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Qianlong's Divine Treasures: The Bells in Rhyming-the-Old Hall

Individual bronzes in China often inspired romantic theories about their function and origin. Connoisseurs portrayed ancient bronzes as subjects endowed with free will, voices of their own, even the power to choose where they went, how they were found, when they were unearthed, and who was qualified to keep them. But not every ancient bronze commanded such powers. The less powerful ones remained buried underground, ignored in the darkest corner of an antique shop's storage room, or put to use as a rice bucket in a farmer's kitchen. These mute objects could hardly become venerable cultural relics. Those that did qualify were wreathed in splendid tales: this one was cast to commemorate a victory, that one was owned by a famous ruler. In some cases, timing meant everything.

In 1759 a farmer in Beixiang 北鄉, Xinyu 新喻, Jiangxi 江西 province, found eleven ancient bells with beautiful faded colors. They were of varying sizes but shared a decorative pattern and similar inscriptions in ancient script. Asiha 阿思哈, the Manchu governor of Jiangxi, soon got wind of this dramatic find. Seizing the relics, he sent them to Beijing as gifts to the Qianlong emperor 乾隆 (r. 1736–1795), explaining in the accompanying memorial that the bells seemed to be musical instruments for an imperial court or a temple and were not suitable for common folks.[1] Once they arrived in the capital, Qianlong had scholars from the Hanlin Academy scrutinize them. They decoded the inscriptions, tested the tones, and identified them as *bozhong* 鎛鍾 from the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1045–256 BC).[2] The inscriptions, decorations, tones, and the site where they were found all indicated that the bells constituted a set – but they were incomplete.

1 *Qing shilu: Qianlong chao* 清實錄乾隆朝 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985), vol. 15, p. 670.

2 The editors of *Xiqing xujian* 西清續鑑 indicated that Qianlong himself examined the bells and identified them as Zhou-era *bozhong*. See *Xiqing xujian* (rpt. Shanghai: Shangwu, 1911), *jia bian* 甲編, *j.* 17, p. 2a. But Qianlong declared clearly in his poem devoted to the bells that court scholars 廷臣 examined and dated them. See "Qianlong er shi ba nian yu zhi ti Yungu tang" 乾隆二十八年御制題韻古堂, in Yu Minzhong 于敏中 et al., eds., *Rixia jiuwen kao* 日下舊聞考 (rpt. Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1983; hereafter, *Rixia*) 22, p. 300.

In "Yungu tang ji" 韻古堂記 ("An Account of Rhyming-the-Old Hall"), an essay written on this occasion, Qianlong explained that the notes produced by the eleven bells did not correspond to the pitches of present-day music 聆其聲頗不合於今律, which he blamed on the deterioration of the bells over time 古器經久而移其本音.[3] While the inscriptions did not mention pitch-standard names, Qianlong believed that a complete set would consist of twelve bells, one for each of the twelve pitch-standards in the octave 律應十二.[4] To complete the set, Qianlong decided to cast the missing bell – the one with the *dalü* 大呂 pitch. Once it was made, the emperor's explanation for casting was inscribed in seal-script on the bell's outer surface, making it look like an antique to match the eleven unearthed bells (see the woodblock illustration and accompanying inscription, figures 1, 2).[5]

The bells had arrived in Beijing around the time that the emperor received the news of a significant Qing victory in Central Asia in 1759, and thus Qianlong did not hesitate to associate the antiques with the conquest. In 1755 domestic strife in the Zunghar kingdom gave Qianlong an opening: he seized the offensive and captured Yili 伊犁, the enemy's capital. After establishing a number of military colonies in the region, a string of victories permitted Qianlong to attack the Muslim peoples of East Turkestan. By 1759, the entire area north and south of the Tianshan 天山 range – later called Xinjiang 新疆, the "new territory" – was under direct Qing control.[6]

After the missing *dalü* bell was cast, Qianlong had the complete set displayed at the Yungu tang 韻古堂, a hall in the southern part of Xi yuan 西苑 (West Park), on the bank of Lake Taiye 太液, in what is today Zhongnanhai 中南海. Previously called "Pengying zai wang" 蓬瀛在望, the Yungu tang, literally "Rhyming-the-Old Hall," was newly christened to honor the bells, which were displayed continuously there

[3] Qianlong, "Yungu Tang ji" 韻古堂記, in E'ertai and Zhang Tingyu et al., eds., *Guochao gongshi* 國朝宮史 (rpt. Beijing: Beijing guji, 2001; hereafter, *GG*) 15, p. 308.

[4] The twelve pitches are *huangzhong* 黃鍾, *dalü* 大呂, *taicu* 太簇, *jiazhong* 夾鍾, *guxian* 姑洗, *zhonglü* 仲呂, *ruibin* 蕤賓, *linzhong* 林鍾, *yize* 夷則, *nanlü* 南呂, *wuyi* 無射, and *yingzhong* 應鍾. On the ancient development of the twelve pitch-standards, see Robert Bagley, "The Prehistory of Chinese Music Theory," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 131 (2005), pp. 41–90; and Lothar von Falkenhausen, "On the Early Development of Chinese Musical Theory: The Rise of Pitch-Standards," *JAOS* 112.3 (1992), pp. 433–39.

[5] *Xiqing xujian, jia bian, j.* 17, p. 5. Today's specialists usually call this set of Zhou bells "Zhejian zhong 者減鐘," a reference to a certain Zhejian mentioned in the bell inscription. He was supposed to be a ruler of the Wu 吳 state and the bells' first owner.

[6] See James A. Millward, "'Coming onto the Map': 'Western Regions,' Geography and Cartographic Nomenclature in the Making of Chinese Empire in Xinjiang," *Late Imperial China* 20 (1999), pp. 61–98.

until 1900, when they apparently were looted during the chaos of the Boxer Uprising.[7] Today only four of the bells are known to exist: two are in the National Palace Museum, Taipei; one is in the Palace Museum, Beijing; the last is in the Shanghai Museum.[8]

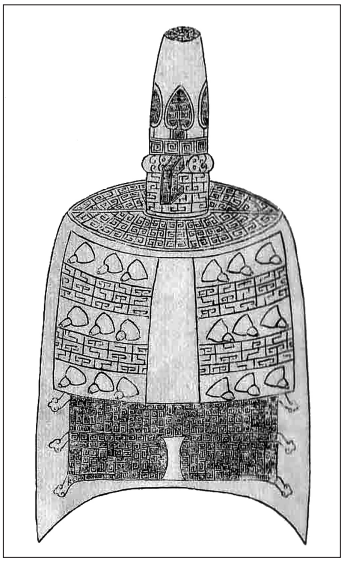
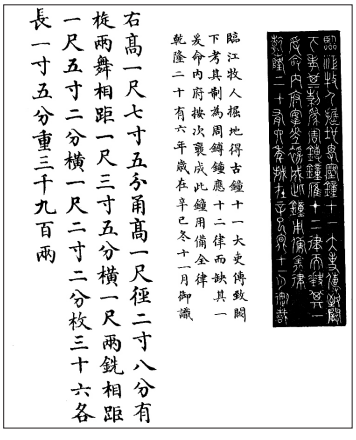


Figure 1. Illustration of New dalü *Bell Cast in 1761*

After Xiqing xujian*, jia bian,* j. *17, p. 4.*


右高一尺七寸五分甬高一尺徑二寸八分有旋兩舞相距一尺三寸五分橫一尺兩銑相距一尺五寸二分橫一尺二寸二分枚三十六各長一寸五分重三千九百兩

臨江牧人掘地得古鐘十一大史傳數闕下考其制為周鎛鐘應十二律而缺其一爰命內府按次裒成此鐘用備全律乾隆二十有六年歲在辛巳冬十一月御識

Figure 2. Inscription Accompanying Illustration of dalü *Bell*

After Xiqing xujian*, jia bian,* j. *17, p. 4.*

In addition to his essay, Qianlong wrote at least eighteen poems about his new bronzes.[9] A great collector of paintings, calligraphy, jades, and ceramics, he loved to write poems and personal commentaries on the rarest items; he also appeared to delight in touching these works of art. But he treated bronzes differently. He seldom wrote poems or commentaries about them and rarely left inscriptions on their surfaces – the last would have been unusual, since ritual bronzes were

[7] The Forbidden City, Xi yuan, and Yuanming yuan were all looted in 1900. See Di Baoxian 葆狄賢, *Pingdeng ge biji* 平等閣筆記 (rpt. Shanghai: Youzheng, 1922) 1, pp. 1–6. For a map of West Park, including Lake Taiye and numerous buildings around it, see in this issue of *Asia Major* the study of the evolution of West Park during Ming times as a Daoist center for imperial practices; Maggie C. K. Wan, "Building an Immortal Land: The Ming Jiajing Emperor's West Park."

