

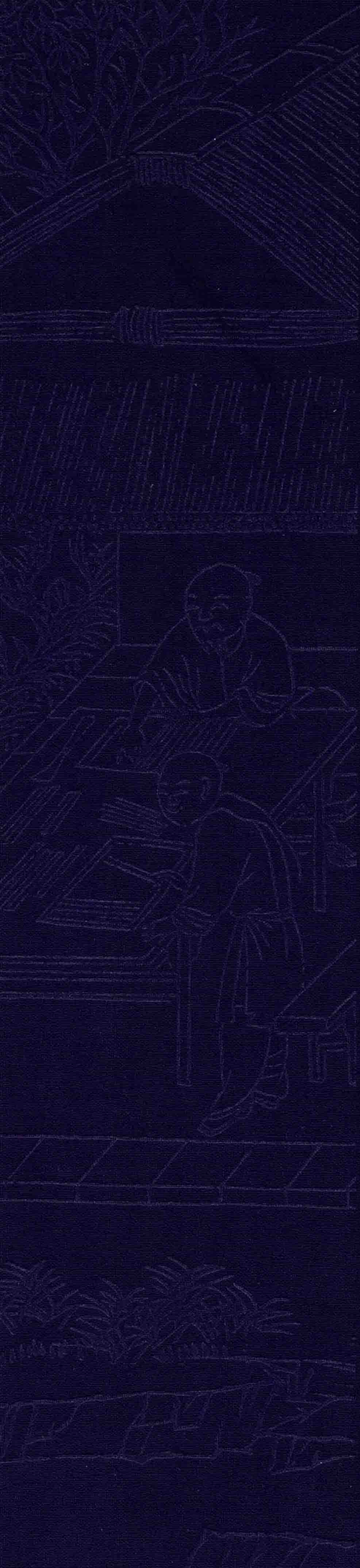
故宫博物院藏品大系

善本特藏編

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图书在版编目 (C I P) 数据

故宫博物院藏品大系. 善本特藏编. 元明刻本 / 故宫博物院编. — 北京 : 故宫出版社, 2014.8
ISBN 978-7-5134-0543-0

I . ①故… II . ①故… III . ①故宫博物院—历史文物—北京市—图集②古籍—善本—汇编—中国—元代—明代
IV . ① K870.2 ② Z424.947

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2013) 第 315628 号

故宫博物院藏品大系
善本特藏編 元明刻本

撰稿統籌 : 張 榮
刻本部分總主編 : 李士娟
本冊主編 : 李 歡
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編輯統籌 : 陳麗華 王亞民 趙國英 劉 輝
責任編輯 : 江 英 李子裔
裝幀設計 : 李 猛
出版發行 : 故宫出版社
地址 : 北京東城區景山前街 4 號 郵編 : 100009
電話 : 010-85007808 010-85007816 傳真 : 010-65129479
郵箱 : ggcb@culturefc.cn
網址 : www.culturefc.cn

印 刷 : 北京雅昌藝術印刷有限公司
開 本 : 787 × 1092 毫米 1/8
印 張 : 46
字 數 : 80 千字
圖 版 : 366 幅
版 次 : 2014 年 8 月第 1 版第 1 次印刷
印 數 : 1~1,000 冊
書 號 : ISBN 978-7-5134-0543-0
定 價 : 760.00 元

General Preface to Compendium of Collections in the Palace Museum

By Zheng Xinmiao

The Palace Museum is not only an administrative organization for the preservation of the Forbidden City architectural complex of the Ming and Qing dynasties and its historical palaces, it is also an institution for storing, exhibiting, and researching collections of Chinese cultural artifacts and ancient works of art, the core of which came from the imperial courts of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. The Palace Museum, with its almost unique collection of artifacts of dynastic imperial culture, occupies an important position among museums in China and in the world.

I. Sources of the Palace Museum's collection

The cultural artifacts in the Palace Museum feature a wide variety of types and are remarkably complete. They can be divided into twenty-five categories and sixty-nine sub-categories, totaling 1.8 million artifacts (or sets of artifacts) in the Museum, which include ceramics, paintings, calligraphic works, stele rubbings, bronze, jade, jewelry, lacquer, enamel, sculpture, inscriptions, furniture, rare editions of ancient books, scholar's items, seal books of emperors and empresses, clocks and watches, military and parade equipment, and religious artifacts. According to the statistics at the end of 2010, the precious cultural artifacts in the Palace Museum represent 41.98% of the total in all of China's museums.

Of the entire Palace Museum collection of over 1.8 million artifacts, eighty-six percent, or 1.55 million artifacts, are from the imperial court of the Qing dynasty. The other more than two hundred and forty thousand (fourteen percent of the total) were acquired after the Palace Museum was founded in 1925. The cultural artifacts from the Qing imperial court primarily came from the following sources:

(1) The collections of former imperial dynasties. It was a long-standing tradition for Chinese imperial courts to collect precious cultural artifacts. For example, during the reign of Emperor Huizong of the Song dynasty, the collection was especially large. *Calligraphic Catalogue of Xuanhe Period* (Xuanhe shu pu), *Painting Catalogue of Xuanhe Period* (Xuanhe hua pu), and *An Illustrated Book Compiled during the Years of Xuanhe on Ancient Bronzeware* (Xuanhe bogu tu), are in fact catalogues of the treasures and curios, such as calligraphic works, paintings and bronze vessels, collected by the Song Court during the Xuanhe reign. The emperors of the Qing dynasty also attached great importance to cultural collecting; the Qianlong emperor, in particular, expanded the imperial collections to its peak. *Catalogue of the Qing Imperial Bronze Collection*

