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Artisanal Luxury and Confucian Statecraft: The Afterlife of Ming Official Carved Lacquer at the Qianlong Court*

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Introduction

When the Ming (1368–1644) fell to the Qing (1644–1912), the former dynasty's palace complex, housing the imperial art collection, passed into the possession of the new rulers.¹ Qing emperors, like their predecessors, attached political legitimacy to possessing and maintaining such collections.² As Lothar Ledderose explains, every imperial art collection was a *lingbao* (magical treasure). The “tally of a contract that Heaven concludes with the ruler,” these treasures were to be “preserved

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1. In referring to the Qing imperial collection, Nicole Chiang challenges assumptions about the assemblage accumulated at the Qianlong court. Chiang, *Emperor Qianlong's Hidden Treasures*, 14–16.

2. Originally part of the Qing imperial holdings and stored in Beijing's Forbidden City, a rich repository of artifacts showcased in exhibitions on Qing court art are now held in the Palace Museums in Beijing and Taipei. For selected exhibitions, see Feng Mingzhu, ed., *Qianlong huangdi de wenhua daye*; Rawski and Rawson, eds., *China*; Feng Mingzhu, ed., *Yongzheng*; Berliner, ed., *The Emperor's Private Paradise*; Yu Peijin, ed., *De jia qu*; He Chuanxin, ed., *Shiquan Qianlong*; Chan Hao-seng, ed., *Red Masterpieces*; Chuan-hsing Ho, ed., *Portrayals from a Brush Divine*. For details of the assemblage divided between Beijing and Taipei, see Zheng Xinmiao, ed., *Tianfu yongcang*.

in the palace like the vital force in a human body.”³ When applied to the Qianlong (r. 1736–95) court, this generalization needs to be contextualized—during this long reign, different kinds of artifacts served different imperial agendas. Moreover, whereas antiquities provided the most significant source of inspiration for material production at the Qing court, during the Qianlong reign they played a particularly instrumental role in shaping the court’s material and visual culture.⁴

Imperial artifacts not only carried symbolic meanings but also bore testimony to the cultural achievements of Qing rulership.⁵ Imperial patronage of decorative arts began in the Kangxi (1662–1722) and Yongzheng (1723–35) reigns, and ultimately peaked in the Qianlong period. Recent studies shed light on the social lives of decorative objects made of ceramic, jade, bronze, cloisonné, and lacquer at the High Qing court, where they were integral to art collecting and connoisseurship, palace displays, and court rituals.⁶ Among Ming and Qing lacquers in the imperial holdings, the genre of carved lacquer occupies the largest proportion; however, their importance has remained overlooked in existing scholarship.⁷

3. Ledderose, “Some Observations,” 34.

4. Recent studies on Qing court art have focused on two subjects. One is the technological and stylistic development of different mediums, as well as their significance in artistic and cultural interactions between the imperial court and peripheral regions. Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*; Gugong bowuyuan and Bolin Mapu xuehui kexueshisuo, eds., *Gongting yu difang*. Another area of study is the globalized facet of the Qing empire and cultural exchanges in the long eighteenth century; see Wang Cheng-hua’s review, “Whither Art History?” In particular, studies on Qing court painting (Kleutghen, *Imperial Illusions*; Musillo, *The Shining Inheritance*) scrutinize its visual representations and historical backdrop related to European Jesuit painters.

5. Here imperial artifacts refer to officially commissioned works—mostly inscribed with reign marks—for imperial use or collecting in the Ming and Qing courts. Thus “imperial” and “official” works are interchangeable terms in this article.

6. Drawing on these primary sources and palace archives, art historians have unraveled the artistic innovations and rich meanings of decorative objects at the Qing court. See Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*; Shi Jingfei, *Riyue guanghua*; Ko, *The Social Life of Inkstones*, chapter 1.

7. Half of the Qing imperial holdings were separately stored at the temporary palaces in present-day Chengde and Liaoning, while the others were stored in the Forbidden City in Beijing. 17,707 lacquer objects are currently housed in Beijing’s Palace Museum, mostly carved lacquers belonging to the imperial holdings (16,000); about 400 pieces are from the Ming dynasty. The lacquer collection at Taipei’s National Palace Museum counts about 700 pieces, most of which are carved lacquers made in the Ming and Qing dynasties, especially the latter. Zheng Xinmiao, ed., *Tianfu yongcang*, 205–07.

Carved lacquer, the most labor-intensive and time-consuming decorative genre in the lacquer industry, features relief carving of elaborate motifs on numerous coats of lacquer applied over a base or core. Requiring both a creative mind and mastery of skills to execute, exquisite patterns and designs protect and decorate lacquered objects ranging from household utensils to interior furnishings.⁸ Its costly material processes and striking visual effects overshadow ordinary lacquers and therefore made carved lacquer a popular luxury good in late imperial China.⁹ The imperial use of carved lacquer flourished at the Ming court and, following the seventeenth-century interregnum, rose to renewed prominence under the Qianlong emperor's patronage. Material and technological exchanges between the court and Suzhou, combined with Jiangnan-based craftsmanship, laid the foundation for imperial commissions, which ultimately transformed carved lacquer into a new artistic achievement reflecting, as a legacy of the dynastic transition, both Ming precedents and Qianlong's evolving tastes.

According to the *Display Archives of the Qing Palaces* (*Qinggong chenshe dang'an*), which contains inventories of displayed and stored objects in various buildings within the Forbidden City, during the Qianlong reign many of these carved lacquers were located in the east chamber of the Hall of Mental Cultivation (Yangxindian) and in the Palace of Tranquil Longevity (Ningshougong).¹⁰ Their centralized storage in these two main palaces within the Forbidden City where Qianlong resided, worked, and studied during his rule and after retirement, respectively, indicate the importance of these artifacts to the emperor.¹¹ Nevertheless, little is known about Qianlong's active patronage of carved lacquer or about carved lacquers' unique position in the Qing imperial holdings.

8. According to the *Records of Lacquering* (*Xiushilu*), the only extant treatise on lacquer craft, from the Ming Longqing period (1567–72), carved lacquer belongs to the category of *diaoloumen* that features carved and/or engraved designs on numerous coats of lacquer sap over a substrate made of bamboo, wood, or metal. Huang Cheng, *Xiushilu tushuo*, 152–66.

9. Craig Clunas incorporates carved lacquer in his discussion of Ming visuality of decorative objects, which were circulated in public space and signified a key component within popular culture. Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, 16–18.

10. CSDA, vol. 13, 73–92, 183–218, vol. 18, 217–48.

11. For comparison, some other high-end decorative objects including painted enamels, Songhua inkstones, and Islamic-style jades were stored in the rear storeroom (Duanningdian) of the Palace of Heavenly Purity (Qianqinggong). Shi Jingfei, *Riyue guanghua*, 9–12, 150–51.

Equally intriguing is that Qianlong's poems on lacquer are dedicated exclusively to carved lacquers from the Ming dynasty. Carved lacquer is a recurring subject in imperial poetry in the mid- to late-Qianlong period, well after the emperor's commissions of lacquerware reached their zenith during the early years of his reign. The chronological disconnect between the production of material and textual sources examined in this article seems not only to reflect Qianlong's shifting interest in carved lacquer but also to betray his anxiety about the luxury consumption that flourished soon after he ascended to the throne. Thus, more than conveying his admiration for exquisite craftsmanship, Qianlong's poems on Ming official lacquerware can be read as metaphors revealing the emperor's ambivalence about his keen interest in artisanal skills and luxury goods, a concern rarely seen in imperial poems devoted to other mediums, such as ceramic and jade.

The act of commissioning lacquer objects as a sign of imperial extravagance is vividly encapsulated in a political allegory in the third-century BCE text *Han Feizi*. Qianlong employed this allegory to project onto Ming carved lacquers the ancient imagery of sage kings, who were believed to have established the orthodox ruling lineage.¹² Recent studies have attended to Qing emperors' appreciation, expressed in poems, of antiquities such as ceramics and jade carvings, revealing the pivotal role of older discourses — particularly late Ming writings that became sourcebooks of connoisseurial and artisanal knowledge — in Qianlong's reception of his collection.¹³ Yet, the extent to which the moral valence attached to the specific medium of poetry matched actual artistic strategies developed by the emperor has yet to be fully explored. I argue that Qianlong viewed carved lacquer as an emblem of extravagance and superior craftsmanship epitomizing Chinese lacquer craft, a sign of his moral tension framed by Confucian ideology.

