

Compiled by Expert Committee of
Chinese Society of Cultural Relics

**Collection
of
Ancient
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Cultural
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Vol. IX

The Qing Dynasty I
1644 - 1911

Guozhen Wang



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The Qing Dynasty

1644-1911

I



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Please note volumes 9 and 10 refer to relics in the Qing Dynasty and while two separate volume should be treated as one

The Qing Dynasty

1644-1911

Preface

The ancestors of the people who established the Manchu Qing Dynasty lived in northeast China in the territory lying between “white mountains and black rivers”. After establishing their capital in Beijing, the Qing Dynasty defeated all the forces that opposed them and they quickly consolidated their frontier defenses. Through a policy of “restraining native ideas and methods but carrying forward native language”, it won over and appeased the Han scholars, reconciled the conflicts between nationalities, appointed officials, and restored and developed the economy. From the late period of Emperor Kangxi to the reign of the Emperor Qianlong, the Qing Dynasty consolidated their power, unified the territory, established social stability and economic prosperity, and began to reach great heights of power and splendour. In Chinese, there is a saying - “The prosperous Kangxi and Qianlong Periods”, which reflects this. After the reign of Emperors Jiaqing and Daoguang, the Qing Dynasty entered a long period of decline as they came under attack from both domestic and external contradictions. Feudal society, which had lasted for over 2,000 years in China, was coming to an end. China thus entered into a new stage of development. In the nearly 300 years of the Qing Dynasty, China achieved some remarkable things especially in the fields of culture and art even

though it lagged behind in many other respects in global terms. The making of jade articles reached a great peak in the mid Qing Dynasty. There was a tremendous variety of jade articles ranging from those made for the institutions of the royal family to those made for religious sacrifice to those made for display to those made for daily use to say nothing of ornaments made from jade. The jade articles of the Qing Dynasty surpassed previous achievements in this field in terms of the size of the jade pieces used, the selection of materials and the overall craftsmanship. The jade articles made for the royal family were particularly exquisite. There was an exclusive jade making department in the palace. Sometimes, even the emperor himself took part in the design and making of jade pieces. A large number of unique jade items were thus produced.

Porcelain production reached its highest ever peak in this era – in fact the Qing Dynasty was a golden period for porcelain. Jingdezhen remained the porcelain making center, the capital of porcelain in the country. The imperial kilns resumed operations in the Shunzhi Period, but they were only fully back on track in the 19th year (1680) of the Kangxi Period. During the Yongzheng and Qianlong Periods, the imperial kilns gained tremendous achievements under the direct supervision of the emperors and thanks to the genius of a number of ceramics supervisors. On the one hand, they inherited and developed existing types and varieties of porcelain, and on the other hand, they boldly blazed new trails and created an amazing amount of new varieties. The selection and processing of the raw materials for porcelain production became more important, the forms became more diversified and the subject matter and techniques for decorating the porcelain became much richer. The violet sand earthenware Yixing pieces improved on the foundations established in the Ming Dynasty to produce some exquisite cultural treasures. Ceramic art shone with glitz and glamour, illuminating the whole world.

The Qing Dynasty can be ranked as a period of revival in the history of Chinese



calligraphy. Stone-inscription studies grew in popularity, and a number of pioneer masters in this field emerged and they exerted a far-reaching influence. Some historic achievements were made, which turned a new page in the millennium-old canon of calligraphy masterpieces. Seal character calligraphy and li calligraphy (official script) which had both been dormant for several hundred years were revived again. These old forms were used as the basis for great creative innovation, and this resulted in the emergence of new genres. Regular, cursive, official and seal script styles were combined and blended unconventionally, forming a diversified range of calligraphy styles. The transition from copybook studies to stone-inscription studies allowed the latter to reach a high level of maturity and the former to revitalize itself by learning from the latter and breaking away from established conventions.

In the world of art in the Qing Dynasty, literati painting played a dominant role and landscape painting and impressionistic ink and wash painting became the most prevalent. More and more artists began to experiment with their brushwork, making great innovations in terms of artistic forms. Many genres, each with different styles, began to emerge. The early period of the Qing Dynasty saw the “orthodox” painting school of the “Four Masters all Named Wang”, the painting of the “Four monks”, i.e. Hong Ren, Kun Can, Shi Tao and Zhu Da and the painting of the “Eight Masters of Jinling” headed by Gong Xian. In the middle years of the Qing Dynasty there emerged the famous “Eight Eccentric Painters of Yangzhou”; and in the late Qing Dynasty you had the so-called “Haipai School” and the “Lingnan School”. Painters of different genres vied with each other to display their skills and there was a great flourishing in the painting art of the Qing Dynasty.



In many areas of the industrial arts, great achievements were made as craftsmen and women synthesized the achievements of past dynasties, and indeed improved on them. Driven by advanced western technologies, glassware manufacturing really began to develop and thrive. The quality improved substantially; new techniques were pioneered; and decorative patterns, colors and shapes became richer and more varied. Lacquer craftwork in all shapes and sizes reached a great level of maturity. Existing techniques were improved, and new techniques were developed. Such techniques as monochromatic lacquer, gold drawing, lacquer drawing, fill-in lacquer, fill-in lacquer with gold inlay, carved lacquer, mother-of-pearl inlay and one-hundred-precious-material inlay all were perfected at this time. Embroidery reached unprecedented heights. Silk tapestries became more and more exquisite and were more widely applied - something which had never been seen before. Both royal and local embroideries boasted superb skills and high artistic values. The production of metal-bodied enamelware reached a great peak. The traditional crafts of wiry enamel and carved-body enamel came center stage. The products of the aulic workshops and those in Guangzhou, Yangzhou and Suzhou were uniformly excellent. Significant achievements were also made in the burgeoning world of painted enamelware and transparent enamelware. Bamboo, wood, ivory and horn carvings were also highly developed. Famous engravers and craftsmen came forth in great numbers.

Jade Ware

The jade articles of the Qing Dynasty generally went through three stages of development. The quantities of items produced, the type of items produced and the artistic style of items produced differ slightly in each stage.

The first stage was the early period of the Qing Dynasty, covering the reigns of Emperors Shunzhi, Kangxi and Yongzheng. The regime was still struggling to establish its legitimacy, and the economy was still being revived so the Qing had not yet put down strong foundations. Therefore, the early Qing emperors advocated frugality in life. Moreover, the court hadn't yet exercised full and effective control over the jade producing areas in the border areas, so jade was scarce and the jade industry lagged behind. As a result, the quantity of jade produced was small and most jade articles were made by ordinary craftsmen and aulic artisans who had learned their techniques in the Ming Dynasty. Thus, jade articles made in the this first stage lacked originality.

The second stage was the mid period of the Qing Dynasty, covering the reigns of Emperors Qianlong and Jiaqing. The regime was well consolidated by then. Xinjiang was brought under the control of the Qing government, and this provided a stable source of jade. Because of growing Qing economic strength and the plentiful supply of jade materials and the great enthusiasm Emperor Qianlong had for ancient jade, the jade industry gradually began to flourish. A huge amount of jade items was produced, with a lot of variety and exquisite craftsmanship. In fact this became one of the great high points in jade carving history in China. Moreover, along with the close cultural exchanges between western neighboring states and Central Asia, some foreign-influenced jade items began to emerge, of which, the most prized were from Hindustan in present-day northern India. Emperor Qianlong spoke highly of such items and ordered the Manufacturing Section of the Imperial Household Department to set up a special "Western



Foreign-Style Workshop” to imitate these jade articles.

The third stage was the late period of the Qing Dynasty, covering the reigns from Emperors Daoguang to Xuantong. Because of the increasing corruption in society and a large number of difficulties, both domestic and external, there was much less appetite for large-sized jade ware and grand jade projects became rarer and rarer because of the prohibitive cost of production. Besides, the supply of jade from Xinjiang was obstructed and the Qing government lifted a ban on jade exploitation among the people, so there was a large inflow of jade used in workshops run by ordinary people. Therefore, mainstream Xinjiang jade was no longer as flourishing as it was in the mid period of the Qing Dynasty. Except for the jade pieces urgently needed by the court and which could be made using jade supplies stored in the palace, state jade production slowed down enormously. Commercial jade techniques were uneven and craftsmen tended to cater to vulgar tastes in order to make the greatest profits, so the theme and decoration of jade articles became much less sophisticated and the processing technology became cruder. Copies of ancient jade pieces became most prevalent. Besides shape and design, even the spot color of the jade was faked. The works of some superior counterfeiters was so skilled, it almost looked genuine.

Gems and jewels became much more widespread in the Qing Dynasty. The carving became more and more exquisite, giving the gems an increasingly strong noble flavor. In particular in the palace, gems became important ornaments for royal family members. They were carved into various kinds of ornaments each with auspicious meaning. Different gems were used together. The supreme status and authority of the royal family found full expression in this area.





1. Two Jade Pieces Linked by Movable Loop Chains

Qing

Length: 28 cm Maximum Thickness: 2 cm

Preserved in the Palace Museum in Beijing

This is a ceremonial object made of two pieces of yellow jade linked by movable loop chains. The two pieces are flat and round, each with a round hole in the center. Their motifs are the same, i.e. a circle of openwork carving imitating an ancient hornless dragon design and a circle of bas-relief grain pattern.



2. Jade Bi with Dragon Design

Qing

Diameter: 7.4 cm Hole Diameter: 1.7 cm Thickness: 0.7 cm

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is a ceremonial object made of white jade, which shines with the luster of grease. It is a round flat piece with a hole in the center. Its face is decorated with four raised dragons, each opposite the other. The body of each dragon is S-shaped and the necks and tails are entangled. Connected cloud patterns can be dimly seen on its back.



3. Jasper Heart-shaped Pendant

Qing

Length: 7.7 cm Width: 4.6 cm

Unearthed from Heisheli's Tomb at Xiaoxitian in Beijing in 1962

Preserved in the Capital Museum

This is an ornament made of dark green jade. The flat piece is in the shape of an irregular rectangle with flattened angles and there is a round hole in the center. Two fl wing clouds can be found around the hole. There is also a taper angle on the upper end. The motifs on both sides are the same, i.e. a bas-relief or openwork carving of flowing clouds and distorted hornless dragons

4. Jade Pendant with Three Auspicious Designs

Qing

Length: 7.7 cm Width: 5.5 cm

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is an ornament made of white jade. It is a long flat piece featuring cloud-shaped sides. Its upper part is adorned with S-shaped clouds, with there is a hole in the middle to facilitate tying. There are two raised boys on its frontispiece. The boy on the left side carries on his shoulders a branch with two ripe peaches and the one on the right holds a pomegranate in his hands. There is also a bat flying in the air. On its back are four Chinese characters carved in relief in official script in a vertical line, reading “Qing Yan San Duo (blessing for happiness, longevity and more offspring)”.



5. Jade Pendant with the Inscription “Yu Zhi Jin Xin”

Qing

Length: 6.9 cm Width: 6.9 cm

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is an approximately square ornament made of white jade. Its upper part is adorned with S-shaped clouds, with a hole in the middle to facilitate tying. A raised daffodil is found on its frontispiece, with an egg-shaped bulb and two umbrella-shaped flowers as well as extending or curled bar-shaped leaves. It is typical of pieces produced during the Qianlong Period. Four Chinese characters “Jade Quality with Gold Heart” carved in relief are found on the back of the ornament.



6. Ornament Inlaid with the Design of a Boy Sitting on a Raft
Qing

Height: 7.1 cm Length: 14.2 cm

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is a piece of openwork ornament made of blue jade with white flaws and a greasy luster. Sitting on a pine-shaped raft, a smiling boy stares at the water and moves his boat forward using a pole. A goose lies on the front part of the raft under a pine branch. The goose is looking back and holding a celestial grass in its mouth. On the stern of the raft is a basket with some glossy ginseng.

7. Jade Arhat

Mid Qing

Height: 11.5 cm Bottom Diameter: 7.8-9.7 cm

Preserved in the Palace Museum in Beijing
This is an item of furnishing made of greenish white jade. Sitting cross-legged on a cattail hassock, a bald arhat with an auspicious expression and big ears wears a bag-sleeved cassock decorated with check and cloud designs.





8. Jade Elephant

Qing

Height: 11.2 cm Length: 19.5 cm

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is a round carved ornament made of greenish white jade. With a stout and strong body, small eyes, big ears, long tusks and sturdy legs, the elephant looks back and raises its trunk after coiling its front end inward. Its tail swings to one side. The pleats of its skin were carved with intaglioed lines. The elephant carries a jade belt decorated with cirrus-cloud-shaped designs and geometric patterns on the back.



9. Blue Jade Dog

Qing

Height: 16 cm Length: 13 cm

Preserved in the Palace Museum in Beijing

This is an item of furnishing made of blue jade. With two drooping ears, the dog holds its head high, closes its mouth lightly and squats on its hind legs while it stands up straight on its front legs. The long tail bends sideward to coil around the hind legs. The dog has a sturdy chest, slender waist, a back with a projecting ridge and a belly with exposed ribs. The upper parts of its legs are plump. Intaglioed fine hairs cover its body.





10. Jade Peach

Qing

Height: 13 cm Length: 13.5 cm

Unearthed from Zhang Zhidong's old mansion in Nanpi, Hebei in 1973

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is a round carved ornament made of yellowish blue jade in the shape of a fla peach. Making use of its original color and shading, the artisan carved the wattle and leaves, which wrap around the peach, as well as the five raised bats which all have various gestures. This gives the item the implied meaning of "five blessings and longevity".

11. Jade Box with Mice Design in Imitation of Wickerwork

Qing

Height: 6.6 cm Width: 4.8 cm

Unearthed from the tomb of a Qing prince at Donggezhuang, Miyun in Beijing in 1962

Preserved in the Capital Museum

This is a container made of grayish blue jade. The object is shaped like a box with a wicker cover. Three exquisite raised mice are found on both sides of the box. There is a small beast-shaped button on the cover. As a miniature agricultural utensil, it still looks elegant and noble.





12. Jade Urn with a Pattern of Nine Dragons

Qing

Height: 134 cm Maximum Diameter: 117 cm

Preserved in the Palace Museum in Beijing

This is an irregular ellipsoidal container made of dark green jade. With a flat mouth, the hollow object can be used to store things. Its protruding bottom is on a rosewood pedestal which has a wave-shaped design. Some thousand characters are carved in intaglio on the interior wall and bottom of the urn in imitation of the inscriptions of Emperor Qianlong and the ministers of the Qing Dynasty. Its exterior wall is carved with the pattern of nine dragons varying in posture using techniques like relief and lines in intaglio.





13. Flowerpot-shaped Jar

Qing

Height: 5 cm Internal Diameter: 7.8 cm

Unearthed from Zhang Zhidong's old mansion in Nanpi, Hebei in 1973

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is a container made of blue jade. It is characterized by its inward-coiled brim, plump shoulder, belly which is pinched in the lower part and a small ring foot. Two layers of lotus petals are found on the exterior. Bas-relief techniques were adopted to carve "eight auspicious designs" on the petals of the upper layer and coherent S-shaped cloud patterns on the petals of the lower layer.



14. Big Jade Bottle

Qing

Height: 25.5 cm

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is an item of furnishing made of bluish white jade. The flat, round vessel features a short neck, flat belly and ring foot. Its cover has a bulging button. There are elephant-head-shaped ears on both sides of its neck. Its belly is decorated with three circles of one-legged dragon designs, animal-face designs and geometric patterns respectively, separated by circular string patterns. There is also an ellipsoidal pedestal made of jasper under the bottle. Openwork and entangled cloud patterns can be seen on the pedestal.



15. Moon Vase with Dragon Design

Qing

Height: 18 cm

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is an item of furnishing made of gray jade with grain lines and filemot spots in some places. Shining with the luster of wax, the oblate vase features a small elliptical mouth, short neck and long ring foot. There is an openwork pattern of a coiling dragon on its cover, holding a precious pearl in its claws. An S-shaped erect dragon is found on each of the two sides of its neck and shoulder. There is also a raised dragon in the approximately round frame on the front and back sides of its belly. The moon vases of the Qing Dynasty were mostly made of porcelain. Jade vases of this kind are rare.

16. