confucian ruler. Accordingly, his intention in gathering a wide assortment of objects was to declare authority over China. In the later essay 'A master of taste: the monumental and exotic in the Qianlong reign', Kahn further argues that the emperor built a political aesthetic through his universal collection. For Qianlong, the imperial collection was monumental and thus inspired awe and respect.[57] Whilst the argument was compellingly situated in the temporal and cultural contexts of Qianlong's China and has proven influential, it relied on the assumption that Qianlong used to exhibit his impressive collection to claim his universal rulership. This is, however, a view integral to the theory regarding European royal collections rather than

[56] Kahn, Harold, 1971, *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes: Image and Reality in the Ch'ien-lung Reign*, Mass. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 85–190.
[57] Kahn, Harold, 1985, 'A matter of taste: the monumental and exotic in the Qianlong reign', in: Zhou and Brown, pp. 288–302.

historical Chinese worldviews necessarily. Kahn compares Qianlong's great art collection to that of contemporary European monarch-collectors, like Catherine the Great (r. 1762-96) and the Habsburg rulers.[58] In the west, royal or aristocratic collections served the purpose of displaying social prestige and inspiring awe in audience.[59] Qianlong, on the contrary, showed no sign of displaying his collection, much less had it exhibited for the public.

Lothar Ledderose's study also suggests that Chinese imperial collections often worked towards political goals.[60] Instead of restricting examination to the collecting project at the Qing court, Ledderose looks into imperial holdings in China from a broader perspective. He brings out three points that support Kahn's argument and which have far-reaching implications for the study of Chinese imperial art collecting. To begin with, Ledderose argues that the holding of art treasures within imperial households performed the function of legitimising the mastery of emperors. Secondly, the imperial riches possessed chronicled value and were repeatedly employed in artistic and literary cultivation. Lastly, Ledderose establishes a correlation between variation in the scale of imperial holdings and the strength of monarchical authority; the stronger the dynastic

[58] Ibid, p. 288.
[59] Findlen, Paula, 1994, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Berkley: University of California Press; Chiang 2019, p. 15.
[60] Ledderose, Lothar, 1978-9, 'Some observations on the imperial art collection in China', *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, vol. 43, pp. 33-46.

power, the greater the scale of its imperial collection, and vice versa.

There are numerous exhibitions and publications that follow Kahn and Ledderose's line of argument.[61] The issue of legitimacy has been justified as an interpretive framework, as it is considered particularly important to regimes that originate from outside the region they control.[62] Shi Shouqian 石守謙 argues that China's imperial collections are the largest of the royal and aristocratic collections in the world. He suggests that it is precisely the close connection between imperial collections and dynastic legitimacy, that led the imperial household of each dynasty to take over the imperial collection of previous dynasties whether they were possessed by the collecting spirit or not. The unparalleled size of the imperial collections has grown through a constant process of

[61] The traveling exhibition *Splendours of Imperial China* at several museums in the United States in 1996 and 1997. *The Golden Exile: Pictorial Expressions of the School of Western Missionaries' Artworks of the Qing Dynasty Court* at Macao Museum of Art in 2001. *Emperor Chi'en-lung's Cultural Enterprise* at the National Museum in Taipei in 2002. *The Life of Emperor Qian Long* at the Palace Museum in Beijing in 2002. *China: Three Emperors* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 2005. *Witness the Qing Empire: Cultural Relics from the Palace Museum* at Macao Museum of Art in 2007. *Eternal Knowledge: Imperial books, Art Works and Culture of the Qing* at Macao Museum of Art in 2007. *The Last Emperor's Collection* at Liaoning Provincial Museum and the China Institute Gallery of America in New York in 2008. *La Cité interdite au Louvre* at Louvre Museum in 2011 and 2012. *The All Complete Qianlong: A Special Exhibition on the Aesthetic Tastes of the Qing Emperor Gaozong* at the National Palace Museum in Taipei in 2013 and 2014.

[62] Numerous studies have been published on the subject, here only shows some examples. Shi Shouqian 石守謙 and Feng Mingzhu 馮明珠 ed., 2002, *Qianlong huangdi de wenhua daye* 乾隆皇帝的文化大業 (Emperor Qianlong's grand cultural enterprise), Taipei: The National Palace Museum; Hostetler, Laura, 2001, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Zhang Liduan 張麗端, 2006, 'Cong "huojidang" kan Qing Gaozong zhijie kongguan yuzhi qiyong de liangge jizhi 從《活計檔》看清高宗直接控管御製器用的兩個機制 (Two mechanisms by which the Qianlong Emperor exerted direct control over the implements made for court use, as evidenced in the documents of the archives of imperial workshop)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 45-70; Demattè, Paola, 2011, 'Emperors and scholars: collecting culture and late imperial antiquarianism', in V. Rujivacharakul ed., *Collecting China: The World, China and a History of Collecting*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, pp. 165-75.

accumulation, which is only seen in China.[63] Accordingly, new dynasties were obliged to expropriate collections from previous dynasties as regimes and emperors took over one another. Imperial collections would come to be a means of reinforcing legitimacy while simultaneously challenging the authority of previous regimes and persons.

However, Patricia Ebrey suggests that such claims are too general and lacking contextual specifications in her book *Accumulating Culture: The Collections of Emperor Huizong*. She judiciously reminds us that not all of the imperial collections were driven by identical desires in China, nor did they follow the same pattern of arrangement.[64] For this reason, she urges scholars to pay attention to the intentions and features that motivated each emperor's collection and focuses on the example of Emperor Huizong of Song (r. 1100-26), who rivals Qianlong for the title of most avid art-collecting emperor in Chinese history. Ebrey proposes that Emperor Huizong's mega-collection was motivated by the antagonism between the emperor and conservative scholar-officials.[65] In this context, an impressive collection and a

[63] Shi Shouqian 石守謙, 2005, 'Qingshi shoucang de xiandai zhuanhua: jianlun qi yu Zhongguo meishushi yanjiu fazhan zhi guanxi 清室收藏的現代轉化：兼論其與中國美術史研究發展之關係 (The transformation of the Qing imperial collection in the early twentieth century)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 1–33.

[64] Ebrey, Patricia, 2008, *Accumulating Culture: The Collections of Emperor Huizong*, Seattle: University of Washington Press.

[65] The conflict between the reformers and conservatives in the Song dynasty was initiated by Wang Anshi's 王安石 (1021–86) political reform during Shenzong's (r. 1067–85) reign. Wang was an economist, who endeavoured to conduct large scale, controversial socioeconomic reform known as the New Policies (*Xinfa* 新法). The emperors after Shenzong all supported the reformers, and factional strife grew worse. The dispute between the two factions continued into the reign of Huizong in the form of

codification of catalogues were accumulated through a cultural and political context of contestation between opposing sides.[66] Emperor Huizong, who was personally enamoured with art and art collections and was himself a great artist, employed his collections, artistic knowledge, and proficiency in artistic creation as the medium of political confrontation to establish himself as supreme ruler.

Ebrey's treatment of Huizong's collection provides an example of how Kahn and Ledderose's approaches towards political power are too broad. Qianlong himself compared his collecting activity with that of Huizong's. Qianlong criticised this previous emperor's excessive obsession with art collecting which, according to Chinese historical records, resulted in the collapse of the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127).[67] Consequently, the Song emperor's rich collection was considered disproportionate to his sovereignty. Besides, Huizong's motivation for gathering objects and his usage of them did not entirely stem from political motives, and was instead fuelled by his cultural character. Huizong himself was an accomplished artist, and he began his collection before his succession to the throne, which was not anticipated, so it should not be assumed that his motive for collecting was solely political. Thus, as Ebrey argues, it would be a sweeping generalisation to apply one principle to all cases of imperial

conflict between the emperor and the conservatives.

[66] Ebrey 2008, pp. 76-149.

[67] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983-6, *Fourth Collection*, *juan* 56, p.21.

collection in China. These imperial collections in China certainly had things in common since they shared a common lineage, but each should be contextualised within each emperor's career, especially when it concerns the Manchu Qing.

The form of Qianlong's collection and his motive for assembling it differed from that of preceding emperors. Jessica Rawson argues that Qianlong's collecting activities, as well as those of the other Qing emperors, were a way whereby he acquired extensive knowledge and nurtured himself as the ruler of a vast, culturally and ethnically diverse empire.[68] She explores the multi-functional roles of the Qing emperors in the exhibition catalogue *China: The Three Emperors 1662–1795*. Rawson proposes that the vastness of and diversity within the empire necessitated that Qianlong assumed multiple roles. To this end, he exploited his miscellaneous collections of painting, porcelain, costume and other artworks to wear multiple hats in diverse circumstances. Rawson stresses that these collections were not just for the emperor's personal interest, but were more fundamentally instruments of self-presentation. Therefore, through the imperial collection, which was not only great in number but also in the type of objects collected, the Qing emperors claimed that their rule far transcended that of preceding dynasties.[69]

[68] Rawson, Jessica, 2005, 'The Qianlong Emperor: virtue and the possession of antiquity', in: Rawski and Rawson, pp. 270–305.
[69] Ibid, p. 272.

Although these numerous exhibitions and publications on various forms of collecting in China throughout the ages all seem to support the idea that Qianlong's collection was intended to honour the empire and demonstrate imperial glory, such an interpretation implies that the imperial collection should have been highly visual and accessible. This was, however, not the case for Qianlong's collection: a majority of it was placed in the emperor's quarters to which only he had access. The objects were confined to his private space, and Qianlong had no intention of displaying them to the public.

Whilst it should be understood that legitimacy is a broad and complex concept and operation that varies in different cultures and periods, the earlier studies characterise Qianlong's collection as primarily a political instrument used to gain public recognition. It is important to note that strategies to achieve recognition of the Qing regime as legitimate would have included subtle ones to optimise propaganda value. An audience was, to a certain extent, essential to the subtle campaigns. Nevertheless, research that favours such explanations for the imperial collection seems to consider mere possession of the objects sufficient for gaining legitimacy, and none of them illustrate how Qianlong used the objects to spread pro-Qing propaganda. Although the emperor revealed the collection to select ministers on special occasions, and those who assisted

in organising the objects also had access to it, these viewers were restricted to a few dozen officials and members of the imperial family,[70] with the latter also working to establish and maintain the collection. The officials were thus not a target audience that Qianlong needed to persuade of his legitimacy. This small court audience was insufficient for the imperial collection to be of use to promulgating the dynasty's legitimacy.

Additionally, viewers were only allowed access to parts of the collection rather than the entirety, with the full picture known and dictated by Qianlong alone. This contrasts with established ideas about the purpose of collecting, which interpretations of the imperial collection as representing dynastic power appear to have been strongly influenced by. In her latest study of Qianlong's collection, Nicole T. C. Chiang proposes that the understanding of Chinese imperial collections has been strongly influenced by Eurocentric interpretations.[71] European aristocrats and royal families typically began art collections to flaunt their wealth, which was normally closely related to competitions for power and control over resources.[72] Chiang argues, however, that this

[70] For the people who assisted in organising Qianlong's collection, see Feng 1996.
[71] Chiang 2019, pp. 109-136.
[72] Anthony Alan Shelton suggests that the perfection of the encyclopaedic collection was accomplished by the Medici family when Francesco I inherited the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1574. He transferred many of his collections from his residence to the newly built Uffizi Gallery in Florence for public display, which encouraged princely rulers to symbolically mark—and thus legitimise—their ascendance in status through collecting precious works of art. See Shelton, Anthony, 1994, 'Cabinets of transgression: renaissance collections and the incorporation of the new world', in: Elsner, John and Cardinal, Roger eds., *The Cultures of Collecting*, London: Reaktion Books, pp. 177–203.

was not the case for the Qing imperial household, which customarily concealed its collection. She challenges the canonical perception of 'Qianlong's imperial art collection' arguing that the scale of Qianlong's actual collection was much smaller than perceived through the lens of modern museum collections and Eurocentric views of royal collections. This new study suggests that the so-called Qianlong's collection should be divided into two groups: the objects that were simply kept at the court, which can only count in the imperial possessions; while those that entered the 'actual collection' and distinguished from furnishings were collectables, which were usually hidden from view as they contained national security or sensitive information. Therefore, Qianlong's collection was in no position to proclaim his imperial grandeur and authority.

Chiang concludes that the political significance of the imperial collection was internal, though she is quite vague about precisely how and why. Also, many hidden 'collectibles' did not concern sensitive information and seemed to be pure works of art. This thesis therefore proposes that the secrecy of Qianlong's collection played a more active role in defining the objects' histories and manipulating his officials. An alternative perspective, again focused on European aristocratic collections, emphasises the different mechanisms behind collecting. Paula Findlen notes that knowledge gained by

possessing objects had a meaningful return for the collectors since the display helped them acquire a reputation.[73] Collecting was therefore adapted for turning knowledge into power, and the princely museum was also an excellent vehicle for establishing aristocratic identity. In addition, Anthony Alan Shelton also reminds us that objects of curiosity were often interchanged within royal circles, just as presents were exchanged among nobilities as a means to fortify the sense of self-worth they appreciated as a class.[74] William Eamon thus argues that such collections became public in the eighteenth century as they shift 'from the secrets of nature to public knowledge' in the last two centuries.[75] And Giuseppe Olmi indicates that it was the transition of princely collections from private to public which necessitated a new presentation of collections, given that the objects they gathered became increasingly perceived as symbols of status and agents of propaganda.[76]

European courts of the eighteenth century were comparatively open compared to the

[73] Findlen explains that objects were not the only things to be displayed, but social and civic conventions that governed the objects' management were also apparent. Beyond the museums themselves, the number and quality of spectators that were admitted after strict exclusion processes were also a measure of a museum's prestige. See Findlen 1994.
[74] Shelton 1994, pp. 186-8.
[75] The conflict between public vs private is outlined in Eamon, William, 1985, 'From the secrets of nature to public knowledge: the origins of the concept of openness in science', *Minerva*, vol. 23, pp. 321–47.
[76] The princely collections were once ordained to the private appreciation of prince circle, were gradually on show to all in the public. Giuseppe, Olmi, 1985, 'Science-honour-metaphor: Italian cabinets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in: Impey, Oliver and MacGregor, Arthur eds., *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinets of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth- Century Europe*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 5-16.

Qing court, and their collections were visible.[77] The Chinese imperial collections were, however, not intended for exhibition in the same way as European collections. In Europe, collections of antiquities were also exhibited in the gardens and residences of the aristocrats.[78] These European collections mostly embraced a great diversity of articles, though many of them were not works of art.[79] Such collections were encyclopaedic in nature, usually known as cabinets of curiosities, 'kunstkammer', or 'wunderkammer'.[80] However, as Patricia Ebrey points out, European and Chinese types of collecting were motivated by different forces, which resulted in distinct collection management strategies. Accordingly, the unique qualities of both Chinese and European collecting need to be compared, for which task the Qing curio box makes an excellent case study.

1.3.3. The Qing Curio Box

The period in which exchange between East Asia and Europe reached a peak was the

[77] Antonio Aimi's study exactly shows that in the case of Milanese collections during the late Renaissance, art galleries were practically controlled by the local patriciate, the aristocracy presiding over the city, and thus galleries served the purpose of displaying social prestige. See Aimi, Michele, and Morandotti, 1985, 'Towards a history of collecting in Milan in the late renaissance and baroque periods', in: Impey and MacGregor, pp. 24-8.
[78] Ibid.
[79] The collectable including paintings, prints, statues, porcelain, medals, mathematical and physical instruments, rocks and minerals, fossil remains, zoological remains, products of the vegetable kingdom, ethnographic items, weapons, archaeological objects, European handicrafts, musical instruments, books, and codices from continents and various ethnic groups. Ibid.
[80] The items of such collections were habitually divided into four categories: curious works of art (*arteficialia*); the wonders of nature (*naturalia*); scientific curiosities (*scientifica*); and curiosities from distant lands (*exotica*). Giuseppe 1985.

reign of Qianlong, and thus some scholars have proposed a connection between the emperor's curio box and European cabinets of curiosities. The encyclopaedic nature of contents within curio boxes is often regarded as a reflection of Qianlong's collection as a whole. This has not only led modern scholars to connect it with European cabinets of curiosities, but has also led them to equate their purpose: strengthening the owner's political power. However, not only were curio boxes a unique genre of artwork that only existed at the Qing court, but they also embodied secrecy, more so than any other object in the imperial collection.

It is important to note that integral to the curio box was a clever use of space. Given its uniqueness in the imperial collection, it is peculiar that the Qing curio box has received minimal scholarly attention, save some mentions in introductory essays. There are no monographs on this object, and the discussion has mostly emerged from exhibitions on related items at the NPM, where most extant curio boxes are housed. Therefore, the researchers are also for the most part associated with the museum.

The Qing curio box has been one of the permanent exhibitions at the NPM since the 1980's. Preliminary studies on the curio box focus on the diversity of its contents and its different physical forms. Deng Shuping 鄧淑蘋 indicates that although the contents

of curio boxes were diverse, the majority of them were fashioned from jade.[81] These jade objects came from different periods and regions. However, as more relevant archives were studied and more curio boxes identified, it became apparent that jade was not the only material used for curio box objects. In a later article, Lu Shihao 呂世浩 describes a curio box of Qianlong named 'Fanjin zuoze' 范金作則; the objects contained within it were exclusively bronze vessels.[82] Tsai Meifen 蔡玫芬 points out that the extant curio boxes are mainly from the Qianlong period. [83] She also notes that curio boxes usually contained objects from various time periods and countries. Ji Ruoxin 嵇若昕 points out that the containers of curio boxes were mainly produced in: the imperial workshops of the Imperial Household Department, modified from boxes of the previous dynasty, Japan, or the local workshops in the southern Yangtze region.[84] As a result, the boxes come in assorted forms.

With the substantial alterations of the exhibition halls of the NPM museum completed in 2007, the curio box exhibits became subsumed under a new permanent exhibition

[81] Deng Shuping 鄧淑蘋, 1984, 'Duobaoge zhong de yuqi 多寶格中的玉器 (Jade articles in curio boxes)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 12, pp. 23–31.
[82] Lü Shihao 呂世浩, 2007, 'Duobaoge zhong de fanggu tongqi—yi "Fanjin zuoze" weili 多寶格中的仿古銅器—以「范金作則」為例 (Bronze vessels modelled after antiques in the Qing curio boxes—a case study of the "Fanjin zuoze" curio box)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 294, pp. 28–39.
[83] Cai Meifen 蔡玫芬, 1984, 'Huangdi de wanjuxiang 皇帝的玩具箱 (The emperors' toy boxes)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 13, pp. 4–7.
[84] Ji Ruoxin 嵇若昕, 1985, 'Duobaoge de niangjia 多寶格的娘家 (The birthplace of the Qing curio boxes)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 23, pp. 104–9.

entitled ‘Arts of the Ch’ing Imperial Collection’. The exhibition triggered new research interest in the curio boxes, leading to research on the connotations and intentions of the curio box, which usually connects the curio box to Qianlong’s claim to legitimacy and universality. Drawing from sources in the Qing imperial archives, Chen Huixia 陳慧霞 concludes that curio boxes had been made and appreciated since the reign of Kangxi.[85] She argues that the forms the curio boxes assumed signified their aim to be seen, and a wide assortment of curios mark the high Qing emperors’ control of rich resources. Hence, she argues that curio boxes symbolically represent the vast empire of these emperors. This argument, while innovative and well-articulated, is very similar to interpretations of European cabinets of curiosities, and there is unfortunately no solid evidence that these boxes were ever intended to be viewed by anyone other than the Qing emperor or his immediate court circle.

Others have also endeavoured to explore the emperors’ attitudes toward curio boxes by studying related archives and the objects contained within. They also imply that the various objects within the curio box reflected Qianlong’s expansion of power. Zhang Liduan 張麗端 considers curio boxes to be partly Qianlong’s playthings or a form of

[85] Chen’s research on the Qing curio box is not published, but she presented the paper ‘A microcosm of the art world: the significance of the treasure box in the imperial Qing collection’ at the international symposium ‘Art in China: Collections and Concepts’, which was jointly held by the NPM and Heidelberg University on 21–23 November 2003 at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn. Professor Shi Jingfei of the Institute of Art History at National Taiwan University also provided information about Chen’s research, for which I am deeply thankful.

recreation, given their non-functional but entertaining characteristics.[86] Moreover, she suggests that curio boxes also reflected the emperor's taste for imitating the Ming literati lifestyle because the contents and form of curio boxes both bore resemblances to the Ming traveling case.[87] Yu Peijin 余佩瑾 presents a case study that illustrates the emperor's political intention and artistic taste as seen through the curio box.[88] She takes one of his curio boxes named *Jiqiongzao* 集瓊藻 to argue that it represented Qianlong's idealised version of the world under his reign and presented him as a force of nature. In addition, Ji Ruoxin attempts to match certain extant curio boxes with the records of the imperial archives in order to clarify the diverse terms and functions of curio boxes.[89] She chooses the general term *baishejian* 百什件 (a hundred assorted items) to acknowledge the diversity of curio boxes, which can range from large versions— such as curio cabinets used as furniture or for displaying objects — to small ones that are placed on tabletops or shelves.

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[86] Zhang Liduan 張麗端, 2005, 'Shoucang quwei youxi kongjian—guanyu duobaoge 收藏趣味・遊戲空間—關於多寶格 (Collecting interests and recreational spaces: on curio boxes)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 263, pp. 26–39.

[87] Zhang Liduan, 2007, 'Wenhua de jiajianchengchu zizisunsun yongbaoyong—Qingdai huangshi de wenwu diancang 文化的加減乘除子子孫孫永寶用—清代皇室的文物典藏 (Cultural arithmetic: arts from the Qing imperial collection)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 294, pp. 40–53.

[88] Yu Peijin, 2007, 'Pinwei yu yitu—Qing Qianlong "Jiqiongzao" duobaoge chutan 品味與意圖—清乾隆「集瓊藻」多寶格初探 (Taste and intention: a preliminary study of Qianlong's curio box "Jiqiongzao")', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 294, pp. 16–27.

[89] Ji Ruoxin, 2007b, 'Shangxia wuqian nian, dongxi shiwan li—Qinggong zhong de baishejian 上下五千年，東西十萬里—清宮中的百什件 (A length of five thousand years, a breadth of one hundred thousand miles: a hundred assorted items of the Qing court)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 294, pp. 4–15.

Beyond that, with the growing interest in the cultural exchanges between Asia and Europe, some scholars have also looked into the curio box from a cross-cultural perspective. Pamela Kyle Crossley, Lai Yuzhi 賴毓芝, and Shi Jingfei 施靜菲 all see similarities between the Qing curio box and European cabinet of curiosities, though their studies do not focus directly on the curio box. Crossley sees the Qing imperial authority as a 'simultaneous emperorship' that embraced all cultural traditions and even transcended all ideologies.[90] She remarks in passing that, as a result, the Qing curio box may correspond to the European cabinets of curiosities.[91] Lai's article follows Crossley's train of thought, bring attention to the fact that there were various collectables in the Qing imperial collection differed substantially from traditional Chinese imperial collections, such as ivory balls, curio boxes, jewelled bonsai, clocks, and other curiosities like a Parthian ostrich-egg.[92] She therefore compares the imperial collection to the European princely collections and concludes that they shared much in common. In light of this evidence of communication with the West, she argues that the Qing imperial collection deserves to be re-evaluated.

[90] Crossley, Pamela K., 1999, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
[91] Crossley 1999, pp. 281–2.
[92] Lai Yuzhi, 2006, 'Kangxi de suanxue dao Aodili anbuliesibao shoucang de yixie sikao 康熙的算學到奧地利安布列斯堡收藏的一些思考 (Some reflections on Kangxi's mathematics to the collection of Ambras Castle in Austria)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 276, pp. 106–18.

Such an evaluation would require the consideration of further questions regarding the Qing imperial collection, in particular the nature of the emperors' perceptions of their collections and how these perceptions might inform our understanding of how Qing China positioned its own empire in relation to the world. Shi Jingfei further elucidates the connection between the collections of these two cultures by studying one specific artwork – ivory concentric balls, also known as 'devil's work balls (*guigong qiu* 鬼工球),' which were a common item both in the collection of the Qing court and the European cabinets of curiosities.[93] She proposes that eighteenth-century Chinese 'devil's work balls' were closely connected with sixteenth- and seventeenth- century turnery in the Holy Roman Empire (962–1806) based on the parallels between turning skills, productive processes, concepts of geometry, and the ball's structure. The Chinese ones were mainly made for export to Europe during the eighteenth century, while the European ivory balls were sometimes employed as diplomatic gifts to the Qing emperors, and they became a type of curiosity object contained in the curio box. For these reasons, Shi concludes that the exchanges of art and craft between China and Europe thrived at the time. She also connects the Qing immortal works and curio boxes with domestic and female spaces since the court ladies could be the potential

[93] Shi Jingfei 施靜菲, 2007, 'Xiangya qiu suojian zhi gongyi jishu jiaoliu: Guangdong, Qinggong yu Shenshengluomadiguo 象牙球所見之工藝技術交流：廣東、清宮與神聖羅馬帝國 (Craft exchange reflected in concentric ivory balls: Canton, the Qing court, and the Holy Roman Empire)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 87–138.

appreciators of these artworks, given that they were primarily stored in the inner court.[94] This is related to the audience of curio boxes and will be discussed in detail in the last chapter.

These studies tend to explain the Qing curio box as a microcosm of the diversity that was unified under the high Qing emperors' vast dominion, which was also reflected by the entire imperial collection. Those interpretations seem plausible but lack evidence and justifiable inferences that relate curio boxes with the emperors' serious political aspirations. Firstly, although the categories of curio box contents were various, they still cannot rival the wide variety of the imperial collection as a whole. It is therefore unclear on what grounds the curio box can be defined as a representation of the entire imperial collection. Secondly, even if the curio boxes were really a microcosm of the collection, then the question remains of why the emperors bothered to have their collections represented in microcosm to manifest their absolute dominion, given that they already possessed absolute control over the collection. Lastly, if the curio box was indeed their empire in microcosm, it then begs the question of to whom the boxes were presented if their intention was to exert their control over the empire.

[94] Shi Jingfei presented the paper 'The Immortal's Works and Treasure Boxes in the Qing Court from 1662 to 1795' at the workshop 'Interactions in Art: East Asia and Europe, 1600–1800' at the Academia Sinica in December 16, 2013. Professor Shi graciously provided me with the unpublished manuscript, intended for publication in *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly* in the near future.

It appears that the microcosm theory may have been encouraged by theories regarding the establishments and developments of the European cabinets of curiosities. In this interpretation, the encyclopaedic collection in the fashionable European circles was for justifying aristocratic authority by displaying and flaunting their compelling collections. Nonetheless, analysis of the Qing curio box, as well as the imperial collection, to date has not yet been adequate to support the above conclusion. Therefore, before drawing direct connections between the curio box and the imperial collection in its entirety, or deeming it a corollary of the European cabinets of curiosities, it is of primary importance to analyse the formation of the objects held within these boxes and their relationships to the boxes or cabinets — that is, the way in which those objects were collected and packaged, which in turn will expose how curio boxes were treated and considered.

1.4. The Power and Traditions of Chinese Packaging

Packaging is the narrative and context built specifically for the object it contains, which can therefore reveal much information about the packed objects. In other words, packaging can be used to manipulate visual information and thereby determines the character of the object. Objects that were important, valuable, or sacred generally

required packaging, which often had their own established forms of packaging in China. As such, packaging forms spoke volumes for their contents. Qianlong and the Qing court exploited the power provided by those forms idea to create new forms.

This section examines the tradition of packaging relics and the practice of secret memorial packaging which was later used and built on by Qing emperors. The packaging of relics was an important source for later packaging traditions. Given the deep meaning of relics, their packaging accordingly manifested as multiple layers to create more room to carry the complex narrative. The objects in the imperial collection were also related to rich and complex history or information, they were thus often packaged with extra layers. The secret memorial packaging (*mizou* 密奏) is an alternative example where packaging was utilised to enforce an air of secrecy in political and official contexts. This was another key element of the imperial packaging, which was also achieved by multilayer packaging. Layered packaging increases the invisibility of the objects inside, as removing one layer simply reveals another. It further contributes to the sense of exclusivity and inaccessibility. This was necessary for Qianlong to exercise his control over the objects.

1.4.1. The Relic Packaging: Chinese Packaging Traditions from Archaeology

In the context of China, religious objects—Buddhist relics in particular—tend to be packaged in layers of containers to define their status. These reliquaries create sacred space for the consecrated objects inside. The sacredness of relics was determined by their packaging. Many relics were actually made of artificial materials like glass rather than bones, which indicates that common objects were transformed into and perceived as sacred as a result of how they were packaged. Also, by packaging relics, Buddhists were able to worship them and contemplate the Buddha's teachings since relics were generally considered to be Buddha himself. Therefore, the packaging of relics reflects how they were treated and believed in. In this connection, relics tended not to be removed from their containers once they had been packed, in order to preserve their status. The definition and significance of relics relied heavily on their containers. If removed from their containers, relics could possibly not be recognised or could lose their sacredness.

The entombing or packaging of the deceased may not only be applied to the deceased holy person's body, but may also be applied to *sheli* 舍利 (transliterated from the Sanskrit *śarīra*), or a part of a deceased Buddhist spiritual master's body that was found among the cremated ashes.[95] It often took the form of a bead, so beads of various

[95] *Śarīra* is a Sanskrit word that originally meant 'body', but it means 'relics' when used in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit texts. Shen Hsueh-man further explains it, referring to the *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林

materials have been found that were considered relics. The container for Buddhistic relics is a *śarīra* box or case, a type of reliquary derived from India. Indian-style reliquaries were stupas or house-shaped containers (Fig. 7).[96] Chinese-style reliquaries were coffin-shaped containers (Fig. 8), which in particular stress that the relics were considered to be parts of the Buddha's body.[97] These reliquaries were usually placed in underground palaces, resembling coffins buried in tombs.[98] Many of them have been discovered in recent archaeological excavations. The most remarkable and best-preserved of these reliquaries were four sets of boxes containing four of Buddha's finger bones that were excavated from the Tang underground palace at the *Famen* Temple 法門寺. According to the corresponding stele, they were buried in the fifteenth year of Xiantong 咸通 (874).[99] Apart from thousands of coins and hundreds of

(compiled by Daoshi 道世 in 668) and *Shishi yaolan* 釋氏要覽 (compiled by Shi Daocheng 釋道誠 in 1019) that, 'the meaning of *śarīra* is actually the same as 'bodily bone' in the Chinese language. But, to prevent the abuse of ordinary human bones, it was not translated in that way.' See Shen, Hsueh-man, 2000, *Buddhist Relic Deposits from Tang (618-907) to Northern Song (960-1127) and Liao (907-1125)*, PhD, University of Oxford, p. 1.

[96] According to Shen's study, the word stupa also came from a Sanskrit word '*stūpa*', originally meaning a funerary mound erected in honour of a great ruler in India: 'it was already an established custom to erect a stupa over a world ruler's relics as part of the funeral rites for him at the time of the Buddha's *mahāparinirvāṇa* (death of the Buddha). The Buddhists adopted the stupa as a container for sacred relics, and the "stupa" in Buddhist terms came to symbolise *mahāparinirvāṇa*, the entry into Final Nirvana and ultimate achievement of Buddhahood.' See Shen 2000, pp. 1–11.

[97] The Research Center for Silk Roadology, 2004, *Tyuugoku sirukuroodo ni okeru syari sougon no keisiki hensen ni kan suru tyousa kenkyuu* 中国・シルクロードにおける舎利荘厳の形式変遷に関する調査研究 (A study of the stylistic changes in Saria containers from sites along the silk road in China), Nara: The Research Center for Silk Roadology.

[98] Su Bai 宿白, 1988, 'Famen si ta digong chutu wenwu bitan: Famen si ta digong chutu wenwu fanying de yi xie wenti 法門寺塔地宮出土文物筆談——法門寺塔地宮出土文物反映的一些問題 (Notes on the cultural relics unearthed from the underground palace at Famen Temple's tower: several problems reflected in the cultural relics unearthed from the underground palace at Famen Temple's tower)', *Cultural Relics*, no. 10, pp. 29–30.

[99] The stele *Datang Xiantong qisong qiyang zhenshen zhiwen* 大唐咸通啟送岐陽真身誌文 provides a detailed record of the construction of the underground palace and the process of relic preservation. See Han Jinke 韓金科, 1998, *Famen si wenhua shi* 法門寺文化史 (A cultural history of Famen Temple), Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, p. 283.

textiles,[100] there are more than 400 objects found, including 121 pieces of gold and silver metalwork, 20 Chinese and foreign glass pieces, 13 pieces of celadon *Yue* ware 越窯, and finally, four sets of reliquaries, each enshrining a finger-bone relic of the Buddha.[101]

As *sheli* worship reached the height of its glory in the Tang dynasty, the contemporary adherents of Buddhism tended to fashion *sheli* from precious gems to enshrine at sacred places. Accordingly, three finger bones among the relics at *Famen* Temple are fashioned with jade, accompanying the genuine one.[102] Although it has been controversial whether the only bone relic actually belonged to the Buddha or was even human,[103] its value did not lie in its authenticity but in its role as a focus for the Buddha's teachings. Reliquaries were where these teachings were accommodated. This is why sutras were regarded as another type of relic—dharma-body relics (*fashen sheli* 法身舍利)—whereas bones or objects were physical body relics (*shengshen sheli* 生身舍利).[104]

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[100] In 1987, when the temple's original foundations were being renovated during the construction of a new brick tower, the excavation of the Buddha's finger bone and 2,499 artefacts of the Tang imperial household from the concealed underground palace astonished archaeological circles. See Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, 2007, *Famen si kaogu fajue baogao* 法門寺考古發掘報告 (Report on archaeological excavations at Famen Temple), Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House.

[101] Ibid.

[102] However, most scholars in China presume the three jade-fashioned finger bones were 'shadow bones' (*yinggu* 影骨), which were made as decoys in order to protect the genuine one or 'spirit bone' (*linggu* 靈骨).

[103] The *Famen* Temple Museum ed., 2013, *Famensi fosheli xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 法門寺佛舍利學術研討會論文集 (The symposium on Buddhist relics of the *Famen* Temple), Xian: Sanqin Publishing House.

[104] Shen Xueman 沈雪曼, 2002, 'Liao yu Bei Song shelita nei cangjing zhi yanjiu 遼與北宋舍利塔內藏經之研究 (Liao and Northern Song deposits of the Buddha's spiritual relics)', *Taida Journal of Art*

All four finger-bone relics excavated at *Famen* Temple are placed separately in a set of nested *sheli* boxes, which is the typical form of packaging for *sheli* in China. One of them has as many as eight nested boxes (Fig. 9-a), though the outermost layer of the sandalwood box has rotted and no longer exists. The layers of packaging provided more space to represent the complex Buddhist realm, thus the Buddha's body was contained in a way that reflected his teachings. This set of nested reliquaries created the sacred space of a mandala.[105] Starting with the content of the smallest box, the finger-bone relic made of white jade is kept in the innermost golden box in the shape of a small pagoda with doors on four sides, and a small silver stick that stretches up from the centre of the pedestal to hold the relic in place (Fig. 9-b). The second box was made of a marblelike stone and ornamented with precious gems and pearls (Fig. 9-c). The third box was made of pure gold with decorations similar to the second one (Fig. 9-d). The fourth one was a golden box adorned with the complex iconography of the six-armed bodhisattva of great mercy (*Guanyin* 觀音) (Fig. 9-e). The fifth box was of gilded silver engraved with an intricate depiction of the Buddha preaching (Fig. 9-f). The sixth one was a plain silver box with no adornment at all (Fig. 9-g). The seventh box is of gilded silver engraved with four heavenly kings on four sides (Fig. 9-h). The excavation

History, vol. 12, pp. 169–212.

[105] Sharf, Robert, 2011, 'The Buddha's finger bones at Famen si and the art of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism', *The Art Bulletin*, pp. 38–59.

inventory also lists an eighth box that no longer exists that was made of sandalwood with silver hinges.

Robert Sharf suggests that the nested reliquaries together represented the altar rites of Esoteric Buddhism (*Mijiao* 密教) that was popular among the upper classes during the Tang period.[106] The set was the three-dimensional embodiment of the two-dimensional mandala motif, a complex spiritual image in Esoteric Buddhism representing the universe. Thus, the finger bone was preserved by altar rites embodied by the nested reliquaries. Lai Yiman 賴依縵 also connects the set of *sheli* boxes with Esoteric Buddhism, based on iconographical analysis of the box panels.[107] Another interpretation of the eight nested reliquaries has recently been added to the mandala argument. Yang Yawen 楊雅雯 proposes that these images on the reliquaries gave a tangible form to Nirvana, the final goal of Buddhist adherents.[108] Each layer embodied a practice of the Noble Eightfold Path,[109] which ultimately led to attainment of the state

[106] Ibid.
[107] Lai Yiman 賴依縵, 2010, 'Kaogu xinfaxian de Tangdai Mijiao yishu 考古新發現的唐代密教藝術 (Tang Esoteric Buddhist art in new archaeological discoveries)', recorded in Cai Yaoqing 蔡耀慶 ed., *Shengshi huangchao mibao: Famensi digong yu Datang wenwu tezhan* 盛世皇朝秘寶：法門寺地宮與大唐文物特展 (Imperial treasures: relics of Famen Temple underground palace and the flourishing Tang), Taipei: National Museum of History, pp. 52–62.
[108] Yang Yawen 楊雅雯, 2012, 'Niepan shuofa: Sui–Tang shelita rongqi de tuxiang yihan 涅槃說法——隋唐舍利容器的圖像意涵 (Expounding on Nirvana: the connotations of the imagery on Sui–Tang *sheli* boxes)', *Art Symposium*, pp. 1–14.
[109] The eight practices of the Eightfold Path include: the right position, right resolve, right speech, right awareness, right concentration, right conduct, right effort, and right livelihood. The study of the visual representation of the Eightfold Path, see Li Yumin 李玉珉, 1986, 'Mantan fohua 漫談佛畫 (A discussion of Buddhist paintings)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 44, pp. 71-81.

of Nirvana.

Exluding the innermost pagoda-shaped box, the other six reliquaries are all boxes with a flat-topped roof (*luding* 盝頂), the roof of ancient Chinese architecture. A *luding* box, admired in the Tang dynasty, was a typical container for objects of great value or Buddhist sacred items. The combination of innermost pagoda- or coffin-shaped reliquaries and nested *luding* reliquaries was developed in the Tang, and was a popular form used in later periods and contemporary Japan and Korea.[110] This was also the case for the packaging of the other three finger-bone relics from the *Famen* Temple. The alleged genuine finger bone of Buddha was enshrined in a set of five nested reliquaries (Fig. 10). The two innermost reliquaries were coffin-shaped boxes, whilst the outer three nested reliquaries were *luding* boxes, though the outermost sandalwood box has rotted and no longer exists.

In a Buddhist context, these reliquaries create sacred space to consecrate objects inside. Without the packaging to dictate their spiritual qualities and otherworldly significance,

[110] Yang Hong 楊泓, 2009, 'Zhongguo gudai he Han de Fojiao sheli rongqi 中國古代和韓的佛教舍利容器 (Ancient Buddhist reliquaries of China and Korea)', *Archaeology*, pp. 73–84; 2006, 'Chūgoku hokuchō, zui, tō jidai no sharitō jimiya to shari yōki 中国北朝・隋・唐時代の舎利塔地宮と舎利容器 (Chinese relics underground palaces and reliquaries during the Northern, Sui, and Tang dynasties)', *the Tohoku Gakuin University Review: History and Culture*, vol. 40, pp. 151–63; 2000, 'Zhongguo Fojiao sheli rongqi yishu zaoxing de bianqian: Fojiao meishu zhongguohua de lizheng zhi yi 中國佛教舍利容器藝術造型的變遷：佛教美術中國化的例證之一 (The transition of forms of Buddhist reliquaries in China: an illustration of the sinicization of Buddhist art)', *Study of Art History*, vol. 2, pp. 231–62.

these relics would not only be meaningless but also just ordinary items. For instance, three of four finger relics at *Famen* Temple were made of jade. Therefore, unpacking the relic could jeopardise its status as a holy relic. These examples show that packaging defines its contents, as well as the perception of the inner objects, since different types of reliquaries reflect varying levels of religious significance though they all hold similar *sheli*. This system was fully implemented by Qianlong in his packaging; different forms of packaging had their own significance and functions. The imperial packaging reflected distinct beliefs and status, and even the identities of the emperor's objects, which will come up in later chapters.

1.4.2. The Qing Secret Memorial Packaging: The Operation of Secrecy

The form of packaging determined how the objects enclosed were perceived and approached, an idea well understood by the high Qing emperors. They further exploited the power of packaging to exercise control over their subjects, the emperor's identities, and ultimately politics by using it to determine who could reveal the packed items and how the items would be viewed. This involved another essential element inherent to the practice of packaging: secrecy, as a basic function of many packaging is to conceal objects.

The Qing emperors successfully ran and controlled their governments in ways that relied heavily on perceptions of the exclusivity of access to space and knowledge.[111] Secrecy created favourable conditions for them in gaining such control. The basic concept of secrecy is that it is the act of concealing then revealing, in which numerous social functions are fulfilled.[112] This system suited the Qing emperors' operation of secrecy, this secrecy was achieved through various forms of packaging. In the case of packaging, concealment was just the initial stage, which was typically designed for the succeeding revelation. The purpose of the packaging in Qianlong's collection was to limit access to the hidden object to a small circle of people: a form of secrecy necessarily involves an act of revealing what was obscured.[113] A secret that only one person knows and is not intended for sharing is not a secret.[114]

The Qing secret memorial system was dependent on such rules of secrecy, and packaging was the device by which it was implemented. The secret memorial system was an exclusive communication channel between the Qing emperor and a small

[111] The practice of secrecy here refers to openness and concealment of information, whose tension is an integral part of the framework of state power. As such, secrecy provides a discretionary space for the one who is vested with authority to act efficiently. See Birchall, Clare, 2011, 'Introduction to "secrecy and transparency": the politics of opacity and openness', *Theory, Culture, and Society*, vol. 28, pp. 7-15; Horn, Eva, 2011, 'Logics of political secrecy', *Theory, Culture, and Society*, vol. 28, pp. 103-22.
[112] Mortensen, Eva, and Saxkjær, Sine G. eds., 2015, *Revealing and Concealing in Antiquity: Textual and Archaeological Approaches to Secrecy*, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, p. 7. This theory was developed from Georg Simmel's study, who first proposed the function of secrecy in sociology. Simmel, 1906, pp. 441-98.
[113] Wright, Erin J., 2015, 'Simmel, the cycle of secrecy, and the socio-spatial dimension of concealing and revealing in the Gospel of Mark', in *Revealing and Concealing in Antiquity*, pp. 25–38.
[114] Horn 2011, p. 109.

number of officials. The key of this intelligent communication system was in the secrecy of information provided in memorials. Yongzheng's desire for secrecy was further achieved by the packaging of such memorials. He built a specific box with locks to contain the memorials when submitted, which was called *baoxia* 報匣 (box for secret reports), in the imperial archives.[115] The box was equipped with one or two locks (Fig. 11). These were European locks specially crafted by the imperial workshop so that they could not be easily picked.[116] Each box had only two sets of keys: one for the emperor and the other for the official who owned the box. This ensured that only the emperor and the official who wrote the memorial could open the box and collect the information. Such boxes were usually crafted by a leather workshop (*pizuo* 皮作) and were only bestowed on officials considered eligible to submit secret memorials. Eligible officials each received two to eight boxes.[117] A secret memorial was first enclosed in an envelope, wrapped with rice or yellow paper, and then placed in a box lined with yellow silk (Fig. 12).[118] If the box was damaged or the official used all his boxes, he could use paper folders whilst waiting for new ones to be issued (Fig. 13).

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[115] The First Historical Archives of China and the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong eds., 2005, *Qinggong neiwufu zaobanchu dang'an zonghui* 清宮內務府造辦處檔案總匯 (Complete compilation of archives of the Qing imperial workshops), vol. 1, p. 6.

[116] Yang Qiqiao 楊啟樵, 1981, *Yongzhengdi ji qi mizhe zhidu zhi yanjiu* 雍正帝及其密摺制度之研究 (The Yongzheng Emperor and his secret memorial system), Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, p. 177.

[117] Feng Mingzhu 馮明珠, 2011, *Qinggong dang'an congtan* 清宮檔案叢談 (Collected accounts of the Qing imperial archives), Taipei: The National Palace Museum, p. 7.

[118] For the wrapping method of secret memorials, see Feng Mingzhu, 2004, 'Zhidaole: zhupizouzhezhan zhanpin xuanjie 知道了：硃批奏摺展展品選介 (The selected exhibits of 'Thou Art Understood! Qing Court Communication as Reflected in the Palace Memorials')', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 258, pp. 46-7.

Lastly, the box or folder was wrapped in a piece of yellow satin.[119] All these wrapping materials for secret memorials were provided by the imperial court.[120]

The Qing secret memorial system was a subtle form of concealing and revealing to control information. Packaging was the tool by which the emperor exercised this control and manipulated officials. The emperor was thereby the only one who obtained the most comprehensive information, which enabled him to control the state apparatus and its subjects tightly. The academic consensus is that Kangxi conceived the idea, Yongzheng perfected it and developed a system, and Qianlong maintained the system. Such conclusions are primarily drawn from study of Yongzheng, whose government was the epitome of secret politics. Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定 (1901–95) first stressed that, in addition to official reports,[121] secret memorials provided an alternative path for certain officials—provincial governors, military commanders, and other high-ranking officials—to unofficially correspond with the emperor directly during the early

[119] The formats of secret memorials and their physical packaging has received much attention in the past decades since 2004, when the NPM organised several exhibitions on the subject. In 2004 and 2005, the NPM held the exhibition 'Thou Art Understood! Qing Court Communication as Reflected in the Palace Memorials'. From 2006 to 2009, the permanent exhibition 'Heaven-sent Conveyances: Treasures among Qing Historical Documents' was held. The most recent one was 'Treasures from the National Palace Museum's Collection of Qing Dynasty Historical Documents' in 2017–8.

[120] Feng 2011, p. 8.

[121] The Qing memorial system was based on the one in use during the Ming, where memorials were divided into two types: *tiben* 題本 (routine memorial) and *zouben* 奏本 (palace memorial). The former was for officials to report to the emperor on official affairs, whilst the latter was for private matters. Either form needed to go through the secretariat and grand secretaries for their remarks before being submitted to the emperor.

Qing.[122] These officials were strictly required to write and wrap the memorials by themselves, and the contents could not be revealed to any other person.[123] Also, the emperor kept the identity of memorialists in secret, so that they could not communicate and thus collude with each other. The emperor on his side made 'comments in red (*zhupi* 硃批)' and sealed memorials by himself after reading them and sent them back to the memorialists.[124] Miyazaki points out that such correspondence between the emperor and each official was strictly confidential: the contents could only be known by the two parties and could not be revealed to any third party.[125] Later studies have followed and expanded on Miyazaki's arguments, and analysed substantial numbers of secret memorials to conclude that, this secret communication resulted in a centralised system

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[122] Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定, 1957, 'Yōseitei shuhi yushi kaidai: sono shiryō teki kachi 雍正硃批諭旨解題：その史料的價値 (Notes on Emperor Yongzheng's "instructions in red")', *the Journal of Oriental Researches*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 365–96. Miyazaki was the professor of the Faculty of Letters at Kyoto University. Alongside Professor Abe Takeo 安部健夫 (1903–59), he initiated 'Seminar on Yongzheng's Secret Memorials' (*Yōseitei shuhi yushi kenkyū han* 雍正硃批諭旨研究班) in 1949, which ended in 1971. The seminar studied the Yongzheng period in detail by systematically analysing primary archives, which stimulated much enthusiasm for the study of Yongzheng in Chinese studies at Japanese universities. His 1957 article was one result of the seminar.

[123] Kangxi instructs that, 'any secret memorials must not be written by others. There would be serious consequences if the contents were to be revealed. Therefore, you need to be careful, be extra careful, be very careful, and be extremely careful! 凡奏摺不可令人寫，但有風聲，關係匪淺。小心！小心！小心！小心！' See The First Historical Archives of China ed., 1984, *Kangxi chao hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian* 康熙朝漢文硃批奏摺彙編 (Complete collection of memorials in Chinese with the emperor's comments of the Kangxi period), Beijing: China Archive Press, vol. 1, p. 121.
Yongzheng states that, 'secrecy is the most vital issue for the secret memorials, whose contents must not to be revealed to a third person. 密之一字最為緊要，不可另一人知之。' The First Historical Archives of China ed., 1991, *Yongzheng chao hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian* 雍正朝漢文硃批奏摺彙編 (Complete collection of memorials in Chinese with the emperor's comments of the Yongzheng period), Jiangsu: Jiangsu Ancient Books Press, vol. 12, p. 583.

[124] Feng 2004, pp. 46–55. Kangxi stressed that all secret memorials were, 'sealed and dispatched by myself. Other than myself, not even people nearby can see one word. 凡督、撫、提、鎮密奏之事，皆朕親手密封發回。朕躬之外，即左右之人，亦不得見隻字。' *Shilu guan*, 1964, *Daqing shengzu ren huangdi shilu* 大清聖祖仁皇帝實錄 (Veritable records of the Kangxi Emperor's reign), Taipei: Hualian Press, vol. 221, p. 139.

[125] Miyazaki 1957, p. 377.

whereby all power was convergent on the emperor.[126]

In this context, 'secrecy is exclusively a characteristic of information, and […] it must be examined as a feature of communication.'[127] A secret memorial was packaged with layers of wrapping, and only the memorialist and the emperor had access to the documents inside. Packaging government documents rendered the information esoteric by restricting who could access and view it. Consequently, politics in the mid-Qing Empire operated according to a limited number of political players, and the mechanism of government can be described as secret politics. The secret nature was also reflected in Qianlong's collection, he performed the secrecy operation to control information communicated through the objects.

1.5. Thesis Structure and Methodology

[126] There are many studies related to the Qing secret memorial system, here are some representative examples: Huang Pei 黃培, 1962, 'Yongzheng shidai de mizou zhidu: Qing Shizong zhishu de yiduan 雍正時代的密奏制度：清世宗治術的一端 (The Yongzheng period secret memorial system: the art of Shizong's politics)', *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 17–52; Wu, Silas H. L., 1970, *Communication and Imperial Control in China: Evolution of the Palace Memorial System, 1693–1735*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Chen Jiexian 陳捷先, 1971, 'Yongzheng zhupi yuzhi: kongzhi chenliao de yizhong gongju 雍正硃批諭旨：控制臣僚的一種工具 (The Yongzheng Emperor's comments in red: a device for manipulating officials)', *National Central Library Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 1–9; Zhuang Jifa 莊吉發, 1979, *Qingdai zouzhe zhidu* 清代奏摺制度 (The secret memorial system of the Qing dynasty), Taipei: The National Palace Museum; Yang, Qiqiao, 1981, *Yongzhengdi ji qi mizhe zhidu zhi yanjiu*; Bartlett, Beatrice S., 1991, *Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Qing China, 1723–1820*, Los Angeles: University of California Press.

[127] The notion of Scheppele's secrecy is extracted by Hugh Bowden, see Bowden, H., 2015, 'Concealing and revealing in ancient Greek religion and beyond', in *Revealing and Concealing in Antiquity*, p. 16. For Scheppele's study, see Scheppele, L. Kim, 1988, *Legal Secrets: Equality and Efficiency in the Common Law*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This section outlines how this thesis will proceed as well as the main research materials . Studies of the Qing imperial palace and imperial collecting activity must be based on the huge volume of imperial textual archives as well as the wealth of material objects. Using the extensive imperial archives, a contextual approach to exploring Qianlong's collection will be applied throughout the thesis. The archives that relate most directly to imperial craftsmanship and imperial collections are those from the Qing Imperial Household Department (*Neiwufu* 內務府), which administered all the internal affairs of the imperial household. It was administered by the Qing emperors themselves and was thus inextricably tied to the imperial family affairs– to the extent that one could say it was a manifestation of the emperorship.[128]

There were numerous divisions and workshops under the Imperial Household

[128] The studies of the Qing Imperial Household Department has been increasingly active since more and more imperial archives were largely compiled and published from the 1970s. For the study of its system, see Torbert, Preston, 1977, *The Ch'ing Imperial Household Department: A Study of Its Organization and Principal Functions, 1662-1796*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Qi Meiqin 祁美琴, 1998, *Qingdai neiwufu* 清代內務府 (The Qing Imperial Household Department), Beijing: China Renmin University Press. For the study of servants in the Department, see Chen Guodong 陳國棟, 1982, 'Qingdai neiwufu baoyi sanqi renyuan de fenlei ji qi qixia zuzhi－jianlun yixie youguan baoyi de wenti 清代內務府包衣三旗人員的分類及其旗下組織－兼論一些有關包衣的問題 (The 'boai' of the Imperial Household in Qing Dynasty: its classification and organisation)', *Shih Huo Monthly*, vol. 12, no. 9, pp. 325-43; Chen Guodong, 2012, 'Neiwufu guanyuan de waipai wairen－yu gianlong gongting wenwu gongji zhijian de guanxi 內務府官員的外派、外任－與乾隆宮廷文物供給之間的關係 (Imperial bondservants' provincial positions and their contribution to the acquisition of objects d'Arts for Emperor Qianlong's court)', *Taida Journal of Art History*, vol. 33, pp. 225-69; Huang Lijun 黃麗君, 2019, *Huangdi ji qi baoyi nucai: lun qingdai huangquan yu neiwufu guanliaotizhi* 皇帝及其包衣奴才：論清代皇權與內務府官僚體制 (The emperors and their bondservants: interaction between imperial wills and bureaucratic institution of the Imperial Household Department in the Qing Dynasty), PhD, National Taiwan University. For the study of its finance, see Lai Huimin 賴惠敏, 2014, *Qianlong Huangdi de hebao* 乾隆皇帝的荷包 (Emperor Qianlong's purse: Imperial Household finance in eighteenth century China), Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica.

department that were responsible for the management of the imperial collection and engaged in the manufacturing of imperial artefacts. These divisions all kept records of their proceedings. Amongst them, the *Crafts Archives of the Imperial Workshop* (*huoji dang* 活計檔) and the *Furnishing Archives of Qing Palace* (*chenshe dang* 陳設檔), both of which are day-to-day accounts and are housed in the First Historical Archives in Beijing, are the main archives consulted for this thesis.[129] Some reference is also made to the equally important, which are the *Imperial Decree Archives* (*shangyu dang* 上諭檔), *Archives of the Imperial Palace* (*gongzhong dang* 宮中檔),[130] the *Qing Veritable Records* (*qing shilu* 清實錄), and *Accounting Report Archives of the Inner Court* (*zouxiao dang* 奏銷檔); housed in the First Historical Archives, the NPM, and the Academia Sinica. These archival materials contain valuable sources for Qing imperial administrative activities. Furthermore, Qianlong's catalogues also provide crucial information regarding imperial packaging as well as the collections as a whole, owing to the close relation between imperial catalogues and classification or class rating of items.

[129] *The Furnishing Archives of Qing Palace* recorded the design of stalls and displays as well as the placement of all items in the palace. It also kept a close watch on the movement of these items, which allows us to reconstruct or at least infer the original housing conditions of imperial artworks. *The Crafts Archives of Imperial Workshop* gives a comprehensive account of the day-to-day operations of imperial workshops, involving dates of emperors' edicts, edict contents, manufacture or repair schedule of objects, choice of materials and forms, names of painters or craftsmen, and so on.

[130] *Archives of the Imperial Palace* were the secret memorials between Qing emperors and their officials.

To demonstrate that Qianlong's packaging acted as the frame of his objects, the main body of the thesis, beginning in Chapter Two, will be divided into three chapters. Chapter Two will address Qianlong's interpretation of his collection as shown through the packaging. To facilitate this, several case studies on the roles of imperial packaging at Qianlong's court are presented.

Chapter Three will explore the original contexts of Qianlong's collection, i.e. how the objects were housed. The concept of packaging is further expanded in this chapter through the study of the Forbidden City's spatial structure. This reveals the inherent secrecy of the imperial collection, as Qianlong was very particular about the placement of objects and their positions in relation to the decoration and furnishings of the imperial halls. In most cases, the collection is discussed on the basis of their material medium: paintings, calligraphy, porcelain, jade, and so on and so forth. Although such sub-categorisation may appear clear and systematic, this kind of division nonetheless disrupts the original condition of the emperor's collection, as those objects were not originally arranged and stored based on subject matter or material. Instead, they were interspersed in the halls and pavilions throughout the Forbidden City and other imperial palaces under Qianlong's stringent regulations. The housing of the collection matters because the manner in which the objects were displayed directly relates to the

interpretation of the collection and even the emperor himself as a collector.

Chapter Four will discuss the various styles of imperial packaging exemplified by the Qing curio box, the highlight of imperial packaging. There was great diversity to the packaging styles at the Qing court, which means there were diversified conceptions to approach the objects contained within the collections. Moreover, each packaging style was governed by its own tradition and rules associated with such traditions in China, such as the ways of bookbinding or the packaging of religious objects. Based on this, Qianlong further developed his own approach to controlling interaction between the objects and their spaces. In this way, various objects were combined to form a coherent whole. This will lead to the analysis of the emperor's role in creating multiform packaging, which is key to understanding the function of the curio box.

CHAPTER 2.

BEAUTIFUL HARMONY: LAYERS OF PACKAGING AND THEIR OBJECTS

2.1. Introduction

Qianlong used packaging to make himself a part of the rich, complex histories behind the objects in the imperial collection. By building this personal connection with the objects, Qianlong could use them to both define and defend as many different roles as he could possibly manage. His personal life experiences coloured his interpretation of the objects' histories, and this dictated the identities he then gave them using packaging. With material support for his interpretation of events, Qianlong was much more likely to have the narratives he constructed for the objects not just listened to but believed. Therefore, the emperor is always the key figure to understanding the interpretations conveyed by the packaging, he then actively participated in its design and production to ensure that the narratives it told gained power over their objects.

Packaging guided by the emperor performed the functional role of protecting its contents but more importantly it was used to establish a personal connection with Qianlong. Presenting objects beautifully through the use of strong and secure packaging

showed the emperor's personal respect for them and also for the themes they embodied. Multilayer packaging was used to express this and provide greater protection. 'Multilayer' not only refers to multiple containers or wrappings, as seen in the cases of Chinese reliquaries or the Qing secret memorial box, but also includes the application of a variety of elements to a single container, such as the myriad of decorative elements used by the man of *Chu* to argument his pearl box. Central to this approach was the need to make room for the emperor's inscription or motif on the packaging, which clearly stated and thus also determined the identity of the object enclosed within. Qianlong usually used his own verses, which enabled him to construct strong relationships between each object and the relevant historical event depending on his goal. In this way, the inscription on packaging dictated how the object would be perceived, as the viewer would inevitably read it before removing the packaging. Each layer of packaging or packaging act embodies at least one idea, which contributes to the construction of relationships between the object and historical events, as well as a conceptual dialogue between Qianlong and the object's history. This made him an ever-present figure in the history represented by the collection. In this way, Qianlong's packaging served to frame the imperial collection in the context of his view of Chinese history.

A coherent relationship between the packaging and its object simultaneously determined the relationship between Qianlong's experiences and the ideas represented by the objects. The emperor was careful with the application of layered packaging, since this approach was powerful yet prone to render the object within redundant. This issue is highlighted in the fable quoted at the beginning of Chapter 1: the multiple packaging elements of the pearl box overwhelmed the pearl it contained. Packaging serves the enclosed objects, it requires something to contain in order to qualify as packaging. Therefore, the agency of packaging shall serve its contents, which is what the man of *Chu* failed to practise in the fable. Instead of developing the identity of the pearl it contained, the ostentatious box built and enhanced its own value. The relationship between the packaging and its contents was thus competitive rather than cooperative, and the result was the end of the relationship, as the man of *Zheng* bought the box but returned the pearl. As the box was perceived to be separable from the object within, it was by definition no longer packaging.

The packaging of the imperial collection was particularly vulnerable to jeopardising its relationship with the contents, as valuable or important objects tended to be packed with extra wrappings or ornaments. If the imperial packaging overshadowed its contents, however, this would have compromised Qianlong's connection to the objects

and weakened his control over them. Accordingly, Qianlong was careful when using multilayer packaging, he was well aware of the advantages and disadvantages to the approach.

2.2. The Rationale behind Multilayer Imperial Packaging

Imperial packaging provided a means for Qianlong to construct strong narratives about the collection's objects or establish the contexts required to understand them. In the imperial collection, more than one wrapping material or packaging procedure was used to achieve this for the reasons that multiple layers provided greater protection, as well as more space to develop sophisticated identities for the object. The packaged objects in Qianlong's collection were perceived as significant, thus they required extra protection. In addition, this approach created enough room for Qianlong to explain significance in his own terms.

2.2.1. High Levels of Protection

Qianlong had the imperial collection's objects contained in durable packaging for adequate protection, which was often achieved by layers of wrapping. This reflected the emperor's care for the objects and their subjects. Such packaging commonly

included an internal layer made from soft material and an external layer from hard material. Qianlong tended to order customised packaging for objects in the imperial collection, which means that all the packaging has unique characteristics that relate to specific occasions and subjects depending on the object.[1] The imperial packaging was thus an extension of its contents and represented their significance to the outside world.

The wooden box for the helmet that Qianlong wore at the Grand Parade (*Dayue* 大閱) every three years is a classic example of durable packaging achieved using multiple layers of wrappings (Fig. 1-a). The carefully crafted helmet reflected Qianlong's status as a leader in battle, as well as his ability to fight. The multiple layers have here resulted in a sophisticated packaging structure that protects the elaborate helmet inside. In this way, Qianlong's martial role, and by extension Manchu military strength, was also well protected.[2]

Extra effort was required to package the irregularly shaped parade helmet and its delicate ornaments, which embodied Manchu military strength. The box comprises four sections to better accommodate the shape of the helmet (Fig. 1-b). The fan-shaped base

[1] In the records of archives of imperial workshops, Qianlong was always the leading role in designating styles for packaging objects.
[2] Qianlong always gave detailed instructions for making his parade helmets, including its style, materials, and craftsmen. See ZBCDAZH, vol. 11, 696-9.

was designed to hold the helmet's neck and ear guards, whilst the main body of the helmet sits on a raised cylinder in the middle. Two half cylinders enclosed the main body, and the top was covered with a round lid (Fig. 1-c). The four moveable sections were secured with copper clasps (Fig. 1-d). All the sections apart from the lid are lined with yellow cotton-padded satin to reduce friction between the helmet and the box. The deconstructed design allowed the box to be made according to the irregular shape of the helmet. This design thus ensured that the packaging fit its contents perfectly.

The box for the parade helmet demonstrates secure arrangements for storing an artefact that represented Qianlong's military authority and thus also the strength of the Qing Empire. The Grand Parade was an important imperial event that took place every three years, and gave the emperor the opportunity to both assess and show his military strength.[3] Therefore, he was prudent in presenting himself at this event. Qianlong started to prepare the suit of armour for his first parade soon after he ascended the throne,[4] even though the parade would not be held until three years later.