Taking Ledderose's generalized framework as a point of departure and adopting an interdisciplinary approach, I will explore the legacy of collectibles and their distinctive role in shaping Qing imperial taste and symbolism. Specifically, an exploration of Qianlong's discursive, cultural,

12. Wang Xianshen, *Han Feizi jijie*, 3:70–71.

13. For discussions of Qianlong's connoisseurial skills as reflected in his poetry, see Xie Mingliang, "Qianlong de taoci jianshanguan"; Yu Peijin, "Qianlong guanyao yanjiu," 255–77; Zhan Zhenpeng, "Yilin shengmian ren qianchao."

and ritual practices with regard to carved lacquer unveils the emperor's negotiation between active patronage of artisanal luxuries and his socio-political role as an ideal ruler embodying Confucian statecraft. I first scrutinize Ming official carved lacquerware along with Qianlong's poems and seals, which reveal these lacquers' afterlives in eighteenth-century China. After showing the emperor's reception and interpretations of lacquer based on scholarly connoisseurship and Confucian discourse, I then contextualize the ways in which Ming designs were transformed and incorporated into Qing palace displays and court festivities. By reconstructing the production, circulation, and use of Qianlong's official works in juxtaposition with their Ming counterparts in light of substantial records from the imperial palace archives, this article demonstrates how these Qing imperial collectibles, initially intended for Ming predecessors, served new agendas.¹⁴

Poetic Connoisseurship as Cultural Performance and Self-Fashioning

The Qianlong emperor's sixty-one poems on carved lacquer, judging by their placement in the *Collected Imperial Poetry* (*Yuzhi shiji*), were composed between 1772 and 1792. At least twenty-one carved lacquers bearing Qianlong's poems have survived to date.¹⁵ Although official wares dating to the Yongle (1403–24) or Xuande (1426–35) periods in the Qing imperial collection encompassed different shapes and decorative motifs, Qianlong focused on those with figural subjects that yielded

14. Most pivotal are records of the activities of various bureaus of the Palace Board of Works (Zaobanchu), the division of the Imperial Household Department (Neiwufu) responsible for the production of all material artifacts for the imperial court. Grouped under the heading “*Yangxindian Neiwufu Zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji Qingdang*,” these records are kept in the First Historical Archives of China (Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan) in Beijing and they serve as primary sources of most significant scholarship used in establishing the timeline of developments of imperial artifacts made during the Qianlong reign. I use archival records of the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods compiled in DAZH.

15. Zhan Zhenpeng, “Yilin shengmian ren qianchao,” 52. Altogether, over forty thousand poems are attributed to Qianlong. Although no definitive source proves that all these poems were produced by Qianlong's own hand, imperial orders for compilation and inscription also embodied emperorship because they could not have been fulfilled without imperial agency. Yu Peijin, “Qianlong guanyao yanjiu,” 21–22.

a more allegorical reading.¹⁶ By examining poems inscribed on extant works, I demonstrate that they are not merely descriptive but rather are best understood as cultural performance and rhetorical pronouncements through which the emperor expressed a form of self-fashioning, evolving from the perspective of a literati connoisseur and antiquarian to self-references with political connotations.

Making reference to Ming-era scholarly connoisseurship is arguably the most significant trope developed in imperial poems about decorative objects across different mediums. For instance, a 1776 poem on the base of a carved red box dated to the early fifteenth century (Figure 1), along with the poet-emperor's gilded seal inside the lid, reads:

Fine works of carved red [lacquer] by the Orchard [Factory];
 Most precious for those [in the form] of sugarcane segment with human
 figures.
 No guests open the window to gaze at the autumn sky;
 Summoning the boy attendant, and holding a staff, the host listens to
 whispers of pines.
 The incisive needle mark is still recognizable;
 Differing, after all, from duplicates of posterity.
 After three hundred years, here it remains intact;
 When caressing this antique in my studio, accompanying thoughts
 linger endlessly.¹⁷

The poem's second couplet depicts a hermit viewing a waterfall, based on the interplay of word and image. The combination of cylindrical shape and figural motif, as characterized by the first couplet, makes this lacquer box one of the most sought-after antiquities among late Ming literati and collectors. Discussions of crafts and objects in miscellaneous jottings (*biji*) reached their apogee in late Ming times when artistic discourses flourished and engaged a wide range of educated elites to an unprecedented degree. Numerous writings from the mid-sixteenth century to the seventeenth century shared in the material culture by virtue of the proliferation of printed books.¹⁸

16. For an overview of early-Ming official carved lacquers, their stylistic development, and functions, see Zhan Zhenpeng, "Zhuxiu zenghua."

17. YZSJ, vol. 4, 39:933b; Xia Gengqi, ed., *Yuan Ming qiqi*, no. 43, 64.

18. The classic investigation of the late Ming discourse of material culture is Clunas, *Superfluous Things*.

Among them, *Survey of Scenery and Monuments in the Imperial Capital* (*Dijing jingwulüe*), a miscellaneous treatise dating to circa 1635, provides detailed information about the imperial artifacts — including bronzes, porcelains, and lacquers — secretly sold and circulated in a market outside the palace compound in the late Ming. In particular, the treatise notes that early Ming official lacquers were sought after because of their exquisite craftsmanship. According to this treatise's ranking scheme, carved red lacquer boxes in sugarcane-segment shape with figural motifs ranked highest, followed by those in steam-cake shape with floral motifs; Yuan-dynasty (1271–1368) works with sword-ring motifs ranked lowest.¹⁹ Qianlong frequently cited this hierarchical order of lacquer decoration, for instance in this poem composed in 1779:

The carved red [lacquerware] originated in the Orchard Factory;
 The steamed-cake shape decorated with floral and spiral motifs.
 In comparison with [those in the form of] sugarcane-segment, it is
 inferior;
 While compared with sword-ring motifs, it surpasses.
 The Yongle marks incised by needles still exist;
 [Artisans] craftily bought lacquerwares in the imperial collection
 without illegally reselling them.
 Unexpectedly, I recall the remonstrance of ten courtiers under Shun's
 rule;
 Could they ever imagine that exquisite lacquerware like this would be
 crafted?²⁰

It is reasonable to conclude that Ming texts, particularly the *Survey of Scenery and Monuments*, cited in over ten poems and accompanying interlinear notes, exerted a great impact on Qianlong's connoisseurship of Ming official wares in terms of their shapes, motifs, and reign marks.²¹ As both poems demonstrate, his admiration for their excellent craftsmanship is evident in multiple references to the Orchard Factory (*Guoyuanchang*), according to later texts an imperial lacquer workshop established during the Yongle period. Qianlong viewed it as a brand that represented Ming

19. Liu Tong and Yu Yizheng, *Dijing jingwulüe*, 4:164.

20. YZSJ, vol. 4, 64:373b–374a.

21. Apart from *Dijing jingwulüe* (4:164), notes on lacquer connoisseurship can also be found in Zhang Yingwen, *Qingmi cang*, 722–23; Gao Lian, *Zunsheng bajian*, 485; Wen Zhenheng, *Zhangwu zhi jiaozhu*, 7:249–50; Gao Shiqi, *Jin'ao tuishi biji*, 145.

official lacquers as a whole regardless of their divergence in mark or style, from the Yongle-Xuande era through the late Ming.²²

Moreover, the third couplet of the 1779 poem addresses the complexity of dating and authentication of early Ming lacquers. Sometimes, a few early fifteenth-century works are known to bear two reign marks.²³ Indeed, several carved red lacquerwares to which imperial poems are dedicated bear a Xuande mark superimposed on a Yongle one. The *Survey of Scenery and Monuments* explains that, after constant accusations of inferior workmanship in comparison to that of the Yongle period, artisans at the Xuande court secretly bought Yongle pieces from palace eunuchs and changed their marks.²⁴ Although impossible to verify by the late Ming, this explanation was widespread within literati circles and subsequently referenced in the interlinear notes of four of Qianlong's poems.²⁵

In general, Qianlong's accumulation of connoisseurial skills relied on empirical experiences (object handling/collecting), on the one hand, and textual references or assistance from civil courtiers, on the other. In the latter case, in his lacquer connoisseurship, apart from employing Ming literati taste, the emperor cites Gao Shiqi's (1645–1704) 1684 private jottings and the 1600 gazetteer of Jiaxing prefecture for biographies of famous lacquer artisans in the Yuan-Ming era.²⁶ These two sources were also compiled under the category of *qigong* (lacquer craft) in the early Qing imperial encyclopedia *Complete Collection of Pictures and Books of the Past and Present* (*Gujin tushu jicheng*), which probably served as the emperor's reference book for these works.²⁷

Qianlong's particular interest in figural subjects also points to literati ideals and tastes. Pictorial themes of early Ming carved lacquer can

22. For historical research on the lacquer workshop, see Li Jingze, "Guoyuanchang xiaokao."

23. The method of incising the phrase "Da Ming Yongle *nian zhi*" (made in the Yongle reign of the Great Ming) inside the foot-ring largely adhered to Yuan dynasty convention. Engraved with knives and gilded on the bottom of vessels, Xuande marks outnumber those of Yongle. Garner, "Two Chinese Carved Lacquer Boxes," 41–50; Zhang Rong, "Mingdai Yuyongjian zao qiqi."