[8] Liu Yu 劉雨, *Qianlong sijian zongli biao* 乾隆四鑑縱理表 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), pp. 2–4.

[9] All the poems were recorded in *Guochao gongshi xubian* 國朝宮史續編 (rpt. Beijing: Beijing guji, 1994; hereafter, *GGXB*) 63, pp. 546–50.

generally inscribed only by their first owners to commemorate personal achievements.[10] Qianlong was fully aware of the difference between being a collector and being a patron: if he wanted to express himself through bronze, he did so by casting new pieces.

Soon after the complete set of Zhou bells went on display, Qianlong decided that they would be used as models in casting new *bozhong* bells. The new bells, to be made in the imperial workshops, would be used for the performance of the Centered Harmony (*zhonghe shaoyue* 中和韶樂), that is, the Qing ceremonial music that accompanied ritual offerings to Heaven, Earth, the God of Soil, the God of Grain, the Five Mountains, Confucius, and the royal ancestors. The bells would also be used on other ceremonial occasions, such as the court assemblies on New Year's Day, the winter solstice, and the emperor's birthday.[11] The replicas, officially issued in 1761, were used until the end of the Qing dynasty.

China's rulers had long relied on newly unearthed bronzes to create a political discourse of auspiciousness. The most illustrious example is the legendary nine cauldrons (*ding* 鼎) cast by the ruler Yu 禹 of the relatively prehistoric Xia 夏 period. Because these massive objects could foresee the rise and fall of a dynasty, and because only sage kings were qualified to own them, they became the preeminent symbols of political legitimacy. We find the earliest record of the myth of the nine cauldrons in the fourth-century BC *Zuo zhuan* 左傳.[12] That account explained that Yu had used the copper tribute from subordinated tribal leaders to cast the nine cauldrons. Tang 湯, the founder of the Shang 商 dynasty, inherited them when he took over the kingship from the Xia. Then Wuwang 武王 took possession of the cauldrons when the Zhou 周 dynasty conquered the Shang. According to the famous account in *Shiji* 史記, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty 秦始皇 set out to retrieve the cauldrons from the Si River 泗水, where they had been hidden after the fall of the Zhou. But an aquatic dragon chewed through the net

[10] In addition to the poems praising the Zhou bells, Qianlong also wrote sixteen poems about the bronzes in his collection that had come from frontier areas (these are in *Xiqing xujian* 西清續鑑) and nine more about other bronzes (in his collected works of poetry). Of all the bronzes that moved him to write, only three were inscribed with his poems: a mirror ascribed to the Yellow Emperor and two foreign bronzes excavated in Xinjiang. Compared with the thousands of poems and colophons the emperor devoted to his collection of paintings and calligraphy, this figure is extremely small.

[11] *Da Qing huidian shili* 大清會典事例 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989) 11, pp. 644–45; Evelyn S. Rawski "The Creation of an Emperor in Eighteenth-Century China," in Rawski et al. eds., *Harmony and Counterpoint* (Stanford: Stanford U.P.), pp. 166–67.

[12] *Zuo zhuan zhushu* 左傳注疏 (SKQS edn.; Taipei: Shangwu, 1983) 4, p. 22.

that soldiers were using to raise the precious vessels, and the cauldrons were lost. The failure implied that the first emperor had not received Heaven's mandate.[13] After the intervention of that politically canny dragon, the symbols of dynastic legitimacy were never found, though many subsequent emperors dreamed of obtaining them.[14]

When ancient bronzes were unearthed, the scent of China's golden age often wafted from them. In 116 BC, for instance, when the Han emperor Wu 漢武帝 (r. 141–88 BC) changed his reign title from Yuanshou 元狩, or "Original Winter Hunt," to Yuanding 元鼎, or "Original Cauldron," he did so to commemorate the recovery of an ancient bronze cauldron from the Fen River 汾水.[15]

Twelve centuries later, in 1104, six ancient Zhou bells were unearthed in Shangqiu 商邱, Henan 河南. Their inscriptions identified the duke of Song 宋公 of the Zhou dynasty as their original owner. Huizong 徽宗, emperor of the Song at the time of the bells' discovery, quickly embraced the bells as proof that he possessed the mandate of Heaven. Just as the bells had belonged to the duke of Song, so the ruler of the Song dynasty could be sure that he would repel the aggressive advance of the Liao 遼 and Jin 金 states. As would Qianlong 757 years later, Huizong used them as models for casting twelve sets of new bells to play ceremonial music composed by the staff of the Dacheng Yuefu 大晟樂府, the Imperial Music Department of the Song dynasty.[16] Today, at least twenty-five of those *dacheng* bells survive in museums in China and abroad.[17] In fact, Qianlong's bronze catalogues mentioned four of the *dacheng* bells, but the cataloguers mistakenly dated them to the Zhou.[18] Qianlong and his Hanlin scholars did not realize these bells were in fact imitations of ancient bells made for Song Huizong, but they certainly knew the story of the *dacheng* bells and may have been inspired by it to glorify the newly unearthed Zhou bells in a very similar manner.

13 Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (SKQS edn.) 6, p. 4.

14 Tu Cheng-sheng 杜正勝, "Yu hua wu ji: ding de lishi yu shenhua" 與華無極, 鼎的歷史與神話, *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊 8.2 (1990), pp. 6–19.

15 Ban Gu 班固, *Qian Han shu* 前漢書 (SKQS edn.) 25, p. 10.

16 Lothar von Falkenhausen, "The Zeng Hou Yi Finds in the History of Chinese Music," in Jenny F. So, ed., *Music in the Age of Confucius* (Washington D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2000), pp. 101–13.

17 Li Youping 李幼平, "Jiancun Dacheng zhong de kaoguxue yanjiu" 見存大晟鐘的考古學研究, *Zhongguo yinyuexue* 中國音樂學 1 (2001), pp. 32–52.

18 Liu, *Qianlong sijian*, p. 1. The four *dacheng* bells were recorded in *Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑 (SKQS edn.) 36, pp. 1–3, and *Xiqing xujian, yi bian* 乙編, *j.* 17, pp. 17–18.

I have given some of the context that helps explain the Qianlong emperor's reaction to the newly found *bozhong* bells, but something is still lacking. Why was the emperor's reaction so dramatic? Perhaps size had something to do with it: the bell with the *huangzhong* pitch was the biggest bell he had ever owned: it was 65.6 centimeters tall and weighed 141 kilograms. And this was the largest set of bronzes in the imperial collection. Bells tended to be made in big sets, and once collectors identified some of the pitches, they could determine the total number in the set.[19] Before the advent of modern archaeology in China, many ancient bronzes circulating in antique markets had been discovered by accident or by grave looters. Once newly unearthed bells were put on the market, a collector could hardly own a complete set of bronze bells. Before 1759 even Qianlong had no more than two pairs of bells that seemed to go together.[20] Here was what he once wrote about a single small bell: "What a pity that this bell is not one of a set; as it is, it can only serve as a plaything 在簴惜不全, 徒爲清玩供."[21] Qianlong already owned so many curiosities that one or two more did not make any difference to him. Why did the bells from Jiangxi make a difference? Apparently part of what made these bells special was that they could be used to perform music. And because they could be used to perform music, Qianlong invested them with the ritual power that music possessed in its ordering of the cosmos.

