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故宣博物院編

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COMPENDIUM OF COLLECTIONS IN THE PALACE MUSEUM

RARE BOOKS AND SPECIAL ARCHIVES

10

Transcripts

Introduction to the special collections of the only existing copies of the Qing Imperial Court

Xiang Si

All the dynasties of China, from the Qin to the Qing Dynasty, had attached great importance to collection of rare editions of ancient books. Nearly every new dynasty had set up its own imperial collection system on the basis of inheriting the classics of the previous dynasties and made constant efforts in collecting, enriching and improving the collections. Of that, the rare editions of the imperial storehouses and special collections of the imperial courts are the essence of the imperial collections. The rare editions cherished by the Palace Museum are the legacy inherited from the previous dynasties: the Ming Dynasty inherited the collection from the Song and Yuan Dynasties and set up the collection system in the imperial palace in Nanjing; Emperor Chengzu moved the capital to Beijing where became the center of official collections. The historians have exclaimed over how exquisite and how rich the collections of Wenyuan Chamber has: all the imperial collections of the Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties had been cherished by Wenyuan Chamber! Established its capital in Beijing, the Qing Dynasty accepted all collections of the Ming Dynasty and set up its own imperial collections. Emperor Kangxi, Emperor Qianlong and other emperors of the Qing Dynasty had attached great importance to the cultural undertaking and spared no efforts in enriching the imperial collections. Emperor Kangxi said, "The large cities connected to the capital shall have their own collections and publications. How could there be no good editions for the unofficial history? Today we should spare no efforts in widely soliciting and compiling books, making no neglect in collection. Only in this way can my ultimate purpose of collecting ancient books and respecting culture be realized." Emperor Qianlong said, "The purpose that I collect the Confucian classics, and works on history, philosophy and literature is not for the fame of respecting culture. Just like what Master Zhang Zai said, the purpose is to enable the people to survive, set up rules, inherit the past classics and open up the peaceful future for the later generations."

In the ancient times, there was a term "bamboo slips written with lacquer", literally, written with lacquer on the bamboo slips. Those were the oldest books of China, and also the rare hand-written editions in the early times. The hand-written edition was written stroke by stroke and classified into the ancient hand-written edition, hand-written edition of the Tang Dynasty, hand-written scripts, and manuscript etc. Before invention of the art of printing, all books were hand-written or hand-copied on the silk, paper and other materials. After invention of the art of printing, the books were classified into the hand-written edition and the printed edition. The printed edition included the block-printed edition of the imperial storehouse, the official block-printed edition, private block-printed edition, block-printed edition of the seigniors and the bookshop block-printed edition. The imperial storehouse editions were books hand written and block printed by the staff members of the imperial storehouse. The most famous editions include the refined hand-written editions and the four types of editions

of the imperial storehouse of the Song Dynasty, the edition of Jingchang (Classics Printing Workshop) of the Ming Dynasty, and the edition of Wuying Palace of the Qing Dynasty etc.

The Qing Dynasty set up a unprecedented imperial book collection system and formed distinct centers of imperial collections: Wenyuan Chamber – collection center of rare editions, best represented by the refined edition of the *Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature* and the *Collection of Ancient and Modern Books* of the imperial storehouse edition; Huangshicheng – the collection center of the imperial family tree, mainly the refined edition of the *Actual Records, Statements and Actions of Emperors*, and the *Jade Plate* (the family tree of the imperial family); Zhaoren Hall – collection center of rare editions of the Song and Yuan Dynasties, best represented by *Tianlulinlang Series*; Wuying Hall – the collection center of editions of imperial storehouse of the Qing Dynasty, best represented by the rare editions of bronze type and wooden type. Many of the rate editions collected by the Qing Imperial Court are the only existing copies across the world.

The only existing copy refers to the books with only an edition, including the hand-written copy, manuscript and the only block-printed copy. According to some bibliographers, the hand-written copy is the only copy while the only existing copy is a term for the block-printed edition and refers to a block-printed edition of a book. The ancient book that has only a copy existing in the world is the only existing copy, for example the *Selected Works with Notes of Five Ministers* printed by Zhongs' Paper-Horse Workshop of Maobaqiao, Hangzhou of the Song Dynasty. There is also an opinion that the "Only Existing Copy across the World" can be used to describe the high value of the book. The Imperial Court of the Qing Dynasty left over more than 400,000 books collected by various dynasties, including many only existing copies. Except for the part secretly brought out by Emperor Puyi and more than 100,000 books cherished in the Taiwan-based National Palace Museum, the rest of the books are cherished in Beijing-based Palace Museum.