The emperor's parade helmets are all typical of the Manchu style (Fig. 2-a). A semi-

[3] Waley-Cohen argues that Qing emperors later than Kangxi did not personally participate in campaigns, after which they sought other means to demonstrate their military prowess; the Grand Parade was one of these methods. Waley-Cohen, Joanna, 2006, *The Culture of War in China: Empire and the Military under the Qing Dynasty*, London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 66–88.
[4] ZBCDAZH, vol. 7, pp. 118–9.

circular covering for the ears and neck made of cotton-padded satin is attached to the main helmet body (Fig. 2-b), which in turn is ornamented with dragons in gold filigree, masks showing ferocious animals, floral and beaded decorations, Sanskrit characters, and precious gems (Fig. 2-c). A metal finial that usually held plumes is set into a round base on the top. The link with Sanskrit is significant, as the Sanskrit writing on this helmet was a prayer to *Guanyin* 觀音—the Chinese name for the bodhisattva *Avalokiteśvara*—who was at the time believed to have been reincarnated in the form of the Dalai Lama.[5] The three lines of Sanskrit, that contained the key teachings of Guanyin (*Xinzhou zunian Guanshiyin pusa* 心咒詛念觀世音菩薩),[6] may have been a means for the Manchu rulers to express respect for the Tibetan leader,[7] whilst also acting as a symbol of the Qing Empire's size and cultural plurality (Fig. 2-c).[8] The helmet is shown in use during the Grand Parade in a portrait of Qianlong, which similarly indicates the emperor's desire to present himself as the supreme commander of the Qing's armed forces (Fig. 3).

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[5] Hevia, James, 1993, 'Lamas, emperors, and rituals: political implications in Qing imperial ceremonies', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, p. 250-1.

[6] The translation was done by the lamas from Shenghua Temple (*Shenghua si* 聖化寺) and Yonghe Lamasery (*Yonghe gong* 雍和宮) during the Daoguang reign (r. 1820-50), as the emperor was baffled by the Sanskrit characters on the parade helmets. See Hu Jianzhong 胡建中, 1989, 'Qingdai wu chao huangdi de jiazhou 清代五朝皇帝的甲冑 (Five Qing emperors' suits of armour)', *Forbidden City*, vol. 2, pp. 36–41.

[7] Manchu emperors incorporated diverse ethnic groups into the Qing Empire and governed them with pluralism. Waley-Cohen, Joanna, 1998, 'Religion, war, and empire-building in eighteenth-century China', *International History Review*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 336-52; Waley-Cohen, 1996, 'Commemorating war in eighteenth-century China', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 869-99.

[8] Waley-Cohen points out that the tradition of Sanskrit inscription derived from Inner Asia and was related to the idea of universal rulership, see Waley-Cohen 2006, p. 73. The Manchu emperors believed in and promoted Tibetan Buddhism, and they were esteemed as the incarnations of *Manjusri*. Qianlong further upgraded himself to Cakravarti King, the Sanskrit term for the universal ruler.

The combination of a variety of wrapping materials provided the collection's objects with bespoke protection. In particular, the multilayer arrangement comprising an outer wooden box with an internal layer of silk was ideal. Whilst the silk padding provided objects with some protection against damage, wooden boxes are even more durable, and they provided both the silk and the object with substantial protection. The boxes made of red sandalwood (*zitan* 紫檀) and Chinese cedar (*nanmu* 楠木) are the most enduring of all in the imperial collection. According to the imperial archives, these were popular materials for packaging at Qianlong's court. He favoured Chinese cedar in particular,[9] and it was used to make many of the containers for his parade helmets, including the one discussed above. During the Qing period, Chinese cedar at the time was one of the most valuable types of timber, and it was widely used for furniture and building materials in the palace.[10] It was known for its properties that repelled pests and insects, which had led the imperial court to monopolise its exploitation and consumption of the wood from the early Qing.[11]

During the Qing, Chinese cedar was abundant in the provinces of Sichuan, Hubei,

[9] Prince Yuntao 允祹 et al., 1983, *Qinding Daqing huidian* 欽定大清會典 (Collected statutes by imperial endorsement of the Great Qing dynasty), Taipei: The Commercial Press, *juan* 75, p. 357.
[10] RZRHDSL, vol. 1, p. 664.
[11] *Shilu guan*, 1964, *Daqing shizu zhang huangdi shilu* 大清世祖章皇帝實錄 (Veritable records of the Shunzhi reign), Taipei: Hualian Press, vol. 3, p. 122.

Hunan, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang. Among these regions, the highest quality Chinese cedar wood was found in the forests of Sichuan, where the feared miasma (*zhangqi* 瘴氣) was thought to drastically decrease one's life expectancy, and deadly creatures like snakes and tigers endangered any logging expedition. These factors rendered exploiting Sichuan's resources both dangerous and expensive. A saying popular among the people of Sichuan attests to the hazards associated with gathering timber: "Only five hundred of the one thousand people who originally entered the forest would leave; the risks to people obtaining timber are thus palpable."[12] Accordingly, the price of Chinese cedar timber was extremely high, and Kangxi placed restrictions on its usage in 1667 to alleviate the burden of gathering it,[13] eventually banning its exploitation completely in 1686 to prevent the deaths of woodcutters.[14] Yongzheng followed his father's principle, maintaining that Chinese cedar could be substituted with pinewood in the event of timber shortages.[15]

However, perhaps because no other timber could match the high quality of Chinese cedar in Qianlong's mind, it was extensively used at his court for packaging, in addition

[12] "入山一千，出山五百，哀可知也。" Zheng Zhen 鄭珍 and Mo Youzhi 莫友芝, 2006, *Zunyi fu zhi* 遵義府志 (Local gazetteer of Zunyi), Chengdu: Bashu Press, vol. 18, p. 1560.
[13] RZRHDSL, vol, p. 498. Due to the solid historical research and elegant style of writing, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) praised this prefectural gazetteer as the greatest local gazetteer ever written.
[14] Ibid, vol. 3, p. 277.
[15] *Shilu guan*, 1964, *Daqing shizong xian huangdi shilu* 大清世宗憲皇帝實錄 (Veritable records of the Yongzheng reign), Taipei: Hualian Press, vol. 2, p. 69.

to other uses.[16] Despite the difficult conditions for loggers and a shortage of Chinese cedar, the emperor rejected substitution with other timbers and pressured the officials of the Imperial Household Department into procuring cedar for packaging all kinds of objects, such as the veritable records of the Qing dynasty.[17] The specifics of how Qianlong dictated the records be packaged is examined in thorough detail in Chapter 3.

The packaging presented in this section was to protect their contents from decay or damage, which was often achieved by multiple layers, as well as the use of fine materials with pest-repellent or preservative qualities. Qianlong had a concept of every object's significance, which he used to inform the design of the packaging. For instance, every layer and component of the complex box for his parade helmet works towards the common aim of ensuring the helmet's security. In this way, Qianlong was rigorously following the principle that packaging exists to serve its contents, and this is also evident in cases when packaging was required to play a more active and complicated role.

2.2.2. Defining the Character of Objects

[16] The use of Chinese cedar was recorded throughout the craft archives of Qianlong's imperial workshops. For example, see ZBCDAZH, vol. 8, p. 314–5.
[17] Ibid, vol. 7, p. 654.

Qianlong's packaging was often required to go beyond simple protection and actively establish the identities or characters of objects at his court. Such information was conveyed through the packaging's form, materials, decoration, and so forth. Viewers' perceptions of the objects were built on the identities that the emperor granted them, and these were established through narratives that were expressed using their packaging. Multilayer packaging thus enabled Qianlong to provide more context to an object or describe its complex characteristics in more detail. This is because different wrapping components and layers allowed more than one idea to be expressed, thus the emperor had more room to clarify his interpretations.

In many instances, Qianlong reformed pre-existing packaging to interpret objects that he felt a particular connection to. This is exemplified by his packaging of the *Sutra of Manjusri's Commendation of the Buddha's Dharma-body* (*Wenshu zan Fofashen li jing* 文殊贊佛法身禮經) (Fig. 4-a). Qianlong usually presented sutras concerning the bodhisattva *Manjusri* (*Wenshu pusa* 文殊菩薩) in packaging that blended features of typical sutra containers and relic packaging. Religious objects were considered to be imbued with profound teachings; thus, they required more wrappings to establish their sacredness, as well as the nature of the realms they occupied. The style of such packaging was commonly distinctive and had undergone extensive development over

generations to become an established form of packaging for similar objects. Therefore, it was important for Qianlong to maintain the basic form, so that the sacred status of the objects remained explicit.

Qianlong modified many styles of packaging for sacred artefacts to integrate his interpretation of the objects. The gilded copper box for the *Manjusri* sutra has a glass cover lined with coloured paper. The box housed the sutra written in four languages: Manchu, Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian, which was written on rectangular gold-powdered paper pages stacked atop one another (Fig. 4-b). The sutra was enclosed by two red sandalwood boards on which the sutra's Sanskrit title was executed in gold. The inner sides of the two boards are covered with three layers of silk sutra screens (*jinglian* 經簾), which have been embroidered with the eight treasures, representing the eight paths of Buddhist practice.[18] The entire box rests on a gilded copper pedestal that is commonly known as a Sumeru throne (*Xumi zuo* 須彌座), which represents the legendary Mount Sumeru (*Xumi shan* 須彌山) from Buddhist mythology.[19] The

[18] The eight treasures are a Buddhist suite of eight sacred teaching tools, including a canopy, pair of fish, a vase, lotus, conch, endless knot, flag, and the wheel of the law. Each tool symbolises its own intellectual qualities, together representing auspiciousness, consummation, and joyful speech. The motif of the eight treasures is commonly used in the art of Tibetan Buddhism. For detailed interpretations of these eight symbols, see Fisher, Robert, 1993, *Buddhist Art and Architecture*, London: Thames and Hudson, pp. 19–28; McArthur, Meher, 2002, *Reading Buddhist Art: An Illustrated Guide to Buddhist Signs*, London: Thames and Hudson.

[19] Mount Sumeru is a sacred mountain in Buddhist cosmology and is considered to be the centre of the universe, being a symbol of reverence and consistency.

Sumeru-style base is commonly used in Chinese architecture and sculpture (Fig. 5).[20] The four upper corners of the supporting throne have right-angled balustrades, which are high enough so that their upper corners lie flush with the upper board of the sutra. Finally, the cover is made of a gilded copper frame and five glass panels. Each panel is lined with a piece of coloured paper on which patterns depicting the eight treasures, lotuses, and bats are depicted. Lotuses reference Buddha's seat, whilst the word for bat in Chinese is a homonym for happiness.

Qianlong followed conventional practice for containing sutras by binding the sutra in the ancient Indian style, but he also created new elements and remodelled established forms of packaging. The sutra was bound in the ancient Indian style known as palm-leaf binding (*beiye jia* 貝葉夾).[21] This involved all boards that the constituted the sutra being punched with one or several holes so that they could be joined with thread. They were then sandwiched between two wooden protectors (Fig. 6). At the imperial court,

[20] The Sumeru-style base is a symbolic representation of the legendary mountain. See Fong, C. Wen, and Ho, Wai-kam, 1996, 'Some Buddhist Images', in Fong Wen, and Watt, C. Y. James eds., *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, pp. 201–18; Eichman, Shawn, and Little, Stephen, 2000, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 182–4.

[21] In ancient South Asia, sutras were written on dried talipot palm leaves, a popular writing material at the time. The leaves were trimmed into slender shapes and dried, then texts were scratched into the dried leaves with needles, and pigments were then spread over the leaves. The pigment would settle in the markings and remain after the leaves were wiped clean. As dried leaves were fragile, the slender pages were sandwiched between two boards for protection. Leaves and boards were punched with holes and threaded together using string. See Yang Yongde 楊永德, 2008, *Zhongguo gudai shuji zhuangzheng* 中國古代書籍裝幀 (Traditional binding styles of Chinese books), Beijing: People's Fine Arts Publishing House, p. 88.

this form of sutra packaging was refined into an elaborate and multi-layered structure. Kangxi's treatment of the *Tibetan Dragon Sutra* (*Longzang jing* 龍藏經) is one of the most exquisite forms of packaging produced by the Qing court (Fig. 7-a).[22] The sutra comprises a total of 108 cases, each of them wrapped in no fewer than six layers.[23] Around 300—500 palm leaves were inscribed with Tibetan script using gold ink, then enclosed between a pair of inner sutra boards (Fig. 7-b). The two sides of each board are inlaid with jewels and decorated with colourful figures, Buddhist motifs, and inscriptions (Fig. 7-c).[24] The inner side is further covered with five layers of embroidered sutra screens dyed in in five different colours—blue, yellow, red, white, and green—representing the Five Buddhas.[25] Two cotton cushions were placed

[22] The *Tibetan Dragon Sutra* contains 1,057 pages of scripture. Grand Empress Dowager Zhaosheng (*Zhaosheng huangtaihou* 昭聖皇太后, 1613–88), Kangxi's beloved grandmother, commissioned the work in 1667. The project took two years to complete, involving 117 monks to transcribe the scriptures and 371,175 silver taels worth of materials in total. For a detailed study of the sutra, see Hu Jinshan 胡進杉 et al., 2007, *Longzang jing: tuxiang zhi bu* 龍藏經：圖像之部 (Tibetan Dragon Sutra: Tibetan-language edition, hand-copied in gold ink Kangxi reign), Taipei: The National Palace Museum; Feng Mingzhu 馮明珠 and Lu Xueyan 盧雪燕 eds., 2015, *Shusheng yinyuan: neifu nijin xieben cangwen Longzang jing tansuo* 殊勝因緣：內府泥金寫本藏文龍藏經探索 (A wondrous occasion predestined: unveiling the Kangxi Kangyur), Taipei: The National Palace Museum; Song Zhaolin 宋兆霖 ed., 2016, *An mani bami hong: yuancang Zangchuan Fojiao wenwu* 唵嘛呢叭咪吽：院藏藏傳佛教文物 (Om mani padme hum: Tibetan Buddhist art in the National Palace Museum), Taipei: The National Palace Museum.

[23] For a thorough study of the *Tibetan Dragon Sutra*'s packaging, see the Department of Books and Documents, 2011, 'Longcang－yuancang dacangjing tezhan 龍藏－院藏大藏經特展 (The special exhibition of the Tibetan Dragon Sutra)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 335, pp. 18-36.

[24] The decoration on the upper board comprises motifs from the *Kālacakra tantra* (Collection of 10 powerful elements), including three pestle images and seven Sanskrit scripts. These represent the world of sentient beings (*mijie* 迷界) composed of the past, the present, and the future. By reciting this tantra, all living creatures were capable of separating themselves from the world of sentient beings. In contrast, the lower board was decorated with vajra, a mystical weapon that symbolises the destruction of life's vexations by the enlightened mind. See Hu 2007.

[25] The Five Great Buddhas are Amoghasiddhi to the north, Akshobhya to the east, Ratnasambhava to the south, Amitābha to the west, and Vairocana in the centre. Ibid.

between the main body of the sutra and its inner boards as a buffer. Also, a white *hada* 哈達, a piece of fabric that symbolises purity and prosperity, was put over the top of the upper board.

The collection of manuscripts, along with the pair of inner sutra boards, were then wrapped sequentially in three pieces of yellow cloth; the first was made of silk, the second cotton, and the final one satin (Figure 7-d). The outermost cloth was decorated with dragon patterns, a long, colourful ribbon was attached to the upper right corner (Fig. 7-e). This was used to secure the packed sutra (Fig. 7-f). This stack was then sandwiched between two red-lacquered outer sutra boards and bound using a piece of coloured cloth (Fig. 7-g). The external faces of the two outer sutra boards bear inscriptions of incantations to the bodhisattva Guanyin and salutations to the triple gem (Fig. 7-h). Finally, the entire stack was wrapped in a yellow quilt, which was secured with a cord (Fig. 7-i). The complex packaging and variety of rich materials used to package the *Tibetan Dragon Sutra* thus acted to stress its religious significance in a way that would not have been achieved using only one layer.

In contrast to Kangxi's treatment of the *Tibetan Dragon Sutra*, Qianlong reduced the number of layers to package the *Sutra of Manjusri's Commendation of the Buddha's*

Dharma-body, and added aspects that are more typically seen in use for the packaging of relics. Although Qianlong maintained the basic structure of palm-leaf binding, he had the outermost container made in the form of a house-shaped reliquary. As already discussed in Chapter 1, sutras were regarded as the relics of the Buddha's dharma-body by Buddhists in North China, so many were deposited in pagodas and worshipped.[26] Qianlong developed this idea further, however, by enshrining the sutra that *Manjusri* expressing admiration for the Buddha's peaceful and serene nature in a container usually reserved for the Buddha's relics, whilst also displaying the wealth of the Qing Empire. The sutra box was, like reliquaries, richly decorated with precious materials from a variety of far-away places, such as coral, lapis lazuli, and turquoise.

Two other boxes made to contain other copies of the *Sutra of Manjusri's Commendation of the Buddha's Dharma-body* demonstrate that the emperor designed this packaging style specifically for such sutras (Figs 8 and 9), as these also have railings along the upper border of their Sumeru throne-style bases and bear a stronger resemblance to the house-shaped reliquary (Fig. 10). By enshrining the sutra in reliquary-style containers, its status was increased significantly, and Qianlong ensured that major temples throughout the empire acknowledged this by sending the sutra and its packaging to

[26] Shen 2002.

them on procession.[27]

The packaging of *Manjusri*'s sutra demonstrates that Qianlong had singled it out from other sutras for special treatment, which may be the result of the bodhisattva Manjusri's significant status at the Qing court. The Manchu emperors, especially Qianlong, were considered to be incarnations of *Manjusri*,[28] and they were addressed as the '*Manjusri*-emperor' in diplomatic letters from Tibet.[29] Qianlong also liked to be represented as *Manjusri* in thangka (*tangka* 唐卡) (Fig.11),[30] a genre of Tibetan Buddhist painting. Qianlong thus seems to have cultivated a close connection with this particular bodhisattva, and the packaging of the *Manjusri* sutra related directly to his personal image. He supervised the design for packaging the sutra personally, specifying the form, materials to be used, and the craftspeople who would make it. In one instance, several

[27] ZBCDAZH, vol. 53, p. 137.

[28] For the connection between the Qing emperors and the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, as well as communication between the Qing Empire and Tibet, see Hevia 1993, pp. 243–78; Wang Junzhong 王俊中, 1997, '*Manzhou yu wenshu de yuanyuan ji Xizang zhengjiao sixiang zhong de lingxiu yu fopusa* 「滿洲」與「文殊」的淵源及西藏政教思想中的領袖與佛菩薩 (The relationship between "Manchu" and "Mañjuśrī" and a discussion of "leaders" and "bodhisattvas" in Tibetan politico-religious history)', *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History of the Academica Sinica*, vol. 28, pp. 89–132; Chen Junlong 陳俊隆, 2008, *Qianlong huangdi yunyong Wenshu pusa huashen celue yu Xizang diqu de zhili* 乾隆皇帝運用文殊菩薩化身策略與西藏地區的治理 (The use of the counterpart of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in the governance of Tibet by Emperor Qianlong), MA., National Cheng Kung University.

[29] *Jamyang gong ma* referred to the '*Manjusri* emperor' in Tibetan, the appellation was customarily used to address the Qing emperor in Tibetan documents from Kangxi onwards.

[30] There are seven paintings in which Qianlong was portrayed in the role of *Manjusri*, all are in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. For a study of the emperor's penchant for dressing up as the bodhisattva, see Kahn 1971, pp. 168-90; Farquhar, David, 1978, 'Emperor as bodhisattva in the governance of the Qing empire', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 5-34; Ge Wanzhang 葛婉章, 1989, 'Zangchuan Fojiao meishu tuxiang de youguan wenti 藏傳佛教美術圖像的有關問題 (Questions regarding artistic images in Tibetan Buddhism)', *A Collection of Essays in Tibetan Studies*, vol. 2, pp. 253–87.

staff members were fined half a year's salary for miscounting the number of sutra screens.[31]

The amount of effort that Qianlong invested in packaging objects in his collection was equivalent to that exerted by the man of *Chu* for his pearl. This is particularly the case as imperial packaging involved multiple elements and layers, as well as luxurious materials. Qianlong's packaging, however, does not overshadow the objects it contains, because all the packaging elements serve to describe and define the characters of the objects, rather than promote the value of the packaging itself. The case of the *Manjusri* sutra is one of many examples where the emperor was not content with established practices and took a proactive role in shaping the imperial collection by designing the packaging to emphasise aspects related to his personal identity that he considered important.

2.3. Packaging the Packaged: Wrapping with Words and Images

Qianlong tended to integrate his image into objects' histories by writing inscriptions on their packaging. The imperial packaging served to provide space for Qianlong to make statements about subjects related to the objects and link them to broader themes of

[31] ZBCDAZH, vol. 44, pp. 563–8.

import. This enabled him to dictate interpretations of the objects' histories and make himself an integral part of them. As many objects were already packaged in established forms when Qianlong inherited the collection, he often added new layers or adjusted the original packaging to accommodate his inscriptions. Doing so created extra space for the emperor to interact with the objects and their histories. He could also invite political associates to justify his statements by including their compositions too. Inscriptions were a powerful and effective means of giving voices to the objects within, as the audience's perceptions of the objects was affected and even shaped by Qianlong's statements. As a result, not only were the objects indivisible from their packaging, but the emperor also came to be part of their histories. He therefore acted as a bridge between the objects and their packaging.

2.3.1. Cultural Layers of Packaging

The inscriptions on packaging structured how viewers 'read' the objects inside. In addition to their already substantial packaging, Qianlong gave Tibetan wooden bowls new boxes, which served to bear verses he himself had written. Whereas previously the bowls had merely been fine dining utensils, through Qianlong's inscriptions they became political representations of the emperor's connection to the events, places, and peoples associated with them. The dates on the inscriptions are typically for the date of

composition rather than that of engraving. Qianlong often used the same verse for objects that entered his collection at different times, which enabled him to redefine these objects by adding inscriptions to packaging.

One object that was packaged in an established style when Qianlong had it was a type of wooden bowl from Tibet known as *Rtsa ba rdzab ya* (*Zhabu zhaya* 札卜札雅) (Fig. 12-a). These bowls were usually sent as annual tribute from the Tibetan aristocracy, along with containers in the forms of gilt iron cases lined with silk (Figs 12-b and 12-c). Such bowls have been an important part of daily life, as Tibetans used them for eating and drinking (Fig. 13), it is thus esteemed highly in Tibet. The precious material used to make the style of bowl rendered it appropriate gifts to send a Qing emperor. As a result, the bowls appeared annually as among the gifts presented to the Qing emperor at the New Year greetings.[32]

The bowls of the highest quality were made of root burls of trees that grew next to salt lakes in Tibet. The root burls were considered stronger than those on other parts of the tree, and the high-quality bowls made of them were thought to possess detoxification

[32] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Third Collection*, *juan* 1, p. 4.

properties.[33] Qianlong regarded the bowls as the most precious items sent from Tibet.[34] The grain of root burl wood was also considered the finest, with the flame pattern the most sought-after (Fig. 12-a). Objects made from root burls were rare and hence pricier than those made from other types of burls.[35]

Qianlong also admired the containers for the wooden bowls. The gilt iron cases were called *phor shubs* (*puxiu* 普修) in Tibetan, which refers to a bowl sheath lined with satin.[36] The use of bowl cases was confined to the Tibetan elite and high-ranking officials, and the cases' decorations depended on the rank of the individual who owned it. The bowls presented to the Qing emperors were specially packaged in round gilt iron cases engraved with openwork dragon and floral designs and inlaid with turquoise (Fig. 12-c). Qianlong appreciated the bowls very much and frequently used them to drink butter tea. The painting 'Qianlong on a Hunting Trip' depicts the emperor having a

[33] Wooden bowls were not only dining utensils but status symbols in Tibetan culture. Many Tibetans practised nomadic lifeways in response to the natural conditions of the surrounding environment, which usually involved the use of available resources. Traditionally, most people would carry wooden bowls for eating and drinking. Though such a basic object might be considered merely simple and practical in nature, the craftmanship involved in making them was elegant and refined, demonstrating the skill and ingenuity of nomadic craftspeople. Bowls made from special woods were thought to protect the human body against poisons and cardiovascular diseases, and these became treasures that were presented to high-ranking recipients, such as the Qing emperors. The inclusion of wooden bowls in tribute from Tibet became a convention from the reign of Kangxi. See Cai Meifen 蔡玫芬, 1999, *Huangquan yu Fofa: Zangchuan Fojiao faqi* 皇權與佛法：藏傳佛教法器 (The monarchy and its Buddhist way: Tibetan-Buddhist ritual implements), Taipei: The National Palace Museum, p. 73.

[34] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Third Collection*, *juan*. 1, p. 3.

[35] He Ning 和寧 ed., 1966, *Xizang zhi* 西藏誌 (General history of Tibet), Taipei: Wenhai Publishing House, p. 125.

[36] Lin Huan 林歡, 2015, 'Gugong bowuyuan cang Zhabu zhaya muqi 故宮博物院藏扎卜扎雅木器 (*Rtsa ba rdzab ya* wooden vessels in the Palace Museum of Beijing)', *Cultural Relics*, vol. 4, p. 60.

dinner party after hunting (Fig. 14-a), where three imperial guards across from the emperor are carefully removing a Tibetan wooden bowl from its case to make tea. The tea would be made using butter stored in a gold *mdong mo* (visible on the lower left), a butter jar known as *duomu* 多穆 in Chinese (Fig.14-b).

Qianlong was deeply attached to the materials and stories behind these bowls, which led him to add another layer of packaging that he could add inscriptions to (Fig. 15). The emperor had many Tibetan wooden bowls and their cases packed in red sandalwood boxes on which verses about the bowls were inscribed,[37] since the openwork sheath left no room for him to perform the operation. This extra packaging served to build a strong connection between the emperor and the issues or subjects embodied by the object. The verses he chose to inscribe on the box corresponded with his packaging form of wooden bowls, which then influenced how the object should be approached and perceived.

Qianlong composed nine verses about Tibetan wooden bowls,[38] among which two

[37] ZBCDAZH, microfilm box 154.

[38] 'Ode to a Wooden Mug' (*Yong mu yuzi* 詠木盂子) was composed in the twenty-second year of Qianlong's reign (1757), see Aisin Gioro Hongli, 1983–6, *Qing Gaozong yuzhishi erji* 清高宗御製詩二集 (The second collection of Qianlong's poetry), *juan* 73, recorded in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 1304, pp. 28–9; 'Ode to the *Rtsa ba rdzab ya* Wooden Bowl' (*Yong Zhabu zhaya muwan* 詠扎卜扎雅木椀) was composed in 1760, see Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Third Collection*, *juan* 1, vol. 1305, p. 3; 'The Mug Made from Tree Root' (*Mugen yu* 木根盂) was composed in 1763, see ibid, *juan* 31, p. 9; 'Verse on the Wooden Bowl' (*Ti muwan* 題木椀) was composed in 1766, see ibid, *juan* 53, p. 22; 'Ode to the Wooden

works were repeatedly inscribed on the boxes or printed on the bowls themselves (Fig. 16). The composition 'Ode to the *Rtsa ba rdzab ya* Wooden Bowl' (*Yong Zhabu zhaya muwan* 詠扎卜扎雅木椀), written in 1760, is the most commonly seen carved into the boxes.[39] Aside from referencing the social context and beauty of the wooden bowl, Qianlong makes several allusions to historical events in this verse. He first praises the bowl's materials and the delicate structure of its container. In the second section, he explains that such bowls were dining utensils used by Tibetan lamas, and they were given as regular tribute to the Qing court. The third section further expresses his admiration for the bowls' simple but elegant shape, stating that the skilled craftsmanship has produced an object as precious as flowers from the realm of the fairies.[40]

In the last section, the emperor makes a sudden turn, relating the bowl to the state's territory and the virtue of frugality. This is the key point of the verse. He made an

Bowl' (*Yong muwan* 詠木椀) was composed in 1776, see Aisin Gioro Hongli, 1983–6, *Qing Gaozong yuzhishi siji* 清高宗御製詩四集 (The fourth collection of Qianlong's poetry), *juan* 40, recorded in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 1307, p. 29; 'Verse on the Wooden Bowl' (*Ti muwan* 題木椀) was composed in 1777, see ibid, *juan* 41, p. 29; 'The Wooden Mug Made of Gomuti Palm' (*Guanglang muyu* 栊榔木盂) was composed in 1780, see ibid, vol. 1308, *juan* 76, p. 9; 'Ode to the Wooden Bowl' (*Yong muwan* 詠木椀) was composed in 1782, see ibid, *juan* 85, p. 5; 'Ode to the Wooden Bowl' (*Yong muwan* 詠木椀) was composed in 1786, see Aisin Gioro Hongli, 1983–6, *Qing Gaozong yuzhishi wuji* 清高宗御製詩五集 (The fifth collection of Qianlong's poetry), *juan* 19, recorded in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 1309, p. 5.

[39] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *the Third Collection*, *juan* 1, vol. 1305, p. 3.

[40] In another imperial poem about the Tibetan bowl—'Verse on the Wooden Bowl'—Qianlong again stresses the refined form, saying that even bowls of Khotan jade, which he was very fond of, paled by comparison with the wooden bowl. Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Fourth Collection*, *juan* 41, vol. 1307, p. 29.

allusion to the Record of Tributaries (*Xianbin lu* 咸賓錄)—a 1591 literary work on the geography of the Ming dynasty's territory[41]—to boast about his imperial authority over Tibet. In addition, the simplicity of the Tibetan bowls is used to link Qianlong to the modest lifestyles of ancient sage rulers, which is typically how he presented himself in these inscriptions. According to classical Chinese texts, the legendary emperors Yao and Shun (c. 2333-2184 BC) ate and drank from unadorned earthenware vessels,[42] and their simple lives and self-discipline was praised by later dynasties.[43] By using a simple wooden bowl that was as plain as earthenware, Qianlong was implying that he was comparable to or greater than the sage rulers, whilst the bowl represented the fruitful products of his much larger empire.

This self-approving verse was inscribed on the top of the box lid—the outermost piece of packaging— thus it gave the viewer an initial and explicit impression of the object inside. It was expected that the inscription would be read before the bowl or case were examined. After Qianlong's description, the exquisite gilt case with dragon designs

[41] The *Record of Tributaries* was written by Luo Yuejiong 羅曰褧 (fl. 1573-1620). This lists the characteristics of foreign countries that neighboured China and the groups that lived in them. The information about Tianzhu 天竺 (India) is most detailed. See Shin, Leo K., 2006, *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 289–90.

[42] Ban Gu 班固, 1981, *Hanshu* 漢書 (The book of Han), *juan* 62, Taipei: Dingwen Book Company, vol. 4, p. 37.

[43] Fan Ye 范曄, 1997, *Houhan shu* 後漢書 (The book of Later Han), *juan* 27, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, p. 314.

would be observed next, then finally the wooden bowl. Throughout the viewer's interaction with the bowl and its packaging, they would draw parallels between the Ming and Qing empires, and Qianlong and the ancient sage rulers, as directed by the verse.

When the viewer finally reached the wooden bowl, another inscription on the bowl itself voiced some deeper thoughts that directed how to appreciate the object. Qianlong was not satisfied with only one inscription on the packaging, and he often had verses inscribed on the bowl's base as well. Sometimes the outer box and the bowl within were inscribed with the same verse (Fig. 16). Other times, the box and bowl were engraved with different verses. The 'Ode to the Wooden Bowl' (*Yong muwan* 詠木椀)—the other verse the emperor often had inscribed on the packaging of Tibetan wooden bowls—is often found on the underside rim of the bowl's foot (Fig. 17);[44] alongside characters denoting that the bowl is for the 'imperial use of Qianlong' (*Qianlong yuyong* 乾隆御用).

The structure of this shorter verse is identical to the longer one on the outermost box. The first three verses also discusses the characteristics of the wooden bowl, saying that

[44] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Fifth Collection*, *juan* 19, vol. 1309, p. 5.

it is made of root burls and was thus considered have detoxifying properties. However, Qianlong makes reference to a drought in Hubei and Anhui provinces in the last verse. This is probably the drought that affected the empire during Qianlong's fiftieth year (1785), the year before this verse was composed. A memorial by Wu Yuan 吳垣 (1719–86), a provincial governor of Hubei (1785–6),[45] during the drought reported that the region's subjects could only assuage their hunger with grass roots and tree bark.[46] The emperor therefore associated the Tibetan wooden bowl—made from tree roots—with the plight of his starving subjects. Through this verse, the fine bowl suddenly becomes an expression of a monarch's sympathy for his suffering subjects. In some cases, this verse is also used for the inscription on the outer box (Fig. 18).

To summarise, Qianlong's inscriptions were an indispensable part of packaging in the imperial collection, as they shaped the identity of the object and structured viewers' perceptions of it. For the already well-packaged Tibetan wooden bowl, the addition of an outer sandalwood box made space for Qianlong to build a dialogue with the object to define his historical and political status. In this way, he exploited various aspects of the objects and their histories to reference contemporary or historical events, which

[45] Wu Yuan fell sick and died from overwork in drought-stricken Hubei. Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽 et al., 1977, *Qingshi gao* 清史稿 (Draft history of the Qing), *juan* 321, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, vol. 36, p. 89.
[46] Wang Jinxiang 王金香, 1996, 'Qianlong nianjian zaihuang shulue 乾隆年間災荒述略 (Outline of famines during the Qianlong reign)', *Studies in Qing History*, vol. 4, p. 96.

served to project the image of himself as a sage-like ruler.

2.3.2. Generational Layers of Inscription

Qianlong was not the only Qing emperor who had a taste for adding inscriptions to objects or packaging. Many objects in the imperial collection had been inscribed before Qianlong added his own, in which cases the aim of Qianlong's packaging was to establish a direct dialogue with the previous inscription. In such cases, the verses he composed were intended specifically to be inscribed on such packaging. As a result, Qianlong's inscriptions and the packaging they adorned could not be dissociated from the object, as such inscriptions would become unintelligible out of context.

An example of this is a gourd brush holder on which Kangxi had already inscribed a verse (Fig. 19-a). Qianlong had a box made for it, which he had engraved with an inscription that establishes a dialogue with his grandfather. Although Kangxi's inscription was made on the object itself rather than on a container, this is another example of Qianlong adding new packaging to bear his inscription and interact with what had previously been written. Qianlong's box and Kangxi's brush holder were thus two participants in a conversation mediated by the object. The box also served to transform viewers' interpretations of the brush holder from a mere writing utensil to a

medium connecting Kangxi and his adoring grandson.

Both Qianlong's grandfather and father had their own preferences when adding inscriptions to objects in the imperial collection. Unlike Qianlong, Kangxi and Yongzheng tended to use excerpts from the Chinese classics and poetry instead of verses they had personally written. The gourd brush holder was inscribed with a poem entitled 'Praise for Writing Brushes' (*Bi zan* 筆贊) by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324) (Fig. 19-a), a Chinese writer and geomancer in the Eastern Jin period (317–420).[47] In the poem, Guo praises brushes for being a powerful writing tool that contribute to social and cultural enlightenment.[48] The only contribution by Kangxi to the text is the addition of a footnote explaining that Guo's poem references another poem by Chenggong Sui 成公綏 (231–73), an earlier scholar. The theme of Guo's poem makes it appropriate for having been inscribed on a brush holder. The underside of the brush holder bears the inscription 'Its beauty is admired by Kangxi' (*Kangxi shangwan* 康熙賞玩).

[47] Guo Pu is mostly known for being the first commentator of the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shan hai jing* 山海經), a famous text that combines legends and mythic geography. See Nicoll-Johnson, Evan Vincent, 2017, *Fringes and Seams: Boundaries of Erudition in Early Medieval China*, PhD, University of California Los Angeles, pp. 269–71.

[48] See Yan Kejun 嚴可均 ed., 1982, *Quan Jinwen* 全晉文 (Complete Jin prose), recorded in *Quan shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (The complete prose of high antiquity, the Three Eras, Qin, Han, Three States, and Six Dynasties), *juan* 121, Taipei: World Publishing, vol. 5, p. 371.

The beauty of the brush holder was also appreciated by Qianlong in his reminiscences of Kangxi. By packaging the holder and ordering some close ministers to contribute statements on his personal memories, Qianlong thus connected himself to Kangxi, Guo Pu, and Chenggong Sui through packaging. A long yellow slip of paper on which the emperor recorded the gourd brush holder's entire history was folded and placed in the brush holder (Fig. 19-b). Both the verse inscribed on the wooden container, 'Ode to the Gourd Brush Holder' (*Yong hulu bitong* 詠葫蘆筆筒), and its introductory essay within acquaint the viewer with the close relationship between Qianlong and his beloved grandfather.[49] The brush holder had been a gift from Kangxi when Qianlong had been a child,[50] and he had kept it on his writing desk since. Perhaps there were too many things on his desk and the holder was neglected, because Qianlong apparently did not notice it again until twenty-three years later,[51] upon which he immediately composed a verse to commemorate the brush holder's history and praise its craftsmanship.[52] Qianlong's verse was inscribed on the top panel of the sandalwood box (Fig. 19-c), serving to establish a dialogue with Kangxi's inscription on the brush holder contained within. Eight ministers also contributed poems at imperial command

[49] For and outline of the close relationship between Qianlong and his grandfather, see Elliott, Mark C., 2009, *Emperor Qianlong: Son of Heaven, Man of the World*, New York: Pearson Longman, pp. 9–11.
[50] Qianlong first met his grandfather Kangxi in the Old Summer Palace (*Yuanming yuan* 圓明園) at the age of 12 in the last year of Kangxi's life (1722). Kangxi was reportedly very interested in this grandson and took him to the Palace to educate him in person. Qianlong lived with his grandfather for around 6 months, during which time Qianlong probably received the brush holder.
[51] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983-6, *Second Collection*, vol. 1304, p. 544.
[52] According to the colophon of Qianlong's verse, he found the brush holder and composed the verse in the summer of 1758.

(*Yingzhi shi* 應制詩), which are inscribed on the four sides, two for each side (Fig. 19-d).

Interestingly, once the lid is removed and the brush holder is taken off its wooden base, an introductory essay engraved on the base about the object's general background is revealed (Fig. 19-e). Its location makes this inscription rather hard to detect, as it cannot be seen until the brush holder is removed. The content of this statement is also rather vague, with Qianlong only mentioning that the object belonged to a deceased person, rather than clearly stating that this person was his grandfather. This may not have been important, however, as the significance of the brush holder would be apparent from the inscriptions on the box's lid. This short essay thus resembles a brief reminder to the person viewing the brush holder of the emperor's affection for Kangxi.

The form of the box with a large covering lid was again designed specifically to bear inscriptions. Archival records from the workshop for mounting and boxes also show that Qianlong was cautious when designing the packaging, first requesting a cardboard model before the workshop began production. The records detail the packaging of a gourd brush holder in June 1758, which matches this object in time and appearance.[53]

[53] ZBCDAZH, vol. 23, p. 740.

In addition to Qianlong's personal relationship with the brush holder's owner, its craftsmanship was specifically indicative of Kangxi, as turning gourds into fine objects was invented during his reign. Qianlong's inscription thus introduces the artistry of turning gourds into fine objects in detail and celebrates this. The gourd was not carved but moulded into a square-shaped holder. Growing fruit was encased in a mould, which it grew into. This technique also allowed the craftpeople to imprint characters or images on the gourd. First, a wooden model of the finished product with a design in relief was made (Fig. 20). The wooden model was used to create ceramic moulds with intaglio decoration; new growing gourd fruits were encased in these (Fig. 21). The moulded gourds then grew as their creators required (Fig. 22). Qianlong stresses in his essay that this artistry was created at Kangxi's court, thus the brush holder was a masterpiece. He then discusses Kangxi's inscription on the holder, ending by expressing his great admiration for Kangxi and the shame he felt for his long negligence of his grandfather's gift.

Qianlong is very likely to have shown this verse to the eight ministers who contributed poems to the sandalwood box, or at least to have informed them of the history of the brush holder. Their poems all echo the emperor's train of thought, discussing the

creativity of gourd art and the profound relationship between the two emperors. Qianlong probably did not use the brush holder after he had it carefully packaged, as the impressive inscriptions altered the nature of the object; its history had been revealed and was now the key feature of its identity. This demonstrates that Qianlong's inscriptions on packaging are more than passive reflections of his identity: packaging objects from the imperial collection and adding his own inscriptions allowed Qianlong to actively participate in the formation of his own identity.

2.4. Interpretation: Using Objects to Reference a Variety of Cultures

In order to use objects' histories to create a positive image of himself as a powerful ruler, Qianlong needed to construct significant narratives for them. The more general the context an object was provided with, the more likely the emperor could use it to place himself in a better position. As a result, when the identity of an object was unclear, adding packaging with inscriptions enabled Qianlong to create narratives through his own interpretation of the objects. The packaging in such cases provided space for Qianlong to explore new possibilities in his collection. Consequently, he was never a passive observer to the imperial collection but an active creator who redefined its identity.

The packaging used for an ostrich egg in the imperial collection demonstrates Qianlong's active participation in constructing Chinese history. He created an inscription for the large egg of unknown provenance, which transformed it into an invaluable tribute item sent to ancient China. Qianlong's aim here was to juxtapose this item with an item he had received as tribute from the same region, which served to further illustrate his superior status as compared to other emperors in Chinese history. Though his inscription initially follows a traditional format by connecting the egg with a large bird gifted by foreign tributaries to show how the Empire had grown under his reign, Qianlong then goes further to create his own system of interpretation. Inspired by exchange with Europeans, he associated the foreign species of large bird with cassowaries, which brings knowledge of foreign places into the inscription. This would be associated with Qianlong's governance by the reader, implying that he used broad knowledge to develop his imperial ideas.[54] From Chinese to global history, Qianlong always endeavoured to extend his reach to different cultures.

The ostrich egg was a peculiar object in Qianlong's collection (Fig. 23-a). Its packaging acted to simultaneously conceal the object and create a prestigious identity for the

[54] Lai Yuzhi 賴毓芝, 2011, 'Tuxiang zhishi yu diguo: Qinggong de shihuoji tuhui 圖像、知識與帝國：清宮的食火雞圖繪 (Images, knowledge, and empire: depictions of cassowaries at the Qing court)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 1–75.

unknown egg. The emperor's approach to this egg was rather unique, as such objects tended to be turned into ornaments (Fig. 24) or egg pots at the imperial court.[55] In this case, however, Qianlong packaged the egg accompanied by a narrative essay in which he transforms it into a precious gift from an ancient kingdom to a Chinese emperor around two thousand years previously (Fig. 23-b). The introductory essay to this inscription states that the emperor discovered the egg in his collection by accident and did not know where it came from, but was curious about its origin.[56] Finding an object of unidentified origin created an opportunity for Qianlong to create history through adding an inscriptions. The inscription is therefore full of historical and literary allusions, which enriches and gives credibility to the 'history' he wanted to project.

Qianlong's inscription on the egg's packaging identifies it as an ostrich egg from Parthia and claims that it had been held in the imperial collection since the Han dynasty. The verse is engraved on the top of the lid, so a viewer could not miss it when examining the contents. Inside, the egg was further wrapped in yellow silk cloth to cushion it against the hard box. Qianlong's verse is entitled 'The Poultry Egg from Parthia' (*Anxi queluan* 安息雀卵), and it was composed in the spring of 1764.[57] Around the same

[55] According to the archives of imperial workshops, large eggs were often transformed into tea pots at Qianlong's court. See ZBCDAZH, vol. 9, pp. 134–5.
[56] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Third Collection*, vol. 1305, *juan* 36, p. 20.
[57] Ibid, pp. 20–1.

time, there is a record that describes the packaging of a *huoji* 火雞 (fire bird) egg.[58] The timing and description suggest that this record probably pertains to the packaging of Qianlong's ostrich egg or another of the same sort. According to the record, Qianlong ordered a wooden box be modified to contain a *huoji* egg in February 1764, which took around five months. The box is relatively plain so should not have taken such a long time to make; it is possible that the application of the inscription lengthened the process.

It is important to note that the term *huoji* in Qing and other historical Chinese texts does not refer to turkeys as it does in modern times but ostriches or large birds that came from foreign lands. Turkeys were called foreign birds (*yangji* 洋雞) at the Qing court and were well known, with the *Manual of Birds* (*Niao pu* 鳥譜), compiled at Qianlong's behest, providing full written and pictorial descriptions (Fig. 25).[59] In contrast, Qianlong composed a verse titled 'Huoji' that provides a brief description of this creature: it has a black body with a long white tail, beautiful wings, and a growth

[58] ZBCDAZH, vol. 28, p. 656.

[59] *Qinding niao pu* 欽定鳥譜 (The imperially endorsed manual of birds), the 18th century, vol. 6, pp. 16-8. Qianlong also ordered a collection of colour illustrations of birds of many species in 12 albums. Each album contained 30 species, whilst the last volume contained 32. Volumes one to four are held in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei, and the other eight volumes are in the collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing. There are 361 bird species recorded in the illustrated manual. A paper on the illustrations entitled 'Qinggong Ouzhou yu Riben: Qinggong "niaopu" de chengli yu liubo 清宮、歐洲與日本：清宮《鳥譜》的成立與流播 (The Qing imperial court, Europe, and Japan: the construction and transmission of the *Manual of Birds*)' was presented by Lai Yu-chih 賴毓芝 at the colloquium 'Stimulation and Reanimation: Cultural and Artistic Exchanges between Asia and Europe', held at the National Palace Museum of Taipei on October 28–9, 2015.

on its head.[60] The description is similar to that of the ostrich in the *Compendium of Materia Medica* (*Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目), which is also referred to as *huoji* (Fig. 26), since they were thought to consume burning charcoal (*huotan* 火炭).[61] This kind of large foreign bird, which appears under various different names in Chinese texts, usually denotes a tribute item from the Western Regions—i.e. Xinjiang—or Southeast Asia.[62] Qianlong's verse concerning the *huoji* was composed in 1760, and added to the upper right corner of a painting depicting the fire bird by Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining 郎世寧, 1688–1766), which was also completed that year (Figs 27-a and 27-b).[63] This painting provides a visual description of what Qianlong understood to be a *huoji*.

Qianlong associated the egg in his collection with the *huoji* to explore the interplay between his imperial universalism and traditional Chinese imperialism. The fire bird was recorded to have been a large bird that was gifted by Parthia to ancient China, and

[60] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Third Collection*, vol. 1305, *juan* 8, pp. 12–3

[61] Li Shizhen 李時珍, 1983–6, *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (Compendium of materia medica), reprinted in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 774, p. 33.

[62] Chen Wen 陳文 et al., 1964–6, *Ming Yingzongrui huangdi shilu* 明英宗睿皇帝實錄 (Veritable records of Emperor Yingzong of Ming), *juan* 140, Taipei: The Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica, vol. 27, p. 266.

[63] It seems that this painting was commissioned in 1759 and Castiglione completed it the following year. See ZBCDAZH, vol. 24, pp. 692–3 and vol. 25, p. 504. Castiglione was an Italian Jesuit at the Qing court, who entered the Society of Jesus in Italy as a novitiate at the age of 19. His early training included painting and architecture. He was then sent to China and arrived Canton in 1715. His artistic skills came to the attention of Kangxi, and he served at the imperial court during the reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong. Castiglione combined his previous training with Chinese painting techniques to create a style that fused both traditions. He excelled at depicting figures, flowers and birds, and especially animals. Castiglione's life and art are outlined by Musillo, Marco, 2016, *The Shining Inheritance: Italian Painters at the Qing Court, 1699-1812*, Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute.

its eggs were known to be as large as urns, which was another gift made to ancient Chinese emperors.[64] This species of bird was actually indigenous to a kingdom the Han records call *Tiaozhi* 條支[65] to the west of Parthia.[66] Qianlong specifies this at the beginning of his inscription, implying that the egg came from Tiaozhi. This allowed him to further define the egg as the one that Emperor Wu of Han (r. 141–87 BC) is recorded to have received as a gift from Parthia. Qianlong also takes the opportunity to mock the Song emperors as superstitious and ignorant, as they attributed such eggs to dragons and phoenixes,[67] which Qianlong did not believe existed. The basis for Qianlong's argument is Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (145–90 BC) account,[68] which states that a Parthian king dispatched his special envoy to the Han Empire and presented large eggs and Alexandrian magicians to Emperor Wu in 112 BC.[69]

The association of this egg with Emperor Wu's egg purposefully raised the pertinent

[64] Li Shizhen 1983–6, p. 33.
[65] The location of the Kingdom of Tiaozhi that existed around the same time as the Han dynasty is controversial. It is usually considered to be the Seleucid Empire (312–63 BC) or sometimes Antiochia by modern scholars. However, Liang Yancheng 梁燕城 has ruled out these two possibilities and suggests that Tiaozhi refers to Egrisi in modern Georgia—commonly known by the Greek name Colchis. See Liang Yancheng 梁燕城, 2016, 'Daqin yu Dahan de jiaowang ji Tiaozhi guo kaoju—cong shiliao kan gudai Zhongguo yu Luoma de guanxi 大秦與大漢的交往及條支國考據─從史料看古代中國與羅馬的關係 (Sino-Roman relations and the evidence for "Tiaozhi": relations between China and Rome in historical sources)', *Cultural China*, vol. 88, pp. 87–94.
[66] Sima Qian 司馬遷, 1983–6, *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the grand historian), reprinted in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 244, *juan* 123, p. 287.
[67] Shao Bo 邵博, 1936, *Shaoshi wenjian houlu* 邵氏聞見後錄 (The later records of Shao's hearsay), *juan* 1, Shanghai: The Shanghai Commercial Press, p. 11.
[68] The inscription directly states that the speculation was based on the *Records of the Grand Historian*.
[69] Sima Qian 1983–6, p. 351.

issue of imperial control and power over China's northwestern territories. Qianlong was implying that the influence of previous Chinese emperors—Emperor Wu in particular—had been limited to receiving tribute offerings, whereas Qianlong himself had conquered and directly controlled the region.[70] In order to impress the egg's ancient Parthian identity on the viewer, Qianlong's description of its appearance parallels that used to describe such eggs in ancient Chinese texts: it is as large as an urn. This allows Qianlong to follow the rationale that the imperial collection's egg could truly be the one mentioned by Sima Qian.

The reason Qianlong made such an effort to identify this egg with the Parthian egg is revealed in the introductory essay to the inscription, where he contrasts the egg he alleges to be Emperor Wu's with his acquisition: a rare bird known as *zhuoyue'er* 鷟鸐爾 from Ili in Xinjiang (a major part of the Western Regions).[71] The bird was native to the region and was presented to Qianlong by his close minister and general, Agui 阿桂 (1717–97), after conquering the northwest. The ostrich egg in the imperial collection and the *zhuoyue'er* were both natives of the northwestern region; therefore, they represent the influence of the Han Empire and Qing Empire in the area, respectively. For this reason, Qianlong wrote a verse about the rare bird and had

[70] GZCHDSL, vol. 11, p. 291–2.
[71] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Third Collection*, vol. 1305, *juan* 36, p. 75.

Castiglione paint the creature, after which the verse was transcribed on the painting (Fig. 28). In this verse, the place of origin of the rare bird was carefully stressed rather than the bird's rarity, as it was a trophy of Qianlong's conquest of Xinjiang.[72] The painting was completed in 1763, a year after Agui returned to Beijing from Ili and presented the bird to the emperor.[73] It is interesting that Qianlong's verse about the large *huoji* egg and its packaging were made the next year. It is unknown when he discovered the egg in his collection; however, it is very likely that the reinvention of its history was triggered by the Xinjiang conquest and Qianlong's acquisition of the rare bird. More specifically, it is possible that Qianlong already knew about the egg but took no action until the rare bird arrived, which inspired him to associate the egg with Emperor Wu. By doing this, Qianlong positioned himself in a direct dialogue with the illustrious Chinese emperor, challenging Wu's achievements and emphasising Qing control over the Western Regions by means of new and old objects in his collection.

[72] The Qianlong Emperor completed the conquest of Xinjiang through three large wars, which started in the twentieth year of his reign (1755) and lasted for five years. In order to ensure the security of Qing rule in the northwest, the emperor launched a large-scale field reclamation program following the conquest. The wars required excessive amounts of military investment and incurred criticism from the beginning. Qianlong justified himself, not only by citing historical precedents, but also by arguing that the conquest brought prosperity instead of financial hardship to Xinjiang. For an outline of Qing rule in Xinjiang, see Millward, James A., 1998, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864*, California: Stanford University Press. In addition, the three wars were an essential part of Emperor Qianlong's '10 Great Campaigns' that he was very proud of, see Zhuang Jifa 莊吉發, 1982, *Qing Gaozong shiquan wugong yanjiu* 清高宗十全武功研究 (Study of Emperor Qianlong's ten great campaigns), Taipei: Chung Hwa Book Company.

[73] Agui had been garrisoned in Ili from the winter of the twenty-fourth year of Qianlong's reign (1759) to the twenty-seventh year (1762) to expand farming land. The pacification of the Muslim regions and Xinjiang were thus completely under Qing control by 1759.

Although Qianlong acknowledges that Emperor Wu first brought the Western Regions under Chinese control, he apparently considered the Han emperor's conquest to have been limited, transitory, and wasteful, in contrast to his own lasting domination. The apparent ease with which the Qing forces are described as having conquered the area is evidently an exaggeration—Qianlong's own triumph over Xinjiang also cost a significant amount and encountered much opposition from officials and ministers.[74] The Parthian ostrich egg from the imperial collection and the newly-acquired Ili bird were thus also tools to justify Qing military action against Xinjiang. Not only had Qianlong successfully integrated the area into the Qing Empire, but if the egg were perceived as representing Emperor Wu's triumphs, then repackaging it demonstrated Qianlong's control of both the egg and Xinjiang by association, as well as the way he had improved on the past. This is both implied through the packaging and also stated explicitly in the inscription that adorned it.

Although Qianlong admits in his inscription that the origin of the large egg was unknown, this did not present an obstacle to him. Rather, he took the opportunity to build a rich and complex history for the object through its packaging. In addition to creating a new container for the egg to demonstrate his control over and improvement

[74] Millward 1998, pp. 38–41.

on the original item, the inscription he added to the box provides an explicit, valid identity for the egg. In this sense, the emperor was able to further play the role of the creator of history.

2.5. Qianlong's Indelible Imprint on Visual Representations of Chinese History

Qianlong's inscriptions made histories for their objects. Furthermore, inscriptions were devices that created a lasting association between the emperor and the objects. Consequently, Qianlong's interpretation of objects shown through the act of packaging has continued to affect modern perceptions of the collection's objects. This has guaranteed the emperor's position in the imperial collection, with his thinking having become an inevitable influence on examining its contents.

However, although Qianlong's packaging presented the objects it contained and the two parts should thus coexist, they have in some cases been physically separated. Numerous imperial wrappings were separated from the objects they contained in the 1950's, such as a two-tiered black lacquer box in which 40 pieces of art were originally stored (Fig. 29).

Fear of separation may be the reason why the emperor also had inscriptions made on the objects themselves. His desire to incorporate himself into the imperial collection was so intense that he even had verses inscribed on fragile materials like porcelain. The underside of an invaluable piece of *Ru* ware was inscribed with a verse by Qianlong entitled 'A Dog Bowl' (*Wo shipen* 猧食盆) (Fig. 30-a). This style of basin, known as a narcissus basin, with celadon glaze was often ridiculed as a dog bowl at Qianlong's court due to its shape.[75] This basin is the only piece of Ru ware known today without any crackle across its surface. It has thus been described as the ideal example of celadons in Chinese art history.[76] Despite this, Qianlong was still willing to have his composition etched onto the precious item's surface. Additionally, he created extra space for his interpretation of the vessel to further be known: the bowl was placed on a small wooden stand with a secret drawer in which Qianlong stored his personal composition entitled 'A Harmonious Match of Paintings and Calligraphy' (*Yubi shuhua hebi* 御筆書畫合璧) (Figs 30-b and 30-c). He presented the Ru basin with his copy of the works of the Four Great Masters of the Song period (*Song si da jia* 宋四大家),

[75] Yu Peijin 余佩瑾 notes that the three extant Ru ware narcissus basins were all engraved with the imperial poem 'A Dog Bowl' at some point, while two Qing copies of such vessels were inscribed with imperial poems concerning Guan ware. This suggests that Qianlong regarded narcissus basins as either dog bowls or Guan ware. However, such works were usually recorded as 'cat bowls' (*mao shipen* 貓食盆) in the Qing archives. Yu Peijin, 2015, 'Qianlong huangdi de ruyao jianshang guan ji shibie licheng 乾隆皇帝的汝窯鑑賞觀及識別歷程 (The Qianlong Emperor's appreciation of and identification process for Ru ware)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 384, pp. 16–31.

[76] Cao Zhao 曹昭, 1967, *Gegu yaolun* 格古要論 (Important discussions on assessing antiques), Taipei: Yee Wen Publishing Company, p. 211.

though he states that he was unsure whether it was a Song or Tang work at the beginning of the inscription.

The combination of inscribing the vessel and providing a stand in which to store album seems to have been Qianlong's standard packaging technique for narcissus basins (Fig. 31).[77] Another narcissus basin bears the same inscription on the underside, though the album originally stored in the hidden drawer is missing. Despite this, the inscription on the basin remains, so the emperor's interpretation will exist alongside it permanently.

By making enduring marks on objects, Qianlong became the dominant figure who shaped the imperial collection, as the emperor would always be part of the objects' histories. The majority of inscriptions were his own compositions, and he left no room on the objects for later generations to make their own mark. By contrast, Qianlong's habit of inscribing verses onto objects was not followed by his successors. For instance, his son, the Jiaqing Emperor, tended to create a separate space for verses rather than inscribe them onto the object. An example of this is 12 jade figures of the Chinese zodiac, which were collectively packaged in a square red sandalwood box (Fig. 32-a). The centre of the container features a covered compartment in which Jiaqing's notes on

[77] Yu 2015, p. 30. Also see ZBCDAZH, vol. 35, p. 213.

the objects were contained (Fig. 32-b).

Unlike his father, Jiaqing more usually used the Chinese classics to interpret objects rather than his own compositions. The text he copied out in calligraphy to pair with the 12 zodiac figures is the 'Various Verifications in Divination' (*Shuzheng* 庶徵) (Fig. 32-c), a section of the 'Great Plan' (*Hongfan* 洪範) from the *Documents of Antiquity* (*Shangshu* 尚書). This chapter discusses the way of Heaven (*Tiandao* 天道), whilst this particular section teaches that a ruler can rule well and nurture a prosperous country if he respects meteorological phenomena granted by Heaven. The calligraphy was done in 1799, which may also be the time that the jade pieces were made. This was the first year that Jiaqing came to rule the Empire in his own right after Qianlong's death.[78] Each year of the Chinese twelve-year cycle is represented by an animal; thus, the jade figures signify the cyclical nature of time and the continuity of Heaven. Jiaqing used the animal set to express his expectations for himself in governing the Empire. By contrast with Jiaqing's use of established classical texts to comment on items in the imperial collection, Qianlong's use of compositions that he had written to mark objects served to create a personal link between both himself and the object, as well as between the viewer and Qianlong's worldview.

[78] Jiaqing ascended the throne in 1796, but his father acted as regent until his death three years later in 1799.

2.6. Concluding Remarks

Qianlong's packaging served to establish a direct connection between himself and objects that represented family ties, religious beliefs, foreign lands, etc. Though each object had its own history, the emperor tended to use text that he had personally written to adorn the packaging, so that he was able to develop personal and solid connection to the object. By doing so, he could then transform the identity of the packaged item. Such an approach usually relied on multiple layers of packaging, which provided Qianlong with ample space to construct both his relationship with the objects and establish his interpretation as cannon.

CHAPTER 3.

THE HOUSING OF QIANLONG'S COLLECTION: THE SPATIAL FORM OF PACKAGING

3.1. Introduction

Qianlong possessed one of the largest collections of art in world history, and the ways he used packaging to establish various object identities is demonstrated in the previous chapter. This chapter explores another aspect of how Qianlong controlled his collection by examining objects' interactions with the spaces in which they were placed, whereby different forms of packaging acted as bridges between the objects and their storage spaces. The concept of space in relation to packaging requires buildings or rooms to be viewed as boxes that regulate the movement of people and determine the placement of objects inside.[1] This theoretical perspective serves to demonstrate Qianlong's systematic use of space to control the objects in the imperial collection.

Qianlong optimised the spatial layout of the Forbidden City, also called the Palace, to create the secrecy of the imperial collection, ensuring that he had firm control over it. The spatial arrangement created by the emperor rendered his collection accessible only

[1] Greenbie proposes that buildings are generally regarded as objects and may be considered boxes with openings in the West, whereas this is not the case in Japan, and buildings are more like discrete contexts. Greenbie, Barrie, 1988, *Space and Spirit in Modern Japan*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 14.

to a very small number of people. This also made it difficult for outsiders to intervene in the identities and stories that he had created. Making the collection accessible to a wider public would have provided others with the opportunity to interpret the objects in their own way and potentially criticise his definition. This also raises a key issue that needs to be revisited, namely the widely-held view that the imperial collection was political propaganda for both Qianlong and the empire's legitimacy; restricted access and the element of secrecy suggest that the objects could not perform such a task.

The Manchu emperors' control over access to the collection relied on spatial form of packaging established in the palace by the Ming court. This packaging helped to conceal Qianlong's collection, and, as with the techniques used to wrap individual objects, was achieved through a multilayer structure. In addition to regulations on admittance to the Forbidden City, the Palace's physical structure transformed the imperial collection—an important material assemblage of information—into a physical embodiment of secrecy. This secrecy allowed Qianlong to arrange objects in ways that he found pleasing, and the categorisation and statuses of objects were determined by the emperor's use of storage space.

The secrecy that surrounded the imperial collection was engendered through the initial

act of concealment, which added to the drama when the objects were later revealed to a selected audience. Concealing the collection through the use of space enabled Qianlong to exercise discretionary power in 'unpacking' it, which involved a threefold approach to control: what to reveal; how to reveal it; and to whom it could be revealed. Revelation is usually the climax of secrecy, thus this phase often involves a performative aspect. Therefore, Qianlong had to put effort into deciding what should be revealed and how to do so. In terms of who participated in the revelation, these were the same clique who assisted the emperor to build his collection and catalogue the objects. Restricting the audience was another way in which Qianlong controlled the imperial collection.

To illustrate the above argument, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section defines and describes the concept of packaging's spatial form. The second section examines how the spatial layout of the Forbidden City contributed to making Qianlong's collection a secret. This demonstrates that spatial packaging was a conscious strategy used by the emperor to protect, conceal, and rank the importance of both people and objects. The third section discusses the spatial arrangement of objects within the imperial buildings of the Palace, examining the housing of Qianlong's collection—imperial archives, porcelain, paintings and calligraphy, bronzes, and

individual works of art. This section demonstrates how the spatial arrangement of these objects reflected the emperor's preferences for particular pieces and his intention to emphasise their importance. The last section examines the effect of secrecy enacted by the 'unpacking' of the Qing court and the imperial collection. In this section, it is shown that the Manchu emperors drew less of a dividing line between themselves and their subjects than the rulers of previous dynasties, and Qianlong increased the visibility of the collection as part of efforts to renegotiate the emperor-subject relationship.

3.2. The Concept of the Spatial Form of Packaging

In this chapter, packaging is used as a metaphor to discuss the spatial planning of the imperial buildings. Specifically, this involves considering buildings or rooms as boxes with openings.[2] Hendry utilises this principle to examine the Japanese concept of space and defines it as the wrapping of space or spatial wrapping.[3] She argues that layering space is a common practice in Japanese architecture, especially in castles and sacred places. This provides extra protection to socially and culturally important buildings, whilst simultaneously serving to emphasise a hierarchical system and aura of power. This section explores this idea and its manifestation in Qing imperial space.

[2] Ibid.
[3] Hendry 1993, pp. 99-122.

The concept and principles of spatial packaging are also found in buildings belonging to the Qing court. Imperial structures, including the Forbidden City, utilised several layers of space, with the heart of the structure—and the people and objects it housed—usually very difficult to access. This provided effective protection for what was placed inside, and layering space also allowed the ruler to categorise different groups, defining their status in relation to the emperor. In imperial China, emperors created and maintained respect in the hierarchical social system in part by positioning themselves at the centre, which could be rendered inaccessible to outsiders. Such spatial organisation generated an air and force of secrecy, which contributed to the public's awe of the emperors through their perceived 'invisibility.'[4] The dynamic of secrecy affected the individuals and objects and the space was likewise conditioned by what it housed. Qianlong was proficient at using spatial planning to manage his collection and transform the character of a place.