Xiqing xujian 西清續鑑 (*A Supplement to The Ancient Mirror of Western Clarity*) is an elaborate catalogue of Qianlong's treasures that describes the entire set of bells, which it calls *Zhou bozhong* 周鎛鍾 (*bo* bells of the Zhou dynasty), distinguishing each by a number and a pitch.[22] A detailed introduction to the entire set appears as part of the entry for "the first *bo* bell of this Zhou set, the *huangzhong* pitch 周鎛鍾一黃鍾."[23] Over four thousand entries appear in Qianlong's three bronze catalogues: *Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑, *Ningshou jiangu* 寧壽鑑古 (*The Ningshou Mirror of Antiquity*), and *Xiqing xujian*. While most entries are flatly descriptive, that for the *bozhong* narrates the discovery, presentation, examination,

19 Other kinds of bronzes, such as *ding* cauldrons and *gui* 簋 bowls, also occurred in sets, but it was hard or impossible to estimate the number of items originally produced.

20 *Xiqing gujian* 36, pp. 20–21, 37–38.

21 Qing Gaozong, "Yong Zhou bian zhong," 詠周編鐘, in *Yuzhi shiji* 御制詩集 (SKQS edn.), 4 *ji*, *j*. 9, p. 10.

22 Ancient Near Eastern bells and most church bells in Europe were signal bells, not tuned bells used for musical performances; see Robert Bagley, "Percussion," in So, ed., *Music in the Age of Confucius*, p. 36. For an interesting study of the functions of church bells in Europe, see Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1998).

23 *Xiqing xujian, jia bian*, *j*. 17, pp. 1–3.

and exhibition of the bells, more like an information panel in a museum than an index card in a collector's cabinet. In explaining why the bells were identified as *bozhong*,[24] the cataloguer wrote:

> According to the commentary by Zheng Kangcheng 鄭康成 (of Eastern Han times) on the term "*bo shi*" 鎛師 in *Zhou li,* a "bo" was a big bell. Commenting on the term "*da zhong zhi yong*" 大鐘之鏞 [a large *yong* bell] in *Er ya,* Sun Yan 孫炎and Guo Pu 郭璞 said that such big bells were also called *bozhong* 鎛鐘. Ma Duanlin 馬端臨 regarded *bo* as similar to small chime-bells 編鐘. All of these theories are centered on the size of the *bozhong.* But in casting a good bell one has to consider not only size, but thickness as well. These scholars were unable to make better judgments because they only considered size and ignored the importance of thickness. Only Ban Gu 班固 said, in *Baihu tong* 白虎通*,* that "*bo* meant the sound of time, the leader in terms of both tempo and pitch: when tempo and pitches are accurate, all things on earth flourish faithfully." It follows that the *bozhong* is the bell that determines the musical tonic. [Among these eleven bells] the only illegible inscription is that of the *yingzhong* bell. From the legible inscriptions, what can be made out does not vary [from bell to bell], and all mention the name of Gongyu 工虡, probably the same master artisan or master fisherman mentioned in *Li ji.* The inscriptions also referred to dead ancestors, which means that these bells were originally used in the ceremonies held in ancestral temples. Following the way of Heaven, ancient people made music according to the twelve pitches and the twelve notes, using these pitches and notes to make up scales and measures. Having stored up auspiciousness for a long time, our dynasty is flourishing. To celebrate the victory our troops have achieved in the west, the earth has responded to Heaven's delight by liberating treasures concealed for over two thousand years. Suspended from their frames, these bells manifest our complete and heroic military might. Announce the ecstasy of victory by playing the elegant melody and by harmonizing the music movements of *xian* 咸 and *shao* 韶. So exceptionally grand an achievement has never been recorded. 謹按周禮鎛師鄭康成註鎛如鐘而大, 爾雅孫炎郭璞釋大鐘之鏞亦名爲鎛, 馬端臨謂鎛即編鐘則又以

[24] According to von Falkenhausen, *bo* 鎛 usually refers to bells "with flat rims and elaborate suspension devices." I believe that Qianlong's set should have been classified as *yongzhong* 甬鐘, which are "suspended obliquely from a ring laterally affixed to the shank," with their rims curved upward. See Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1993), pp. 68–69.

鎛爲小鐘矣. 茲鐘大小不一. 因知制器之精有大小而無厚薄, 固非康成諸人所能臆斷也. 惟班固白虎通云鎛者時之聲也, 節度之所主也. 有節度則萬物昌信乎. 鎛鐘之即律鐘也. 銘文惟應鐘鐘漫漶不可辨, 餘可識者繹其文義大略相同, 曰工敿如禮記所載工師漁師之類, 曰皇祖皇考知爲廟祀所用. 古者作樂以十有二律爲之度數, 以十有二聲爲之齊量, 凡以順天道也. 我國家集瑞凝庥久而彌茂. 當西師奏凱之候, 天心克享地祇効靈, 用是以二千餘年祕藏之寶器一旦出而懸諸簴業, 聿彰神武之膚功, 大備中和之雅奏, 配咸韶而宣悅豫, 固簡牒所未有之盛也.[25]

This scholarly exegesis sets forth the reasons for identifying the bells as *bozhong*. The inscriptions on the bells do not offer any assistance in this area, nor does the earlier volume of Qianlong's catalogue, *Xiqing gujian,* even mention the term *bozhong*. But the term was ancient and, as *Xiqing xujian* shows, can be found in lexicographic works dating from the first century AD. Some speculations about *bozhong* had been made by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200; above, called by his style "Kangcheng"), Guo Pu (276–324), and Ma Duanlin (1254–1330), all famous lexicographers. Their unresolved debates centered on the dimensions of bells, but the author of this introduction – probably a Hanlin scholar – rejected considerations of size and instead focused on function. For him, the *bozhong* was a type of *lüzhong* 律鍾, that is, a bell that determined a tonic, the first note of a scale – an idea set forth one and a half millennia earlier by Ban Gu (32–92) in *Baihu tong* (*Comprehensive Discussions in White Tiger Hall*).

Considered today, the arguments for the identification of the bells do not seem particularly compelling. The inscriptions, for example, say nothing about *bozhong* or *lüzhong*, and the identification by Qianlong and his officials seems far more romantic than scientific.[26] I suspect that this talk of *bozhong* had something to do with Qianlong's plans to reform music theory and the performance of court music.

In concluding his introduction, the author praised the emperor, whose virtue and military achievements had brought these auspicious bells back to the imperial court after more than two thousand years underground. Though this was a formulaic rhetorical flourish, it suggested the main reason why Qianlong considered this set of ancient bells so precious.

[25] *Xiqing xujian, jia bian, j.* 17, pp. 1–3.

[26] For a modern decipherment of the inscriptions, see Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music*, p. 99.

