Bronzes from Afar
Qianlong’s “Xiqing Xujian Jiabian Fulu”

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Abstract: Qianlong’s three bronze catalogues, *Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑, *Ningshou jianju* 宁壽鑑古, and *Xiqing xujian* 西清續鑑, documenting a total of 4,115 bronzes, were the most comprehensive reference books on Chinese bronzes until the twentieth century. These three bronze catalogues should be comprehended as one curatorial project lasting for forty-four years, covering roughly three-fourths of Qianlong’s reign. Through this project, the emperor documented his ownership of the oldest creations of Chinese civilization and declared his respect for that long history.

While Qianlong fully consolidated power and his authority became unchallengeable, cataloguing bronzes turned into one of his ways of mapping the great Manchu empire: he included thirty-eight bronzes from afar in “Xiqing xujian jiabian fulu 西清續鑑甲編附錄.” Qianlong thus employed these bronze catalogues to position himself as a sage king who extended the historical depth even as he expanded the geographic scope of his empire. By means of close reading of Qianlong’s bronze catalogues, especially “Xiqing xujian jiabian fulu,” this paper investigates the emperor’s cultural performances—his presentation of bronzes as magical talismans from the utopian past, symbols of dynastic legitimacy, and mementoes of the glorious Manchu Empire.

Keywords: Qianlong, *Xiqing gujian*, *Xiqing xujian*, “Xiqing xujian jiabian fulu”, bronze

During the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor’s remarkable sixty-year-long reign (1735-1795), the Manchu empire grew to its greatest extent, expanding its dominion from China over central Asia. The emperor’s achievements on collecting and preserving artifacts are as impressive as his success in ruling over the empire. Being an

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exceptionally enthusiastic collector who determined to accumulate as many different collections as possible, Qianlong was willing to exercise his absolute power to acquire the most precious and rare works of art, either local or imported. In addition to objects from the past and the present, Qianlong also collected culture and nature, territory and authority, and human subjects.

Ancient bronzes supposedly dating from the Shang 商 (ca. 1600-1045 BC), Zhou 周 (ca. 1045-256 BC), Han 漢 (206 BC-AD 220), and Tang 唐 (618-907) dynasties prove particularly well suited to the study of the emperor’s “rule through collections.” As early as the Shang, bronzes were conceptualized as ritual objects; they symbolized political legitimacy and sovereignty. As a token of cultural identity, social status, taste, and merit, a three-thousand-year-old bronze was and remains emblematic of political power even in twenty-first-century China.

In the 1749 edict calling on scholars to draw up his first bronze catalogue Xiqing gujian 西清古鑑 (The ancient mirror of Western Clarity), the emperor presented himself as a collector who just happened to be able to accumulate an especially large number of ancient bronzes. Xiqing gujian also opens with this edict, the only text in which Qianlong clearly expressed opinions on his bronze collections:

On the seventh day of the eleventh month, in the fourteenth year of the reign of the Qianlong emperor [1749], we have respectfully received his majesty’s superior command: Among the rare ancient ritual objects handed down through generations, only bronze vessels such as the zun, yi, ding, and nai will last forever through the ages. Their solid nature and heavy bodies remain unchanged by drought and damp, unharmed by rust. Their mysterious glories reveal the greatness and atmosphere of the three dynasties [that is, the Xia, Shang, and Zhou]. Therefore, many antiquarians are anxious to acquire ancient bronzes. Xuanhe bogu tulu circulated widely among art world and then came Lü Dalin’s Kaogu tu. Besides these two catalogues, very few records about ancient bronzes have survived. The techniques to compile catalogues do exist, but the difficulty of gathering a large number of ancient bronzes remains. Small collections are not worth recording. The royal discipline of our dynasty prevents us from indulging in entertainments and frivolities. But it is perfectly acceptable for the people to take part in the lively realms of connoisseurship and art appreciation and, after all, many bronzes are displayed in the imperial palaces. In spite of the pressures of my duties, I have found the time to examine and grade these bronzes, discovering that many of these
ancient bronzes have never been documented in previous catalogues. Since the discovery and disappearance of these ancient treasures are events of some moment, if we fail to honor them by writing them up in books as soon as possible, how can future investigators get information? I hereby designate the three ministers Liang Shizheng, Jiang Pu, and Wang Youdun, leading Hanlin scholars of the inner court, to compile *The Ancient Mirror of Western Clarity*, following the schema of *Xuanhe bogu tulu* by providing detailed depictions of form and unabridged transcriptions of inscriptions. If, while one is bringing the reserve of merit [accumulated from] one’s engagement with the arts to bear on lofty thoughts drawn from reflections on antiquity, this is worthy of the name of peace and grace. Respect this.

In this edict, Qinlong humbly explained that he had simply “brought the reserve of merit [accumulated from] the engagement with art to bear on lofty thoughts drawn from reflections on antiquity” (以游藝之餘功寄鑑古之遠思). The term *jiangu鉴古*, which literally means “using the past as a mirror” and has an extended meaning of “drawing lessons from the past,” provided the emperor with excellent motivation to collect as many ancient bronzes as he could.

Qinlong called bronzes *fawu法物* in this edict, literally meaning “model object” or “ritual object,” a term used in state rites with resonance for dynastic legitimation. *Fawu* such as ritual vessels, imperial seals, ceremonial dress, musical and astronomical instruments, carriages, and banners, helped people to visualize sovereignty and jurisdiction. *Fawu* objects symbolized imperial majesty: who

possessed them possessed the heavenly mandate. Conceptualizing ancient bronzes as fawu explained why and how Qianlong used ancient bronzes to rationalize the Manchu ruling over China. With the rise of a new dynasty, old fawu systems had to be overturned and new ones set up in their stead. How a new regime handled old fawu revealed its relation to past dynasties. Some emperors might call for wholesale destruction, while others might collect these objects into treasuries. In 591, Emperor Wen of Sui dynasty (隋文帝) declared that all the booty he had collected while conquering the Chen 陳 kingdom turned into demons and had to be destroyed. Citing the same reason, in 1158 the Jurchen emperor of the Jin 金 ordered the destruction of all the old ritual objects captured from the Song 宋 and the Liao 迤.

In most cases, however, the old fawu of previous dynasties became collections preserved by new rulers as proof of their claims to sovereignty. After the Manchu conquest of the Ming, the Department of Imperial Household (內務府) and the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (太常寺) in the Forbidden City served as repositories for countless Ming fawu. Qianlong once demanded that the Court of Imperial Sacrifices inventoried the Ming ritual objects in storage, selecting five items of old jade to be displayed in the Qianqing Gong 乾清宮. By collecting and displaying the Ming fawu, or any antiquated fawu from previous dynasties, Qianlong in a way put the collective memory of the past under control.

Catalogues, especially printed ones, dramatically expanded the spatial and temporal audience for a collection. Far more people than those permitted to visit imperial galleries would acknowledge Qianlong’s possession of precious objects as they leafed through his catalogues. The Qing imperial library had collected many bronze catalogues compiled by previous emperors or individual collectors. From these predecessors, Qianlong quickly realized that a book in which each object was precisely described would be the ultimate fusion of his claims to ownership and his fascination with quantification and display.

Qianlong ordered the editorial board of Xiqing gujian to closely imitate the style and format of Song emperor Huizong’s (宋徽宗) Xuanhe bogu tulu.
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(Xuanhe period illustrated guide to antiquity): every entry must contain a well-drawn illustration of the bronze, along with rubbings and transcriptions of any inscriptions. In compliance with Qianlong’s edict, the editors of Xiqing gujian faithfully imitated the typological scheme of Xuanhe bogu tulu, dividing bronzes first according to type and then subdividing them according to period. Since Huizong, the great collector who pioneered imperial collecting, lost everything he had ever collected during the invasion of Jurchen army in 1126, Qianlong must do better.5 Claiming that he was obliged to protect imperial collections because nobody else could collect as many treasures as he did, Qianlong resorted to every conceivable means to enlarge and preserve his collections.

Qianlong’s three bronze catalogues, Xiqing gujian, Ningshou jiangu 宁寿鉴古 (The Ningshou Palace mirror of antiquity), and Xiqing xujian 西清续鉴 (The supplement to “The ancient mirror of Western Clarity”), documenting a total of 4,115 bronzes, were the most comprehensive reference books on Chinese bronzes until the twentieth century. These three bronze catalogues should be comprehended as one curatorial project lasting for forty-four years, covering roughly three-fourths of Qianlong’s reign. Through this project, the emperor documented his ownership of the oldest creations of Chinese civilization and declared his respect for that long history. As he said in the 1749 edict, “The mysterious glories [of ancient bronzes] reveal the greatness and atmosphere of the [Xia, the Shang, and the Zhou] three dynasties (淵然之光穆乎可見三代以上規模氣象).”

While Qianlong fully consolidated power and his authority became unchallengeable, cataloguing bronzes turned into one of his ways of mapping the great Manchu empire: he included thirty-eight bronzes from the frontiers in his final catalogue, Xiqing xujian. Qianlong thus employed these bronze catalogues to position himself as a sage king who extended the historical depth even as he expanded the geographic scope of his empire. By means of close reading of Qianlong’s bronze catalogues, this paper investigates the emperor’s cultural performances—his presentation of bronzes as magical talismans from the utopian past, symbols of dynastic legitimacy, and mementoes of the glorious Manchu Empire.

5. Patricia B. Ebrey has made useful points about the relationship between Huizong’s and Qianlong’s bronze cataloguing practices, see Patricia B. Ebrey, Accumulating Culture: The Collections of Emperor Huizong (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), pp. 341-352.
Collecting a Utopian Past

Thousands of ancient bronzes found their ways into the Qing Department of Imperial Household (內務府), but not all of them ended up being catalogued. Many either lay forgotten in storage rooms, or were melted down and sold as scrap. The frequent mentioning of such cases in the *Yangxindian zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huojidang* (Records of manual labor of the Imperial Factory of the Yangxin Hall, henceforth “huojidang”) makes me wonder whether the unclassified bronzes may have outnumbered the 4,115 objects that Qianlong considered as collectables. Still, 4,115 is certainly a large number compared with the 840 bronzes listed in *Xuanhe bogu tulu*. It was said that Huizong collected about six thousand ancient bronzes in twenty-five years. Had Qianlong pursued his collections at the same rate, he could have obtained 14,400 bronzes in sixty years, indicating that more than ten thousand bronzes were unqualified for cataloguing according to the emperor’s criteria.