The rare only existing copies left over by the Imperial Court of the Qing Dynasty include the scriptures hand-copied by the emperors, ministers and imperial storehouse, opera manuscripts and patterns of the imperial court. There are more than several hundreds of volumes, or over 2,300 books of Buddhist and Taoist scriptures hand-copied by emperors of the Qing Dynasty. The most valuable manuscript is the *Prajbaparamita* hand written by Emperor Kangxi on the white damask silk in regular script, equipped with the refined hardwood box with mother-of-pearl inlay and agalmatolite. On the cover of the box is the name in the official script made by the mother-of-pearl inlay and a vivid picture of two dragons holding a pearl. The Buddhist and Taoist scriptures hand-copied by ministers were presented to the emperors and cherished in the imperial store-house, e.g. *the Yuanjue Sutra* of the edition of the Yuan Dynasty written by Zhao Mengfu, which is cherished in a silver box decorated with golden lines, entangled flowers, chrysanthemum, peony and Buddhist treasures. The book has a rosewood cover with a sandalwood bookmark inlaid in the center, with the book name written on the bookmark.

The hand-written editions of the imperial storehouse refer to those copies compiled in the imperial palace and bound by the imperial storehouse. For example, the 42 volumes of *Kangxi Dictionary* were cherished in the Hall of Mental Cultivation, compiled under the leadership of Zhang Tingyu and Chen Tingjing. On the ninth day of the third lunar month of the 49th year under the reign of Emperor Kangxi, the emperor issued an order to Chen Tingjing, grand secretary on duty in the Southern Study, "I have attached importance to the classics and compilation of books. In recent years, the *Complete Collection of Zhu Xi's Works, Peiwenyunfu* (Standard Phrase Dictionary), *Yuanjian Leilan* (General Cyclopedia) and *Guang Qunfangpu* (A Broader Dictionary of Plants) and other books have been carefully compiled and edited one by one. In terms of the lexicon, it is very important and we should compile a dictionary. *Zihui* (A Dictionary of Vocabulary) is too simple while

Zhengzitong (Correct Dictionary of Vocabulary) involved too many items. What's more, the customs vary from place to place and the pronunciation is different between the north and the south. The classification of Sima Guang's Leipian is not well defined while Shen Yue's Shengyun (Pronunciation) has been criticized. Although Hongwu Zhengyun (Correct Pronunciation Dictionary Complied during the Reign of Emperor Hongwu) has made correction, it could not work so far and Shen's works were followed. I have consulted works of different schools and researched attentively. Mongolia, the Western Regions, and foreign countries normally use letters to mark the pronunciation. As the pronunciation varies from region to region, it is hard to set up a connection. Roughly the initial sound of the nature was made by human being while the human being represents the sounds with pictographic characters. Today I want to compile a dictionary with proper content and well-defined classification so to make up the neglect of Zihui and delete repetitions of Zhengzitong to form a new dictionary for forever use." Emperor Kangxi personally designated the most learned ministers to head the compilation team: chief editor: Zhang Tingyu, grand secretary of Wenhua Hall and Minister of Personnel, classics lecture: Chen Tingjing, grand secretary of Wenyuan Chamber and Minister of Personnel; 27 officials acting as editors and compilers, including Ling Shaowen, secretary of cabinet and assistant minister of the Ministry of Rites. When the dictionary was completed in the 49th year under the reign of Emperor Kangxi, it was copied by designated staff members of the imperial storehouse. That was the refined copy in red and black completed on the 49th year under the reign of Emperor Kangxi.

The palace opera was flourishing in the past dynasties and the opera scripts were one of the special collections of the imperial court. Since the Song Dynasty, the southern opera emerged quietly. Southern Opera originated from the grand opera of Tang and Song Dynasties with references to poems of the Song Dynasty and the folk melody of southern China. With great achievements, it gradually surpassed the northern opera which included *Zaju* Opera of the Yuan Dynasty (Poetic Opera of Yuan Dynasty). According to the historical records, the Southern Opera had many different schools in the Wanli Period of the Ming Dynasty, and the most famous schools included Yiyang Tune, Haiyan Tune and Kunshan Tune. At that time, there were more than 300 eunuch players in Yuxi Hall of the Ming Dynasty. Those eunuch players were dedicated to performance of various schools of the Southern Opera. In the 16th Year under the reign of Emperor Shunzhi, Emperor Fulin ordered to reform the Imperial Music Office to lay off all woman musicians and replace the vacancies with eunuchs. From then till the end of the Qing Dynasty, eunuchs had been liable for the opera performance in the imperial courts.