YUNGU TANG, OR RHYMING-THE-OLD HALL

Qianlong was both a collector and a curator. He displayed his collections in order to see them in splendid settings, to endow the individual objects with iconographic meanings, and to incorporate possible viewers into the dynamic interaction between collector and collectable. Most of Qianlong's bronzes decorated imperial spaces – imperial palaces and garden compounds in Beijing, Rehe 熱河, and Shenyang 瀋陽, not to mention the many imperial villas in the provinces that he used only occasionally. The pride of his collection was displayed in the Qianqing gong 乾清宮 (Palace of Heavenly Purity), Yangxin Dian 養心殿 (Hall of Mental Cultivation), and Ningshou Gong 寧壽宮 (Palace of Tranquil Longevity), all inside the Forbidden City. Qianqing gong was the main reception hall of the inner court; Yangxin dian contained Qianlong's office and bedchamber; and Ningshou gong was designed for the emperor's own use after he had abdicated. It was in these domestic settings that Qianlong regularly examined, touched, and wrote about his art collections.

Of Qianlong's thousands of bronzes, only the Zhou bells in Rhyming-the-Old Hall were what one might call permanent exhibits, housed in their own special gallery. Rhyming-the-Old Hall was located in the Shuqing yuan 淑清院 (Courtyard of Purity), in the southwest part of Xi yuan. This royal garden-palace complex just next to the Forbidden City was built along Lake Taiye, an artificial lake that was enlarged over time and conventionally divided into southern, central, and northern lakes.[27] Originally, during the Liao dynasty (907–1125), Xi yuan was a royal park adjacent to the northern lake. In the Jin dynasty (1126–1233), it expanded when several imperial palaces were built in the area. During the Yuan 元 (1234–1367) and Ming 明 (1368–1643), an ever increasing collection of parks and buildings engulfed the central and southern lake areas. The old Ming palaces on the islet in the northern lake were torn down in 1651, and the famous White Pagoda and Buddhist temples were built in their place.[28] Compared with the walled-in Forbidden City, the relatively open spaces of Xi yuan invited those unrelated to the imperial clan, including court officials and foreign guests, to stroll and take in the sights. Perhaps the presence of such a varied audience led the emperor to display the bells there; he hoped to amaze his domestic subjects and foreign guests.

[27] On the landscape of Xi yuan and its significance, see Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 2000), pp. 308–11.

[28] On the history of Lake Taiye, see *Rixia,* pp. 271–403.

During the Qing dynasty, many recreational, religious, and political events took place in the Xi yuan: the emperor's annual plowing ceremony; firework performances along the waterfront during the Lantern Festival; imperial banquets for foreign guests, court officials, or Manchu noblemen; and ice-skating or martial arts competitions. Even today, Xi yuan remains a politically important area: part of it has become Zhongnanhai 中南海, the headquarters of the Chinese Communist Party.

Rhyming-the-Old Hall was a modest, simply furnished hall that functioned as the emperor's private studio.[29] A sandalwood *luohan*-style throne 紫檀羅漢寶座 occupied the center. If Qianlong used this hall as private space, which seems likely, the throne would not have needed the screen that always stood behind the most formal imperial chairs. On each side of this throne stood a low table (*ji* 几). A seal made of green jade and two volumes of Qianlong's *Yungu tang ji* rested on the left table. On the right table sat another copy of *Yungu tang ji* transcribed by Chen Xiaoyong 陳孝泳 and, inscribed in a jade book (*yu ce* 玉冊), a text titled "Ringing Sounds to Announce Achievements" (Sheng zhen xiang gong 聲振象功). Suspended from individual brackets (*jia* 架), the twelve bells were placed on four desks (*an* 案).[30]

An elegant garden compound in the refined literati style surrounded Rhyming-the-Old Hall. Liushuiyin 流水音 (Sound of Flowing Water), a small pavilion, stood on the east side. Fancifully, the building straddled a meandering stream so that aesthetes could engage in the traditional pastime of *qushui liushang* 曲水流觴, sending a wine cup drifting on the water while composing poems. To the north of Liushuiyin was a quiet studio called Sushang zhai 素尙齋 (Studio of Superior Simplicity), one of Qianlong's studies since his youth. The emperor had inscribed several poetic couplets praising the natural and serene beauty of this study on its pillars. Many other studios and pavilions lay nearby. Most of them had poetic names, such as Shangxiuzhu 賞修竹 (Watching Slender Bamboo), Qianchixue 千尺雪 (Thousand-foot Snow), Yule ting 魚樂亭 (Pavilion of Joyful Fish), Chunji xuan 春即軒 (Studio of Approaching Spring), Jiaoyu xuan 蕉雨軒 (Banana Rain Studio), and Yunqing ju 韻磬居 (Studio of Harmonious Chime-stones).[31]

[29] Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan 中國第一歷史檔案館, *Qingdai Zhongnanhai dang'an* 清代中南海檔案 (Beijing: Xiyuan, 2004), vol. 23, pp. 206–8; vol. 24, pp. 83–84.

[30] Although the details of the Yungu tang's furnishings come from an archival source dated 1874, they are quite consistent with what we know of the emperor's taste and inclinations.

[31] *GGXB* 63, pp. 550–51.

These names evoked and even contributed to the intimate, charming character of the area.

Though the utter simplicity of Rhyming-the-Old Hall had little in common with the grand solemnity of the palaces in the Forbidden City, where ranks of officials stood on alert, politics resonated with the emperor's bells. They were connected to a revival of ancient ritual. When he wrote about his *bozhong,* Qianlong always evoked the *fugu* 復古 and *fagu* 法古 ideals: returning to ancient times and following ancient ways. Rhyming-the-Old Hall was a place where the emperor preserved some of the surviving traces of the Zhou, China's great golden age. The place linked the great collector to earlier rulers, presenting him, like them, as a paragon of divine rulership.

Rhyming-the-Old Hall was not the only studio named in honor of Qianlong's collections. From 1746 to 1791, the emperor christened at least eight other studios that displayed his ancient relics and replicas – three in the Xi yuan, one in suburban Changchun yuan 長春園 (Garden of Eternal springtime), and one in the Huishan yuan 惠山園 (Mount Hui Garden). These studios functioned as tokens of his intention to establish canonical interpretations of his treasures. In the Forbidden City, the Xueshi tang 學詩堂 (Hall for Studying *The Book of Songs*), a studio in the Jingyang gong 景陽宮 (Palace of the Brilliant Sun), housed a hand-scroll of *Shijing* 詩經 (*The Classic of Songs*) transcribed by Song Gaozong 宋高宗 (r. 1127–1161) and illustrated by Ma Hezhi 馬和之 (active in the twelfth century).[32] The name Xueshi tang was an allusion to Confucius's famous statement, "If one does not study the *Book of Songs*, one will not converse properly 不學詩無以言," as recorded in *Lun yu* 論語 (*The Analects of Confucius*). The Sanxi tang 三希堂 (Hall of Three Rarities), a famous, small chamber in the Yangxin dian 養性殿 (Palace of Cultivating One's Nature), housed the three masterpieces of calligraphy supposedly written by Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (ca. 321–379), Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344–386), and Wang Xun 王洵 (350–401).[33] The Moyun shi 墨雲室 (Ink Cloud Studio), also located in Yangxing dian, housed the ancient ink sticks said to have been made by the great artisan Li Tinggui 李廷圭 in the tenth century.[34] The Chun'ou zhai 春耦齋 (Spring Cultivation Studio) near the imperial farm Fengze yuan 豐澤園 (Garden of Harvestable Marsh), housed the *Five Cattle* scroll 五牛圖 painted by Han Huang 韓滉 in the Tang dynasty.[35] Cattle were the most important power source in Chinese farming. Qianlong visited Chun'ou

[32] *GGXB* 55, pp. 445–46.
[33] *GG* 13, pp. 255–56.
[34] *GGXB* 59, pp. 485–86.
[35] *GG* 23, pp. 321–22.

zhai to examine this painting whenever he finished the annual imperial sacrifice to the God of Agriculture 神農 and the rite of plowing a furrow of soil 演耕 on the day of vernal equinox. For him, the *Five Cattle* scroll was more than a masterpiece of art; its subject corresponded to the emperor's expectation of harvest in a new farming season.