6. Qianlong’s collections grew out of the Ming imperial collections, private property confiscated by the Qing government, and gifts from officials and foreign diplomats. For a general survey of confiscated art collections during the Qianlong era, see Wei Mei-yueh, “Qianlong huangdi de jiazhiguan yu rugong de ruguan wenwu 乾隆皇帝的價值觀與入宮的入官文物,” *Gugong wenwu yuekan* (故宮文物月刊), 16 (5), pp. 118-133. On the regulations of gift giving in the Qianlong court, see Dong Jianzhong, “Qing Qianlong chao wanggong dachen guanyuan jingong wenti chutan 清乾隆朝王公大臣官員進貢問題初探,” *Qingshi yanjiu* (清史研究), 1996 (1), pp. 40-50, 66. The chaos of war during the dynastic transition made it very hard to assess the volume of treasures seized from the Ming imperial collections, but the Forbidden City did store a great number of works of art during the Ming dynasty, including ancient bronzes. See Zhu Jiajin, “Mingqing gongdian neibu chenshe gaishuo 明清宮殿內部陳設概說,” *Jincheng yingshan ji* (禁城營繕紀)(Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1992), pp. 318-322. However, how many bronzes existed in the imperial palaces when Qianlong came to power is not so clear. It is possible that many of objects in *Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑 came from imperial collections that antedated Qionglong’s reign. The bronzes documented in *Ningshou jiangu* 宁壽鑑古 and *Xiqing xujian* 西清續鑑 were mostly accumulated over Qionglong’s reign.

7. The original *huojidang* archives are in the Number One Historical Archives (第一歷史檔案館), Beijing. In this project, I mainly rely on the copies in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

8. Compared with what private collectors managed to amass at the same time, Qianlong piled up an astonishing number of bronzes. Few Qing collectors ever owned as many as one hundred ancient bronzes. For example, Ruan Yuan (1764-1849) only possessed seventy-four bronzes according to his *Jiguzhai cangqi mu* 積古齋藏器目 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1966). Chen Jieqi 陳介祺 (1813-1884), reputedly the dynasty’s greatest private collector, only managed to acquire around 380 bronzes. See Chen Jieqi, *Fuzhai cangqi mu* 篆齋藏器目, in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編, vol. 1550 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936). Qianlong snatched up most bronzes that
With more than four thousand entries, Qianlong’s three catalogues could only have been accomplished by imperial support. The editorial board of *Xiqing gujian* (1749-1751) included Liang Shizheng 梁詩正 (1697-1763), Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (1714-1778), Jiang Pu 蒋溥 (1708-1761), Wang Youdun 汪由敦 (1692-1758), Ji Huang 建璜 (1711-1794), Qiu Yuexiu 裘曰修 (1712-1773), Jin Deying 金德瑛 (1701-1762), Guanbao 觀保 (d. 1776), Dong Bangda 董邦達 (1696-1796), Wang Jihua 王際華 (d. 1776), and Qian Weicheng 錦維城 (1720-1772). Most of these men, including the two most prominent, Liang Shizheng and Yu Minzhong, were involved in other imperial cataloguing projects, such as the painting catalogues, *Midian zhulin* 秘殿珠林 (Beaded grove of the Secret Hall) and *Shiqu baoji* 石渠寶笈 (Precious book box of the Stone Drain). While none was considered a serious epigraphic specialist in ancient bronzes, some were amateurs who knew something of antiquarianism, or *jinshixue* 金石学. For example, it was said Jin Deying collected rubbings of stone steles. Others were acquainted with well-known *jinshixue* scholars. Liang Shizheng was a good friend of Wang Chang 王昶 (1725-1806), the author of *Jinshi cui bian* 金石萃編 (Complete collections of metals and stones).

*Xiqing gujian* was printed in 1755 by the Wuyingdian 武英殿 imperial printing house. There is no record of how many copies were made or where they went, but presumably many were bestowed upon court officials. Of Qianlong’s three bronze catalogues, only *Xiqing gujian* was originally printed; the others were only in manuscript form. Even with the exceptional edition included in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全

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11. As far as I know, nine copies of the Wuyingdian imperial printing house edition (武英殿刊本) of *Xiqing gujian* still survive today. Two are in the Palace Museum, Taipei, one in Peking University, one in the Chinese Academy of Science (中國科學院), one in Shanghai Library (上海圖書館), one in Liaoning Library (遼寧省圖書館), one in the Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University (京都大學人文科學研究所), and the last two in the National Archives of Japan (公文書館).
書，available only in seven libraries in the entire Qing empire, *Xiqing gujian*, however, did not circulate beyond the court and members of the imperial family at that time.\(^\text{12}\) It was not until 1888 that private publishers printed new editions and this catalogue began to circulate widely.\(^\text{13}\)

In addition to the printed version, Qianlong commissioned a hand-painted version: perhaps he amused himself with this single copy.\(^\text{14}\) Today, only one out of forty volumes of this painted version exists in the Institute of Archaeology in Beijing. Its contents correspond to the thirty-second *juan* of printed *Xiqing gujian*. According to the *huojidang*, this painted version was called “*Xiqing gujian ceye*” 西清古鑑冊頁, and was finished in 1758, three years after the printed version. This painted version presents bronzes quite faithfully, depicting colors, shapes, and even shadows with great detail.

### The Ancient Mirror

Why did Qianlong initiate the *Xiqing gujian* project? We know that some time during 1748, while rummaging through his many collections, the sight of a bronze mirror that was never mentioned in previous literature strongly affected the emperor (fig. 1).\(^\text{15}\) Qianlong attributed it to the Yellow Emperor (黃帝), the legendary founder of Chinese civilization, and composed “*Gu tong jian ge*” 古銅鑑歌, “The Song of the Ancient Bronze Mirror,” which was also transcribed onto *Xiqing gujian* as follows:

> The Yellow Emperor cast this divine object from liquid bronze. Its virtue corresponds to Heaven and Earth, brightening the sun and the moon.

\(^\text{12}\) At the conclusion of imperially sanctioned publishing projects, tradition required that at least one copy be presented to Qianlong (呈覽本), ten to thirty copies be sent to various imperial palaces for display (陳設本), two hundred copies be presented to imperial family members or high officials (賞賜本), and three hundred copies be sold to the public (通行本). See Zhu Saihong 朱賽虹, “Cong zhuanghuang kan banben: Yi Qingdai huangjia shuji wei dianxing 从装潢看版本—以清代皇家书籍为典型,” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊, 88 (2), pp. 70-77. I doubt that copies of this work were sold to the public: before two commercial publishers reprinted the Wuyingdian version in 1888, no one seemed to have quoted from Qianlong’s bronze catalogues.

\(^\text{13}\) According to Liu Yu 劉雨, there were five printed editions and two manuscript editions. See Liu Yu, *Qianlong sijian zongli biao* 乾隆四鑑縱理表 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), pp. 5-6.


\(^\text{15}\) Unfortunately, this mirror seems not to have survived today, or it is held in an unknown private collection.
Yu, Hui-Chun  Bronzes from Afar Qianlong’s “Xiqing Xujian Jiabian Fulu”

軒轅液金作神物, 德合乾坤明日月.
Nourished by the energy of yin and yang, it cannot be destroyed even after eighteen thousand years.

陰陽精氣此蘊鬱, 萬八千春豈湮沒.
Troops in Heaven protect it from demons. With a polished splendid-green-colored round circle in the center, the entire mirror is as beautiful as celestial space with shining stars and bright moon.

丁甲護持魑魅祓, 中圓光外綠雲蔚, 如星重輪麗天闕.
Even the four spirits and five mountains cannot compete with its splendor. Its vigor seizes the power of ordinary mirrors of the Han and Tang dynasties.

四靈五嶽卒難核, 漢唐俗製氣早奪.
Its auspiciousness might save Qu Yuan from injustice and suffering, because it illuminates the good among the treacherous, piercing their hearts and bones.

其祥應不讓屈軹, 以燭賢奸洞心骨.16

As was his practice with jades, ceramics, and other treasures about which he enthused, Qianlong had his poem inscribed directly onto the lower part of this mirror’s reflective, polished side, as well as the designs of his two seals—“de chong fu” 德充符 and “huixin buyuan” 會心不遠, meaning “the sign of virtue complete” and “the way of enlightenment is not far.” One year later, in 1749, Qianlong issued the edict in which he called for a catalogue to be named in honor of this bronze mirror.17 Thomas Lawton has commented, “Qianlong never had inscriptions added to the surfaces of the ritual bronzes in the imperial collection, even though it was technically possible to do so.”18 I do not know whether this mirror meets Lawton’s definition of a ritual object, but his general point is not wrong: the inscription on this mirror is extraordinary.

Even today, such a plain mirror is not easy to date. While Qianlong’s identification was spurious, the simplicity of the mirror convinced Qianlong of its venerability. If it had belonged to the Yellow Emperor, it would have been Qianlong’s oldest bronze, and older than any of Huizong’s collections.

16. Xiqing gujian, juan 39, p. 3.
17. The Yellow Emperor’s mirror did not win pride of place when Xiqing gujian was finally drawn up; the thirty-ninth chapter, the last but one, describes it.
What did those scholarly editors of *Xiqing gujian* have to say about this mirror? “The Yellow Emperor did once cast twelve mirrors on the Wangwu Mountain [. . .] This mottled, unusual mirror looks so old that it could not have been cast after the Han or Tang dynasty, but [we] cannot date it. We name it ‘the ancient mirror’ to place it ahead of all mirrors.” (軒轅氏於王屋山鑄鏡十二…此器斑駁古異，非漢唐以下所能彷彿，亦不能名其時代，命之曰古鑑，以冠於諸鑑之首).19 Those editors, though they could not date this mirror, thus confirmed it was an antique relic and kept alive the possibility that the Yellow Emperor had cast it. Perhaps this was simply another way of saying that the mirror was older than any reference they might apply.