The packaging of space is an unusual form of packaging, as it is manifested on a much larger scale through buildings. As a result, a broader perspective must be adopted when discussing such packaging. The interaction between space and its housed objects—the arrangement of objects inside a 'box'—is an integral part of this packaging. The

[4] Ibid, p. 107.

preliminary purpose of a building is to, 'create and order the empty volumes of space.'[5] When construction is finished and the 'box' has been created, the key issue is how to manage the interaction between the object and its packaging. That is, it is through the design of space including decoration and furnishing by which the packaging of space is achieved and spatial coherence is derived. At the same time, the housed objects give space significance. In other words, spaces or buildings as the packaging of objects inside, they provide meaning for the objects since the presentation of the objects relies on and takes place in space. Conversely, the function and status of a space are defined by the objects it houses, and the arrangement of the objects affects the spatial structure.

3.2.1. A Multilayer Spatial Structure in Late Imperial China

A sixteenth century scroll of the Forbidden City depicts its spatial structure (Fig. 1), vividly demonstrating the way the Palace was 'packaged'. Though this painting depicts the Palace during the Ming period, the Qing court inherited the general structure, in general altering only the interiors of buildings. Traditionally, important spaces in China, including imperial buildings and sites, tended to be packaged with extra layers, in order to give them more protection. The central Palace in the painting at the top of Fig. 1 is encircled by multiple high walls, on which garrison forts and troop barracks are

[5] Hillier, Bill and Hanson, Julienne, 1984, *The Social Logic of Space*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1.

positioned to emphasise their defensive qualities. Inside the Palace, which is the most distant building in the painting, the building compound is wreathed in cloud and almost invisible. The extra visual protection for the Palace in the painting represents multiple layers of packaging around a hierarchically important space.

The layered structure also served the need for imperial places to establish a managerial hierarchy; different layers marked sharp divisions in status. Fundamentally, the Qing government used the structure to divide Manchu and Han Chinese, as well as the nobility and commoners. A person could only enter the space that his or her status permitted, which will be expounded upon further in section 3.3.

In general, the outer layer could be accessed for public activities, and the rules governing it were relatively liberal. People of different social statuses were allowed to interact with one another, as shown in the foreground of the painting (Fig. 1), whilst officials and commoners engaged in joint activities in the same space. As one moved toward the inner layers, however, there were increasing restrictions on who and what could enter each space. The inner part of the imperial space was difficult to access, and activities conducted there were also shrouded from the public eye. This layout increased both the physical and conceptual distance between the imperial buildings and the

outside world, as the exterior was pushed away by multiple layers of architectural space.

Packaging is a concept that is helpful to understanding the perception of secrecy as expressed visually in Fig. 1. To package layers of space generated an impression of depth, which enhanced the forbidden nature of the imperial palace. Additionally, the secrecy surrounding the events and people in the central Palace was protected by the obstructed approach, with the result that the buildings pull away from the outside world, the area that is most wrapped eventually becomes invisible to anyone on the outside. Through layering space, a tangible and conceptual distance between inner and outer spaces is created. Through their depth within the packaging, therefore, the inner areas become obscured, as well as the people who lived there. The secrecy surrounding the imperial buildings, as well as the objects and people inside, was thus achieved by layering of packaging.

3.2.2. Qianlong's Spatial Arrangement of Objects

The use of space in the palaces where Qianlong kept objects from the imperial collection was thus subtle, with each layer able to accommodate a different type of spatial arrangement. The imperial buildings packaging the emperor's collection defined the actual arrangement of the objects in space. The objects themselves also influenced

the design and further determined the statuses of their spaces. The items were usually examined and graded before their storage locations were determined, then their individual packaging was designed. This process allowed different objects to be integrated into their surroundings. In addition, certain sets of works achieved exceptional unity with their surroundings by being packaged in a room or building that was built specifically for them alone. The packaging or repackaging of works transformed them into exceptional representations of the paradigm that Qianlong intended to create.

Qianlong's reconstruction of the Hall Compound of Permanent Sovereignty (*Shouhuang dian* 壽皇殿) is an ideal example of his use of architectural layout to elevate status. The emperor used the hall to house the portraits of the Qing imperial ancestors and their relics. Whilst the housed objects contributed to the hall's superior status and determined the interior design, it was reconstructed into a more sanctified space by packaging with extra layers of buildings in order to show Qianlong's piety to his ancestors (Fig. 2).[6] The housing of the portraits of the imperial ancestors and the layering design of the building compound turned the area into a sacred space.

[6] The reconstruction of *Shouhuang dian* was started in 1749 and completed in May of 1750. Qianlong personally inspected the construction when it began. See GZCHDSL, *juan* 338, p. 29, and *juan* 364, p. 80.

What had originally been a single hall was extended to become a compound, adding two additional layers of space. The *Illustrations of the Collected Statues of the Great Qing Published on Imperial Command* (*Qinding Daqing huidian tu* 欽定大清會典圖) provides a clear plan of the compound (Fig. 3).[7] Though this illustrated book was compiled during the Guangxu reign (1875-1908), the layout did not change after Qianlong's expansion. The outermost layer comprised three monumental archways outside the main gate in the outer wall. The middle layer constituted an intermediary courtyard and served as a store for sacrificial vessels and a preparatory area for sacrifices.[8] The main hall and several supplementary buildings was finally accessed at the centre of the innermost layer through another gate. Forcing anyone visiting to move through multiple layers of spatial packaging before finally arriving at a central space established religious spatial order and enhanced the perceived sanctity of the space. Additionally, a long corridor leading to the layered construction reinforced people's reverence before they even reached the main gate. This layout follows the design of the Imperial Ancestral Temple (*Taimiao* 太廟) (Fig. 4),[9] where memorial tablets of the Qing imperial ancestors were enshrined, one of the empire's most significant places of worship.

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[7] Kungang 崑岡 et al., 1899, *Qinding Daqing huidian tu* 欽定大清會典圖 (Illustrations of the collected statues of the Great Qing published on imperial command), Berlin: The Berlin State Library, *juan* 9, pp. 25-6.
[8] Ibid, p. 25.
[9] GZCHDSL, *juan* 364, p. 29.

Qianlong enshrined all the portraits of deceased emperors and empresses in the Hall Compound of Permanent Sovereignty's main hall after the expansion. Their presentation was also systematically arranged by the layout of niches in the hall. He further specified that the niche for Kangxi's portrait be placed in the centre, with Yongzheng's niche to its left (Fig. 5), and a niche for his own posthumous portrait prepared to the right of Kangxi's.[10] Qianlong even stipulated that these three niches be dedicated to these particular subjects in perpetuity, due to the three emperors' great merits and achievements.[11] However, the niches of emperors after himself should be moved out in succession when the hall became filled to capacity.[12]

Through his spatial arrangement of the imperial niches, Qianlong boosted the status of his grandfather, father, and himself. The housing of imperial ancestral portraits transformed the Hall Compound of Permanent Sovereignty into a sanctified space. Qianlong adjusted the hall's architectural layout to suit the function he intended it for, and layered spatial structure contributed to this.

3.2.3. Summary

[10] Ibid, *juan* 1495, p. 246-7.
[11] Ibid, p. 248.
[12] Ibid, p. 249.

The concept of layering space was employed throughout the imperial palaces. This spatial structure rendered the internal layer of space inaccessible to outsiders. Places that were difficult or even impossible to access were often those of the highest status, as were the people and objects they housed. Qianlong exploited the spatial qualities of the Forbidden City to create the dynamic of secrecy to his collection. Under such conditions, the emperor further established spatial relationships between objects and their surroundings in the ways that various forms of packaging were used.

3.3. Spatial Planning of the Forbidden City: Boxes within Boxes

The imperial buildings served as 'boxes' for the imperial collection at Qianlong's court. The presentation of the imperial palaces must, therefore, be examined in order to understand the setting of the objects. As has been established in the preceding chapters, Qianlong was greatly concerned with how he interacted with his collection. He therefore respected the ordering of the spaces in which the objects were located provided him with another aspect by which he could control this. His ability to manipulate spatial narratives allowed him to determine the objects' interactions with their surroundings and thus how they would be approached by himself and others.

According to the imperial catalogues and relevant imperial archives, the major storage

locations for the emperor's most cherished objects were the Forbidden City, the Old Summer Palace (*Yuanming yuan* 圓明園), the Imperial Summer Villa of Chengde (*Chengde bishu shanzhuang* 承德避暑山莊), and Mukden Palace (*Shenjing gongdian* 盛京宮殿). Among these imperial residences, the Forbidden City housed the majority of the imperial collection. Although the Palace was planned and built by the Ming imperial household,[13] it had proven useful to the Qing emperors, and Qianlong in particular organised numerous refurbishments of building interiors for the purpose of housing his collection.

On the whole, the layout of the Forbidden City demonstrates a layered spatial structure. This spatial form of packaging achieved three significant effects that were necessary in the arrangement of Chinese imperial space. The first effect was that, similar to multilayer packaging in general, an area with several spatial layers provided the objects or people at its centre with a greater level of security. Fig. 1 illustrates that the Palace was intensively protected by multiple layers of walls and spaces, which provided the imperial buildings and emperors at the centre with advanced protection.

[13] The Forbidden City served as the principal imperial palace in the Chinese Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), the home of twenty-four emperors (1420-1911). It was constructed by the Yongle Emperor 永樂皇帝 (r. 1402-1424), the third emperor of the Ming dynasty, and completed in the year of eighteenth year of the Yongle period (1420). The Palace compound was composed of around 1000 buildings and covered a land of 720,000 square meters. It retains most of the original layout from the Ming times despite centuries of repair, change, and rebuilding.

Another effect of the Forbidden City's layered space was that it enabled Qing society's marked stratification to be expressed visually, as different social strata could be separated and localised in different layers. The Palace can be conceptualised as being at the centre of a set of concentric circles, with those furthest from it constituting the lowest rank.

Finally, the layered spatial structure produced physical distance between the inner and outer layers, which produced a sense of depth and secrecy. The most remote spatial layer in the background of Fig. 1 (the area above the upper yellow line) was the Inner Court, where the Qing emperors lived and Qianlong housed his collection. This area was largely inaccessible to the outer layers of space and was obscured from the public eye. These three main results of the Palace's layered spatial structure together engendered the force of secrecy in which access to both the imperial Palace and collection was controlled.

3.3.1. Imperial Space and Security

The fundamental requirement for high-level security in imperial construction led to a layered design of space. The Forbidden City was structured as three and a half concentric layers: from the centre outwards was the Palace, the Imperial City, the Inner

City, and the Outer City (Fig. 6); together, these formed the urban area of Beijing. The rectangular Palace lay at the centre of the Imperial City, which was in turn enclosed by the Inner City and Outer City (the red lines mark the walls enclosing each area).

The name of the Palace—'Purple Forbidden City'—combines the characters for the Purple Forbidden Enclosure (*Ziwei yuan* 紫微垣), considered in Chinese astrology to be the brightest constellation at the centre of heaven, and the idea that the emperor's residence should ideally be a forbidden space. This constellation was deemed to be the location of the Purple Palace, the Heavenly Emperor's residence. Therefore, the star was also generally referred to as the 'Emperor Star' (*di xing* 帝星),[14] and it was the astronomical equivalent of emperors in the secular world.[15] The layout of the Palace fully justified the heavenly reference of its appellation,[16] and the association itself also contributed to the mysterious and unapproachable nature of the Palace.

3.3.1.1. Outside the Forbidden City

The Outer City was the outermost layer of Beijing, and it only enclosed the southern

[14] Hu Xu 胡煦, 1983-6, *Zhouyi hanshu* 周易函書 (the study of the book of changes), reprinted in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 48, p. 315.
[15] Yu Zhuoyun et al., 1984, *Palaces of the Forbidden City*, New York: Viking Press, p. 18.
[16] In addition, the idea that "emperors must live at the centre of the world" (*wangzhe bi ju tianxia zhi zhong* 王者必居天下之中) was a core influence in theories of building capital cities in China, as the central position was considered the most honourable. See Zhou gong 周公, 2012, *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou), Taipei: National Taiwan Normal University Press, pp. 97-8.

wall it shared with the Inner City (Fig. 6). The original Ming plan to completely enclose the Inner City and thus provide the Palace with radiating spatial buffers was interrupted by financial difficulties and a labour shortage.[17] Therefore, only the southern part of the Outer City was completed. Moving inwards, the Inner City was the outermost layer which fully surrounded the Palace. The buildings in this area were the offices of the imperial government, and there were also a great number of Manchu princely mansions and homes for members of the Eight Banners, an administrative and military system that ranked all Manchu households.[18]

The Imperial City was the first line of defence for the Palace walls, this area that immediately surrounded the Palace was of the utmost concern to the spatial packaging of the Forbidden City. Here was a collection of the imperial gardens, temples, depositories, workshops, and the residences of some members of the Manchu nobility and banner families of high rank (Fig. 7).[19] Owing to its close proximity to the Palace and its consequently much more exalted status, the Imperial City was considered to be

[17] The Outer City project was proposed in 1542 to provide an extra layer of defence against the Mongol military. The southern part was completed in 1553 along with parts of the east and west sides, the rest of the construction was expected to proceed when government funds were restored. Xu Xueju 徐學聚 ed., 1965, *Ming dianhui* 明典彙 (Collection of canons of the Ming dynasty), Taipei: Student Book, vol. 63, pp. 34-5.

[18] Eertai 鄂爾泰 et al., 1985, *Baqi tongzhi chuji* 八旗通志初集 (Records of the Eight Banners), Changchun: Northeast Normal University Press, vol. 1, pp. 1-10.

[19] The Imperial Ancestral Temple (*Taimiao* 太廟), the Altars of State (*Sheji* 社稷), and the Church of the Saviour (*Xishiku tianzhutang* 西什庫天主堂)—the most magnificent church in the Qing China—were all located in this area. Wu Changyuan 吳長元, 1972, *Chenyuan shihlueh* 宸垣識略 (A brief description of the capital), Taipei: Wenhai Press, pp. 332-45.

a restricted zone that only imperial associates and people on imperial business were permitted to enter.[20] As the spatial layer contiguous to the Palace, this area served as a buffer zone. Being the physical and administrative core of both Beijing and the empire more broadly, the Forbidden City was heavily fortified with layer upon layer of defences.[21]

3.3.1.2. Layers of Space inside the Palace: The Division of the Outer Palace and Inner Court

Inside the Forbidden City, a great number of building sets together composed its central palace.[22] It was divided into two areas: the Inner Court (*Neiting* 內廷) and the Outer Palace (*Waichao* 外朝) (Fig. 8). The Outer Palace forms the anterior part of the complex,[23] and signified a locale for outer audiences, hence its name. It was used for grand ceremonies and for the emperors to administer government affairs.

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[20] This area was called the "imperial within" (*jinzhong* 禁中) at the time. See Yu Mingzhong 于敏中 et al., 2000, *Qinding rixia jiuwen kao* 欽定日下舊聞考 (Imperially endorsed investigations of hearsay of old matters from under the sun), Beijing: Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p. 420.

[21] The Palace measured 3,428 metres in circumference, 961 metres on the south to north axis, and 753 metres on the east to west axis. See Eertai 鄂爾泰 et al., 1987, *Guochao gongshi* 國朝宮史 (History of the Qing imperial court), Beijing: Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, vol. 11, p. 178.

[22] Zhu Jianfei, 2004, *Chinese Spatial Strategies: Imperial Beijing, 1420-1911*, London: Routledge Curzon; Guo Qinghua, 2005, *Chinese Architecture and Planning: Ideas, Methods, Techniques*, London: Edition Axel Menges; Pan Guxi 潘谷西, 2009, *Zhongguo jianzhu shi* 中國建築史 (A history of Chinese architecture), Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press.

[23] The Outer Palace began at the Palace's entrance—the Meridian Gate—and ended at the Gate of Heavenly Purity. This area comprised the Three Front Halls (*Qiansan dian* 前三殿): the Hall of Supreme Harmony (*Taihe dian* 太和殿) led to the Hall of Middle Harmony (*Zhonghe dian* 中和殿), from where one progressed to the Hall of Preserving Harmony (*Baohe dian* 保和殿). Each hall sits on a grand triple-tiered platform edged with balustrades. These three halls were the venues for grand ceremonies and impressed the magnitude of imperial power on anyone who attended.

Approximately half-way into the Palace, the Gate of Heavenly Purity (*Qianqing men* 乾清門) marked the entrance to the Inner Court. Through the gate lay a small courtyard formed by the Gate of Great Fortune (*Jingyun men* 景運門) in the east; the Gate of the Thriving Imperial Clan (*Longzong men* 隆宗門) in the west, and the Palace of Heavenly Purity (*Qianqing gong* 乾清宮) to the north (Fig. 8).[24] The Inner Court served as the emperors' residence. This was also where the majority of the imperial collection was kept. Qianlong kept the objects as close to him as possible and could even be said to have hidden them so that he had absolute control over their arrangement. This is discussed further in section 3.4.

The gates on the three sides of the courtyard in front of the Palace of Heavenly Purity were the first line of defence for the imperial residence. They were, therefore, called the inner Forbidden Gates (*Jinmen* 禁門), emphasising that the Inner Court was private and secret. In the plan in Fig. 11, the density of buildings in the Outer Palace is quite low. By contrast, buildings in the Inner Court are densely packed, complicating the spatial network; the intricately winding alleys made this zone a confusing labyrinth (Fig. 9). The layout, coupled with the stringent rules and regulations governing admittance

[24] The quadrangle that demarcated the two areas was commonly known as a "side street", and it was where officials and ministers waited before they were summoned to audience with the emperor. Several duty rooms were thus located here, as well as the Antechamber of the Grand Council (*Junjichu* 軍機處), the highest central office institution of the Qing empire.

to the Palace and Inner Court, were significant factors that acted to conceal Qianlong's residence and his collection.

The halls (*dian* 殿), pavilions (*ge* 閣), palaces (*gong* 宮), studios (*zhai* 齋), residences (*suo* 所), and other buildings in the Palace were grouped to form units or compounds. Each building in a compound was linked to the other buildings, and these compounds can be seen as a kind of spatial packaging: each compound with its entrances was like a box and its lid. The elaborate designs of the larger compounds also meant that the buildings functioned as multiple layers of packaging, or as boxes within boxes. The section of a scroll shown in Fig. 10 illustrates the complex structure of the Palace Compound of Longevity and Tranquillity (*Shouan gong* 壽安宮), located in the northwest corner of the Palace (Fig. 8). Qianlong expanded and refurbished the compound for his mother's sixtieth birthday in 1751,[25] and the scene depicts the emperor hosting officials for the celebration. The structure of the Forbidden City was like multiple boxes wrapped up in a larger box.

3.3.1.3. Summary

[25] The First Historical Archives and Palace Museum eds., 2014, *Qinggong neiwufu zouxiao dang* 清宮內務府奏銷檔 (Accounting report archives of the inner court), Beijing: The Forbidden City Press, vol. 225, pp. 174-5.

From the ‘packaging’ of the Forbidden City to its layout, a layered spatial structure appears to have been a constant principle that provided stronger security for its residents and objects. This, together with stringent security measures, contributed to the concealment of the emperor and the imperial collection, both of which were located in the area furthest from the outside world and most difficult to access.

3.3.2. Hierarchy and Imperial Space

The stratified packaging of space evidently played a role in categorising the social statuses of ethnic groups, thereby reinforcing the hierarchical structure of Qing society. The areas outside the Forbidden City were divided into three zones, from innermost to outermost these were the Imperial City for the imperial household and Manchu aristocracy, the Inner City for the Manchus and banner forces (Fig. 11), and the Outer City for the Han Chinese. The Inner City was thus referred to as the Manchu City (*Mancheng* 滿城) and the Outer City as the Han City (*Hancheng* 漢城).[26] Additionally, any Manchu without an official title could not enter the imperial zone. This layering of space worked so seamlessly with their governing policies that the Manchu minority simultaneously conveying their greater social importance.

[26] See Xia Renhu 夏仁虎, 1986, *Jiujing suoji* 舊京瑣記 (Scattered notes on the old capital), Beijing: Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, vol. 8, pp. 88-9.

Moreover, the packaging was organised according to the three ethnic components of the banner forces: the innermost circle immediately next to the imperial zone comprised the Manchu Eight Banners, with the Mongol Eight Banners located outside of this, then the outermost layer was composed of the Han Eight Banners.[27] In this way, the imperial zone—the Palace and Imperial City—was securely packaged by layers of banner troops.[28] The disposition of three ethnic garrison units was a system of clear segregation.[29]

The act of layering imperial space not only provided a heightened degree of security resulting from the layering of space, but also created spatial order through which the social stratification of the Qing state revealed itself. The closer a zone was to the Palace, the higher the status of its residents. Within a particular group of individuals, one's access to a particular space and power to utilize it was simultaneously a proclamation

[27] Eertai 1985, pp. 17-22. The total number of troops from twenty-four banners was around 550, and the Manchu Eight Banners constituted the majority. Tanaka Kazuko 田中和子 and Kizu Yuko 木津祐子, 2015, 'Kyoto daigaku kura pekin utiziro zu (hata houi zu) ni sime sa reru mansyuu mouko kara gun no kanren sisetu to sono zidai haikei 京都大学蔵『北京内城図（八旗方位図）』に示される満州・蒙古・漢軍の関連施設とその時代背景 (The Eight-banners in garrison of Manchu, Mongolian, and Han, and the names of places and facilities presented in "Map of Inner City of Beijing" stored in Kyoto University: a preliminary observation)', *Memoirs of the Faculty of Letters, Kyoto University*, vol. 54, pp. 1-28.

[28] 'The Eight Banners were disaggregated in the Capital City (Inner City) in order to surround and guard the imperial residences. 分列八旗，拱衛皇居。' Yu 2000, p. 578.

[29] Tanaka Kazuko, 2016a, 'Sinhakken no kyoutodaigaku kura pekin utiziro zu wo huku mu kiyosi dai hatibata houi zu gun no sougouteki kenkyuu 新発見の京都大学蔵『北京内城図』を含む清代八旗方位図群の総合的研究 (Research on the spatial arrangement of the Qing Eight Banners on three Qing maps)', *the Mishima Kaiun Memorial Foundation Research Report*, vol. 53, pp. 177-81; 2016b, 'Analysis of the Eight Banners' disposition on the three Qing dynasty maps of Beijing', *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, vol. 74, pp. 101-30.

of one's status and authority.

3.3.3. The Secrecy of Imperial Space

The final significant effect of a layered spatial structure was the extension of spatial depth, which enhanced the sense of mystery, sanctity, and awe surrounding the Forbidden City. These were all elements essential to the creation of imperial space. The sacred and inviolable character of the Forbidden City originated in the housing of the emperors. In other words, the sanctity and inviolability of the Chinese emperors was heavily based on their 'never being seen', and it was through the multilayer packaging of space that this concealment was achieved and the 'dignity' of the emperors thus propagated. The Qing emperors took over this structure, by which they built up the force of secrecy.

The intricate layering of space created distance, and through this the Palace, as well as the emperors and the imperial collection, were concealed from outsiders and became inaccessible. Furthermore, physical distance served to inspire awe and respect for the 'objects' contained within the impressive packaging. Access to the Forbidden City was impeded by the extensive space in front of its main entrance. The space to the south of the Palace was prolonged by a series of gates and a lengthy corridor called the

Thousand-Paces Passageway (*Qianbulang* 千步廊) (Fig. 12) whose end was the Gate of Great Qing (*Daqing men* 大清門).[30] The long scroll painting shown in Fig. 21 shows only a small sector of the long corridor, from the Meridian Gate (*Wu men* 午門) to the Gate of Uprightness (*Duan men* 端門), and it depicts Qianlong returning to the Palace from his first Southern Inspection Tour in 1751.

The Gate of Great Qing, followed by the Gate of Heavenly Peace and the Gate of Uprightness, is the first of a series of gates that run northwards along the middle axis from the Imperial City to the Palace (Fig. 13). The extension of entry space and the repeated necessity for any visitor to pass through imposing gates emphasised the inaccessibility of the Forbidden City. Even if one had no intention of approaching the Inner City, the area around the approach was considered part of it, and the space was thus restricted to relevant persons and the government offices located there.

This series of city entryways that enveloped the Palace maximised the separation between the Palace and the public,[31] shielding the former from the latter through layers

[30] Prince Yuntao 允祹 et al., 1983, *Qinding daqing huidian* 欽定大清會典 (Imperially endorsed collected statutes of the Great Qing Dynasty), Taipei: The Commercial Press, vol. 70, p. 111.

[31] Along the central avenue from the outmost Beijing to the Palace, there were six portals: the Gate of Everlasting Certainty (*Yongdingmen* 永定門), the main entrance of the Outer City; the Gate of the Noonday Sun (*Zhengyangmen* 正陽門), the portal of the Inner City; the Gate of Great Qing, the first opening of the Imperial City; the Gate of Heavenly Peace, the main gate of the Imperial City; the Gate of Uprightness, the gate at the Thousand-Pace Corridor; and Meridian Gate, the portal of the Forbidden City.

of constructions. The prolonged space around each portal also created and enhanced the perception of depth. Thus, the Forbidden City, along with the people and objects inside, became an area that was out of bounds to outsiders who could only imagine was lay inside. It was because of this long-held sense of mystique that when the Palace and the imperial collection made its public debut on 10 October 1925, it was as if the whole country turned up to visit the imperial buildings and treasures. The public was beyond thrilled that they finally had the chance to take a look at how the compound was styled and what treasures the imperial household collected.[32] Emperors were usually the sole owners and audiences for imperial riches, and this was the very first time in the Chinese history that the secret imperial area and its objects were revealed to the public.

3.3.4. Summary

The Forbidden City was packaged by multiple layers of space controlled by the arrangement of buildings, walls, and gates. The sense of its unsurpassable prestige was manifested through its layered spatial structure, which served to emphasise the rigidly hierarchal spatial order. In this way, the Palace, located in the innermost recesses of the city and elaborately enclosed within layers of walled spaces, came to be the most

[32] Na Zhiliang 那志良, 2004, *Dianshou gugong guobao qishinian* 典守故宮國寶七十年 (Memoirs of preserving the collection of the Forbidden City for seventy years), Beijing: The Forbidden City Press, p. 40.

inaccessible and secretive seat of imperial power.

3.4. The Spatial Arrangement of Qianlong's Collection inside the Forbidden City

The Forbidden City was 'packaged' so deep inside the Beijing city that its secrecy was forged. Qianlong's collection was placed in the innermost area of the Palace where he lived. The secrecy of the imperial collection enabled the emperor to arrange the objects with his own system, and to ensure that there was a minimal number of participants. He defined their categorisation and status by where and how they were situated; Qianlong was therefore keen to organise these spaces. Generally speaking, the emperor developed two systems for the storage of his collection; various objects were either housed together in the same space or a room was designed specifically for a special group or collection. Either way, the spatial planning within the imperial buildings played a crucial role in housing the objects. This section discusses their arrangement in the imperial buildings.

3.4.1. The Secrecy of the Inner Court along with the Imperial Collection

As mentioned earlier, the Forbidden City was divided into two areas, the deeper one was where Qianlong housed his collection and its security was the most strict,

especially during the Qianlong period.[33] The division of space inside the Palace created a spatial hierarchy and guaranteed the secrecy of the Inner Court, where the emperor determined who could enter the innermost space.

The highly restricted access to the Palace and the Inner Court was achieved by keeping a list of those who could enter, and by requiring a permit to enter. The major entrance was at the right and left gates to the Meridian Gate on the south,[34] those who entered it were subjected to various restrictions in accordance with their status. In general, however, the Office of the Imperial Bodyguard (*Ling shiwei fu* 領侍衛府) recorded the members' names, the banner that they were subordinate to, and their household registrations in advance, then verified when the individual passed through the doorway with their licenses.[35] The entrants of the Palace were divided into two groups: officials and staff like craftsmen, clerks and runners. The inventory called *Menji* 門籍 (the gate register) documented officials' names, titles, facial features, and other information, which only recorded those who were permitted into the Palace. It was used by the

[33] Cinggui 慶桂 et al., 1932, *Guochao gongshi xubain* 國朝宮史續編 (Continuation of the history of the Qing imperial court), Peking: Library of the Palace Museum, *juan* 6, p. 142.
[34] The right gate was confined to the nobility whilst the left gate was passed by officials. Ibid, *juan* 48, p. 351.
[35] Ibid. For the study of the imperial guardsmen during the Qing dynasty, see Chang Jiang 常江 and Li Li 李理, 1994, *Qinggong shiwei* 清宮侍衛 (The Qing imperial guardsmen), Shenyang: Liaoning University Press; Chen Zhang 陳章, 2016, 'Qingdai shiwei dengji xinta 清代侍衛等級新探 (A new interpretation of the levels of *shiwei* in the Qing dynasty)', *Journal of Chinese Studies*, no. 63, pp. 123-48.

imperial guards to verify whether or not certain officials could enter.

Staff, on the other hand, required a license for admission.[36] These licenses were called waist tablets (*Yaopai* 腰牌) (Fig. 14), which were carried by staff who were permitted to enter the Palace. The tablets were manufactured by the imperial workshops and were issued by the Imperial Household Department. Each person's name, age, position, and brief facial features were written on the wooden tablet. The tablet shown in Figure 23 belonged to a clerk (*Shuli* 書吏) named Zhu Qixun 朱啟勛, who was thirty-five years old and was a man of fair complexion without beard. The date it was made, Zhu Qixun's position and unit were branded (*huoluo yin* 火烙印) on the tablet. Up to 1773 the tablets were manufactured and issued by different government offices, hence there is little uniformity in the form.[37] Qianlong found that this resulted in too many entrants for them to be properly verified.[38] The Imperial Household Department therefore proposed that the waist tablets should be produced solely in the imperial workshops. After the production was consolidated, the number of the Palace entrants who were issued waist tablets was reduced to 3,765.[39] Two sets of careful inventories of staff

[36] "紫禁城内，……翊衛森嚴。官員有門籍，匠役有腰牌。" *Shilu guan*, 1964, *Daqing xuanzong cheng huangdi shilu* 大清宣宗成皇帝實錄 (Veritable records of Emperor Daoguang), Taipei: Hualian Press, vol. 8, p. 320.
[37] 'The official communication between the imperial workshops and the office of the Gate of Great Fortune relating to the craftsman without permits 造辦處為無腰牌匠役出入事致景運門咨文', ZBCDAZH, vol. 36, pp. 820-1.
[38] Ibid, p. 820.
[39] Ibid, p. 821.

entrants were made accordingly, one was kept in the Department whilst the other was sent to the office of the Gate of Great Fortune in order to verify the staff with tablets.[40]

Control of access to the Inner Court was even harsher. Even aristocrats and court officials were not permitted to enter into the quadrangle of the Gate of Heavenly Purity—the delimitation of 'outer audience' and 'inner court'—unless summoned. The Department was directly responsible for entrant verification of the Inner Court. Their officials were assigned to the offices of the two Inner Forbidden Gates, the Gate of Great Fortune and the Gate of Thriving Imperial Clan.[41] Unauthorised entrants would be executed by hanging.[42] Members of the Inner Court, mostly the emperors' concubines and court ladies, were strictly prohibited from leaving the area without the emperor's consent.[43] In 1782, Qianlong appended an extra clause to the rules regarding entrants' retinues, "military officials higher than rank two, civil officials no lower than rank three and those on duty can enter the Inner Court together with their entourages, but all the followers must remain standing 20 steps outside the Inner Forbidden Gates."[44] The number of members of an official's entourage was also strictly limited

[40] Ibid.
[41] XZCHDSL, vol. 8, p. 320.
[42] Ibid.
[43] The Qing Imperial Household Ministry, 1979, *Qinding gongzhong xianxing zeli* 欽定宮中現行則例 (Imperially endorsed regulations and precedents presently applied in the palace), Taipei: Wenhai Press, vol. 1, pp. 371-85.
[44] "自王以下文職三品、武職二品以上大員並內廷行走各官，所帶之人，準其至景運門、隆宗門外，在台階下二十步外停立。" See Cinggui 1932, p. 143.

based on rank. Even those of the highest rank could be accompanied by no more than ten retainers.[45] This demonstrates the seclusion, inaccessibility, and exclusiveness of the Inner Court, which naturally led to the concealment of the imperial collection within. Thus, the layering of imperial space directly reflected the hierarchical structures of the court.

Qianlong placed much of his collection deep within the Palace—the Inner Court—where the emperor and his family resided. This was the area where he was in the best position to control access to the objects, since as shown above, entry to this area was restricted to the imperial family and a few authorised officials and staff. In this regard, it was highly unlikely that the imperial collection was a propaganda tool for the emperor's authority, which would have required visibility. The packaging of the imperial collection, specifically the way in which the objects were managed and arranged, suggests that the emperor had no intention of displaying them except occasionally to members of a very narrow circle of those closest to him. Even his catalogues of his collection were not published until the Republican period.[46] The collection in its entirety was almost invisible, unknown to anyone other than Qianlong,

[45] Zhaoqing 兆慶 et al., 1870, *Qinding zongguan neiwufutan xianxing zeli* 欽定總管內務府堂現行則例 (Imperially endorsed current regulations and precedents of the Imperial Household Department), the collection of Harvard Yenching Library, *juan* 1, p. 3.
[46] Zhuang Yan 莊嚴, 2006, *Qiansheng zaoding Gugong yuan* 前生造定故宮緣 (The memoir of my stay in the Palace Museum), Beijing: the Forbidden City Press, p. 53.

some of his family members, and a few officials, and was therefore unlikely to be primarily an instrument of shaping the legitimacy of the regime. However, this closed system did propel Qianlong toward a leading role in defining the collection that constituted Chinese history through the practice of packaging, as seen in the previous chapter. Otherwise Qianlong would risk losing control over those objects if too many voices were involved. The emperor was not interested in receiving worldwide recognition for his collection, only the recognition from his close political and cultural associates.

3.4.2. The Qianlong Emperor's Methods of Housing the Imperial Collection

Apart from controlling access, Qianlong stored the collection in his living area to facilitate complete control of the objects, including their spatial organisation. The ways in which he housed the imperial collection can be divided into two broad types: a room designed to serve the needs of particular artworks or items, which was generally subject to no further changes once it had been created; and a building compound which performed various functions, one of which was housing artwork. In general, housing artworks of all types in a building compound seems to have been a more common use of imperial space. Artworks were transferred between the buildings from time to time, and they were likely repackaged when they were moved. Their storage space was

changed accordingly, like the repackaging of the imperial portraits in the Hall of South Wind discussed in Chapter 1. Qianlong defined or redefined the identities of objects by repackaging them and moving their storage locations. Through the process of repackaging, the meaning of the packaged item could be transformed, or its emphasis shifted.

It is precisely because of this packaging effect that viewing artworks in the imperial collection was the exception, not the norm, even for favoured officials. As the artworks were usually placed in the emperor's residence, which among many things, was used as a repository. Qianlong put considerable thought into accommodating different types of objects in a space. He made optimal use of different forms of packaging to arrange various objects, including paintings, calligraphy, porcelain, bronzes, and so forth. Through packaging, objects with different shapes were transformed and adjusted, in order to put them in an order and have them coexist with each other. Packaging helped him organise and store as many objects as possible in one room. In other words, the emperor combined assorted objects into a unified whole by means of spatial packaging, so the objects in each unit should be understood as a set, rather than a single piece. In addition, each type of artwork developed its own form of presentation, which enabled Qianlong to influence their packaging, and thereby use their histories to define his

position within them. This was a key reason behind the emperor's collection of miscellaneous objects.

The packaging of his collection in imperial buildings thus defined the actual arrangement conditions of the objects in space. The items were usually examined and ranked before their storage locations were determined. Then their packaging was designed after their position was chosen. This process allowed different objects to be placed together. In addition, certain sets of works were shaped to achieve an exceptional unity with their surroundings by being packaged in a room that was built specifically for them alone. The room was built to fit the set. The packaging or repackaging of works transformed them into an exceptional representation of the paradigm that Qianlong was creating.

3.4.2.1. A Building Compound as a Unit of Miscellaneous Collections: The Palace Compound of Heavenly Purity

The Palace of Heavenly Purity, the Hall of Mental Cultivation (*Yangxin dian* 養心殿), the Palace of Double Glory (*Chunghua gong* 重華宮), and Palace of Great Brilliance (*Jingyang gong* 景陽宮) had the highest concentrations of Qianlong's collected artworks (Fig. 15). The Palace of Heavenly Purity, in particular, played the lead in

housing these works. It was the largest hall compound of the three residential palaces (*housangong* 後三宮) in the Inner Court,[47] as well as the main palace of the imperial residency. This palace compound merits close attention, as it was where Qianlong's collections were most heavily concentrated. This palace originally served as emperors' chambers throughout the Ming and the early Qing dynasties, though the Hall of Mental Cultivation replaced it after the Kangxi period.[48] State affairs and imperial private lives were consolidated in both the palace and, later, the Hall of Mental Cultivation when the Qing took possession of the Forbidden City. The palace compound thus came to be a multifunctional construction of varied purposes, among which the collection of miscellaneous artworks was the brainchild of Qianlong.

Though by the Qianlong period the Palace of Heavenly Purity was no longer used for the emperor's chamber,[49] this site remained one of the most significant places for

[47] The compound of the three residential palaces echoed that of the three front halls in Outer Palace. It comprised the Palace of Heavenly Purity, and followed by the Hall of Union (*Jiaotai dian* 交泰殿) and the Palace of Earthly Tranquility (*Kunning gong* 坤寧宮).

[48] It was the tradition that emperors should reside in the Palace of Heavenly Purity whilst empresses lived in the Hall of Earthly Tranquillity in the Ming dynasty. The early Qing rulers, referred to the Shunzhi Emperor (r. 1643-61) and the Kangxi Emperor that the first two Qing emperors after Manchu army entered the Shanhai Pass and conquered almost all of China to the south of the Great Wall, adopted the convention until Yongzheng moved to the Hall of Mental Cultivation after his father Kangxi died. According to the Emperor Yongzheng's own proclamation, the reason why he decided not to follow the tradition to move in the Palace of Heavenly Purity after ascending the throne, was that the Palace was "where the former emperor had lived over sixty years 皇考六十餘年所御之宮殿", he hence "could not bear his sorrow and did not dare to live there 朕即居住其中心實不忍". See Prince Yunlu 允祿 et al., 1983-6, *[Shizong Xian Huangdi] Shangyu neige* [世宗憲皇帝]上諭內閣 (The imperial injunctions to the Grand Secretariat from the Yongzheng Emperor), vol. 1, reprinted in *Sikuquanshu*, vol. 414, p. 151.

[49] Since Yongzheng took the Hall of Mental Cultivation to be his chamber, the subsequent seven emperors all remained to live there. The hall became the Qing emperors' abode until the end of the dynasty.

politics and other duties of the Inner Court. Qianlong further transformed its buildings into a storage space for his collection. As a depository of various artworks, most of the four types of objects documented in the imperial catalogues were found here. The emperor rezoned this compound into compartments for the collection. He ordered the imperial wood workshop to manufacture sets of shelves with black lacquerware boxes at the very beginning of his reign.[50] This indicates that although the first imperial catalogue was not compiled until the eighth year of Qianlong's reign (1743), he had already launched a large-scale project to reorganise the objects through packaging.

3.4.2.1.1. The Layout and Interior of the Palace Compound of Heavenly Purity

The structure of the Palace of Heavenly Purity was comprised of fifteen rooms and three gates,[51] which together formed a circle (Fig. 16). The depository areas were distributed among the compound's buildings in: (1) the main building with the same title as the compound;[52] (2) the Halls of Manifesting Benevolence (*Zhaoren dian* 昭仁殿) and Expanding Virtue (*Hongde dian* 弘德殿) – the two auxiliary buildings of the main building; and (3) the Hall of Profuse Diligence (*Maoqin dian* 懋勤殿) – an annex building of the compound, which was situated in the forepart of the compound, close

[50] ZBCDAZH, vol. 7, pp. 67-8.
[51] Eertai 1987, p.223.
[52] The titles of the palace compounds in the Forbidden City were usually named after their main buildings.

to the main hall.

The main building was divided into three rooms: the central hall (*mingjian* 明間), and the eastern and western warmth chambers (*dong xi nuange* 東、西暖閣).[53] The depository space was in the two side chambers as the central hall was mainly taken up by a golden throne and a platform of considerable size (Fig. 17).[54] In order to accommodate so many objects of varied types, every wall of the two warmth chambers was covered by shelves (Fig. 18). The celestials' building (*xianlou* 仙樓), a room partitioned from a later loft conversion,[55] was also filled with shelves. Different sizes of shelves were ordered in succession from the imperial wood workshop from the first year to the third year of Qianlong's reign (1736-8).[56] Qianlong usually required the workshops to present the shelves' blueprints and models, as well as their materials, styles, and sizes, before they were produced, so that he could approve them. Works could not be carried out prior to his approval of the models.[57] The reason that the emperor was so particular about these shelves was that they were used to package very

[53] The warmth chamber referred to certain type of room with underground passage in which a fire could be lighted to warm the room. In northern China, the temperature is generally very low during wintertime. Therefore, the buildings in the north have usually been equipped with interior cavities that can be heated up using the fire from cooking stoves. This was also the case throughout the Forbidden City, especially auxiliary rooms of main halls as the rooms were rather small and easy to be warmed up. This type of room was thus called 'the warmth chamber (or room)'.
[54] The central hall of the Palace of Heavenly Purity was the main place for the emperor addressed affairs of state.
[55] ZBCDAZH, vol. 9, pp. 478-83.
[56] Ibid, vol.1 and 2.
[57] Ibid, vol. 7, p. 654.

particular items. They would thus be adjusted or replaced as soon as the items on them were transferred to another location.[58]

The shelves of the main building were designed to accommodate assorted things, including: the Imperial Commandments (*Shengxun* 聖訓),[59] Veritable Records (*Shilu* 實錄),[60] Jade Registers (*Yudie* 玉牒),[61] the imperial compositions (*Chenhan* 宸翰),[62] porcelains, paintings and calligraphy, bronzes, books, and seals.[63] These items all had diverse forms; every object was irregular in shape, except the books. Consequently, the emperor gave much thought on how to integrate them into the shelving system, with all their varied forms of packaging. The shelves were divided into compartments to categorise the objects. Starting from the bottom of the shelves on the western wall of the eastern warmth chamber, the ground level was furnished with drawers with handles. The next three levels included several chests decorated with dragon patterns (*longxiang* 龍箱) along with two compartments for the imperial compositions.[64] The top three levels were occupied with veritable records and the imperial commandments (Fig. 19).

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[58] Ibid, vol. 35, p. 366.
[59] The imperial commandments were the imperial family's traditional injunctions and instructions passed from generation to generation.
[60] The vertical records were a chronologically organised collection of the most important edicts issued during the Qing period.
[61] Jade registers were the genealogy of the Qing imperial family. Genealogies of the imperial lineal family were wrapped by red covers whilst those of imperial clan were yellow covers.
[62] The imperial compositions referred to the emperor's own works.
[63] Xu Ke 徐珂, 1917, *Qingbai leichao* 清稗類鈔 (A Qing anthology of petty matters), Beijing: Commercial Press, vol. 3, p. 662.
[64] The chest with dragon decoration was likely a kind of containers painted or carved with dragons, it was usually made of Chinese cedar or red sandalwood at Qianlong's court. ZBCDAZH, vol. 13, p. 675.

The shelving systems of the other three walls, the eastern wall of the eastern warmth chamber and the western and eastern walls of the western warmth chamber, were similarly arranged.[65]

3.4.2.1.2. The Housing of the Imperial Archives

The Imperial Commandments, veritable records, and jade registers were all bound in book-form and housed on those shelves. Their contents were all related to the Qing emperors' actions or the imperial household, so their packaging was designed with great care. The Imperial Commandments were first packaged in a book container with usually three to six books as a set, and the title and numbers of the volumes inside were marked on the top of a container (Fig. 20). The lid of the container was fastened with two bone pins, and then wrapped in a piece of yellow satin woven with a five-clawed dragon (Fig. 21-a). It was tied with a maroon ribbon and a red satin tag marking the serial number was attached to the top (Fig. 21-b). Lastly, the wrapped book containers were put on the shelves and arranged in chronological order (Fig. 19).

The Veritable Records and Jade Registers were organised in much the same way. They

[65] The shelves on the eastern wall of the eastern chamber were also divided into several levels, from the top to the bottom levels were taken up with Manchu veritable records, veritable records, and the imperial commandments. From the top to the bottom, the shelving systems on the eastern wall of the western warmth chamber were organized in the order of veritable records, the imperial commandments, the *Illustrated Standards of Ritual Objects of Our August Dynasty* (*Huangchao liqi tushi* 皇朝禮器圖式), dragon chests, and drawers.

were both placed in book containers and then wrapped in textiles (Figs. 22-a and 22-b), and the categories of Jade Registers were further distinguished by colours—the genealogies of the imperial clans were bound with red covers and wrapped in textiles of the same colour, while those of the imperial household were in yellow (Fig. 23).[66] Qianlong employed this colour classification approach to packaging on other items, which will be further described below. The multilayered protective packaging of the imperial archives demonstrated the great significance that was attached to them, and the outermost wrapper in particular ensured maximum protection for the materials. Qianlong specifically directed that valuable Chinese cedar be used for the shelves on which the Veritable Records were stored.[67]

Concealed in boxes underneath layers of wrapping as they were, the contents of the archive containers were easy to identify by their packaging. From the outside-in, the compartments of the seven-to-eight-tier shelving systems were classified by the contents of the archives. In the compartments the boxes were organized chronologically. Inside the boxes, the wrappers were all labelled with dockets and the names of the volumes were marked on their cases. In other words, each wrapping layer clearly

[66] Accordingly, the Jade Registers or members of the imperial household were commonly called 'yellow belt' (*huang daizi* 黃帶子), whilst those of the imperial clans were called 'red belt' (*hong daizi* 紅帶子).
[67] ZBCDAZH, vol. 7, p. 654.

disclosed what was wrapped, which enabled the users to search the archives easily and, as long as one was familiar with the system, not be hindered by the heavy wrapping. Qianlong used to read his predecessors', especially Kangxi's, commandments or veritable records in the early mornings in the room in which they were housed.[68] The frequency with which these massive archives were referenced necessitated a packaging method that was comprehensive yet easy to access. After all, the emperor could not be expected to wait for a long time while the eunuchs scrambled to locate the specific volumes he requests on a daily basis.

This shelving system was simple but effective, and this approach of affixing labels on the wrappers was straightforward. The archive and book depositories where walls were usually completely covered with high shelves of materials were arranged neatly in accordance with this practice of wrapping. The shelves, which were tiered and partitioned, stored archives and books that were carefully wrapped in vellum or cases and put into compartments. There were always tabs fastened to wrappers so that the contents could be identified even after they had been concealed in airtight packaging. Images of this type of system in use can also be found in the portrait-paintings of the Qing emperors in reading posture. In the portrait of Kangxi, we can see in the

[68] See Wu Shizhou 吳十洲, 2002, *Qianlong yiri* 乾隆一日 (A day of the Emperor Qianlong), Taipei: Yuanliu Press, pp. 83-96.

background shelves on which books are tidily packed, with a label attached to each book containers (Fig. 24). Apparently, labelling items was an effective way in organising and classifying the vast imperial belongings of the court. Qianlong also tended to make marks or affix labels on packaging when he managed certain types of collections, and he would have shelves and boxes prepared beforehand. The packaging scheme of porcelains in the Hall of Heavenly Purity is a case in point.

3.4.2.1.3. The Housing of Porcelain in the Imperial Collection

Qianlong used to order shelves and boxes for his porcelain collection in this hall, in order to determine the status of these works. Interestingly, the packaging played the leading role at the beginning, hundreds of boxes were first presented and the selected porcelains were then housed in the boxes.[69] According to Yu Peijin's 余佩瑾 study, from the third year to the eighth year of his reign (1738-43), the emperor organised two special groups of porcelain and boxed them in the Hall of Heavenly Purity: antique works and enamel painted and *famille rose* (*fencai* 粉彩) works recently made.[70]

[69] 'The selected porcelains that were stored in the Hall of Heavenly Purity shall be packaged aligning with the sizes of boxes submitted earlier. 乾清宮現有磁器，配合匣子大小盛裝。' ZBCDAZH, vol. 8, p. 149.

[70] Yu Peijin 余佩瑾, 2013a, 'Qianlong huangdi yu qinggong ciqi diancang 乾隆皇帝與清宮瓷器典藏 (the Qianlong Emperor and his organisation of the porcelain collection)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 369, pp. 44-55.

At the outset of this scheme, Qianlong asked the imperial workshop to submit around 758 boxes in different sizes and materials.[71] He further ordered the workshop to reform these boxes for the porcelains he was going to select later.[72] This was contrary to the emperor's usual packaging practice, where receptacles were supposed to be made according to the contents that they would so as to make sure they harmonise with their contents. However, from the description of the *Craft Archives*, this was not the case for the hundreds of porcelains in the hall, for in this instance their containers—boxes made of various kinds of woods—came first. It seems that not only had the boxes been made prior to any decisions regarding which items were to be selected and packaged, but the porcelains also had to be packed so as to work with the sizes of those pre-made boxes.[73] This may have been because it was necessary to dovetail the boxes for those porcelains with other items in the storage space. Apart from books, most other works like bronzes and ceramics were objects with irregular shapes. Therefore, Qianlong gave priority to the packaging itself and the measurements of the boxes, instead of the items that boxes would eventually hold so that the collection of porcelains could be positioned and arranged properly in the shelves with their boxes.

However, the situation changed and the containers were made to be adjusted to the

[71] Ibid, p. 46.
[72] ZBCDAZH, vol. 8, pp. 149-60.
[73] Ibid.

selected objects. When Qianlong expanded the packaging scheme of porcelains in the hall, the boxes for the porcelains were devised or adjusted after their contents had been selected. The packaging came to play an enabling and co-ordinating role in the process. It was not long after the scheme was initiated that the emperor further commanded that, all porcelains stored in the Hall of Mental Cultivation and the Palace of Brilliance should be submitted and classified; those which were selected should be repositioned in the Hall of Heavenly Purity after they were encased.[74] The selected objects were further ranked as first, second, and third class, and they were eligible for packaging (Fig. 25).[75] Their class and title were engraved on the boxes. The criteria for deciding the quality and thus class of each porcelain work seems to have been predominantly based on Qianlong's personal taste.

As stated in the archives, Yu finds that the emperor liked enamel painted porcelains and *famille rose* porcelains, as well as more contemporary works, namely those from the reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng, and in particular his own time.[76] She further argues that Qianlong intended to highlight the skilled craftsmanship of the high Qing by promoting the porcelains of the time in order to demonstrate that the Qing were unsurpassed by

[74] '再將重華宮、養心殿所有磁器亦交出選看，按等次歸入在[乾清宮]配匣磁器內。' Ibid, p. 150.
[75] Ibid, p. 151.
[76] Yu 2013a, pp. 44-6.

Western artisans in terms of technique. This was why he picked out those particular pieces and packaged them in this hall to form a purpose-built collection of porcelains, to demonstrate that the Qing works were just as good as those of foreigners.[77] Having said that, though, the screening, packaging, and placement of the porcelains all took place in the internal administration of the Forbidden City, meaning that it could hardly have been possible for the emperor to showcase advances in porcelain technology and craftsmanship to a large audience when only a severely limited number of people were involved in their display or had access to the collection.

3.4.2.1.4. The Housing of Paintings and Calligraphy in the Imperial Collection

Qianlong's catalogues and the shelving charts from the *Furnishing Archives* show that the shelves also housed the Qing emperors' paintings and calligraphic works, as well as those of other artists as documented in the catalogues of paintings and calligraphy. The charts in particular demonstrate an overarching scheme for the arrangement of assorted imperial artworks (Fig. 26). Chinese paintings and calligraphy were usually mounted in three different formats, namely album, handscroll, and hanging scroll.[78] Each format had its own mounting and presentational conventions, and their packaging

[77] Yu contends that the packaging for these two types of porcelain demonstrates that Qianlong placed great emphasis on the imperial production.
[78] The traditional materials for Chinese paintings or calligraphy were usually done on paper or silk, which both were easily damaged by tearing or folding. The works hence were required to be mounted in suitable formats in order to be presented and stored.

therefore differed accordingly. The shape of album leaves was a flat oblong,[79] hence the packaging for albums was often rectangular boxes or covers. Qianlong's essay on the seal of commemoration of his eightieth birthday (*Yuzhi bazheng maonian baoji* 御製八徵耄念寶記) was mounted in an album. This was stored in a cloisonné enamel box with the pedestal of a lotus (Fig. 27), and the top of its lid was inlaid with the gilded characters '*Xiang Yong Wu Fu* 嚮用五福' (enjoying the happy assembly of five generations). The box for this imperial essay implies that Qianlong was lucky enough to enjoy a five-generational gathering on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.[80] The formats of handscroll and hanging scroll were both in rolls,[81] so they had similar packaging. Scrolls were usually wrapped in several pieces of brocade (Fig. 28), and sometimes they were further packaged in a box (Fig. 29).

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[79] The album format can be tracked down to the "accordion leaves" used to mount sutras during the Tang period. However, the original mounting format was regarded as inconvenient for reading. The leaves were therefore cut along the folds into separate leaves. This woefully often led to the leaves being mixed up, they were hence assembled as an album. The album mounting has come in four types: the left-right "folding" (independent pages) and "butterfly" (a single piece) formats, the "shove-awning" opened top and bottom, and the "sutra leaf" with continuous accordion-fashion style. Mounters usually choose a format according to measurements of leaves. Although these mounting formats reflect different visual effects, the folding style of albums is the easiest way for preserving and appreciating works, so it has been the most common form for painting and calligraphy. See Tu Tzuhsiung 杜子熊, 1980, *Zhongguo shuhua zhuangbiao* 中國書畫裝裱 (The mounting of Chinese paintings and calligraphy), Shanghai: Shanghai Fine Arts Publishing House; Tu, 1989, *Shuhua chuanghuang* 書畫裝潢 (The art of mounting in Chinese paintings and calligraphy), Shanghai: Shanghai Fine Arts Publishing House; Cheng Chiang 成江, 2005, *Tan chuang shuo biao* 談裝說裱 (Discussions of mounting), Taiyuan: Shuhai Press.

[80] Qianlong was the only emperor in China that the life spanned long enough to enjoy, so he was extremely proud of it; he kept writing poems or essays to stress his prosperity.

[81] The handscroll was designed to be placed on a table and appreciated from right to left in a mounting rolled one section on each occasion. The frontispiece and endpiece in a mounting made a handscroll longer, which not only protected the work inside but also increased the length of the rolled scroll to ease tension that caused creasing and curling. Mounting hand scroll was complex and time-consuming as compared with other formats. The hanging scroll, as the name suggested, such vertical scrolls were meant to be hang on a wall to be appreciated. It could also be suspended on a pole. A hanging scroll was rolled from bottom to top, where a cord and clip were attached to keep scroll tight and avoid abrasion.

Paintings and works of calligraphy were arranged based on their mounting format. The positioning and storage of the works in the hall depended on the format of the work or its packaging. Qianlong kept these works in separate compartments for albums, handscrolls, and hanging scrolls, precisely the subcategorisations given in the catalogues of paintings and calligraphy, which will be discussed in next section.

3.4.2.1.5. The Housing of Bronzes in the Imperial Collection

Bronze articles may be the most significant item category in Qianlong's collection of antiquities. Though the four catalogues on bronzes are the only imperial catalogue without notation of storage location, the title Western Apartments (*xiqing* 西清) derived from the western warmth chamber of the Hall of Heavenly Purity implied at least some of the articles may have been stored here.[82] Also, unlike other catalogues, the compiling system of the bronze catalogues did not follow the organisation and packaging of the documented bronzes in the imperial halls. It may have been because the items had not yet been settled into place during cataloguing that the catalogues do not indicate the location of these objects. According to Xu Yuanting's 許媛婷 study, Qianlong had the bronze mirrors recorded in the bronze catalogues packaged and

[82] Cinggui 1932, *juan* 23, vol. 3 p. 371.

relocated just after the completion of the catalogues.[83] She therefore argues that the packaging of those bronze mirrors and their compilation were closely related and both the packaging of the bronzes and their cataloguing should considered part of the same scheme.

Unfortunately, we do not know the exact arrangement of the documented bronzes in the imperial buildings except for these mirrors. Right after the first bronze compilation project, Qianlong ordered some of the mirrors to be packaged into cases. There were in total ninety-three mirrors to be recorded in the first catalogue, and just thirty-two of them were packaged. From the sixteenth year to the twentieth year of the Qianlong reign (1751-5), the imperial workshops had produced two sets of mirror packaging, eight cases for each set and two mirrors for each case. The title of these cases was also named after the name of the catalogue.[84] The packaging of those mirrors was imaginative and deceptive (Fig. 30). The cases for bronze mirrors were usually made in the form of an album leaf (Fig. 31-a), in which wooden 'pages' were indented with one or two mirror-shaped hollows for containing the items. Each cut-out indentation could hold one mirror (Fig. 31-b). In the bottom of indentations were painted with

[83] Xu Yuanting 許媛婷, 2012, 'Tan Qianlong huangdi chibian sijian yu jingxia zhizuo 談乾隆皇帝敕編「四鑑」與鏡匣製作 (A discussion on the connection between Qianlong's bronze catalogues and the production of cases of bronze mirrors), *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 352, pp. 34-43.
[84] Ibid, p. 38.

images of its respective mirror. Each mirror was then covered with a yellow disc-shaped cushion and a wooden lid (Fig. 31-c). Information about the mirrors and the emperor's perceptions of them were written on pages and one side of the lids. On the page opposite the identation would be a landscape painting or a bird-and-flower painting (Fig. 31-d).

The inventive design of album-style cases made it so that the bronze mirrors appeared from the outside to be paintings, calligraphy, or books; it was not possible to tell whether a case contained a mirror without unpacking it. Moreover, the naming of this type of packaging followed the title of the catalogue that it was recorded in and this title would be put on the case covers (Fig. 31-a), further obscuring its contents. It makes sense, then, that the packaging of the bronze mirrors actually stressed the unpacking of the items. When one opens such a casing, first a painting that occupied one whole page and the wooden lid on the other page would be in view (Fig. 30). Only by removing the lid and silk cushion could the essential part of its contents, the back of the mirrors, be revealed and appreciated. Taking out the mirror from the hollow and flipping the page over, there would ultimately be colour illustrations and mirror's information on one page (Fig. 31-b), and the painting on the first whole page can be again appreciated from a different perspective, the hollow. This enjoyable and surprising presentation of bronze mirrors begins with the deceptive album-style cases and ends after the packaging is

unwrapped layer by layer; or the other way round, one first unpacks the packaging and then sees the book form. Either way, through this process, the impact of illusive appearances is made manifest and the experiential agency of unpacking was foregrounded.

3.4.2.1.6. Summary

Qianlong liked to use the imperial buildings that he most frequently stayed in as storerooms for his collection, so that he could keep a close eye on its organisation. He also liked to use packaging to organise different types of objects in the same space. The harmony of the objects and their settings was always a great concern to the emperor. This was particularly evident when he arranged special collections.

3.4.2.2. A Single Room for a Particular Group of Objects

Aside from housing various items together in a hall compound, Qianlong also developed another storage system in which a room was designed exclusively for housing certain item or artworks. He showed a strong tendency to choose items that he prized from the imperial collection, making room for them and positioning them (and consequently their storage spaces) in a manner befitting items and spaces of high prestige. These objects were usually transferred from different storage places. They

would then be rebuilt as new collections. These artworks, as well as their housing places, were in a sense repackaged and reshaped into bodies of new paradigms of Chinese art history.

3.4.2.2.1. The Library of Resplendent Jewel Bestowed by Heaven

The Library of the Resplendent Jewel Bestowed by Heaven (*Tianlu linlang* 天祿琳琅) was Qianlong's collection of rare books of the Song (960-1297), Yuan (1271-1368), and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties. He launched the organisation of rare books in the imperial collection in 1744. This collection was further recorded in the Catalogue of Resplendent Jewel Bestowed by Heaven (*Tianlu linlang shumu* 天祿琳琅書目) under the supervision of Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (1714-79), a very senior official on the Grand Council, in 1775.[85] Four hundred and twenty-nine book sets were selected for the library and catalogue.[86] The study of the book collection mainly focuses on its catalogue and the current circulation of those books, namely the study of editions of Chinese ancient books.[87] The discussion here examines how the collection was

[85] Yu Minzhong et al., 1968, *[Qinding] Tianlu linlang shumu* [欽定]天祿琳琅書目 ([imperially endorsed] catalogue of resplendent jewel bestowed by heaven), Taipei: Kwangwen Book Company, p. 3.
[86] Books of the Song were ninety-two sets whilst those of the Yuan and the Ming were eighty-five and 252 sets respectively.
[87] *Tianlu linlang* has been studied in Qianlong's preference for books and their versions other than the compiling structure of the catalogue. Yang Guolin 楊果霖, 2013, 'Tianlu linlang shumu jianbie banke youlie zhi faxilun《天祿琳琅書目》鑒別版刻優劣之法析論 (Bibliography of "Tianlu linlang": critique on the methods of discriminating versions)', *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 10, pp. 1-23; Yang, 2006, 'Tianlu linlang shumu kaoding weiben tushu fangfa xilun《天祿琳琅書目》考訂偽本圖書方法析論 (The analysis of checking pseudograph ways in Tianlu linlang Bibliography)', *Bibliography Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 9-29; Yang, 2012, 'Tianlu linlang shumu kaobian guji banben fangfa shuping《天祿

organised in the library.

Qianlong commanded the ministers of the Hanlin Academy to select ancient books of high quality from the court. After this group of rare books had been selected from amongst the collection, he had them placed as a group on shelves in the Hall of Manifesting Benevolence, one of the auxiliary halls of the Palace of Heavenly Purity. This room was originally Kangxi's study and also the hall where his grandson, the future Qianlong Emperor, studied.[88] Perhaps it was in memory of his grandfather and the time that they spent studying together there that Qianlong favoured using this hall for reading rare books. Unfortunately, the library along with its collection was destroyed in a fire of 1797. Qianlong commanded the ministers led by Peng Yuanrui 彭元瑞(1731-1803) to reconstruct the book collection at the same room in the same year. The reconstructed collection was again catalogued as the Supplement of the Catalogue of Resplendent Jewel Bestowed by Heaven (*Tienlu linlang shumu hobian* 天祿琳琅書目後編). Six hundred and twenty-nine sets were selected for the later collection. Based on the comparison of the two catalogues, the arrangement of the rebuilt collection

琳琅書目》考辨古籍版本方法述評 ("Tianlu linlang book collection" a commentary on discrimination method of ancient book versions)', *National Central Library Bulletin*, vol. 1, pp. 23-50; Liu Meiling 劉美玲, 2007, *Tianlu linlang gianlong yulan zhi bao* 天祿琳琅：乾隆御覽之寶 (The Tienlu linlang library: treasured rare books of the Ch'ing inner court), Taipei: National Palace Museum.

[88] Qianlong and his grandfather Kangxi were on intimate terms since his age of twelve. Kangxi was struck by the grandson's intelligence and brought him into the Forbidden City to raise him in person. Emperor Qianlong therefore adored his grandfather and regarded him as a role model throughout his lifetime.

followed the original one.

The ancient books selected for this room were rebound and repackaged with different coloured covers for ranking purposes. The books of the Song and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties were bound with brocade covers (Fig. 32), whilst those of Yuan and Ming periods were bound in blue and brown silk, respectively (Fig. 33).[89] They were shelved in chronological order, and within each era the books were further arranged by a four-category classification: classics (*jing* 經), histories (*shi* 史), masters (zi 子), and collections (*ji* 集) (Fig. 34). By housing these precious rare books, the hall was transformed into a library of precious and rare antique books (Fig. 35). Its status was then higher than other imperial libraries. Consequently, the name *Tianlu linlang* not only referred to this collection or the catalogue but also applied to the hall as a library.