List of Studios Named for Qianlong's Collections

BUILDING	LOCATION	PRIZED ITEM	YEAR NAMED
Sanxi tang 三希堂	Yangxin dian compound, Forbidden City	Three masterpieces of calligraphy	1746
Yuegu lou 閱古樓	Xi yuan, Imperial City	Sanxi tang model calligraphy	1747
Miaomo xuan 妙墨軒	Changchun yuan, Suburbs	Miaomo xuan model calligraphy	1755
Chun'ou zhai 春耦齋	Xi yuan, Imperial City	*Five Cattle* painting	1756
Chunhua xuan 淳化軒	Changchun yuan, Suburbs	Chunhua ge model calligraphy	1770
Xueshi tang 學詩堂	Jingyang gong compound, Forbidden City	*Shijing* painting	1771
Kuaixue tang 快雪堂	Xi yuan, Imperial City	Kuaixue tang model calligraphy	1779
Moyun shi 墨雲室	Yangxing dian, Forbidden City	Ink sticks made by Li Tinggui	1791

A lover of fine calligraphy, Qianlong named five studios after *fatie* 法帖, a phrase meaning "standard examples of calligraphic art." Stone carvings in *Sanxi tang fatie* 三希堂法帖 (*Model Calligraphy of the Hall of the Three Rarities*), a collection of masterpieces from the Jin 晉 (265–419) to the Ming dynasties, were set in the wall of the Yuegu lou 閱古樓 (Inspecting-Antiquity Hall) in 1747.[36] In 1779 Qianlong built the Kuaixue tang 快雪堂 (Snowfall Hall) in honor of *Kuaixue tang fatie* 快雪堂法帖 (*Model Calligraphy of Snowfall Hall*), a collection of great works of calligraphy compiled and carved by Feng Quan 馮銓 (1519–1672). In the Changchun yuan, a villa located in the northwest of the Imperial City, the Chunhua xuan 淳化軒 (Purification Studio) displayed the stone carvings of *Chunhua ge fatie* 淳化閣法帖 (*Model Calligraphy of Purification*

[36] *Rixia* 26, pp. 374–75; *GGXB* 68, pp. 615–16.

Studio), based on a collection originally assembled by Song Taizong 宋太宗 (r. 976–97) and recarved during Qianlong's reign.[37] The Miaomo xuan 妙墨軒 (Subtle Ink Studio), in Huishan yuan, was built to store the stone carvings of *Miaomo xuan fatie* 妙墨軒法帖 (*Model Calligraphy of Subtle Ink Studio*), a collection edited by Hanlin scholars in 1755.[38] These studios showcased his authority to maintain cultural hegemony. Ownership conferred a certain aura, but Qianlong went beyond that, commissioning a variety of ancillary projects that established canonical interpretations of Chinese calligraphy. His beloved court calligraphers, men like Zhang Zhao 張照 (1691–1745) and Wang Youdun 汪由敦 (1692–1758), had mastered the calligraphic styles of Qianlong's favorites of the past, including Wang Xizhi, Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322), and Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636). In a sense, Qianlong's collections served as the standard of literati calligraphy among members of the court. Those who practiced the rising *beixue* 碑學 (stele studies) style, based on ancient scripts found on stone monuments, were consciously setting themselves apart – the emperor ignored this trend.

Since the bells had been unearthed at the moment when Zunghar and Muslim forces had been put to flight by Qing troops, Qianlong may have chosen Rhyming-the-Old Hall because of its proximity to the Ziguang ge 紫光閣, a military museum filled with war trophies, portraits of meritorious officials, and paintings of military scenes.[39] One could say that the entirety of the Xi yuan had been fashioned according to Qianlong's vision of the Qing empire, a specifically Manchu empire founded on warfare but maintained through civil virtue. If the Ziguang ge displays loudly declared sovereignty won through violence, Qianlong did not forget to use poetry to claim the title of cultural commander-in-chief. The Chinese discourse of rulership always emphasized the complementarity of things literary and military, a particularly interesting *wen* 文/*wu* 武 dyad under the Manchus.

Not surprisingly, Qianlong had an ambivalent relationship with literati culture. In 1766 he posted a decree on the wall of the Shang shufang 尚書房, the study where Qing princes were educated, warning against the adoption of "bookish mannerisms 書生習氣"; the emperor had noticed that the signature appended to a fan painted by the young eleventh prince 十一阿哥 was his Chinese *hao* 號, or literary nickname, instead of his Manchu name.[40] The strongly worded decree execrated such effete behavior as adopting poetic nicknames, wasting time writ-

[37] *Rixia* 83, pp. 1381–82. [38] *Rixia* 84, p. 1400. [39] *Rixia* 65, pp. 569–87.
[40] *GGXB* 1, pp. 4–5.

ing showy pieces and practicing calligraphy, exchanging poems, cooing over works of art, and joining aesthetic cliques – all affronted the masculine ideals of Manchu culture. Qianlong worried that Manchu princes addicted to art and literature would forfeit any chance to become good archers and horsemen, which is to say, good Manchus.[41]

But what of Qianlong the lover of art and poetry? He was probably the most erudite emperor and most voluminous poet in Chinese history. Not a gifted poet, he nonetheless composed incessantly, in a range from paeans to orchid blossoms to panegyrics on history. Of his forty thousand poems, around four thousand described his art collections. So fond was he of his collections that he never traveled without bringing a portion with him. If paintings inspired poems, great works of calligraphy inspired copies: the emperor seldom painted but spent countless hours practicing calligraphy, and he loved to give his productions to court officials.[42]

The apparent contradiction between Qianlong's aesthetic pursuits and his anxiety about the princes explained his necessarily twofold imperial identity: Qianlong's cultural activities confirmed and strengthened his political status. For him, art, as well as music, was a discourse of politics, not just a purely aesthetic experience. This man who invested so much energy in collecting masterpieces, inscribing poems on them, having reproductions of great works made, and arranging their exhibition in special galleries, did not want his young princes to follow suit. As with the scholarly elite, who focused on passing the examinations for the first decades of their lives, giving themselves over to poetry and amateur pursuits only once they had proven themselves, a member of the imperial clan had to fully inhabit his Manchu identity before anything else. In a poem inscribed upon the painting "Pingan ruyi tu" 平安如意圖 ("As Peaceful as One Likes") painted by prince Yongrong 永瑢 (1744–1790), Qianlong explicitly said, "It is also an accomplishment to enjoy art after hard study 學餘遊藝亦功夫."[43] A zealous student of imperial history, Qianlong knew that in spite of Song Huizong's ability as a great artist, he had failed to secure the Song imperial collections when the Jurchen army seized the Song capital Kaifeng 開封 in 1126.

41 On the preservation of Manchu identity during the Qing dynasty, see Pamela Kyle Crossley, *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1990), pp. 23–30; Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2001), pp. 68–72.

42 Liu Lu 劉潞, "Lun Qianlong huangdi de shiren hua qingxiang" 論乾隆皇帝的士人化傾向, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* 中國文化研究 3 (1999), pp. 54–62.

43 This painting is now in the Palace Museum, Beijing; see Gugong bowuyuan 故宮博物院, ed., *Qing shi tong dian: Qianlong chao* 清史通典, 乾隆朝 (Beijing: Zijincheng, 2002), p. 426.

In Qianlong's mind, the martial ideals of Manchu culture, not aesthetic pursuits, would preserve the cultural hegemony he had established. If Qianlong sometimes insisted on more emphasis on Manchu practices, at other times he showcased art treasures in a refined literati manner. The crucial point of the complex intertwining of *wen* and *wu* in Manchu imperial culture was that the throne could only be preserved by combining and balancing the two.