(Xi qing gu jian), *Sequel Catalogue of the Qing Imperial Bronze Collection* (Xi qing xu jian), *Imperial Bronze Collection in the Palace of Tranquil Longevity* (Ningshou jian gu), *Precious Collection of Stone Moat* (Shiqu baoji), *Treasured Collections of Mysterious Halls* (Midian zhulin), *Treasured Rare Books of the Qing Court* (Tianlu linlang) and *General Catalogue of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries* are all catalogues compiled under the Qianlong reign concerning ancient bronze vessels, calligraphic works, paintings, and books collected by the imperial court. Although many of them are no longer extant, some treasures have been preserved in spite of the turbulent ages and vicissitudes they went through, among which there are famous calligraphic works or paintings such as *Manuscript Beginning with Boyuan* by Wang Xun of the Jin dynasty, *Spring Excursion* by Zhan Ziqian of the Sui dynasty, *Five Oxen* by Han Huang of the Tang dynasty, and *Night Revels of Han Xizai* painted by Gu Hongzhong of the Five Dynasties. All these works of art now in the Palace Museum were recorded in *Calligraphic Catalogue of Xuanhe Period*, *Painting Catalogue of Xuanhe Period* or *Precious Collection of Stone Moat*. They are evidence of the long tradition of collecting at Chinese imperial courts.

(2) Articles made by imperial courts. In order to meet the needs of the imperial family, articles of daily use and handicrafts of various kinds were made by highly skilled craftsmen from all over the country under the supervision of the Qing Imperial Workshop, a branch of the Imperial Household Department. No expense was spared to improve the quality of those articles needed inside the imperial palace. Before 1755, thirty-eight different jobs were listed in the Imperial Workshop, which included box making, mounting of painting and calligraphy, painting, Guangdong-style woodworking, bead threading, leatherwork, embroidery, gilding, silversmithing, jade carving, filigreeing, chiseling, inlaying, ivory and horn carving, ink-stone making, bronze manufacture, clock making, glass blowing, drawing, bow making, armory forging, enamel making, wood working, and lacquering. Later they were rearranged into fifteen workshops. This was a comprehensive handicraft workshop of a very large scale. Its regular work was to make works of art, handicrafts, and articles for daily use, all characterized by imperial splendor. Other articles were made by the best local craftsmen of Suzhou, Yangzhou, Nanjing, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Guangdong according to design drawings, or models made of wax or wood, provided by the Imperial Workshop. Many consummate handicraft articles handed down, such as jades, enamelware, clocks, and curios, were all made by this workshop. The archives of the workshop, which have been preserved, provide detailed information on many exquisite works of art and handicrafts in the Palace Museum, such as their makers, the dates when they were designed, when their design drawings or models were made, and when they were completed, as well as the locations where the items were stored.

(3) Tributes presented to the court or objects confiscated. Under the autocratic system of dynastic China, the ruler viewed the whole country as his own. On the occasions of festivals, birthday celebration ceremonies of the emperors or inspection tours, it was a common practice for officials to present gifts, of which calligraphic works, paintings and curios were most to the emperors' liking. The Qianlong emperor wrote in "Preface" to the *Sequel of Precious Collection of Stone Moat*, "Over the past forty-eight years, whenever there was a grand ceremony, calligraphic works and paintings, ancient and modern, presented by ministers and those created by myself were numerous." And in an imperial edict on *The Third Sequel to Precious Collection of Stone Moat*, the Jiaqing emperor wrote, "Ever since I ascended the throne, my chief pastime has been calligraphy and painting... Ministers in and out of court have presented ancient and recent paintings and calligraphy as well."

Calligraphic works and paintings collected by the Qing imperial court were mostly gifts from officials, as was the case with other treasures. Besides those from domestic sources, there were others presented by vassal states and other countries. All of these tributes tended to be closely associated with major political events. Confiscated articles were another important source. A case in point is Mingzhu, a powerful official during the early years of the Kangxi reign, who collected in his private library, Qianmu Hall, tens of thousands of volumes, of which many were rare editions of the Song and Yuan dynasties. After Mingzhu died, his son, having been convicted of certain crimes, was deprived of his position and noble title; his home was searched and all rare books and famous paintings were confiscated by the Qing court. In 1797, when *The Sequel of Treasured Rare Books of the Qing Court* was compiled, a selection of books from the Qianmu Hall, were important entries. There were other high-ranking officials such as Gao Shiqi and Bi Yuan who were outstanding collectors and connoisseurs. Their large collections of calligraphic works, paintings, and copies of ancient books were confiscated by the Qing court.

(4) Books compiled and printed by the Qing imperial court. Based on the book collection inherited from the Ming imperial court, the Qing court searched for and accumulated books for more than two centuries, added, compiled, transcribed, and printed books of various kinds; they managed to amass a book collection that surpassed all previous dynasties. During the Qing dynasty, especially during its early years, the Imperial Household Department oversaw the compilation, printing, and hand copying of many large books. These books are not only of great importance in the history of Chinese printing, they are also another important source of the book collection of the Qing palace. During the Kangxi reign, the Hall of Martial Valor (Wuying dian) became the site for compiling texts and carving woodblocks under the Imperial Household Department, who, through the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong reigns, compiled and published a vast number of books. Because the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors especially liked calligraphy, it was also a common practice for the Department to transcribe books. These manuscripts, due to the quality of calligraphy, beauty of their bindings, and their sheer quantity, can compare with the printed books published by the Imperial Household Department. All of these printed and hand-copied books became collections of the Palace Museum.