Why would Qianlong name the catalogue after a plain mirror without decoration and ancient inscription? Why not after a cauldron or a bell, something with a long and interesting inscription? Was this a gesture of humility? After all, compared with Huizong’s “bogu” 博古, which means “to possess a wide knowledge of ancient things,” “gujian” 古鑑, or “a mirror for reflecting the past,” is a humble expression. Qianlong forbore any claim to knowledge of antiquities; instead, he hoped that his collections could provide ancient models. He was young, and his bronze collections did not rival Huizong’s six thousand items at that time. However, this ancient mirror ascribed to Yellow Emperor could be older than any of Huizong’s collections, and made Qianlong the most significant emperor-collector in imperial China.

The most celebrated and mysterious bronzes in Chinese history were the nine cauldrons (九鼎) supposedly cast by Yu 禹, the mythical sage king who founded the Xia 夏 kingdom, allegedly China’s first dynasty. The Yellow Emperor was said to have ruled five hundred years before Yu. Qianlong may have believed that the objects that the Yellow Emperor supposedly left behind differed from later bronzes in type as well as style: among their manufactures were this mirror, and bronze money.

Thus, in the winter of 1750, while the scholars of the Nan Shufang 南書房 were busy compiling *Xiqing gujian*, Qianlong decided to tack on another project: he ordered Liang Shizheng to begin working on *Qian lu* 錢錄, the catalogue of ancient bronze coins. Both catalogues were complete by the summer of 1751. They were printed jointly, *Qian lu* as a supplement to *Xiqing gujian*, to form one big catalogue.

Without *Qian lu*’s 567 bronze coins dating from remote antiquity down to the Ming, we cannot fully appreciate Qianlong’s bronze enterprise. Among his coins were some attributed to Fuxi 伏羲, Shennong 神農, the Yellow Emperor (黃帝), Shaohao

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少昊, 高陽, 堯, and 舜, all of whom were mythical rulers from the dawn of Chinese civilization. The first entry, a coin associated with Fuxi, was identified as the very first coin (貨幣之始), even older than the ancient mirror attributed to the Yellow Emperor. By laying claim to a series of relics that corresponded to the entire ancient history of the Chinese world, Qianlong declared all known time for himself.

**Ningshou Jiangu**

Of Qianlong’s three bronze catalogues, Ningshou jiangu, which describes 701 items, is the most problematic. It lacks both preface and postscript, and virtually nothing is known about who edited it or when. We do know that Peng Yuanrui 彭元瑞, the editor-in-chief of Xiqing xujian, was involved. Of all three bronze catalogues, Ningshou jiangu must have been compiled after the end of the Xiqing gujian project in 1755 but before the start of Xiqing xujian in 1781 because the editors of Ningshou jiangu once cited Xiqing gujian but never referred to Xiqing xujian. Judging from the title, the compilation of Ningshou jiangu probably began around 1770 to 1776 during the renovation of the Ningshou Gong 寧壽宮, the palace in the Forbidden City originally planned as Qianlong’s residence for his retirement. According to Shen Chu 沈初 (1735-1799), a Hanlin 翰林 scholar who served at the Nan Shufang 南書房 more than thirty years during Qianlong’s reign, the 701 bronzes documented in Ningshou jiangu were selected from the bronzes that Qianlong acquired after the completion of Xiqing gujian; all were displayed in the Ningshou Gong.

While no color version of Ningshou jiangu exists today, it is quite possible that the first version of this catalogue was a hand-painted version. A transcribed version

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21. Liu Yu has inferred from this detail that the editorial board of Ningshou jiangu might have been the same as that of Xiqing xujian. See Liu Yu, *Qianlong sijian zongli biao*, pp. 4-5.
24. According to the *huojidang*, there are at least nine records within the years from 1769 to 1770 mentioning the project of making “Xiqing gujian ceye 西清古鑑冊頁,” in total thirty-two volumes. Judging from the date, this set of “Xiqing gujian ceye” would not have been the painted version of Xiqing gujian mentioned above, but of Ningshou jiangu. It is very possible that the first edition of Ningshou jiangu was this color version. See “Qianlong sanshiwu nian Ruyiguan 乾隆三十五年如意館” in *Yangxindian zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdang* 養心殿造辦處各作成做活計清檔 (Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Dang’an Guan 中國第一歷史檔案館).
did not exist until 1793 when Qianlong commissioned the staffs of Maoqin Dian 懷勤殿 to transcribe Ningshou jiangu as well as Xiqing xujian.\textsuperscript{25} Quite possibly the final title of Ningshou jiangu was not given to the catalogue until this transcribed version was nearing completion.\textsuperscript{26} To some extent, the very title Ningshou jiangu (The Ningshou Palace mirror of antiquity) shows that the emperor’s imminent retirement from the public stage was an occasion for examining bronzes in his private space. He was trying to bridge the gap between ancient sage-hood and his collectorship.

**Xiqing Xujian**

After the Xiqing gujian and Ningshou jiangu projects had been completed, Qianlong’s bronze collection kept growing. In 1781, Qianlong called for another catalogue; Xiqing xujian was finished in 1793.\textsuperscript{27} According to the huojidang, there was a bit of a rush: the transcription of Ningshou jiangu and Xiqing xujian, totaling 7,048 pages, had to be completed within two years before Qianlong’s abdication in 1795. The painters employed in Ruyiguan 如意館 could not handle all of the work themselves and had to hire additional staff.\textsuperscript{28} All these efforts belonged to the celebration surrounding the conclusion of Qianlong’s six decades in power.

**Xiqing xujian, jiabian** 西清續鑑甲編, the first volume of Xiqing xujian, listed 975 bronzes stored in the Forbidden City; the 900 bronzes in the second volume, yibian 乙編, were originally in Beijing until 1782 when, probably right after the cataloguing project was concluded, they were sent to Shengjing 盛京, today’s Shenyang 瀋陽, the old capital of Qing empire before it took over Ming China.\textsuperscript{29} Xiqing xujian is unique among Qianlong’s three bronze catalogues because the last thirty-eight objects were gathered from Qing frontiers. Most of them were not typical Chinese bronzes and were cast quite recently. Small as it was, this section

\begin{flalign*}
\text{25.}\ & \text{“Qianlong wushiba nian liu yue Ruyiguan 乾隆五十八年六月如意館” in Yangxindian zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdang 養心殿造辦處各作成做活計清檔.}
\text{26.}\ & \text{In Shen Chu’s notes, this catalogue was originally called Ningshou gujian 宁壽古鑑, rather than Ningshou jiangu 宁壽鑑古. See Shen Chu, Xiqing biji 西清筆記, juan 1, p.6.}
\text{27.}\ & \text{I mainly use the 1911 reprint edition of Xiqing xujian and “Xiqing xujian jiabian fulu” published by Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館.}
\text{28.}\ & \text{“Qianlong wushiba nian jiu yue Ruyiguan 乾隆五十八年九月如意館” in Yangxindian zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdang 養心殿造辦處各作成做活計清檔.}
\end{flalign*}
expanded the scope of Qianlong’s entire bronze collections from the central cultural zone to the peripheral areas, as well as stretching from the legendary ancient era of Fuxi 伏羲 to the eighteenth century. Qianlong, who took special interest in these frontier bronzes, wrote commentaries for sixteen of them. The emperor must have considered these objects very important because he clearly spent some time examining and thinking about them before writing commentaries. The editorial board seconded this emphasis, devoting special attention to these frontier bronzes in the catalogue’s postscript.

If Xiqing gujian was created to proclaim Qianlong a great collector, then Xiqing xujian was the monument that would wrap up his long rule. Its long postscript, dated 1793, was in reality the concluding remarks on all three bronze catalogues. According to this postscript, Xiqing xujian would supplement our knowledge about ancient history and rituals, provide models so that bells to be played in Qing state rites might more closely resemble those played by the ancients, celebrate several magnificent events in the life of the emperor, and commemorate his ten military campaigns.30

The postscript of Xiqing gujian written in 1751 mentioned none of Qianlong’s achievements or contributions, but forty-one years later, the emperor sounded triumphant by calling himself “the old man of ten victories” （十全老人）and his officials shamelessly showered him with praise. In 1794, Peng Yuanrui 彭元瑞, one of the main cataloguers of Xiqing xujian, edited Yuzhi shiwen shiquanj 青詩文十全集 (Collection of the poetry and prose written by the emperor on the ten campaigns), an anthology of Qianlong’s essays and poems about the ten principal military campaigns launched during his reign. Peng presented this anthology to Qianlong as a gift. It is the most comprehensive record of Qianlong’s thoughts on the ten campaigns and is of great value to anyone who wants some context for the frontier bronzes documented in Xiqing xujian. One can only wonder whether Peng played a role in the inclusion of these frontier bronzes in this catalogue he compiled.

A comparison of the contents of Xiqing gujian and Xiqing xujian shows a shift in Qianlong’s emperorship from a focus on administration and culture to an emphasis on warfare and statecraft. In a separate essay entitled “Shi quan ji 十全記” (A record of the ten victories), Qianlong said that after all of its enemies had submitted to the Qing empire, he realized that in addition to promote culture and education, the government

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ought also to maintain a standing army to protect the homeland. He also came to see that bronzes had more than one function: they could point the way to an ideal past, of course, but they could also remind anyone who saw them of those who had submitted to the great Qing. The more, the better.

“Xiqing Xujian Jiabian Fulu”

“Xiqing xujian jiabian fulu” (Appendix to the first volume of “A supplement to ‘The mirror of Western Clarity’”), a small catalogue, physically part of Xiqing xujian, recorded the thirty-eight metal objects collected from the border areas of the Qing empire—modern Mongolia, Inner Asia, Tibet, and Vietnam—over the course of Qianlong’s reign. These objects were the fruits of what we might call Qing imperialism: war trophies from Inner Asia, tributes from allies, or relics unearthed after the Qing colonized and created Xinjiang 新疆. Some were displayed in the Ziguang Ge 紫光阁 (Pavilion of purple light), a Qing military museum. Alongside large paintings and engravings that narrated Qianlong’s principal campaigns and many portraits of meritorious officials, these tokens from afar commemorated Qianlong’s “ten victorious campaigns,” certified Qing sovereignty over Xinjiang, and represented the vision of the great Qing empire under Qianlong’s rule.