The player eunuchs of the imperial household department of the Qing Dynasty were named *Neixue* (internal study) while those accompanied the emperors to perform were named *Waixue* (external study). Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty followed the practice of Emperor Minghuang of the Tang Dynasty to locate all the player eunuchs out of the Xihua Gate of the Forbidden City, the south gate of the Changjie Street, where was named South Mansion. According to the records, there were more than 1,500 player eunuchs in the South Mansion at the heyday. During the reign of Emperor Daoguang, all the player eunuchs in Jingshan were relocated to the South Mansion which was officially renamed to Shengping Division. The opera was popular in the Qing Dynasty and the operas played were normally centered on auspiciousness, longevity, happiness and celebration. The programs played in the imperial palace of the Qing Dynasty varied according to the seasons, purposes and scale of the ceremonies. Those programs were compiled into books according to the festival celebration, different seasons, birthday of the emperor, empress dowager and empress and the ceremonies of the dynasty and played according to the designated ritual regulations.

The programs played in the imperial palace of the Qing Dynasty were classified into four groups: opera for the change

of climate and phenology, or celebration, opera played under the temporary order and opera for the funeral ceremony. The content of the operas was different according to the target audience. For example, the operas for the change of climate and phenology were centered on happiness, peace and harmony, including Five Happiness Immortals, More Happiness, Five Immortals Embracing the Spring Festival, Jiaobai and Tusu Wine to Defense off All Diseases, Ancient Customs of Freeing Captive Animals, and the Happiness Day. The operas for the celebration ceremonies were played for the longevity and festivals, including the Longevity and Wealth, Longevity Celebration, Peaceful and Lucky, Double Happiness of Good Fortune and Longevity, Happy and Harmonious.

The collections of imperial palace opera scripts cherished by the Palace Museum are very rich, basically the old editions of the imperial palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, mainly the palace opera of the Qing Dynasty. Most palace opera scripts collected by the imperial courts of the Ming and Qing Dynasty were hand-written editions, with part of refined block-printed editions. The refined hand-written editions were normally had a yellow-paper cover, with a red bookmark on the left top, and name of the opera written with ink in regular script on the bookmark. For example, *Jiangzhou Governor Sending Liquor* is a refined hand-written edition of the South Mansion of the Qing imperial court: it has a yellow-paper cover, and a red bookmark on the left top, on which written the inscription "Jiangzhou Governor Sending Liquor at the Double Ninth Festival"; it is a half-page, with seven rows and each row has 20 Chinese characters, except for the top row which has 22 Chinese characters; two rows of the small characters and each row has the same number of Chinese characters; there is no frame or row lines. *Golden Lotus Emerging from the Ground*, the refined hand-written edition of the South Mansion of the Qing Dynasty: it has a yellow-paper cover and a red bookmark on the cover, with the inscription "Full Edition of the Golden Lotus Emerging from the Ground", Kun tune, a program to be played on the birthday of the emperor. It is a half-page, eight rows and each row has 20 Chinese characters, except for the top row which has 22 Chinese characters. The edition was written with ink in regular scripts with red period and comma.

The imperial patterns are patterns with strong characteristics of the imperial family, including the designs for apparel and accessories, porcelain patterns and architectural drawings. Those patterns were the refined editions of color painting of the imperial household department. Many of the patterns have the yellow notes. Made under the leadership of the imperial household department of the Qing Dynasty, the designs for apparel and accessories were the only existing color copies and very valuable. The designs included apparel for the emperors and empresses and imperial concubines, including court dress, robe, short gown for the emperor, cappa and mandarin jacket, for example, the Court Dress with Cappa for the Summer, Court Dress with Dragon-Pattern Hem and Ermine Muff, Emperor's Robe with 12 Emblems, Design for the Short Gown with the Chinese Flowering Crab-Apple with Chinese Silk Tapestry, Design for the Short Gown with the Golden Svastika Background, Golden Xi (Happiness) Pattern and Color Butterflies and Chinese Silk Tapestry. Most of the architectural drawings were made by the Ministry of Works of the Qing Dynasty in color or ink painting, for example the Plans for the Dimensions of Halls of the Old Summer Palace, the Rough Figure for Dimensions of Linxujinggui of Changchun Fairy Pavilion.

This series are select collections from the only existing copies of the Imperial Court of the Qing Dynasty, with details of the book name, number of volumes, authors, edition, number of books, and dimensions, and pictures as well to entertain readers.

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