The Palace Museum also has many articles of daily use from the Qing imperial court. At that time, they were not items for collection, but for practical use. However, as evidence of the history of the imperial court, they have significant historical value and are worth studying today. Because they were made with exquisite workmanship for imperial family members, they also have artistic value. These articles, various in type and large in number, include palace lamps, musical instruments, carts, sedans, furniture of both the Ming and Qing dynasties, opera costumes and stage props, clothing, carpets, silverware, gold, tin, and bronze objects, even dressing and makeup boxes, toys, tea leaves, herbs, and medical tools. They all provide useful information concerning the customs, and cultural and recreational activities of the Qing dynasty court.

The imperial collection of the Qing dynasty reached its peak during the Qianlong reign. Thereafter, as a result of the continuous weakening of China and frequent invasions of foreign countries, its scale gradually shrank. Still more unfortunately, many cultural artifacts and treasures of the Qing imperial court suffered repeated barbarous looting or damage. There were three major disasters: the first one was in 1860 when the Anglo-French Allied Forces looted and wantonly set fire to the Garden of Perfect Brightness; the second was in 1900 when the Allied Forces of the Eight Powers looted and destroyed the imperial treasures; the third instance was during the period of the “reduced court” of the abdicated emperor, Puyi, when

quantities of cultural artifacts and treasures were smuggled out of the palace and others were incinerated in the conflagration of the Garden of Established Happiness in 1923. After Puyi was expelled from the palace at the end of 1924, the Qing Palace Reparation Committee and the Palace Museum were established soon after, made a rough count of the articles left in the Qing palace and published Report of the Qing Palace Reparation Committee in twenty-eight sections in six volumes. According to the report, there were more than 1.17 million cultural artifacts, which were handed over to the Palace Museum that was established in 1925. Of course, this number is much smaller than the actual number, because the contents of some of the palaces were not included and because of discrepancies in the counting methods. As a result, the cataloguing of artifacts has been a continuing job conducted many times. It is estimated that, when the Palace Museum was established, the artifacts passed down from the Qing court numbered at least seven million.

In order to prevent these objects from falling into the hands of Japanese invaders, in 1933, hundreds of thousands of them were crated and moved to South China. During the War of Resistance, they were moved further inland to the southwest. At the end of 1940s, one fourth of these artifacts, about 600,000 items, were transported to Taiwan, which included about fifty thousand calligraphic works, paintings and objects, nearly 170,000 copies of classic books, about 380,000 documents and archives. In 1965, the Palace Museum of Taipei was established.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, with support from many sources, the Palace Museum has endeavored to enlarge its collection. After several decades of acquisitions, the old palace complex has not only recovered its collection to a scale as large as in the imperial times, but also added exquisite works of art that the imperial palace collections never had. The Palace Museum in Beijing has become the greatest treasury of Chinese cultural artifacts and works of art.

Newly acquired artifacts entered the museum through three major channels:

(1) Cultural artifacts handed over by the government or other museums. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Palace Museum received as many as 160,000 cultural artifacts (sets) from relevant government departments and other museums. Many of them were items that had formerly been in the Qing palace collection, but were lost sometime in history. For example, there were jade articles, ceramics, enamel objects, gold seals, and gold bells given by Puyi to the Yien Yieh Commercial Bank as collateral. In the early 1950s, the Central Government bought back a large number of rare treasures, which included two of the famous Hall of Three Rarities manuscripts, i.e., the Manuscript Beginning with Boyuan by Wang Xun and the Mid-Autumn Festival Manuscript by Wang Xianzhi, as well as some uniquely important ancient paintings such as Five Oxen by Han Huang, Night Revels of Han Xizai by Gu Hongzhong, Xiang River by Dong Yuan, and Auspicious Dragon Rock by Zhao Ji. These were turned over to the Palace Museum. Supported by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage and museums across the country, many precious cultural artifacts under state-level protection were transferred to the Palace Museum, thereby making the collections larger and more comprehensive.

(2) Cultural artifacts purchased by the Palace Museum. Since the 1950s, under the guideline of "giving priority to buying back valuable cultural artifacts originally in the Qing palace collection and taking into account fine works of art of dynastic China," and with the financial support of the government, the Palace Museum has purchased many rare artifacts. These pur-

chases have been conducted mainly through cultural relic stores, curio stores, collectors, and auction houses. During the 1950s and the early 1960s, when a fairly large number of cultural artifacts were in private hands, such purchases were at their peak. When an antique store in Liulichang obtained a rare item, they would present it to the Palace Museum for first refusal, which gave the Museum valuable opportunities to purchase rare cultural artifacts. By the end of 2006, altogether 53,971 cultural artifacts had been purchased, of which 1,764 were designated First Rank. These artifacts are of many kinds. Especially worth mentioning are the great paintings and calligraphic works such as *Ode to the Army Which Is About to Be Sent Out* by an unknown calligrapher of the Sui dynasty, and works by such great artists as Zhou Fang and Yan Zhenqing of the Tang dynasty, Wang Shen, Liu Songnian, Ma Hezhi, Xia Gui, Ma Yuan, Zhang Xian, Ouyang Xiu, Su Shi and Mi Fu of the Song dynasty, Gu An, Qian Xuan, Zhao Mengfu, and Naixian of the Yuan dynasty, Wu Wei, Tang Yin, Shen Zhou, Dong Qichang, and Zhu Yunming of the Ming dynasty, Yuanji and Zhao Zhiqian of the Qing dynasty.