The “Xiqing xujian jiabian fulu” (henceforth ‘fulu’) presents thirty-eight objects in thirty-one entries. These objects can be classified into five groups by function: four containers, nine weapons, two musical instruments, fourteen seals, and nine coins. As in the main body of Xiqing xujian, every entry in the fulu has an illustration and a detailed description including a date, dimensions, origins, and significant features. For antique collectors in eighteenth-century China, the thirty-eight objects might have been considered attractive foreign goods, but they were definitely not in the mainstream of antique collection. To Qianlong, they kindled his imagination of foreign lands, a multicultural and multiethnic world that extended well beyond the Manchu and the Han.

As an independent unit placed at the end of the first volume of Xiqing xujian, this modest appendix was definitely insignificant. The main body of Xiqing xujian comprised forty juan 卷 and described 1,837 bronzes from the Shang to the Tang dynasties. The thirty-eight objects in the fulu were too different and too new to fit into this catalogue. Some of them were actually manufactured in the Qianlong era; others

were not even made of bronze. Readers might have easily ignored these peculiar objects in the last part of *Xiqing xujian*. There was no question of impressing others with the handwritten *Xiqing xujian* because this bronze catalogue was not meant to be circulated, but was instead imbued with a “public” purpose.

One of Qianlong’s principal achievements was the conquest of neighboring territories, which the *fulu* clearly demonstrated by explaining the ways he obtained these objects. The *fulu* should not be regarded as just a catalogue of antiques: its language clearly was borrowed from an imperialist discourse and the very objects selected embodied Qianlong’s vision to make the Qing empire as grand as the thirteenth-century Mongolian empire. The emperor commissioned a sequence of complex commemorations of his *shiquan wugong* 十全武功 (ten victorious campaigns), including multilingual steles placed all over the country,\(^{32}\) enormous paintings of battle scenes and meritorious officials hanging in the Ziguang Ge,\(^{33}\) paintings of imperial banquets given to foreign visitors,\(^{34}\) and cartographic projects.\(^{35}\) The objects in the *fulu* can add one more chapter to our understanding of this grand dissemination of imperial propaganda.

The editorial board of *Xiqing xujian* included Wang Jie 王杰 (1725-1805), Dong Gao 董誥 (1740-1818), Peng Yuanrui 彭元瑞 (1733-1803), Jin Shisong 金士松 (1730-1800), Yubao 玉保 (1759-1798), Hutuli 瑚圖禮 (d. 1814), and Nayancheng 那彥成 (1764-1833). Though no extant record described the organizational hierarchy, Wang Jie and Dong Gao might have been the main editors of the *fulu* because both achieved distinction in the wars in Taiwan and Gurkha (Nepal). Still, only one object in the *fulu* is associated with the Gurkha campaign and none was associated with the Taiwan


\(^{34}\) On the painting *Imperial Banquet in the Park of Ten Thousand Trees* (萬樹園賜宴圖), see Lucia Tripodes, “Painting and Diplomacy at the Qianlong Court: A Commemorative Picture by Wang Zhicheng (Jean-Denis Attiret),” *Res*, 35 (1999), pp. 185-200.

Peng Yuanrui, who knew a great deal about Qianlong’s military campaigns, was also qualified to be the chief editor of the *fulu*. In any case, the *fulu* was completed sometime between Qianlong 57 (1792) and Qianlong 58 (1793), right before the whole *Xiqing xujian* project was finished. We know this because the last two objects in the *fulu* that Qianlong obtained were the drum and cymbal from Annam (Vietnam), acquired in 1792.

Editing the *fulu* probably did not take long and may not have been initiated by Qianlong. With such a small percentage of his frontier booty appearing in the *fulu*, it was likely that as the seven editors neared the end of the *Xiqing xujian* project they decided to please their patron by quickly producing the small *fulu*. Why? In Qianlong 57 (1792), Qianlong announced his plan to abdicate in the sixtieth year of his rule (1795), many officials sought ways to show their loyalty.

A distinguishing feature of the *fulu* is that sixteen of the entries open with a commentary by Qianlong. These commentaries, either in verse or in prose, were composed between Qianlong 20 (1755) and Qianlong 53 (1788), well before the creation of the catalogue. This was extraordinarily unusual. Of all the 4,115 ancient bronzes catalogued, only seventeen entries open with Qianlong’s commentaries. Sixteen are in the *fulu*. The other one is the ancient mirror mentioned above that gave the first catalogue its name. These sixteen carefully transcribed commentaries explain how the collector Qianlong interpreted these objects in his own words. He must have examined these objects before he wrote the commentaries. Some commentaries are full of detailed information about these bronzes, such as their physical condition, decorations, inscriptions, and how they ended up in the Qing imperial collection. The editors of the *fulu* did not bother to add much to these commentaries. In a sense, Qianlong was the main contributor to the *fulu*; his commentaries functioned as strong declarations of authorship.

**Objects Related to the Zunghar Wars**

The Zunghar wars took place intermittently between Qianlong 20 (1755)
and Qianlong 23 (1758). Victory gave the Qing empire its first opportunity to set up colonies in Zungharia.\(^{37}\) Zunghar was the most powerful Mongolian kingdom in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To dominate all the Mongolian kingdoms, the Qing decided to first take on the Zunghars. Before Qianlong launched his large campaign, low-level conflicts had routinely broken out for over a century. For this victory in 1758, Qianlong proudly claimed he had accomplished what he called his ancestors’ incomplete enterprise (述我祖宗未竟之志事).\(^{38}\)

**Table 1. Objects related to the Zunghar wars**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item(^{39})</th>
<th>Date made</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date collected</th>
<th>Qianlong’s commentary</th>
<th>Where displayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron seal of Zunghar (準噶爾鐵章)</td>
<td>17(^{th}) century</td>
<td>Trophy</td>
<td>1755</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze seal of Hainu (海努銅印)</td>
<td>1726</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1760?</td>
<td>Prose with poem</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan great seal for issuing imperial decrees (元制誥之寶)</td>
<td>Yuan dynasty</td>
<td>Gift(^{40})</td>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan official seal of Taiwei from the Xuanguang era (元宣光年太尉印)</td>
<td>Yuan dynasty</td>
<td>Unearthed</td>
<td>1771 (spring)</td>
<td>Prose with poem</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torghut sword inlaid with seven jewels (土爾扈特七寶刀)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Tribute</td>
<td>1771 (fall)</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Ziguang Ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New currency commemorating the pacification of Yili (平定伊犁新鑄錢)</td>
<td>1775</td>
<td>Cast by Qing mint in Yili</td>
<td>1775</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39. All the item names and dates in these tables are based on the *fulu*. Some of them might originally be Qianlong’s attributions.
40. It is not always possible to distinguish a tribute from a gift. Here, I use the word “tribute” for the Chinese word “gong 貢” in the text, and “gift” for “gongjin 恭進.”
1. Iron Seal of Zunghar (準噶爾鐵章)

The iron seal illustrated in fig. 2 was a war trophy from Yili 伊犁, taken during the first Zunghar war in the summer of Qianlong 20 (1755). The text of the seal read: “E-er-de-ni-zhuo-li-ke-tu hongtaiji zhi zhang” 厄爾德尼卓里克圖洪台吉之章. According to Qianlong’s commentary written in the same year when the seal was taken, “E-er-de-ni-zhuo-li-ke-tu” was a transliteration of a Sanskrit phrase meaning “the celebrated king with majestic sovereignty” (寶權大慶王). This seal had belonged to the Zunghar royal family and was originally a gift from the sixth Dalai Lama (1683-1706) to Tsewang Rabdan (策旺阿拉布坦, 1697-1727), the sixteenth khan of Zunghar. He had ascended to the throne thanks to the intercession of the Kangxi emperor, who helped defeat Galdan (葛爾丹), Tsewang Rabdan’s uncle. Beholden or not, the khan had not ended the raids across the border into the Qing territory.

In 1731, the Yongzheng emperor sent Yue Zhongqi 岳鍾琪 (1686-1754) to attack Galdan Tseren (葛爾丹策凌), the new khan at this time and the son of Tsewang Rabdan. When the Qing troops proved incapable of defeating the Zunghars, Yongzheng settled for a negotiated truce. Then, in 1755, taking the advantage of internal disorder in the Zunghar kingdom, Qianlong took the offensive and finally seized Yili, the enemy’s capital. After that time, the Qing gradually set up settlements in northern Xinjiang, as the “new territory” was called.

In the commentary he wrote about this iron seal, Qianlong carefully described its dimensions and decorations. He also expressed surprise at the discovery that the rulers of Zunghar “barbarians” (鐻君長) possessed such a fawu heirloom (世守法物). Claiming not only the seal but the power associated with it, Qianlong revoked Tsewang Rabdan’s title of “the celebrated king with majestic sovereignty.”

2. Bronze Seal of Hainu (海努銅印)

This bronze seal (fig. 3) was found by General Agui 阿桂 at a Buddhist temple in...
“Hainuke” 海努克 near Yili, probably in Qianlong 25 (1760) after the Qing conquered the Zunghars and set up colonies in Yili. The seal text read “seal of jasaq, governor of the Rear Banner of the Eleuths” (管轄厄魯特後旗札薩克印) in Manchu. Emperor Yongzheng originally issued this seal in 1726 as the official seal of jasaq chieftain of the Rear Banner of the Eleuths. However, one year later, “Maohai” 毛海, the jasaq at that time, betrayed the Qing and pledged allegiance to its main enemy, Galdan Tseren (葛爾丹策凌). Therefore, in Qianlong’s commentary, he proudly declared that this seal had finally returned to the sacred capital (神京) of the Qing empire because one as savage as “Maohai” was unqualified to keep it.

3. Yuan Great Seal for Issuing Imperial Decrees (元制誥之寶)

A banner soldier from Ordos (鄂爾多斯) unearthed this impressive bronze seal (fig. 4), which weighed 220 liang (around 8 kg). The seal text read “zhigao zhibao” 制誥之寶 (treasure of imperial decree) in Chinese, with a few words in Sanskrit of unknown meaning. The handle of the seal, decorated with dragons in low relief, was engraved with a Sanskrit text that read, “With the blessings of three treasures, auspiciousness is arriving” (陳三寶呵護吉祥臻). Qianlong had consulted Rolpay Dorje for help in translating this text.

According to the commentary Qianlong made in 1766, right around when he would have obtained this seal, this seal was a symbol of imperial sovereignty used by Mongolian emperors of the Yuan dynasty for issuing decrees. The yellow sect of Lamaism dominated religious life during the Yuan dynasty in both the “foreign territories” and the “central plain” (震外域平中原), and the famous Tibetan lama Bashpa (八思巴), who served as imperial preceptor, had preached Buddhist teachings to those who dwelt in both places (內外諸臣). Based on the location where this seal was found and the contents of its inscriptions, Qianlong believed this to be an imperial seal of the Yuan dynasty left behind by the last emperor, Shundi 順帝 (r. 1333-1367) when he fled to Mongolia in 1367. To conclude his commentary, Qianlong proudly noted his appreciation towards those subjects in Ordos who had respectfully presented him with this great seal.

Qianlong appeared to have been especially fond of this seal that he examined often. In his last year on the throne (1795), he wrote an additional commentary, explaining that when he had Rolpay Dorje translate the Sanskrit seal text of unknown meaning thirty years ago, the lama was only able to decode the characters; their
meaning had eluded him. Dissatisfied, Qianlong sent a rubbing of the mysterious passage to Tibet, where other religious scholars could inspect it. (It is not clear when this happened.) Finally, the puzzle was solved. In the report from a Qing resident minister in Tibet, Qianlong was informed that the Sanskrit text had nothing to do with the Chinese text “zhigao zhibao,” but was a Sanskrit spell.

A great seal of the Yuan dynasty was much more than an antique. This seal reminded Qianlong that the fierce Mongol cavalry would always be a serious threat to the Qing empire. It also confirmed the glorious history of northern nomadic peoples and the dynastic legitimacy of the Liao 仿, the Jin 金, and the Yuan 元, the three predecessors to the Qing. This bronze seal may further have reminded Qianlong of another legendary “zhigao zhibao” jade seal, one which had contributed to the establishment of the multiethnic Qing empire.

It was said that the “zhigao zhibao” jade seal was initially made by the First Emperor of the Qin (秦始皇帝) as the “seal of transmitting the State” (傳國璽). Since then, all founders of new dynasties tried their best to acquire it as a symbol of political legitimacy. When Chinggis Khan came to power, according to the Mongol chronicles of the seventeenth century, this jade seal “issued from a rock, or he was born with it in his hand, or it was given to him by the dragon king.” It then became a Mongolian symbol of sovereignty and whoever obtained it was destined to subjugate all the Mongolian kingdoms.

According to the Qing official history, in 1635, Hong Taiji obtained Chinggis Khan’s “zhigao zhibao” jade seal after conquering Ligdan Khan (林丹汗) of Chahar. Hong Taiji soon exhibited this seal to other princes and banner leaders to show them that he had received the mandate of Heaven. Barely a year slipped past before Hong Taiji, with the support of family members and many Mongolian leaders, he changed

46. Johan Elverskog, Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism and the State in Late Imperial China (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 2006), p. 31.
48. Qimudea’erji and Ba Genna, eds., Qingchao Taizong Shizhu chao shilu Menggu shi shiliao chao 清朝太祖太宗實錄蒙古史料抄, pp. 344-346

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the name of his country from Hou Jin (Latter Jin) to Da Qing (Great Qing), declared himself emperor, and changed the era-name from Tiancong (Heaven’s sagaciousness) to Chongde (lofty virtue).

Obtaining a precious fawu, or ritual object, from previous dynasties was easily interpreted as “shou ming zhi fu” (token of receiving heavenly mandate) for winning Heaven’s endorsement to seize power. The vital force embedded in ritual objects was going to irrigate the new rising sovereignty. Assisted by the mysterious power of a jade seal that he kept in his palace, Hong Taiji officially established the emperorship of the Qing dynasty. Although Hong Taiji’s jade seal might be a fabricated story, it did play a very important role in early Qing history, especially in the Manchu-Mongol relation. The latter had identified the new Manchu state as the “Jade Great State,” a term directly referring to Chinggis Khan’s “zhigao zhibao” jade seal. Qianlong knew this story very well. In the essay regarding the preservation of Qing imperial seals “Guochao chuanbao ji” (The transmitted treasures of our dynasty, 1733), Qianlong stated directly that Hong Taiji’s imperial project succeeded because of his respectable virtue to win the “shou ming zhi fu.”

This argument was simply a repetition of the famous adage that appeared in Zuo zhuan, ascribed to Confucius, that sovereignty depended on a king’s virtue, not on his possession of treasures. Therefore, when he obtained this bronze “zhigao zhibao” from Ordos in 1766, Qianlong was delighted but had to act humble. At the end of the commentary written in that year, he simply spoke of learning lessons from the demise of earlier dynasties and said nothing about the seal’s auspiciousness. In other words, Qianlong treated this seal as a precious relic attesting to history, rather than proof of Heaven’s mandate as Hong Taiji had one century earlier. Unlike Hong Taiji, Qianlong never used this bronze “zhigao zhibao” seal in any practical way. He simply kept the seal, and possibly housed it inside the Forbidden City.

Qianlong’s reaction to this new “zhigao zhibao” seal seemed rational and cautious. He did not exaggerate its magical power but simply spoke of a ruler’s

49. Qimudedaoerji and Ba Genna, eds., Qingchao Taizu Taizong Shizu chao shilu Menggu shi shiliao chao, pp. 370-372. It is said that this jade zhigao zhibao seal used to be stored in the Fenghuang Lou (Pavilion of phoenix) in Shengjing. See Li Fengmin, “Yuan chuan guo xi zhi mi.”
50. Johan Elverskog, Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism and the State in Late Imperial China, p. 30.
virtue. One obvious explanation of his behavior is that had he related this new seal to Heaven’s mandate, Qianlong would then have violated the foundation of Qing imperial rhetoric, which was built upon Hong Taiji’s “zhigao zhibao” jade seal. However, in his commentary, Qianlong still regarded this bronze seal as *zhongqi* (vital object). After all, the empire had never enjoyed greater glory before, Qianlong hardly needed another “zhigao zhibao” seal to confirm Heaven’s mandate, but he could collect more “vital objects” to maintain the imperial glory and to justify his frequent engagements in military aggression.

### 4. Yuan Official Seal of Taiwei from the Xuanguang Era (元宣光年太尉印)

This seal (fig. 5) was excavated at a new Qing military colony in northern Xinjiang. It is now still housed in the Palace Museum, Beijing. The seal text in Mongol read “seal of Taiwei” (太尉之印). On the sides of the seal were two more inscriptions in Chinese; one read “seal of Taiwei” and the other “made by the Ministry of Rites of the Secretariat in the eleventh month of the first year of Xuanguang” (宣光元年十一月中書禮部造). According to Qianlong’s commentary written in 1771, no official Chinese dynastic history (正史) gave this term Xuanguang as the name of an era. Some research needed to be done on this unfamiliar era-name. Fortunately, Qianlong’s scholars consulted The *History of Koryo* (高麗史) in which the Korean historian Chung In-ji (鄭麟趾 1396-1478) mentioned that in 1377 a diplomatic corps visiting Koryo from the Northern Yuan (北元) used the era-name of Xuanguang on its credential. This so-called Northern Yuan was the vestige of the Yuan dynasty after its fall in 1368. The Mongolian royal family, at war with Ming China, maintained the dynasty in the North. In other words, the Ming coexisted with the Northern Yuan for several decades.

Qianlong commented that this seal revealed the unknown history of Northern Yuan. While the rulers of the Ming chased Mongolians from their territory, they never conquered the Northern Yuan (北元國未亡). Although Qianlong was not explicit, it was obvious that for him the unknown history of the Northern Yuan was the missing link between the Yuan and the Qing, creating an uninterrupted series of northern dynasties from the Liao to Qianlong’s day. At the end of his commentary, Qianlong

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returned to the subject of the Northern Yuan coexisting with the Ming. He questioned the Southerner’s prejudiced view against the Mongolian, and uneasily doubted who was able to clarify the truth (南人率左袒，正論誰折衷). He believed that this seal was the key to unlock the historical justice.

5. Torghut Sword Inlaid with Seven Jewels (土爾扈特七寶刀)

This curved sword inlaid with jewels and silver (fig. 6) was one of the tributary gifts presented by the Torghut khan Ubashi 渥八錫, who led the whole Torghut tribe out of Russia and submitted to the Qing in Qianlong 36 (1771). According to Qianlong, this submission was by the Torghut people’s free will: he felt that this act confirmed his role as a sage king, a king who, in the classic Confucian mode, could attract men from afar.54

The Torghut was one of the Mongolian tribes originally living in Zungharia. To avoid tribal conflicts, the Torghuts moved to southern Russia in the early eighteenth century. The first time the Torghut khan paid tribute to the Qing was in Qianlong 21 (1756), but the bond between Qing and the Torghuts was very weak at that time. Fifteen years later, after the Qing had finally conquered the Eleuths and colonized the whole Zungharia, the entire Torghut tribe finally “returned” to the Qing. Qianlong was so excited that he wrote at least two essays to commemorate the return of the Torghut tribe. They were translated into four languages and engraved on a stele in Rehe. Qianlong also held an imperial banquet at Wanshu Yuan 萬樹園 (Garden of ten thousand trees) in Bishu Shanzhuang 避暑山莊 (Summer Palace), to welcome the Torghut khan and his tribesmen.55 Qianlong probably received this sword during the banquet and then housed it in the Ziguang Ge.56

6. New Currency Commemorating the Pacification of Yili (平定伊犁新鑄錢)

The new Yili mint issued this coin in 1775. The text on one side of coin read “Qianlong tong bao” 乾隆通寶 (circulating treasure of Qianlong) in Chinese; the other

side read “treasure of Yili” in Manchu. The coin was issued “in response to the severe shortage of currency for small transactions that accompanied the growth of Yili’s commercial economy,” according to James A. Millward. This new currency was more than a response to economic growth; it was also an important symbol of Qianlong’s conquest of Yili.

The six objects I have described above at some length, all related to the Zunghar wars, were markers along Qianlong’s road to conquest. So potent were these items that obtaining the iron seal of Zunghar (1755) and the bronze seal of Hainu (1760) gave Qianlong claim to establish complete control over the area. The great Yuan seal, used for issuing imperial decrees (1766), and the official Yuan seal of Taiwei in the Xuanguang era (1771), proved (or so Qianlong thought) that Zungharia was once part of the grand Mongolian empire. Seizing these two seals implied that Qianlong had made the Manchu empire a successor to the Mongolian empire. The Torghut sword inlaid with seven jewels (1771) indicated that Qing rule over northern Xinjiang was welcomed by those who had fled from the conflicts among the Zunghars. The coin commemorating the pacification of Yili (1775) was a token of Qianlong’s sovereignty and a symbol of his successful colonization and economic control.

**Objects Collected During the Huibu War**

In the twenty-third year of his reign (1758), following a recent victory in Zunghar wars, Qianlong attacked the Muslim peoples of Eastern Turkistan. By 1759, the entire area of both the north and south of the Tianshan range—later called Xinjiang —was under the Qing’s direct control. In addition to the vast territory Qianlong acquired, he also gained fine metalwork. The fulu recorded some of them.

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Yu, Hui-Chun  Bronzes from Afar Qianlong’s “Xiqing Xu Jian Jiabian Fulu”

Table 2. Objects related to the Huibu war

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Date made</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date collected</th>
<th>Qianlong’s commentary</th>
<th>Where displayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islamic metalwork of the Tang dynasty</td>
<td>Tang Dynasty (618-907)</td>
<td>Old collection in the Bishu Shanzhuang</td>
<td>1759&lt;sup&gt;59&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Bishu Shanzhuang, Rehe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic poluchou bucket</td>
<td>Yuan Dynasty</td>
<td>Trophy</td>
<td>1760</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ax from Badakhshan</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Tribute</td>
<td>1761</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword and ax from Bolor</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Tribute</td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Ziguang Ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagger from Andijan</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Tribute</td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagger from Bolor</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Tribute</td>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two daggers from Bolor</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Tribute</td>
<td>1769</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drum-shaped zun vessel</td>
<td>Tang dynasty (618-907)</td>
<td>Unearthed</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>Poem inscribed</td>
<td>Qianqing Gong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huige jar decorated with four magpies</td>
<td>Tang dynasty (618-907)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1781</td>
<td>Poem inscribed</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>59</sup> Qianlong rediscovered this Islamic bronze and wrote a poem of appreciation in 1759.
1. Islamic Metalwork of the Tang Dynasty (唐時回銅器)

This Islamic footed bowl (fig. 7) originated from an old collection housed in the Bishu Shanzhuang in Rehe 熱河. It is not clear which Qing emperor first obtained it, but Qianlong noticed this object and wrote a long commentary about it in the fall of 1759, the year when Qing troops conquered the Muslim peoples of Eastern Turkistan. There was no mention of what attribute of the bowl attracted Qianlong’s attention. Yet, as Qing forces poured into Huibu 回部 (that is, the “Muslim region”), more and more Islamic objects, either as tributes or as trophies, entered the Qing imperial collection. These foreign artifacts, mainly jade and metalwork, inspired several commentaries from the emperor; it seems likely that Qianlong dug through his old collections to compare the new arrivals with others.

So closely does this bowl resemble a dou 豆, a standard type of ancient Chinese vessel, that when he first saw it, Qianlong mistook it for a Chinese bronze. Then he noticed that its inscription seemed to be in the Arabic alphabet (回字) and its decorations differed from those of Chinese bronzes. He asked a Muslim from Hami 哈密 to translate the inscription into Chinese, but the translator could only recognize two characters. Qianlong concluded that the bowl had to be quite ancient if it baffled an expert. Without any other evidence, Qianlong dated this bronze to the Tang dynasty (618-907). This made it the oldest object in the fulu, hence the first entry.

Qianlong regarded his rediscovery of this bowl as an auspicious omen. In his commentary, he boldly declared that many more Islamic treasures were coming to

60. A similar Islamic bronze was mistakenly recorded in the second volume of Xiqing xujian, under the title “Han yunwen dou 漢雲文豆” (A dou of the Han dynasty decorated with cloud pattern). See Xiqing xujian, yì biān 乙編, juàn 13, p. 9.
the Qing domain because General Zhaohui 兆惠 (1708-1764) had just successfully conquered two cities in Huibu. Qianlong also tried to differentiate between various ethnic groups in Huibu and to sketch the history of each group. His conclusions might be erroneous, but his efforts to study the Muslim peoples and their objects suggest an early form of what would serve as important political tools.

This bowl appears to have remained at the Bishu Shanzhuang until the end of the Qing dynasty, and now is at the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 8). It probably came from Persia, where this type of footed bowl was usually called a “jām,” meaning “wine bowl.” The inscriptions appear to be repetitive, al-‘aa, probably indicating a series of nouns like happiness and good-will. A similar bowl, part of the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, has been dated to the thirteenth century (fig. 9).

2. Islamic Poluchou Bucket (回銅啣篘器)

This poluchou bucket (fig. 10) was one of the trophies presented to Qianlong by General Zhaohui at the xianfu 獻俘 ceremony held in the first month of Qianlong 25 (1760) in Beijing, soon after the Qing conquered Huibu. After the ceremony, Qianlong wrote a long commentary on this object. He called it a poluchou 啣篘器, a term that seems to be a transliteration of a foreign word.

In his remarks, Qianlong first gave a clear description of this object, and then presented its history. A translation a Muslim provided of the inscription on the outside of the bucket indicated that it had been made during the Yuan dynasty for the khan “Meili Temuer” (眉哩特木爾) of “Yileng” 伊楞 by a master artisan called “Kamaer” (喀馬爾) living in “Shalaizi” 沙賴子. Only these Chinese transliterations in Qianlong’s commentaries remain, since the vessel bearing the Farsi inscription has apparently been lost. Qianlong stated that a more detailed history of Huibu could be written after the Qing had fully subdued it and brought the Muslim peoples and their heirlooms to the Central Kingdom, where their fragmented and disconnected records could be pieced together (其人乃至，昔日舊物留遺皆得入中國，而詳其原委). In his conclusion,

62. I would like to thank Prof. Sheila Blair of Boston College and Prof. Rachel Ward of The Royal Asiatic Society for translating the inscriptions on all the Persian objects in this article and providing precious references about Islamic metalwork.
Qianlong remarked that obtaining objects from afar was not something about which he wished to boast, but he urged later generations to not fear confronting the difficulties involved in pacifying the frontiers (不敢矜方物之遠益, 無忌綏輯之艱). In Huangyu Xiyu tuzhi 皇輿西域圖志 (Imperial illustrated gazetteer of western regions, 1782), this poluchou bucket was singled out as a representative Zunghar container for food and drink.64

Today we know that this is a typical Islamic metal bucket, probably Persian because the inscription mentions the “sultan of the Arabs and Persians.” This kind of bucket is usually called a satl in Arabic and a tās-e hammām in Persian; both mean, literally, bath-house bucket.65 The bucket usually functioned as a container of liquid soap in bathhouses.66 An analogous object belongs to the Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (fig. 11).67 It was dated 1333 and made for the Grand-Vizier of the Injū Sultan of Fars by the artisan Muhammad Shāh al-Shīrāzī.68 A center of metalwork in the province of Fars in western Iran produced this masterpiece. Fars is also the location of the city of Shiraz, possibly the “Shalaizī” mentioned by Qianlong’s translator. Apparently a fourteenth-century Persian bucket was moved from Shiraz to Inner Asia before making its way to Qianlong’s imperial collection.

3. Ax from Badakhshan (拔達克山斧)

Sultan Shah (素爾坦沙), the khan of Badakhshan, presented this ax as a tributary gift to Qianlong in the twenty-sixth year of his reign (1761) (fig. 12). Close to the end of the Huibu war, in Qianlong 24 (1759), Sultan Shah killed the Khoja Jihān (霍集占) and his brother Burhān ad-Dīn (布羅尼特), the leaders of the resistance to the Qing, and presented their decapitated heads to the Qing general Fude 富德.

In Qianlong’s commentary about this ax, he claimed that after Qing troops established control over Huibu, Sultan Shah was in no great hurry to acknowledge the Qing sovereignty. Qianlong had been obliged to apply some pressure to this recalcitrant

65. For the origin of this term, see A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World: 8-18 centuries, pp. 397-398.
subject through his ambassadors. Only then did the emperor start to receive the tribute he deserved, including this ax, which he viewed as a symbol of loyalty and meaningful proof of his triumph in Huibu.

4. Sword and Ax from Bolor (博洛爾劍斧)

“Sha-hu-sha-mo-te” 沙胡沙默特, the local chieftain (beg) of Bolor 博洛爾, presented the sword and the ax in fig. 13 to Qianlong, probably as new-year gifts in Qianlong 28 (1763). After the Qing conquest of Huibu in 1759, the emperor held a number of imperial new-year banquets in the Ziguang Ge to which he invited the diplomatic corps from the Qing’s allies. Exchanging gifts was one of the routines at such events. These two weapons were then housed in the Ziguang Ge.

5. Dagger from Andijan (安集延匕首)

After conquering Huibu, Qianlong obtained more and more objects from Inner Asia. This dagger (fig. 14) was a gift to Qianlong presented in the twenty-eighth year of his reign (1763) from Andijan (安集延). Impressed by the crescent shape, crystal handle, and gold-inlaid sheath, Qianlong wrote a poem that same year to praise its flamboyant style. The Qing imperial workshops also made some daggers in imitation of this foreign style, no doubt because of Qianlong’s interest.

6. Daggers from Bolor (博洛爾匕首)

Qianlong received the three daggers in fig. 15 as tributary gifts from “Sha-hu-sha-mo-te” 沙胡沙默特 of Bolor, respectively in the twenty-ninth (1764) and thirty-fourth (1769) years of his reign. According to Qianlong’s commentary, when the Qing governor in Yarkand managed to prevent the conflict between Bolor and Badakhshan, the Bolor leader presented Qianlong with these daggers to express gratitude.

69. Because Qianlong’s commentary was dated early in the first month of 1763.
7. Drum-Shaped Zun Vessel (唐鼓腔尊)

The bronze vessel in fig. 16 was excavated by Qing soldiers on an agricultural colony in Urumqi around Qianlong 41 (1776). Several other bronzes and ceramics were discovered at the same time, including a ceramic bowl made in the Yuan dynasty. Qianlong wrote a very long commentary on this bowl, which he considered to be jun ware (均窯), the blue or purple ware of Northern Song. As part of his commentary, he employed the tools of evidential research to investigate Urumqi's political status from the Han to the Yuan, trying to understand how the bowl had ended up there. Among other conclusions, he reckoned that this area must have been quite wealthy during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (耕屯相望廬井阜而倉廩實).

As to this zun vessel, Qianlong dated it to the Tang (618-907) because until then Urumqi had lacked, he thought, the resources to make such a fine object. Awarded the rank of “finest quality antique” (古上等), this vessel was displayed at the Qianqing Gong 乾清宮 inside the Forbidden City. Qianlong called it a guqiang zun 鼓腔尊, a zun in the shape of drum shell, after a similar object recorded in Zun sheng ba jian 遵生八箋 (Eight discourses on the art of living), a famous guide to connoisseurship by Gao Lian 高濂 (fl. 1573).

We now know that this type of Persian cooking vessels, called hāvan, had been in use as mortar since the thirteenth century. Their styles ranged from the simple to the flamboyant (fig. 17). This modest piece recorded in the fulu may have been used by an ordinary family in Urumqi during the Mongolian Yuan dynasty.

According to the description in the fulu, a poem that Qianlong had written in 1777 was engraved onto this zun mortar. As we have seen, Qianlong was a collector who left a range of marks on the things he collected. Though he liked to leave his

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74. “Qianlong sishiyi nian shi yue xiabiao zuo 乾隆四十一年十月匣裱作,” in Yangxindian zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdang 養心殿造辦處各作成做活計清檔.
75. Qianlong’s original commentary about this bronze contained an introduction and a poem, but the introduction was not transcribed into the fulu. For the complete commentary, see Qing Gaozong, “Tang guqiang zun 唐鼓腔尊,” in Yuzhi shiji 御製詩集, 4 ji, juan 38, p. 10.
76. On hāvan, see A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World:8-18 centuries, p. 389.
words on hard materials, such as jades and ceramics, he seemed hesitant to mar the surfaces of ancient bronzes. Usually Qianlong engraved his commentaries about bronzes on the surfaces of the boxes or stands that supported them, or he transcribed them into an album. However, here he took the unusual step of having his poem (sixty-five characters) and the designs of two seals carved onto the bottom ring of zun mortar, probably soon after he composed the poem in 1777. In this poem, Qianlong first described how he acquired this zun and then pointed out that it looked very different from typical ancient Chinese bronzes (範銅形異子孫卣). At the end of his poem he declared that while he took suggestions from others in expanding his territory, his real plan was to pacify and unify all the peoples (闢地開疆聽彼議，安民和眾盡吾謀).

8. Huige Jar Decorated with Four Magpies (唐回紇四喜壺)

We know little about how this newly-unearthed jar in fig. 18 entered the emperor’s collection. Possibly he received it around the forty-sixth year of his reign (1781), the year when he wrote a long poem about it. As with the zun mortar discussed above, Qianlong had this poem of ninety-one characters engraved onto it, but this time on the inner surface of the lid.

Once again, in his commentary, Qianlong assigned this object of uncertain age to the Tang dynasty; he believed it had been made by the Muslim Huige 回紇 people. He also expressed that the Tang needed the help of the Huige to control the western regions (中國兵威或弗足，借彼之力因成功). This expression might reflect his expectations toward the Muslim peoples in Xinjiang, as well as his affirmation that the Qing empire outshined the Tang empire.

This Huige jar and the above zun were the only two bronzes in the fulu that bore Qianlong’s poems on their surfaces. It is hard to explain why he singled out these two bronzes in this fashion. Why did bronzes excavated from Urumqi receive such a special treatment? Did Qianlong inscribe the objects he most highly valued, or, quite the opposite, did he honor those he deemed second rate? Considering the significance of the ancient mirror after which Qianlong entitled his first bronze catalogue, I think that he must also have highly valued the two bronzes from afar by inscribing poems onto them.

Among Qianlong’s antique collections, many bronzes already bore long inscriptions composed by the first owners who had them cast to commemorate personal achievements for a ritual context, especially for worshipping their ancestors. These inscriptions, usually found in the interior of a bronze ritual vessel, were not supposed
to be read by the living. Together with food and drink, these eulogistic texts were presented to the inhabitants of the beyond.

Qianlong was fully aware of the difference between being a collector of bronzes and being a patron who commissioned bronze casting. If he wanted to eulogize his achievements through bronzes, he usually did so by casting new ones and inscribing his own words onto them.77

The authority to excavate and the right to own what one unearthed were, and still are, proofs of sovereignty. Neither trophies nor tributes, the zun mortar and the Huige jar were the only two bronze vessels in the fulu that had been recently unearthed in the western regions, ten years after the wars that established Qing control. This was a period when the emperor was busy setting up monuments, settlements, and colonies, levying taxes, and making maps. In other words, if not for the Qing’s triumphant imperialism, these two vessels would not have been unearthed and then entered into the imperial collection. By engraving his own words onto the unearthed relics, Qianlong left permanent marks of ownership. This emperor not only controlled the lands of the new territory, he also laid claim to what lay underground.

9. Pul Coin of Huibu (回部普爾錢)

The pul was an old economic unit in Xinjiang.78 This coin bore texts in Uyghur and Mongolian languages. On the one side was the word “Yarkand,” the name of the city where the coin was minted; on the other side was “Galdan Tseren” (葛爾丹策凌), the name of the last khan of the Zunghar kingdom. The editors of the fulu did not identify when the coin appeared or where it came from. Qianlong probably obtained it after the Qing controlled Xinjiang; it may have been housed in the Ziguang Ge.79

10. New Coins Commemorating the Pacification of Huibu (平定回部新鑄錢)

These five coins (fig. 19) were the official Qing currency of Huibu issued after 1760 by mints in Aksu (阿克蘇), Ush (烏什), Kashgar (喀什葛爾), Yarkand (葉爾羌), and Hetian (和闐). On one side, every coin bore the same text: “Qianlong tongbao” 乾

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78. For the illustration of this pul coin, see “Xiqing xujian jiabian fulu 西清續鑑甲編附錄,” p. 39.
隆通宝 (circulating treasure of Qianlong) in Chinese; on the other side were the names of the cities where the coins were minted written in both the Manchu and Uyghur languages (回文).

In Qianlong 25 (1760), right after the Qing army conquered Huibu, the Qing government set up its first mint in this area, in Yarkand, and issued the first Qing currency that would replace the pul. Thereafter, more mints were continually set up in various cities. Qianlong probably received these five new coins in the fifty-third year of his reign (1788), the year when he wrote his commentary on them. These coins came from afar, he stated, and were going to be stored in the center (呈樣各看來自外, 聚銖並以并於中).

While these objects I have just itemized represented the Muslim landscape of metalworking before the arrival of Qing forces, it was jade, rather than metalwork, that seized Qianlong’s attention after the defeat of Huibu. He collected more than 250 Mughal jades, which he called “Hendusitan”痕都斯坦 jades. In a commentary written in the fortieth year of his reign (1775) about a jade plate, he declared that even the famous jade workers of Suzhou蘇州 might not be as skillful as Islamic artisans (喀嘗匠能逞彼巧, 專諸人或遜其精). As a collector who enjoyed novel objects, Qianlong benefited a lot from the Huibu war because it opened up and stabilized trade and cultural communication between the Manchu and the Muslim world.

**Objects Related to the Jinchuan Wars**

Qianlong waged two wars against the Xi Qiang 西羌 peoples who lived in the region of the Jin River (金川) in western Sichuan—the first conflict lasted from the twelfth (1747) to the fourteenth (1749) year of his reign, and the second from the thirty-sixth (1771) to the forty-first (1776). The latter was the longest and the most grueling war the emperor ever undertook. To Qianlong’s surprise, this small group of poor Qiang tribesmen proved much tougher than he had anticipated (朕思蕞爾窮番, 何足當

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82. Qing Gaozong, “Yong hendustan lü yupan 詠痕都斯坦綠玉盤,” *Yuzhi shiji* 御製詩集, 4 ji, juan 28, pp. 8-9.
For the first Jinchuan war, at least eighty thousand soldiers were mobilized, while expenses exceeded ten million liang of silver. For the second war, one hundred thousand soldiers were mobilized with costs soaring past seventy million liang. According to the report submitted by the Manchu general Agui in Qianlong 37 (1772), the Qiangs sent no more than fifteen thousand soldiers to resist the vast Manchu army in the second Jinchuan war.

More than one hundred trophies captured during these years were eventually stored in the Ziguang Ge, seven of which were recorded in the fulu. For Qianlong, the trophies from Jinchuan seemed to be less interesting than those from Xinjiang: he only bothered to write something about one Jinchuan sword.

Table 3. Objects related to the Jinchuan wars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Date made</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Date collected</th>
<th>Qianlong’s commentary</th>
<th>Where displayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ming official seal of the pacification commissioner of Yangtang (明楊塘安撫司印)</td>
<td>1406</td>
<td>Trophy</td>
<td>1773</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Ziguang Ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming official seal of the pacification commissioner of Biesizhai (明別思寨安撫司印)</td>
<td>1435</td>
<td>Trophy</td>
<td>1773</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Ziguang Ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming official seal of the chief officer of Yanzhou (明豊州長官司印)</td>
<td>1378</td>
<td>Trophy</td>
<td>1773</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Ziguang Ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign sword from Jinchuan (金川蕃劍)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Trophy</td>
<td>1776</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Ziguang Ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming official seal of the pacification office of Dongbu Hanhu (明董卜韓胡宣慰史司印)</td>
<td>1414</td>
<td>Trophy</td>
<td>1776</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Ziguang Ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming official seal of the chief of military colony in Hongren Yunzhou (明宏仁允州長官司印)</td>
<td>Ming dynasty (1368-1643)</td>
<td>Trophy</td>
<td>1776</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Ziguang Ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming official seal of the battalion of Zangbulang (明藏卜浪千戶所印)</td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>Trophy</td>
<td>1776</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Ziguang Ge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Foreign Sword from Jinchuan (金川蕃劍)

The sword in fig. 20 was a trophy brought back from Jinchuan and presented to Qianlong in the forty-first year of his reign (1776), after Agui’s return. It was displayed in the Ziguang Ge together with other trophies captured there. In the poem Qianlong wrote that same year, he mentioned that the militant Xi Qiang peoples generally walked about with this kind of sword hung at their waists (西羌尚武相爭囂，盈尺利器常繫腰).

2. Official Seals of the Ming Dynasty from Jinchuan

Because Qing officials in Jinchuan decided that Ming objects, in addition to indigenous products, might be of interest to their sovereign, they returned with the following six official seals: Ming official seal of the Pacification Office of Dongbu Hanhu (明董卜韓胡宣慰司印), Ming official seal of the Pacification Commissioner of Yangtang (明楊塘安撫司印), Ming official seal of the Pacification Commissioner of Biesizhai (明別思寨安撫司印), Ming official seal of the Chief Officer of Yanzhou (明州長官司印), Ming official seal of the Chief of Military Colony in Hungren Yunzhou (明宏仁允州阡照長官印), and Ming official seal of Battalion of Zangbulang (明藏卜浪千戶所印). These seals were part of the aboriginal tusi 土司 system, developed by the Ming to organize and control native peoples under a local headman. Qianlong did not write any commentaries on these seals, which might imply that he did not cherish these objects that much. The Ziguang Ge 紫光閣 housed all these seals.

Other Objects in the Fulu

1. Drum and Cymbal from Annam

According to the fulu, this set of percussion instruments in fig. 21 was a tribute from Nguyên Quang Binh, the king of Annam (present Vietnam) enthroned in Qianlong 57 (1792). These instruments were not Annam products. Annam army captured them...
from the “State of Ten Thousand Elephants” (萬象國), present-day Vientiane in Laos.

Since Qianlong 50 (1785), a civil war had raged in Annam. Nguyên Quang Binh succeeded in overthrowing the previous king, Le Duy Chi, and seized the throne. Le and the members of royal family had fled to the Qing, requesting military support. At first, Qianlong had complied, sending troops that helped defeat Nguyên’s forces and restored Le Duy Chi to the throne in Qianlong 53 (1788). However, when Le proved incapable of maintaining control, and again, fled to China, Qianlong was not prepared to back the loser once more. With more than five thousand Qing soldiers dying in the earlier conflict, Qianlong was happy to accept Nguyên’s proposal to open peace negotiations. In Qianlong 54 (1789), after Nguyên Quang Binh had routed out Le Duy Chi completely and unified Annam, the Qing government accepted Nguyên as the new king, with the understanding that he would pay tribute every two years, send a diplomatic mission to Beijing for an audience with the emperor every four years, and receive the emperor’s presents in return.86 Qianlong had the drum and the cymbal housed in the Ziguang Ge in 1792.87

2. New Silver Coins of Tibet

These three new silver coins were made in the Qing mint in Tibet established in Qianlong 57 (1792); they are the only objects in the fulu related to the war against the Gurkhas.88 One side of the coins read Qianlong baozang 乾隆寶藏, or Tibetan treasure of Qianlong, in Chinese, while the reverse said the same thing in Tibetan. Before the Qing defeated the Gurkhas, the main currency in Tibet was Gurkha silver coins (廓爾喀銀錢), but when long simmering tensions and low-level conflicts over trade boiled over in Qianlong 56 (1791), the Gurkhas invaded Tibet. Qianlong sent troops to defend Tibet and in the following year the Gurkhas officially surrendered and agreed to send tribute to the Qing.89

Collecting the Glorious Present

Overall, the objects in the fulu represented Qianlong’s efforts to build up what

86. On the course of Annam war, see Chuang Chi-fa, Qing Gaozong shiquan wugong yanjiu, pp. 331-389.
88. For the illustration, see “Xiqing xujian jiabian fulu 西清續鑑甲編附錄,” p. 40.
89. Chuang Chi-fa, Qing Gaozong shiquan wugong yanjiu, pp. 417-476.
we would call a multiethnic collection. Through such efforts, Qianlong defined himself as the mighty sovereign of an empire with dominion over many different ethnic groups.

These thirty-eight objects can be categorized into four categories, each one playing a specific role in Qianlong’s colonial discourse. The first category is the four bronze containers from Muslim areas. By collecting these objects, Qianlong also collected the past of those previous owners by bringing their cultural heritages to the center of the Qing empire. In his commentaries, Qianlong traced these objects’ fragmented history, showing that the past emperors who had ruled over great empires such as the Tang and the Yuan had long labored to control the Muslim peoples that Qianlong had finally conquered. He also declared that the Muslim peoples from afar, together with their cultural heritages, came to his empire because of Heaven’s blessing; his duty was to remind later generations the difficulty of preserving the great Manchu empire.

The second category of the weapons and percussion instruments suggests the military strength of foreign states. By collecting them, Qianlong declared that he had disarmed his former enemies and transformed the tools of violence into symbols of peace, reshaping his own image from military autocrat to cultured man of peace.

The third category consists of official seals through which past dynasties had symbolized their control over these newly conquered lands. These seals gave Qianlong the legitimacy to dominate the frontiers himself. By collecting them, he was able to defend himself against the criticism of wantonly engaging in military aggression, casting military affairs as the logical reclamation of lost territories.

The last category is the coins issued by indigenous political entities and by the Qing. These coins attested to Qing institutions functioning in the newly conquered areas. By abolishing old local currencies and issuing “Qianlong tongbao,” the emperor placed the broad empire under one united monetary system. When the editors decided to include these contemporary “Qianlong tongbao,” the message was that the fulu was not a catalogue of Qianlong’s ancient bronzes: it was a record of Qianlong’s colonial ambition.

Qianlong collected bronzes from different cultures, just as he collected subjects from different ethnic groups. The fulu, possibly created as a gift for the Qianlong emperor, embodied Qianlong’s vision of the grand Qing empire, a Manchu-centered empire encompassing many different groups. Working from the superior position of an emperor-collector, he interpreted the cultural heritages of his heterogeneous subjects within the frame of Manchu imperialism. Both the fulu and Ziguang Ge could be regarded as “political theaters,” in which Qianlong chose his objects from afar as actors.
to perform the ongoing formation of Qing empire. During the performance, Qianlong kept adding commentaries as captions to highlight several select episodes for his audiences.

Qianlong’s practices of collecting belonged to a set of political dramas to strengthen his power. His expanding collections functioned as a model of the empire over which he reigned. The creation and maintenance of the Qing imperial collection were an ongoing dialogue between Qianlong the collector and his collected. He not only adopted existing political discourses—such as Heaven’s mandate and auspiciousness—to contextualize ancient relics, but also kept adding new objects to the body of imperial collection, as well as new meanings, narratives, and representations to them. Other collectors at Qianlong’s time, no matter how rich their collections, were themselves collectable. Secular or sacred institutions, including the state bureaucracy and monastic orders, gathered and sorted them. At the top of the collecting pyramid sat Qianlong, the supreme collector, the only one in the empire who could not be collected. Even in his religious practices, he reserved for himself a special position immune to the whims of collector-deities: as the reincarnation of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, Qianlong freed from being appropriated by some gods.90

This Manchu ruler considered all subjugated peoples as others, not “us.” The thousands of ancient Chinese bronzes he collected did not convince Qianlong to give up Manchu language and skip the fall hunt. He hired specialists to study these bronzes, to catalogue them, to display them, to classify them according to artistic quality, to translate inscriptions, and to correct the mistakes in previous written records. After all of these works had been done, he came with his ink-stone and brush to dash off a poem, inserting a bowl or a cauldron into his narrative of legitimacy.

Qianlong’s imperialistic attitude toward ancient Chinese bronzes and those from afar was quite consistent as well. He treated both much the same: they would embody civil and military virtues as imperial propaganda. Because of the very few objects in the fulu, Qianlong made his entire bronze collections a complete lineage of bronze history, from the earliest mirror ascribed to the Yellow Emperor to coins recently minted by the Qing. He did not value Chinese bronzes higher than those from afar. To Qianlong, all his bronze collections functioned as emblems of incorporation to constitute the Great

90. On the Qianlong emperor’s religious practices, see David M. Farquhar, “Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch‘ing Empire,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 38 (1), pp. 5-34; Patricia Berger, Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 2003).
Qing. The more he obtained, the better he controlled his subjects and their histories.

To a certain degree, however, Qianlong seemed to be more attached to his limited bronzes from afar than his thousands of Chinese bronzes; he composed more poems of praise and inscribed more poems onto these particular bronzes. After all, the ways to obtain these very few bronzes had been painstakingly established by Manchu soldiers. Most importantly, Qianlong was able to closely recontextualize those thirty-eight bronzes into the present age of Qing empire under his sixty-year emperorship. He used them to cast his own history. Unlike ancient Chinese bronzes that merely evoked the longing for a never-experienced legendary golden age, these bronzes from afar brought Qianlong a solid recognition that he was creating and experiencing the history of Qing dynasty, an age, in Qianlong’s mind, more glorious than any other dynasties in history.
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