3.4.2.2.2. The Study of Three Rarities

The effect of exclusive housing on artworks made the peculiarities of the housed objects evident and raised their prestige in the hierarchy of items in the imperial collection. The most eminent room was perhaps the Study of Three Rarities (*Sanxi tang* 三希堂), which was designed to hold three rare pieces of Chinese calligraphy. Through a subtle play on

[89] "其宋金板及影宋鈔皆函以錦，元板以藍色綈，明板以褐色綈，用示差等。" Yu 1968, p. 7.

words, the emperor used the preciousness and rareness of these calligraphic works to convert them into the very incarnation of the virtues he was aiming for. In order to achieve this effect, he had to remove those works from the imperial collection and the initial repository, and 'package,' or situate, them in a collection pregnant with meaning. This small study room, the housing place of the rarities, thereby became where the emperor would go to cultivate and educate himself to become that ideal person who was in communion with Heaven.

This study room was located in the westernmost space of the Hall Compound of Mental Cultivation (Fig. 36),[90] Qianlong's chamber as well as another one of the main treasuries of his collections.[91] By housing his most prized artworks in this study, it became the most prestigious space at the court. The emperor must have been racking his brain to organise this small space for his treasures. The three calligraphic works were the *Timely Clearing after Snowfall* (*Kuaixue shiqing tie* 快雪時晴帖) by Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-61), the *Mid-Autumn Festival* (*Zhongqiu tie* 中秋帖) by Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344-86), and the *Letter to Boyuan* (*Boyuan tie* 伯遠帖) by Wang Xun 王珣 (350-401) (Fig. 37). Wang Xizhi was the most noted Chinese calligrapher in

[90] "養心殿西室為三希堂。" Eertai 1987, p. 531.

[91] As stated previously, the Hall of Mental Cultivation became the Qing emperors' place of residence since Qianlong's father, the Yongzeng Emperor. Here then came to be the place where eight emperors lived and dealt with state affairs and where numerous significant events took place.

history, the calligraphic style of the Wang family has been perceived as one of models of Chinese calligraphy. Their original works were very rare by the Qing period. The works of *Timely Clearing after Snowfall* and *Mid-Autumn Festival* were originally present in the imperial collection of calligraphy and they were stored in the Hall of Mental Cultivation and the Imperial Study Studio (*Yushufang* 御書房) respectively.[92] The emperor was so fond of them that he had written a number of colophons on the works and had the initial calligraphic sheets, which were just the size of a letter, made into a very long album and a handscroll (Fig. 38).[93]

In 1746, Qianlong acquired the last work of the trio, the *Letter to Boyuan*. The emperor, extremely excited that he was now the owner of works by the three greatest calligraphers in the Chinese history, immediately called for the other two works from the Hall of Mental Cultivation and the Imperial Study Studio to accompany the new acquisition and made room to collectively display these three calligraphic sheets in deepest part of the western chamber of the Hall Compound of Mental Cultivation, that is to say in the Study of Three Rarities.[94] He further commanded Dong Bangda 董邦

[92] *Shiqu baoji* 1983-6, *juan* 1 p. 1; *juan* 3, p. 1.
[93] Qianlong had written sixty-nine colophons and composed two paintings on the *Timely Clearing after Snowfall*, which only contained twenty-eight characters, within around fifty years, from the age of thirty-five to his old age. See Chen Baozhen 陳葆真, 2009, 'Qianlong huangdi yu kuaixue shiqing tie 乾隆皇帝與《快雪時晴帖》(The Emperor Qianlong and Written after Snow)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 127-92.
[94] '乾隆丙寅春月，獲王珣此帖，遂與快雪、中秋二跡並藏養心殿溫室中，顏曰：「三希堂」。' Prince Yongrong 永瑢 and Ji Yun 紀昀 et al., 1983, *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (The

達 (1699-1769), his close minister and a well-known literati painter, to paint a landscape painting addressing the theme of this collection to furnish the room in the same year (Fig. 39).[95]

This study room was very small, covering an area of merely eight-square metres.[96] Qianlong, however, adopted his usual practice of using different types of packaging—boxes were in the majority—to accommodate as many objects as possible. Based on the *Furnishing Archives* of 1802, there were over a hundred objects placed in the very cramped room.[97] Moreover, the emperor applied visual and architectural illusions to expand the space. Zhang Shuxian 張淑嫻 has used the records of the *Craft Archives* accompanying the restoration scheme of the Hall of Mental Cultivation initiated in 2016 by the Palace Museum in Beijing to illustrate Qianlong's spatial development of the Study of Three Rarities.[98] This small room was divided into two spaces with sill wall windows (*kanchuang* 檻窗) (Fig. 40). A lattice-work archway (*feizhao* 飛罩) projected from the walls (Fig. 41). These construction components did not really separate the

description of the complete books of the four storehouses), Taipei: the Commercial Press, vol. 113, p. 41.
[95] ZBCDAZH, vol. 14, p. 567.
[96] The interior of the Study of Three Rarities was two metres in width, six in length, and two metres high.
[97] The Palace Museum ed., 2013, *Gugong bowuyuan cang qinggong chenshe dangan* 故宮博物院藏清宮陳設檔案 (furnishing archives of the Qing palace in the collection of the Palace Museum), vol. 11, pp. 137-45.
[98] Zhang Shuxian 張淑嫻, 2016, '*Sanxitang de kongjian gousi* 三希堂的空間構思 (The spatial design of the Study of Three Rarities)', *the Forbidden City*, vol. 12, pp. 120-35.

room, yet they created visual depth and made the cramped room look spacious. Such spatial planning was fashionable in the interior of Qing imperial buildings (Fig. 42). Also, the west wall of the rear space was pasted with a scenic illusion painting (*tongjing hua* 通景畫) by Jin Tingbiao 金廷標 (?-1767) and Castiglione (Fig. 43),[99] which enabled the extension of space.[100] Since the painting was located in the entrance to the study room, Qianlong would not necessarily have felt constrained when he entered the room from its entrance that connected it to the Hall of Diligent Government and Closeness to the Worthies (*Qinzheng qinxian diang* 勤政親賢殿) (Fig. 44), where the emperor often received close ministers. The scenic illusion paintings were another popular style of interior design at Qianlong's court.[101] Moreover, the west wall of the front space was installed with a ceiling mirror to visually extend the space (Fig. 45). Those spatial design made the small study room look not so small at all.

Although, the room was nevertheless cramped for practical purposes, Qianlong still managed to place over a hundred objects in it through packaging. Only ten or more

[99] ZBCDAZH, vol. 29, p. 539.
[100] According to the *Craft Archives*, the original scenic illusion paintings of the Hall of Three Rarities had a bias towards the Western decorative painting style trompe l'oeil. However, they were gradually sinicized from the mid Qianlong reign. This tendency was also reflected in the overall scenic illusion paintings of Qianlong's court. See Kleutghen, Kristina 李啟樂, 2012, 'Tongjinghua yu langshining yichan yanjiu 通景畫與郎世寧遺產研究 (Scenic illusion paintings and the Castiglione legacy)', *the Palace Museum Journal*, vol. 3, pp. 77-88; Zhang Shuxian, 2014, 'Cong sanxitang tongjinghua kan gianlong shiqi huanggong tongjinghua de yanbian 從三希堂通景畫看乾隆時期皇宮通景畫的演變 (The transformation of trompe l'oeil paintings of the Qianlong era based on the study of trompe l'oeil painting in the Hall of Three Rarities)', *the Journal of Gugong Studies*, vol. 1, pp. 205-24.
[101] The study of scenic illusion paintings at the Qing court, see Kleutghen, Kristina, 2015, *Imperial Illusions: Crossing Pictorial Boundaries in the Qing Palaces*, Seattle: University of Washington Press.

objects were kept in the rear space (Fig. 46), the majority were in the front space and it was smaller than the rear one. Therefore, Qianlong spent more thought on decorating it to accommodate all the objects, such as adding window ledges (*xianyuban* 閑餘板) for holding vessels (Fig. 47).[102] It was furnished with only a *kang* table, a cushion throne, and a low cabinet (Fig. 48). It was, however, decorated with numerous antiques and valuable curios like jade ornamental sceptres, lacquer works, and porcelain,[103] all of which served to accentuate the space that the three rare calligraphic works occupied. According to the records, the three pieces in the forms of two scrolls and one album were jointly stored in a red sandalwood box.[104] They are now separately collected in the Palace Museums in Taipei and Beijing and the original box has been lost.

Through the housing of these three works, Qianlong expressed his longing for an association with Heaven. The word *sanxi* 三希 (three rarities) originally referred to three ideal values expected to be achieved by Chinese intellectuals. In Chinese literature, *sanxi* indicated that a scholar was expected to be a wise man, a wise man in turn was expected to be a sage, and a sage was expected to be a person who knows Heaven's manifest will.[105] Qianlong's subtle play on words allowed him to add and transform

[102] ZBCDAZH, vol. 30, 398.
[103] QQCSDA, vol. 11, pp. 143-4.
[104] Ibid.
[105] '士希賢，賢希聖，聖希天。' Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, 1992, *Tongshu* 通書 (Penetrating the scripture of change), Shanghai: Shanghai Rarebooks Publishing House, p. 271.

the significance of the three precious works as well as the space that housed them. Being their collector enabled the emperor to use their characteristics to cultivate his relationship with Heaven in this study. Perhaps to provide appropriate solitude for reflection, partition walls were built in the portico outside the room to prevent others peeping into it (Fig. 49). The entrance to the room was covered with a curtain,[106] as the hall connected to the Hall of Diligent Government and Closeness to the Worthies. The study room was a completely secret space for Qianlong to appreciate his collection. According to Wu Shizhou's 吳十洲 study, the emperor usually spent two hours daily on art appreciation in this particular room from five to seven in the afternoon.[107]

The room also developed into a space that represented calligraphy's highest ideals and a symbol for artworks of great quality at the court. In 1747, the year after the inauguration of this room, Qianlong compiled the *Model Calligraphy of the Hall of Three Rarities* (*Sanxitang fatie* 三希堂法帖). This was a comprehensive anthology of models of Chinese calligraphy from all the past dynasties. This compilation, clearly inspired by the housing of these great calligraphic works, went on to play a leading role in the imperial collection of calligraphy and paintings. Calligraphic works that were identified as first rate would later all be marked with the imperial seal of this room (Fig.

[106] ZBCDAZH, vol. 29, pp. 632-3.
[107] Wu 2002, pp. 203-28.

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3.4.3. Summary

Qianlong placed his collection deep inside the Forbidden City in his living area, where he would have minimised outside interference with his arrangement. The way in which he organised his collection changed frequently according to how he chose to package his items. Nevertheless, the imperial buildings, as storerooms for the objects, showed a certain pattern of usage. A specific room would be made into an exclusive space for certain works once the emperor determined that they were of exceptional value, or if he desired to establish a dominant paradigm of virtues that he would like to extol or achieve in them. Through spatial packaging, the emperor was able to engage in the intellectual exercise of putting together various combinations of works. The same was also true for the packaging of varied objects within a building compound, which involved more considerations for the packaging format of each type of object. Additionally, detailed attention needed to be paid to the interaction of objects with their surroundings, since the rooms were not just mere storage facilities. To reconcile these aspects, a shelving system seems to have been Qianlong's most common solution. The system brought together different forms of packaging for a variety of objects, and through this system the items could be neatly arranged in space. In the emperor's

perception, the spatial packaging of the imperial buildings had played a crucial role in housing his collection. He organised the imperial artefacts in accordance with the locations of the buildings, as well as their spatial layout. The uses of the imperial space were reflected in the storage of those objects.

3.5. 'Unpacking' the Palace and Imperial Collection Inside: The Use of Space by Manchu Emperors

The secrecy of the imperial collection and its spaces gave Qianlong the discretionary power to determine who could penetrate the area and access the objects. The concealment represented the first half of the Qing emperors' secrecy operation, which was designed for later revelation and to maximise the revealing effect. As the secret memorial system, in spatial packaging of the Forbidden City, concealing the objects or emperors themselves was not to make something hidden completely invisible, but to control to whom the emperors revealed and what and how to reveal.

Manchu emperors made optimal use of the inherited spatial layout to control the level of secrecy, developing differing forms of emperor-subject relationship. For them, the concealment of emperors in China provided an excellent opportunity for their revealing acts. The imperial collection was placed deep in the Palace, which enabled Qianlong to

maintain access control. The effects of this secrecy were fully exploited by the emperor for the revelation of his collection. He established and implemented well-designed activities for improving the revelation performance, by which Qianlong granted privilege to those who were allowed to engage in the activities. This section examines Qianlong's revelation of the imperial collection in this area, as well as the divulgence of Qing emperors themselves outside the Palace.

3.5.1. The Marriage of State Affairs with the Personal Lives of the Manchu Emperor

The line between public and private affairs drawn by the two quarters—the Outer Palace and the Inner Court—was more defined earlier in the Ming dynasty, whereas this line was more blurred in the Qing period. Some rooms of the Inner Court were where the Qing emperors administered state affairs and received officials. This indicates that Manchu rulers were less secretive than the earlier Chinese emperors. Generally speaking, the Ming emperors kept official and private spaces separate from each other. The Inner Court was strictly the private residential area of the imperial family, while state business was concentrated in the Outer Palace. However, the Qing emperors moved the major part of government affairs to their living area,[108] mostly

[108] The living style of the Manchu people reflected the characteristic that public affairs were usually united with family affairs, the two were consolidated for greater efficiency. This point also manifested in the court of the Manchu emperors, they tended to handle affairs of state in the abode area.

into the Palace of Heavenly Purity and the Hall of Mental Cultivation. The division between public and private spaces of the Ming was, thus, blurred to a considerable extent in the Qing residential area—the three audience halls in the Outer Palace served only for grand ceremonies during the Qing dynasty.[109] Though even then, state affairs were still confined to the front of the Inner Court.

The most prominent change in space utilisation was the location of the emperor's morning audience. The venue was changed from the Outer Palace to the Inner Court. One of the main duties of emperors in China was regularly holding court meetings with government officials in order to discuss state affairs. In the Ming dynasty, this Formal Audience and Listening to the Reports at the Imperial Gate (*Changchao yumen yi* 常朝御門儀) was held at the square in front of the Gate of Great Harmony (*Taihemen* 太和門), the portal of the Outer Palace. The audience process was well ordered:

> Beginning with drums on Meridian Gate, the rite demands officials to line up outside the gate and not walk in until the bell ring. Officials then should follow the rank sequence and the division of civil and military to enter and pass the Inner Golden River to reach the Gate of Great

[109] The Qing emperors held grand ceremonies including the emperor's birthday, the Winter Solstice, lunar New Year's Day, enthroning, wedding, and titling the empress.

> Harmony. Ministers must stand in their positions based on their rank along both sides of the road to the steps. The emperor appearing, whips are to be lashed resonantly, then officials should kneel down to pay respect to the emperor and present memorials in order. After all the presentations, whips lashed again, the emperor leaves and then the officials withdraw from the square in sequence.[110]

This rite, Listening to the Reports from Officials at the Imperial Gate (*Yumen tingzheng* 御門聽政), and the rules were adopted by the Qing court, but the location was changed to the emperor's residence, specifically to the square in front of the Gate of Heavenly Purity that led into the imperial residential area and separated the Outer Palace and the Inner Court.

This change led the Manchu emperors to address state affairs in their residential area, and thus some high-ranking officials were given the opportunity to access part of the Inner Court. From the Kangxi period, the rite of Listening to the Reports was normally held every day, starting at dawn during the spring and summer, and 7 am during the

[110] '凡早朝，鼓起，文武官各於左右掖門外序立。候鐘鳴開門，各以次進。過金水橋，至皇極門丹墀，東西相向立。候上御寶座，鳴鞭，文武官俱入班，行一拜三叩頭禮。各衙門應奏事件，以次奏訖。事畢，鳴鞭，駕興，百官以次出。' Li Dongyang 李東陽 et al., 1986, *Daming huidian* 大明會典 (A collection of official statutes of the Ming dynasty), Taipei: Wenhai Press, vol. 44, p. 513.

autumn and winter.[111] The emperor would issue the gathering command to the Cabinet Ministers, who would then inform the officials to prepare for it. When the time came, a set of fittings were positioned including a throne, a table, a back screen, and felt kneelers for officials to use as they made their presentations. Officials gathered in waiting rooms for the emperor's order to attend the gathering in the *Qianqing men* square (Fig. 51). After the officials had taken their positions, the emperor arrived in a sedan chair from his chamber. One by one the officials knelt down on the kneelers, presented their reports to the emperor and returned to their original positions. After the presentations concluded, the emperor first departed, and then the officials.[112] This gathering at the imperial gate was seen as of the greatest importance by the Qing emperors. It was intended to show their diligence in ruling and their concern for their people.

Besides, the main halls of the Palace of Heavenly Purity and the Hall of Mental Cultivation, the Qing emperors' chamber also served as a reception area.[113] They were thus furbished as antechambers with a throne set at the centre (Figs. 17 and 52). From the Yongzheng period, the Hall of Diligent Government and Close to Worthies—the small room connected the main hall of the Hall of Mental Cultivation with the Study of

[111] RZRHDSL, *juan* 103, p. 5123; *juan* 115, p. 5756.
[112] See Prince Yuntao 1983, vol. 21, pp. 9-10.
[113] Cinggui 1932, *juan* 54, p. 312.

Three Rarities—was for meeting with grand minsters and high-ranking officials.[114] A list of provincial officials was hanging on its west wall during the Qianlong reign.[115] As the room was so close to the emperor's personal space, the visitors were usually confined to a few favourite courtiers and high-ranking officials when they were summoned.

When the Qing emperors needed to meet with officials of lower ranks, they also used to meet them in his living area, rather than in the relative open space in the Outer Palace. The emperor would have a name list for the officials he wanted to receive; he then summoned them into the room one by one. Eunuchs led the officials to the duty room where they waited for the emperor's summons but eunuchs were not allowed to be near the room during the meetings, and were strictly forbidden to talk with the officials.[116] But they were also required to stand in the spot where they could hear the emperor's call, in order to lead the next summoned official to the room.[117]

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[114] 'The linked verse of the Hall of Mental Cultivation 養心殿聯句', recorded in Yongyan 顒琰, 2000, *Qingrenzong yuzhishiji* 清仁宗御製詩 (The anthology of imperial Jiaqing poems), reprinted in the Palace Museum eds., *Gugong zhenben congkan* 故宮珍本叢刊 (Collectanea of precious books from the Palace Museum), Haikou: Hainan Press, vol. 571, p. 371.

[115] Wu Zhenyu 吳振棫, 2005, *Yangjizhai conglu* 養吉齋叢錄 (A collection of records from Auspiciousness Fostering Studio), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, *juan* 17, p. 3.

[116] GZCHDSL, *juan* 693, pp. 52584-6.

[117] See *Shiluguan* 實錄館, 1936, *Xuantong zhengji* 宣統政紀 (Veritable records of the Xuantong period), Shenyang: Liaohai Publishing House, vol. 3, pp. 175-6.

The Manchu emperors preferred to tackle administrative matters in their living area, and thus the Inner Court was more accessible than during the Ming dynasty. Therefore, their control over both access to the area and individuals' acts in this area had tightened accordingly. Qianlong further used this control to employ his collection stored here.

3.5.2. The Contact between the Qing Emperors and Their Subjects

Manchu emperors transformed their revealing action into a performance, which usually involved innovative schemes or dramatic reactions and maximised the agency of secrecy. Through this operation, they better defined and adjusted their relationships with their subjects, which was often related to how both sides interacted. There were only two ways by which such interaction was initiated: officials entered the palaces, or the emperor made a tour of inspection. The former was the norm of the emperor's contact with his subjects and was confined to a rather small number of people. On the other hand, the emperor rarely left his palaces and his contact with the subjects outside was often a one-off, which thus commonly caused a strong reaction. The emperor took the initiative in either way.

3.5.2.1. Qianlong's Revelation of His Collection: Entering the Inner Court

The secrecy with which Qianlong treated his collection was, in part, tailored for its

revelation, which was the most alluring and powerful phase of the secrecy process. Accordingly, the moment of revealing usually necessitated special arrangements like rituals. Qianlong indeed planned some activities for unveiling his collection and works, which allowed him to decide what and how to show and to whom he showed the objects. Very often, the act of revealing was given more weight than what was unveiled. These activities often took place in the Palace Compound of Double Glory, one of the palaces that contained the highest concentration of Qianlong's collection. The emperor used this palace to perform the activities such as Conferring the Imperial Calligraphy of the Character *Fu* (*Shangci fuzi yi* 賞賜福字儀).[118]

Manchu emperors allowed some officials, to a limited extent, to enter their living area not only for state affairs but also for art business and activities. It should be noted, however, that access to the area where the imperial collection was housed in no way translated into access to the collection, which required further invitation from the emperor. The Shunzhi Emperor (r. 1643-61) had specially invited Xu Wenyuan 徐文元 (1634-91), Ye Fangai 葉方藹 (1629-82) and Hua Yixiang 華亦祥 (1624-65)—who were graded as the top three in the palace examination (*Dianshi* 殿試) of 1659—to view the collection of the Palace of Heavenly Purity.[119] The collection viewing

[118] See Eertai 1987, *juan* 5, pp. 65-6.
[119] Xu Ke 1917, vol. 1, p. 53. It should be noted that the anthology states that the invited viewers were

included books in various categories, ancient bronze vessels, ceramics of the Song official kilns, seals, paintings, and over a hundred potted plants. In the same way Qianlong used to hold periodic activities to invite his political and cultural associates to appreciate his collection.

Those activities were created for the ritualised presentation of various aspects of Qianlong and his objects that were rarely seen. They were the emperor's revealing performance, hence the sophisticated and refined process. He only invited a small circle of courtiers and family members that were friendly with him. The venue was also set in the buildings where even these close associates had no access, the rear of the Inner Court. Consequently, Qianlong made it rather private to limit the revelation. Among them, the tea party in the Palace of Double Glory, which was located deep in the Inner Court and to the west of the Imperial Garden (Fig. 15), was the most significant activity. The palace compound was his residence when he was the crown prince; the emperor had lived here for nine years until he ascended the throne.[120] It was then refurbished for his leisure activities.

Xu Wenyuan 徐文元, Zhang Ruoai 張若藹, and Hua Yixiang 華亦祥. However, Zhang was born in 1713 and it was not possible for him to attend the viewing. Thus, it could be a slip of the pen, the author meant to write Ye Fangai 葉方藹, not Zhang Ruoai 張若藹. Ye was a distinguished graduate of the palace examination in the same year as Xu and Hua. It would be logical to assume, therefore, that Ye was the third official who was invited to Shunzhi's viewing.

[120] Yongzheng granted this building compound to Hongli in 1727. Hongli married Lady Fuca, the later Empress Xiaoxianchun, at the palace in the same year. Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983-6, *the Fifth Collection*, *juan* 85, p. 5.

This palace was a very private space of Qianlong's. Officials were thus most privileged when they were invited to visit here. Starting in 1743, the emperor would choose an auspicious day in the first month of the Lunar Year to invite some nobles and officials from the Grand Secretariat and Hanlin Academy to a tea party in the palace.[121] The number of invitees ranged between twelve to over thirty, and then settled on eighteen in 1766, which may echo the theme of the eighteen scholars' literati gathering. However, the number later increased to twenty-eight.[122] The eighteen scholars refers to when Emperor Taizong of Tang established the Institute of Education (*Wenxueguan* 文學館) in his residence to recruit eighteen top scholars when he was the Prince of Qin. This activity became a popular motif in Chinese paintings and such paintings were also produced at Qianlong's court.[123] They usually depict a group of literati gathering together for art activities like writing verses, appreciating works of art, and drinking tea (Fig. 53). This was what Qianlong did with his close associates during the tea party. It is interesting to note that the court paintings regarding the eighteen scholars were often stored in this same palace.

[121] Cinggui 1932, *juan* 46, p. 22.
[122] Shen Chu 沈初, 1967, *Xiqing biji* 西清筆記, reprinted in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編, Taipei: The Commercial Press, vol. 2966, p. 83.
[123] Qiu Shihua 邱士華, 2015, 'Qing yuanben shibaxueshitu shangxi 清院本十八學士圖賞析(on Qing court version of the eighteen scholars)', *the National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 385, pp. 64-76.

Who were Qianlong's 'eighteen scholars' that he shared his private space with? The tea party was designed for the emperor to reveal some objects of his collection and to have these intellectuals endorse his views. Therefore, the invitees were usually the same group of officials who helped him organising his collection.[124] The invitees for the tea party of 1745 included:[125] Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672-1755) who served under three emperors, Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong, and was especially favoured by Yongzheng; Liu Tongxun 劉統勳 (1698-1773) who was highly praised by Qianlong for his integrity and excelled in water control; Liang Shizheng 梁詩正 (1697-1763) who was often ordered to write Qianlong's verses on the emperor's behalf; and Wang Youdun 汪由敦 (1692-1758) who was noted for his calligraphy and literature. Unlike Liang and Wang who were appreciated for their talent for art, Zhang and Liu were the head of senior ministers. Besides, the four were all Han Chinese. The invitees for the next year included: Prince Yunlu 允祿 (1695-1767) who was Qianlong's respected uncle;[126] Prince Yuntao 允裪 (1686-1763) who was also Qianlong's respected uncle; Prince Hongzhou 弘晝 (1712-70) who was Qianlong's younger brother; and Prince

[124] For Qianlong's literati group that assisted him in organising his collection, see Shi and Feng 2002.
[125] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983-6, *the First Collection*, *juan* 24, pp. 1-4.
[126] When Qianlong was nurtured by his grandfather Kangxi at the court, his daily life was taken care of by Yunlu's mother the Court Lady Mi (*Mi pin* 密嬪, 1668-1744). Qianlong and Yunlu were together educated by Kangxi for a short while at the time. See Chen Jiexian 陳捷先, 2002, *Qianlong xiezhen* 乾隆寫真 (A portrait of the Qianlong Emperor), Taipei: Yuanliu Press, p. 63.

Hongyan 弘瞻 (1733-65) who was Qianlong's youngest brother and was raised at the emperor's court. They were often on the invitation list of Qianlong's tea party. The invitees were those who engaged in the emperor's collecting activities and their works were often seen in the inscriptions of the imperial collection and its packaging.

How did this small circle of officials approach Qianlong's private space? The emperor devised a systematic procedure for the tea party.[127] A list of qualified officials would be submitted to the emperor for his selection to the party. The invitees were selected from four groups: (1) the Grand Council, (2) the Study (*Shang shufang* 上書房), (3) the Southern Study,[128] and (4) the grand secretaries, chief ministers, imperial censors, and vice ministers of the Outer Court.[129] When the invitation list was determined, the chosen officials would be informed by the officers of the Office for Memorials (*Zhoushichu* 奏事處). On the day of the tea party, the invitees were required to gather in front of the Gate of Heavenly Purity in the early morning and to wait for the officers to lead them to the Palace of Double Glory. The tea and refreshments were ready when they entered the palace. The tea for this party was specially created by Qianlong himself: The Three-Purity Tea (*Sanqing cha* 三清茶). It consisted of plum blossoms, tropical

[127] Eertai 1987, *juan* 7, p. 15.
[128] The items 1-3 were the most powerful inner court officials.
[129] Shen 1967, p. 83.

finger citron, and roasted pine nut, which were boiled in melted snow.[130] The emperor was so proud of this creation that he wrote many poems about it. Those poems and the image of the three ingredients were further imprinted on the teacups and they became the specialised tea service for the tea party (Fig. 54). This gathering was therefore called the three-purity tea party.[131]

After the tea drinking, Qianlong and the officials would move to the Imbibed Fragrance Studio (*Shufang zhai* 漱芳齋)—the building in the east of the palace compound—to watch drama. The theatrical stage of the studio was the second largest one in the Forbidden City (Fig. 55).[132] They would then return to the room to composes linked verses, the highlight of the tea party. Four treasures of the study—the writing brush, ink stick, paper, and inkstone—were prepared by the eunuchs of the Hall of Profuse Diligence. The emperor would choose the theme for the verse and write a preface to it, which was then circulated among the officials to have them grasp the point. The linked

[130] Cinggui 1932, *juan* 46, pp. 275-322.
[131] Shen 1967, p. 83.
[132] For the study of theatrical stages at the Qing court, see Niu Chuanhai 牛川海, 1977, *Qianlong shi juchang huodong zhi yanjiu* 乾隆時劇場活動之研究 (Research on theatrical activities during Qianlong's reign), Taipei: Huagang Press; Yu Jian 俞健, 2003, 'Qinggong da xitai yu wutai jishu 清宮大戲臺與舞臺技術 (Grand theatre of the Qing court and its theatrical techniques)', in Zhou Huabin 周華斌 and Zhu Lianqun 朱聯群 eds., *Zhongguo juchang shilun* 中國劇場史論 (Discussion on history of Chinese theatre), vol. 2, Beijing: Communication University of China Publishing House, pp. 440-458; Petcharapiruch, Sasiporn, 2006, 'Marvel of the three-tiered stage: the pleasant sound pavilion', *the Chinese Studies Journal*, no. 1, pp. 185-218; Petcharapiruch, 2008, 'Synthesis between Chinese and Western theatricalities of the three-tiered stage Pleasant Sound Pavilion', *the Journal of Humanities*, vol. 15, pp. 32-48.

verse started from Qianlong and he would write the first three phrases of a seven-syllable quatrain. The next official needed to complete the fourth phrase of the emperor's poem and write another three phrases which the next official would then finish and so on and so forth. On this basis, each official needed to write four phrases, one that completed the previous writer's poem and the other three that were the first part of a new quatrain. Thus, the last official had to write five phrases in order to complete the previous writer's quatrain and compose a whole poem. These poems together formed a linked verse and they were all compiled in Qianlong's imperial poem collections.[133] The emperor also commanded the imperial workshop to mount all the writings as a hand scroll and package it with a fine box afterward.[134]

The themes that Qianlong chose for the linked verse may answer the last question regarding what he revealed. The objects of the imperial collection were often the themes in the tea party, including jade articles, court paintings, ink-rubbings, the Complete Library of Four Treasures, Qianlong's rare book collection, imperial seals, and so forth.[135] The venue itself—the Palace of Double Glory—and the Three-Purity Tea were also part of the themes. The content of those verses included vivid depictions of the

[133] The composers' names were also documented in the imperial poem collections, which provides us with invitees of each year.
[134] ZBCDAZH, vol. 50, p. 583.
[135] GZCHDSL, *juan* 652, p. 35905; *juan* 678, p. 37004; *juan* 900, p. 48366; *juan* 920, p. 50010; *juan* 950, p. 51821; *juan* 974, p. 53490; *juan* 1346, p. 74860.

objects, which suggests that the invited officials were able to examine these works of art while composing poems. Interestingly, the poems composed in the tea party often became the inscriptions on the works that they wrote about. The Seal of "the Commemoration of Eighty Years Age" (*bazheng maonian zhi bao* 八徵耄念之寶) was the theme for verse in 1790.[136] This year happened to be the year Qianlong turned eighty. The linked verse was recorded in the *Fifth Collection of Imperial Qianlong Poetry*.[137] The emperor's poem and his preface to the verse were further inscribed on the seal and its red sandalwood box (Fig. 56). The seal was packaged with the Seal of "the Longevity of Seventy Years of Age" (*guxi tyanzi zhi bao* 古稀天子之寶). The jade seal corresponded with what the officials described.[138] Qianlong shared his joy of longevity and encouragement to himself with his close circle. They unsurprisingly had remarked positively on this matter. He was obviously content with the entire package that was made up of the interaction between himself and his people, as well as the interplay between the verse and its object. There was more than one set of these jade seals to be made at his court (Fig .57).

The imperial collection was not only revealed by the viewing during the tea party, Qianlong also gifted some objects to the invitees. The last session of the tea party was

[136] Ibid, *juan* 1346, p. 74860.
[137] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983-6, *the Fifth Collection*, *juan* 51, pp. 15-47.
[138] Ibid, pp. 19-20.

gifting. According to an essay by Shen Chu 沈初 (1735-99), who was invited to the tea party several times from 1774, the emperor usually gifted ruyi-sceptres, inkstones, pouches, and paintings after the gathering.[139] Shen specially mentioned that the paintings that Qianlong gifted had to bear inscriptions in the emperor's hand. Tang Yin's 唐寅 (1470-1524) painting of the withered tree with mynah bird was a case in point (Fig. 58-a). Qianlong's inscription was written in the upper left corner in 1755. Based on Zhang Ruogui's 張若澅 (1703-87) inscription, the painting was gifted to him in the tea party of 1774 along with a jade ruyi-sceptre and an inkstone with golden flecks (Fig. 58-b). These items are consistent with Shen's narrative. It seems that Qianlong had a gifting practice for the tea party. Zhang also says that it was a great honour to be invited to the emperor's tea party and to be gifted with those objects, which would become heirlooms that would be passed down to future generations. Such remarks were commonly seen in the invitees' prose and the inscriptions of the paintings that they were given.[140] Shen also said proudly that the invitees were able to bring home the Three-Purity Tea bowls after the tea party.[141]

The secrecy of Qianlong's collection together with its setting turned the revelation of

[139] Shen 1967, p. 27.
[140] Peng Qifeng 彭啟豐, 2015, *Linian jilue* 歷年紀略, recorded in Zhou Deming 周德明 and Wu Jienwei 吳建偉 eds., *Shanghai tushuguan cangzhenben nianpu congkan* 上海圖書館藏珍本年譜叢刊, Beijing: National Library of China Publishing House, vol. 10, p. 417.
[141] Shen 1967, p. 85.

its contents into a great privilege. The access to the emperor's personal space and the acquisition of objects from the imperial collection both determined the exceptional relationship between Qianlong and those officials. Also, he could adjust it just by making the invitation list. The tea party, therefore, was an extreme, highly ritualised form of revelation. It indicates that Qianlong used such activities to control and manipulate his officials. Consequently, he instructed his descendants that the tea party must be an established custom.[142] Though in fact, this activity ended in the Xianfeng period and was no longer held regularly after the Qianlong period.

3.5.2.2. Visibility of the Manchu Emperors: Stepping Out from the Palaces

The other way a subject could interact with the emperor was when he left the palaces, which usually depended on the imperial inspection tour and was rare in Chinese history. Manchu emperors, however, were relatively open as noted above, which not only referred to the access to their living area but also involved their frequency of outings. For one thing, the Qing emperors did not reside in the Forbidden City all the year round;[143] for another, they went on inspection tours to the North, East, and South often,

[142] Cinggui 1932, *juan* 46, p. 322.

[143] Qing emperors shifted themselves around the imperial gardens in the North, and on the western and southern outskirts of Beijing. Kangxi constructed the Garden of Pervading Spring (*Changchun yuan* 暢春園) in the style of Jiangnan gardens after his first southern inspection tour in 1684. After the construction was completed in 1687, the emperor stayed in the garden for around half of the time each year. The First Historical Archives of China ed., 1984, *Kangxi qijuzhu* 康熙起居注 (Imperial diaries of action and repose of the Kangxi Emperor), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, vol. 2-3. In addition, since the extension of the Old Summer Palace was done in 1725, Yongzheng mainly lived here and only

especially Kangxi and Qianlong.[144] These movements increased the visibility and accessibility of the emperor among the public and the officials. As non-Chinese rulers, Manchu emperors needed some unusual political tactics to govern the vast empire comprising people of differing ethnic groups in which Manchu was minority. The revelation of themselves was therefore a way to exercise control over their subjects.

Given that this revelation practice was outside of the imperial court, both its method and the reactions it introduced were different than those of the revelations performed inside the imperial court. The meeting between Kangxi and Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648-1718), the sixty-fourth generation descendant of Confucius (551-479 B.C.), clearly demonstrates the force of revealing emperors to the public. The emperor's revelation of himself was the most thrilling stage of his secrecy, which changed the man's life. Kong was a scholar without official rank, who, like the general public, had

returned to the Forbidden City in winter. Qianlong further extended the Old Summer Palace but his stay in the palace was shorter than his father as he tended to make inspection tours of other imperial gardens. He started to reside in the Chengde Mountain Resort during autumns after he revived the imperial hunting of the Mulan paddock in 1741. See Guo Daiheng 郭黛姮 ed., 2009, *Yuanshi de huihuang: Yuanmingyuan jianzhu yuanlin yanjiu yu baohu* 遠逝的輝煌：圓明園建築園林研究與保護 (Brilliance of the distant past: research and protection of Yuanmingyuan's architecture and gardens), Shanghai: Shanghai Scientific and Technical Publishers, pp. 69-73; Wan Yi 萬依 et al., 2004, *Qingdai gongtingshi* 清代宮廷史 (History of the Qing dynasty palace), Tianjin: Baihua Art Press, pp. 397-9.

[144] Both Kangxi and Qianlong took six major southern inspection tours. Their imperial inspection tours were remarkable in Chinese history. Manchus emperors' inspection tours were the first to arrange comprehensive visits to the empire, whilst emperors of previous dynasties all took on single tour of the state when they did it. Scholars propose that Qing emperors who were Manchus—a non-Chinese ethic group and perceived as people of lower culture than traditional Chinese—found it vital for the Manchu regime to receive support from Chinese elites who mainly based on southern China as a foundation of stabilising their ruling. The imperial inspection tours happened to be an efficient way for the Manchu rulers to execute the political power and manifest their image as legitimate sovereigns. See Hearn, K. Maxwell, 1990, *The 'Kangxi Southern Inspection Tour': A Narrative Program by Wang Hui*, PhD., Princeton University.

no chance at all to have access to the emperor except during some special occasions. Kangxi's Southern Inspection Tour was one of these special occasions.[145] Kong was recommended to give an exposition of the classics to Kangxi during his visit to Qufu 曲阜,[146] the hometown of Confucius. The emperor was impressed by his performance and requested his company as a guide at the Temple and Cemetery of Confucius on the same day. Kangxi was also content with Kong's tour, thereby appointing him as an erudite of the Imperial Academy (*Guozijian boshi* 國子監博士).[147]

Compared with the imperial appointment, however, it was instead the exciting experience of his close and personal contact with the emperor that inspired and changed Kong. He recorded it in an essay—*Chushan yishu ji* 出山異數記 (extraordinary events on leaving the mountains)—to commemorate this lifechanging event.[148] Kong was

[145] The imperial inspection tours (*Xunshou* 巡狩) were Chinese emperors making inspection visits for safeguarding the realm. This inspection activity was aimed to awe potential enemies into submission and unite the state under personal rule and diligent government by emperors. *The Book of Jin* (*Jinshu* 晉書, 648) thus states that 'There was no emperor in ancient China who would not make inspection tour of the state. 古者帝王莫不巡狩。' The imperial inspection tours were a campaign concerning politics, military affairs, culture, economy, and religion. For such tour, see He Pingli 何平立, 2003, *Xunshou yu fengchan: fengjian zhengzhi de wenhua guiji* 巡狩與封禪：封建政治的文化軌跡 (The imperial inspection tour and worship of heaven: the culture implications of feudalism), Jinan: Qilu Publishing House.

[146] Kangxi started his first southern inspection tour in September 1684, he visited Qufu to pay his respect to 'the supreme saint' on his return journey to Beijing on the 18th of November.

[147] The Imperial Academy was the highest agency for all educational institutions in traditional China. The students of the academy were either so-called tribute students (*Gongsheng* 貢生) or academy students (*Jiansheng* 監生) whose title was easy to purchase. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Academy had its own examination system to offer a possible route to office, however, graduates from the Academy had never been comparable with the degrees acquired by the imperial examination. In addition, "erudite" in the Academy was conferred as an honorary title to the descendants of Confucius then. For the Imperial Academy, see Hucker, O. Charles, 1985, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p.315.

[148] Kong Shangren 孔尚任, 1990, *Chushan yishu ji* 出山異數記 (Extraordinary events on leaving the mountains), reprinted in Zhang Chao 張潮 et al., *Zhaodai congshu* 昭代叢書 (Collectanea of the

most moved by Kangxi asking about his age three times within one day. He was so thrilled about it and considered it as the emperor's gesture of establishing closer ties with him as well as the crowning glory of his life.[149] After he went home Kong took a bath and dressed up to report this glorious day to his ancestors and mother. His mother basked in Kong's reflected glory and they were both moved to tears.[150] Although it may seem absurd from a modern point of view, this indeed paints a vivid picture of commoners' reactions to contact with an emperor who was practically invisible to the public.

Moreover, after this once-in-a-lifetime meeting, Kong abandoned his peaceful life and comfortable mood in the seclusion of the Shimen Mountain. He willingly suffered the trials of an official career for eighteen years just to draw the emperor's attention again. Unfortunately, Kong's sufferings did not pay off; Kangxi seemed to complete forget the person he had once praised. It would be no exaggeration to conclude that this particular day, 18th November of 1684, cost Kong eighteen years.[151] The revelation of the emperor brought about such a powerful reaction that his meeting with a commoner could cause great 'damage'. The concealment of the emperor was designed to create

glorious dynasty), vol. 2, no. 18, Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House.
[149] Ibid, p. 20.
[150] Ibid, p. 22.
[151] Kong Shangren; Wang Weilin 汪蔚林 eds., 1962, *Kongshangren shiwenji* 孔尚任詩文集 (The poetry and prose of Kong, Shangren), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, vol. 3, p. 53.

this force of revelation.

3.5.3. Summary

Compared to previous Chinese emperors, the Qing emperors and their surroundings were comparatively visible. They exploited the power of Chinese emperors' inherent secrecy, controlling the distance between themselves and their subjects in order to devise a new method of governing. The power of revelation was deepened by Manchu emperors: part of the private imperial residence was used for state affairs. Qianlong further used his private space for activities in which he revealed himself and his collection to close associates. The activities were transformed into privilege that determined the relationship between the emperor and his associates. The level of secrecy differed outside of the imperial court. Different ways of revealing were used and stronger reactions were evoked. The emperor took the initiative in both cases since he controlled the secrecy operation.

3.6. Concluding Remarks

Packaging was an effective way to create an order in which everything was carefully and systematically arranged. In the spatial form of packaging, the practice served to strengthen protection, create hierarchy, and produce secrecy through the imperial

buildings. Though the Qing emperors inherited the layout of Beijing and the Forbidden City from the Ming, they changed the spatial usage of the Palace to achieve these effects. Qianlong used the most secretive space of the Inner Court to house and organise his collection in his own way. Though different types of objects had different forms of packaging, shelving and boxes allowed them to coexist in the same space. Besides, the exclusive housing of certain items led to the elevated status of both the objects and the space that housed them. The act of packaging particular items within a single space was perceived as an elevation of the packaged object's status in the imperial collection. The objects along with their space became a unified whole. The significance of this unity was further manifested and acknowledged through the agency of packaging, which will be explored further in the next chapter on Qianlong's curio boxes. Accordingly, these spaces were profoundly transformed by what was placed within them. An inconspicuous room could change into a significant space due to the objects it housed.

Manchu emperors exploited the concealment of the imperial court's secrecy to enhance the impact of later revelation, and thus to develop different relationships with their subjects. To highlight the secrecy, Qianlong devised special schemes for his revealing performance. The way to approach his collection and personal space was subtle and the attendants were very limited. This turned the emperor's revealing activities into an

impressive performance. The invisibility of Chinese emperors certainly maximised the effect of revelation, and the public's reaction to it could be beyond imagination.

CHAPTER 4.

THE QING CURIO BOX: A KALEIDOSCOPE OF PACKAGING

4.1. Introduction

The curio box was a unique genre of artwork that existed only at the Qing imperial court, with the Qianlong period being its golden age in terms of both physical production and archival records. A number of mysteries, however, are still surrounding this item, including its purpose, the meaning of its composition, and why Qianlong never mentioned it in his writing, which is quite out of his character. This may be why the emperor's curio boxes are so attractive, its packaging was to transform the item into a puzzle.

Qianlong's use of space in the Forbidden City was built on the pre-existing structure, while he created his own spatial concept in the curio box. The packaging of the curio box could be seen as encapsulating a calculated framework founded upon subtle spatial stratification. Its modular structure created an exquisitely elaborate arrangement for its enclosed objects.

A plethora of delicate storage mechanisms were employed in various modular units to

organise assorted curios within a box. The design of these mechanisms often involved the direct input of Qianlong himself in collaboration with the craftsmen of the imperial workshops; in essence, the emperor acted as the chief architect of all the curio box projects. He strictly controlled the creation of each curio box from the selection of curios to the manner in which they are housed. The curio box's spatial variation resulting from its stratified structure maximises the power of packaging. Packaging was thus an effective and efficient means through which Qianlong defined or redefined the qualities of the curios inside.

At the same time, such definition or redefinition was achieved in the act of unpacking—that is, through the presentation of the curios. The purpose and spectacle of the curio box rests in this act of unveiling. The box's sophisticated storage devices transform the presentation of its contents into a performative game of revelations. This enabled the curio box, though often no larger than a basketball, to contain within it an immense vista.

4.2. Defining of the Qing Curio Box

The Qing curio box is an assemblage of numerous objects within a box or a cabinet, and Qianlong's take on the curio box was a complex combination of spatial

stratification and article placement. The marriage of these two aspects brings to the forefront the indivisibility of packaging from the contents being packaged. In fact, packaging often takes the lead, organising an assortment of items together to achieve a perfect unity. Qianlong would make use of a container's existent spatial structure if it was in alignment with his ideas, and would also innovate new frameworks to design the placement of and access to the enclosed curios. In either case, the core of Qianlong's curio box is its layered packaging: a large storage unit enclosed a slightly smaller one, which further enclosed a smaller storage unit, and so forth, functioning similarly to Russian dolls but with much more complexity in its structural design. From the boxes themselves and archival material, we can sense that the emperor was specific in his definition of curio boxes: numerous curios made of various materials combined with intricate spatial design of packaging. As such, its shape should not be confused with other forms of assemblage, even those which were also intricately organised. Based on current knowledge, there is insufficient evidence to determine that a collection of objects of a single type fits Qianlong's definition of a curio box. This section examines his ideology regarding curio boxes.

4.2.1. The Terminology for the Curio Box in the Imperial Archives

In order to proceed onto Qianlong's definition of the curio box, the variety in its

terminology and form must first be introduced. The curio box had many different names in the archives of the Qing court, including *Baishijian* 百什件 ("hundreds of assorted items"), *Duobaoge* 多寶格 ("box of many treasures"), *Wanbaoxiang* 萬寶箱 ("treasure chest of ten thousand items"), *Baobeige* 寶貝格 ("treasure box or cabinet"), and so forth. Based on these records, modern scholars have pointed out that each of these various terms was related to its place in the hierarchy of classification. Qianlong usually referred to works of superior quality as *duobaoge* and those of inferior quality as *wanbaoxiang* or *baishijian*.[1] However, it should be noted that *baishijian* was also the generic term for such an assemblage regardless of quality and it thus appears most frequently in the archives. To this day, the works are often called *baishijian* or *duobaoge*. As a general convention, this thesis will use *baishijian* as the generic Chinese term and "curio box" as its English equivalent. It is not the aim of this study to make clear delineations regarding superior versus inferior works.[2]

In terms of size, the curio box can be divided into two types. The large-scale "box" essentially takes the form of a cabinet with numerous shelves and drawers in which various objects are placed, like the large curio cabinet in the Studio of Imbibed Fragrance (Fig. 1). This display cabinet accommodates 115 objects and each has its

[1] ZBCDAZH, vol. 8, pp. 285-6.
[2] At this stage, we only learn that there was a hierarchy in the genre of Qianlong's curio boxes or cabinets. The characteristics that distinguished the forms of superiority and inferiority require further study.

own storage space. The other type, judging by extant curio boxes, takes the form of a small box or cabinet that measures no more than fifty centimetres in length, width, and height.[3] Its interior space is divided into several storage compartments, housing mostly miniature objects (Fig. 2). Some scholars have suggested that the archival terminology used to describe an object is reflective of the size of the curio box. For example, a *boguge* 博古格 ("antique box or cabinet") or an item named after an imperial building, such as *Jingsheng zhai baishijian* 敬勝齋百式件 ("the *baishijian* of the Studio of Esteemed Excellence"), generally refers to a large-format curio cabinet.[4] These suggestions notwithstanding, it is not the case that the name of an object necessarily denotes its size, since Qianlong also enjoyed modelling smaller curio boxes after cabinets or other furniture formats. Furthermore, the use of the name of a building merely indicates the location in which the item is placed. The size of a curio box or cabinet, therefore, can hardly be identified directly by the terminology used to name it. Moreover, even with archival records, determining the size of an object accurately is difficult, unless the measurements are provided, which is rare. As such, information on the size or type of each curio box or cabinet cannot be easily ascertained from textual records; it can only be determined by measuring the physical dimensions of existing

[3] There are around seventy curio boxes of this type remaining in the National Palace Museum of Taipei. Zheng Jiahua 鄭家華, 1986, 'Qianlong changfang duobaoge 乾隆長方多寶閣 (a rectangular curio box of Qianlong)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 35, pp. 4-12.
[4] Ji 2007b, p. 7.

pieces. The material objects are thus crucial for understanding Qianlong's concepts of *baishijian* as well. As the smaller format curio box is the main concern of this thesis, all the items referenced henceforth will refer to this particular form unless otherwise specified.

4.2.2. The Image of Qianlong's Curio Box

The emperor made strenuous efforts to manage the dynamic interaction between the container and its contents. The curio box could be said to be Qianlong's own innovation of spatial concepts rather than a genre of artwork. A methodical packaging approach enabled the assemblage of various curios, which combined objects and their surroundings superbly. This approach to design allowed the emperor to organise varied assortments of curios within a single box. Based on the archives and extant works, it seems that for Qianlong two conditions had to be met in order for an object to qualify as a curio box: the contents had to be an assortment of objects made from different materials and depicting different subjects, and the spatial structure of the container had to be intricate and adjustable. Undergirding the structure was a carefully calculated spatial framework that provided organised housing to the box's many and varied curios.

Viewed in this light, the emperor's curio box is not merely a wide-ranging collection of

various items, but also an exhibition of a comprehensive system of packaging devices. The kaleidoscope of spatial arrangements made possible through this game of combinations meant that Qianlong never grew tired of it. As we can see in the archives of the imperial box workshop, he commanded the production of curio boxes from the very first year of his reign (1736):

> On 26 July of 1736, Samuha 薩木哈 —a staff supervisor of the seventh rank (*qipin shuoling* 七品首領)— and Wushiba 五十八 —a foreman (*cuizong* 催總)— inform the box workshop that, Hu Shijie 胡世傑— an eunuch of conveying imperial edicts (*chuanzhi taijian* 傳旨太監)— hands in a *baishijian* box inlaid with white sandalwood and lined with brocade. The box contains 131 curios. The Qianlong Emperor instructs them to equip the box with a Sumeru throne style pedestal and gilding the copper ornaments; provide a blueprint for these alterations and submit it. The alterations cannot be put into practice until the blueprint is approved by him. Also, the emperor orders them to fill up the empty compartments with curios and renew all the compartments. The craftsmen must respect the imperial edicts.
>
> On 4 August of 1737, Liushanjiu 劉山久 —a warehouseman (*siku* 司庫)— and Samuha deliver the finished *baishijian* box entitled *Wanyan*

ji 琬琰集 ('the curio box equipped with the pedestal accompanying the 131 curios') to the eunuchs Mao Tuan 毛團 and Hu. They then transmit it to the emperor.[5]

Considering that the curios in this curio box numbered as many as 131, it is quite understandable that it took the workshop over a year to complete. It seems, however, that only a pedestal and some gilt ornaments were newly made for the box, and no additional curios were placed within even though Qianlong commanded it. It is unclear why the number of items remained at 131; perhaps the emperor changed his mind at some point. His main demand, though, was the reorganisation of the assorted curios, meaning the rearrangement of them in the box and also implying renovations to the partitioning of the box's inner space. This is an indication that the box's packaging was crucial to its construction, so much so that the box workshop (*xiazuo* 匣作) was generally the division that undertook the container production of curio boxes. Furthermore, *baishijian* became an independent subject in the *Craft Archives* from the twenty-first to thirty-third year of the Qianlong reign (1756-67).[6] This may suggest

[5] "(乾隆元年七月) 二十六日，七品首領薩木哈、催總五十八來說，太監胡世傑交鑲白檀香邊糊錦心百什件箱一件，內盛古玩等一百三十一件。傳旨，將百什件箱下添配一須彌座，銅面葉鍍金見新收什，畫樣呈覽，准時再做；其箱內原盛古玩空處，添補古玩，屜裡亦見新收什，欽此。於乾隆二年八月初四日，司庫劉山久、七品首領薩木哈將鑲白檀香邊糊錦心琬琰集百什件箱一件，配得須彌座並原隨古玩等一百三十一件俱持進，交太監毛團、胡世傑呈進，訖。" ZBCDAZH, vol. 7, p. 235.

[6] Ji 2007b, p. 7.

that Qianlong had specially established a new workshop dedicated to the curio box during this period, or that the output had increased significantly enough to warrant its own subject heading. Either way, it is clear that the emperor's appetite for the curio box kept growing.

By partitioning the space within a given box, the curio box specialised in the creation of varied storage spaces. In order to accommodate as many articles as possible within a box, the partitioned units of space were tailor made for each curio and no space was wasted. This was also the case in Qianlong's application of packaging devices, employing diverse forms of packaging that allowed for the maximisation of storage capacity within a limited space. A case-in-point is a carved red lacquer curio cabinet (Fig. 3-a).

4.2.3. The Use of Pre-existing Framework

As mentioned earlier, Qianlong was highly skilled in making good use of the existing spatial configuration if it suited his needs. The red lacquer cabinet itself was a work of art from the Ming court during the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign (1522-66). Since this type of Ming lacquer box was commonly equipped with multiple drawers, Qianlong modified it into an outer encasing for a curio box (Fig. 3-b). After removing the front cover, the

drawers inside are revealed: ten drawers arranged in arithmetic progression in four tiers. The top row is fitted with four drawers and the number of drawers decreased progressively in the rows below. Such lacquer boxes with multiple drawers seemed to be prevalent in the Jiajing period (Fig. 4).[7] This box in Fig. 4 was equipped with a hinged lid on top and a sliding cover in the front. Removing the front cover, six drawers of various sizes arranged in three tiers are revealed, while lifting the lid reveals one compartment on top. Also, the structure of another lacquer box from Jiajing's court was identical to that of Qianlong's modified curio box in Fig. 3 (Fig. 5).

The multi-drawer box or cabinet design was in line with the emperor's concept of a curio box's arrangement of storage space. This approach of dividing the space with drawers suited his packaging of curio boxes, whose interior space was divided on the basis of modular storage units. Each drawer housed a fitted case, which was further divided into a varying number of compartments whose dimensions depended on the curios they housed (Fig. 3-c). Each compartment only accommodated one curio and perfectly matched the size of the curio it housed. This curio cabinet holds 108 curios in total at the present, though there are several empty compartments. Qianlong always

[7] The Chinese lacquerware reached the acme of craftsmanship in the Ming dynasty. Its prosperity was directly related to the Ming imperial family's fancy for it, especially the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402-24). The court established the workshop of lacquerware for the imperial use. The first monograph on the art of lacquerwork *On Lacquer Decoration* (*Xiushilu* 髹飾錄) was also published at the time. See Clunas, Craig, 1997, 'Luxury knowledge: the *Xiushilu* (*records of lacquering*) of 1625', *Techniques et Culture*, vol. 29, pp. 27-40.

paid particular attention to the spatial harmony between the storage space and the object held within it. Either the objects were carefully selected or specially made to coordinate with the sizes of the storage compartments,[8] or, if the emperor had particular items that he intended to place in a box, compartments were tailored to the sizes of their contents.[9] Either way, he was exceedingly particular about how objects are stored and placed.

The objects in this curio box are encased in multiple layers: only by lifting open the outermost board, sliding the drawers out, and taking out the inset storage cases that contain separate compartments for each curio could the objects ultimately be exposed to view. The extant 108 curios include forty-one jade items, twelve ink sticks, eight Chinese paintings, seven European watches and clocks, six pieces of porcelain, six lacquer works, three calligraphic works, and twenty-five writing implements (Fig. 3-d). This storage scheme where each compartment only housed one item was a simple but efficient way to organise numerous varied objects within a container.

The more curios were stored in a curio box, the more sophisticated and labour-intensive the spatial divisions naturally became. It was customary for every single compartment of a curio box to be lined with silk material (Fig. 3-e). As the records indicate, the

[8] ZBCDAZ, vol. 8, pp. 305-13.
[9] Ibid, vol. 16, p. 303.

organisation of a curio box that contained over a hundred curios usually took a very long time. The quantity of curios within a Qianlong *bashijian* generally ranged from just over one hundred to more than one thousand.[10] The latter larger type of *bashijian* could be a large cabinet, such as the one in the Studio of Imbibed Fragrance. The records also indicate that it took around three and a half months to repair thirteen worm-damaged drawers in a *bashijian* entitled *Qingwange* 清玩閣 that held at least 300 curios.[11] In another record, it states that a curio box named *Jinyu xia* 瑾瑜匣 could not be submitted to Qianlong on-time because the lining of drawers was still in progress; the craftsmen of the box workshop requested a deadline extension to finish lining. The emperor refused the request and commanded additional manpower to assist with the project. He demanded that this curio box must be submitted according to schedule.[12] All of this demonstrates that there were various rigorous requirements for the production of a *bashijian* and that Qianlong had a voracious appetite for these objects.

4.2.4. Qianlong's Spatial Stratification: Modular Storage Units

Apart from making the most of the suitable containers on hand, Qianlong created his own spatial structure for curio boxes. He realised the full potential of packaging by using the scaffolding of curio boxes as an intricate way of stratifying space. The

[10] Ibid, vol. 35, p. 208.
[11] Ibid, vol. 10, pp. 94-5.
[12] Ibid, vol. 12, p. 573.

partitioning of internal space into numerous drawers (*ti* 屜) of many different sizes, each of them further divided into several compartments (*geduan* 隔斷), demanded an expertise resembling geometric or stereometric knowledge. The structure of a curio box was basically constituted of drawers in various sizes that functioned as modular storage units. These units dovetail neatly with each other. In general, the two main features of Qianlong's curio box were its assorted items and its elaborate configuration of storage space.

Compared to curio boxes created by modifying pre-existing containers, the curio boxes newly created by Qianlong display an elaborate configuration of space that particularly stands out as a defining characteristic. Underlying Qianlong's method of packaging his curio boxes was a calculated spatial framework that determined the organisation of the contents. The spatial design of the lacquer curio cabinet in Fig. 3 was rather plain for the *bashijian*, where a drawer or its close-fitting case worked as the storage unit in which separate compartments were made. Repurposing an existing container limited the spatial variation that could occur because the structural framework could no longer change. Qianlong's custom-made curio boxes for which he specified the storage mechanisms, on the other hand, exhausted all possibilities for developing spatial variations. The curio box titled *Jiqiongzao* 集瓊藻 ("a garland of treasures") is one of

the most delicately-made curio boxes we have today.

This curio box was structured as boxes within boxes and drawers within drawers. Drawers of various sizes dovetail perfectly with each other, forming a sequence of stratified spaces and generating in the curio box a very fine sense of spatial harmony. Many of the curios are placed deep within the box, making them invisible and intangible until all the layers of wrapping had been stripped off. This curio box's outermost container was a wooden box inlaid with mother-of-pearl and bovid bones in an interlaced floral design (Fig. 6-a). On the panel at the centre of the lid are the inscriptions "*Jiqiongzao* 集瓊藻" and "*Assembled in the 6th Year of the Qianlong Reign*" (*Qianlong xinyounian zhuang* 乾隆辛酉年裝) (Fig. 6-b),[13] the name and date of assembly for this curio box. Its title, *A Garland of Treasures*, refers to the collection of a large variety of rare and precious things contained within,[14] and from this we begin to have an inkling of Qianlong's perception of the curio box. Also, he had the tendency to name *bashijian* with all kinds of jade-related names, such as the aforementioned

[13] The records concerning the *Jiqiongzao* curio box were also seen in the archives of the tenth year and the thirteenth year of the Qianlong reign. It could refer to the reorganisation for this same curio box, or there were more than one *Jiqiongzao* curio box at the court.

[14] The word *qiong* 瓊 means jade that refers to rare and precious things, the word *zao* 藻 signifies abundance. The term *qiongzao* 瓊藻 derives from a line of 'He yuanri xuehua yingzhao shi 和元日雪花應詔詩' (Snowflakes on New Year's Day: a matching poem at imperial command), a poetic work of the poet Xie zhuang 謝莊 (421-466). For the translation and discussion of this poem, see Wu, Fusheng, 2008, *Written at Imperial Command: Panegyric Poetry in Early Medieval China*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 100-101.

Wanyan ji 琬琰集 whose characters meant an elongated pointed tablet of jade (*gui* 圭), or a *bashijian* titled *Jinyu xia* 瑾瑜匣 that referred to fine jade.[15] Such names all refer to a collection of fine jade items and, more generally, indicates any collection of various beautiful things. The beautiful objects that the emperor hinted at with the name of *Jiqiongzao* were not only the curios within, but also the external packaging itself and the coordinated interaction between the container and the contained. This collection of assorted objects was not randomly placed together, but rather their assembly was highly organised through the stratification of storage space. Knowing the importance of spatial arrangement, Qianlong often pressed the relevant production workshops for the development of innovative packaging designs for housing various curios.[16] In other words, the container that houses curios should itself be considered one of the curios of a curio box.

After lifting the lid of the outer box of *Jiqiongzao*, a Japanese two-tiered *makie* box is revealed, the second largest storage unit of this curio box (Fig. 6-c). Each tier of this box contains one tight-fitting case whose interior is divided into drawers of varied sizes, each drawer further partitioned into several compartments (Fig. 6-d). These two cases are the main structural units, each of which is further partitioned into mobile drawers

[15] ZBCDAZ, vol. 8, p. 304.
[16] Ibid, vol. 12, p. 544.

as storage sub-units (Fig. 6-e). The upper tier is divided into four modular units: (1) the case in itself, (2) a rectangular drawer in the upper part, (3) a smaller rectangular drawer in the lower right-hand corner, and (4) a dark wooden drawer on the upper left corner, which is a secret drawer that can be revealed after pulling it out (2) or by drawing it out from the outer side of (1) (Fig. 6-f). All the units were removable except the case itself. These sub-units were then divided into compartments in varying sizes for placing various curios. These are the smallest and most basic storage units of the curio box. Each compartment housed only one curio. Those storage units—the outer wooden box, the Japanese *makie* box, the two main cases, and the mobile drawers—are nested into each other one after other. This packaging system enabled the most efficient use of space for housing as many objects as possible, and the connection between all the storage units is seamless. The curio box as a whole presents a spatial combination that is harmonious and well-balanced.

In addition, secret drawers were an often-employed device for spatial partition in curio boxes. As such, the configuration that can be seen at first glance is usually not the entirety of a curio box. The two main cases in this curio box for example, were both fitted with hidden drawers on two sides. One was inserted with two small drawers and a red lacquer casket (Fig. 6-g), in which an album of *Poem and Painting Integration of*

Coreopsis by Qianlong's own handwriting (御筆秋英詩畫合璧), an agate bowl, and a stone were stored (Figs 6-h and 6-i). The other (the upper-tier case) was set with two secret drawers which were divided into several compartments (Figs 6-j and 6-k). Sometimes there were even secret drawers within secret drawers. For another curio box named *Tianqiu hebi* 天球合璧, a secret drawer was inset with a smaller secret drawer on its right side (Fig. 7). The insetting of those secret storage units represented a very complex and precisely calculated structure, as well as the stratification of storage units in varying shapes and sizes. Such a spatial layout involved precise calculations for reserving spaces in different spatial strata. The division of compartments was also artful. Irregularly shaped compartments were designed to match with the shape of their own curios (Fig. 6-l), but the coordination between compartments was intricate and tenuous: any change in one compartment meant that all adjacent ones had to be changed, too. The structure of a curio box in a sense represented infinite space whose end could not be reached until the most deeply hidden storage unit was discovered.