REPLICAS OF ANCIENT ZHOU BELLS

Two years after ordering the Board of Music 樂部 to use the newly discovered bells as models to cast new bells, the Qianlong emperor saw two sets of twelve replicas installed in the Forbidden City. According to the 1766 *Huangchao liqi tushi* 皇朝禮器圖示 (*An Illustrated Compendium of Qing Rituals*), one set of replicas known as "*bozhong* for the Centered Harmony melody played for court audiences" (*chaohui zhonghe shaoyue bozhong* 朝會中和韶樂鎛鐘) was stored at the Taihe dian 太和殿, the largest palace in the Forbidden City; the other set was the "*bozhong* for the Centered Harmony played for banquets" (*yanxiang zhonghe shaoyue bozhong* 燕饗中和韶樂鎛鐘), kept in the Qianqing gong.[44] Then, in 1775, when the Forbidden City's Ningshou gong compound was nearly finished, Qianlong ordered two more complete sets of *bozhong,* one to establish pitches during court audiences in the Huangji dian 皇極殿, the compound's main reception hall, and the other for banquets in the Leshou tang 樂壽堂, the inner reception hall.[45] These tonic bells, used strictly for establishing the opening scale-note for a particular key, were hung from individual frames: only one bell was needed for any given ceremony.

A number of *bozhong* could be found elsewhere: the Yuanming yuan 圓明園, the Ziguang ge, and some altars and temples where the Centered Harmony was played during sacrificial rites.[46] Most needed one, some needed two *bozhong* bells, depending on how often offerings

[44] *Huangchao liqi tushi* 皇朝禮器圖示 (SKQS edn.) 8, pp. 4–28.

[45] Zhao Yang 趙陽, "Qianlong chao dian zhi yueqi de zhizuo" 乾隆朝典制樂器的製作, in Qing dai gong shi yanjiu hui 清代宮史研究會, ed., *Qing dai gong shi luncong* 清代宮史論叢 (Beijing: Zijincheng, 2000), pp. 218–20

[46] These tonic bells were used at the Tian tan 天壇 (Altar of Heaven), Di tan 地壇 (Altar of Earth), Sheji tan 社稷壇 (Altar of the God of Grain and Soil), Ri tan 日壇 (Altar of the Sun), Yue tan 月壇 (Altar of the Moon), Taisui tan 太歲壇 (Altar of the Taisui Star), Xiannong tan 先農壇 (Altar of the God of Farming), Xiancan tan 先蠶壇 (Altar of the God of Sericulture), Tai miao 太廟 (Temple of the Royal Ancestors), Tianshen tan 天神壇 (Altar of Celestial Spirits), Diqi tan 地祇壇 (Altar of the God of Earth), Xianshi miao 先師廟 (Confucian Temple), and Lidai diwang miao 歷代帝王廟 (Temple of the Emperors of Past Dynasties).

were made. In Qing, and even early China's, music theory, the twelve pitch-standards of the octave corresponded to the twelve months in a year.[47] This meant that the key of the Centered Harmony was established by the month in which the ritual was performed. If the ceremony was held in the first month, the standard pitch would be *taicu* 太簇; if the ceremony was held in the second month, the standard pitch was *jiazhong* 夾鐘, and so forth. Hence, the only *bozhong* kept at Tian tan 天壇 (Altar of Heaven) was a *huangzhong* 黃鐘 because the annual sacrifice to Heaven was held in the eleventh month of the lunar year.

Over the course of his sixty-year reign, the Qianlong emperor had the Qing imperial foundry cast at least sixty-six *bozhong*. (One of these *bozhong* is pictured in figure 3.) His thinking about the bells informed the detailed instructions he gave for their manufacture. For example, he once told foundry workers to gild the surfaces of these bells, rather than imitating the dark green color of ancient bells.[48] In other words, Qianlong did not want the imperial foundry to produce a set of Qing bells exactly like his prize set from Jiangxi. While he modeled himself on the sage kings of the Zhou, Qianlong insisted on preserving the dynastic identity of the Qing. For him, the new bells belonged to the Qing dynasty even though they were modeled after the Zhou examples.

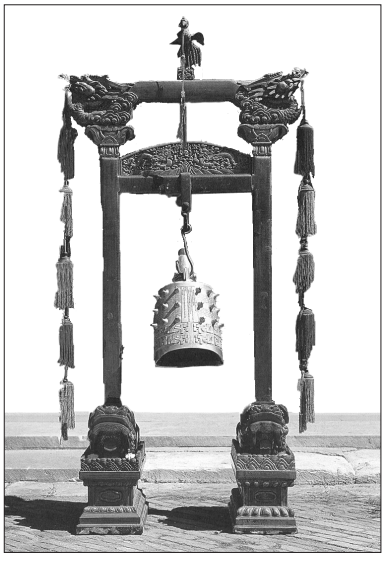


Figure 3. Qing bozhong *Bell*

After Ho Chumei and Bennet Bronson, eds., Splendors of China's Forbidden City: The Glorious Reign of Emperor Qianlong *(London: Merrell, 2004), p. 53.*

Qianlong might also want the new *bozhong* to correct the ravages of time and its production to be understood as an act of restoration.[49] This was the reason he gave concerning many other replication projects. For example, in 1743, Qianlong ordered

[47] For general studies of Qing ritual music, see Chen Wannai 陳萬鼐, *Qingshi yuezhi zhi yanjiu* 清史樂志之研究 (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1978); Wan Yi 萬依 and Huang Haitao 黃海濤, *Qingdai gongting yinyue* 清代宮廷音樂 (Beijing: Zijincheng, 1985).

[48] Zhao, "Qianlong chao dian zhi yueqi de zhizuo," p. 216.

[49] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer who kindly drew my attention to this possibility.

the imperial workshop to faithfully copy a tiger-shaped jade 琥 based on an image recorded in *Kaogu tu* 考古圖 (*Illustrated Catalogue of Studies of Antiquity*) attributed to Lü Dalin 呂大臨 (1044–1091), a famous pioneer of antiquarianism. Several months later, this copy was presented to Qianlong. He further ordered to carve "shi san 十三" (thirteen) upon this tiger-shaped jade and to match it with an elegant wood stand upon which two more inscriptions were carved – "Xuanhe yu wan 宣和御玩" (Emperor Xuanhe's imperial enjoyment) and "Boshi zhen cang 伯時珍藏" (Boshi's precious collection).[50] Why did Qianlong have the jade tiger that was carved by his craftsmen bear the marks of other collectors? According to *Kaogu tu*, this jade was a piece in the Song imperial collections and originally bore the inscription "the thirteenth 个十三." Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049–1106), also known as Li Boshi 李伯時, a famous elite-artist and collector during Song, was its first owner.[51] Then, Huizong obtained it and made it a part of the collections, but it was lost. Centuries later, Qianlong "re-collected" this lost jade by replicating it, reconstructed its original features, and thus simultaneously restored its history under multiple owners.

On the back of each new *bozhong* appeared a clerical inscription: a serial number, its pitch-standard name, and the date it was cast. On the front every new *bozhong* bore the *fu* 賦 (a rhapsodic poem) composed by Qianlong that began with the words "Since ancient times, military victories have been followed by music 自古在昔, 功成作樂," a reminder that the recent discovery of ancient bells was an auspicious sign related to the conquest of Xinjiang. He would, as a celebration of this military victory, immediately complete the reform of imperial music begun by his grandfather, the Kangxi 康熙 emperor (r. 1662–1723). Qianlong boasted that Kangxi had left this mission to him because he knew that it could be accomplished only after a great military victory.[52]

Qianlong's ideas about *bozhong* belonged to orthodox Chinese music theory. The method of generating twelve pitches and producing an even, in some contexts mathematically correct, spacing for them, had been discovered in China well before the Han dynasty. Since early Han, music theory became deeply influenced by the concepts of yin

[50] This episode was reconstructed from "Qianlong ba nian zheng yue jishilu" 乾隆八年正月紀事錄 and "Qianlong ba nian shi yi yue xiazuo" 乾隆八年十一月匣作, in *Yangxindian zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdang* 養心殿造辦處各作成做活計清檔. The original *huoji qingdang* archives are in the First Historical Archives (Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan 中國第一歷史檔案館), Beijing. I mainly rely on the copies in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

[51] Lü Dalin 呂大臨, *Kaogu tu* 考古圖 (1752 edn.) 8, pp. 2–4.