24. Liu Tong and Yu Yizheng, *Dijing jingwulue*, 164.

25. YZSJ, vol. 4, 58:279b–280a, 61:335a–b, 94: 813a, vol. 5, 63:609b.

26. YZSJ, vol. 4, 51:181a, 68:435b–436a; Gao Shiqi, *Jin'ao tuishi biji*, 145.

27. Jiang Tingxi and Chen Menglei, eds., *Qinding gujin tushu jicheng*, vol. 781, 51a–b.

roughly be divided into two genres: figural landscape and bird-and-flower subjects. That these genres and naturalistic styles echo those of contemporary court painting is no coincidence.²⁸ Figural landscapes on lacquerware engaged the Qianlong emperor not only because Ming literati rated them as possessing the highest aesthetic value, but presumably also because the pictorial narratives make the emperor's poetic inscriptions and seals comparable to their counterparts on paintings. In a 1778 poem, he even associated such painting-like qualities with Ming literati painting, noticing that a carved red lacquer box carrying a Yongle mark (Figure 2) had the same visual schema as the hanging scroll *Sipping Tea* (*Pincha tu*, Figure 3) by Tang Yin (1470–1523).²⁹ Despite differences in material and technique, both artifacts convey the same lofty ideal with one recluse host, portrayed in scholar's robe and seated inside his pavilion/hut, dominating the foreground, while one or two servants brew tea in the corner. It was the Jiangnan literati's refined taste embedded in both images that triggered the emperor's compositional comparison. In fact, *Sipping Tea* belonged to Qianlong's collection; he inscribed twenty-one poems on it during his frequent visits to the Mountain Lodge Conferring Tranquility (Jingji shanzhuang) built on Mount Pan (Panshan), due east of the capital. It was hung in a teahouse named Qianchixue (Thousand Feet of Snow) for the emperor's tea ceremony in honor of Lu Yu (733–804), the renowned author of the *Classic of Tea* (*Chajing*).³⁰ By continually establishing a series of Qianchixue teahouses in his several temporary palaces, and by transforming the Ming lacquerware from an incense or cosmetic box into a container for *longtuan* tea, Qianlong gave shape to his discourse over the Jiangnan region through cultural performance inspired by such imagery.³¹

Given the curious analogy, in Qianlong's poems, between a lacquer artisan's carving burin and a painter's paintbrush, the same pattern of intertextuality between lacquerware and court painting applies to

28. Xie Yuzhen, "Mingchu guanfang yongqi."

29. YZSJ, vol. 4, 65:388b–389a. For the image, see Xia Gengqi, ed., *Yuan Ming qiqi*, no. 38, 57.

30. On the designation, locations, and activities of these teahouses during the Qianlong reign, see Liao Baoxiu, "Qing Gaozong Panshan qianchixue chashe chutan."

31. Such cultural performances can also be found with the subject of Han Chinese beauties in court paintings. See Wu Hong, *Zhongguo huibua zhongde "nüxing kongjian"*, 431–77.

the emperor's self-fashioning as a literatus.³² A third poem from 1782, engraved on the cover interior of a circular lacquer box (Figure 4) reads:

Under pine trees, the zigzag railing lies in shade;
 The lonely pavilion is tranquil yet beautiful.
 The sentiment of wind knocks bamboo leaves;
 The spring message transmits through plum blossoms.
 The crane seems to avoid boiling tea;
 The zither does not hang on the wall diagonally.
 With two or three boy attendants to serve;
 Lin [Bu]'s home can hardly be recognized.³³

The first three couplets depict the central scene in bas-relief by listing key visual elements inside a garden where one gentleman sits in a pavilion. He is obviously a literatus-recluse attended by three servants: in the foreground, one holds a vase with a branch of blossoming flowers. Behind him, another carries a seven-string zither (*qin*), while the third prepares tea beside a stove.

Based on the iconographic combination of plum blossom, crane, zither, and pine trees—attributes of the gentleman's persona—Qianlong accurately attached this central figure to Lin Bu (967–1028), an influential poet known chiefly for his poems on flowering plum.³⁴ It is generally believed that Lin moved to Hangzhou's West Lake upon reaching middle age and there led his life as a celibate recluse, which brought him a lofty reputation for taking plum trees and cranes as lifelong companions akin to spouses and offspring (*meiqi bezi*).

The tropes of “bamboo” and “spring message” in the second couplet shift our attention to the hanging scroll *Spring's Peaceful Message* (*Ping'an chunxin tu*) in Beijing's Palace Museum, attributed to the Italian Jesuit painter Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766). This painting carries Qianlong's designation and inscription of 1782, a year that coincides with the above poem, in gold paint. Like *Sipping Tea*, this scroll was housed in the Mountain Lodge Conferring Tranquility and presented to the

32. YZSJ, vol. 4, 46:108b, 78:562a.

33. YZSJ, vol. 5, 1:249a; Xia Gengqi, ed., *Yuan Ming qiqi*, 56.

34. On Lin Bu's oeuvre of plum blossoms and his influence on the development of literati bird-and-flower painting during the Song-Yuan era, see Bickford, *Ink Plum*, 23–24.

emperor during his retreat in the same year. In this painting, two stalks of bamboo in the background echo the two figures' different status and intimate relationship in a symbolic manner: What was transmitted from the Yongzheng emperor on the left to Qianlong as the young Prince Hongli, both portrayed in Chinese scholar robes, as Wu Hung eloquently remarks, "is not only a branch of blossoming plum indicating peaceful hope, but also implies the authority to rule the empire."³⁵ There is ample evidence to conclude that Qianlong inscribed these two artifacts — *Spring's Peaceful Message* and the carved lacquer box — at almost the same time, and that their shared tropes, whether literary or visual, of bamboo and spring plum denoting the scholar are keys to understanding the emperor's elaborate and allusive self-representation.

As we have seen from the above poems, Qianlong fashioned himself as a scholarly antiquarian through displaying connoisseurial knowledge and values from literature to support his reading of antiquities. Artfully framed by a multifaceted identity, poetic references to anecdotes and figures in the past also allow us to glimpse Qianlong's dual persona that reveals his subjectivity as an imperial ruler: These virtuous recluses may await summons from a sagacious ruler like him.

Reframing Antiquities through Allegorical Reading and Commentary

Even among literati in Ming-Qing China, composing and inscribing poems onto objects was never merely a matter of artistic appreciation. This was even more so the case when done by an imperial hand. Ming carved lacquer provided a particularly fruitful convergence of past and present for the imperial collector to express political concerns through allegorical readings. Qianlong tended to identify figural landscapes in the academic style from early Ming official wares as anecdotal illustrations signifying exemplary figures, with references to classical or historical texts. At the same time, he viewed the auspicious symbols and royal emblems on late Ming works as allegorical imagery that conjured negative images and warnings about the Jiajing (r. 1522–67) and Wanli (r. 1573–1620) emperors' incompetent rule.

35. Wu, "Emperor's Masquerade," 28. More detailed discussions of this scroll and other variations of Qianlong's "costume portraits" can be found in Kleutghen, *Imperial Illusions*, 5–17.

Qianlong's reading of a carved lacquer dish now in the collection of Beijing's Palace Museum exemplifies the former case. Embellished with flowers of different seasons on the square border, the dish (Figure 5) depicts a literary gathering with a waterfront garden: three gentlemen accompanied by two servants emerge in the foreground. On the second floor of a two-story building on the left, another two gentlemen seated by a table seem to be expecting a forthcoming meeting for which two attendants on the ground floor are preparing. The emperor's 1783 poem, inscribed on the bottom of the dish, reads:

Two is subtracted from full seven;
 Equaling ten minus five.
 What refers to ghosts are Han [Yu]'s satires;
 What sing of gentlemen are Yan [Yanzhi]'s poems.
 As if in the picture they appear;
 Too numerous to be counted with fingers.
 But after all, they are all worthies;
 Worth the bother of enumerating their surnames and sobriquets.
 In between tall pines and the courtyard;
 [They are] bowing gracefully as companions of the immortal.
 Remembering Shun's courtiers in the distant past;
 How to acquire worthies herein to assist [my rule]?³⁶

As the first couplet emphasizes, this poem focuses on the five gentlemen as a group. They traditionally refer to the Northern Song (960–1127) “Five Elders of Suiyang” (*Suiyang wulao*), who dedicated themselves to assisting the Song court from its establishment through the Renzong reign (1022–63).³⁷ After retiring from officialdom, they all returned to their shared native place, Suiyang (in present-day Shangqiu, Henan), where they occasionally held meetings; hence, their gathering stands

36. YZSJ, vol. 5, 1:238b.

37. There is a set of five portraits in the format of album leaves produced around 1056 and collectively known as *Suiyang wulao tu*. The two portraits of Wang Huan (891 *jinsbi*) and Feng Ping now are in the Freer Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian Institution; two other portraits, of Zhu Guan (fl. tenth century) and Du Yan (978–1057), are in the Art Museum of Yale University. The fifth portrait, of Bi Shichang (963–?), is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

for the virtue of eremitism or, possibly, longevity associated with self-cultivation.³⁸

In the second and third couplets as well as interlinear notes, however, Qianlong associates the five scholars more broadly with any combination of five worthies active over a long period from the Six Dynasties (220–589) to the Northern Song.³⁹ Nevertheless, in the last two lines Qianlong highlights the visual locus of “elegant gathering,” a centuries-old subject matter alluding to refined elitism, to express his eager pursuit of virtuous officials—the scholars from antiquity evoked his desire to summon ancient as well as contemporary worthies to assist his rule. His desire for virtuous scholars serving such sagacious rulers as Shun is also echoed by the two gilded seals—*huixin* (knowing heart) and *dechongfu* (evidence of enriched virtue)—accompanying the inscription.

In contrast to monoscenic figural landscapes that invite the beholder to visualize an idealized past, for Qianlong the auspicious symbols and royal emblems dominating late Ming official works evoked negative images of their Ming imperial patrons. In early 1779, for instance, Qianlong composed a poem for a Jiajing carved lacquer box featuring the Three Stars, along with long interlinear commentaries:

The icons of the Three Stars were set for pious sacrifice;

Interlinear note: Beside the Hall of Great Brightness

(Daguangmingdian) there is a side room containing statues of the Three Stars, the same deities as those enshrined during the Jiajing period

The auspiciousness applied to the ornament of utensils.

Interlinear note: On this box are carved the three words *fu*,

lu, and *shou*, surrounded by cranes flying amid the clouds;

considering the exquisite workmanship as well as the subtle

implication, it probably was ordered for sacrifice in Daoist rituals

Happiness (*fu*), Emolument (*lu*), and Longevity (*shou*) originally aimed at self-cultivation;

[Standing for] upright yet gentle mentality and diligent governance for common people.