Qianlong seemed to have been addicted to this structure of boxes within boxes, with many curios in his curio boxes being miniature boxes containing miniature objects. These curios were both containers and contents at the same time. The ivory eleven-piece set of nested miniature boxes in openwork relief contained within the *Jiqiongzao*

curio box is an extremely clever work. Housed within a small ivory box are ten miniature ivory boxes placed next to each other (Fig. 6-m). The measurements of the main ivory box, the largest one in this set, comes to only 4.1 by 2.8 by 1.7 centimetres. The miniature boxes inside are all about one centimetre or less in size. A similar work is held in the collection of the Palace Museum of Beijing, a small box that contains eighteen miniature boxes (Fig. 8-a), which is more than the miniature boxes housed in the *Jiqiongzao* curio box. These miniature boxes were placed side by side in two tiers within the small box (Fig. 8-b). Astonishingly, each of the miniature boxes further held tinier ivory articles. This is also the case of the eleven-piece set in the *Jiqiongzao* curio box (Fig. 6-n). These tinier ivories in openwork were placed in the miniature boxes which themselves measured only about one centimetre more or less – one can only imagine the diminutiveness of items like the hollow cylinder and the tea set (Fig. 6-n).

Such nested boxes flaunted a high level of ivory craftsmanship, specialties of Cantonese ivory artisans. The ivory box one that contained ten miniature boxes from *Jiqiongzao* curio box was the work of Huang Zhenxiao 黃振效, whilst the other with eighteen miniature boxes was by Li Juelu 李爵祿 (Figs 6-o and 8-c). Both of them were Cantonese master ivory craftsmen.[17] The miniature boxes in the curio box formed an

[17] Huang had entered the Imperial Ivory Workshop (*Yazuo* 牙作) since the second year of the Qianlong reign (1737). He was rewarded for his works more than his colleagues, indicating Qianlong's great fancy

independent collection, which was further structured as curio boxes within a larger curio box. The small nested Japanese *makie* box in the same curio box is another example of the box-within-a-box motif (Fig. 6-p). Within the *makie* box was a two-tiered system: the upper part was a small tray, while the lower space was filled with three small boxes containing three tiny jade articles separately. As a whole, the curio box presents an intellectual and sophisticated stratification of solid geometry.

4.2.5. Qianlong's Perception of Assembly of the Curio Box

Qianlong provided a clear definition of the shape of the curio box, whose characteristics should not be confused with those of other types of assemblage. The definition of a

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to his ivory works. Li entered the ivory workshop in 1755 and retired in 1775. Chained ivories and ivory boxes in openwork, nested boxes in particular, were not only Huang's forte but also that of Cantonese artisans of ivory. The study of ivory art at the Qianlong's court, see Ji Ruoxin, 2005, 'Shiba shiji gongting yajiang ji qi zuopin yanjiu 十八世紀宮廷牙匠及其作品研究 (Ivory artisans and their work in the eighteenth-century court)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 467-530; Ji, 2007a, 'Cong guigong dao xiangong—qingdai nanpai yadiao gongyi gaishu 從「鬼工」到「仙工」--清代南派牙雕工藝概述 (From the hands of spirits to the immortal works: the survey of Southern artisans' craftsmanship in the Qing dynasty)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 291, pp. 58-71; Ji, 2015, 'Qing chengshi neiting yajiang yu guangdong yadiao gongyi--yi chen zuzhang he huang zhenxiao wei li 清盛世內廷牙匠與廣東牙雕工藝--以陳祖章和黃振效為例 (The imperial ivory artisans and Cantonese ivory craftsmanship during the high Qing: exemplified by Chen, Zuzhang and Huang, Zhenxiao)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 384, pp. 4-15; Shi Jingfei 施靜菲, 2007, 'Xiangyaqiu suojian zhi gongyi jishu jiaoliu—Guangdong, qinggong yu shensheng luoma diguo 象牙球所見之工藝技術交流--廣東、清宮與神聖羅馬帝國 (Concentric ivory spheres and the exchange of craft techniques: Canton, the Qing court and the Holy Roman Empire)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 87-138; Shi, 2012, 'Yeshi bolaipin—qinggong zhong de huashi xuanchuang 也是舶來品：清宮中的花式鏇床 (Another item from over the sea: ornamental lathes at the Qing court)', *Taida Journal of Art History*, vol. 32, pp. 171-238; Shi, 2016, 'Zishi guigong shou neng chuan xianke qing—Qianlong chao gongting de xiangya xiangong「自是鬼工手，能傳仙客情」: 乾隆朝宮廷的象牙「仙工」 (From the hands of spirits, conveying the quality of immortals: ivory "immortal works" from the Qianlong court)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 93-151; Huang Yanhong 黃燕紅, 2010, 'Qingdai guangzhou yadiao 清代廣州牙雕 (The Cantonese ivory carving in the Qing dynasty)', recorded in Zhang, Zhenhong 張鎮洪 ed., *Lingnan kaogu yanjiu* 嶺南考古研究 (Lingnan archaeological research), vol. 9, Hong Kong: China Review Academic Publishers.

bashijian could be extended indefinitely to include a sundry of objects if we do not limit our definition with his. Most modern scholars regard a collection of single type of objects as a kind of Qianlong's curio box, as these two kinds of assemblage sometimes shared the same name in the archives. This further leads them to refer to some surviving collections of objects composed of only one material as curio boxes. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Qianlong deemed these collections to be curio boxes. Also, as far as the archives I have examined are concerned, the emperor has never referred to such collections as *bashijian*, whose constituents were always numerous articles made of various materials in the archives. The term *bashijian* itself already indicated its constituents of the mixture. Ji Ruoxin 嵇若昕 notices that *Linlansi* 琳瑯笥 was the title of a curio box and also a collection of jade articles in the Craft Archives. She thus proposes that these two items referred to the same thing and the collection of articles made of a single material was also a type of curio box.[18] In that case, scholars consider a collection of ten bronze vessels named *Jifan liuhui* 吉笵流輝 and collections such as these to be curio boxes as well (Fig. 9).

However, if it is really the case that *Linlansi* was a curio box composed of a group of jade articles, why it is obvious to us that one is a curio box while one is just a collection

[18] Ji 2007b, pp. 7-8.

of jade pieces? Because they were in essence two different things, and Qianlong had already pointed that out to us through their archival identities: a box of jade articles named *Linlansi* (*Linlansi yuqi xian* 琳瑯笥玉器箱) in 1741 and a curio box with the same name (*Linlansi bashijian* 琳瑯笥百什件) in 1745.[19] Unless further evidence is provided, there is no indication that Qianlong had any intention of confusing these two items or of referring to the box of jade articles—a collection of objects in the same material—as a curio box. A piece of work that bore the same name as that of a curio box should not automatically be considered a curio box; all this shows is that the same title could be used for different works. It was not an uncommon practice in Qianlong's collection. The above-mentioned *Jiqiongzao* curio box was clearly completed in 1741, yet there was also a curio box with the same name in the record of 1748. What is important here is that the description of the curio box in the record is not consistent with the one we have today.[20] Apparently, more than one curio boxes given the same name. This also suggests that what the archives say about the provenance of the name of each item does not necessarily apply to the other existing works with the same name.

In addition, I have mentioned that we have yet to see evidence that Qianlong used *bashijian* for any collection of articles made from the same materials. Thus far, that

[19] ZBCDAZ, vol. 10, pp. 84-5; vol. 13, p. 646.
[20] Ibid, vol. 16, p. 331.

term when used in the archives always refers to the assembly of various articles. Nevertheless, I am not proposing that a collection of curios made of a single material could never be a curio box. This is certainly a possibility, but more research is required. Furthermore, extant curio boxes have shown us that spatial ingenuity was the main distinguishing characteristic of Qianlong's *bashijian*. Take, for example, the cylindrical curio box with Indian lotus motifs carved on the outside that contains twenty-seven objects: twenty-three jade articles, three miniature hand scrolls, and one miniature album (Fig. 10-a). Since the majority of the curios were made of jade, the object may more or less count as a collection of items of the same material or type. Based on Ji's detailed examination of the contents, it can also be certain that this item was the curio box called *Yangxindian houdian zhusi xiaoge bashijian* 養心殿後殿竹絲小格百式件 ("curio box with the décor of bamboo filaments placed in the rear hall of the Hall of Mental Cultivation") recorded in the *Furnishing Archives*.[21] This is the only confirmed case to-date of such an assemblage (that is, mostly made up of articles of the same type) was called a curio box in the archives. Although this record was established in the nineteenth year of the Daoguang reign (1839), the inscription on the scrolls and albums show that this curio box was a work of Qianlong's court. Therefore, we can be certain

[21] Ji Ruoxin, 2013, 'Qingneiting chenshedangce zhong de qianlongchao zhusichanzhifanlian duobaoge yuanhe 清內廷陳設檔冊中的乾隆朝竹絲纏枝番蓮多寶格圓盒 (Qianlong's round curio box with Indian lotus décor in the Qing imperial archives)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 367, pp. 26-35.

that it was recognised as a *bashijian* in the late Qing court, though we cannot be sure if this was how Qianlong himself perceived of this work.

Nonetheless, what is striking about this curio box is not its contents but its packaging design. The curio box is shaped like a column (Fig. 10-b) divided into four fan-shaped storage units (Fig. 10-a). Each unit is attached by hinges so that the box can be unfolded into a screen at an angle of 180 degrees or a cubic frame at 360 degrees (Fig. 10-c). Every unit is further partitioned into several compartments in varying forms. The bottoms are all installed with fan-shaped drawers that can be swung open. Several compartments worked as revolving trays, some of which revealed curios and some landscape screens in a European style when swung in different directions. One compartment is equipped with a door. This intricate housing design along with the rich ornamentation, such as mesh windows and elegant pillars, give this curio box the structure of a cabinet.

Even in this case, even if we were to accept the view that an assembly of articles in the same material was part of Qianlong's definition of curio boxes, it is still clear that an intricate packaging system was required. Without imposing such limitations, the definition of the curio box would be infinitely large and vague. Even the collection of

writing brushes within a five-tray lacquer box could be regarded as *bashijian* by the vague definition (Fig. 11), as well as the group of ink sticks within the portable multi-drawered box entitled *Huluo wujue* 笏羅烏玦 ("a collection of black jade") (Fig. 12). Our current working definition of the curio box, however, indicates that it should fulfil the two conditions: be a collection of various articles and a distinctive calculated framework for its container.

Another possible explanation about the aforementioned *Linlansi* jade collection or such collections in the archives is that, it could be seen as one unit of a curio box. A record regarding a group of drawers containing jade articles also called *Linlansi* is found earlier in the same year that the curio box with the same name was recorded. Because Qianlong requested to view *Linlansi*'s drawers that contained jade articles (*Linlansi yuqi ti* 琳瑯笥玉器屜), the box workshop submitted all such drawers.

> On 9 February of 1745, the warehouseman Baishixiu 白世秀 informs the box workshop that, the eunuch Hu Shijie conveys an imperial edict. The Qianlong Emperor requires to view the *Linlansi*'s drawers that contain jade articles. Respect the imperial edict. On the same day, Baishixiu delivers all those drawers to the eunuch Hu, who further

submits them to the emperor.[22]

This record rather clearly shows that *Linlansi yuqi ti* referred to all drawers housing jade articles of the *Linlansi* curio box. As mentioned at the beginning, some *bashijian* were as large as a collection of over a thousand items. Their form may be in the shapes of cabinets or shelves. Such *bashijian*'s composition seemed to consist of different groups of drawers. Those drawers tended to be numbered with sexagenary cycle (*Ganzhi* 干支) like the said *Qingwange*,[23] or with the "Thousand Character Classic" (*Qianziwen* 千字文). It was not uncommon that some of the drawers were a collection of articles in the same material, and jade was the most common subgroup within Qianlong's curio box.

Also, as I have mentioned in the beginning, there clearly was a hierarchy in Qianlong's curio boxes, which suggests different types of form. The emperor often required craftsmen of the Imperial Workshops or members of the Imperial Academy to assess the quality of objects. Those of superior quality were placed in *doubaoge* and the inferior ones were stored in *baishijian* or *wanbaoxian*g. On this basis, Zhang Liduan 張麗端 uses one of such record to propose that some groups of copper seals that had been

[22] "初九日，司庫白世秀來說，太監胡世傑傳旨，要琳瑯筒玉器屜子呈覽，欽此。於本日，司庫白世秀隨將玉器屜俱各持進，交太監胡世傑呈覽。" ZBCDAZ, vol. 13, p. 594.
[23] Ibid, vol. 10, pp. 94-5.

graded and categorised by Wang Youdun in 1738 represents the hierarchy of the curio box.[24] The selected seals were placed in five black lacquer boxes and formed a collection, which Qianlong named *Jinxie liuzhen* 金薤留珍 (Fig. 13-a). This group of seals are organised in several drawers of the five boxes (Fig. 13-b). Through this item, Chang also points out that collections whose articles were made of a single material were also one type of curio box for Qianlong.[25]

However, I would again stress that the emperor had never directly referred to *Jinxie liuzhen* as any type of *baishijian*.[26] Also, it was a common practice in Qianlong's other collections for objects to be graded and categorised by packaging, a practice not exclusive to the genre of curio boxes. Besides, the other record Chang uses regarding other groups of copper seals to manifest the hierarchy of the curio box is actually a further indication that such collections were not within the scope of Qianlong's curio boxes.

> On 4 January of 1738, the warehouseman Liushanjiu and the foreman Baishixiu inform the box workshop that, the eunuchs Mao and Hu hand in 116 copper seals in various sizes. The Qianlong Emperor requires the

[24] Zhang 2005, pp. 26-39.
[25] Zhang Liduan, 2010, 'Qing Qianlong zitan "wannian jiazi" duobaohe 清乾隆紫檀「萬年甲子」多寶盒 (The red sandalwood curio box of *Wannian jiazi* during the Qianlong reign)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 323, pp. 82-6.
[26] ZBCDAZ, vol. 8, pp. 346-7.

craftsmen to examine and grade these seals. Respect the imperial edict.

On 29 January, ……the emperor instructs that 68 seals of superior quality should be placed in *doubaoge* and store them in one of the drawers. ……20 seals of inferior quality should be placed in *wanbaoxian*g and also store them in one of the drawers. ……There are 25 unknown seals, whose placement is pending. The 3 uninscribed seals along with a copper box should be melted down. Respect the imperial edict.

On 10 February of 1739, except for the ones that were already placed in *baishijian*, Liushanjiu and the staff supervisor Samuha deliver the remaining 25 unknown seals to the eunuchs Mao, Hu, and Gao Yu 高玉. They further submit them to the emperor in order to request his instruction regarding their placement. The Qianlong Emperor then instructs that they should be placed in the black lacquer boxes. Respect the imperial edict.

On the same day, the 25 unknown seals are all placed in the five black lacquer boxes with 1,109 seals that has been submitted to the emperor on 9 November of 1738.[27]

[27] "初四日，司庫劉山久、催總白世秀來說，太監毛團、胡世傑交銅圖章大小一百十六方，傳旨著認看，欽此。於本月二十九日，……奉旨，著將上等古銅圖章六十八方入多寶格，選一匣盛

Apart from the classification between *doubaoge* and *wanbaoxian*g (and both of them were in the genre of *baishijian*), this record indicates that the copper seals were just part of the contents of both *doubaoge* and *wanbaoxian*g, not that they consisted of only copper seals. Moreover, the five black lacquer boxes with 1,109 seals that Qianlong viewed on 9 November of 1738 was *Jinxie liuzhen*.[28] It was obviously and consciously excluded from *baishijian* and was for the placement of seals which were not eligible to be placed in a *baishijian*. This manifests that such collections, or at least the seal collection within the five lacquer boxes, were not part of Qianlong's curio boxes.

4.2.6. Summary

The curio box was Qianlong's synthesis of packaging forms and various types of objects. This form of art would only be meaningful if the container and the objects enclosed were deemed to be one cohesive whole. Qianlong used the practice of packaging to achieve this unity. Its packaging was a calculated framework that controlled the arrangement of and access to the articles within. The emperor not only

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裝；……再將次等古銅圖章二十方入萬寶箱，亦選一小匣盛裝；……再不識古銅圖章二十五方，有應裝處盛裝。其餘未刻字銅圖章三方、銅印色盒一件著毀銅用，欽此。於乾隆四年二月初十日，司庫劉山久、七品首領薩木哈將銅圖章一百十六方除裝百什件之外，下剩不識古銅圖章二十五方持進交太監毛團、胡世傑、高玉呈覽請旨，奉旨著入在黑漆匣銅圖章內補用，欽此。於本日，將不識古銅圖章二十五方，俱歸入在本年十一月初九日交出黑漆匣五件內盛古銅圖章一千一百零九方之內，訖。" ZBCDAZ, vol. 8, pp. 285-6.

[28] Ibid, vol. 8, pp. 346-7.

adapted suitable existing containers for this purpose, but also innovated elaborate structures for this game of spatial arrangement. Either way, spatial stratification lies at the very core of curio boxes. This remarkable feature was identified—and even designed or closely supervised—by Qianlong as essential to the curio box, the definition of which we should be careful not to be overly loose with. An assemblage of curios does not automatically render it a curio box without properly analysis.

4.3. The Importance of Packaging for Understanding the Curio Box

The variation of storage space along with the varying combination of curios formed the core of Qianlong's curio boxes. He always participated fully and actively in all aspects of their assembly and dictated how and in what the curios were to be stored. He could be said to be the principal architect of curio boxes, micromanaging each and every curio box project. The complexity of the curio box in both its framework and the arrangement of curios made any slight change result in significant implications. The emperor therefore kept a close eye on the creation of all the curio boxes through models or drafts, ensuring that his design and instructions were followed by the workshops. He geared his development towards varied packaging forms for varied curios. The basic framework of a curio box was usually constituted of a number of drawers, each of which was further divided into several drawers or compartments. This system of multifaceted

layers of drawers operated as Qianlong's storing and categorisation unit, which allowed him to simultaneously equip each layer with a different storage design. He was never contented with only one packaging form within a curio box.

4.3.1. Qianlong's Position as the Chief Architect of Curio Box Projects

In the process of assembling the said *Linlansi* curio box, Qianlong himself carefully designed a housing scheme for 498 jade articles to be placed in forty-four drawers.

> On 24 August of 1744, the staff supervisor Samuha informs the box workshop that the eunuch Hu handed in 44 drawers of jade articles from the *Linlansi* box (in which 498 jade articles were stored along with an album of dark blue paper). The Qianlong Emperor demanded that these jade articles be placed according to his arrangement and that indentations be cut out for them; their housing order must not be confused. The drawers should be lined with silk fabric and the indentations with rice paper. The images of those jade articles should also be painted on the original brocades. The edges of these drawers should be decorated with bamboo palm and rings should be put on the drawers. Then there should be labels for written words, the model for

which will be bestowed by the emperor later. Heed this imperial edict.[29]

Qianlong gave detailed and specific instructions on how to package these jade articles. In particular he emphasised his placement plan and required that the workshop abide by it. It seems that on average each drawer housed ten to fifteen jade articles. The forty-five-piece set of jadeware with horizontally inserted drawers in Fig. 14-a corresponds closely to this description of the *Linlansi* box. The packaging complex contains forty-five flat sliding wooden drawers lined with silk fabric and covered with brocade (Fig. 14-b). The interdigitated drawers are stacked up in nine tiers. Each drawer houses nine to fifteen jade articles, each of which is stored in a cut-out indentation of its own shape. The background of each indentation is decorated with colour paintings of landscape, flower, or birds, or with calligraphy. Additionally, an image of each jade article together with its name is reproduced in painting on a sheet of white silk. These drawings could have functioned as a detailed layout plan that Qianlong commanded the workshop to follow. Interestingly, in recent years the Palace Museum of Beijing has indeed used these images as indexes for reuniting the jade articles with their containers.[30]

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[29] "二十四日，七品首領薩木哈來說，太監胡世傑交琳瑯筒匣內玉器四十四屜（內盛玉器四百九十八件，隨磁青紙摺一件）。傳旨，將此玉器照朕擺的樣款換木胎落槽，不可錯亂。面糊月白綾，其槽內要平地糊宣紙，寫畫仍用舊錦，棕竹邊，倒環，再簽子上寫字樣，另賞字樣，欽此。" Ibid, vol. 12, p. 564.

[30] After the Palace Museum of Beijing assumed ownership of the imperial collection in 1949, a categorisation scheme based on material type rather than subject entities displaced all of the jade articles from this packaging complex, essentially leaving behind only empty drawers. The project of reconstituting the jade contents into the drawer complex is under way, using Qianlong's illustrations on

Although there is not enough evidence to prove with certainty that this drawer complex was part of the *Linlansi* curio box, it is nevertheless indicative of the ways in which Qianlong liked to arrange jade articles within a curio box. The square red sandalwood curio box in Fig. 15 contains a jadeware drawer that is organised in a similar fashion, with several cut-out indentations in the shapes of the articles they housed (Fig. 15). For the Fig. 14-a drawer complex, the emperor took extra care in order to ensure the organisational unity of the multiple drawers. Each drawer had two inlaid ivory labels on the front and back, so that each drawer and its respective cover could be easily reunited when the drawers slid out (Fig. 14-c). The names of these drawers are categorised into nine groups, each of which ingeniously combines the tier number with auspicious phrases, such as Unity of Track in One Standard (*Yitong cheshu* 一統車書), Harmony of Two Opposite Principles of Yin and Yang (*Erxiang youyi* 二象有儀), and Integrity of Nine Divisions (*Jiuzhou youtong* 九州攸同). Additionally, the edges of each drawer are decorated with bamboo strips. The top face of each drawers is equipped with collapsible gilt copper rings. All of these design elements match the description of the drawers of the *Linlansi* curio box. This drawer complex could also be part of a large curio cabinet. The forty-five drawers together form a rectangular unit, which was

white silk as guides. This reinstatement is expected to take three years.

further stored in a black lacquer box (Fig. 14-d).

4.3.2. The Assembly of a Curio Box

Qianlong's stipulations for curio box packaging and assemblage were put into practice by the craftsmen of the imperial workshops, chief among which was the box workshop that was responsible for the packaging of curio boxes as well as other objects in the imperial collection. The emperor's penchant for innovative packaging design also meant that he pressed the craftsmen to conceive of ever-more creative packaging plans. A long written entry regarding the making of a pair curio cabinets gives a clear and complete account of the process of assembly, showing that the organisation of a curio box often commenced at the inception of its design framework and that the composition of the container was designed in conjunction with its interior structure.

> On 19 October of 1772, the storehouse overseer (*kuzhang* 庫掌) Wude 五德 and the clerk (*bitieshi* 筆帖式) Fuqing 福慶 informed the box workshop that, the eunuch Hu handed in a pair of red sandalwood cabinets with jade inlay (from the Palace of Great Brilliance). The Qianlong Emperor instructed that the cabinets are to be for housing *baishijian*, so their interior should be adjusted accordingly. A cardboard model (*hepaiyang* 合牌樣) of the interior structure must be shown to

the emperor in advance. Heed this imperial edict.[31]

Qianlong preferred the use of hardwoods such as padauk, sandalwood, and agalloch as the container of curio boxes. In another record, he specifically directed that the workshop use red sandalwood, rosewood, boxwood, Nanmu, agalloch, and Indian sandalwood for making the *baishijian*'s drawers.[32] Apart from stipulating the raw materials, the emperor would also supervise the project from the creation of the framework through to the production of the models. The workshop was frequently ordered to produce all kinds of models for Qianlong's examination. The production of a box could not commence until he was pleased with the model. This was the standard operating procedure for all the imperial workshops at Qianlong's court, and through this he was able to maintain control over every detail and ensure that the items were executed exactly the way he wanted. The cardboard models would specify shapes, materials, measurements, and other relevant details, as we see in the prototype of a palace hall in Fig. 16. This approach of giving specific instructions to the imperial craftsmen,[33] allowed for the emperor's direct personal engagement in the construction of the imperial collection. It also allowed the craftsmen insight into the emperor's ideas

[31] "十九日，庫掌五德、筆帖式福慶來說，太監胡世傑交嵌玉紫檀木小櫃一對（景陽宮）。傳旨，將櫃內配裝百什件，先做合牌樣呈覽，欽此。" ZBCDAZ, vol. 35, p. 201.
[32] "百什件屜子著用紫檀木、花梨、黃楊、楠木、沉香、白檀等樣木成做。" Ibid, vol. 12, p. 544.
[33] Ibid, vol. 7, p. 825.

and the rubrics for satisfying his demands. In fact, model-making was so central to the process that Qianlong often kept the models he was pleased with for later reuse.[34]

Returning to the assembly of the pair of curio cabinets, it should be noted that soon after the dictation of the container—two days after in this case—its contents were selected. Qianlong handpicked seventy curios to be housed in this pair.[35] The box workshop was then tasked with the housing arrangement of the selected curios in the cabinets. It seems that in this case the emperor did not give detailed instructions for the way to house these curios, leaving it up to the craftsmen's discretion. He did, however, again require that a model of the housing arrangement be made for his approval before the actual placement of objects. It is clear through this detail that Qianlong was ever-reluctant to concede any control over the spatial planning of the curios. The craftsmen would have been familiar with the basic framework of the emperor's curio boxes: nested drawers whose interiors were divided into varying compartments. It was therefore unnecessary for Qianlong to give specific guidance on how to arrange the internal storage of curios. The fact that he did not give detailed instructions also allowed some room for the craftsmen's ingenuity in packaging design. The emperor encouraged creative design (*qiaofa* 巧法) for curio storage solutions, such as handscroll-shaped or

[34] Ibid, vol. 56, p. 154.
[35] Ibid, vol. 35, pp. 201-2.

album-shaped drawers.[36] An excellent example of this is a bookcase-shaped drawer contained within a pair of curio cabinets (Fig. 17-a), this pair also closely fits that of the entry under discussion. Qianlong often asked a member of the box workshop named Cai Liushi 蔡六十, who served as the deputy foreman of the workshop (*fu cuizong* 副催總), to design the placement and packaging of the curios.[37] Cai must have been an ingenious box designer, as the emperor frequently entrusted him with the task of devising containers for curio boxes,[38] or sought his advice on how to arrange curios.[39] Even so, Qianlong remained the principal architect of his curio boxes, for without his approval the arrangement of curios was not to take place. He actively participated in the positioning of curios, deciding, for example, what was to be placed in the visible drawers (*mingzhuang* 明裝) versus the secret compartments (*anzhuang* 暗裝).[40]

The pair of red sandalwood curio cabinets in Fig. 17-a is very similar to the framework of the one under discussion here. Each cabinet in this pair is made up of eleven main drawers of varying sizes (Fig. 17-b). Most of these drawers are equipped with a close-fitting wooden case whose space is partitioned into several compartments for curios. Secret drawers are embedded on the sides of some cases (Fig. 17-c). Qianlong was very

[36] Ibid, vol. 12, p. 544.
[37] Ibid, vol. 8, p. 345.
[38] Ibid, vol. 13, p. 672.
[39] Ibid, vol. 13, p. 520.
[40] Ibid, vol. 12, p. 541.

fond of the interplay between visible and hidden storage units. This pair of curio cabinets also exemplifies his typical box-within-a-box or drawer-within-a-drawer structure.

Now let us again return to the assembly of this pair of curio cabinets in the long entry: the previously selected seventy articles of curios were only a preliminary selection; the final selection process was far from over. Over the course of the ensuing two months, Qianlong commanded that the Office of Imperial Manufacture submit to him several large groups of purpose-built curios for consideration of inclusion within curio boxes. He then selected numerous curios from these submissions for the cabinets.[41] Each time a group of curios was selected for inclusion, the emperor would require a model for their placement plan, thereby closely monitoring the entire assembly process. From time to time, especially for jade articles and his own paintings or calligraphy, he would also personally direct the placement of certain curios. The assembly of this pair of curio cabinets was finally completed at the end of March of the following year (1773). This pair of cabinets, which took almost half a year to finish, were then placed in the Hall of Honouring Three Selflessnesses (*Fengsanwusi* 奉三無私) at the Summer Palace (*Yuanmingyuan* 圓明園).[42]

[41] Ibid, vol. 35, pp. 202-8.
[42] The Hall of Honouring Three Selflessnesses was the second-row hall of the Summer Palace. Its name

4.3.3. The Assembly of a Wide Assortment of Packaging Forms

A collection of varied objects necessitates a correspondingly various collection of packaging forms. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Qianlong developed or encouraged the imperial craftsmen to create different forms for housing and furnishing different types of objects. Creating a curio box made up of diverse curios entailed the packaging of diverse forms, resulting in a veritable kaleidoscope of packaging forms.

Within any given curio box, there was always more than one manner of housing objects. Qianlong's preferred method of packaging jade articles has been discussed in detail in the preceding section, with cut-out indentations in the precise shape of the items that were usually decorated with paintings and calligraphy in the background. For the *Tianqiu hebi* curio box, which housed forty-three items organised in three tiers of cases (Fig. 18-a), a key feature is the use of a variety of hidden drawers, cases, and spaces. Like the previously mentioned *Jiqiongzao* curio box, the three drawers of *Tianqiu hebi* functioned as its main constructed storage units, and these trays were in turn each

was taken from a statement in *the Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) by Confucius: "The heaven provides cover selflessly, the earth gives support selflessly, and the sun and the moon shine selflessly. 天無私覆，地無私載，日月無私照。" Which implies that rulers should consider the welfare of the populace magnanimously the way the heaven, the earth, and the sun and moon do. The hall was where the Qing emperors entertained the imperial family, as well as where government officials paid tribute to the emperors.

separately packed in a close-fitting red lacquer case (Fig. 18-b). The three cases were then arranged in tiers and packaged together within an outermost red lacquer box with a dragon-and phoenix decorative motif (fig. 18-c). Generally speaking, following the design of the framing of a container and the selection of curios to be included within, Qianlong would begin to design the partitioning of space for the placement of specific objects.

Designing an assortment of hidden storage units within a single curio box was a rigorous test of the craftsmen's ability to calculate and manipulate space. Not only was finding enough room for each compartment a challenge, so too was figuring out how to incorporate their diverse formats into a whole. The device of having a secret drawer within a secret drawer, as we have seen in Fig. 7, is but one aspect of this curio box. Its complexity lies in how the double secret storage unit operates in close coordination with its neighbours. The visible compartments above the larger secret drawer were shallow to provide space for inserting the drawer, and so was the compartment above the smaller one.

In addition to the secret drawers, Qianlong had some of the hidden storage devices shaped into book-style boxes. A small white jade vase was stored in a book-shaped

wooden box which was moulded into a book cover of the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) (Fig. 18-d), an authoritative history of ancient China by Sima, Qian. The side of the book-shaped box imitated the book-clip style of traditional Chinese book covers, like we see in the cover of *Tangshi lunduan* 唐史論斷 (*On the History of the Tang Dynasty*) (Fig. 19). This hidden box was inserted in a recess on a side of one of the three main cases (Fig. 18-d). Inserted into the other side of the same case is another hidden box in the shape of a book (Fig. 18-e). It contains a rosary of red agate prayer beads which are wound around the circular grooves specifically designed for the beads (Fig. 18-f). This box was designed to imitate the cover of Gao Shiqi's 高士奇 (1644-1703) *Tianlu shiyu* 天祿識餘, a book of mixed records regarding what he learned from the imperial court. Gao, an official close to Kangxi who stood high in the emperor's favour, is also known for recording what he saw and heard during the time of his service in the *Southern Study* (*Nanshufang xingzou* 南書房行走). The book-style boxes in Qianlong's curio box were not limited to serious or official texts and also represented lighter reading material; Gao's book, for example, even mentions recipes for cuisines across Asia.[43] Other hidden boxes of *Tianqiu hebi* curio box are camouflaged in the fabrics of the same colour and pattern as that of the case they are

[43] Gao Shiqi 高士奇, 2001, *Tianlu shiyu* 天祿識餘 (Remnant knowledge from the gift of heaven), reprinte in *Gugong zhenben congkan* 故宮珍本叢刊 (Collectanea of Precious Books from the Palace Museum), Haikou: Hainan Publishing House, vol. 483.

inserted into (Fig. 18-g). Additionally, some articles were directly inserted into hidden spaces without an extra container, like the miniature album that is embedded in a secret recess of one of the main cases (Fig. 18-h).

4.3.4. Summary

Qianlong was strict in his control over the assembly of curio boxes, from the selection of curios all the way to the manner in which they were placed. So strong was his enthusiasm for the layout of curios within a box and how to accommodate them that he continually demanded that the workshops create spatial designs of increasing complexity. The craftsmen were constantly being pressed for innovative forms of packaging. The emperor was not content with having only one storage method in a given curio box, demanding a level of creativity and resourcefulness that resulted in the constant change of contents and their spatial arrangement, all the while amplifying the power of the packaging of curio boxes.

4.4. The Power of Packaging: Camouflage, Transformation, and Infinite Possibilities

Packaging—that is, the coherent framework of a curio box—determined the organisation of the objects inside. This in turn determined how the contents were

approached and then perceived. Qianlong used the various packaging mechanisms of curio boxes to define or alter the character of the objects themselves. Housing objects in various ways within a curio box resulted in endless possibilities for the objects, as well as the potential to disguise objects and alter their character. The disguising and altering of objects are connected to the act of unpacking, especially since these effects are achieved in part through the way objects are revealed. The modular structure of storage units produced different combinations of curios, and this design of dividing space into units enabled Qianlong to employ different packaging devices in different units. The emperor never tired of assembling curio boxes with their ever-changing forms of packaging.

4.4.1. Permutations and Combinations in the Curio Box

Through packaging, assemblages of varied forms could be derived through different combination of curios. As Qianlong was very keen on changing the curios and their positions, the permutations and combinations of curios benefited from the curio box's modular storage units. It also led to the infinite possibilities of the assembly of curious. The combinatory variability of curios is similar to that of a digit string, though while each digit only has ten possibilities, in theory each curio has infinite options. Even with a finite potential to each digit, the combinations of a digit string could be almost

unlimited depending on its length. The same holds true for the possibility of curio combinations within a curio box; the larger its size, the greater the possibilities. The curios could be paintings, calligraphic works, jade, bronzes, porcelain, ivories, objects from foreign lands such as European clocks and telescopes, and so forth. There were countless options at Qianlong's disposal. The great variety curios along with the variations in the way they are housed all contribute to the ever-changing permutations and combinations of the curio box.

4.4.1.1. The Uniqueness of Each Curio Box

The endless combinations of curio boxes enabled Qianlong to exhaust every possibility he could conceive of, even allowing him to indulge in his passion for the frequent alteration of curios, even after the assembly of a box. This is why the emperor never tired of assembling curio boxes; even though the basic rules of its framework were fixed and recognised, there were still infinite possibilities and new changes were constantly introduced to these set rules. For example, even though the five-drawer and the six-drawer wooden curio cabinets share an identical external framework (Figs 20-a and 21-a), their interior layout and contents are nevertheless distinct. Both were shaped into a small cabinet, the former with five drawers and the latter with six. These two cabinets are rather severe in appearance, in contrast with their exquisite interior design and

complex spatial stratification (Figs 20-b and 21-b). Clearly, an attractive exterior was not Qianlong's focus for these two cabinets. Or, given the similarities in their framework and material composition, they might have originally been part of a larger curio cabinet which no longer exists. In any case, the emphasis here is on the order of curios inside, and these cabinets also serve to remind us to not judge curio boxes merely by their exteriors, which can be very misleading.

The permutations and combinations of those curios are achieved by careful spatial planning. The difference in curios led to the different spatial divisions of the two cabinets. One drawer of the five-drawer cabinet contains a close-fitting case which works as a modular storage unit and is divided into five compartments (Fig. 20-b). Moreover, its bottom portion is shaped into an irregular empty space for the curios hidden beneath. Some of the drawers of the six-drawer cabinet are storage cases in themselves and are directly divided into several mobile modular storage units and compartments (Figs 21-b and 21-c). Different combinations of curios necessarily led to different permutations, resulting in these two distinct curio cabinets. There is no such thing as identical curio boxes; each curio box is truly one-of-a-kind. Each of the two cabinets in this set is one possibility resulting from a unique combination and permutation of a set of objects.

4.4.1.2. The Variability within a Curio Box

The variation of combinations and permutations is not only evident across different curio boxes, but also within a curio box. Qianlong enjoyed trying out various combinations and permutations of curios during and even after the assembly of a curio box.[44] Considering one of the basic rules was that every compartment must match the size of the curio it houses, even the substitution of one curio would affect the division of other compartments and the spatial layout, and the box would need to be adjusted accordingly. It is in situations like this that modular storage units of various shapes and sizes come in handy. For example, if the jade cup stored in the left side of storage unit three of the upper-tier case of the *Jiqiongzao* curio box were to be replaced by another curio (fig. 6-f), only the space of unit three where the substitution takes place would need to be repartitioned. Other units connected with it need not be altered, and the overall structure of the curio box can remain unchanged. The new curio would then be equipped with a new compartment and furnishings.[45] This modular storage system with mobile units satisfied Qianlong's proclivity for frequent replacement of curios within a curio box. This spatial flexibility allowed him to experiment with different combinations of curios along with different permutations of storage units. The design

[44] ZBCDAZ, vol. 8, pp. 303-4.
[45] Ibid, vol. 31, pp. 71-2.

of separate compartments is of course also convenient when the replacement object is made in the same size as the original curio or its compartment.[46] On the basis of this modular system, the curio box could produce many combinations and permutations while requiring minimal change to its overall structure or framework. Perhaps due to the complexity of designing such a system, it was common for Qianlong to spend over half a year on the assembly of a curio box irrespective of its scale.[47] He seemed to find pleasure in examining the different possibilities and options in pursuit of a satisfactory form.

Qianlong often changed his mind about the spatial layout of a curio box together with its contents after the completion of its assembly. The *Jinyu xia* curio box was done by the end of the third year of the Qianlong reign (1738).[48] The emperor ordered some of its drawers to be remade with *nanmu* in the tenth year (1745).[49] In the thirteenth year (1748), he found that the division of some storage units of the *Jinyu xia* curio box was too piecemeal. He thus demanded that the workshop to repartition the units into larger compartments after he reselected some larger curios to replace the original ones.[50] He

[46] Ibid, vol. 8, pp. 303-4.
[47] Ibid.
[48] ZBCDAZ, vol. 8, p. 304.
[49] Ibid, vol. 13, p.530.
[50] '傳旨，瑾瑜匣頭層、二層屜內紫檀木小格二件隔斷甚碎，俟裡邊另選大些古玩交出之時，從新配裝另改隔斷，先做樣呈覽，准時再做。' Ibid, vol. 16, p. 303.

also ordered them to redecorate one of the drawers.[51] The alteration of spatial divisions also meant that the curios needed to be replaced, since the sizes and shapes of the compartments must match the curios that they house. A completed curio box by no means meant that Qianlong ceased to entertain ideas regarding the reorganisation of its spatial layout and curios. The modular storage system of his curio boxes allowed for his exploration of infinite combinations and permutations. He remained enthusiastic about the assembly of curio boxes at the ripe old age of 85.[52]

Even after Qianlong's death, the combinations of curios kept changing. Regrettably, such changes usually meant the loss of objects. Succeeding emperors sometimes removed curios from their curio boxes for unknown reasons. It would be fair to say that any slight change made to a curio box results in significant alterations to the box as a whole, for the loss of even just one curio irreversibly damages the subtle design of Qianlong's curio boxes. For example, there were originally seventy-four curios stored in the *Jiqiongzao* curio box, but only fifty-seven of them exist today. A yellow note left in one of the empty compartments states that: 'A string of coral beads originally stored in the compartment has been found missing on 24 February of the seventh year of the

[51] Ibid, p. 302.
[52] ZBCDAZ, microform 154.

Xianfeng reign (1857)' (Fig. 22).[53] Another note says: 'The manager Chengxiang 承祥 delivers an imperial order that the Xuantong Emperor requires the treasured sword from this compartment on 7 February of the thirteenth year of the Xuantong reign (1921).'[54] Qianlong's curio boxes were much more than just collections of curios; they are embodiments of the subtle interaction between his calculated framework and the arrangement of curios. The loss of curios spoils the unity of packaging and contents inherent to a Qianlong curio box.

4.4.2. The Deceptive Front of Curio Boxes

Based on the analysis above, it is clear that the packaging system of modular storage units provided the fundamental framework upon which Qianlong's curio boxes were built. The emperor's game of spatial stratification and combinations and permutations were well served by this system. It also enabled him to employ various packaging mechanisms on the different storage units, which led to the other two effects of packaging: camouflage and transformation. These two effects were related not only to the practice of packaging, but also to the act of unpacking. They dominate the manner in which enclosed curios are approached and further encourage the spatial exploration of curio boxes. Camouflage refers to the deceptive storage devices such as secret

[53] '咸豐七年二月二十一日，查得少珊瑚素珠一串。' Yu 2007, p. 18.
[54] '宣統十三年二月初七日，總管承祥傳上要去寶劍一口。' Ibid.

drawers or book-shaped boxes. These ingenious mechanisms that Qianlong consistently pressed his craftsmen to devise makes the structure of a curio box difficult to penetrate at a glance, which complicates the access to the curios within. Deciphering such spatial camouflage and figuring out how to approach the curios within are intellectual challenges ever-present in Qianlong's curio boxes.

4.4.2.1. The Structural Form of Camouflage

The framework of a curio box determines how its curios should be approached. Qianlong was very upset when a curio box of poor craftsmanship was submitted to him in February of 1745.[55] Consistent with the emperor's persistent concern with the spatial arrangement of curios, in this record he defines poor craftsmanship as an unsatisfactory format for housing objects. Being a camouflage in itself, the square red sandalwood curio box in Fig. 23-a is an exemplar of superior housing design (Fig. 23-a). Judging from its exterior, since it appears to be a box without an opening, it may not be seen as a box but an ornament at the first glance. How to "open" this box is the initial task of unpacking this curio box. The inlaid jade annulus on top without a tight joint suggests the most obvious possibility of a way in. The annulus is indeed removable and seems to function as the lid. However, once removed it only enables us to view part of the

[55] '此分百什件做的甚糙，嗣後再想這樣做法，必不輕恕，欽此。' ZBCDAZ, vol. 13, p. 520.

interior and its curios (Fig. 23-b), a teasing smoke-screen of a mechanism. The real entry into the box is hidden on the four sides with the decoration of landscape paintings and calligraphy. There are four removable panels inset into four sides (Fig. 23-c). They can be drawn out and the four fan-shaped storage units can thereupon be slid out (Fig. 23-d). Each unit, as is usual, is divided into compartments of varying numbers and shapes for housing various curios.

The sliding panels together with the sliding storage units form a housing mechanism of intricate craftsmanship. Qianlong appeared to like this design so much that it was recreated in other curio boxes. For example, in a Japanese box with *makie* pine-and-bamboo painting that was adapted into one of Qianlong's curio boxes (Fig. 24-a), and which houses forty items that are arranged in two tiers of cases, the lower-tier case is equipped with two sliding fan-shaped storage rooms on the two sides as its hidden spaces (Fig. 24-b).

This ingenious design is not the end of camouflage elements in this curio box of Fig. 23-a. Qianlong's curio boxes were hardly ever constructed without secret storage spaces. Though not easily detectable, they can still be figured out if one looks for evidence of the emperor's rule of making as full use of the space as possible. For example, it should

be perceptible that the 'Sumeru Throne' style base of this box is the remaining component that has not yet been examined. In Qianlong's curio boxes, no structural components merely serve the purpose of decoration. All the components perform a functional role in storage items. This base is no exception; it hides a storage unit. The main body of the curio box can be separated from the base. The hidden unit is divided into several compartments that can be revealed by sliding the panel on the top that was drawn out (Fig. 23-e). Not only does the curio box waste no space, this excellent structural design is combined with multiple deceptive devices. All the storage units are arranged with camouflage vehicles, rendering the whole curio box one complex spatial puzzle and a deceptive mechanism.

4.4.2.2. Camouflage in Shapes

Visual mimicry was the other technique of deception that Qianlong favoured in his curio boxes. The scroll or album-shaped boxes and book-shaped ones are the most common styles, as seen in storage units of some previously mentioned curio boxes.[56] This imitation of the packaging forms of other objects can also be seen in the main body of curio boxes. There is a square curio box that was shaped into four stacked books on a wooden stand (Fig. 25-a). The upper part of the exterior of the box was covered with

[56] Ibid, vol. 12, p. 544.

different cloths and wood materials to mimic the shape of four books. This shaping makes it seem as though it was moulded, making it hard to detecting any opening at the beginning. Like the previous square curio box full of hidden mechanisms, the entry point into this box is also hidden with a sliding panel on one of its sides. The interior is partitioned into five compartments for three jade articles, an ivory carving, and a porcelain (Fig. 25-b).

Such mimesis of packaging forms, especially of the book-style containers, seems to have been popular at Qianlong's court. When packaging gifts to the emperor, officials catered to his tastes. Bai Huang 白潢, the provincial governor of Jiangxi, gifted a group of writing brushes with bamboo handles to the emperor packed in a book-style box covered with brocade (Fig. 26-a), which contained five trays divided into ten compartments (Fig. 26-b). The top of the box was pasted with a yellow note on which were characters of *nei bi yibai zhi* 內筆一百隻 (one hundred writing brushes are inside). The note, which exposes the box's deceptive disguise, somewhat ruins the clever craftsmanship of the box and further results in a disconnection between the packaging and its contents. Here the act of mimicry is reduced to mere decoration.

Qianlong's mimetic packaging, on the other hand, tends to define characteristics of and

give meaning to the enclosed objects. On the curio box disguised as a stack of four books, two of the "books" are labelled with book titles (Fig. 25-c). One was *Mingshan cang* 名山藏 (*Storehouse of Mount Mingshan*), and the other title was unfortunately rubbed off so that its full title can no longer be recognised. The book of *Mingshan zang* was a privately written history by He Qiaoyuan 何喬遠 (1558-1632), a Ming official and scholar from Fujian.[57] He was well-versed in local gazetteers (*Difangzhi* 地方誌) and fond of writing. This book was a collection of incidents of the past thirteen reigns of the Ming dynasty in a biographical style (*Jizhuanti* 紀傳體).[58] It had been widely circulated until Qianlong prohibited and destroyed it multiple times during the compilation of the *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*.[59] This being the case, it would be very unlikely that the emperor would have used the title of a book he disapproved of on his curio box, an object whose purpose was to be a collection of beautiful things.

[57] Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 et al., 1964, *Ming shi* 明史 (Official history of the Ming dynasty), number 130 of biographies (*Lie zhuan* 列傳), juan 242, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, p. 6287.
[58] Ma, Xisha and Meng, Huiying eds., 2011, *Popular Religion and Shamanism*, Leiden: Brill, p. 57.
[59] The book of *Mingshan zang* was included in *Jinshu zongmu* 禁書總目 (The register of prohibited books) during the Qianlong reign. It was first seized and captured in the fourteenth year of the Qianlong reign (1749) when Zhong Yin 鐘音 (active 1736-1779), the governor general of Min Zhe 閩浙 (Fujian and Zhejiang), imposed censorship on the local publications by the emperor's order. Some sections of the book were continually seized in the fortieth year (1775) and forty-third year (1778). The First Historical Archives of China ed., 1997, *Zuanxiu siku quanshu dangan* 纂修四庫全書檔案 (Archives of the compilation of *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*), Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Works Publishing House, pp. 436, 447, and 980.

The title thus cannot refer to this prohibited book,[60] but rather derives from a famous quotation from Sima Qian's *Letter in Reply to Jen Shaoqing* (*bao ren shaoqing shu* 報任少卿書):[61] "Storing the work at the famous hideaway mountain until it may be handed down to like-minded people. 藏之名山，傳之其人。"[62] Privately written history or literati's note-style books were regarded as a sensitive matter since their accounts and opinions were usually negative compared to officially recorded history. Therefore, compositions that were not intended to be disclosed often invoked Sima's phrase in their titles, as he does with his "Storehouse of Mount *Mingshan*."[63] This term then refers to the works of great value that should be preserved for future generations.

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[60] There was a Qing note-style book named *Mingshancang fuben* 名山藏副本 (a duplicate of storehouse of mount *Mingshan*) by Qi Zhouhua 齊周華 (1698-1767). This book was also prohibited and destroyed by Emperor Qianlong as Qi argued against Emperor Yongzheng's handling about Lu Liuliang 呂留良 (1629-1683) case in it. Qi himself was also executed by Emperor Qianlong due to his sympathy for Lu and other persons involved. Therefore, this book was much less likely to be the emperor's consideration for his curio box. Besides, the circulation of *Mingshan zang fuben* was restricted at the time due to its regional context. However, there are quite a few studies about Qi and his book by modern scholars. See Wang Fansen 王汎森, 2013, *Quanli de maoxiguan zuoyong: qingdai de sixiang xueshu yu xintai* 權力的毛細管作用：清代的思想、學術與心態(Capillary function of power: ideology, scholarship and mentality during the Qing period), Taipei: Linking Publishing, pp. 341-392; Xu Sanjian 徐三見, 1989, 'Qing qizhouhua "mingshancang fuben" chukeben yu minguo kanben 清齊周華《名山藏副本》初刻本與民國刊本 (The first edition of *Mingshancang fuben* and its edition of the Republican era)', *the Document*, vol. 3, pp. 258-265.

[61] Jen Shaoqing (?-91 BC) was Jen An's 任安 courtesy name, who was Sima Qian's good friend.

[62] Sima, Qian's masterpiece, the *Records of the Grand Historian*, was disliked by Emperor Wu of Han, the emperor of the time. Sima thus wrote to his close friend Jen, An 任安 (?-91 B.C.) to express his worry and ideals of composing this work for people who would appreciate it. The complete paragraph is: "When I have utterly finished this work, I shall store it at the famous hideaway mountain until it may be passed to like-minded people and be transmitted to the world. In that case, the humiliation I have suffered will be worth it. Even if there are worse sufferings, what regret should I have? 僕誠以著此書，藏之名山，傳之其人，通邑大都，則僕償前辱之責，雖萬被戮，豈有悔哉！" Ban Gu 1981, vol. 62, p. 731. Many modern historians thereby argue that the *Records of the Grand Historian* had been a prohibited book during Han dynasty. However, more and more scholars oppose this argument according to the circulation of the records. See Lu Shihao 呂世浩, 2009, *Cong shiji dao hanshu: zhuanzhe guocheng yu lishi yiyi* 從《史記》到《漢書》: 轉折過程與歷史意義 (From historical records to history of Han dynasty: the transition and historic significance), Taipei: National Taiwan University Press.

[63] The titles of this type of works often involved the character 'hidden 藏', such as *Cangshu* 藏書 (A book to be hidden) and *Xu Cangshu* 續藏書 (Continuation of a book to be hidden) by Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602), a critic of Neo-Confucianism.

This connotation would be much more sensible in the context of a curio box. Qianlong used the term to indicate books of great significance when he was upset at the lukewarm response during book requisition for compiling the *Four Treasures*.[64] This value also corresponded to the packaging of curio boxes. The emperor held the curios inside a book-style box in great esteem.

4.4.3. Curio Transformation through Packaging

Apart from camouflage, the other effect of the dazzling packaging mechanisms employed in curio boxes is the transformation of their contents. As mentioned above, this effect was also associated with the practice of unpacking, as it was affected through the packaging and through the approaching of contents. The former directed the operation of the latter. The form of packaging shaped viewers' first impression of the objects within, and the viewers' perception was determined or further reinforced by the access to the contents—namely the act of unpacking. The characters or meaning of contents were hereby transformed. Some of the contents of curio boxes were not curios but common objects which were transformed into curios due to the calculated framework and accompanying power of other curios.

[64] The First Historical Archives of China ed., 1991, *Qianlongchao shangyudang* 乾隆朝上諭檔 (The collection of the Qianlong Emperor's edicts), Beijing: Archives Publishing House, vol. 7, p. 285.

The way curio boxes housed objects had great influence on the objects they housed and the viewer's perception of these objects. Novel forms of storage design turned the curio box into a treasure hunt, and this process of spatial exploration further elevates ordinary objects into extraordinary ones. One type of interesting item in Qianlong's curio boxes are clamshells. A small copper aventurine-inlaid box of the *Jiqiongzao* curio box contains four clamshells (Fig. 27). These shells are ordinary considering their type and shape. Yu Peijin 余佩瑾 suggests that the clamshells with their resplendent box represented exotic culture, as aventurine was the product of Europe.[65] However, the clamshells themselves were not rare in the Qing local gazetteers.[66] Also, they had been a popular ingredient of dishes at the imperial court since the Ming period.[67] The clam dishes were often found in *Shandi dang* 膳底檔 (imperial archives of tea and food house) during the Qianlong reign.[68] Aventurine was accidentally invented by Venetian glass craftsmen in seventeenth century. However, the Qing imperial glass workshop had successfully produced aventurine by the sixth year of the Qianlong reign (1741)

[65] Yu 2007, pp. 23-4.
[66] For example, the Gazetteer of Jinjiang (*Jinjiang xianzhi* 晉江縣誌) introduced a variety of shellfish in 1765, including clams. Zhou Xuezeng 周學曾, 1990, *Jinjiang xianzhi* 晉江縣誌, Fuzhou: Fujian People's Publishing House, vol. 16, p. 1929.
[67] According to *Zhuozhong zhi* 酌中志 (Records on aiming at the mean), a note-style treatise on the Ming court life by the chief eunuch Liu Ruoyu 劉若愚 (1584-ca. 1642), the dish of broiled clams was one of Emperor Tianqi's (r. 1620-1627) favourites. See Liu Ruoyu, 1985, *Zhuozhong zhi*, *juan* 20, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, p. 211.
[68] For example, the menu of the eighteenth of January, the thirtieth year of Qianlong reign (1765) listed a dish of clam soup (*geshetang* 蛤什湯). The First Historical Archives of China, 1984, *Qingdai dangan shiliao congbian* 清代檔案史料叢編 (A collection of the archives of the Qing Dynasty), vol. 10, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, p. 131.

after years of effort since the Kangxi reign.[69] There is no evidence suggesting that this aventurine-inlaid box was an imported good from Europe, as it could have been produced by Qianlong's glass workshop. Also, an exotic container cannot render its native contents exotic, since the clamshells could not have been considered foreign objects. The transformation of objects through their packaging happens in a more delicate and subtle manner.

It should be noted that any object of a curio box was arranged as an integral part of the assemblage. Each combination was a representation of Qianlong's meticulous selection. That is, all the objects within a curio box ought to be viewed as a set and the interdependence among them was essential. In this way, viewers' perception of each object was bound up with that of its neighbours. The power of accompanying curios enabled the integration of some ordinary objects. That is, the ordinary could become extraordinary within the context of the totality of the curio box. Although we are missing sixteen items from the *Jiqiongzao* curio box, its catalogue album which was placed in a compartment of the upper-tier case provides a complete picture of its

[69] Chen Donghe 陳東和, 2018, *Dong xi fang lishi zhong de jinxingboli: qiyuan zhizao yu yishuxing* 東西方歷史中的金星玻璃: 起源、製造與藝術性 (aventurine glass in western and eastern history: occurrence, fabrication and artistry), unpublished paper that Chen presented at the "International Conference on Glass in Archaeology and History: Cultural, Economic and Artistic Exchanges", which was jointly held by the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica and the National Palace Museum in Taipei (NPM) on 27-28 March, 2008 in Academia Sinica and NPM.

original composition (Fig. 28). The small catalogue details the contents and their number within this curio box, as well as their general locations. The storage of these clamshells makes them stand out due to their contrast with other curios made with extreme artistry or composed of precious materials. That is, the ordinariness of these clamshells is what made them extraordinary, and thus suitable as curios. The clamshells are distinguished by their stunning mediocrity and spatial context that they should be approached.

Apart from the power of accompanying objects, the storage framework which resembling a treasure hunt also transformed all the objects—curios or otherwise—into something precious. Approaching the contents of Qianlong's curio boxes usually involves different layers of revelation. This process is reminiscent of the way a treasure hunt is played. Searching for hidden objects gives their revelation a special sense of meaning, making every found object valuable and even glorious no matter what they are. Those shells with their aventurine-inlaid box, for example, were placed in a compartment of a bottom storage unit of the lower-tier case. The only means of approaching them would be as follows: Open the outmost wooden box and take out the two-tiered *makie* box (Figs 6-a and 6-c). After opening the *makie* box, one of the main storage units closely fitted into the lower-tier space is revealed (Fig. 6-g). At this stage,

the aventurine box is still unseen. When one of the mobile units on the top layer is drawn out, several compartments underneath are disclosed. The box is located in one of the compartments. These unattractive clamshells are thereupon transformed into attractive objects due to this prolonged process of search and revelation. It is therefore understandable why Qianlong was obsessed with the intricate design of spatial frameworks and storage mechanisms for his curio boxes. Those devices served to define the characters of the contents, developing and transforming the viewer's perception of them.

4.4.4. The Contents of Curio Boxes

All these packaging devices turned the container into the brightest curio of a curio box. They also transformed piecemeal curios inside into a wonder, though the meaning of such groupings remains unclear. As demonstrated in section 4.3.2 above, Qianlong usually personally selected these curios from groups of objects that were specially made as contents of curio boxes. However, except they were objects of various kinds, it is still unknown what the emperor's choice criterion was and what the relation among a group of curios was.

The contents of the *Jiqiongzao* curio box exemplifies Qianlong's curio combination, its

small catalogue revealing the complete composition (Fig. 28). There were seventy-three curios stored in two tiers of cases separately. Interestingly, the catalogue album itself was not included in the list, so there should be seventy-four items in total. The first tier that refers to the lower-tier case (Fig. 6-g) contained thirty-five items; whilst the second tier (Fig. 6-e) had thirty-eight items, excluding the catalogue.

> The first tier: a Duan inkstone of the Song dynasty, a painting scroll of white clouds and red trees by Tang Dai 唐岱, a white jade mountain stand, a blue and white water vessel of the Xuande Kiln, a *yangci* 洋磁-mounted silver box (storing empty emerald stones), a white jade incense holder, a jasper paperweight in antelope shape, a glass box (storing a gold ornament with auspicious design), an ivory carving arm-rest, a lacquer fill-in box (storing empty emerald stones), an amber wine vessel with plantain-leaf, a bronze tripod of the Han dynasty, a white jade vase (with a gilt spoon and chopsticks), an enamel box (storing empty emerald stones), a screen embedded with a Han jade annulus, a green jade paperweight in toad shape, an agate bowl, an ivory carving box (storing Han jade swine), a boxwood raft, an enamel snuff bottle, a connecting jade pendant, an enamel bowl, an aventurine box (storing clamshells), an agate cup, a *yangci* pouch, a jade tally, a gourd box (storing flint tools),

a white jade pendant in the shape of dragon and phoenix bringing prosperity, a foreign lacquer box (storing a white jade plaque), a painting scroll of the colours of Mount Taihang by Tang Dai, a pair of agate-mounted silver boxes, a box of the Western tools and ivory boards, a jasper tablet engraved with grain pattern, a white jade plaque in the shape of "Double happiness" character, and an album of *Poem and Painting Integration of Coreopsis* by Qianlong's own handwriting.

The second tier: a *yangci*-mounted ivory box (storing a Han jade hornless dragon), a fan inscribed with Zou Yigui's 鄒一桂 Plum Blossom Poem (written by Zhang Zhao 張照), a foreign lacquer box (storing three melon seeds micro-inscribed with writing and paintings), a glass snuff bottle, a Han jade ink rest, a white jade pendant in the shape of a rope double loop, a Han jade baby, a bronze flower vase, a jade screen inscribed with Qianlong's plum blossom verse, a Han jade seal in dragon shape, a white jade paperweight in horse shape, a *yangci* box (storing Han jade fan), a celadon jade wine cup, a lacquer zither, a treasured sword, a *yangci* brush rest in the shape of lotus leaves, a white jade box, a set of Four Books, an ivory carving box (with ten small boxes storing ivory objects), a white jade lidded vessel, a Han jade tiger, a Western seal, a painting scroll of

old temples in autumn forest by Tang Dai, an ivory carving turreted boat, a red porcelain stem cup, a box with mother-of-pearl inlay (storing eight jade pieces), a pair of foreign agate boxes in waist drum shape, a pair of red agate cups, a white jade box in butterfly shape, a foreign lacquer box (with three small boxes), a string of coral beads, a pair of small five coloured dishes of the Chenghua Kiln, a carving lacquer box in sunflower shape, a foreign lacquer snuff bottle in gourd shape, a *yangci* snuff bottle, a *yangci*-mounted gilt box, a white jade vajra pestle, and a carving walnut fan. There are seventy-three items in total.[70]

From the text (catalogue), it was just a collection of varied and unrelated curios, which included paintings and calligraphy, stationery, religious objects, and articles for daily

[70] "第一層：宋端溪鐘研一方、唐岱白雲紅樹一卷、白玉硯山一座、宣窯青花水盛一件、洋磁鑲銀合一件（貯空青石）、白玉方香盤一件、碧玉羚羊書鎮一件、玻璨合一件（貯空青石）、仙工雕牙臂閣一件、填漆合一件（貯空青石）、龍珀蕉葉方觚一件、漢銅鼎一件、白玉瓶一件（鍍金匙筯全）、琺瑯合一件（貯空青石）、漢玉拱璧插屏一件、綠玉仙蟾書鎮一件、瑪瑙盌一件、彫牙香合一件（貯漢玉豕）、黃楊仙客乘槎一件、琺瑯鼻煙壺一件、白玉連環珮一件、琺瑯盌一件、金星玻璨方合一件（貯螺蛤）、瑪瑙鍾一件、洋磁香囊一件、青玉合符一件、葫蘆方合一件（貯取火事件）、白玉龍鳳呈祥珮一件、洋漆方合一件（貯白玉扇牌）、唐岱太行山色一卷、洋瑪瑙鑲銀合一對、西洋規矩并象牙記事一匣、碧玉穀璧一件、白玉雙喜扇牌一件、御筆秋英詩畫合璧一冊，共三十五種。
第二層：洋磁鑲牙方合一件（貯漢玉螭珮）、鄒一桂梅花詩扇一柄（張照書）、洋漆方合一件（貯字畫瓜仁三瓣）、玻璨鼻煙壺一件、漢玉雙螭墨床一件、白玉繩環珮一件、漢玉蓮嬰一件、商金花插一件、御筆梅花王帖玉插屏一件、漢玉螭紐圖章一件、白玉馬鎮紙一件、洋磁如意合一件（貯漢玉扇器）、青白玉叵羅一件、漆琴一張、寶劍一口、洋磁荷葉筆電撰一件、白玉合一件、四書一部、仙工雕牙合一件（內子合十貯牙器）、白玉提梁卣一件（鍍金挑杆全）、漢玉虎座一件、西洋印記一件、唐岱秋林古寺一軸、仙工雕牙樓船一件、紅磁靶盃一件、螺甸串合一件（貯玉石吉祥八寶）、洋瑪瑙腰鼓合一對、紅瑪瑙盃一對、白玉蝴蝶香合一件、洋漆合一件（內屜一子合三）、珊瑚素珠一褂、成窯五彩碟一對、雕漆葵花香合一件、洋漆葫蘆鼻煙壺一件、洋漆鼻煙壺一件、洋磁鑲鍍金盒一件、白玉金剛杵一件、雕刻核桃扇器一件，共三十八種。通共七十三種。" See Fig. 28.

use and recreation. The packaging of a calculated structure, however, gave order to these piecemeal curios, though the meaning of such order remains a mystery. It is certain that the objects within a curio box were a group of random pieces without packaging.

4.4.5. Summary

Qianlong's curio boxes embody an intellectual game of spatial arrangement. These sophisticated storage devices not only encouraged spatial exploration but also influenced viewers' perception of the contents. The character of the objects within are defined or redefined in the process. Given that its definition is partly built upon the viewer's understanding of it, the curio box presupposes an audience. In a way, the unpacking of a curio box is an essential part of its ontology.