[52] *Huangchao liqi tushi* 8, p. 5.

and yang, *wuxing* 五行 (five phases), *bagua* 八卦 (eight trigrams), and other cosmological and natural theories.[53] Music was regarded as a reflection of society: a licentious society would produce licentious music, a righteous society, sincere music. This idea was rooted so deeply that the Kangxi emperor, who once hoped to produce pitches by scientific and rigorously mathematical theory, stated, "Long ago, people said that once the twelve pitches were set up correctly, the eight sounds could be laid out and played harmoniously; and when the harmonious sounds echoed through the world, the eight winds would harmonize too. As long as the winds blew harmoniously, auspiciousness would follow 古人謂十二律定, 而後被之八音則八音和, 奏之天地則八風和, 而諸被之物, 可致之祥, 無不畢致."[54] For him – indeed, for all Chinese emperors – music functioned as a political language.[55]

Using *bozhong* bells to determine the tonic in a musical performance made them the symbols of standardization and "the root of everything 萬事本根." These bells were regarded as the embodiments of the twelve-*lü* 律, the absolute and invariable pitches. Casting *bozhong* was just one part of the continuing project of reforming ritual and music.[56] In 1713 the Kangxi emperor had appointed an editorial board to draw up *Lülü zhengyi* 律呂正義 (*The Correct Interpretation of the [Twelve] Pitch-standards*), a comprehensive treatment of music theories, music history, and imperial music. An array of scholars specializing in musicology, astronomy, and mathematics, including two European Jesuits, participated in this project, and the results were published one year later.[57] Then, in 1741, Qianlong named an editorial board to prepare *Lülü zhengyi houbian* 律呂正義後編 (*A Supplement to The Correct Interpretation of the [Twelve] Pitch-standards*), a sequel to his grandfather's musical enterprise. Four years later, *Lülü zhengyi houbian* was complete.[58]

In 1759, while Qianlong was having the new *bozhong* cast to play ceremonial music, Qing troops conquered Khotan 和闐, famous for its jade mines. Yunlu 允祿, the director of the Board of Music, saw this as an opportunity to make chime-stones (also called lithophones). Qian-

[53] Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1982), pp. 55–83.

[54] *Qing shilu: Kangxi chao* 清實錄康熙朝 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985) 154, p. 23.

[55] On music and politics, see Evelyn S. Rawski, "Re-envisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History," *JAS* 4 (1996), pp. 829–50; Joseph S. C. Lam, *State Sacrifices and Music in Ming China: Orthodoxy, Creativity, and Expressiveness* (Albany: State U. of New York P., 1998).

[56] For a general study of the Qing movement to reform music, see Chen, *Qingshi yuezhi.*

[57] Ibid., pp. 16–26.

[58] Ibid., pp. 28–31.

long seized the suggestion, and the imperial workshops transformed Khotan jade into *teqing* 特磬, remarkable stone chimes that would be played with his *bozhong*.[59] Like *bozhong,* each *teqing* was individually hung and served to establish the tonic for the performances of the Centered Harmony.[60] In the politics of music, Qianlong believed that the sounds of bronze bells and jade chime-stones 金聲玉振 conveyed triumph. Just as the Duke of Zhou 周公 "set up rituals and music 制禮作樂" after King Wu 周武王 conquered the Shang, so would proper rituals and music celebrate Qing victories.

In the secular realm, Qianlong installed the twelve Zhou bells in Rhyming-the-Old Hall as the vehicles of ancient ways, but in the ritual context he made new *bozhong* – those replicas of Zhou bells – that ultimately rang music that was distinctive to the Qing. Both the Song emperor Huizong and Qianlong had used ancient models to cast new bells, but their motives diverged. The *dacheng* bells did not bear Song Huizong's inscription; they looked very much like Zhou bells. But no one could mistake Qianlong's *bozhong* for antiques. Even as he revived forgotten rituals and ideological contexts, the Manchu emperor modified ancient ways to suit the Manchu empire.

To further Qing claims to the Mandate of Heaven, Qianlong might have invited small audiences to Rhyming-the-Old Hall and shown them the original Zhou *bozhong* bells. Exhibited in this special gallery, those bells became actors on a small stage to "perform" silently the Mandate of Heaven, and Qianlong became a curator who drew music of a powerful sort from his collection. Still, only Manchu nobles or high ministers would have ever gained admission to Rhyming-the-Old Hall to observe the "silent performance" of the Mandate of Heaven. On the other hand, at ceremonies accompanied by the new *bozhong* performing Qing ritual music, row upon row of tributaries, representatives of the outer dependents, civil and military officials, musicians, dancers, and escorts – as many as 500 people – stood in dignified silence as the bronze notes hung in the air.[61] The new bells injected the legendary "ideal Zhou" into the political reality of the Manchu empire. The bells – both the originals and their duplicates – played out a metaphor of harmony and political order dominated by Confucian rulership.

[59] *Da Qing huidian tu* 大清會典圖 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), p. 395.

[60] *Huangchao liqi tushi* 8, pp. 31–46.

[61] For the size of audiences of major state rituals in the Qing, see Naquin, *Peking*, pp. 325–27.

On the grand sacrifices carried out during Qianlong's reign, Angela Zito wrote that "performance according to the texts was a re-presentation of the knowledge of past order coupled with the power of the emperor to command the objects and people needed to demonstrate its reality in the present Qing reign."[62] In my view, Qianlong's ritual use of ancient bronzes confirms Zito's argument, but while Zito cast the body of the emperor as the actor, I prefer to see the bronzes in that role and Qianlong as the director behind the scenes who created the image of the Qing empire as the second coming of the imaginary and idealized Zhou. Or perhaps we can see Qianlong as a producer of political dramas in which he enabled ancient bronzes to please Heaven.[63]

HEAVEN: THE ULTIMATE OWNER OF IMPERIAL COLLECTIONS

When I first set out to investigate Qianlong's practices as a collector and curator, I asked myself about his audiences: Who watched? Who listened? Who mattered? We know a great deal about Qianlong, an emperor whose distinctive voice is audible in almost everything he wrote, but we know very little about his audiences. To a certain degree, the Son of Heaven was controlled by his audiences and had to anticipate their reactions to his every performance. So much labor – the cataloguing, the creation of special studios for treasures of great interest, the performance of music using special replicas, the writing of poems inspired by his collections – not only for the eyes of the living, but for the inhabitants of the beyond as well. The peers of an emperor-collector were not primarily the amateurs who sought out classical masterpieces that bespoke their taste, but the emperors of the past and the future.

Lothar Ledderose has pointed out that every imperial art collection was a *lingbao* 靈寶, a magical treasure. The "tally of a contract that Heaven concludes with the ruler," the *lingbao* must be "preserved in the palace like the vital force in a human body."[64] However, this generalization needs to be historicized. It is possible to speak of exquisite objects owned by an emperor, for instance, without invoking the concept of an imperial collection with a specific political function. Before

62 Angela Zito, *Of Body and Brush: Grand Sacrifice as Text/Performance in Eighteenth-Century China* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1997), p. 151.