It is unnecessary to question how greedy the crafty ministers were;

38. See Xie Yuzhen, “Mingchu guanfang yongqi,” 124–25.

39. YZSJ, vol. 5, 1:238b.

Decrees and governance were mostly consigned to eunuchs.
 Chanting about objects has long served to comment on contemporary
 affairs;
 Vessels that incurred admonishment were [made] in the Orchard
 Factory.⁴⁰

At the Ming Jiajing court, the characters *fu*, *lu*, and *shou* in irregular cursive script dominated the decoration of official objects across different media.⁴¹ Official porcelain and carved lacquer both share this auspicious design, alluding to this cult of three deities, and embody the Jiajing emperor's Daoist beliefs.⁴² In her insightful examination of Daoist religious contexts at the Jiajing court, Maggie Wan argues that official wares decorated with particular auspicious motifs were specially designed vessels for Daoist religious practices at West Park (Xiyuan), an imperial garden adjacent to the Forbidden City. Regarding Qianlong's assumptions in his intertextual commentary in the second line, auspicious words were presumably intended as simulations of their archetypes performed during the Daoist spiritual writing (*fujū*).⁴³

Daoist visual culture exemplified by this lacquer box reminded Qianlong of Jiajing's patronage of religious Daoism which, as described in standard histories, had contributed to the decline of central governance, especially after the Ming emperor's retreat from the Palace of Heavenly Purity to West Park in pursuit of immortality.⁴⁴ As the third couplet suggests, while devoting himself to Daoist cultivation, Jiajing left his officials in charge of most governmental affairs. Most of these officials appear in the *History of the Ming (Mingshi)*, compiled by Qing grand

40. YZSJ, vol. 4, 55:242b.

41. On the iconography of the Three Stars triad portrayed in diverse material forms for popular appeal in late imperial China, see Fong, "The Iconography of the Popular Gods," 159–99.

42. Drawing inspiration from James Watt's term "organic form" to describe these auspicious motifs, Maggie Wan elucidates their embedded religious connotations. Watt and Ford, *East Asian Lacquer*, 95; Wan, "Jiajing Emperor and His Auspicious Words."

43. Wan, "Motifs with an Intention"; Wan, "Jiajing Emperor and His Auspicious Words."

44. Frequent renaming and reconstruction of buildings within West Park reflected Jiajing's keen intention to transform the garden into a sacred space for pursuing immortality. Wan, "Building an Immortal Land."

secretaries, as wicked or corrupt courtiers.⁴⁵ Religious immorality at the Jiajing court, according to Qianlong's reading and critical commentaries, violated the supposed visual auspiciousness on these antiquities and was to be borne in mind as a bitter lesson by all subsequent rulers.

Imperial poems on Wanli official lacquers follow closely this mode of allegorical interpretation. One of them, composed in the spring of 1783, reads:

The dragon is holding a coin that bears *tianxia taiping*;
 Identifying the box depends on its engraved mark in gold words.
 Spoiling [his third son] in the enfeoffment and striving for estates;
 [The Wanli emperor] alienated himself from the outer court for years.
 It is strange indeed that half the courtiers were absent from imperial
 audiences;
 Made even worse by his negation of the great undertaking.
 Who should be blamed for the fall of the Ming?
 One inevitably blushes when facing this vessel.⁴⁶

Extant works decorated with paired dragons flanking a coin that bears the same four characters —*tianxia taiping* (peace and harmony beneath heaven) — can be found in museums and private hands.⁴⁷ The poem reflects another political conflict in the Ming court between the state's welfare and the emperor's self-will: after Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng's (1525–82) death, the Wanli emperor gradually proceeded with state affairs perfunctorily while obstinately ignoring primogeniture to raise the rank of his third son, Zhu Changxun (1586–1641), borne by his most beloved concubine, as the heir to the throne. Although Wanli finally dropped this proposal, following fierce opposition from bureaucrats and debates over the foundation of the state, his desire to struggle in Changxun's interest and to be distant from the outer court did not diminish.⁴⁸

45. After 1539, certain ministers including Yan Song (1480–1567) gained imperial favor and high positions through their skills in writing Daoist prayers. Zhang Tingyu et al., *Mingshi*, 193, 5115–18.

46. YZSJ, vol. 4, 96:838a–b.

47. See, for instance, Chen Huixia, ed., *Heguang ticaï*, no. 98, 110.

48. Huang, 1587, 75–76.

As ironically questioned by Qianlong, Wanli's corrupt rule is blamed for the fall of the Ming, ostensibly serving to justify the Manchu conquest of the Ming. Taking over the Ming administrative structure did not necessarily amount to a long-lasting and stable throne; rather, Qing rule had to rely on coordinated interactions between the emperor and his officials. His aspiration to this governing ideal is evident in references to the "ten courtiers' remonstrance on lacquerware" (*shiren jian qiqi*), derived from the classical text *Han Feizi*.⁴⁹ Early Chinese society from the Warring States period (475–221 BCE) to the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) witnessed the increased popularity of lacquer among aristocratic elites as a key surrogate for bronze in the production of ritual and funerary vessels.⁵⁰ Luxury lacquer objects at that time not only represented the socio-economic status of the owner but also could cause political concern. The *Han Feizi* serves as a didactic warning that imperial extravagance could gradually lead to political crisis for future generations. Qianlong's references to this political allegory, judging from the wording of his poems, are probably based on the *Essentials of Governance in the Zhenguan Reign* (*Zhenguan zhengyao*), written by the historian Wu Jing (670–749):

In the seventeenth year of the Zhenguan reign (643–44), Emperor Taizong asked the Grand Master of Remonstrance Chu Suiliang: "When Shun commissioned lacquerware, and Yu ordered ritual vessels to be embellished with carvings, a dozen courtiers remonstrated against the imperial will. Regarding such a trifling matter as tableware, why [did they] bother to remonstrate?" Suiliang replied: "Involvement in carving crafts impairs farming, just as weaving sumptuous clothes hinders women from household chores. Once a precedent for extravagance and debauchery is established, gradually it brings peril [to the state]. If the use of lacquerware is not stopped, works of gold will be ordered; if the use of golden vessels is not dissuaded, then jade works will be commissioned. Therefore, outspoken courtiers must

49. Wang Xianshen, *Han Feizi jijie*, 3:70–71.

50. Among the most significant archaeological finds are over 700 lacquer objects excavated from the Mawangdui Western Han tombs in Changsha; they account for almost one-quarter of the whole tomb inventory. Regarding the medium transformation of ritual vessels in early China, see Knight, "Bronze to Lacquer."

remonstrate as soon as signs [of excess] appear; otherwise, when it develops into excessive indulgence, the remonstrance will have been too late.”⁵¹

The dialogue between Emperor Taizong (r. 626–49) and Chu Suiliang (596–658) illustrates the key role of officials in rectifying the monarch’s mistakes. Following ancient exemplars, Chu was duty-bound to persuade the emperor to rein in extravagant consumption, especially in commissioning highly ornamented utensils crafted from luxurious materials. This remained in accordance with the Confucian ideal of occupational hierarchy, with agriculture superior to handicraft, and commerce receiving the least esteem. Following the same pattern of historical narratives set by Chinese ruling discourse, Qianlong in ten of his poems projects the imagery of sage kings such as Shun and Yu onto Ming official wares—reframed as mementos transmitted from the past.⁵²

For Qianlong, encoding Ming-dynasty lacquer through poetry provided a venue for cultural performance and political articulation. His reflections on imperial righteousness embedded in connoisseurship of Ming carved lacquer fall into what I would term a “duality of political ethics” under the rubric of Confucian didacticism.⁵³ This rubric is best illustrated in the exemplary images—including legendary paragons and historical figures of both good and evil—tracing back to the Western Han.⁵⁴ Art historians tend to characterize didactic images dating from the Han to Ming dynasties as a pictorial genre with a focus on their narrative strategies through the lens of Confucian ethics, but the question of how Qing monarchs reframed and reinterpreted such didacticism is not pursued.⁵⁵ Emperors and high officials alike used crafts as symbolic devices of persuasion to complement other, more conventional forms of

51. Wu Jing, *Zhenguan zhengyao*, 2:385b.

52. YZSJ, vol. 4, 13:461a, 41:19a, 42:37a, 46:108b, 64:373b–374a, 87:706b, 91:759b–760a, 98:868b–869a; vol. 5, 13:446b, 19:553a–b.

53. I use this term to characterize Qianlong’s practice of judging political actions of historical figures, which fall into the “good-evil” dualism framed by Confucian ideology.

54. An early example is the Hall of Numinous Light (Lingguangdian), built by the Han Prince of Lu, Liu Yu (?–128 BCE), in the same area where Confucius lived and taught three centuries earlier.

55. Julia Murray, in *Mirror of Morality*, has thoroughly studied the complex relationship between the development of Chinese narrative illustrations and their cultural or political implications. However, her linear outline only extends to woodblock-printed illustrations no later than the Ming Wanli period.

wielding authority and exerting influence. Qianlong fashioned himself in the same manner through scholarly cultivation and multiple discourses, most notably his endorsement of Confucian ideology, so as to present his own image as a sagacious ruler inheriting the ruling lineage from ancient exemplars rather than late Ming emperors, the conquered predecessors of the Manchu Qing.