4.5. Unpacking the Curio Box: The Performative Act and Its Audience

The act of packaging, being a dynamic process, necessitates the act of unpacking. That is, the majority of packaging forms have as their ultimate purpose the act of *un*-packing. Qianlong's curio boxes took pains to highlight this final step. The sophisticated packaging devices of a curio box transformed the process of unpacking and revealing

curios into a staged performance full of surprises and excitement.

The sophisticated structures of curio boxes, with their precisely calculated internal framework, required detailed instructions on how to unpack them. After the imperial workshops completed the packaging of a curio box, Qianlong also wielded exclusive control over the practice of unpacking. The emperor, being the owner of these objects, was the only one who could provide guidance with regards to how to unpack and explore the contents of his curio boxes. Since the act of unpacking a curio box was a performative process that required the emperor's physical presence, we can also assume that such a display was intended for specific types of audience. Given the locations in which curio boxes were usually placed (mostly in the private dwellings of Qianlong) and the relatively small sizes of them, the audience was likely restricted to a small in-circle at court. Furthermore, the intricacy of the mechanisms and the miniature scale of the curios would only have allowed for a small group of viewers at a time. The curios themselves may also suggest the identity of those in the audience. A box of cosmetics, for example, may have been intended for a female audience. The nature of the objects might have influenced the process of unpacking as well. Additionally, certain types of curio boxes could have been of great practical value after being unpacked. In this way, it could be said that the objects contained within a curio box determined the way they

are packaged from the outset.

4.5.1. Layers of Packaging Calling for Layers of Unpacking

The practice of unpacking curio boxes has been addressed in the previous sections on camouflage and transformation. The square curio box with a jade annulus in particular presented the many effects of unpacking. Devices such as creating a misleading point of entry and secret stowage spaces were also designed with the display of curios in mind. One could even say that the final step of revealing the objects contained within was where the storage mechanisms created the most theatrical impact.

The mechanisms created by different strata of storage units made it so that some curios were placed so deep within the overall structure that many other objects needed to be removed first in order to access them. That is, in order to get to the bottom of Qianlong's curio boxes, the spatial layout of curio boxes call for layers of revelation. For example, on the inner sides of the compartments of a small red sandalwood curio cabinet (Fig. 29-a), there are several secret drawers and trays installed. The location of these hidden storage devices makes the curios inside difficult to access. The jade pendant in a secret drawer and the two chicken cups (*jigang bei* 雞缸杯) on two secret trays cannot be

detected until all the layers of storage units above them have been taken out.[71] The small curio cabinet is made up of two tiers of drawers (Fig. 29-b) as its main storage units. The secret housing devices on the inside of the compartment mentioned above are located in the lower tier (Fig. 29-c). After pulling out the drawer, the two painting scrolls with their bracket in the middle compartment need to first be removed (Fig. 29-d). A tray where an inkstone was placed was set beneath the paintings' bracket, whose body was hollow, allowing for the storage of an album of calligraphy rubbings (Fig. 29-e). Once the inkstone and its container are removed from the compartment, the secret stowage units on the two inner sides of the compartment can then be detected along with their three curios (Fig. 29-a).

The series of disassembling acts described above is for revealing the full contents of just one compartment of a curio box. Once such devices have been revealed, it then becomes clear that every visible curio ought to be taken out in order to truly appreciate the complexities and treasures held within the cabinet (Fig. 29-f). There would be no other way to ascertain the full inventory of curios housed within the cabinet unless

[71] Chicken cups were small porcelain wine cups painted with hens with their chicks and cocks. It was created in the Chenghua period (1465-87) when the technique of *doucai* 鬥彩 (polychrome cloisonné) reached its peak. Small pieces like chicken cups were the representatives of Chenghua *doucai*. The high quality and extreme rarity of Chenghua chicken cups have made them art treasures among collectors since the Wanli reign (1573-1619). The Qing imperial court was enthusiastic about making the replicas. It is said that no more than twenty-five Chenghua chicken cups are in existence. Cui, Yifang, 2017, *Speaking for the Chicken Cup: A Case Study in Chinese Art Collecting*, MA, the Australian National University.

every compartment inside was inspected thoroughly. In this sense, the packaging schemes of Qianlong's curio boxes encourage their own deconstruction, an act that allows the viewer to see them in their entirety. The unpacking of a curio box, filled as it is with intricate storage devices, was a theatrical performance.

The performative and explorative nature of unveiling a curio box in its entirety resembled something of an intellectual adventure, one that requires a specific guidance. Even museum curators today, such as researchers of the National Palace Museum, find that they must make detailed and accurate notes when disassembling a curio box if they are to reassemble it correctly later on.[72] This gives us a sense of the complexity and subtlety involved in the assembly and disassembly of a curio box. Apart from the craftsmen of the box workshop who produced the boxes, Qianlong was likely the only one who knew the right way to 'open' the curio boxes and to access all of the curios inside. All of the extant records regarding curio boxes are correspondence strictly between the workshop and the emperor, found only in the archives of the imperial workshops and furnishing archives. Based on these archives, it is clear that both the production and quality of curio boxes reached their peak during the Qianlong reign. Be this as it may, the emperor barely discussed their production in his writings, despite

[72] This information is provided by Professor Jingfei Shi of the Graduate Institute of Art History in the National Taiwan University. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to her.

having a penchant for writing about whatever he felt enthusiastic for.[73] There are no mentions of the curio boxes in Qing dynasty literature either. It is interesting that, except for manufacturing records in the imperial archives, there is not a single mention of this large corpus of artistic works. Qianlong appears to have intentionally kept them out of the public eye, certainly more so than with other objects in the imperial collection. Thus, outside of a small circle comprised of craftsmen and the emperor, little was known of the curio boxes at all, not to mention expertise on how to unpack them. It can thus be inferred that Qianlong's direction and supervision would have been necessary when attempting to open the curio boxes.

Interestingly, there were some similar cases in European princely collections from the eighteenth century. The unpacking of nested eggs would have required instructions from the owner or an insider. A large part of the pleasure of these objects is derived from the surprising revelations that occur in the act of unpacking. Gifting eggs of refined craftsmanship was a popular custom among European royal families, especially at Easter.[74] The first Tsar Imperial Fabergé egg was a hen's egg composed of five

[73] Qianlong had composed around 42,640 poems, over 1,000 essays, and 300 volumes of imperial instructions in his reign. He was the ruler who produced most written works in Chinese history. Sun Wenliang 孫文良 et al., 2001, *Qianlong huangdi* 乾隆皇帝 (The Qianlong Emperor), Taipei: Knowledge House Press, p. 368. The emperor discussed about everything in his compositions but the curio box.

[74] Bencard, Mogens; Davidson, J. and Abrahamson, G. M. trans., 1999, *The Hen in the Egg*, Copenhagen: Amalienborg Palace Museum, pp. 19-24, 30.

components (Fig. 30). The outermost eggshell was made of gold coated with white enamelin. Inside the shell was a close-fitting yolk of gold. A gold hen inside the yolk contained a diamond and gold crown. The crown opened to reveal a ruby pendant. Both the crown and pendant are now lost.[75]

The egg was a gift from Tsar Alexander III (r. 1881-94) to his wife Empress Maria Feodorovna (1847-1928) during the Easter of 1885.[76] The Tsar's brother Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich (1847-1909) was the middleman between his brother and the master craftsman Peter Fabergé (1846-1920). He sent the finished egg to the Tsar with a letter dated 21 March, 1885, which details the instructions for opening the egg.

> I send you herewith, dear Sasha (Tsar Alexander III), an egg made according to your wishes by the jeweller Fabergé. …… I attach hereto a brief, and probably unclear, set of instructions on how this complicated article should be handled in order to extract the treasure contained therein. First turn the top half to the left and remove it. Second, repeat this operation with the yolk. Third, having grasped the hen in your hands, press under its crop, and at the same time, after seizing the beak with your fingernails, lift it up, which will cause the bird to split into two.

[75] Lowes, Will et al., 2001, *Fabergé Eggs: A Retrospective Encyclopaedia*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press, p. 18.
[76] Fabergé, Tatiana et al., 1997, *The Fabergé Imperial Easter Eggs*, London: Christie's, p. 15.

> Fourth, you must take out the crown, base forward, and having grasped each half with four fingers, you must bend them both back so that a diamond rim remains, with the aforementioned symbol of autocracy; the rim should be pressed at its base, at the end where a little joint-pin protrudes. The rim is then folded back, and the ruby treasure can then be unhooked. Altogether, this object in the totality of its various component parts falls for the most delicate handling. ……[77]

The Tsar was charmed by the egg and wrote an immediate reply the very same day from Gatchina.

> I am very grateful to you, dear Vladimir, for the trouble you have taken in placing the order and for the execution of the order itself, which could not have been more successful: the workmanship is really very fine and exquisite. Your instructions for the delicate handling of the object are so explicit that I was able to carry them out easily and with complete success. I do hope that the egg will have the desired effect on its future owner [the Empress Maria Feodorovna]. …….[78]

[77] Ibid, pp. 16-17.
[78] Ibid, p. 17.

The empress was so delighted with this egg that the Tsar made it an annual tradition to present her with a Fabergé egg every Easter.[79] The handling instructions included with the first egg are so thorough and specific that one imagines the craftsman must have given them to the Grand Duke when the egg was delivered, who then passed them onto his brother the Tsar. The final recipient, the Empress Maria Feodorovna (previously known as Princess Dagmar of Denmark), may not have needed her husband's guidance to open the egg, for another gold egg from the Danish royal family (Fig. 31) was believed to have inspired the creation of this egg. The Empress Maria Feodorovna was probably familiar with this type of object from her days as a Danish princess.

4.5.2. The Audience for the Performance of Curio Boxes

Qianlong's curio boxes were equal to—or perhaps surpassed—the artistry of the European eggs. Just as with the Fabergé egg, handling the curio boxes necessitated the emperor's instructions. This suggests that inherent in the performative unpacking of curio boxes is an expectation of a certain type of audience. These curio boxes existed within the confines of the walls of the Inner Court, which meant a very restricted viewership. There were only five groups of people who could have had opportunities to access the curio boxes: the emperor himself, his family members, the craftsmen,

[79] His son Nicholas II carried on the tradition to present his wife and his mother each with an egg at Easter. Bencard 1999, p. 32.

some courtiers, and certain eunuchs. However, not all of them were necessarily the audience that Qianlong had in mind; it is likely that only the imperial family and courtiers were part of the intended audience.

4.5.2.1. The Audience inside the Inner Court

The eunuchs constituted a large and special group in the inner palace, serving as cleaners and preservers of the imperial treasures, as well as messengers between the emperor and the imperial workshops.[80] Yet they were certainly not active participants in the imperial collection due to their very low levels of education and lowly status.[81] Qianlong resented their existence within the inner court day and night,[82] so it goes without saying that he would not consider them a suitable audience for whom to exhibit his curio boxes.

The craftsmen who produced and designed the curio boxes were as well-acquainted with the boxes as the emperor, but they could hardly be considered the intended audience for the objects. There is no evidence to suggest that they had any relation to

[80] According to *Imperially Authorized Laws and Regulations of Conduct within the Palace*, there were around 3,300 eunuchs serving the imperial household in sixty-nine imperial properties during the Qianlong reign. See the Qing Imperial Household Department 1979, pp. 637-743.
[81] The eunuchs were treated poorly throughout the Qing period, so much so that even Kangxi, the emperor was renowned for his benevolence, regarded them as pests. The latest study concerning the Qing eunuchs is Kutcher, Norman, 2018, *Eunuch and Emperor in the Great Age of Qing Rule*, Oakland: University of California Press.
[82] Eertai 1987, vol. 4, p. 67.

the boxes apart from being the creators. Qianlong may have explored the art of making curio boxes with the craftsmen, but he would not have displayed the boxes for them.

The only remaining groups for whom the boxes might have been shown are the imperial family members and the emperor's courtiers. Chen Huixia 陳慧霞 and Shi Jingfei 施靜菲 have already suggested that the imperial concubines might have been an intended audience for Qianlong's curio boxes and collection. Chen's argument is based on one of a series of paintings of *Twelve Beauties* titled *Bogu yousi* 博古幽思 ('lost in thought amid the antiques') (Fig. 32).[83] The imperial concubine is surrounded by a large curio cabinet and appears to be admiring some antiques placed on the table in front of her. It is clear from these paintings that the imperial concubines were considered to be important users and appreciators of the curios. Moreover, since the concubines in this painting series are all engaged in the activity of appreciating artefacts (Fig. 33), Chen further proposes that the imperial concubines might have been required to have knowledge of antiquities. Although it is difficult to say for certain whether the Qing emperors did truly examine their imperial collection with their concubines, the paintings do seem to imply that the imperial concubines were considered to be a suitable

[83] Chen's research about the Qing curio box is unpublished, the paper "A Microcosm of the Art World: The Significance of the Treasure Box in the Imperial Ch'ing Collection" was presented at the international symposium *Art in China: Collections and Concepts*, which was jointly held by the NPM and Heidelberg University on 21-23 November, 2003 in the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn. It is Professor Shih Ching-Fei who provides the information about this paper, I would like to express my gratitude to her.

audience for the curio boxes.[84]

Furthermore, the curios sometimes included articles for female use, such as the tiny comb stored inside another set of *makie* boxes in an aforementioned square red sandalwood curio box (Figs 15 and 34). European vanity cases sometimes formed part of curio sets as well. The British timepiece box included within that same red sandalwood curio box might have originally been a vanity case (Fig. 35). Although it is an empty box now, its style in terms of form, shape, size, and decoration is identical with other European vanity cases in the imperial collection (Fig. 36-a). This gilt bronze vanity case decorated with mother-of-pearl inlay was imported from eighteenth-century Europe. It contains three small glass vases, a gilt powder box, a clasp knife with mother-of-pearl inlay, an eyebrow clip with nail file, and an eyeshadow brush, and a powder brush (Fig. 36-b). The vanity case was a set of pocket necessaries (nécessaires de poche) that was popular among the aristocratic ladies of eighteenth-century Europe.[85] Shi Jingfei has argued that, to some extent, certain articles included in curio boxes imply a

[84] The Qing emperors were fond of disguising themselves as different roles, including Han Chinese literati and the European aristocracy, in their portrait paintings. Modern scholars argue that such paintings were based on fictions rather than on the record of actual events. For the study, see Chen Baozhen 陳葆真, 2010, 'Yongzheng yu gianlong erdi hanzhuang xingletu de xushi yu yihan 雍正與乾隆二帝漢裝行樂圖的虛實與意涵 (On the portraits of Emperors Yongzheng and Qianlong in Han-Chinese costume)', *National Palace Museum Research Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 49-101. In that case, it is highly likely that it was the case for these paintings of the imperial concubines.

[85] Bremer-David, Charissa ed., 2011, *Paris: Life and Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum.

sense of femininity.[86] Based on the *Twelve Beauties*, she has also argued that the imperial concubines were users of European objects at the Qing court (Fig. 37). In one painting, a concubine is seen holding a European pocket watch and an armillary sphere is placed on the table behind her. Shi also discovered that the majority of European pocket watches in the imperial collection were stored in curio boxes. She thus reaches the conclusion that the imperial concubines might have been part of an elite group who were allowed and able to appreciate the curio boxes. However, it is still of course contestable whether European pocket watches can be deemed as 'feminine' accessories. Later emperors have also been seen wearing pocket watches in paintings (Fig. 38); Qianlong himself was a great collector of European clocks and watches.[87]

In addition to the imperial concubines, Qianlong's sons and courtiers, who were usually the authors of miniature paintings and calligraphic works stored in curio boxes, might have been another type of audience. As seen in Chapter 2, they were the very same people whose works would often serve as inscriptions or decoration on the curio box

[86] Shi's paper "The 'Immortal's Works' and the 'Treasure Boxes' in the Qing Court from 1662 to 1795" was presented at the international conference *Interactions in Art: East Asia and Europe, 1600-1800*, which took place in the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica on 16-17 December 2013. I would like to show my gratefulness to Professor Shih for so generously providing me with her unpublished article, whose publication is forthcoming.

[87] The topic in European clocks and watches of the Qing imperial collection has been widely studied, mainly focusing on the periods of early Qing and high Qing. Guo Fuxiang 郭福祥, the research fellow of Palace Museum in Beijing, has been devoted himself to the study about Emperor Qianlong's collection of clocks and watches. Guo, 1995, 'Qianlong huangdi yu qinggong zhongbiao de jianshang he shoucang 乾隆皇帝與清宮鐘錶的鑑賞和收藏 (Emperor Qianlong and his imperial collection of clocks and watches)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 143, pp. 76-88.

packaging designed by Qianlong. Given that all the curios were specifically tailored to the compartments they were housed in, the emperor may have needed to discuss the form and shape of miniature works with his sons and courtiers when they were tasked with creating the items.[88] Additionally, due to their great learning and close relationship with the emperor, they might have been the main audience for Qianlong's curio boxes. When Dong Gao 董誥 (1740-1818) was presented with a landscape painting of an unusual small size (Fig. 39), he must have been aware that this work was designed for a certain curio box (Fig. 15). Such miniature works were sometimes created by the emperor's sons, like the small album of Jiaqing's calligraphy in the same curio box (Fig. 40). These individuals usually had access, albeit restricted access, to the inner palace where the curio boxes were kept. It is thus likely that Qianlong may have 'performed' the unpacking of his spectacular creations for those who contributed significantly to the making of the curio box, and that they were also the group that he would peruse his collection with.

[88] 'On 21 July of 1745, the deputy foreman Dazi 達子 informs the box workshop that, the eunuch Hu hands in a calligraphic album of *Yuanjinglou ji* 遠景樓記 by Chen Bangyan 陳邦彥, an album of flower paintings by Zhang Ruoai 張若靄, an album of copy of Chu Suiliang's 褚遂良 imperial mandate by Li Zongwan 勵宗萬, and an album of landscape paintings by Dong Bangda 董邦達. The Qianlong Emperor commands the workshop to place these four albums in a *baishijian*. Respect the imperial edict. (乾隆十年七月) 二十一日，副催總達子來說，太監胡世傑交陳邦彥書遠景樓記一冊、張若靄花卉一冊、勵宗萬臨褚遂良制誥一冊、董邦達山水一冊。傳旨，著入百什件內，欽此。' ZBCDAZH, vol. 13, p. 660. The four officials were all presented scholars (*Jinshi* 進士) and had been served in the Southern Study (*Nanshufang* 南書房), the office where lectures to the emperors were given and located near the emperors' chamber, during the Qianlong reign.

4.5.2.2. Other Potential Audience

On certain special occasions and with regards to certain types of curio boxes, it seems that the scope of viewership was broader. Qianlong would occasionally command that certain curio boxes needed to be completed before particular events while they were in intensive production.[89] In May 1756, he ordered the assembly of a curio box entitled *Qiulin si* 璆琳笥 to imitate another curio box named *Wanyan ji* located at the Palace of Double Glory. He said that it must be finished before his birthday, the thirteenth of August.[90] This indicated that the *Qiulin si* curio box was probably customised to be used on his Longevity Day (*wanshou jie* 萬壽節), the imperial birthday of the Qing emperors. This curio box was eventually completed on 9 August,[91] four days before the emperor's birthday. As stated at the beginning of this section, the function of a curio box truly comes to life at its presentation, when the curios inside are unpacked and exhibited. It is thus possible that this curio box was designed for performance during the Longevity Day event. During the celebration of the emperor's birthday, the Forbidden City would have been more accessible than usual. This means that the displaying of *Qiulin si* would have been geared towards a wider audience, including those who did not usually have the opportunity to view curio boxes. Unfortunately, it

[89] Qianlong cared the production of curio boxes so much that he required the box workshop to submit all the curio boxes they were assembling every five days, for him to check them. ZBCDAZH, vol. 12, p. 546.
[90] Ibid, vol. 22, pp.59-60.
[91] Ibid, vol. 22, p. 60.

is not possible to deduce the shape of this particular curio box from is archival description. Its contents seem to have been no different than that of other curio boxes, mainly consisting of small curios on various subjects.[92] It therefore remains unclear what made the *Qiulin si* curio box so unique that Qianlong felt compelled to present it at his birthday celebration.

We do know that there was a distinctive style of curio box that Qianlong would order for special occasions, especially before he was about to travel out of the Forbidden City. When they ventured outside of the Palace or Beijing, the Qing emperors and their belongings became more visible than usual. The special type of curio box that Qianlong would commission for these outings was variously called 'traveling curio box within a folding table' (*chuwai zhedie baishijian zhuo* 出外摺疊百拾件桌), 'traveling folding table with drawers' (*chuwaiyong huotui chouti zhuo* 出外用活腿抽屜桌), or just 'traveling table' (*chuwai zhuozi* 出外桌子), and so forth in the archives.[93] The timing of their production was usually determined by the emperor's traveling schedule. He once commanded the production of a folding table to be completed before his trip to Rehe 熱河.[94] In order to ensure that the table would be completed on schedule, Qianlong assigned the Minister of War Fu Kang'an 福康安 (1753-96) and the Vice

[92] Ibid.
[93] Chi 2007, pp. 8-9.
[94] ZBCDAZH, vol. 47, p. 651.

Minister of Revenue Fu Chang'an 福長安 (1760-1817) to oversee its production.[95] It appears that such curio tables were a travel necessity that the emperor could not dispense with.

4.5.3. The Contents of the Traveling Table

As has already been stated, the exterior packaging of a curio set was determined by the function of its contents. Most of the curios (e.g. jade sculptures, clamshells, etc.) of the curio boxes that have already been mentioned lack any genuine utility. The act of unpacking the box and exposing these objects would have been their ultimate purpose. The curios held within the emperor's traveling tables, however, were highly practical items that served functions beyond simply being an exhibition piece to be unpacked. For these curios of utility, Qianlong was the only intended audience.

The structure and contents of a traveling curio table were such that the table could be transformed into a mobile office for Qianlong. Not only that, the traveling table also encapsulated a day in the life of Qianlong or even an entire journey. A red sandalwood curio folding table is a striking example of this (Fig. 41-a). The emperor ingeniously combined a folding table and a curio box into one. In appearance, it is like a small

[95] Ibid. Both of the overseers were Qianlong's close ministers at the imperial court. They even bore affinity to the emperor, whose nephews-in law.

suitcase without a handle. The outermost structure is that of a box that can be unfolded to become a *kang* 炕 table (Fig. 41-b). The four legs are separately folded into four recesses on the two long sides of the interior (Fig. 41-a). The rest of the space is divided into two chambers for housing two cases that serve as the main storage units. As is standard for curio boxes, the main units are then further divided into modular storage units, each of which is further partitioned into small compartments for individual curios (Fig. 41-b).

The *kang* table is a type of short-legged table for use on a *kang* 炕, a heated brick bed or platform common in northern China and Manchuria for surviving the bitter cold of winter. Due to its small size, the *kang* table is especially suited to being adapted into a portable object. Many of the curios held within were also made foldable for easy assemblage and portability, like the hat stand which can be folded flat and the candlestick which consisted of a holder and a painted screen (Fig. 41-c). Sixty curios are housed in this folding table, and the following record gives us a sense of the table's original inventory.[96]

The first case contains: an inkstone within a Songhua stone box inlaid

[96] Wu Chunyan 吳春燕, 2007, 'Shengshi de yinfu- youganyu gianlong de luxing wenjuxiang 盛世的音符：有感於乾隆的旅行文具箱 (A traveling stationery case of Qianlong)', *the Forbidden City*, vol. 150, pp. 196-203.

with glass, a red ink stick, a black ink stick, a mottled bamboo writing brush, a black lacquer writing brush, an ivory ruler, an ivory screwdriver, a red sandalwood brush rest, a pair of gilt compasses, a white jade seal, a white jade brush washer, ……an ivory armrest, a *taipingche* 太平車 (facial massager) with jade bead of Han dynasty, a dust whisk, an aventurine brush lick, a copper body painted enamel snuff bottle, a set of twelve silver tools, two pieces of flint, two memorials in paper made from young bamboo, a fan, a folding brush holder, a book of poems written at the imperial command, a book of *Shi yun* 詩韻 (the rhyming dictionary), a pair of scissors with ivory handles, five Western tools, an ivory tally, a crystal lion, a teakettle, ……a small telescope, a book of the Infinite Life Sutra, ……an album of landscape paintings by Zhou Kun, a lacquer box, a porcelain animal, a jade cup, and an ivory ball. There are fifty-eight items in total.

The second case contains: a handscroll of Grazing in Spring by Zhou Kun, a handscroll of Traveling in the Autumn Mountain by Zhou Kun, a folding backgammon board, an ivory folding ruler, a set of ivory Chinese chess, a folding Chinese chessboard, an set of ivory encircling game with lacquer boxes, a black folding hat stand, an set of ivory backgammon, a

cloisonné box with six ivory dice, a zither brush with an ivory handle, two books of *Leiyuan liyu* 類苑儷語, a gilt candlestick with an ivory holder, and a set of ivory domino. A total of fifteen items are stored in this case.[97]

These items can be classified into eight categories based on their function:

1. Stationery (21 pieces) items made up the majority of objects in this table, and included such things as an inkstone and black lacquer brush which were stored in a hinged box together with red and black ink sticks and an ivory ruler (Fig. 41-d). The hinged box was placed in a small leather bag.
2. Western tools (9 pieces), which were mainly writing materials as well. These items have been given their own category because they were not traditional Chinese stationery items necessary for literary composition. For example, there is a silver box with a painted enamel Western figure on its lid that contains a set

[97] "第一匣盛：嵌玻璃松花玉石盒硯一方，朱墨一錠，黑墨一錠，湘妃竹管筆一枝，黑漆管筆一枝，象牙尺一件，象牙起子一件，紫檀木筆船一件，鎏金寶規一件，白玉圖章一方，白玉筆洗一件，……，象牙臂擱一件，漢玉珠太平車一件，淨塵一分，溫都里那石筆撰一件，銅胎琺瑯鼻煙壺一件，銀鞘規矩一分（計十二件），圈子火鐮二件，本紙折子二個，書畫曹扇一柄，折疊筆筒一件，《應制詩選》一函，《詩韵》一函，象牙把剪子一件，西洋傢伙五件，象牙合符一件，銀晶獅子一件，青綠水壺一件，……，小千里眼一件，《無量壽佛經》一部，……，周鯤山水冊頁一冊，銅架洋漆撞盒一件，宣窯異獸一件，玉杯一件，象牙仙工球一件。共五十八件。第二匣盛：周鯤《春郊散牧圖手卷》一卷，周鯤《秋山行旅圖手卷》一卷，折疊雙陸盤一件，象牙折疊尺一件，象牙象棋一分，折疊棋盤一件，洋漆盒象牙圍棋一分，黑皮折疊冠架一件，象牙雙陸一分，掐絲琺瑯色盒一件（隨象牙色骰子六個），象牙把琴拂一件，《類苑儷語》二函，銅鍍金象牙書燈一分，象牙骨牌一副。共十五件。" ZBCDAZH, vol. 22, pp. 124-126.

of drawing tools (Fig. 41-e). This would have been considered a set of European pocket necessaries.

3. Curios (13 pieces), or objects for pleasure that may be less practical, like a crystal lion and porcelain animal (Fig. 41-f).
4. Paintings, calligraphy, and books (9 pieces) in miniature, such as a small album of landscape paintings and a miniature rhyming dictionary (Fig. 41-g).
5. Articles for daily use (8 pieces), including objects like a facial massager and a set of three cloisonné vessels with a pair of chopsticks and a spoon (Fig. 41-h).
6. Furniture (4 pieces), including the folding *kang* table itself and the hat stand (Fig. 41-c).
7. Board games (8 pieces), including all kinds of Chinese chess and board games, such as a Chinese backgammon set (Fig. 41-i).
8. Others (2 pieces) include an ivory tally and two memorials that were rather unusual for a curio box. The memorials are now missing.

This traveling table was submitted to the emperor several days after 18 November, 1756. It was about one month before Qianlong departed on his second Southern Inspection Tour on 11 January, 1757. His demand for this curio table was likely part of his

preparations for the impending trip,[98] since the production of such traveling tables usually happened before the emperor's travel. The contents of traveling curio tables are very similar to another type of curio box called *wenju baishijian* 文具百什件 (stationery curio boxes) that we find mentioned in the archives. A record of 1 August, 1737 states:

> A stationery case contains a copper incense burner, a gilt copper vase (with a spoon), a set of eleven Western tools, a glass mirror, a set of Chinese chess (with a chessboard), an ivory sundial, a pair of glasses, a glass snuff bottle, an ivory ruler, an ivory screwdriver, a blackwood paperweight, two writing brushes, a telescope, an agate water vessel, two ink sticks, an inkstone, a small writing table, and a pencil, a memorial. The Qianlong Emperor commands the box workshop to make other two stationery cases in the way of this one. The workshop must respect this imperial edict. ……On 8 December, two cases of the stationery curio box are completed and submitted to the emperor.[99]

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[98] Qianlong always brought some artworks with him when he travelled. Some of the works sometimes left in the locals and were not returned to the imperial court. Qiu Shihua 邱士華 ed., 2017, *Xingqie suixing─qianlong nanxun xinglixiang zhong de shuhua* 行篋隨行─乾隆南巡行李箱中的書畫 (Traveling with art- painting and calligraphy accompanying the Qianlong Emperor's southern tours), Taipei: The National Palace Museum; Chen Guodong 2012, pp. 231-2.

[99] "文具匣一件，內盛銅爐一件、銅鍍金匙瓶一件（隨匙）、西洋傢伙十一件、玻璃鏡一件、象棋一副（隨棋盤）、象牙日晷一件、眼鏡一副、玻璃鼻煙壺一件、象牙必立尺一件、象牙起子一件、烏木壓紙一件、筆二枝、千里眼一件、土瑪瑙水盛一件、墨二錠、硯一方、房文方几一件、鉛筆一枝、紅盪子摺子一件。傳旨，照樣做二分，欽此。……於本年十二月初八日，將做得文具百什件匣二分，七品首領薩木哈交太監毛團、胡世傑呈進，訖。" ZBCDAZH, vol. 7, p. 805.

In comparison with the curio boxes mentioned earlier, the contents of both the traveling table and stationery curio box are predominantly objects of practical value. There is a two-tiered stationery box that could be the *wenju baishijian* of the craft archives (Fig. 42). The *makie*-style box is comprised of two trays of stationery, including an inkstone, writing brushes, a folding ruler, a small scissor, and so forth. Traveling tables seem to allow for a more diverse array of objects, as they needed to cover all aspects of Qianlong's daily necessities. Some of the objects bring attention to his imperial power. The ivory tally, for example, would have been used by the emperor to issue imperial authorisation for the movement of manpower while on the go. The *Leiyuan liyu*, a reference books for emperors, was a type of political literature that recorded the ways in which emperors should perform statecraft and execute civil administration.[100] By including such objects, Qianlong seems to have been suggesting that his mind never strayed far from the affairs of the empire, even when travelling.

4.5.4. Summary

The packaging of curio boxes was designed for performative unpacking. It could be said that the act of unpacking maximised the spectacle of a curio box's storage

[100] *Leiyuan liyu* 類苑儷語, recorded in *Gugong zhenben congkan*, vol. 515.

mechanisms. This implies that the boxes were constructed with an audience in mind, an audience that must have been restricted to members of the imperial family and courtiers. Additionally, the complexity of the unpacking operation must have required Qianlong's personal instructions and supervision. However, for certain special types of curio boxes, their structure and contents were not merely for the sake of the theatrics of exhibition, but also served important practical functions for the emperor himself. In such cases, the emperor would have been the only intended viewer and user.

4.6. Concluding Remarks

Qianlong's curio boxes were constructed with an intricate framework by which a plethora of objects could be arranged together. Numerous packaging devices were devised to accommodate different items within a single box, a feat which required precisely calculated spatial structures that greatly utilized modular storage units. This not only maximised the storage capacity of a given curio box but also satisfied Qianlong's taste for variation and variety. The resulting curio boxes were not only an assemblage of assorted curios, but also a true kaleidoscope of packaging forms. The emperor actively engaged himself in the production of curio boxes and exercised complete control over his objects and their placement. Using various forms of packaging, he transformed the very nature of the objects enclosed within, turning the

curio box into a treasure hunt or puzzle for which he was essentially the only one with the answer key. Except for the imperial craftsmen, anyone attempting to open up a curio box without the emperor's instructions would have found it highly challenging, which made the unpacking of a curio box a performance that could only be enacted by the emperor. Given this and the restricted access to curio boxes, it seems that the performative exhibition of curio boxes was more exclusive than for other objects in the imperial collection. Based on this, we can only surmise that the imperial family and courtiers were the only ones who were privy to such performances. Qianlong himself was the only one with thorough knowledge of the workings of his curio boxes.

CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The art collection of the Qianlong Emperor has predominantly been interpreted as a propaganda tool for dynastic or monarchical legitimacy. However, the ways in which objects were packaged have generally been neglected by art and material culture studies, which has rendered understanding of the collection's objects incomplete. Whilst several exhibitions of Qing imperial packaging in the early 2000s brought some attention to the practice of containing and concealing objects, the catalogues characterised packaging as superfluous decoration that could be removed without the objects losing any significance. Other exhibitions, alternatively, followed prevalent theories of legitimacy, proposing that Qianlong's packaging was used to create a brand for his collection and persuade others of his authority.

This thesis has challenged these interpretations by demonstrating the complex strategies utilised to package objects in the imperial collection, many of which served to define the identity of the item being contained. Though not all objects in the imperial collection received such treatment, packaging played a vital role in framing the collection where it was used. Specifically, Qianlong optimised different forms of

packaging to both connect himself with various objects—usually items associated with important historical events or people—and also to explain the objects' histories in his own terms. Crucially, however, both the collection and the version of history that the emperor interpreted or constructed were hidden from public view through the elaborate spatial packaging afforded by the architectural structure of the Qing capital and imperial palace, which restricted the collection's audience to a small court circle. This contradicts dominant theories that the collection was used to convince others of Qianlong's authority, as such a role would require that it reach a wide audience. As a result, what Qianlong intended to achieve through his collection was not confined to the representation of his sovereign power.

The variety of packaging forms examined in this thesis show that the emperor used packaging to create and explore the objects' characteristics. Multiple layers of containers and wrappings is a feature that dominated Qianlong's packaging style. Such modes of packaging functioned both to protect and emphasise the importance of the object contained, as well as to provide a space for the emperor to interact with and create narratives about it. These narratives were realised and materialised through the packaging, and they formed new identities for the objects. In addition to establishing objects' identities and categorising them, Qianlong made use of packaging to integrate

himself into the objects' histories. In this way, he established himself as an ever-present feature of an art collection that had been accumulated over multiple dynasties.

It is crucial to note that, in order to preserve his status in the collection, as well as his privileged relationship to it, Qianlong restricted access to himself and a small group comprising courtiers and the imperial family. The secrecy surrounding the imperial collection ensured that the narratives he created for the objects were protected against external criticism, with his clique more likely to unquestioningly support his interpretations. Controlling access to the collection was achieved through a multilayer form of spatial packaging that situated it at the centre of a restricted palatial complex that was itself contained within various layers of urban architecture. Through mechanisms that limited access, the Outer City, Inner City, and Imperial City served to protect the Palace, whilst simultaneously utilising spatial hierarchy to impress the Qing empire's social hierarchy upon the capital's inhabitants. Similar strategies of spatial organisation and stratification are evident in the curio boxes of Qianlong's collection. These objects epitomise the emperor's appreciation for the role of packaging mechanisms, as, similar to the structure of the capital city, curio boxes controlled how the viewer approached the object contained, all the while impressing upon them information that Qianlong considered important. In contrast to the Forbidden City,

however, the spatial structure of curio boxes and the compositions of their contents were controlled in their entirety by Qianlong.

The objects of Qianlong's collection were embedded with valuable information relating to events of historical significance and the emperor's personal experiences. Packaging served to collect and convey this information, which could be changed as time passed and the emperor reinterpreted these events or the objects themselves. As a result, objects during Qianlong's reign were often transferred to different rooms, and their packaging was also changed frequently alongside the emperor's aims. The practice of packaging enabled Qianlong to convey his ideas about different times, spaces, and contexts, and through this process the stories constructed for the objects accumulated and were enriched. This is part of the reason that Qianlong collected many different objects, as the more materials he possessed, the more resources he had to shape and explain the imperial collection. One example of of this is the acquisition of jade from Khotan, which researchers have noted became an important part of Qianlong's jade collection after the defeat of the Dzungars in 1759.[1] The jade was thus used to mark his conquest and establish his achievement in relation to those of other emperors represented by other objects in the collection.[2]

[1] Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Fifth Collection*, *juan* 39, pp. 27–9.
[2] Millward 1998, pp. 180–91.

The study of the packaging Qianlong used tells us much about the formation and growth of his ideas. Kahn proposes that the art collection was a significant resource used in the emperor's education,[3] and the objects are considered to have played a key functional role in his self-cultivation.[4] Changes to the objects' packaging reflect the continuous dialogue Qianlong held with them, as well as his own self-examination that he conducted using the objects' histories. This is evident in cases where Qianlong has written different verses for a single item, connecting his experiences or achievements to the historical context embodied by the object. This indicates that what really interested him was not the object in itself, but what it could tell him and inspire him to do.

Qianlong expended much effort on managing the settings of the objects, even ones that he had already packaged. Inscriptions throughout the imperial palaces and on packaging were regularly updated, which the emperor explained was because he was always improving his calligraphy and writings.[5] However, the changes to his earlier packaging designs indicate that Qianlong kept abreast of current events and that inscriptions were changed when his interpretation did. For this reason, in 1767, he ordered that all

[3] Kahn 1971, pp. 115–67.
[4] He 2013, pp. 13–77.
[5] GZCHDSL, *juan* 798, p. 42089.

imperial works he had presented to officials before 1747 be sent back to court so that he could write new and better ones, then return them to the officials.[6] This not only shows that Qianlong embraced change but also suggests that the dynamic nature of packaging—i.e. the relatively frequent changes and alterations—during Qianlong's reign was an outcome of his continuous reflection on the objects. Modern scholars have criticised Qianlong's penchant for adding inscriptions or seals directly to objects as damaging the original artworks. This behaviour, however, is understandable if we appreciate that the value of an object from Qianlong's perspective was in its history rather than the object itself. Additionally, as the histories behind these objects were liable to change depending on the emperor's particular understanding or current events, his inscriptions are thus part of what makes them valuable now.

Though Qianlong's huge collection contributed greatly to what he perceived to be the accumulation of knowledge, empowering him to interpret Chinese culture and history, Qianlong seemed to become conscious of potential issues with doing so as he grew older. When he compiled the Second Catalogue of Paintings and Calligraphy (*Shiqu baoji xubian* 石渠寶笈續編), the emperor continued to reflect on his collecting activity and seems somewhat remorseful for his enthusiasm in an essay dated 1793.

[6] Ibid, p. 42090.

Qianlong states that:

> It is necessary that a sovereign should be cautious about their personal likes and dislikes, even though examining antiques and appreciating paintings and calligraphy are acts of refinement and good taste, and are more desirable than abandoning oneself to sensual pleasures. A ruler, however, should dedicate themselves to state affairs and caring for their people rather than pursuing their own passion! …… I wrote this to mark my demerits and hereby admonish my descendants that they should use it for reference and identify their priorities![7]

Rather than justifying collecting antiquities as he had done previously, the 83-year-old Qianlong had apparently become quite disapproving of his hobby. Throughout the long course of his life, the emperor not only redefined the imperial collection's objects through packaging, but his own attitude towards the collection appears to have changed. This demonstrates that the simplistic interpretation of Qianlong's collection being a vehicle to establish imperial authority is insufficient for understanding the complex and

[7] '人君之好惡不可不慎，雖考古書畫為寄情雅致之為，較溺於聲色貨利為差勝。然與其用志於此，孰若用志於勤政愛民乎！…… 書以誌過，後之子孫，當知可以鑒戒去取矣！' Aisin Gioro Hongli 1983–6, *Third Collection of Imperial Essays*, *juan* 9, p. 17.

ever-changing statuses of the objects.

As Ebrey has reminded us, the meaning and use of imperial collections varied with different emperors or imperial households.[8] An emperor's ideas of his collection could also vary with different periods of his time. Maybe Qianlong's descendants accepted his admonition and paid less attention to the collection. Puyi recalled that when he was sixteen, he found many large boxes piled high in a storeroom of the Palace of Established Happiness (*Jianfu gong* 建福宮), and they were all covered in dust and sealed with Jiaqing's paper strips.[9] These boxes contained Qianlong's treasures including paintings, porcelains, and jade articles. Puyi speculated that Jiaqing boxed up much of Qianlong's collection after his father's death, and stored the boxes throughout the storerooms around the *Jianfu* Palace. Large objects like bronzes and clocks were collectively placed in separate storerooms.[10] Consequently, the meaning and agency of Chinese imperial collections change through time, which has carried on till this day.[11]

[8] Ebrey 2008, pp. 341-54.
[9] Aisin Gioro Puyi, 1988, *Modai huangdi: wode qianbansheng* 末代皇帝：我的前半生 (From emperor to citizen: the autobiography of Aisin Gioro Puyi), Taipei: Vista Publishing, pp. 27-8.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Shi 2005.

FIGURES

1. Chapter 1 Figures

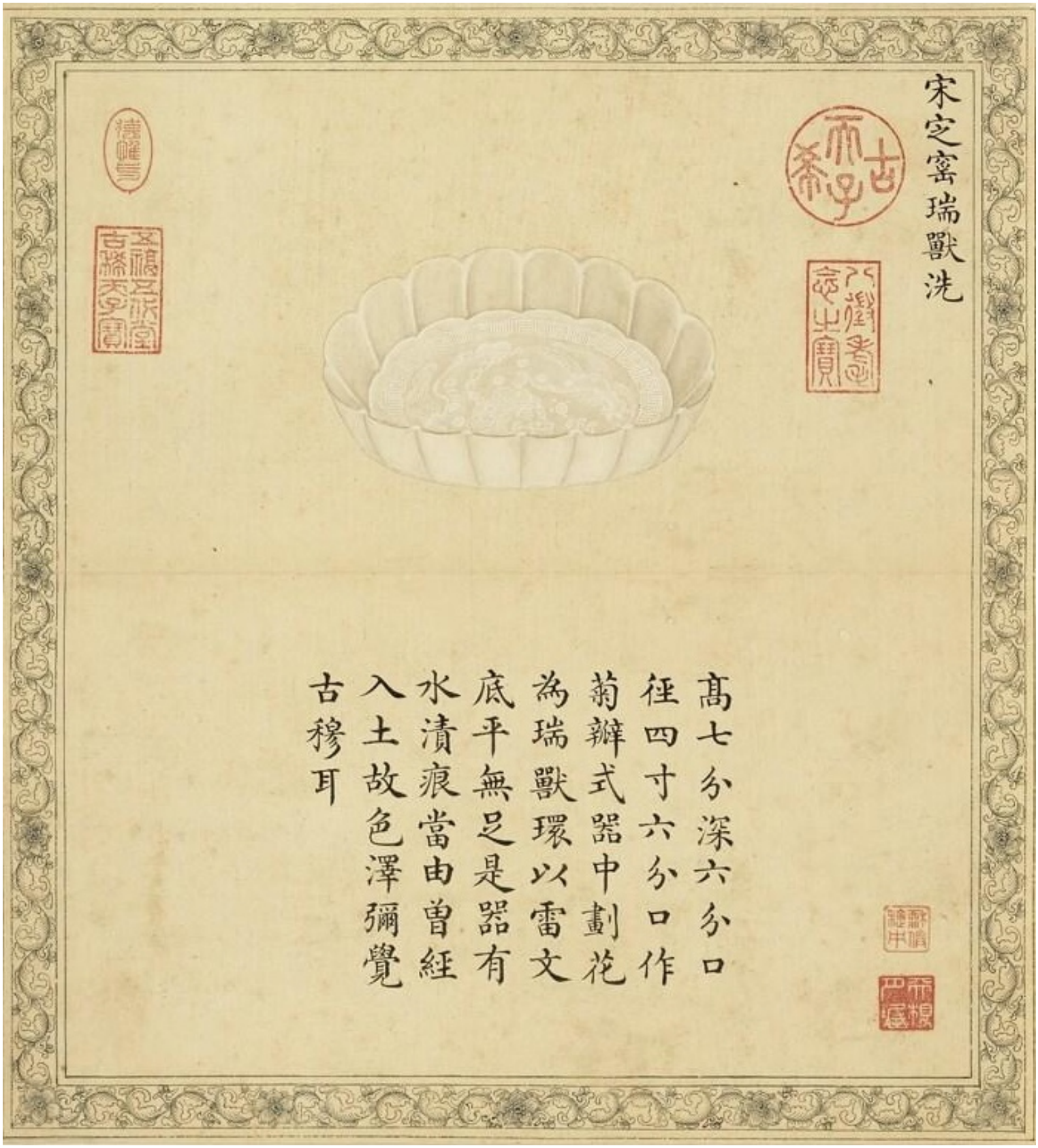


Fig. 1 An album leaf of *Taoci puce* 陶瓷譜冊, ca. 1780-90, 28.8 x 30.7 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 2-a The cover of the hand scroll of *A Powerful Bow Shooting a Deer*, the Qianlong reign (1736-95), 36 x 6.5 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 2-b Lang Shining 郎世寧 (Giuseppe Castiglione, 1688 -1766) et al., *Weihu huolu* 威弧獲鹿 (in part), the Qianlong reign, 37.6 x 195.5 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 3 Red carved lacquerware of scrolls and albums, the Qianlong reign, 17 x 10 x 18 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 4 Yellow satin covers of the imperial portraitures of the Hall of South Wind (*Nanxundian* 南薰殿), 1748. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 5 A red sandalwood box of an ink holder and a brush receptacle in Hindustan jade, the Qianlong reign, 8 x 22.5 x 7.5 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 6-a Two album-style wooden cases whose covers were inscribed with *Cangzhi zihua* 蒼質滋華 (referring to pines) and *Fuyun shurun* 浮筠漱潤 (referring to bamboo), the Qianlong reign, 13 x 10.9 cm. Currently in a private collection.



Fig. 6-b Two jade articles inlaid in the wooden cases decorated with Qianlong's paintings, jade: 9.1 and 8.9 cm.



Fig. 7 The gold pagoda reliquary, early 8th century, 14.2 cm. The Daegu National Museum, Daegu.



Fig. 8 The gilt bronze reliquary in the shape of a coffin, 8th century, excavated from Shandong, 12.3 x 11.6 x 22.5 cm. Senoku Hakkokan, Kyoto.



Fig. 9-a The set of eight nested *sheli* boxes at Famen Temple, the 9th century. The Famen Temple Museum, Baoji.



Fig. 9-b The white jade finger relic in the golden *sheli* box in the shape of pagoda (the first box of eight nested boxes), 7.2 x 4.8 x 4.8 cm.



Fig. 9-c The marblelike *sheli* box with flat-topped roof (the second box of eight nested boxes), 10.6 x 8.2 x 8.2 cm.



Fig. 9-d The golden *sheli* box with flat-topped roof (the third one), 13.3 x 11.3 x 11.3 cm.



Fig. 9-e The golden *sheli* box with flat-topped roof (the fourth one), 13.5 x 13.5 x 13.5 cm.



Fig. 9-f The gilded silver *sheli* box with flat-topped roof (the fifth one), 15.8 x 15.8 x 15.8 cm.



Fig. 9-g The silver *sheli* box with flat-topped roof (the sixth one), 19.3 x 18.4 x 18.4 cm.



Fig. 9-h The gilded silver *sheli* box with flat-topped roof (the seventh one), 27.5 x 20.5 x 20.5 cm.



Fig. 10 The set of five nested *sheli* boxes at Famen Temple, the 9th century. The Famen Temple Museum, Baoji.



Fig. 11 A box for secret memorials, the Yongzheng reign (1722-35), 30 x 15 x 6.8 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 12 The wrapping materials for secret memorials, the Yongzheng reign. The Palace Museum, Beijing.

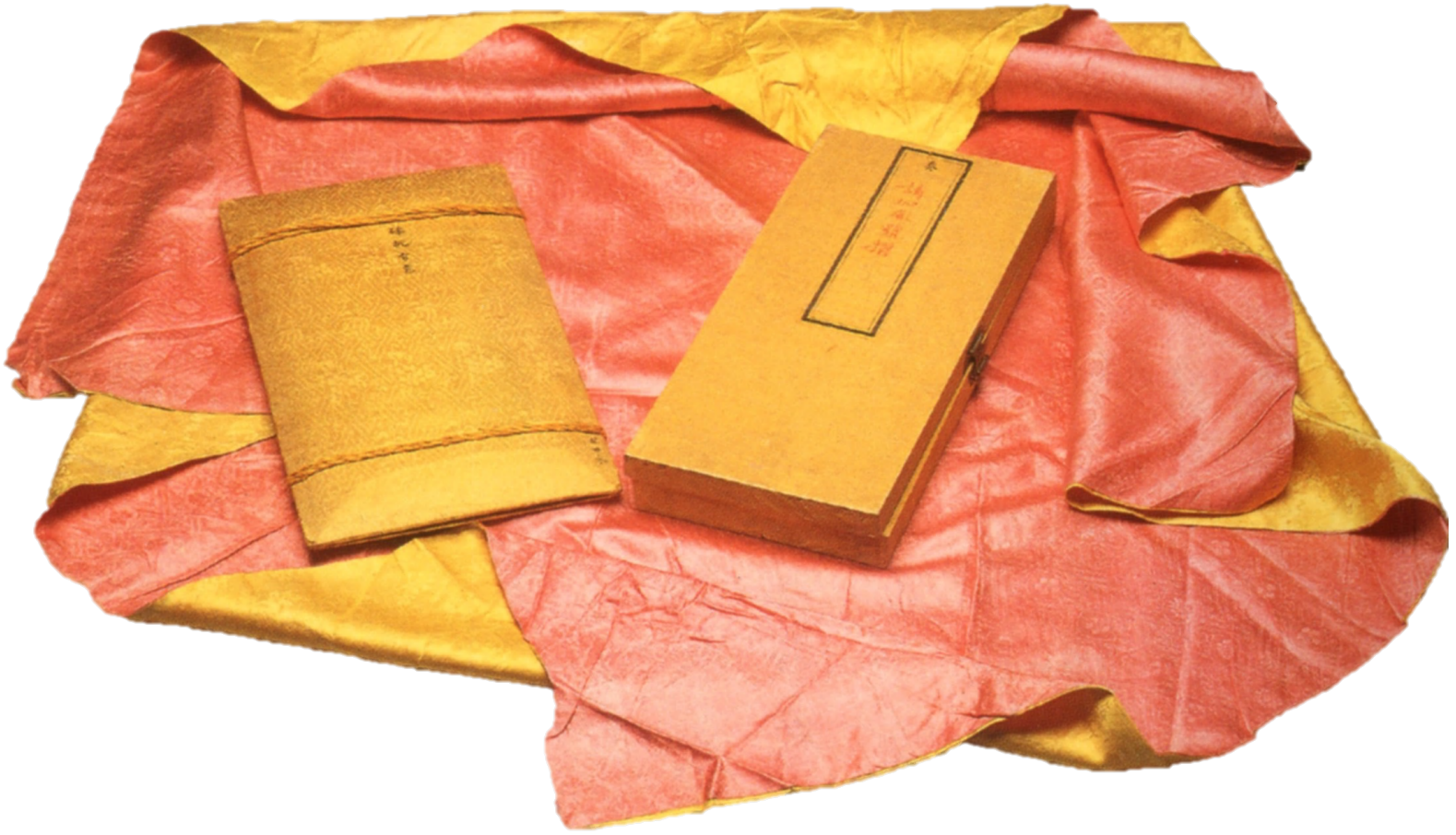


Fig. 13 The folder and box for secret memorials (with the outmost wrapping of satin), the Yongzheng reign. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.

2. Chapter 2 Figures



Fig. 1-a A wooden box of Qianlong's helmet, the Qianlong reign, 90 x 70 x 43 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 1-b The helmet box opened to display the helmet inside.



Fig. 1-c The round lid removed.

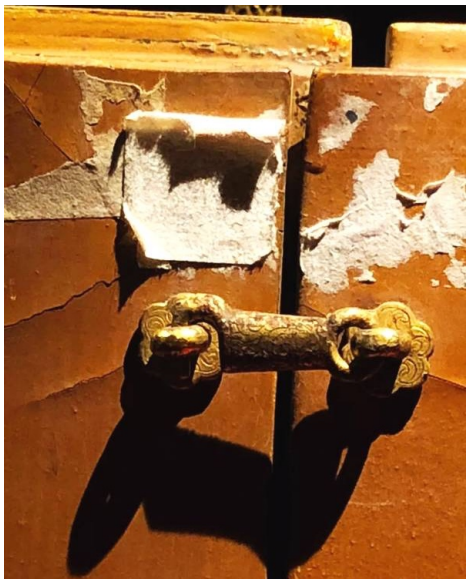


Fig. 1-d The copper clasp that secures one of the moveable packaging components.



Fig. 2-a Qianlong's parade helmet, the Qianlong reign, 32 x 19 x 22 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 2-b The rear of the imperial parade helmet showing the neck guard.



Fig. 2-c The three tiers of Sanskrit characters.





Fig. 3 Lang Shining, 'Portrait of the Qianlong Emperor participating in the Grand Parade (*Qianlong dayue tu* 乾隆大閱圖), 1739, 332.5 x 232 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 4-a A gilded copper sutra box with glass covers lined with coloured paper, the Qianlong reign, 23.5 x 12 x 19.5 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 4-b Palm-leaf binding of the sutra.



Fig. 5 A *Sumeru*-throne base of Renshou pagoda (*Renshou ta* 仁壽塔) in Kaiyuan Temple(*Kaiyuan si* 開元寺), 1228-1237. Quanzhou, Fujian.



Fig. 6 Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什 (translated), *Sutra Asked by Visesacinta Brahma Deva* (*Siyi fantian suowen jing* 思益梵天所問經), the palm-leaf binding, the Later Qin (384-417), 26.5 x 8.6 cm (per leaf). The National Library of China, Beijing.



Fig. 7-a The seventh case of the *Tibetan Dragon Sutra*, 1667-9, 33 x 87.5 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 7-b The sutra's leaves, which are made of cobalt-blue palm leaves decorated with gold and sandwiched between two sutra boards.



Fig. 7-c The inner sides of inner sutra boards covered with layers of sutra screens.



Fig. 7-d The three pieces of yellow cloths with a ribbon.



Fig. 7-e The outmost piece of the three cloths made of satin.



Fig. 7-f A sandwiched sutra wrapped with three pieces of yellow cloths.



Fig. 7-g A wrapped sutra further sandwiched between two outer sutra boards.



Fig. 7-h The two sides of the outer sutra board, 29.1 x 36.6 x 5.3 cm.



Fig. 7-i The outermost cloth of a case of sutra.



Fig. 8 A gilded copper box of the *Sutra of Manjusri's Commendation of the Buddha's Dharma-body*, the Qianlong reign. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 9 A gilded copper box of the *Sutra of Manjusri's Commendation of the Buddha's Dharma-body*, 1781. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 10 A house-shaped reliquary made from three-colour glazed pottery, the early 10th century, excavated from Fahai Temple (*Fahai si* 法海寺) in Xinmi 新密, 47.3 x 33.2. The Henan Museum, Zhengzhou.



Fig. 11 'The Qianlong Emperor as Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Thangka', the Qianlong reign, 108 x 63 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 12-a A *Rtsa ba rdzab ya* wooden bowl, the Qianlong reign, 13.2 x 4.6 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 12-b A *Rtsa ba rdzab ya* wooden bowl with its gilt iron case.



Fig. 12-c The gilt iron case of Tibetan wooden bowls.



Fig. 13 A Tibetan lama holding a wooden bowl containing buttered tea. Photographed by Ernst Schäfer, 1938-9.



Fig. 14-a Lang shining et al., ‘Qianlong on a Hunting Trip’, 1749, 317.5 x 190 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 14-b The imperial guards preparing the buttered tea.



Fig. 15 A Tibetan wooden bowl and gilt iron case packaged in a sandalwood box, the Qianlong reign, 9 x 22 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 16 A Tibetan wooden bowl, its gilt case, and sandalwood outer box inscribed with a verse composed by Qianlong, the Qianlong reign. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 17 The bottom of a Tibetan wooden bowl, the Qianlong reign. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 18 An outer case to package a Tibetan wooden bowl decorated with an inscription that refers to the suffering of famine victims, the Qianlong reign. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 19-a A moulded gourd brush holder with inscriptions, the Kangxi reign, 10.9 x 10.6 x 14 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.

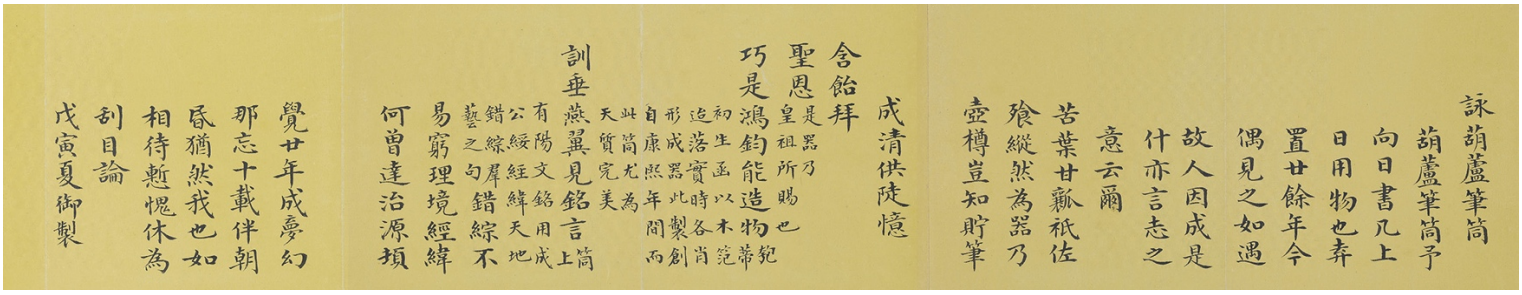


Fig. 19-b The verse and its introductory essay written by Qianlong in a piece of yellow paper.



Fig. 19-c The sandalwood container of the brush holder, the Qianlong reign.



Fig. 19-d The container of the brush holder. The top panel is inscribed with a verse written by Qianlong, whilst the four sides bear poems written by eight ministers.



Fig. 19-e The base of the container.



Fig. 20 The wooden model of what the finished gourd would look like, the Qing dynasty. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 21 The ceramic moulds used to form gourds as they grew, the Qing dynasty, xcavated from Classics Hall (*Hanjing tang* 含經堂) at the Old Summer Palace, 16 x 5 cm.



Fig. 22 Bottle gourds for katydids, the Qing dynasty, 12.1 cm (length). The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 23-a The Parthian ostrich-egg, 18 x 14.5 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 23-b The wooden box of the Parthian ostrich-egg, the Qianlong Reign.



Fig. 24 An ostrich egg with bird-and-flower decoration in gold, the Qing period, 15.2 cm (width). The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 25 Ilustrations of male and female turkeys from the *Manual of Birds*, the Qianlong reign. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 26 The image of the fire bird, Li Shizhen's *Compendium of Materia Medica*, p. 33.



Fig. 27-a Lang Shining, ‘Painting of the Fire Bird’, 1759-60, 212 x 188.5 cm. Currently held in a private collection.

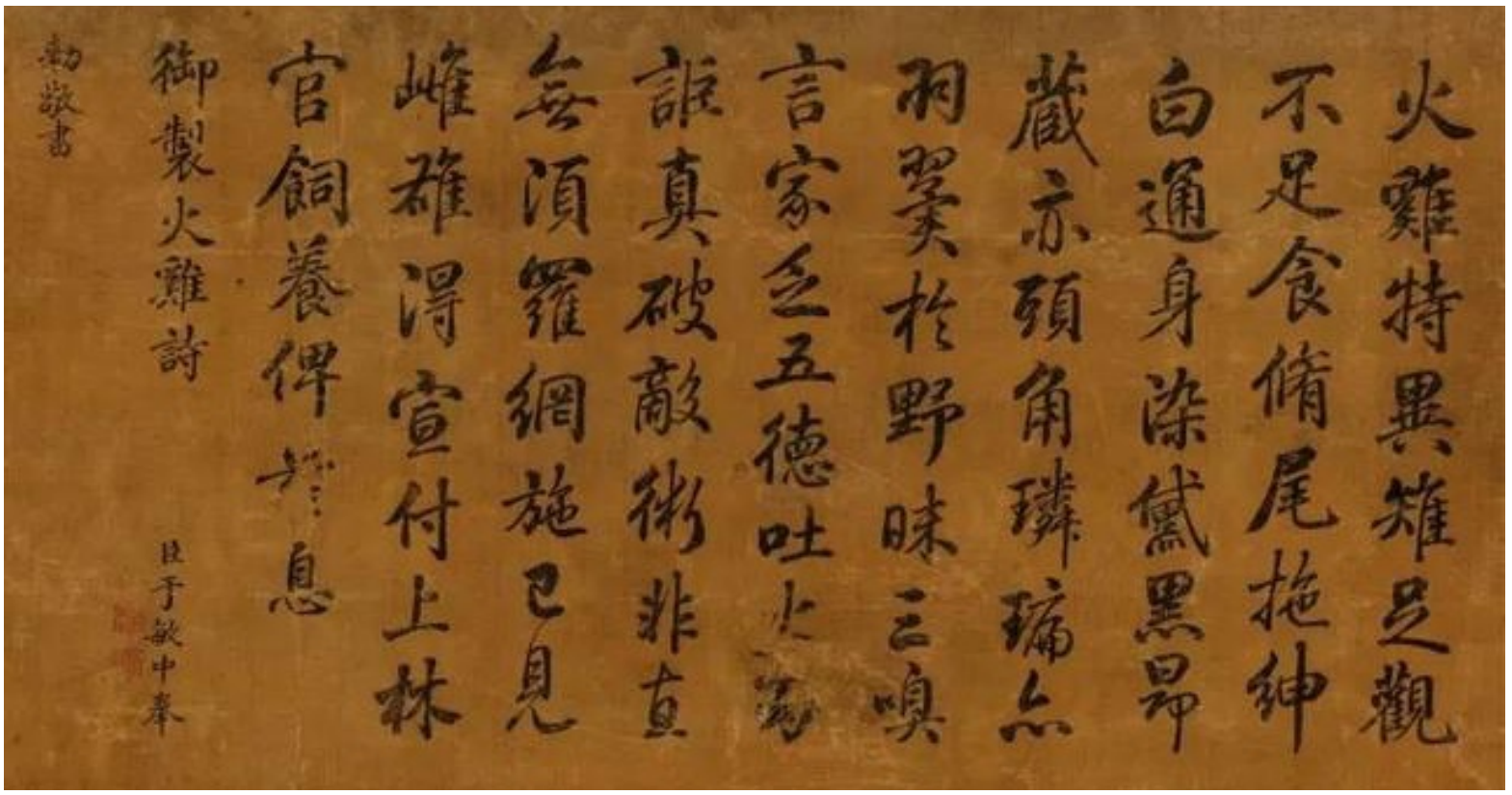


Fig. 27-b The transcription of the imperial verse concerning the fire bird.



Fig. 28 Lang Shining, ‘A Bird in front of a Pine Tree’, 1763, 159 x 96.2 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 29 A two-tiered black lacquer box with dragon and cloud designs in fold tracery that originally held art pieces, the Qianlong reign, 19 x 37.2 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 30-a A narcissus basin with celadon glaze, 1086-1106, 6.9 x 23 x 16.4 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 30-b The wooden stand for the Ru ware vessel and its hidden drawer.

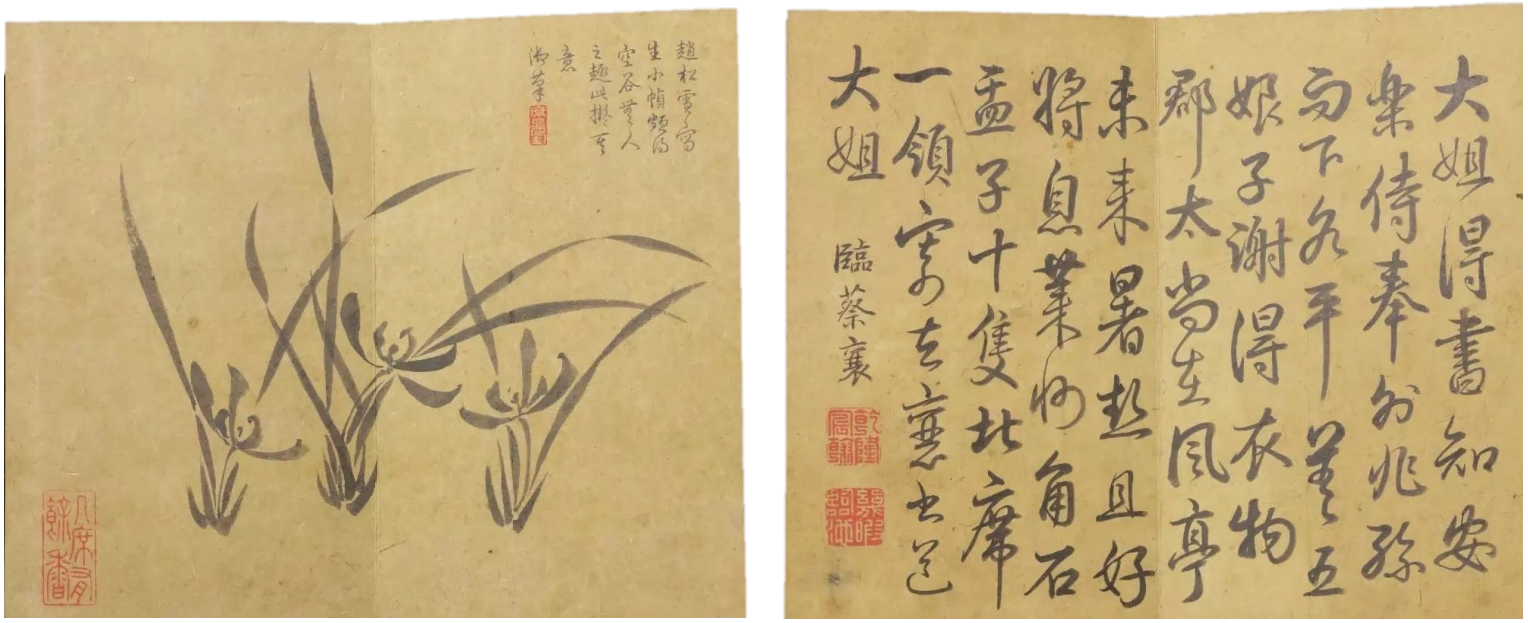


Fig. 30-c Qianlong's miniature album 'A Harmonious Match of Paintings and Calligraphy'.



Fig. 31 Another narcissus basin and its stand, basin: early 12th century, inscription and stand: the Qianlong reign 5.7 x 15.1 x 22.9 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 32-a Twelve jade carvings of the Chinese zodiac, 1799. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 32-b The red sandalwood box containing 12 creatures of the zodiac, with the central compartment opened to reveal a composition by Jiaqing, 12.5 cm.

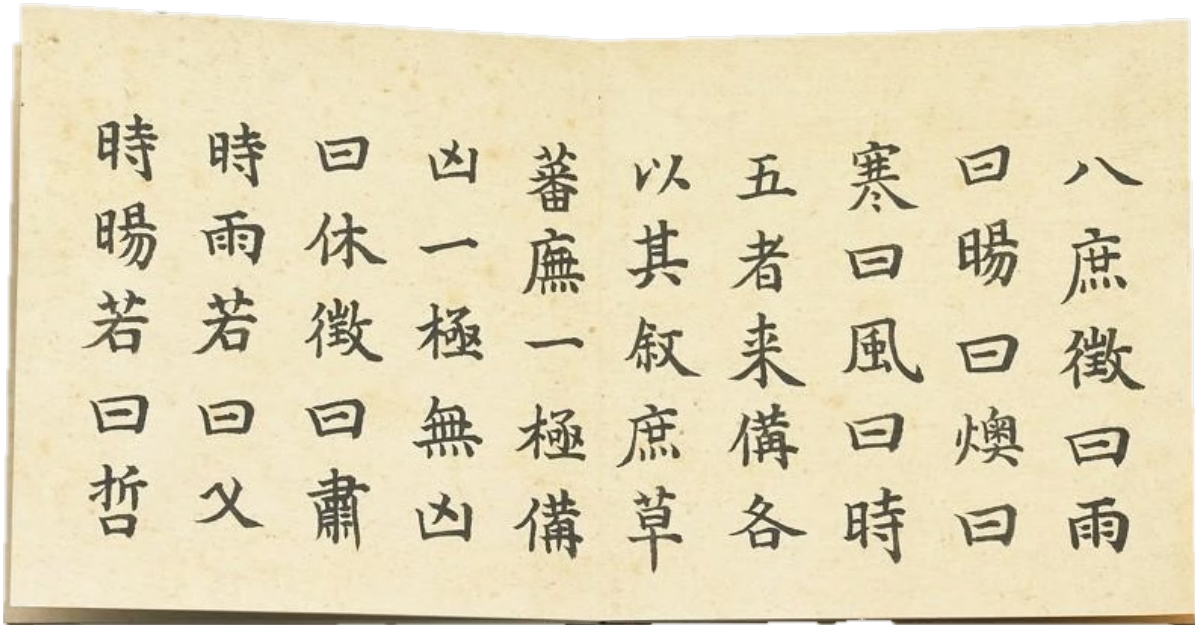


Fig. 32-c Jiaqing's transcription of the *Various Verifications in Divination*.

3. Chapter 3 Figures



Fig. 1 (alleged) Zhu Bang 朱邦, *Portrait of an Official in front of the Forbidden City*, 16th century, hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 170 x 110.8 cm. The British Museum, London.



Fig. 2 The Hall Complex of Sovereign Longevity (*Shouhuang dian* 壽皇殿), the Scenery Mountain (*Jingshan* 景山).

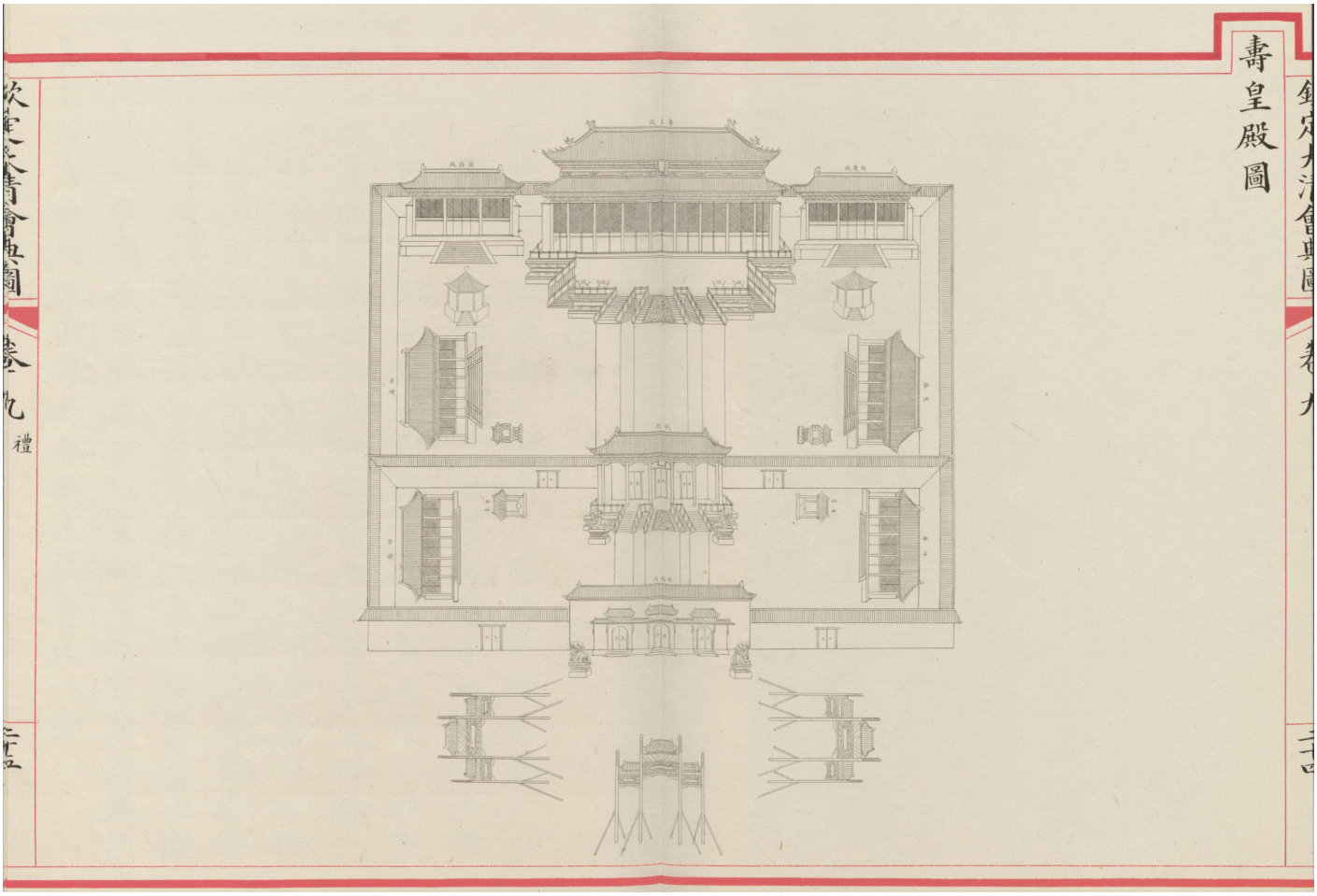


Fig. 3 The layout of the Hall Complex of Sovereign Longevity. Kungang 崑岡 (1836-1907) et al., 1899, *Qinding daqing hudian tu* 欽定大清會典圖 (imperially endorsed illustrations of collected statutes of the Great Qing Dynasty), *juan* 9, pp. 24-5. The Berlin State Library, Berlin.

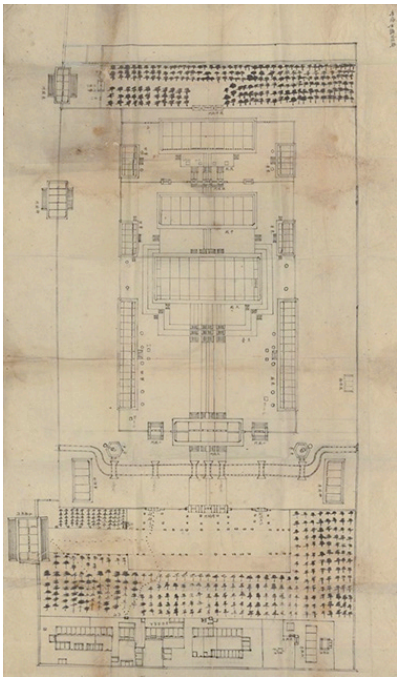


Fig. 4 *Yangshi Lei* 樣式雷 (the architectural style of Lei family), the layout of the Imperial Ancestral Temple, 151 x 86.5. The National Library of China, Beijing.

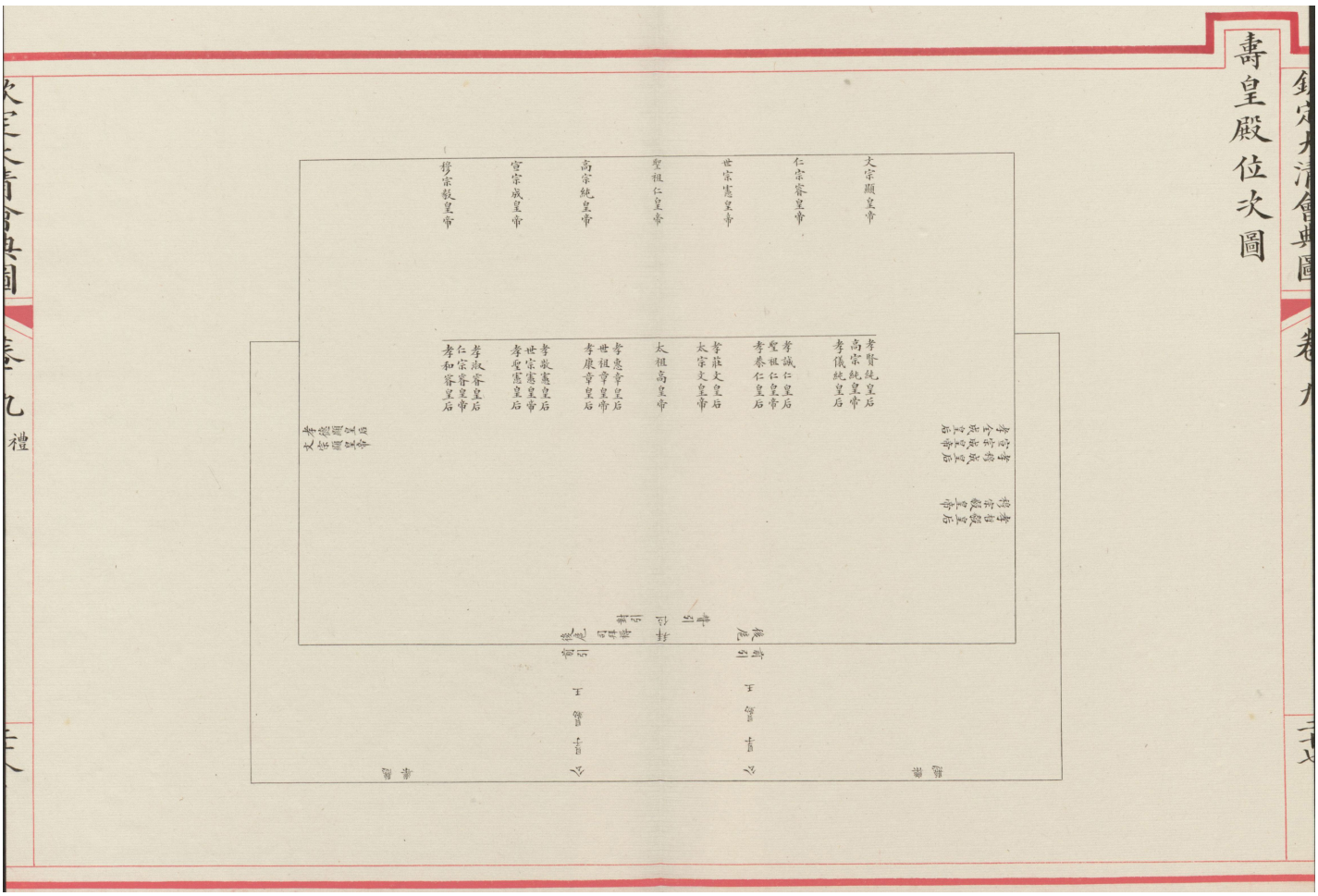


Fig. 5 The array of the imperial portraits inside the main hall. *The Imperially Endorsed Illustrations*, pp. 27-8.

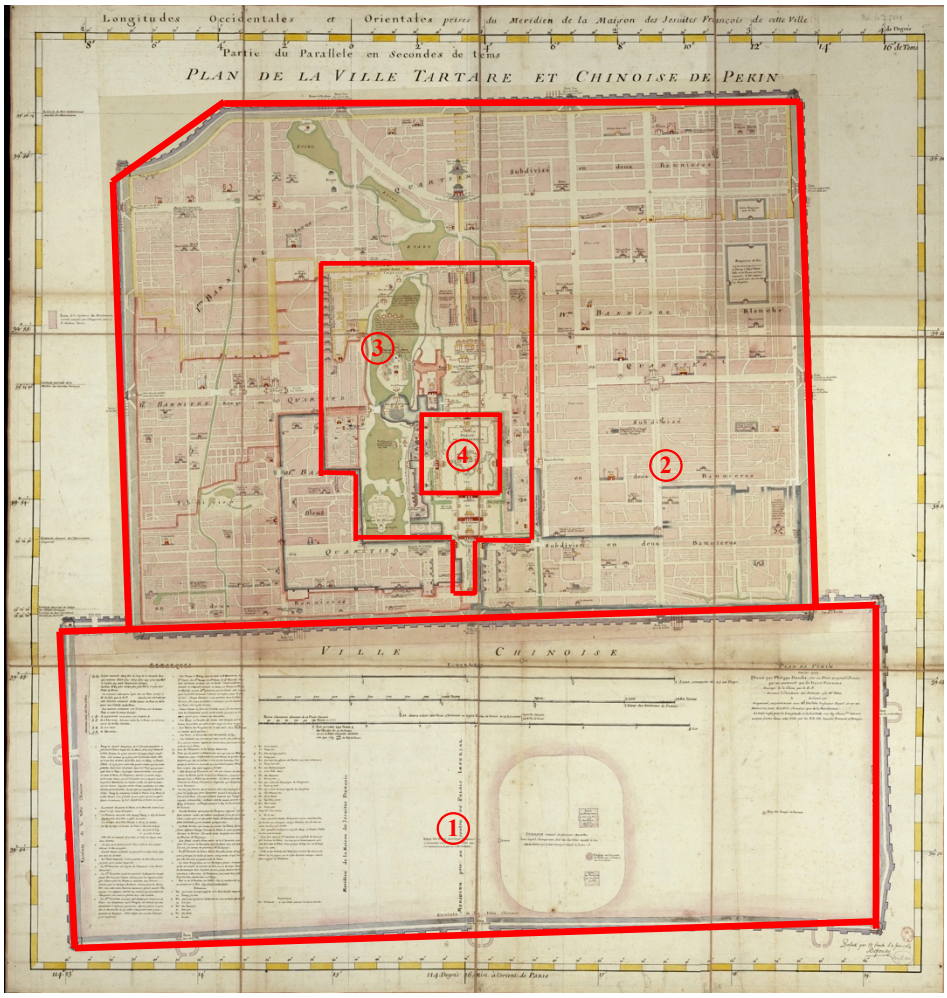


Fig. 6 Philippe Buache (1700-73), *the Plan of Peking* (*Plan de Pékin*), 1752, 136 x 136cm. The National Library of France, Paris. ①The Outer City ②The Inner City ③The Imperial City ④The Forbidden City

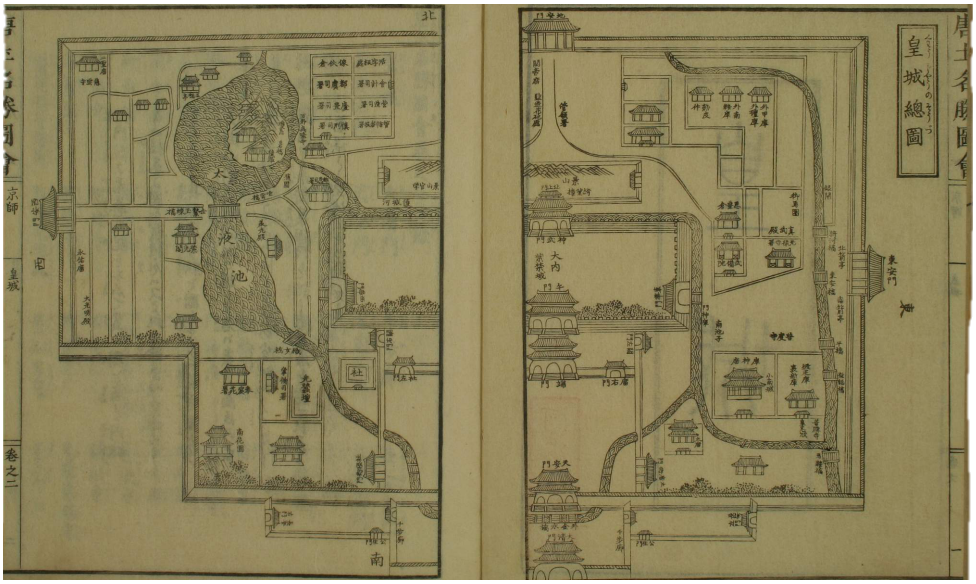


Fig. 7 The plan of the Imperial City from Okada Gyokuzan 岡田玉山, *Morokoshi meishō zue* 唐土名勝図会 (Illustrations of famous places in China), 1806. The Waseda University Library, Tokyo.

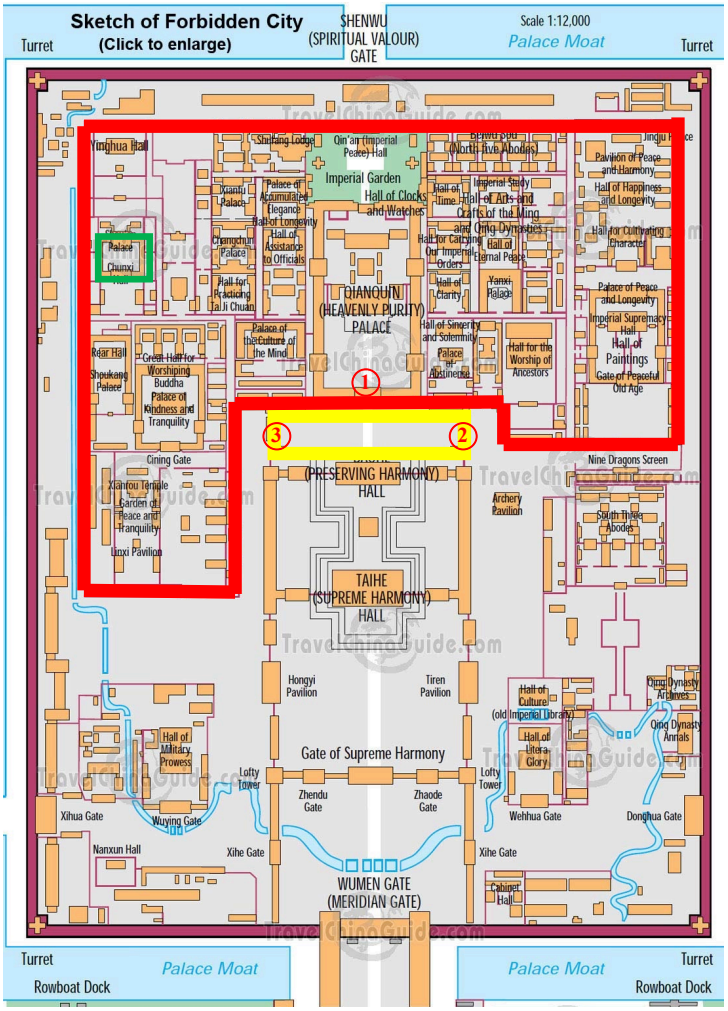


Fig. 8 The plan of the Forbidden City. A quadrangle in front of the Palace of Heavenly Purity (yellow line); the Inner Court (red line); *Shouan gong* 壽安宮 (green line). ①The Gate of Heavenly Purity ②The Gate of Great Fortune ③The Gate of Thriving Imperial Clan



Fig. 9 The area of the Inner Court at the Forbidden City.

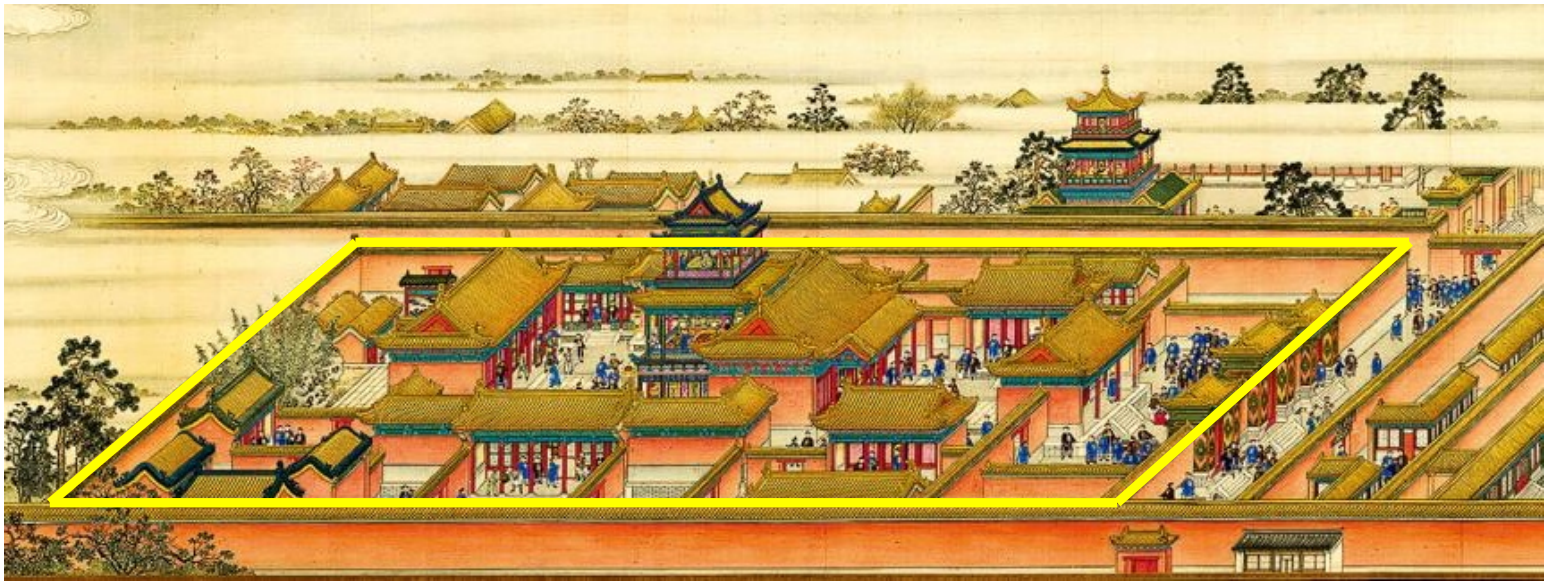


Fig. 10 The Palace Compound of Longevity and Tranquillity (*Shouan gong* 壽安宮). Chang Tingyan 張廷彥 (1735-94) et al., Empress Dowager Chongqing's sixtieth birthday celebration painting, *Landian yanxi* 蘭殿延禧 (scroll 4, part section), 64.5 x 2800 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.

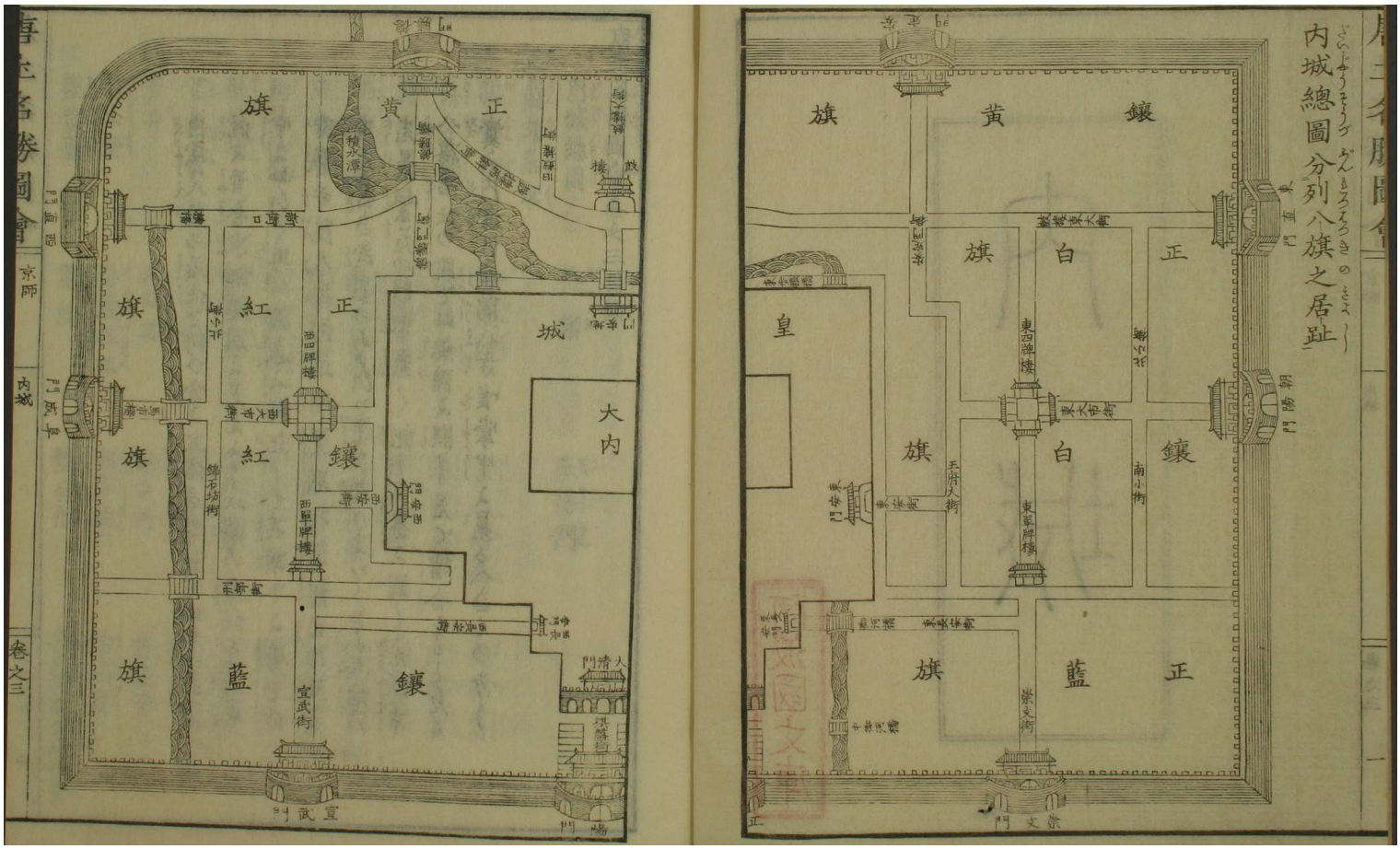


Fig. 11 The spatial arrangement of the Eight Banners in the Inner City, *Illustrations of Famous Places in China*.

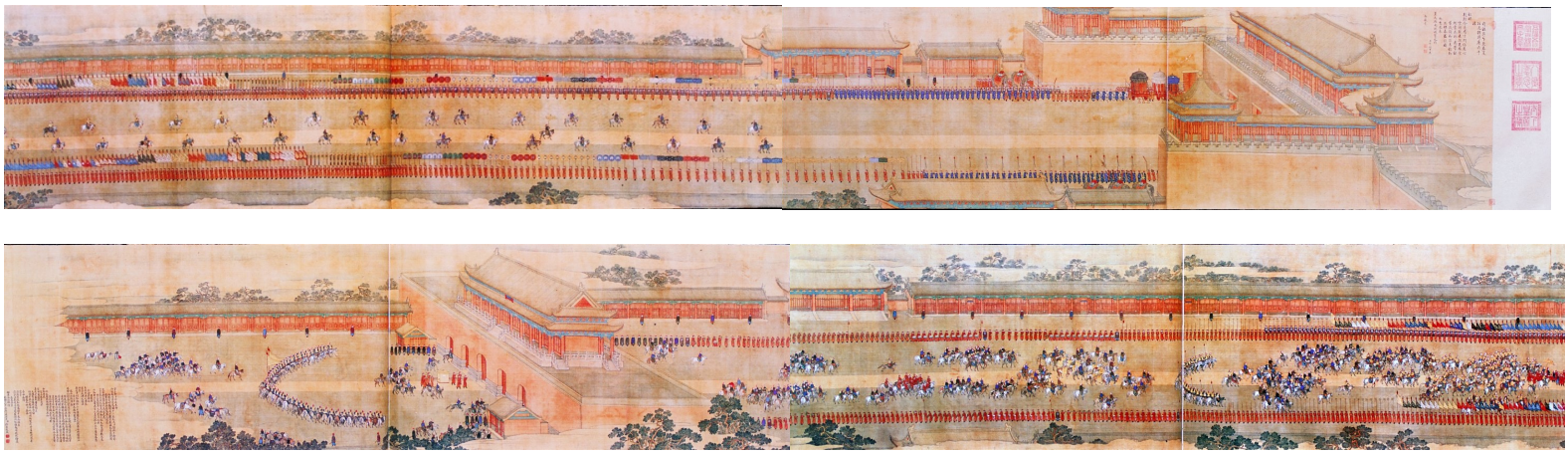


Fig. 12 Part of the thousand-pace passageway (*Qianbulang* 千步廊). Xu Yang 徐揚, the Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour, scroll 12, 1775, 980 x 68.6 cm. The National Museum of China, Beijing.

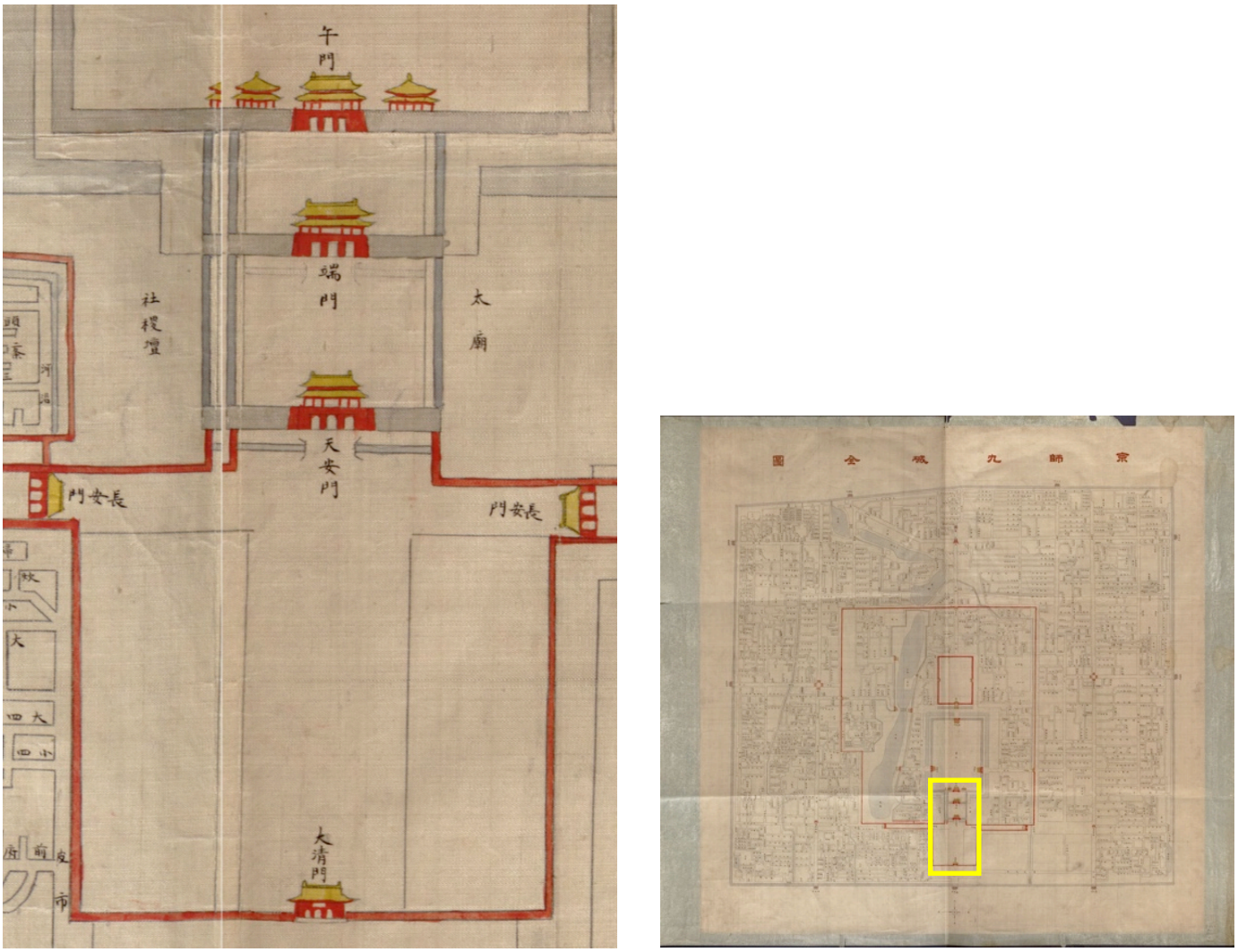


Fig. 13 A series gates from the Imperial City to the Forbidden City. The *Complete Map of the Nine Inner Cities of Beijing*, ca. 1900, 120 x 119 cm. The Library of Congress, Washington D.C.



Fig. 14 A waist tablet, 1896, 8 x 5 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.

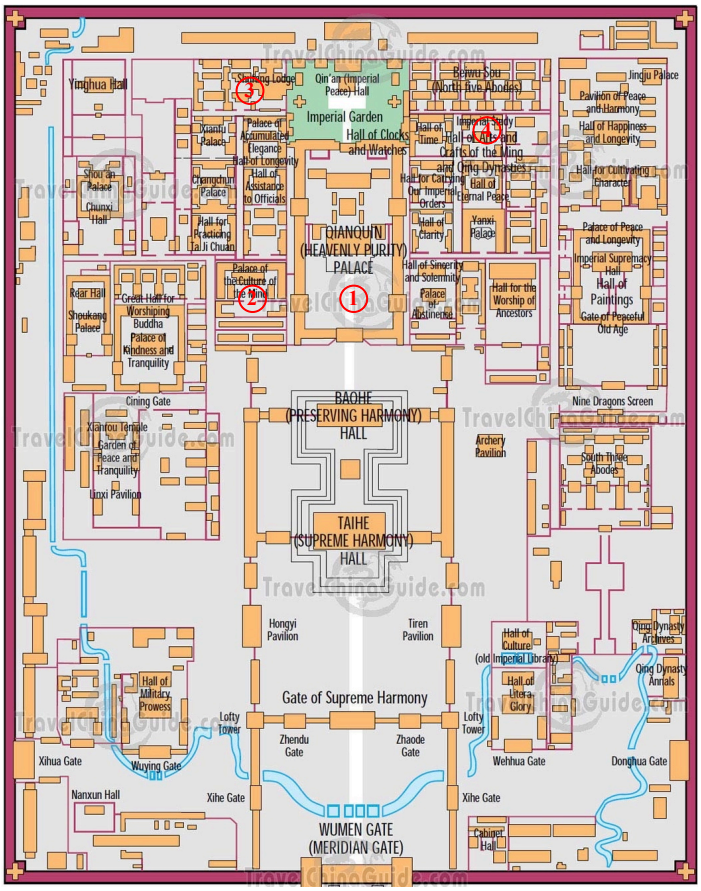
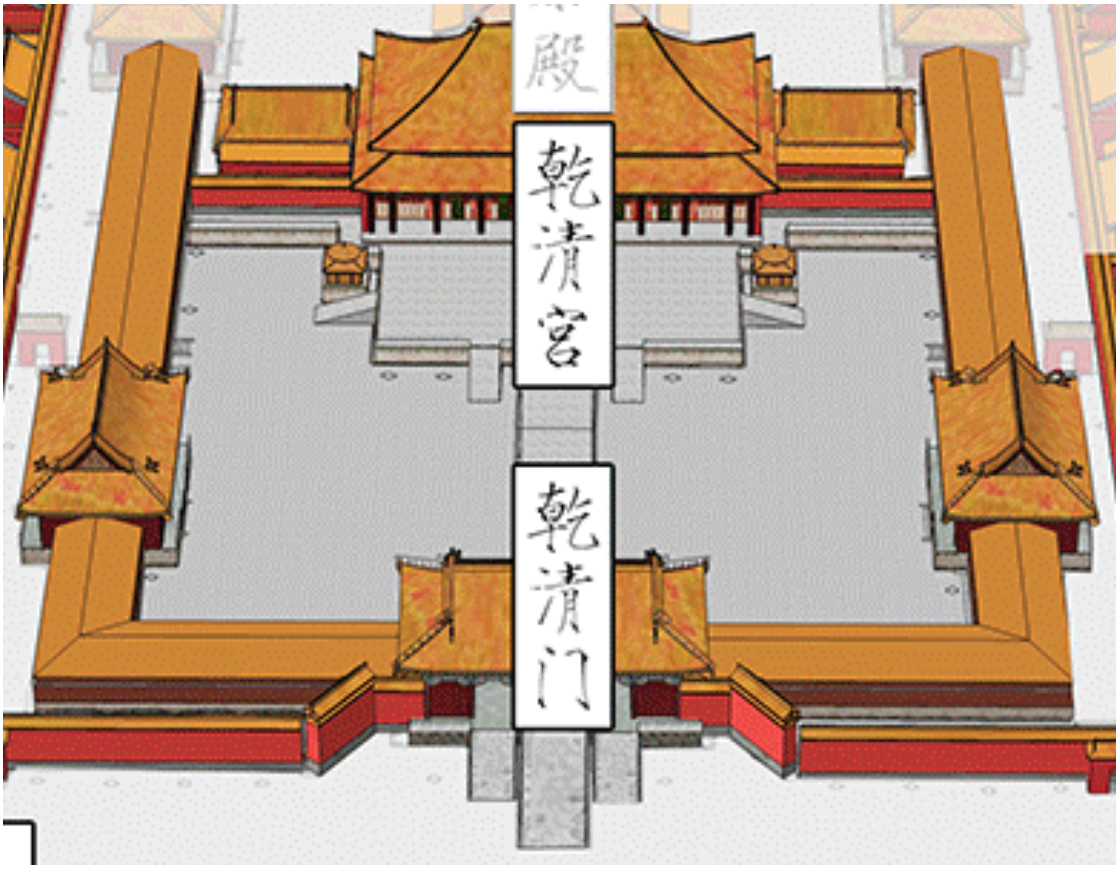


Fig. 15 The main locations of Qianlong's collection in the Forbidden City

① The Palace of Heavenly Purity
② The Hall of Mental Cultivation
③ The Palace of Double Glory
④ The Palace of Great Brilliance



	(2) The Hall of Expanding Virtue	(1) The Palace of Heavenly Purity	(2) The Hall of Manifesting Benevolence	
The Auxiliary Room of the Hall of Profuse Diligence				The Palace Larder
(3) The Hall of Profuse Diligence				The Duanning Hall
The Endorsement-copying Office				The Bureau of Striking Clocks
The Gate of Lunar Essence				The Gate of Solar Essence
The Office for Provincial Memorials				The Imperial Dispensary
The South Study	Respectability Room	The Gate of Heavenly Purity	The Study	The Office for Confucian Sacrifices

Fig. 16 The plane of the Palace Compound of Heavenly Purity



Fig. 17 The central hall of the Palace of Heavenly Purity.


Fig. 18 The eastern warmth chamber of the Palace of Heavenly Purity, and its celestial building (*xianlou* 仙樓) (yellow).

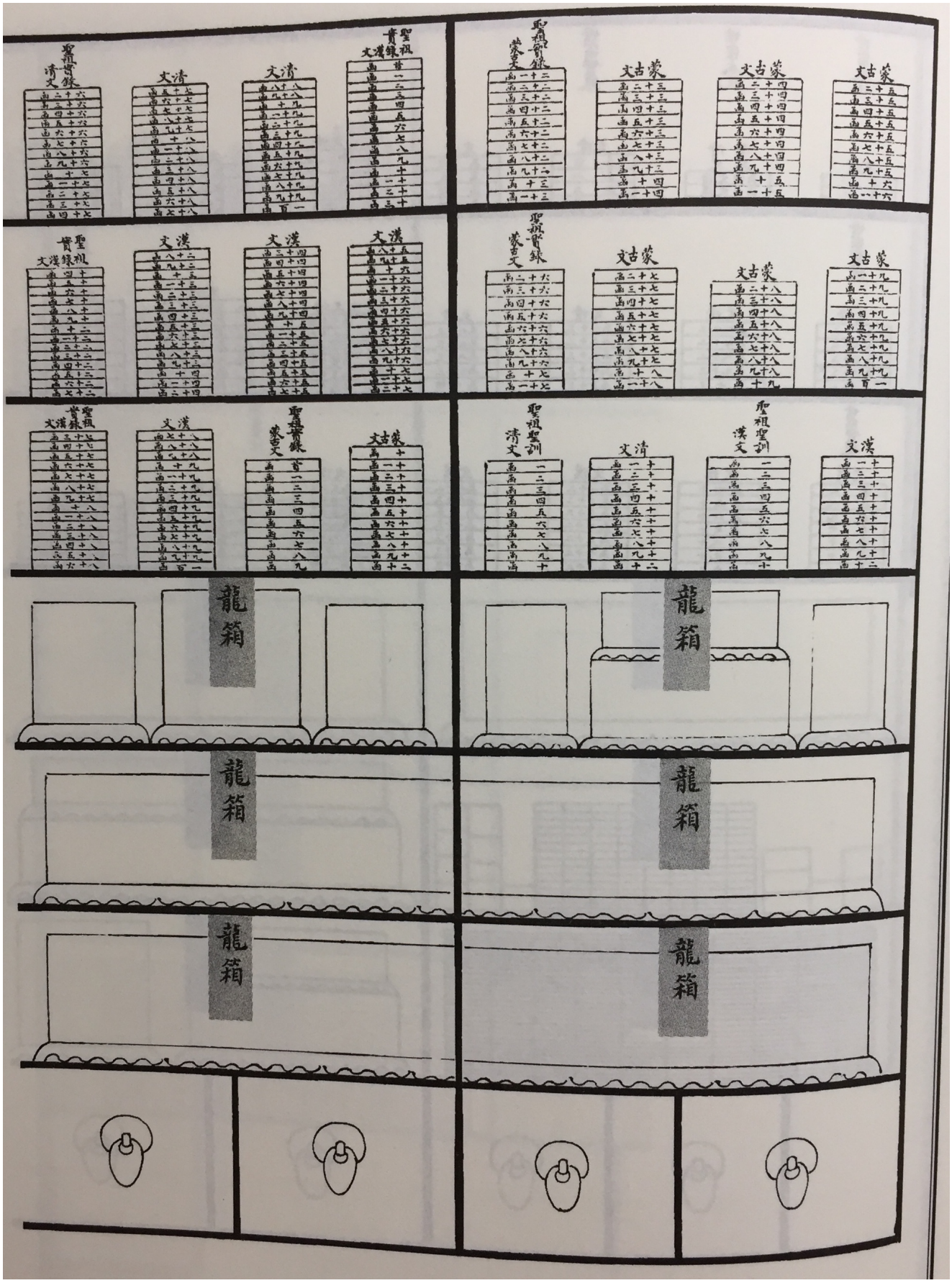


Fig. 19 The shelving depiction of the side chambers of the Palace of Heavenly Purity.



Fig. 20 The Qing imperial commandments of Huang Taiji, the Shunzhi, and Kangxi Emperors. Liaoning Provincial Archives, Shenyang.



Fig. 21-a The packaging of the imperial commandments of the Xianfeng Emperor. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 21-b The cloth, ribbon, and tag of the packaging of the Imperial Commandments.



Fig. 22-a The Veritable Records of the Kangxi Emperor. Liaoning Provincial Archives, Shenyang.

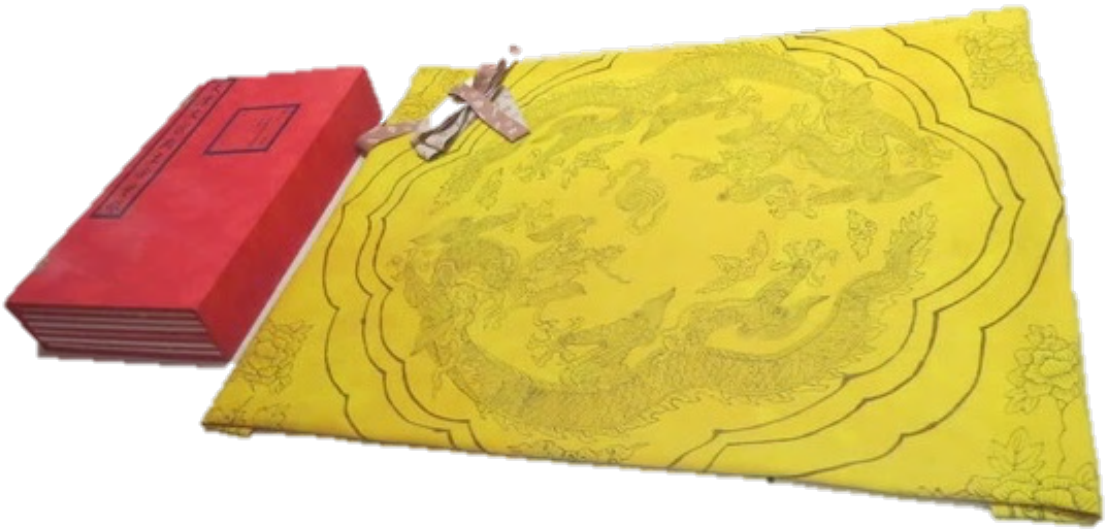


Fig. 22-b The wrapping of the Veritable Records.



Fig. 23 The Qing Jade Registers. The First Historical Archives of China, Beijing.



Fig. 24 The portrait of the Kangxi Emperor, the Kangxi reign, 138 x 106.5 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 25 The first-class porcelain of the Palace of Heavenly Purity. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.

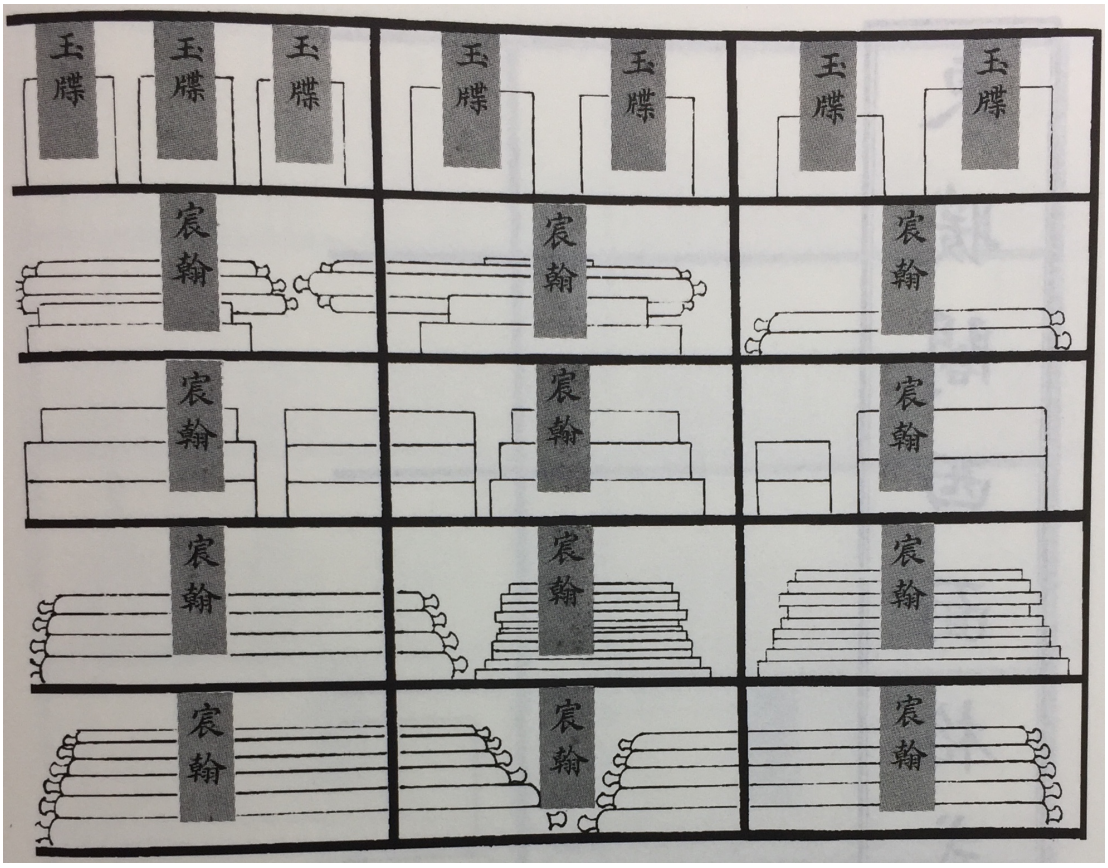


Fig. 26 The shelving depiction of the side chambers of the Palace of Heavenly Purity.



Fig. 27 The cloisonné enamel box of the Emperor Qianlong's essay, the Qianlong reign (1736-1795), 21 x 20 x 13 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 28 The packaging of a Qianlong's painting. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 29 The packaging of a Qianlong's painting. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 30 A mirror case set of *Xiqing xujian yibian* (vol. 29), the Qianlong reign, 44.5 x 32 x 6.5 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 31-a A mirror case set *Xiqing xujian yibian* (vol. 1), the Qianlong reign, 44.5 x 31.1 x 5 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 31-b The inside of the mirror case set.



Fig. 31-c The silk cushion and two-sided wooden lid of a mirror.



Fig. 31-d Another page of the mirror case set.



Fig. 32 *Records of the Grand Historian of Song Edition* (*Songban shiji* 宋板史記), the summer of the Chiating sixth year (1213), 25.6 x 27.5 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 33 *Explanations in Literary and Philosophical Writings* (*Wenzhongzi zhongshuo* 文中子中說), the twelfth year of the Jiajing reign in Ming dynasty (1533), 26 x 30.5 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.
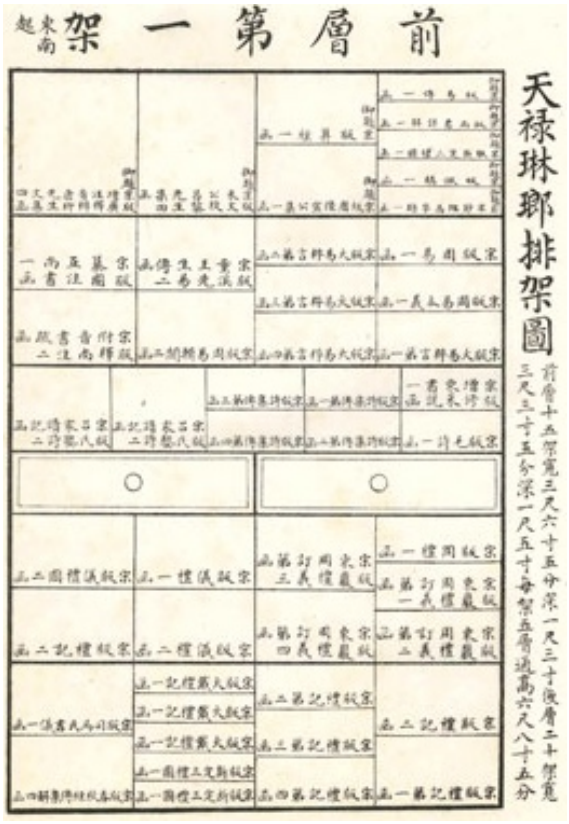


Fig. 34 The shelving system of *Tianlu linlang*, the Furnishing Archive of Extracts of Four Collections.

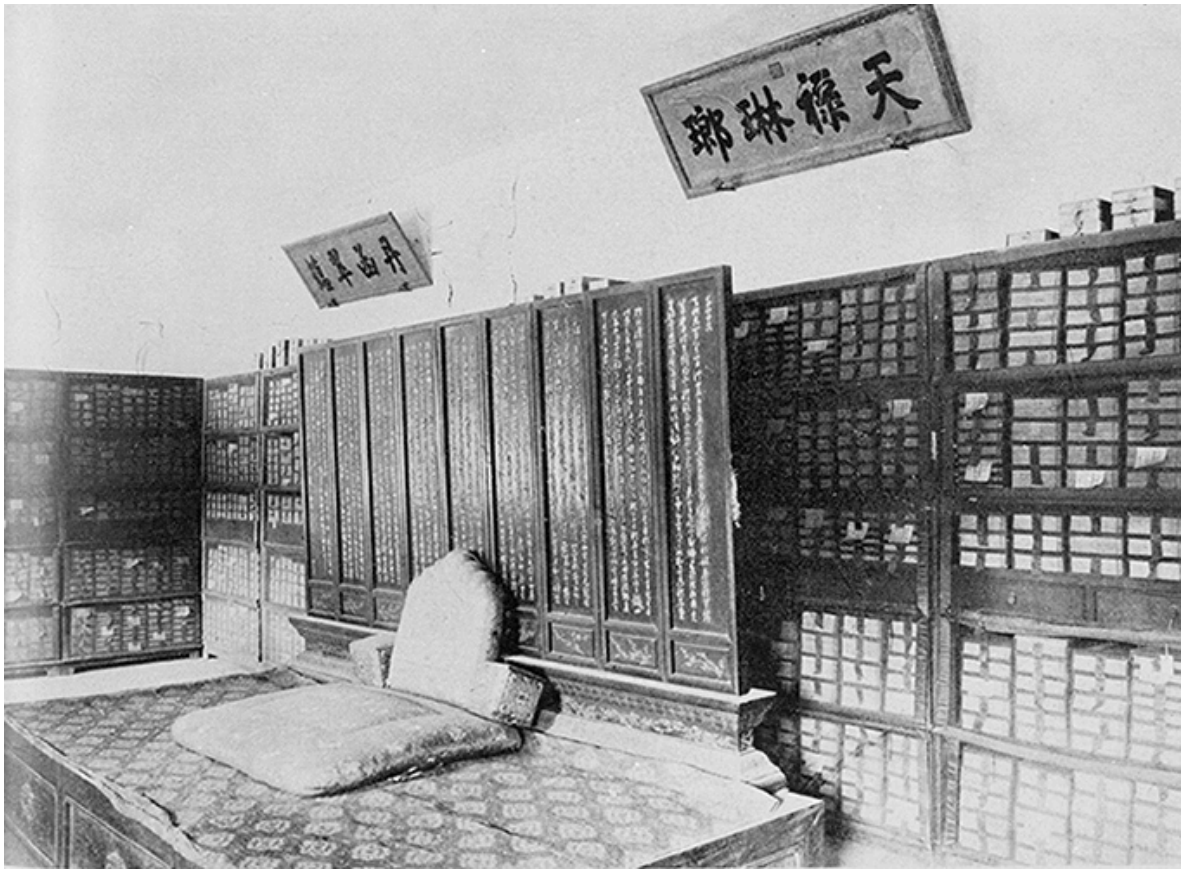


Fig. 35 The Library of *Tianlu linlang*, 1900, the Hall of Manifesting Benevolence (*Zhaoren dian* 昭仁殿).

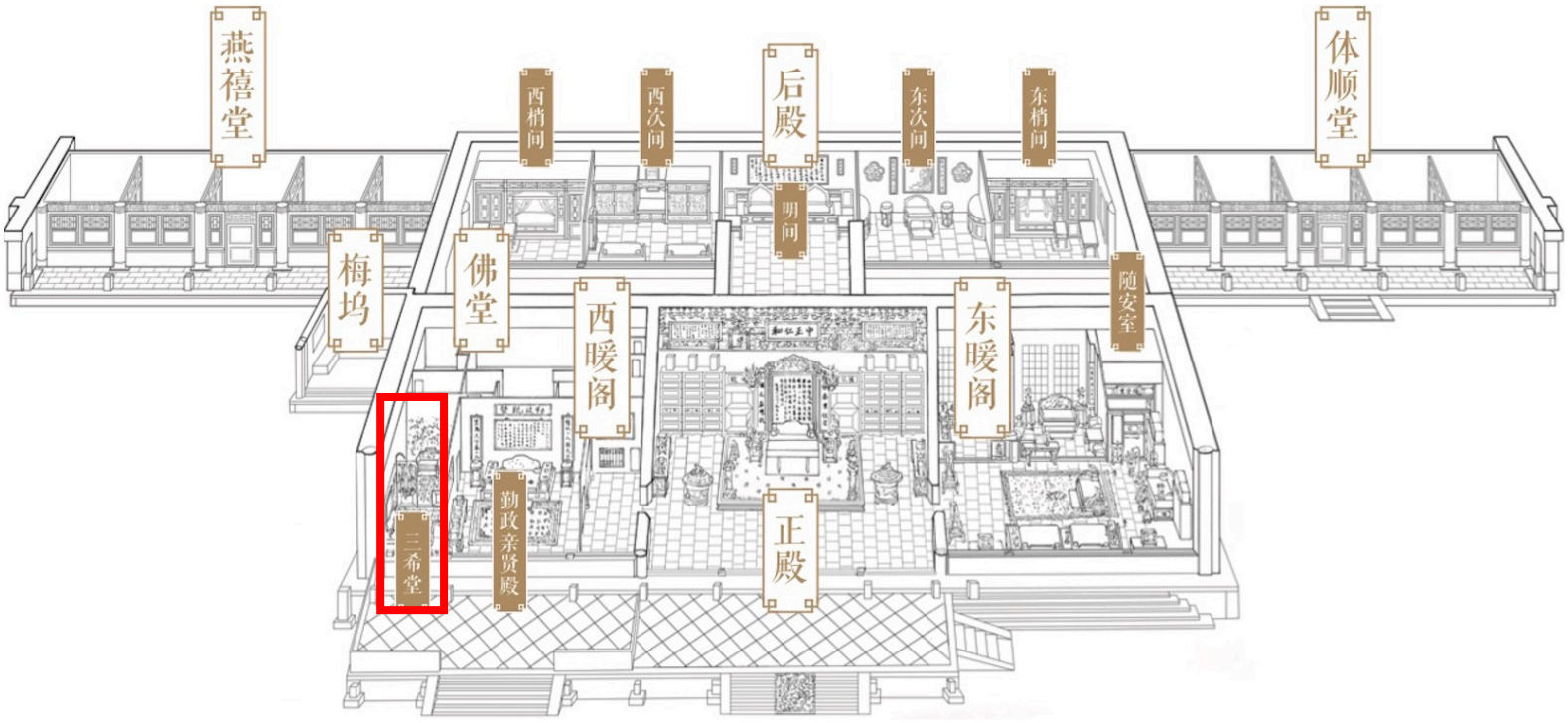


Fig. 36 The Study of Three Rarities (*Sanxi tang* 三希堂), the plan of the Hall of Mental Cultivation.