63 Here I drew upon Maggie Bickford, "Emperor Huizong and the Aesthetic of Agency," *Archives of Asian Art* 53 (2002–2003), pp. 71–104.

64 Lothar Ledderose, "Some Observations on the Imperial Art Collection in China," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 43 (1978–1979), p. 34.

an integrated bureaucratic system transformed an emperor's personal possessions into an imperial collection to legitimize his rule, a treasure's "vital force" was quite weak. For example, if the fondness of an emperor for a specific treasure inspired him to have it buried along with him after his death, one must surely speak of a treasure owned by an individual collector who happened to be an emperor, and any talk of an imperial collection legitimizing emperorship and dynastic sovereignty would be irrelevant.

The earliest system that functioned to transform emperors' personal possessions into imperial collections was probably the Mi ge 祕閣 (Palace Library) organized during the reign of Song Gaozong after the royal family fled to the south. In 1126 the Jin conquered Bianjing 汴京 (now Kaifeng), taking Song Huizong and his son, who would ultimately be named Qinzong 宋欽宗 (r. 1126), as hostages. Gaozong, the ninth son of Huizong, had to use every tool at his disposal to consolidate power because he was not a legitimate successor to the throne. He instituted the ritual of periodically inspecting what became the imperial collections housed in the Mi ge.[65] As the emperor entered the office, officials threw themselves onto the floor and fireworks shot off. After the emperor entered the building to inspect his treasures, waiting officials would join him and the group would inspect ancient pieces, works by famous artists, and the calligraphy and the paintings made by earlier Song emperors 宣群臣觀累朝御書御制書畫古器.[66] After inspection, the emperor would share a feast with high officials, invariably announcing the names of a few soon to be promoted. The ritual formed a strong link between the careful display of exquisite works of art and the functioning of the state.

In the Yuan dynasty, literary activities were added to the mix. Scholar-officials who were assigned to the Kuizhang ge 奎章閣 (Hall of Literature) spent their days studying and translating important texts, and brought the emperor enlightening paintings adorned with their poetic comments.[67] While these paintings belonged to the Yuan emperors, scholarly interpretations curbed the power of ownership. During the reign of Ming Xuanzong 明宣宗 (r. 1425–1434), the emperor and his

65 Peng Huiping 彭慧萍, "Liang Song gongting shu hua chucang zhidu zhi bian: yi mige wei hexin de jiancang jizhi yanjiu" 兩宋宮廷書畫儲藏制度之變, 以祕閣爲核心的鑑藏機制研究, *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 1 (2005), pp. 12–40.

66 Ibid., p. 35.

67 Ankeney Weitz, "Art and Politics at the Mongol Court of China: Tugh Temur's Collection of Chinese Paintings," *Artibus Asiae* 2 (2004), pp. 243–80.

officials cooperated actively in construing imperial art collections.[68] The Ming ritual inspection of imperial collections took the form of literary gatherings, exactly what Qianlong and his officials did two hundred years later.

As the chief curator of the Qing imperial collections, Qianlong set the rhetorical tone, obliging his team of literary officials to repeat that the imperial collections were the magical treasures of "our empire 我國家."[69] Many connoisseurs of our time would be outraged to see what Qianlong did to these treasures – adding lots of marks and inscriptions – and, in fact, Qianlong himself was concerned about this. Yet, these very traces, which branded the works of art as items of imperial collections, turned them into *lingbao*.

For example, a late-neolithic jade tablet displayed at Yangxin dian (now in the Palace Museum, Taipei) was inscribed with two of Qianlong's poems. (See figure 4.) The first poem was composed in 1746. At that time, however, in order not to impair its beauty 虞壞其質, Qianlong had Zhang Ruoai 張若靄 (1713–1746), a literary official and calligrapher, simply transcribe the poem onto the wooden stand that supported the jade.[70] Eight years later, in 1754, the emperor composed another poem in praise of the same jade tablet. On this occasion he overcame his scruples and ordered both the new and the old poems inscribed directly on the tablet. On a new wooden stand were carved additional eulogies composed by a group of prominent literary officials including Zhang Ruoai, Liang Shizheng 梁詩正 (1697–1763), Wang Youdun 汪由敦 (1692–1758), Li Zongwan 勵宗萬 (1705–1759), Qiu Yuexiu 裘曰修 (1712–1773),

Figure 4. Jade Tablet

Feng Ming-chu 馮明珠, *ed.,* Qianlong huangdi de wenhua daye 乾隆皇帝的文化大業 *(Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 2002), p. 95.*

[68] Wang Cheng-hua, "Material Culture and Emperorship: The Shaping of Imperial Roles at the Court of Xuanzong (r. 1426–35)," Ph.D. diss. (Yale University, 1998), pp. 316–38.

[69] Qianlong used this term in an imperial decree regarding the issue of selecting his successor 立儲; see *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 皇朝文獻通考 (SKQS edn.) 242, p. 11.

[70] Qing Gaozong, "Han yu pingfeng ge" 漢玉屏風歌, in *Yuzhi shiji, chu ji* 初集, *j.* 30, p.

and Dong Bangda 董邦達 (1699–1774). Not only did court officials contribute eulogies, but audiences attended the "ritual" during which the jade tablet became part of the imperial collections.

The emperor may well have organized a literary gathering to inspect this remarkable jade tablet in 1746: this was the occasion for his first poem. Probably the six officials who contributed eulogies were present. All of the poetry created during this gathering was filed away, and then dug out again to decorate the second stand. Designing and manufacturing the stand must have required a lot of time and labor, but painstakingly carving Qianlong's two poems – over five hundred characters in total – on the hard surface of the jade took far longer. Not dozens, not hundreds, but thousands of such projects were carried out during Qianlong's rule.

In the poem he wrote in 1746, the emperor said, "[This jade tablet] has circulated in the imperial household for a long time 內府流傳歲以久,/ but it has never been praised in a poem. Was it waiting [for the right moment] 從無題什啓有待?" I find this fascinating. Why did Qianlong think a precious jade might wait for praise? Why was he eventually unable to resist the temptation to mark the stone? Who would read the poems carved on it? I believe that the emperor did not consider the jade only as a passive rock and himself as an all-powerful owner, but instead viewed the jade as having a will of its own. Placing his words on the jade was an act of domestication, one side of a dialogue, a claim to the right (and the power) to serve the ancient stone and to rule the state.

Collecting is a continuing dialogue between people and the material world. The collector and the collectable dominate each other. As an emperor-collector, Qianlong considered collecting magical treasures as both his political responsibility and achievement; his bureaucracy had to evolve into connoisseurship in order to legitimize an object for the imperial collection. His collectorship and connoisseurship were completely institutionalized into his emperorship. Many of his efforts to expand and display the imperial collections belonged to the political realm as much as they did to the aesthetic. And as strong as his position was, the dialogue he carried out with his bronzes and other treasures bespeaks a dynamic, flexible relationship. This explains why Qianlong considered the bells unearthed in Jiangxi auspicious gifts

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6; idem, "Yong Han yu pingfeng die jiuzuo yun" 詠漢玉屏風疊舊作韻, in *Yuzhi shiji, chu ji*, *j.* 46, p. 5.

from Heaven. It was not enough to store these gifts at Rhyming-the-Old Hall; Qianlong also needed to repay Heaven by using the bells in the Qing's most important ritual events. For the treasures did not belong to the emperor, let alone his Chinese or Manchu subjects. Qianlong served as custodian, always aware that Heaven was the ultimate owner of every bell and chime.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GG	E'ertai and Zhang Tingyu et al., eds., *Guochao gongshi* 國朝宮史
GGXB	*Guochao gongshi xubian* 國朝宮史續編
Rixia	Yu Minzhong 于敏中 et al., eds., *Rixia jiuwen kao* 日下舊聞考