(3) Donated cultural artifacts. By the end of 2006, the Palace Museum had accepted about 33,900 cultural artifacts from 696 donors, among whom were leaders from the party, government and military services, experts from all walks of life, scholars, and artists, compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, overseas Chinese, international friends, leaders and experts of the Palace Museum. Chairman Mao donated to the Palace Museum *Prose Poem on Two Auspiciously Dancing Cranes* written by Wang Chuanshan, *Thirteen Inscriptions for the Orchid Pavilion* transcribed by Qian Dongbi, and the *Manuscript of Shangyang Terrace* by Li Bai of the Tang dynasty, which Zhang Boju had given him as a present. Zhang Boju donated great paintings and calligraphic works such as the *Ping Fu Manuscript* by Lu Ji of the Western Jin dynasty, *Spring Excursion* by Zhan Ziqian of the Sui dynasty, *Poem on Zhang Haohao* composed and written by Du Mu of the Tang dynasty, *The Seating Controversy* transcribed by Huang Tingjian of the Northern Song, *Personally-written Poetry Album* by Cai Xiang of the Northern Song, *Ode to Taoist Costumes* written by Fan Zhongyan of the Song, and *Thousand-Character Classic* written by Zhao Mengfu of the Yuan dynasty. Sun Yingzhou donated over 3,000 fine cultural artifacts of various kinds, of which the exquisite ceramics are the most important. Zheng Zhenduo donated 657, of which there are many fine sculptures. Chen Shutong donated his collection of 109 great paintings of plum blossoms by 102 famous painters of the Ming and Qing dynasties, including Tang Yin, Chen Lu, Wang Qi, Shao Mi, Yuanji, and the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou. Han Huaizhun, a Singaporean Chinese, donated his collection of Chinese export ceramics that he had assembled over his lifetime, thereby enriching the Museum's inadequate collection in this area. Ye Yi, from Hong Kong, donated 81 rhinoceros horn carvings, all fine works of art of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

In the mid 1950s, the Palace Museum adjusted its operations and organizational structure. The Archives was separated from the Museum. The archives of the Ming and Qing dynasties once occupied an important place among the collections in the Museum. In February 1955, the Archives of the Palace Museum were turned over to the State Archives Administration and, at the end of 1969, were returned to the Museum. In April 1980, the Ming and Qing Archives Department of the Palace Museum, whose items amounted to over eight million, was once again turned over to the State Archives Administration and renamed the First Historical Archives of China. For a long time, the Museum Library had been an important department of the Museum. After 1949, many rare editions of Song and Yuan dynasty books, ancient books of Ming and Qing and "duplicate copies" of books of Qing—altogether 150,000 of them were transferred in many batches to sixteen other libraries such as

the Beijing Library, the Library of Renmin University of China, and Jilin Provincial Library. For instance, in 1958, a selection of rare editions of the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties (totaling 69,510 folios) were sent to the Beijing Library (now the National Library). After the completion of these transfers, the books collected in the Qing palace once again are distributed across the country.

Although early rare editions were transferred to the National Library, the Palace Museum still possesses a large number of Ming and Qing dynasty hand-written and printed books of various kinds, which include the various book manuscripts generated during the Qing court's process of compilation, the finalized manuscripts submitted to the emperors for inspection and authorization before printing, classical texts in Manchu, Mongolian, and Chinese which have never been printed, books of different types recopied for the convenience of the emperors' reading or carrying, special ornamental books for halls in and outside the imperial palace. There are also specially preserved items such as books by imperial academicians or poetry officials that have never been published, books presented by book collectors across the country, many opera scripts and records, samples of the fabrics of the emperors' and empresses' clothes and articles for practical use, architectural drawings and models of buildings, and Chinese traditional maps. These above-mentioned articles add up to 195,000 volumes. In addition, there are 230,000 exquisite original woodblocks for the books published in the Hall of Martial Valor. All these endow the Museum's collection of rare editions of books with distinctive characteristics.

During the period from 1949 to 1980, while the Palace Museum collections were enriched with the support of the whole society, the Museum also transferred over 84,000 cultural artifacts to other museums, libraries and organizations. For example, the Palace Museum transferred 3,781 rare cultural artifacts, including a painting scroll of The Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour and the famous Western Zhou ritual bronze vessel with an eight-line inscription (*Guo jizi bai pan*) to the History Museum of China established in 1959. In addition, some of the finest official-kiln porcelains were sent to museums at the sites of ancient kilns. For some monasteries and Chinese embassies in other countries, artifacts were transferred or lent by the Palace Museum. Some cultural artifacts of the Qing palace were given to foreign museums as presents. For example, in 1957, 550 cultural artifacts of the Qing dynasty, including porcelain, jade, lacquer, enamel, and embroidery, were given to the Museum of Oriental Art of the former Soviet Union. In addition, in the Nanjing Museum, there are still about 100,000 artifacts of the Palace Museum, which remained there after they were moved from Beijing to South China to avoid Japanese invaders.

II. The value of the Palace Museum's collection

The Palace Museum's collection, which is rich in variety and of excellent quality, is classic, systematic and complete, with tremendous historical and cultural value.

The collection is a national treasure. In China, the practice of collecting by a royal house has a long history and is highly symbolic, both politically and culturally. Artifacts were assembled not only because of their rarity or artistic value, but also because of their implications of supreme virtue, and because their assembly was symbolic of receiving the mandate of heaven. A new dynasty's taking over the collection of a previous one indicated the takeover of heaven's mandate. Such collect-

ing culminated in the Qing dynasty, which had effectively taken over the collections of all previous dynasties. Founded at a time of fighting against the restoration of the monarchy, the Palace Museum regards the Qing court's collection as the essence of the cultural tradition and a treasure of all the people, and sees the preservation of the treasures and of the palace as integral to safeguarding democracy and the republic. The image of the collection as a national treasure was enhanced during the arduous efforts to ship it to the South. Although such efforts met objections at first, it was soon realized that while lost territory could be regained, the national tradition and spirit would be at stake if treasures representing thousands of years of civilization were destroyed. Finally, a consensus was reached to protect as much of the national patrimony as possible. With the Forbidden City being designated a World Cultural Heritage Site, thanks to enhanced understanding of its value and cultural significance, not only are its collections regarded as national treasures, but the entire Forbidden City itself is considered an unparalleled treasure that best represents the cultural traditions of China.

The Palace Museum is the richest and most important treasury of ancient Chinese works of art. Its collection of over 1.8 million artifacts (or sets of artifacts) date from the Neolithic era to the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties and to modern times. They represent the essence of ancient culture of every region of China and that of the Han and the ethnic minorities. They include all the categories of ancient Chinese art. The artifacts in the major categories are complete records of the inception, development, and apex of their respective categories. Take calligraphic works for example. Those in the museum's collection cover the process from engraving to writing and to the development of calligraphy as an independent art, ranging from oracle bones, bronze inscriptions, early calligraphic works of the Jin dynasty, and works of major schools of various periods. Or consider ceramics. The collection includes black and painted pottery of the Neolithic, products of the five famous kilns of the Song dynasty, blue and white porcelain of the Yuan dynasty, white porcelain, under-glaze red porcelain, and porcelain with contending colors of the Ming dynasty, and famille rose and colored enamel porcelain of the Qing dynasty. This is also true of jade, bronze, and handicrafts. The museum is also collecting modern and contemporary works for the sake of cultural continuity and for the benefit of posterity. Therefore, the Palace Museum can be said to represent a condensed history of the five millennia of Chinese civilization. The museum's collection fully attests to the continuity of Chinese history and culture.

Both the collection and the historical buildings of the museum are peerless treasures. A major characteristic of the former is its inextricable link with the latter. Their combination constitutes the Forbidden City's unrivaled value and the museum's rich significance and high prestige. As the Forbidden City is a site of world cultural heritage, so is its collection. It belongs not only to China, but also to the world.

The Forbidden City was the imperial palace in the Ming and Qing dynasties, serving as the political center of the dynastic empire and the residence of twenty-four emperors over 491 years. The quantity of collections and related items that were handed down bear inextricable links not only to the Forbidden City, but also to Chinese history, especially to that of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The collection, the historical buildings and the figures and events related to the court form a whole that has given rise to a new discipline—Gugong Studies. From the point of view of Gugong Studies, the museum's collections are not only of special cultural and artistic importance, but, having witnessed the rise and fall of dynasties, are also of tremendous historic value.

III. The significance of the publication of the Compendium of Collections in the Palace Museum

The compilation and publication of this compendium is significant in more ways than one.

Collections are the basis for the existence and operation of a museum, whose importance is mainly judged by its quality and quantity. Though the cultural artifacts of the Forbidden City have been inventoried several times, some specific information and statistics remain unclear due to the enormous number and variety of the court collection. Effective protection and a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the collection's significance, features and value would not be possible without a thorough inventory of the types and numbers, which is a fundamental task for the museum. In light of that, the Palace Museum has been continuously cataloguing the Collection over recent decades, and the implementation of The Plan for Cataloguing Cultural Artifacts in 2004-2010 has produced remarkable results, which, along with the efforts of several generations of museum staff, are embodied by the General Catalogue for the Collections in the Palace Museum and Compendium of Collections in the Palace Museum. They are useful in presenting, in a comprehensive way, the wonders of the museum's collection, in meeting the needs for appreciation and research, and in enlightening society.

The Palace Museum has published The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum (in sixty volumes) and a number of catalogues on paintings and calligraphy, ceramics, bronze, jade, and architecture. However, the number of cultural artifacts presented in publications is still rather small, and the vast majority remains unknown. It is difficult for people to appreciate the splendor of Chinese cultural artifacts, and for experts and scholars to make full use of the museum's resources. The historical, scientific and artistic value of a large proportion of the collection is yet to be realized. The publication of Compendium of Collections in the Palace Museum, which is beautifully printed with advanced technology, presents such artifacts in a systematic, comprehensive way and turns them into cultural resources truly shared by the public.

As noted above, 600,000 artifacts were shipped to Taiwan and now there are two Palace Museums, one in Beijing and the other in Taipei. The collections of both were primarily inherited from the Qing court and are mutually complementary, and should therefore be regarded as a whole. The publication of the Compendium helps to familiarize people with the collections on both sides of the straits and facilitates a deeper understanding of the museum's culture as a whole. More importantly, it makes for a more comprehensive appreciation of the age, splendor, and continuity of Chinese civilization.

The collection of so many treasures, which has been an arduous process, signifies the continuity of civilization. The publication of Compendium of Collections in the Palace Museum is a major cultural project and a great event in the history of publication of the twenty-first century. We believe that it will be beneficial for further revealing the cultural significance of the Forbidden City, for its overall protection, and for the development of Gugong Studies.

Notes

- I. As a bilingual informative catalogue in Chinese and English, this compendium presents a general view of the Palace Museum's collections through images. There are no explanatory notes apart from such basic information as each item's inventory number, title, date, dimensions, shape, and decorative pattern.
- II. The compendium is divided into parts according to the materials and functions of collected items. Each part is in principle divided into chronologically arranged volumes, and the first volume of each part contains the preface, guide to the use of the compendium, an essay on its contents, list of plates, plates and index, while the other volumes only contain list of plates, plates and index.
- III. The criterion for selection is a comprehensive survey of the Palace Museum's collection as well as the historical and artistic value of the items. The selected items account for about 10% of the total of 1.8 million (sets of) objects in the Palace Museum collection.
- IV. Items whose numbers begin with the word "Gu (old)" were collected before September 30, 1949, and the vast majority of them were taken over from the Qing court. Those whose numbers begin with the word "Xin (new)" were collected through purchase, transfer, or donation after October 1, 1949.
- V. The items are mainly named according to material, decorative pattern and shape, the generally acknowledged three essentials. Old names are still used for certain influential ones that have clear records of ownership in history. Controversial ones are named according to the latest reliable results of research.
- VI. Chinese artifacts are dated in the traditional way, while "common era" is used for foreign ones. The PRC's legal units of measurement are used.
- VII. Sites of excavation are specified if we are certain about them.

Foreword

By Zhu Saihong

The ancient books associate the past with the present and continue the civilization. In Chinese history, from the pre-Qin Dynasty to modern China, book collection developed into independent systems, such as governmental collection, private collection, Buddhist temple collection, Taoist temple collection, and academy collection, among which court collection was the most important. The present rare books collected in the Palace Museum mainly cover the books in the Qing-Dynasty court, the last splendor in the court collection in China.

Court, owner of the collections, indicates more royal, imperial, and autocratic colors in Qing Dynasty than its precursors. Firstly, the court had the power to collect books from the whole country. Emperors in Qing Dynasty frequently issued imperial edicts to collect books. As a result, local governments and collectors vied to present books, with the excellent handwritten copies and rare wood-block editions piled in the court. Secondly, the court possessed closed and excellent environment for the collections. The stone room and golden box, *Nanmu* wood shelf and sandalwood cabinet, and silk slip-case and brocade case protected the rare books from damages and preserved them well. Thirdly, the emperors edited, inscribed, designed, and printed a large number of books by convening the most renowned scholars with imperial edicts, using the most advanced technology, and choosing the best materials. This endowed the court books with strong imperial color and enriched the treasury.

The ancientness in the collections embodies their original sources and long history. In historical records, there were such imperial palaces as Jixi Hall (Southern Song Dynasty), Imperial Academy and National History Academy (Yuan Dynasty), Wenyuan Chamber (Ming and Qing dynasties), Imperial Museum (Ming and Qing dynasties), Hall of Brilliance and Benevolence (Qing Dynasty), Palace of Heavenly Purity (Qing Dynasty), Palace of Tranquil Longevity (Qing Dynasty), etc. *Collections of Rare Books in Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties* (*Tian Lu Lin Lang*) and *Collections of Calligraphies and Paintings* (*Shi Qu Bao Ji*) continued the tradition in the court collection in Han Dynasty. In general, the court-collected books were piled in the capital. With the change of dynasties, riot and fire caused the loss or extreme damage of these books of the former dynasty. The books that were passed down to today all suffer the calamity in history and seem more valuable.

Since the Republican China (1911), the books in Qing-Dynasty court had been transferred. In October 1925, the Palace Museum was established and Hall of Longevity and Peace was chosen as the site of a library. Except *Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature* (Wenyuan Chamber) and *Introduction to Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature*

(Chizao Studio) that remained intact, more than 100,000 volumes from Hall of Brilliance and Benevolence, Palace of Tranquil Longevity and other dozens of palaces were moved to Hall of Longevity and Peace. From February 1933, the collections in the Palace Museum were transferred south to avoid the war. The rare books were divided into 5 groups, 1,415 boxes and over 150,000 volumes in total, including *Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature* (Wenyuan Chamber), *Introduction to Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature* (Chizao Studio), *Collections of Other Rare Books Uncollected in Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature* (Wan Wei Bie Cang), *Supplemented Collections of Rare Books in Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties* (Tian Lu Ji Jian), books in the Cabinet of Qing Dynasty, local chorography of Ming and Qing dynasties, Hall of Martial Valor Editions, Manchu and Mongolian books, anthologies, Buddhist scripts, and collections in Guanhai Studio. Later, 1,335 boxes of books were moved to Taipei National Palace Museum. From the 1950s to the 1990s, the rest of *Supplemented Collections of Rare Books in Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties* were presented to China National Museum, and the copies of the some collections in Qing Dynasty was given to more than 10 local museums, which amounted to over 10,000 volumes. Meanwhile, China National Museum received tens of thousands volumes from the governmental and private book-collection organizations. This ended the spread of books in Qing-Dynasty court.

In spite of the loss and transfer, the present rare books in the Palace Museum are exquisite editions. More than 600,000 volumes (pieces) in total, they are rich in category and diverse in style, enjoying high reputation in domestic and overseas. Generally speaking, the excellent block-printed books in all dynasties, Hall of Martial Valor Edition, excellent hand-written copies in Imperial Household Department in Ming and Qing dynasties, and Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan books are rare books. The scripts in Qing-Dynasty court, handwritings of emperors, empresses, and officials, picture catalogues of imperial architectures, official samples of clothes and appliances, and engraved block and book block are special collections. The series basically consists of 4 parts, "Block-Printed Book," "Hand-Written and Painted Edition," "National Ancient Books," and "Book Block," which will be elaborated in volumes based on the content, category, language, and time.

The excellent block-printed books came from governments, collectors, bookshops, temples, and academies. In addition to the books in Imperial Household Department, most were rare books collected in the reigns of Emperor Kangxi, Emperor Qianlong, and Emperor Jiaqing. The printing technology was diverse, covering both the traditional monochromatic block printing, multi-colored block printing, copper and wooden type printing, *Dou Ban*, and *Gong Hua*, and the introduced technology, such as lithography and letterpress printing. With well-chosen papers, the books were printed in several editions and embodied profound thoughts and academic achievements.

Different from the local and other editions, Hall of Martial Valor Edition fully presented the editing and printing quality of Imperial Household Department. Hall of Martial Valor Edition started from 1680, the 19th year of Emperor Kangxi and ended in late Qing Dynasty, lasting over 200 years. More than 100 high-quality books were printed, especially in the reigns of Emperor Kangxi, Emperor Yongzheng, and Emperor Qianlong. Since the reign of Emperor Jiaqing, the number of books had been decreasing along with the decline of the national power of Qing Dynasty. Hall of Martial Valor Edition was edited by convening scholars with imperial edicts. Covering Confucian Classics (*Jing*), History (*Shi*), Philosophy (*Zi*), Literature (*Ji*), and Miscellaneous Edition (*Cong*) branches, it epitomized the wisdom of the officials and scholars in Qing Dynasty. From Hall of Martial Valor Edition, we can understand the rise and fall in the cultural activities of Qing Dynasty, and appreciate the superior editing quality, fine paper and ink, exquisite design and binding, and excellent printing.

The local chorography was basically block-printed edition. However, that in the Palace Museum was different. In Qing Dynasty, *History of the Unification of Qing Dynasty* was edited and reprinted three times. As a result, books on local chorography, tax, and forced labor were collected throughout the country, which constituted the chorography collection in the Palace Museum. The present collection of local chorography covers 33 provinces and cities, from Beijing, Zhili (present-day Hebei Province), and Shengjing (present-day Liaoning Province), to cities and counties. Most were about Hebei, Shanxi, Sha'anxi, Henan, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Sichuan, and Guangdong provinces and were block-printed edition. There were also two or three only-existing and rare editions collected in China and overseas.

One feature of book collection in Qing-Dynasty court was the transcribed and hand-written copies with regular script in Imperial Household Department Edition of Ming and Qing dynasties, which were categorized into five types based on their purposes. The first was edited but unprinted books. For instance, *The Memoir in the Reigns of Emperors in Qing Dynasty* and *The Biography of Emperors in Qing Dynasty* were often transcribed with Manchu, Mongolian, and Chinese and saved in Palace of Heavenly Purity, National Museum, and Shengjing. The second was the sample books that were presented to emperors for approval before printing. The third was the proofs at various stages edited by Imperial Household Department. The fourth was hand-written copies of the booklets for emperors to read or take. The fifth was the pleasing readings to decorate the halls and gardens in the palace. In addition to the transcribed and hand-written copies, there were copies of books presented by collectors and books written by scholars in Imperial Academy and officials. The latter possessed historical value but were unprinted. Transcribed and hand-written copies were characterized with small quantity, arduous work, multiple values, and imperial reading, which qualified them to be rare editions.

Buddhist and Taoist scripts were also special collections in the Palace Museum. With large quantity, they were mainly heritage in families that worshipped Buddha. Some were presents from Mongolia and Tibet, and some were printed by the court. The scripts were generally divided into three categories. The first was *Great Treasury of Sūtras*, the total body of Buddhist literature in various editions and languages. The second was Buddhist script with one volume, with diverse format and design. In hand-written and block-printed editions, they underwent Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties and covered Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan languages. These scripts suggested the change and spread of Buddhism in China. The first and second can be seen in "Block-Printed Books" and "Block-Printed Editions." The third was the writings of Buddhist and Taoist scripts by emperors, officials, and calligraphers. They were emperors' works at festivals or officials' tributes, and written in regular script. While writing Buddhist scripts, they conveyed their religious belief and found pleasure in calligraphy. These writings had uniqueness in edition, printing, design, binding, and Buddhist classics.

The scripts collected in Qing-Dynasty court included opera in Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, romance in Ming and Qing dynasties, dramas adapted from novels in Qing Dynasty by Opera Department (*Le Bu*), and Ceremony Drama (*Cheng Ying Xi*) composed by Opera Department. The performing forms were *Kunshan Opera* (*Kun Qiang*), *Yiyang Tune* (*Yiyang Qiang*), *Luan Tan*, *Bang Zi*, etc. In each drama, there were several scripts for various purposes: Imperial Script (*Andian Ben*) for emperors and empresses to read, General Script (*Zong Ben*) for actors and directors, Role Script (*Dantou Script*) to record the roles, Musical Scores (*Qu Pu*) to record the songs, signs, and rhythms for actors, Plot and Clue (*Pai Chang and Chuan Tou*) to record the actor's costume, lead the acrobatic fight, and coordinate the stage, and Outline (*Ti Gang*) to record the appearance of actors. The earliest script was composed by Imperial Music Office (*Jiao Fang Si*) in the reign of Emperor

Shunzhi of Qing Dynasty. Most scripts were hand-written copies in the reigns from Emperor Kangxi to Emperor Daoguang, during which South Garden for Drama Learning (*Nan Fu*) was established and promoted to Peace and Rise Division (*Sheng Ping Shu*) in 1827, the 7th year of Emperor Daoguang. They presented the plays staged in the folk and court in 300 years and provided a comprehensive historical record of drama in Qing Dynasty.

Among the numerous special collections, official graphic format was the most unique, among which *Lei Family Style* (*Yang Shi Lei*) was the largest and most famous cultural heritage. *Lei Family Style* was an honor to the Lei family that designed imperial architectures for generations in Qing Dynasty and provided the richest and detailed historical record of the Ancient Chinese architecture. Currently, there are nearly 20,000 pieces of *Lei Family Style*, and that in the Palace Museum account for about 1/4. One half was illustrations, and the others were bills (*Zhe Dan*) and account book (*Bo Ce*), mostly drawn in the reigns of Emperor Daoguang, Emperor Xianfeng, Emperor Tongzhi, and Emperor Guangxu. The illustrations covered the plans for imperial palace, emperor's temporary residence, garden, mausoleum, imperial city, temple, barrack, watercourse, decoration, and furnishing. They represented the Lei family's achievements in illustration and the details in site-choosing, plan and design, construction, and provided valuable materials for the studies of the histories of Qing Dynasty, ancient technology, architecture, and protection of ancient architecture, thus had been highly valued in the academia. *Lei Family Style* has been selected in *Memory of the World*, upgrading the protection, research, and use of the ancient architectures.

In addition to *Lei Family Style* graphic format, the series collect patterns for clothing and porcelain in Qing Dynasty. They were colored drawings, ink drawing samples, and rough sketches that painters in Imperial Household Department painted based on emperor's order. Firstly ink line was used to draw the outline, and then color was put on the local drawing. As high-quality dye was used, the patterns presented lasting charm and diverse form. The patterns were mainly used as the criterion for workmen in the producing offices, so they could be called "Mother of Imperial Supplies." However, few exist now. The clothing patterns covered emperor's robe, official's attire, tippet, cover of foot-stepping, and costume. The patterns for bed and seat appliances covered quilt, mattress, backrest, and cushion. There were also articles for dress, such as *Dian Ding* (Top of a Flower-like Ornament), *Cai Yue* (Colored Shawl), *He Bao* (Pouch-like Bag), and jewelry. The porcelain pattern included porcelain for Emperor Tongzhi's wedding, porcelain from *Daya* (Good Taste) Studio and *Tibe Hall* (Hall of National Peace), porcelain for Empress Dowager Cixi's longevity ceremony, and porcelains for furnishing and daily life. The patterns were flowers, animals, auspicious pictures, and characters, with diverse form and fine meaning. Through the prefect artistic effect created by the shape, pattern, and color, they presented the fashion and culture in the court and the emperor's taste to the producers and provided visual materials for us to understand and study the official pattern system as well as the production and management in the official handicraft in the ancient China.

Before Qing Dynasty was established, Chinese classics had been translated into Manchu. When Manchu people entered Beijing, they extended the translation to solidify Qing Dynasty and their rule. Later, Mongolian and Tibetan versions were supplemented to placate Mongolia and stabilize Tibet. Therefore, there were Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan books in the Palace Museum, including Imperial Household Department Edition, hand-written edition, and Hall of Martial Valor Edition. For instance, *The Memoir in the Reigns of Emperors in Qing Dynasty* compiled by the court had hand-written copies in Manchu, Mongolian, and Chinese. *The Imperial Edicts and Their Commentaries* had hand-written and printed copies in

Manchu and Chinese. Chinese-Manchu or Mongolian-Manchu edition could be found in Confucianist classics, historical and biographical books, military books, political books, almanacs, poetry collections, Buddhist scripts, linguistic books, and reference books. In addition to one-language printed and hand-written books, there were Manchu-Chinese, Mongolian-Chinese, Manchu-Mongolian-Chinese, and other multi-language editions, which were valuable materials for the research of languages and translations of nationalities in Qing Dynasty.

Considered as “Mother of Printed Books,” the engraved block and book block are also unique and valuable heritage. The blocks total more than 100 types and 240,000 pieces, including blocks for *The Complete Tibetan Buddhist Scripts in Manchu* (also known as *Great Treasury of Sūtras in Manchu*), *Notes and Commentaries on Thirteen Confucianist Classics*, *The Twenty-Four Histories*, *Collections of Three Classics of Du You, Zheng Qiao, and Ma Duanlin (San Tong)*, *Comments in Red on Memorials and Imperial Edicts*, books on *Zi* (Philosophy) and *Ji* (literature) branches, documents, and edicts. The materials for block were pear and date wood with nice texture collected from provinces. Hemp was applied and paint was dyed. As artisans engraved with force, the characters in the block were arranged in unison, the drawings were close and smooth. Both were excellent works. Blocks were mostly made in middle and late Qing Dynasty and early Republican China, seldom in Ming Dynasty. They play an important role in the researches of Buddhist scripts and history of books.

Sample chapter and picture catalogue are achievements made in bibliography. As one of the two departments in the Palace Museum, the library has compiled many sample chapters in 86 years (since 1925). The earlier was *The Primary Collection of Sample Chapters of the Rare Books in the Palace Museum*, which covered 41 black-white pictures of the rare books in Song and Yuan dynasties and made the collections in Qing-Dynasty court known to the public. Since 1992, several volumes of *Imperial Readings in Ming and Qing Dynasties Series* have been published. In the plane and 3-D forms, the colored picture catalogue presented better the essence of these rare books. With over 6,000 colored pictures and related information, the numbers of picture catalogues exceeded the sum of the past years. I hope more collections in Qing-Dynasty court will be displayed to readers with sample chapter and picture catalogue and that readers may study or appreciate them.