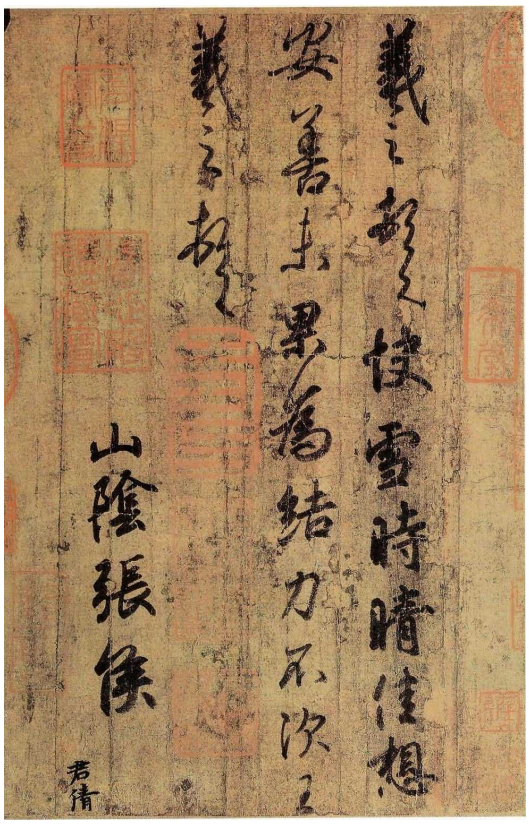
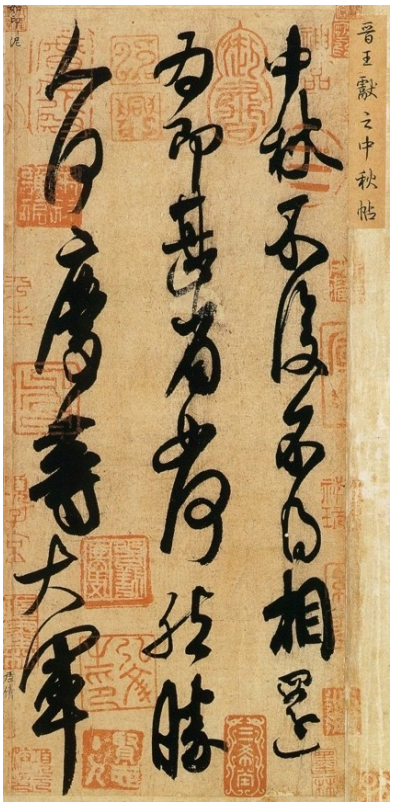
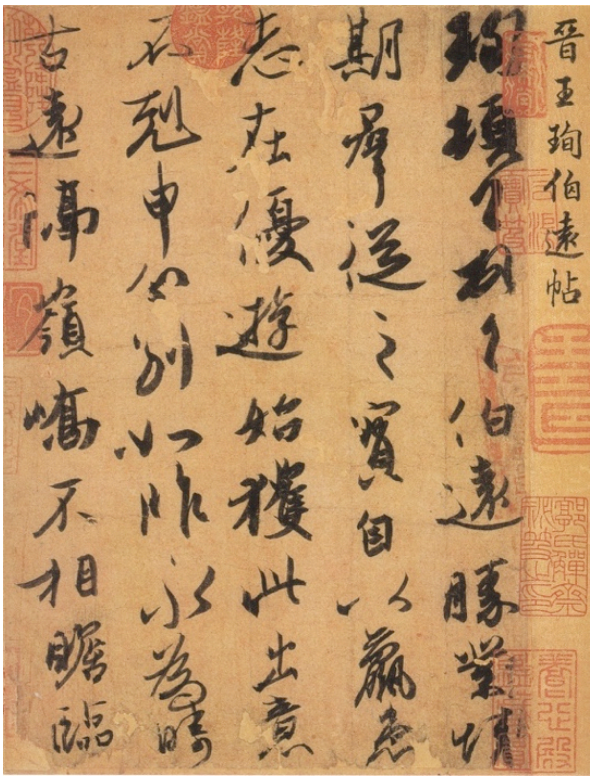


Fig. 37 Wang Xizhi 王羲之, *Kuaixue shiqing tie* 快雪時晴帖, 303-361, 23 x 14.8 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Wang Xianzhi 王獻之, *Zhongqiu tie* 中秋帖, 344-386, 27 x 11.9 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Wang Xun 王珣, *Boyuan tie* 伯遠帖, 350-401, 25.1×17.2 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing

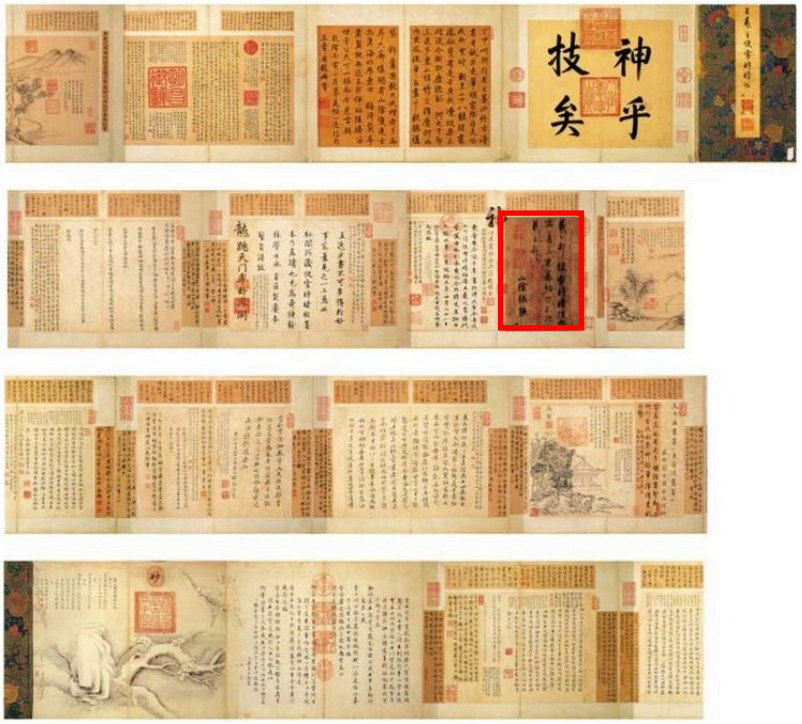


Fig. 38 The section of Wang, Xizhi's calligraphy in the complete album of *Kuaixue shiqing tie*, 23 x 514 cm.



Fig. 39 Dong Bangda 董邦達, *Sanxitang jiyi tu* 三希堂記意圖, 1746, 201.5 x 154 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 40 *Kanchuang* 檻窗 (sill wall windows), the interior of the Study of Three Rarities.



Fig. 41 *Feizhao* 飛罩 (a lattice-work archway).

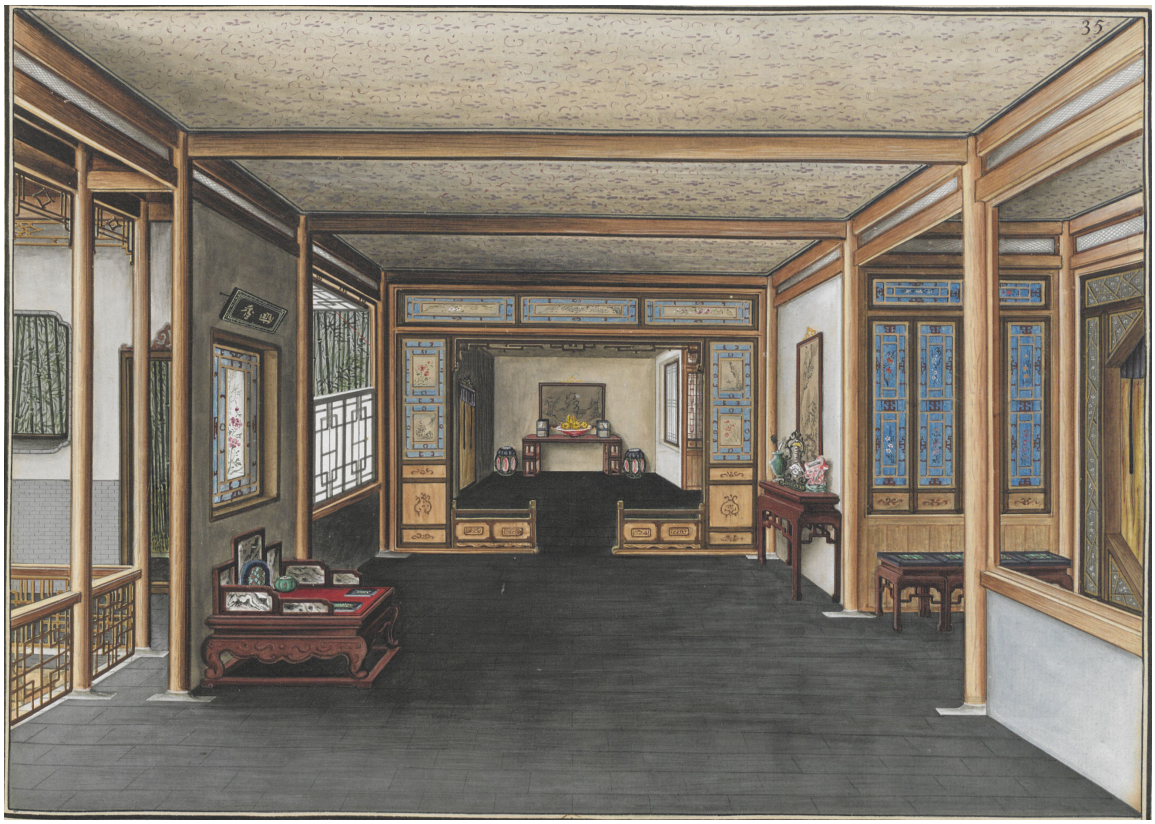


Fig. 42 The residential interior of the Forbidden City. Attributed to Louis-François Delatour (1727-1807), *Essai Sur l'Architecture Chinoise*, the 18th century. The National Library of France, Paris.



Fig. 43 Jin Tingbiao 金廷標 (?-1767) and Lang Shining, the scenic illusion painting of *Spring's Peaceful Message*, the Qianlong reign. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 44 The entrance to the Hall of Three Rarities from the Hall of Diligent Government and Close to Worthies (*Qinzheng qinxian diang* 勤政親賢殿).



Fig. 45 The mirror on the west wall.



Fig. 46 The rear room of the Study of Three Rarities.



Fig. 47 *Xianyuban* 閑餘板 (window ledges).



Fig. 48 The front room of the Study of Three Rarities.



Fig. 49 The walls outside the Study of Three Rarities.

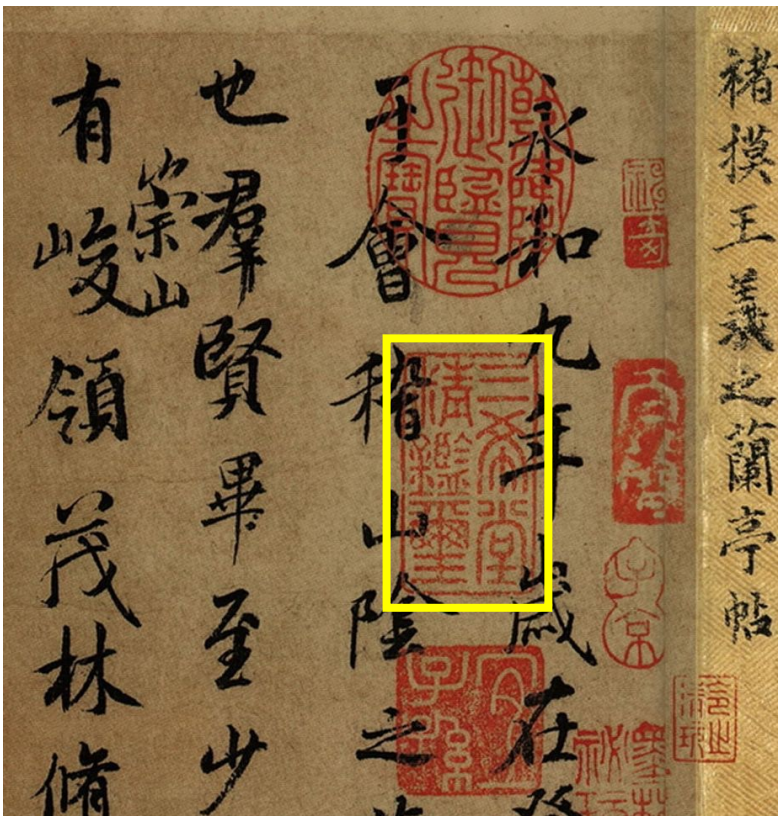


Fig. 50 The seal of *Sanxi tang*.

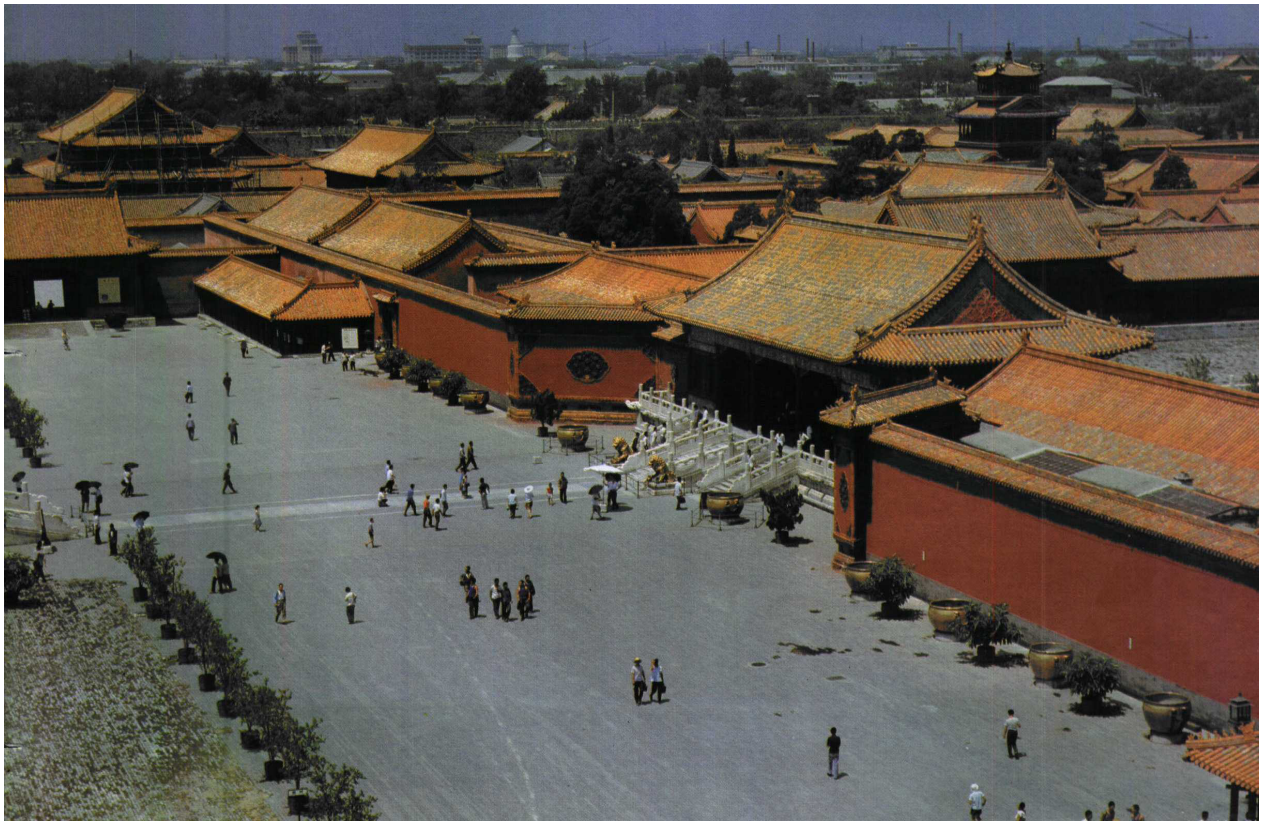


Fig. 51 The square in front of the Gate of Heavenly Purity.



Fig. 52 The main hall of the Hall of Mental Cultivation.



Fig. 53 Sun Hu 孫祜 et al., *the Eighteen Scholars* (a partial section), 1741, 1138.2 x 39 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 54 The tea bowl in overglaze red with an imperial poem *Sanqing*, the Qianlong reign, 5.5 x 11 x 4.7 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 55 The theatrical stage in the Imbibed Fragrance Studio (*Shufang zhai* 漱芳齋).


Fig. 56 A red sandalwood box of the Seals of "the Longevity of Seventy Years of Age" and "the Commemoration of Eighty Years of Age", the Qianlong reign, 13 x 13 x 10.4 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 57 A red sandalwood box of the Seals of “the Longevity of Seventy Years of Age” and “the Commemoration of Eighty Years of Age”, the Qianlong reign, 15 x 15 x 16 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 58-a Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1524), *Gucha guanyu tu* 古槎鸛鴿圖, 121 x 26.7 cm. The Shanghai Museum, Shanghai.

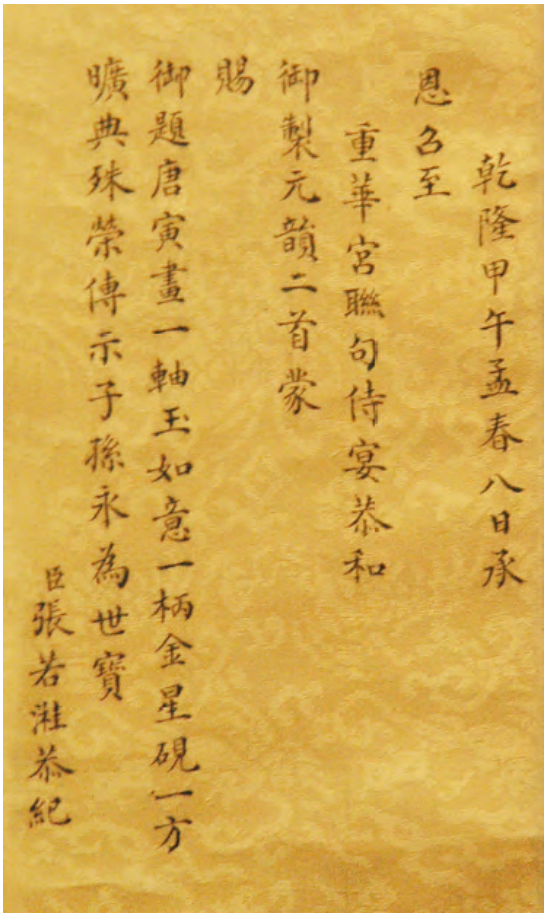


Fig. 58-b Zhang Ruogui’s 張若溎 inscription, 1774.

4. Chapter 4 Figures



Fig. 1 The curio cabinet, 115 items, the Imbibed Fragrance Studio (*Shufang zha* 漱芳齋). The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 2 The assembly of various curios within a curio box, the Qianlong reign. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 3-a A carved red lacquer curio cabinet with cloud-and-dragon decoration, box: the Jiajing reign (1522-1566), the assembly: the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), 48.4 x 34.1x 41.2 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 3-b The drawers inside the curio box.



Fig. 4 A red lacquer box with gold painting, the Jiajing reign, 26.3 x 18.6 x 26.3 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 5 A coloured lacquer box with phoenix decoration, the Jiajing reign, 24.6 x 26.4 x 20.5 cm. The private collection.



Fig. 3-c An inner case of a drawer of the red lacquer curio cabinet.



Fig. 3-d The various curios of the red lacquer curio cabinet.



Fig. 3-e The compartments lined with silk material.



Fig. 6-a The curio box of *Jiqiongzao* 集瓊藻, the 6th year of the Qianlong reign (1741), 27.8 x 21.2 x 31.7 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 6-b The panel in the centre of the lid.



Fig. 6-c The Japanese two-tiered *makie* box with landscape, turtle and crane décor, 18th century.



Fig. 6-d The two main cases inside the two tiered *makie* box.



Fig. 6-e The upper-tier case of the *Jiqiongzao* curio box.



Fig. 6-f The partition of the main storage unit: 4 modular storage units.



Fig. 6-g The lower-tier case and whose secret drawers of the *Jiqiongzao* curio box.



Fig. 6-h The secret drawer containing Qianlong's work.



Fig. 6-i The secret drawer containing an agate bowl and the hidden red lacquer box.



Fig. 6-j The secret drawer of the upper-tier case.



Fig. 6-k The secret drawer on the other side of the upper-tier case.



Fig. 7 A secret drawer inset into the right side of a secret drawer in the *Tianqiu hebi* 天球合璧 curio box.



Fig. 6-l The division of various compartments of the *Jiqiongzao* curio box.

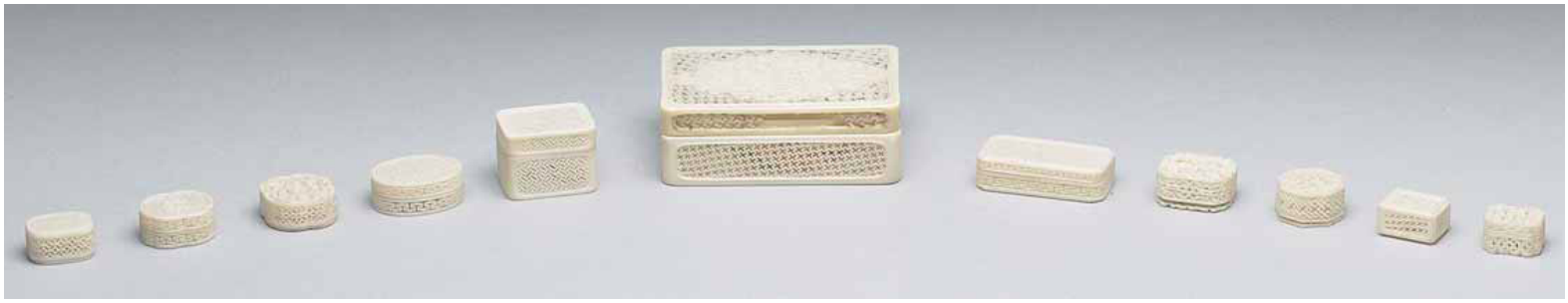


Fig. 6-m Huang Zhenxiao 黃振效, the eleven-piece set of nested ivory boxes within the *Jiqiongzao* curio box, the 4th year of the Qianlong reign (1739), the main box in the middle: 4.1x 2.8 x 1.7 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 8-a Li Juelu 李爵祿, the nineteen-piece set of nested ivory boxes, the 28th year of the Qianlong reign (1763), the main box: 2.3 x 5.3 x 4.2 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 8-b The placement of the 18 miniature ivory boxes within the main box.



Fig. 6-n The tinier ivory articles within the miniature boxes from the *Jiqiongzao* curio box. The cylinder on the left: 2 cm, its box: 2.2 x 1.2 x 0.6 cm; the tray of the tea set: 1.3 x 1 cm, its box: 1.6 x 1.2 x 0.6 cm.

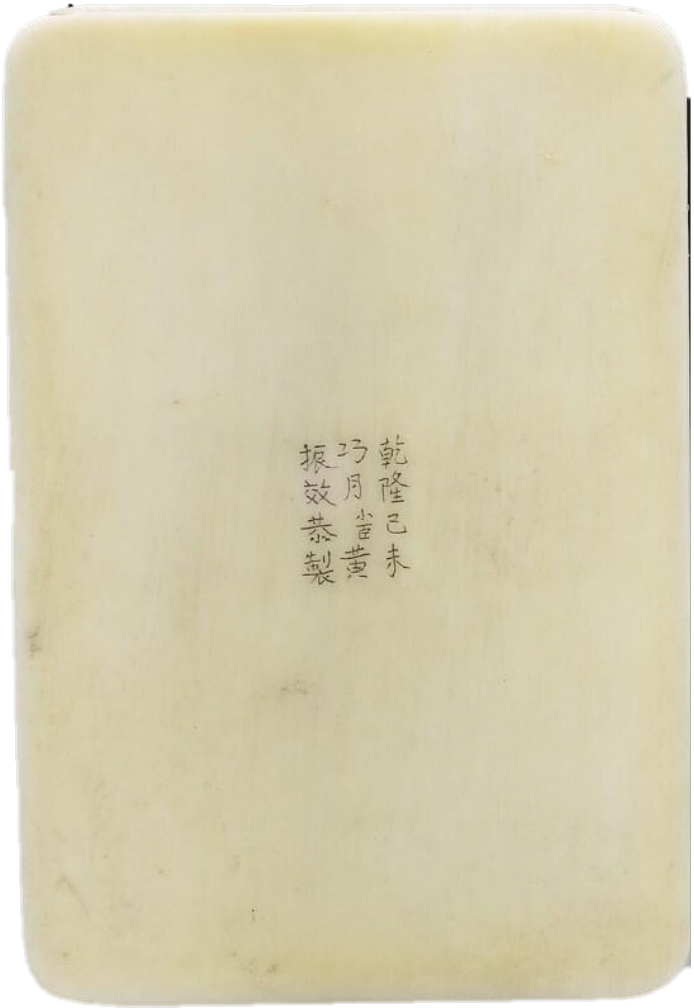


Fig. 6-o The inscription on the outer bottom of the main box of the eleven-piece set.



Fig. 8-c The inscription on the outer bottom of the main box of the nineteen-piece set.



Fig. 6-p A set of Japanese *makie* lacquer boxes with the décor of cherry blossom, the 18th century, 7.5 x 5.4 x 2.5 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 9 The box of *Jifan liuhui* 吉范流輝 with ten bronze vessels and one illustrative album, the Qianlong reign, 34 x 25.8 x 43.7 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 10-a A round curio box with Indian lotus décor, the Qianlong reign, 24 x 18.7 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 10-b The folding shape of the round curio box.



Fig. 10-c The unfolding shape at an angle of 360 degrees.



Fig. 11 The red five-tray lacquer box with fifty writing brushes, the Qianlong reign, 28.2 x 21.4 x 36.2 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 12 The portable multi-drawered nanmu box of *Huluo wujue* 笏羅烏玦 (a collection of black jade) with twenty ink sticks, the Qianlong reign, 31.5 x 23 x 27 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 13-a The *Jinxie liuzhen* 金薤留珍 set of five black lacquer boxes, the Qianlong reign. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.





Fig. 13-b The *Jinxie liuzhen* 金薤留珍 set with 1291 copper seals.



Fig. 14-a The jadeware packing complex with forty-five wooden drawers, the Qianlong reign, 85 x 83 x 48.5cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 14-b A drawer of the jadeware packing complex.



Fig. 15 The square red sandalwood curio box with carved dragon decoration, 47 items, the Qianlong reign, 30.5 x 30.3 x 16.5 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 14-c The ivory name tags of the drawers on the front and back sides.



Fig. 14-d The black lacquer box for the jadeware drawer complex.



Fig. 16 The cardboard models of a palace hall. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 17-a A pair of red sandalwood curio cabinets with dragon decoration, the Qianlong reign, 44.6 x 35 x 21.5 cm. The National Palace Museum.



Fig. 17-b The eleven-drawer structure and the close-fitting cases of the drawers.



Fig. 17-c The secret drawers of the pair of curio cabinets.



Fig. 18-a *Tianqiu hebi* 天球合璧 curio box with filled-in gold and lacquered dragon-and phoenix décor, 43 items, the Qianlong reign, 26.6 x 17.4 x 25.6 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.

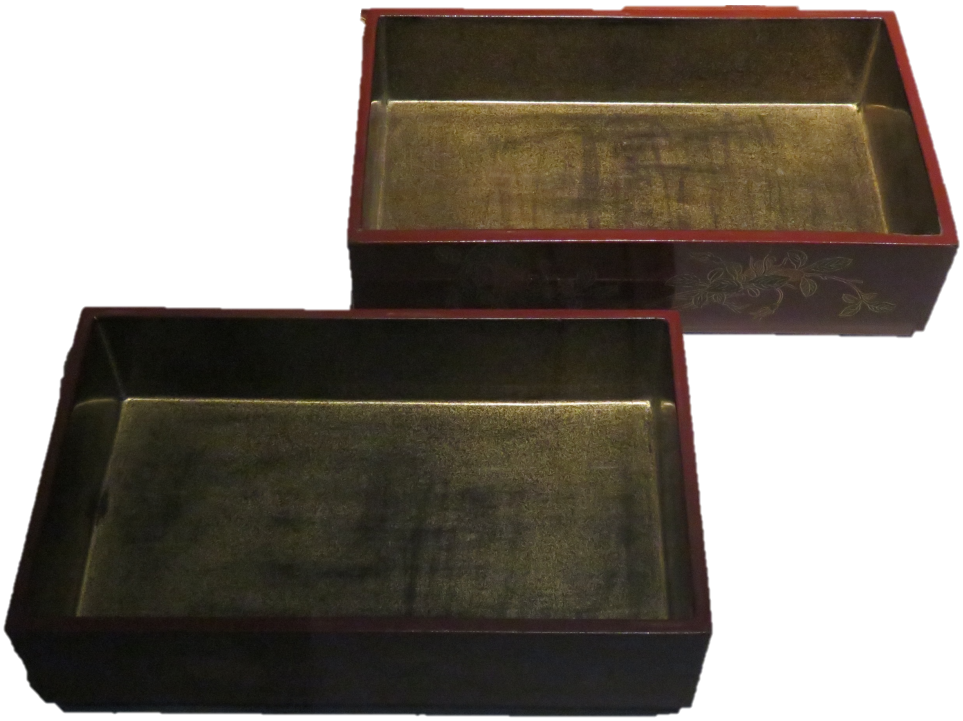


Fig. 18-b The close-fitting red lacquer cases.



Fig. 18-c The outermost box of *Tianqiu hebi* curio box.



Fig. 18-d The book-shaped box for a jade article, *Tianqiu hebi* curio box.



Fig. 19 The Qing imperial book cover for *On the History of the Tang Dynasty* (*Tangshi lunduan* 唐史論斷), Qing dynasty. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 18-e The hidden space on the upper left corner and the secret box it housed.



Fig. 18-f The book-shaped box for a string of red agate prayer beads, *Tianqiu hebi* curio box.

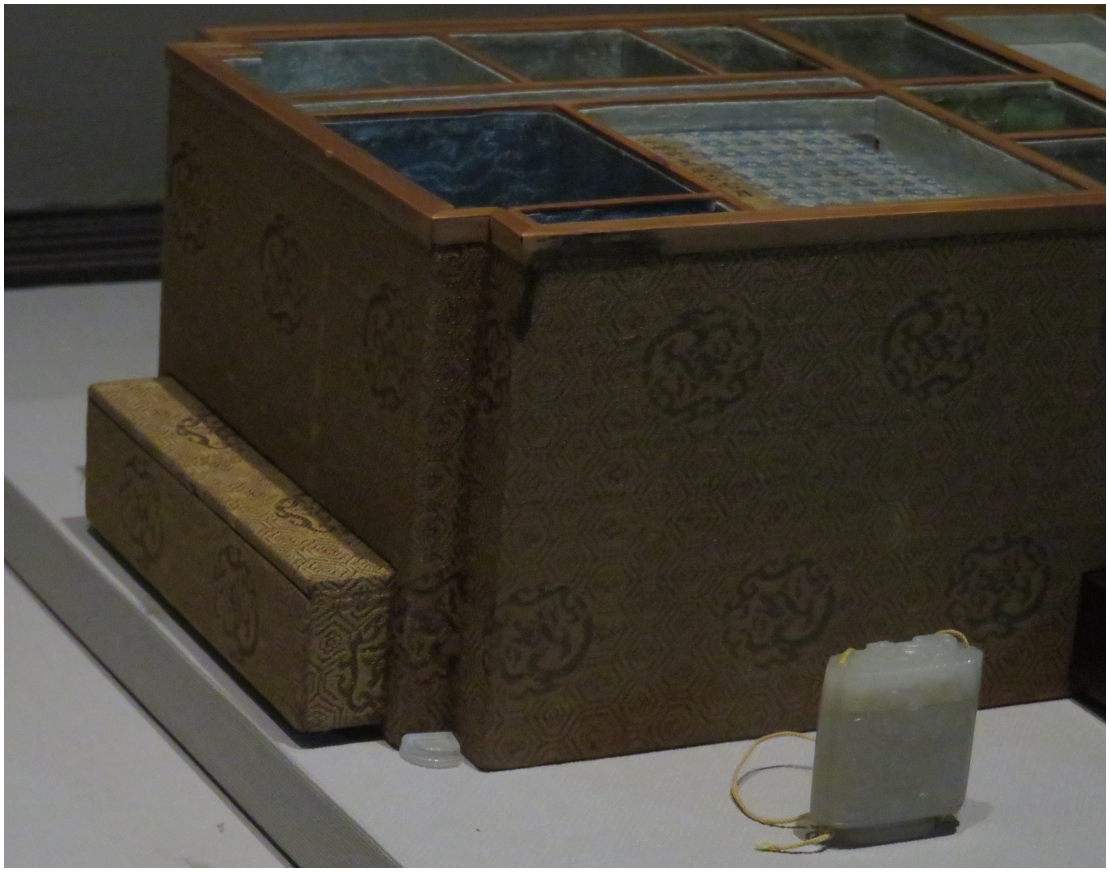


Fig. 18-g A hidden box of *Tianqiu hebi* curio box.



Fig. 18-h A miniature album hidden in a secret recess of a main case of *Tianqiu hebi* curio box, 7.3 x 3.8 x 1.2 cm.



Fig. 20-a A five-drawer wooden curio cabinet, the Qing dynasty, 27.5 x 12.7 x 30.7 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 21-a A six-drawer wooden curio cabinet, the Qing dynasty, 34 x 13.6 x 36.2 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 20-b The curios and interior of the five-drawer curio cabinet.



Fig. 21-b The curios and interior of the six-drawer curio cabinet.



Fig. 21-c Some drawers and curios of the six-drawer curio cabinet.

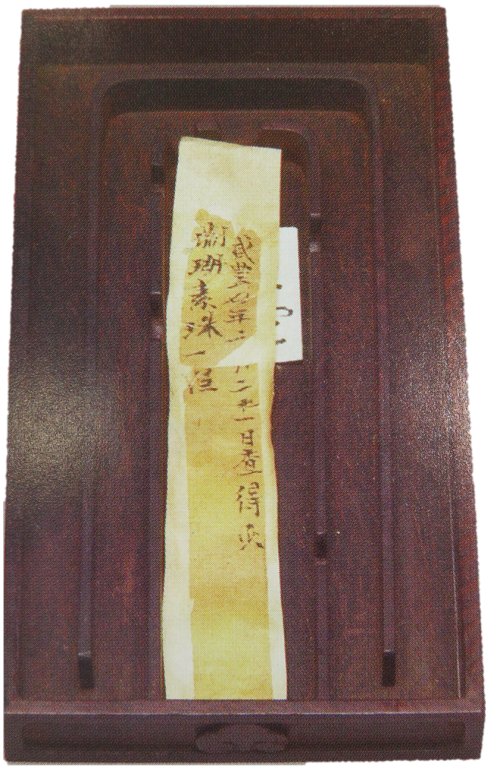


Fig. 22 An empty drawer with a yellow note of 1857, the *Jiqiongzao* curio box.



Fig. 23-a A square curio box, the Qianlong reign, 25.2 x 25.4 x 19.9 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 23-b The open space after removing the jade annulus.



Fig. 23-c The four removable panels on the four sides.



Fig. 23-d The four fan-shape storage units after removing the four panels.



Fig. 24-a A curio box with *makie* pine-and-bamboo painting, 40 items, the Qianlong reign, 23.7 x 21.4 x 18.6 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 24-b The two hidden fan-shape storage units of the lower-tier case.



Fig. 23-e The secret unit and its compartments inside the ‘Sumeru Throne’ style base of Fig. 23-a.



Fig. 25-a A book-pile mimicry curio box, the Qianlong reign. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 25-b The interior of the curio box.



Fig. 26-a A book-style box with 100 writing brushes, the Qianlong reign, 31 x 18 x 19 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 26-b The drawers and brushes inside the box.



Fig. 25-c The titles of the book-style curio box.



Fig. 27 A small copper aventurine-inlaid box containing several clamshells, 5.5 x 4.3 cm, the *Jiqiongzao* curio box.

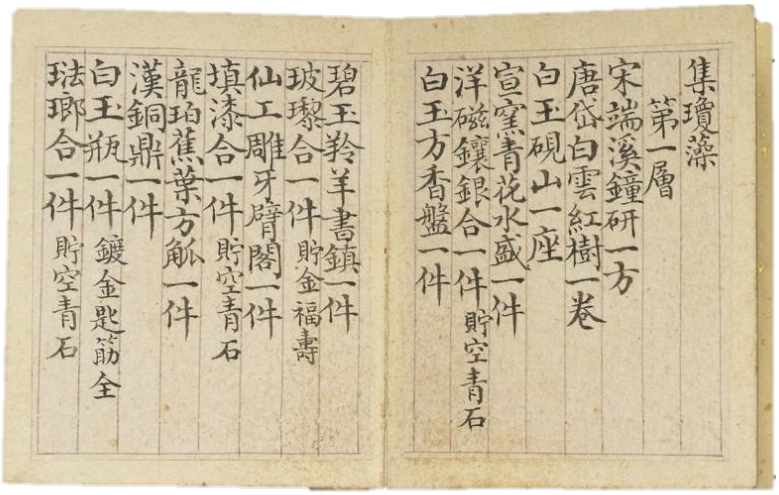
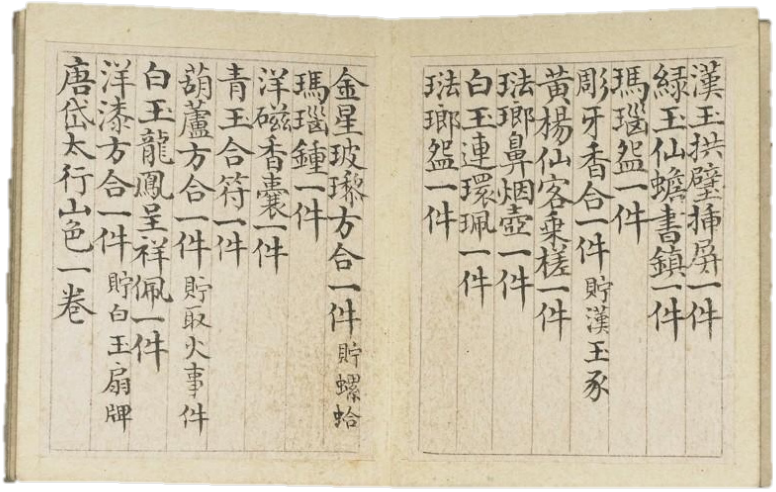
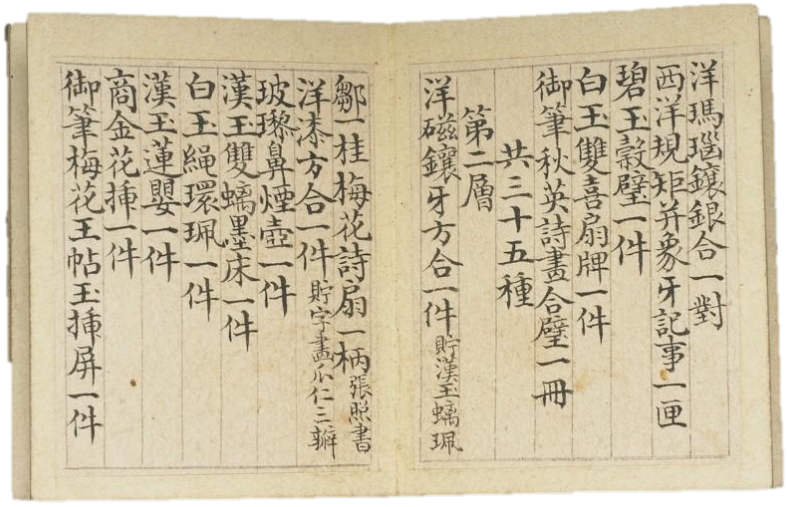
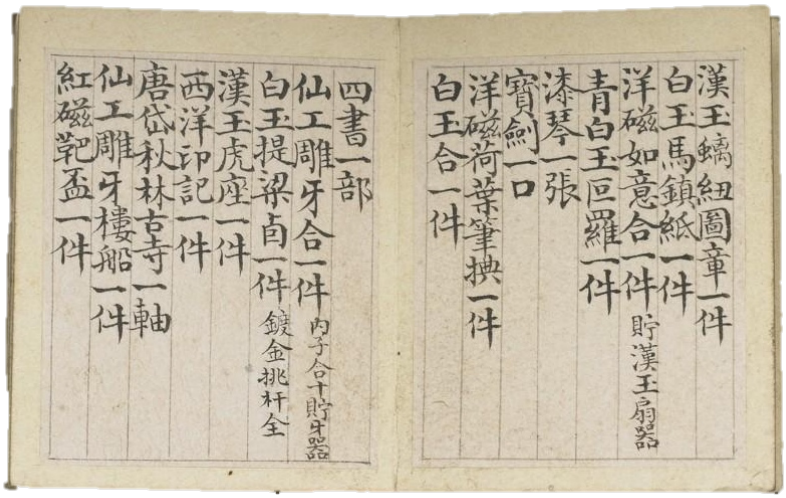
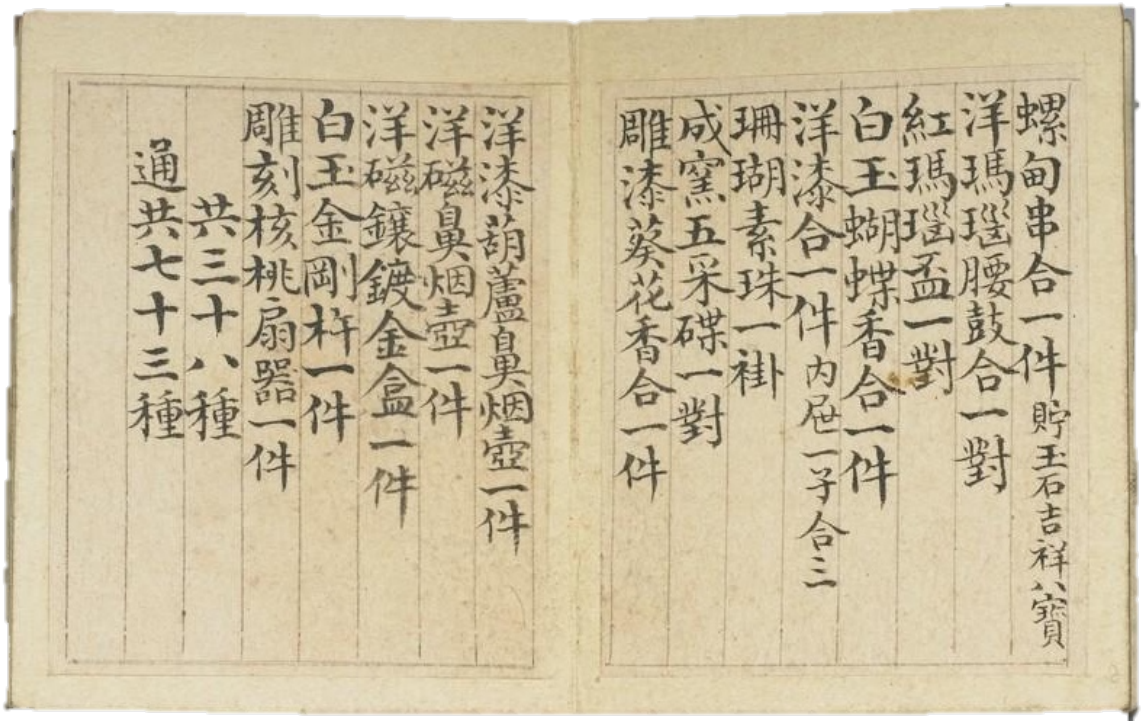

集瓊簃
第一層
宋端溪鐘研一方
唐岱白雲紅樹一卷
白玉硯山一座
宣窯青花水盛一件
洋磁鑲銀合一件貯空青石
白玉方香盤一件
碧玉羚羊書鎮一件
玻瓈合一件貯金福壽
仙工雕牙臂閣一件
填漆合一件貯空青石
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漢銅鼎一件
白玉瓶一件鍍金匙筋全
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黃楊仙客乘槎一件
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洋磁香囊一件
青玉合符一件
葫蘆方合一件貯取火事件
白玉龍鳳呈祥佩一件
洋漆方合一件貯白玉扇牌
唐岱太行山色一卷

洋瑪瑙鑲銀合一對
西洋規矩并象牙記事一匣
碧玉穀璧一件
白玉雙喜扇牌一件
御筆秋英詩畫合璧一冊
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洋磁鑲牙方合一件貯漢玉蝠珮
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白玉合一件
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唐岱秋林古寺一軸
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珊瑚素珠一褂
咸窯五采碟一對
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洋漆葫蘆鼻煙壺一件
洋磁鼻煙壺一件
洋磁鑲鍍金盒一件
白玉金剛杵一件
雕刻核桃扇器一件
共三十八種
通共七十三種

Fig. 28 The small catalogue of the *Jiqiongzao* curio box, 4.9 x 4 cm.



Fig. 29-a The deep hidden drawer and trays of a red sandalwood curio cabinet, the Qianlong reign. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 29-b The small red sandalwood curio cabinet and its main two drawers, 45 items, 46 x 42 cm.





Fig. 29-c The lower-tiered drawer of the curio cabinet.



Fig. 29-d The two scrolls in the middle compartment.

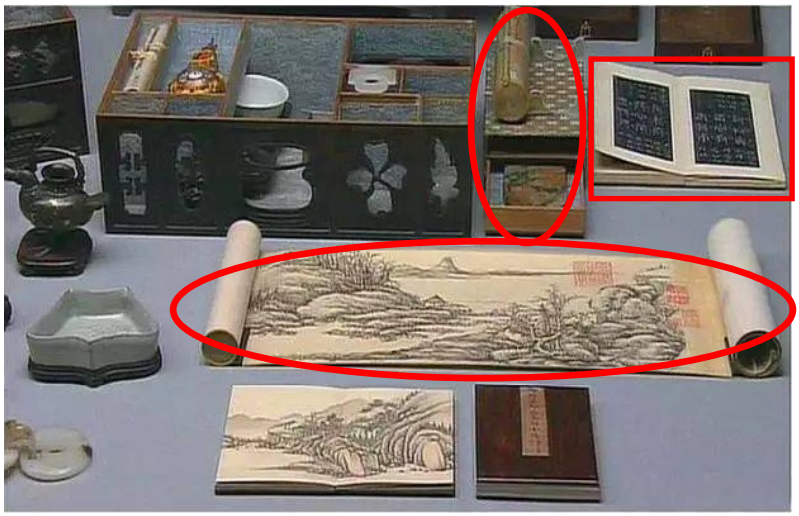


Fig. 29-e All the visible articles in the middle compartment.



Fig. 29-f The uncovering of the curio cabinet.



Fig. 30 The first Fabergé Egg, 1885, 6.4 x 3.5 cm. The Fabergé Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Fig. 31 The golden egg with hen, ca. 1720. Amalienborg Palace, Copenhagen.

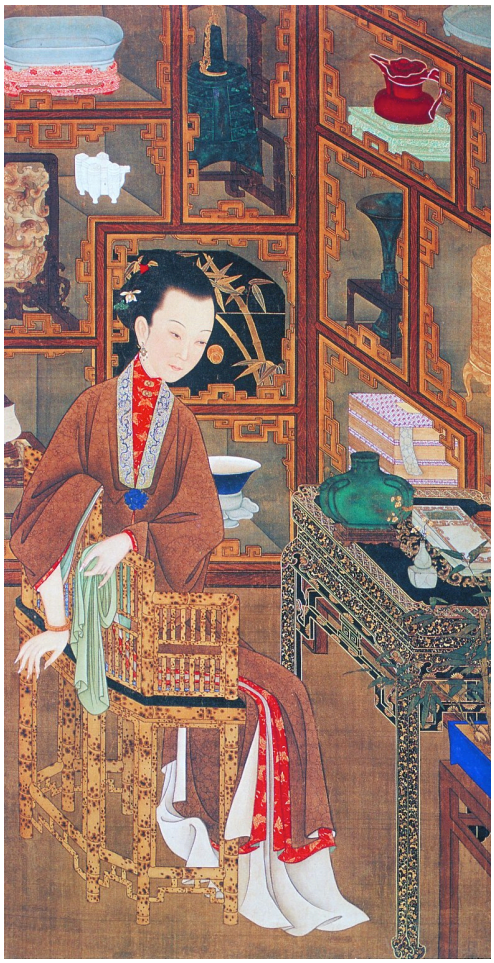


Fig. 32 The painting of *Lost in Thought amid the Antiques* (*Bogu yousi* 博古幽思), the Yongzheng reign (1723-1735), 184 x 98 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 33 The painting series of *Twelve Beauties*. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 34 The Japanese *makie* lacquer set container with plum décor, stored in the curio box of fig. 15, 18 century, 8.7 x 5.8 x 3 cm.



Fig. 35 A British timepiece box, stored in the curio box of fig. 15, 18 century, 8.1 x 6.5 x 4.6 cm.



Fig. 36-a A European vanity case, 18th century, 7.2 x 5 x 6.4 cm. The National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 36-b The contents of the European vanity case.

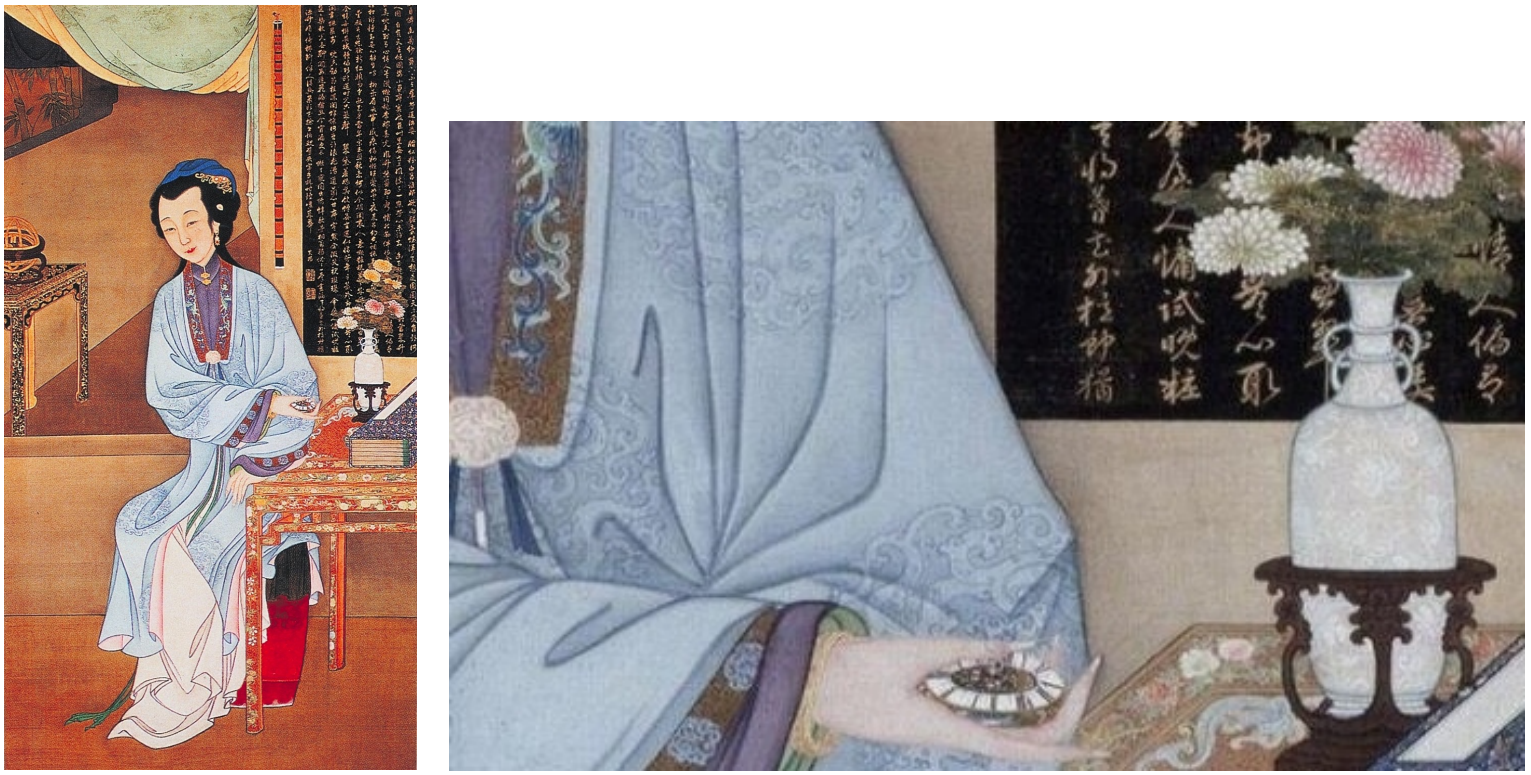


Fig. 37 The painting of *Holding a Pocket Watch*, 184 x 98 cm.

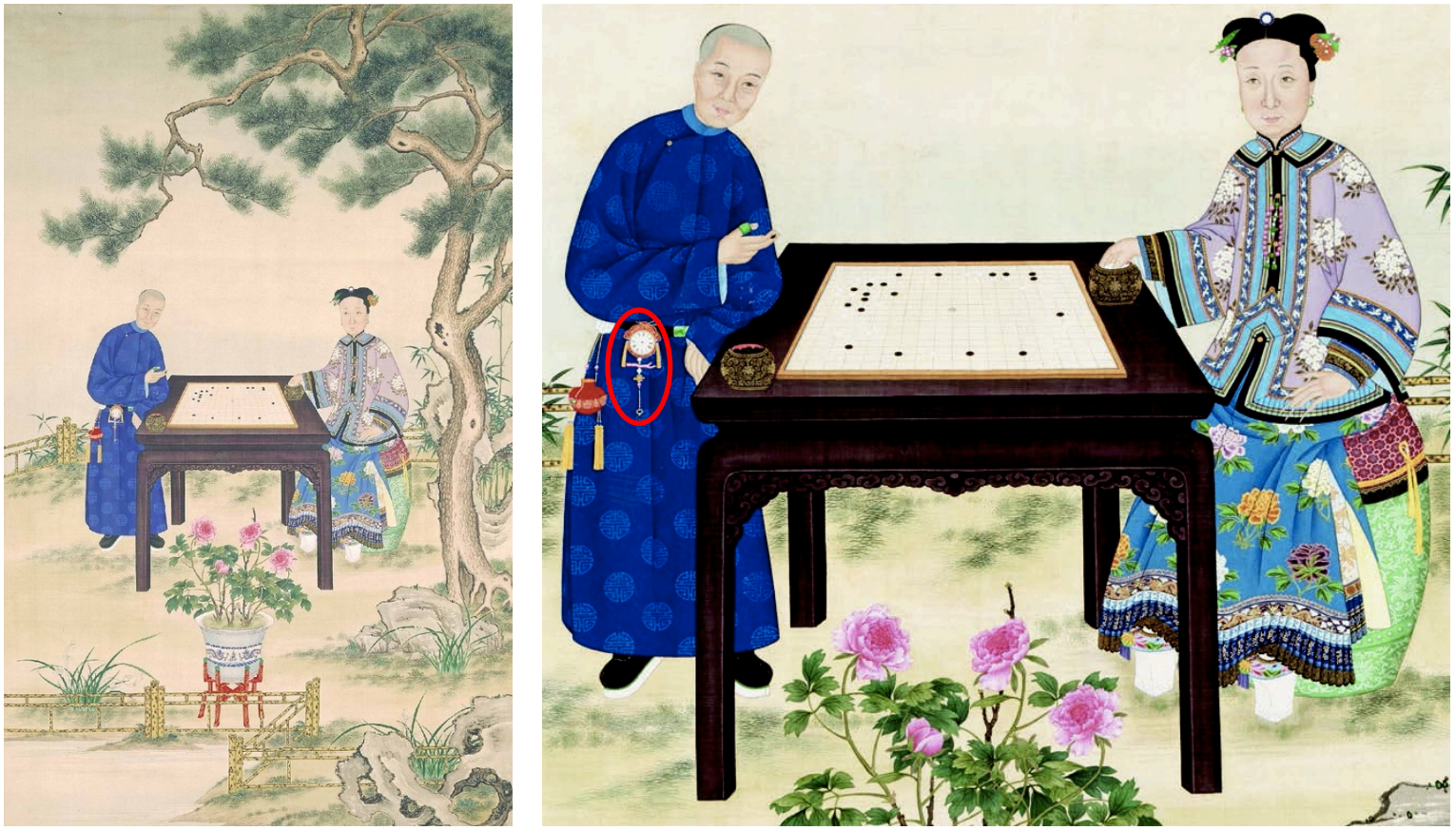


Fig. 38 The painting of Emperor Xianfeng playing chess with Empress Xiaoqinxian. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 39 Dong Gao 董誥, a small handscroll of landscape painting, stored in the curio box of fig. 15, 11.9 cm in width.

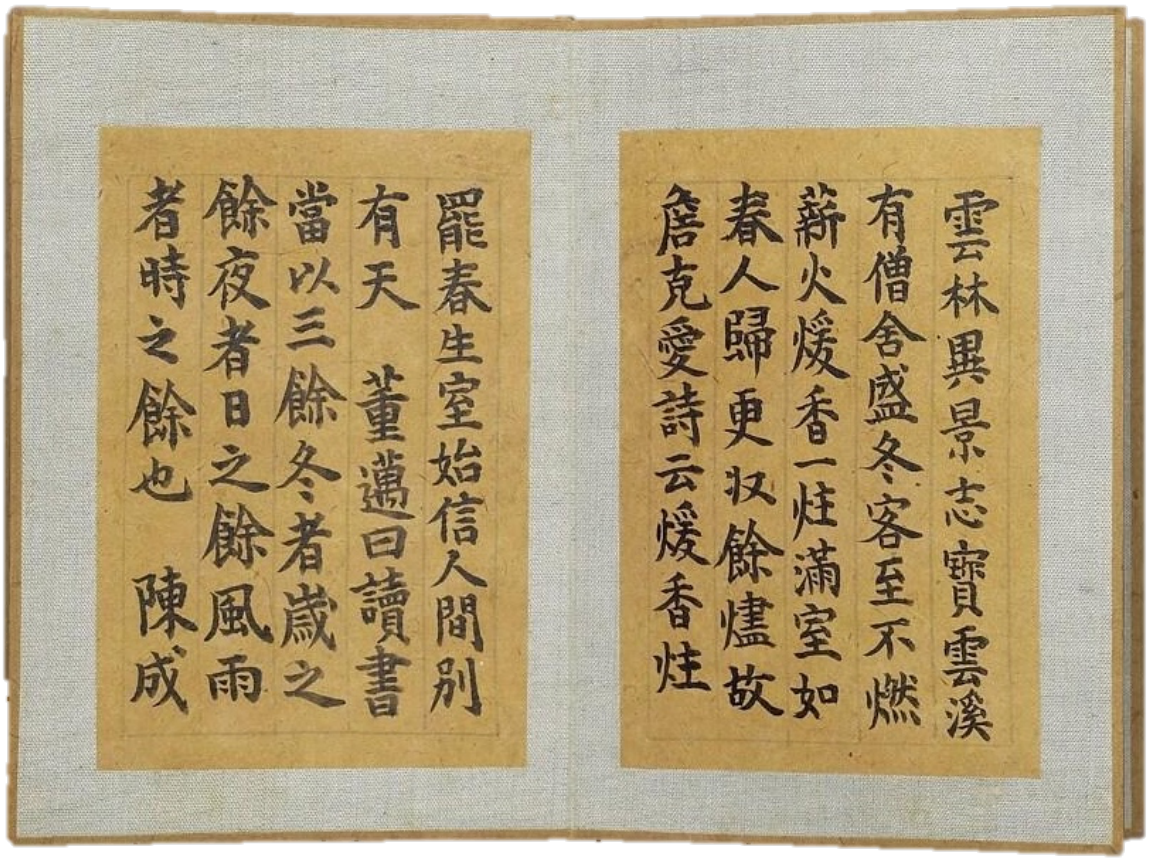


Fig. 40 The calligraphic work of the Jiaqing Emperor, stored in the curio box of Fig. 15, 8.8 x 6.1 x 1.3 cm.



Fig. 41-a A red sandalwood traveling curio case in the form of a folding table, the Qianlong reign, 84 x 29 x 14.5 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 41-b The unfolding form of the traveling table.

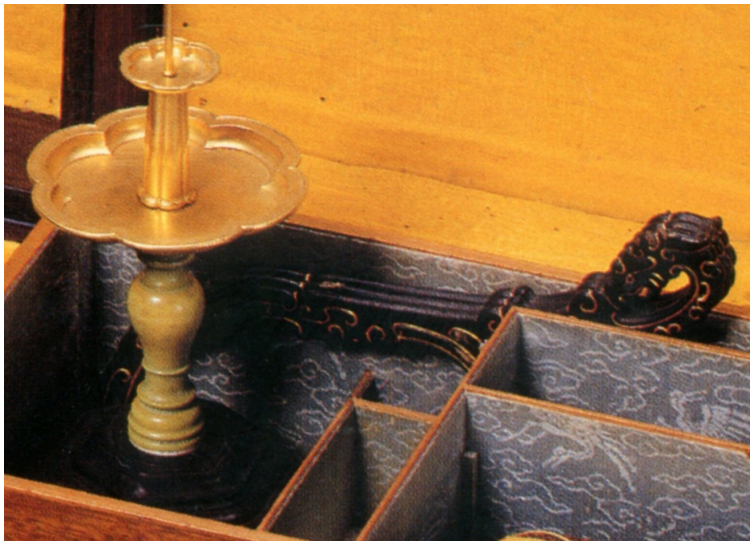






Fig. 41-c The folding hat stand and the candle stand.



Fig. 41-d A set of writing tools.



Fig. 41-e A silver box with with painted enamelled Western-figure and a set of silver drawing tools.



Fig. 41-f A crystal lion and an porcelain animal.



Fig. 41-g An album of landscape paintings and a rhyming dictionary.



Fig. 41-h A facial massager and a set of cloisonné vessels.

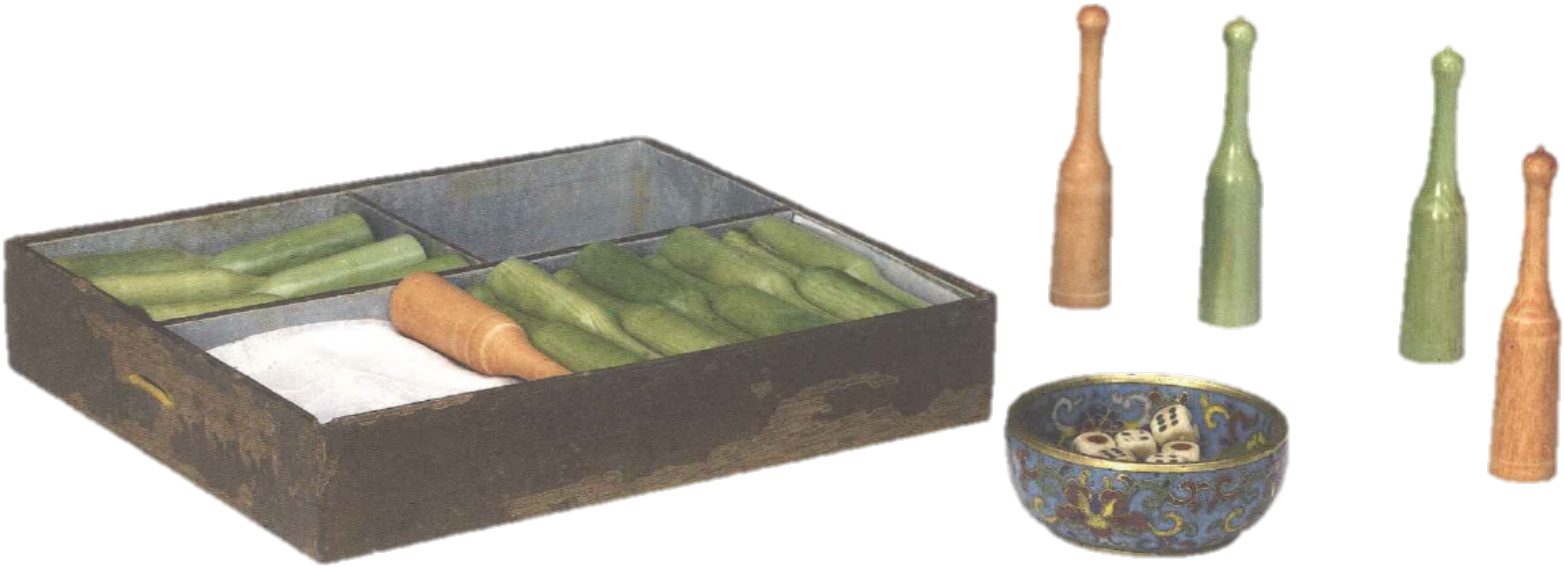


Fig. 41-i A set of Chinese backgammon.



Fig. 42 A stationery curio box, the Qianlong reign, 22 x 24.3 x 6 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing.

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Figs. 3.28 and 3.29 The packaging of a Qianlong's paintings
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Fig. 3.35 The Library of *Tianlu linlang*
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Chen 2000, p. 86.

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4. Chapter 4 The Qing Curio Box: The Kaleidoscope of Packaging

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Fig. 4.2 The assembly of various curios within a curio box
The editorial department, 1984, 'Zhenwan duobaoge 珍玩多寶格 (the precious curio box)', *National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, vol. 12, p. 2.

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