Qing Lacquer Production in Suzhou: Imitation and Innovation

“What if additional carved [lacquers] were crafted?”⁵⁶ This line from a 1782 poem bespeaks Qianlong’s ambivalence about his active commissions of carved lacquer in previous decades. Although Qianlong perceived Ming official wares as emblems of extravagance, they also served as a catalyst in the formation of a new Qing style during the early years of his reign. Regarding the imperial patronage of carved lacquer in the early Qing, there are few examples and none bearing the reign marks of Kangxi or Yongzheng.⁵⁷ It was therefore not until Qianlong’s active patronage that Qing China witnessed the revival of carved lacquer, which was produced in Suzhou instead of Beijing.

Since 1739, the making and repair of lacquerware —mostly carved lacquer —was largely assigned to the Suzhou Weaving Department (Suzhou zhizaoshu).⁵⁸ Established during the Ming dynasty, three weaving departments —at Suzhou and two other Jiangnan cities —were responsible for the production of various textiles, clothes, and robes mainly for the imperial court, accompanied by commissioned orders for other artifacts.⁵⁹ Judging from their material practices, imperial orders along with approved models or sketches were issued from Beijing, and samples or products were then transported from Suzhou back to the court via the Grand Canal.

56. YZSJ, vol. 4, 87:706b. For the lacquer box bearing this poem, see Chen Huixia, ed., *Heguang ticaì*, no. 14, 33.

57. The only Yongzheng-era archival record dates to 1730 and the result remains obscure. Yang Boda, “Qingdai Suzhou diaoqi shimo,” 123–27. Influenced by Japanese fashion favored by late Ming literati, the Yongzheng emperor apparently preferred Japanese-inspired lacquer to carved lacquer. See Chen Huixia, “Yongzheng chao de yangqi.”

58. Yang Boda, “Qingdai Suzhou diaoqi shimo,” 123–27; Yang Yong, “Qianlong chao Suzhou zhizao.”

59. See Lai Huimin, “Guaren haohuo.”

Why was the imperial project of lacquer production initiated in Suzhou? In 1693, a memorial to the Kangxi emperor submitted by Li Xu (1655–1729), then in charge of the Suzhou Weaving Department, lists a group of carved lacquer and Japanese *maki-e* wares designated as tribute to the emperor.⁶⁰ The city held a leading role in handicrafts in the Qing empire. According to two Suzhou gazetteers and the Jiangnan-based official Nalan Chang'an (1681–1747), Suzhou had excelled in lacquer-making from the early sixteenth century through the eighteenth century.⁶¹ Yang Yong speculates that what triggered Qianlong to commission lacquerwares for court use in Suzhou were its high-quality products and lower costs.⁶² After several unsatisfactory trials by palace craftsmen in Beijing, Qianlong's high expectations for Suzhou's carved lacquer can be seen in his first order, in 1739. Soon after an imperial inspection of the first products from Suzhou in 1740, the emperor was apparently satisfied with their quality; Suzhou workmanship increasingly gained his confidence during the remainder of his reign.⁶³ The technological advantage of Suzhou in the lacquer industry together with the city's abundant natural and labor resources most likely met Qianlong's scrutinizing standards.⁶⁴

Furthermore, Qianlong designed a naming scheme featuring *mingseqian* (name inscription) for his officially commissioned lacquers, notably with the character *bao* (treasure), to highlight their importance and unique identity in the imperial holdings. By imperial regulation, only after inspection and approval of the final product was the official order for inscriptions (including reign marks, poems, and seals) permitted to be issued from the Hanlin Academy to the Board of Works.⁶⁵ In early 1744, Suzhou artisans were required to leave sufficient space on the

60. Gugong bowuyuan, ed., *Li Xu zouzhe*, 2–3.

61. *Gusu zhi*, 212; *Suzhou fuzhi*, 875; Nalan Chang'an, *Huanyou biji*, 18:954–55.

62. Yang Yong, "Qianlong chao Suzhou zhizao," 123–24.

63. DAZH, vol. 8, 271–72; vol. 9, 91.

64. Considering northern China's relatively low humidity and long winters, some scholars cast doubt upon the possibility of crafting high-quality carved lacquer there in the Ming dynasty. See Garner, *Chinese Lacquer*; Tsai Mei-fen, "Guoyuanchang qiqi."

65. As the registration numbers assigned by curatorial staff at the Palace Museum show, some Qing wares denoting the character *ru* refer to alternative supplies waiting to be inscribed in the Hall of Wish Fulfillment (Ruyiguan). Chen Huixia, ed., *Heguang tici*, 6–8.

base of carved lacquer for inscription in Beijing.⁶⁶ Since 1739, exemplary official wares selected from newly crafted works needed to be engraved with gilded names by imperial designation, representing an official style fashioned by Qianlong.⁶⁷ Four characters in gold, such as *xunshi baohe* (treasure box depicting tamed lions), *longfeng baohe* (treasure box depicting dragon and phoenix), and *Chibi baohe* (treasure box depicting Red Cliff, Figure 6), are engraved on the base or inside the lid of lacquerware, functioning as labels to indicate their corresponding designs.⁶⁸ Such inscriptions not only reflect the emperor's agency as an art patron and collector, but also have exerted a profound influence on museum curators and researchers in writing labels or entries of these inscribed works for exhibitions and publication.⁶⁹

In addition to evoking admiration from Qianlong as reflected in his poetry, Ming official works also set a benchmark for craftsmanship. Jiajing's auspicious designs dominate Qianlong's imitations. Of them, dozens of polychrome boxes with the Qianlong marks and named *chunshou baohe* (treasure box depicting spring longevity) stand out by virtue of their uniformity in design and execution (Figure 7). They are exact copies of Jiajing-era official works. A Ming model in the National Palace Museum is decorated with a large basket holding various auspicious omens and emitting rays of light in support of a large character *chun* (spring), which is flanked on both sides by a five-clawed dragon frolicking among the clouds.⁷⁰ In the center of the character is a circular panel enclosing the god of longevity (Shouxing) seated under a pine tree beside a reclining deer (a homonym for *lu* [emolument]). The sloping shoulders are embellished with figures in a landscape within four *ruyi*-shaped panels.

In early 1744, Qianlong evaluated the commissioned objects presented by Tula, a bondservant supervising the Suzhou Weaving Department:

The quality of the boxes decorated with spring longevity, which were supervised by Tula, is fine grade (*shangdeng*), while sutra cases are of

66. DAZH, vol. 15, 89.

67. DAZH, vol. 8, 740.

68. DAZH, vol. 47, 530.

69. Li Jiufang, ed., *Qingdai qiqi*; Chen Huixia, ed., *Heguang tici*; Chan Hao-seng, ed., *Red Masterpieces*.

70. For the entry and image, see Chen Huixia, ed., *Heguang tici*, no. 87, 97.

moderate grade (*zhongdeng*), the rest are of inferior grade (*cideng*); the works even better than those fine ones are of special grade (*tedeng*).⁷¹

Between 1740 and 1744, the enterprise of carved lacquer in Suzhou rose to unprecedented prominence, as Qianlong classified its products into four ranks —special, fine, moderate, and inferior —based on carving execution.⁷² Of particular importance is the vigorous supervision and quality control as reflected in increased orders.⁷³ The Jiajing models were probably presented to Qianlong a year earlier; duly impressed, he ordered Tula to copy their auspicious designs. In 1758, another special order, for twelve more, was issued; a different carved lacquer box with similar designs was delivered to the bondservant supervisor Anning for replicas accordingly, with the reign marks to be subsequently engraved.⁷⁴ Supervised and verified by the emperor himself, the “fine” quality of the copies of Jiajing official works is indicative of his attentiveness to their workmanship when compared with the Ming models.

Apart from boxes depicting spring longevity, designs of other Jiajing official works were also borrowed. On a circular dish now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 8), the dragon in the center of this vessel holds up the character *sheng*, which means “sage” and stands for the imperial majesty; flanking it are the characters *fu* and *bi*, both meaning “assist” or “support” and serving as classical references to an emperor’s chief grand secretary or chancellor. As one of the finest products from the Ming imperial workshops, James Watt aptly speculates, this dish was presumably made in the early Jiajing period, before Daoist symbols began to dominate the decoration of objects produced for court use.⁷⁵ A Qianlong replica in Beijing’s Palace Museum shows that Suzhou artisans somehow boldly transplanted the original design from the concave interior of a circular tray to the convex box surface (Figure 9).⁷⁶ Similar to

71. DAZH, vol. 11, 539.

72. DAZH, vol. 11, 437, 522. Because this ranking scheme cannot be found in archival entries devoted to other mediums, it is likely that such quality control was exclusively intended for carved lacquer.

73. Zhang Liduan, “Cong *Huoji* dang kan Qing Gaozong.”

74. DAZH, vol. 13, 760.

75. Watt and Ford, *East Asian Lacquer*, no. 32, 92–93.

76. Chan Hao-seng, ed., *Red Masterpieces*, vol. 1, no. 21, 82–83; Li Jiufang, ed., *Qingdai qiqi*, no. 13, 22.

a technique applied to murals, lacquer craftsmen used perforated stencils and powder to transfer designs on sketches, as described in the *Records of Lacquering*, a treatise written and annotated by late-Ming lacquer artisans.⁷⁷ The direction of the dragon body on the Qianlong copy is reversed in relation to that of the Jiajing model, probably the result of the use of stencils. As Ledderose has rightly summarized, Chinese artisans in a wide range of genres relied on standardized parts or modules to effectively assemble large quantities of art objects, ranging from ancient ritual vessels to lacquerware and porcelain.⁷⁸ The efficiency indicates that lacquer production in Suzhou operated within a highly specialized workshop system supervised by the Weaving Department.⁷⁹

Besides promoting the imitation of Ming designs, the Qing court encouraged experimentation and artistic innovation in its Suzhou workshop, enabling artisans to combine different visual elements. In a commission issued in early 1778, a Jiajing official dish with the character *fu* (happiness) was sent to Suzhou for four copies, with imperial marks *Da Qing Qianlong nian zhi* (made in the Qianlong reign of the Great Qing) to be subsequently engraved.⁸⁰ A polychrome dish carrying the Qianlong mark matches the archival description and thereby bears witness to such experiments (Figure 10). The interior of this Qianlong dish is decorated with a large auspicious character *fu*, indicating its connection to the Jiajing model, whereas its eight-petal floral rim is a design popular in early Ming lacquer dishes.⁸¹ Despite the absence of proof, it is likely that the emperor encouraged Suzhou artisans to blend the two different styles in pursuit of such a visual hybrid.

Moreover, official wares commissioned in Suzhou point to a distinct Qing official style. The lavish use of precious materials such as gold, copper, and jade, which were rarely found in conventional lacquerware but favored by the Manchu and Mongol nobility, indeed offers another hybrid example that differentiates their tastes from prevailing Chinese

77. Huang Cheng, *Xiushilu tushuo*, 22.

78. Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things*. See also Zhang Liduan, "Cong Huojidang kan Qing Gaozong,"

79. Lacquer and jade craftsmen probably worked on demand (imperial orders) outside the Department mansion. See Guo Fuxiang, "Gongting yu Suzhou," 192–95; Zhan Zhenpeng, "Diguojixun yu difang gongpin," 214–16.

80. DAZH, vol. 41, 869.

81. Li Jiufang, ed., *Qingdai qiqi*, no. 30, 49; Xia Gengqi, ed., *Yuan Ming qiqi*, no. 120, 161.

tastes. Despite their thematic link to Ming counterparts, the classic narrative depictions of elegant gatherings and Daoist immortals combine diverse compositional elements with miniature figures (Figure 6), distinguishing the Qianlong style from the formalized combination of motifs from the early Ming group. In particular, the three-dimensionality of lacquer motifs in relief carving suggests the close collaboration of artisans skilled in working with a broad range of materials, including hardwood, bamboo, jade, and ivory.⁸² The participation of ivory artisans in the making of carved lacquer in the early years of both the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods indeed supports this possibility.⁸³ The meticulously combed seascape pattern surrounding dragons or fish on carved red lacquer vessels (Figure 6), for instance, was probably inspired by early Qing designs as found on carved ivory flint tokens.⁸⁴ The decision to establish a new production system within the Jiangnan-based workshops encouraged technological exchanges and transmission of motifs between different media. Artisans from various ateliers were frequently exposed to each other's works and, as a result, the designs show signs of mutual inspiration.⁸⁵

An intriguing contradiction thus emerges between Qianlong's reflections on didactic warning against imperial extravagance and his active commissions of official wares. This raises the question of what purposes these imitations and additions based on Ming designs, especially Jiajing's auspicious symbols, served in the Qing court. By contextualizing the combinations and use of these luxury goods in the actual palace buildings for specific occasions, however, we can grasp Qianlong's attempts to negotiate the two seemingly conflicting agendas: While

82. On the Suzhou style of ivory and bamboo carvings as well as its impact on Qing official works, see Ji Ruoxin, "Shiba shiji gongting yajiang."

83. DAZH, vol. 2, 161, 685; vol. 7, 684; vol. 9, 158–59. See also Yang Yong, "Qianlong chao Suzhou zhizao," 111.

84. Hao-seng Chan, ed., *Red Masterpieces*, vol. 1, no. 23, 86; Li Jiufang, ed., *Qingdai qiqi*, no. 9, 16–17; *Zhongguo zhumu yajiaoqi quanji*, vol. 4, 36–37.

85. Judging from entries in the sections of "Suzhou" or "Suzhou zhizao" in DAZH, craftsmen across different disciplines and materials were distributed in the Suzhou workshops — including but not limited to the locale of the Weaving Department — that functioned as a Jiangnan-region division under the Palace Board of Works in Beijing. For technological exchanges between the court and Suzhou in jade-working, see Guo Fuxiang, "Gongting yu Suzhou."

deploying Confucian discourse as a rhetorical disguise to express his moral ambivalence, he also manifested his ruling identity and personal desire through material displays and accumulation. In other words, Qianlong's desire for self-glorification and physical immortality can be observed in the auspicious designs and functions of these objects.

Furnishing Imperial Spaces during Annual Festivals

The social life of luxury goods at the Qing court — from production and circulation to display and storage — is difficult to trace, despite a rich body of archival sources produced during the Qianlong reign.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, fragmentary textual evidence from the archives allows us to piece together a rough picture of the life histories of Qing carved lacquer. Official wares produced under Qianlong's rule and stored in the Hall of Mental Cultivation and the Palace of Tranquil Longevity were not merely treasured artifacts for the exclusive, imperial gaze; substantial records show that at least some of these elaborately decorated objects — boxes, dishes, vases, and furniture — were used for royal banquets, interior displays, and religious offerings, and were bestowed as gifts during annual festivals, particularly the New Year and the emperor's birthday.⁸⁷

Of particular importance are specific instructions concerning the production cycle of carved lacquer, characterized by its sophisticated techniques and material practices that distinguish this decorative material from others. Applying numerous coats of lacquer sap along with the complicated processes of relief carving and polishing normally required a year or so to complete.⁸⁸ Imperial orders for carved lacquer were usually delivered to Suzhou near the close of a lunar year, sometimes with instructions requiring Suzhou artisans to complete the commissioned works and send them back to the court by the end of the following year.⁸⁹

86. On the concept of “social life” in material culture, see Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things*, 13.

87. In the Qing court, the most significant festivals were known as the Three Grand Festivals (*sandajie*) — New Year's Day, the emperor's birthday, and the Winter Solstice; ceremonial rites reserved for these occasions were different from regular court ceremony. Keliher, *The Board of Rites and the Making of Qing China*, 69–75.

88. Besides my data analysis of archives, also see Yang Yong, “Qianlong chao Suzhou zhizao,” 110.

89. DAZH, vol. 11, 437, 745; vol. 12, 381.

This production cycle satisfied the imperial demand for objects for court use during festivals.

In Qing imperial ritual, according to Angela Zito's framework, "subjectivity and language were organized to operate within the world rather than upon it," and human consciousness "constantly performed itself into being through actions of significance, the set of practices called *wen* (text-patterns)."⁹⁰ In addition to spoken words and bodily movements, material displays of lavish garments, portraits, implements, furniture, and architectural structures, serving as tangible signs of cosmic order accessible to those able to discern them within the ritual space, were integral to Qianlong's ritualist symbolism.

Following their Chinese predecessors, the Manchu emperors were duty-bound to perform a series of court ceremonies overnight from the last day of one lunar year passing into another. According to the *Archives of Imperial Meals (Shandidang)*, at midnight before the Lunar New Year's Day in 1783, after offering prayers with incense at the Hall for Ancestral Worship (Fengxiandian) and imperial Confucian and Buddhist temples, the Qianlong emperor went to the Hall of Propagated Virtues (Hongdedian), in the west wing of the Palace of Heavenly Purity, for a special rite:

At 3:30 in the morning (*yinchu erke*), the eunuch Elu[li] delivered to His Majesty a dish of boiled *bobo* on a small treasure table [carved with the characters] "great auspiciousness" (*daji baoan*). On the table was a side-dish from Annan (Vietnam), water spinach on a dish with the characters *wanguo xianning* (peace upon ten thousand nations), ginger vinegar on a dish with the characters *jiazi chongxin* (renewed cycle of heavenly stems and earthly branches), and a mountain stone, all served with cloisonné enamel dishes. Chopsticks were placed on a hand cloth resting on the edge of the auspicious gourd [carved on the tabletop]; the placement was now completed. Then [a eunuch] carried the [lacquer] treasure table [carved] with "great auspiciousness" to the hall gate, passing it to Chief Manager (*zongguan*) Xiao Yunpeng, who knelt on the floor when delivering this table to the [imperial] daybed. The head [eunuch] Wang Bingzhong carried the [lacquer] banquet box [carved] with flying dragons (*feilong yanhe*) inside of which were

90. Zito, *Of Body and Brush*, 49–50.

four boiled *bobo*, two of which contained *tongbao* coins. He stepped inside and knelt in the middle of the hall, passing the box to eunuch Eluli; *the latter delivered the box to the treasure table [carved] with “great auspiciousness,” placing it on the character “auspiciousness.”* His Majesty ate three *bobo* and there was no coin in the remaining one. The two coins were taken back to the Hall of Propagated Virtue as offerings... [It is] hereby recorded.⁹¹

Eating *bobo*, a wheat-based dumpling of Manchu origin, in the first meal of the New Year can be understood as a cultural adaptation of Chinese tradition.⁹² The two circular coins, similar to their late-Ming counterparts bearing the idiom “peace and harmony beneath heaven,” discussed in the aforementioned poem dedicated to a Wanli lacquer box, embodied good omens for imperial governance if the emperor could find them when he ate the *bobo*, and on this occasion the emperor found the coins in two of the three *bobo* that he ate. This culinary divination heralded a new annual cycle and marked the beginning of Qing court celebrations for the New Year. Such ritual performances over which the emperor presided were intended to express the desire for blessings and peace over his empire and the subjects living within it.

The ritual scene is vividly captured through a series of formulaic actions and interactions between various human agents and the objects presented to the emperor. Golden characters inscribed on lacquerwares, as recorded in this text, also functioned as labels aiding court eunuchs and bondservants in preparing, serving, and keeping track of these inscribed objects for imperial use within a wide variety of contexts.⁹³ The lacquer table and the banquet box featured in the quotation above played a key role in the practice of this festive rite with their striking visual features. The polychrome lacquered low table, featuring a gigantic gourd bearing the characters *daji* and one hundred boys playing in a garden scene on

91. Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan, ed., *Qingdai dang’an shiliao congbian*, vol. 10, 166–67. *Underlines* added by the author.

92. Accounts of eating dumplings as a New Year custom across the social spectrum in Beijing and beyond can be found in the Manchu Fucha Dunchong’s (1855–1926?) *Yanjing suishiji*, 9–10.

93. Golden characters on these official wares are also included in CSDA, showing their storage locations in actual buildings. Thus, they allow us to match many extant works with inventory entries.

its tabletop, was designed exclusively for this rite and used only once a year.⁹⁴ Commissioned no later than 1745, the table was crafted, following the emperor's instruction, in accordance with the highest grade, "special," and later stored in the Hall of Mental Cultivation.⁹⁵

The banquet box features the auspicious design unmistakably replicated from a Ming Jiajing model (Figure 8), with a dragon carrying the character *sheng* and flanked by *fu* and *bi* on its lid surface. According to the initial order in early 1745, two auspicious idioms with two sets of four characters — *fulu changchun* (happiness and emolument with eternal spring) and *qiankun ruyi* (wish fulfilling between heaven and earth) — were added to adorn four sides of the lid (Figure 9). These boxes were required to be completed by the end of that year, conforming to the "fine" grade.⁹⁶

Commissioned in pairs, the boxes were meant exclusively to serve Qianlong at imperial banquets held at the Hall of Heavenly Purity on two consecutive days, New Year's Eve and Day. Celebrating such special dates, imperial banquets devoted to court ceremonies constituted a ritualized locus filled with sensory spectacles. The high quality and sheer quantity of tableware supplied and displayed at these banquets speak to the regal extravagance and privileged status of imperial family members. On New Year's Day, imperial princes and other noblemen — including both Manchus and Mongols — attended the banquet alongside the emperor at the Hall of Heavenly Purity. When the banquet began with ritualized music, a pair of carved lacquer banquet boxes, accompanied by cloisonné enamel bowls bearing auspicious characters, contained the first dish exclusively for Qianlong: The royal emblems and auspicious characters in cinnabar red color served as a visual indicator of imperial presence by distinguishing his supreme status from all other attendees.⁹⁷

Auspicious designs of other Jiajing official works, particularly treasure boxes depicting spring longevity (Figure 7), gained new life through the emperor's birthday celebrations. On special occasions, such portable objects would be transferred to temporary palaces outside Beijing and

94. In contrast to the New Year, imperial meals during the rest of the year were routinely served on an inlaid-lacquer table. Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan, ed., *Qingdai dang'an shiliao congbian*, vol. 10.

95. DAZH, vol. 11, 437.

96. DAZH, vol. 11, 745.

97. Keliher, *The Board of Rites and the Making of Qing China*, 112–13.

prepared for the emperor's visit during imperial tours. In order to escape the summer heat in the capital, the Qianlong emperor, following the annual tour tradition established by his grandfather Kangxi, normally spent several months a year, from late spring to after the Mid-Autumn Festival, at Bishu shanzhuang, the Mountain Resort summer palace in Chengde.⁹⁸ Therefore, ceremonies and banquets associated with the emperor's birthday on the thirteenth day of the eighth month, just before Mid Autumn, were mostly held in Chengde. By the end of 1743, soon after the completion of the first products of carved lacquer from Suzhou, the court ordered that two pairs of treasure boxes depicting spring longevity, together with other official lacquers, be brought to Chengde for imperial use the following year. Elaborately packed with cotton padding inside a big wooden case carried by servants to Chengde, they testify to the luxury value and fragile condition of carved lacquer.⁹⁹

The circulation of luxury goods in the Qing empire and beyond recurred on these special occasions through gift exchanges of domestic and diplomatic tribute.¹⁰⁰ When the Macartney embassy finally met with the Qianlong emperor at the Mountain Resort in 1793 on the occasion of his birthday celebration, diplomatic gifts with a long list of imperial porcelains, jades, and lacquers were bestowed upon the British king, George III. Carved lacquers, particularly those engraved with name inscriptions and reign marks, dominate the category of lacquer on the gift list.¹⁰¹ As part of Qianlong's enduring legacy, most of these official works remained in the two palaces until the downfall of the Qing dynasty. According to inventory labels, carved lacquers stored in the Hall of Mental Cultivation were repeatedly taken out in the late Qing, and they continued to serve the Daoguang (r. 1821–50), Xianfeng (r. 1851–61), and Tongzhi (r. 1861–74) emperors on festive occasions from 1835 to 1864, as special gifts bestowed to Mongol noblemen, high-ranking Tibetan

98. The multicultural facets of the imperial hunting expeditions, annual tours, architectural structures, and religious and cultural landscapes at Chengde are illustrated in Millward, et al, *New Qing Imperial History*.

99. DAZH, vol. 11, 528–29.

100. Wu, *Luxurious Networks*, 64–66.

101. Ayers, *Chinese and Japanese Works of Art*, vol. 3, 1058–63. See also Harrison, “Chinese and British Diplomatic Gifts in the Macartney Embassy of 1793.”

monks, and tributary envoys from the Ryukyu, Chosŏn, and Vietnam kingdoms.¹⁰²

Imperial orders for special displays also exemplify Qianlong's enthusiasm as an interior designer in furnishing his imperial spaces. In 1754, for instance, Qianlong designed a carved lacquer hanging panel as part of the New Year furnishings for the east chamber of the Hall of Mental Cultivation, his main residence inside the Forbidden City. According to descriptions of the approved blueprint sent to Suzhou, it featured five-clawed dragons, the characters *qian* (heaven) and *kun* (earth), and inlaid rubies within two tiers of frames (in circular and square shape) — royal emblems and cosmic signs of Heaven and Earth.¹⁰³ This design was followed by another lacquer panel commissioned in 1764 for the throne hall (Jingyixuan) in the Palace of Established Happiness (Jianfugong); it was intended to be hung on the wall behind the imperial throne in early 1765.¹⁰⁴

Among the displays for imperial palaces outside the Forbidden City, nine carved lacquer *ruyi* scepters, each depicting one of the eight Daoist immortals (*baxian*) and the god of longevity, were commissioned as a set in Suzhou in 1745 (Figure 11). Early the following spring, Qianlong sent this *ruyi* set to a throne hall of the Garden of Perfect Brightness (Yuanmingyuan) in the western suburb of the Qing capital for display after imperial inspection, where the one representing the god of longevity should be placed on the throne in the middle of the hall, while the remaining eight were arranged surrounding it.¹⁰⁵ Embodying the popular trope of “eight immortals bestowing longevity” (*baxian heshou*), this display configuration within the imperial space recalls certain dramas that depict the same immortal figures with props and costumes and were staged at the inner court for festive celebrations.¹⁰⁶ Both sensory experiences invite spectatorship and project onto the shared symbolic imagery a universal desire for auspicious longevity.

In contrast to the Jiajing emperor, a Daoist devotee believed to have commissioned official wares for religious rituals in pursuit of personal

102. CSDA, vol. 13, 187, 189–92, 208–12.

103. DAZH, vol. 20, 306, 346.

104. DAZH, vol. 29, 9.

105. DAZH, vol. 15, 63.

106. Ye, *Ascendant Peace in the Four Seas*, 62–67.

immortality, Qianlong's borrowing of late Ming auspicious designs tended to downplay their religious implications. In the spring of 1783, when a Wanli-era polychrome box decorated with dragons carrying an auspicious coin was presented in his studio at the Hall of Mental Cultivation, Qianlong placed in this elaborately decorated container the "four treasures" — writing brush, inkstick, paper, and inkstone — that stand for educated elites, whether unconsciously or deliberately subverting the "elegant-vulgar" aesthetic dualism that Ming literati advocated.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, his criticisms of the Jiajing and Wanli emperors, whose political virtues failed to live up to the auspicious emblems on their commissioned objects, did not necessarily contradict the practice of valuing late Ming official works equally. Substantial evidence shows that Qianlong's keen interest in late-Ming religious auspiciousness and royal emblems lies in their symbolic ties to the desire for physical immortality and regal extravagance. Top-quality luxury displays, however, were not merely for the private pleasure of the emperor; special orders were initiated for festivals and ritual purposes that served the political agenda and ritual duties to be fulfilled by Qianlong as the Son of Heaven. In doing so, the righteous purposes behind these actions may have helped justify his consumption of artisanal luxuries.

After their rediscovery by the Qianlong court, the striking visual effects of carved lacquer, characterized by cinnabar red and relief carving, satisfied the Qing monarch's great desire to express auspiciousness both for his rule and for the ruler himself. The use of carved lacquer on festive occasions was nothing new in the Qing dynasty; rather, Qianlong's innovation lies in his active agency through which a highly coherent idea was conceptualized and materialized: Visual designs, production cycle, and quality control adhered to their specific functions, contexts of use, and importance attached by the emperor. Similar to poetic inscriptions and seals on imperial collectibles, unique naming and ranking schemes enabled Qianlong to claim ownership and establish a conceptual order of his imperial artifacts. As such, in addition to labeling artifacts that epitomized a new official style, his designation for carved lacquers, as characterized by the character *bao*, highlighted their luxury value and visual auspiciousness, which ennobled both the "treasures" they presented

107. Ming literati writings widely proclaim that wooden cases with unadorned simplicity are among the best studio containers. According to their "elegant" taste, lacquered containers were not preferred, except Song antiques or Japanese-style lacquers. Gao Lian, *Zunsheng bajian*, 533, 543–44; Wen Zhenheng, *Zhangwu zhi jiaozhu*, 312–13.

and the spaces where they were displayed and stored. Various functions of these lacquer objects also help us to understand why they were stored together in the two main residences where Qianlong slept during his rule and after retirement: Physical proximity to auspicious omens in both his political and personal life was considered part of the blessings bestowed by Heaven.

Conclusion

The afterlife of Ming-dynasty carved lacquer at the Qianlong court illuminates how visual representations, functions, and meanings of antiquities were manipulated, translated, and woven into the webs of Qing material symbolism. These luxury objects provided the symbolic tools by which the Qianlong emperor could negotiate his cultural-political and personal agendas. Shaped by poetic inscriptions, Ming official lacquers seem to have turned into tokens of statecraft that embodied their patrons' political ethics and therefore implied dynastic competition: Qianlong's political virtue was manifested as comparable to those of sage kings through the endorsement of Confucian cultivation, while his criticisms of late Ming emperors' failures in statecraft served as a legitimizing manifesto of Qing emperorship, mandated by Heaven, to displace the corrupt Ming rule.

At the same time, Ming official carved lacquer and eighteenth-century replicas reflect the experimentation of diverse visual elements initiated by Qianlong to embellish imperial spaces and enrich court festivities. More importantly, they bear witness to an overlooked cultural intersection between the Ming and the High Qing, one that betrays Qianlong's desire to achieve both physical and political longevity. Rediscovered and transformed at the Qianlong court, carved lacquer contributed to the innovation of luxury displays with a new form of auspicious signs for the Manchu emperor to fashion his ruling identity and perform ritual duties.

Special orders for carved lacquer declined in the latter half of his reign, perhaps because Qianlong realized that official works commissioned earlier were sufficient for imperial use.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, his earlier active patronage of carved lacquer had consequences. In response to Qianlong's preference and taste, provincial governors and other high-

108. Supplies to replace old or damaged wares as well as new designs were continually produced in Suzhou, where the bondservant supervisors who became familiar with Qianlong's taste probably took more liberty in designs.

ranking officials actively commissioned carved lacquers with fancy designs and longevity auspiciousness (*shouyi*) as part of their tribute gifts to the emperor.¹⁰⁹ Qianlong repeatedly rejected these lavish gifts and reprimanded the officials for extravagant consumption. Indeed, when the Qing monarch determined to maintain a universal collection and govern the empire on a symbolic level, there was a thin line between self-glorification and extravagance. This tension can be observed in Qianlong's poems on Ming carved lacquer.

The appropriation of these antiquities brings to the fore Qianlong's attempts to negotiate his socio-political role (as exemplar of Confucian statecraft) and personal desire through reinventions. The complex tensions between his public presentation and private desires point to his transcultural, multifaceted identity, which was definitely not restricted to the domain of Confucianism.¹¹⁰ Cultural performance and rhetorical articulations that project his self-fashioning onto material objects might not be unique in the case of carved lacquers, but their multilayered meanings that became integral to Qing material symbolism as both models of exquisite craftsmanship and emblems of extravagance shed new light on the Manchu emperor's reconciliation of Chinese knowledge and values about artisanal skills and luxury and his own sense of imperial righteousness.

109. For an in-depth discussion of high-ranking officials' patronage of lacquer objects dedicated to Qianlong, see Zhan Zhenpeng, "Diguo jixun yu difang gongpin."

110. In the case of Qianlong's patronage of Tibetan Buddhism, as Patricia Berger demonstrates, "these issues of duality, even plurality, of private identity and public presentation were all part of the shifting landscape the Manchu emperors of the Qing dynasty faced as their culturally complex empire grew." Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 5–6.

FIGURES

Figure 1. Circular box with figures in landscape, early 15th century, inscription and seal dated 1776. Carved red lacquer on wood; 7.7cm (h), 23cm (diam). Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph provided by the Palace Museum.

Figure 2. Circular box with figures in landscape, early 15th century, inscription and seal dated 1778. Carved red lacquer on wood; 6.5cm (h), 18.5cm (diam). Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph provided by the Palace Museum.

Figure 3. Tang Yin, *Sipping Tea* (detail), circa 1500. Hanging scroll, ink on paper; 93.2×29.8cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (Guhua 2172). Photograph provided by the National Palace Museum.

Figure 4. Circular box with figures in garden scene, Yongle mark, early 15th century, inscription dated 1782. Carved red lacquer on wood; 8.1cm (h), 26.5cm (diam). Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph provided by the Palace Museum.

Figure 5. Square dish with the five elders in garden scene, Xuande mark, early 15th century, inscription dated 1783. Carved red lacquer on wood; 5.6cm (h), 39.6cm (l/w). Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph provided by the Palace Museum

Figure 6. Square box depicting Red Cliff (*Chibi baohe*), Qianlong mark and period. Carved red lacquer on wood; 19.3cm (h), 16.8cm (l/w). Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph provided by the Palace Museum.

Figure 7. Circular box depicting spring longevity (*chunshou baohe*), Qianlong mark and period. Carved polychrome lacquer on wood; 12.6cm (h), 35.4cm (diam). Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (Zhongqi 52). Artwork in the public domain; photograph © National Palace Museum.

Figure 8. Circular tray with dragons and characters in seascape, Ming dynasty, Jiajing mark and period. Carved red lacquer on wood; 5.1cm (h), 36.8cm (diam). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Florence and Herbert Irving (2015.500.1.39). Artwork in the public domain; photograph © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 9. Rectangular banquet box with flaying dragons and auspicious characters (*feilong yanhe*), Qianlong mark and period. Carved red lacquer on wood; 24.6cm (h), 54cm (l), 24cm (w). Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph provided by the Palace Museum.

Figure 10. Floral-rim dish with *fú* character, Qianlong mark and period. Carved polychrome lacquer on wood; 3.5cm (h), 19.1cm (diam). Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph provided by the Palace Museum.

Figure 11. *Ruyi* scepter depicting the eight Daoist immortals (detail), Qing dynasty, Qianlong period. Carved red lacquer on wood. Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph provided by the Palace Museum.

GLOSSARY

Anning	安寧
bao	寶
baxian heshou	八仙賀壽
biji	筆記
Bishu shanzhuang	避暑山莊
bobo	餽餽
<i>Chajing</i>	茶經
Chibi baohe	赤壁寶盒
Chu Suiliang	褚遂良
chunshou baohe	春壽寶盒
cideng	次等
Daguangmingdian	大光明殿
daji	大吉
daji baoan	大吉寶案
Da Qing Qianlong nian zhi	大清乾隆年製
dechongfu	德充符
<i>Dijing jingwulue</i>	帝京景物略
Eluli	厄祿里
feilong yanhe	飛龍宴盒
Fengxiandian	奉先殿
fu	福
fu bi	輔弼
fuji	扶乩
fulu changchun	福祿長春
fu lu shou	福祿壽
Gao Shiqi	高士奇
<i>Gujin tushu jicheng</i>	古今圖書集成
<i>Han Feizi</i>	韓非子
Hongdedian	弘德殿
Hongli	弘曆
huixin	會心
Jianfugong	建福宮
jiazi chongxin	甲子重新
Jingji shanzhuang	靜寄山莊
Jingyixuan	靜怡軒
Li Xu	李煦

Lin Bu	林逋
lingbao	靈寶
longfeng baohe	龍鳳寶盒
longtuan	龍團
Lu Yu	陸羽
meiqi hezi	梅妻鶴子
mingseqian	名色箋
<i>Mingshi</i>	明史
Nalan Chang'an	納蘭常安
Ningshougong	寧壽宮
Panshan	盤山
<i>Pincha tu</i>	品茶圖
<i>Ping'an chunxin tu</i>	平安春信圖
Qianchixue	千尺雪
qiankun ruyi	乾坤如意
qigong	漆工
qin	琴
<i>Qingong chenshe dang'an</i>	清宮陳設檔案
<i>Shandidang</i>	膳底檔
shangdeng	上等
sheng	聖
shiren jian qiqi	十人諫漆器
Shouxing	壽星
shouyi	壽意
Shun	舜
Suiyang wulao	睢陽五老
Suzhou zhizaoshu	蘇州織造署
Tang Yin	唐寅
tedeng	特等
tianxia taiping	天下太平
Tula	圖拉
Wang Bingzhong	王秉忠
wanguo xianing	萬國咸寧
wen	文
Wu Jing	吳兢
Xiao Yunpeng	蕭雲鵬
Xiyuan	西苑
xunshi baohe	馴獅寶盒

Yangxindian	養心殿
yinchu erke	寅初二刻
Yu	禹
Yuanmingyuan	圓明園
Yuzhi shiji	御製詩集
Zhang Juzheng	張居正
Zhenguan zhengyao	貞觀政要
zhongdeng	中等
Zhu Changxun	朱常洵
zongguan	總管

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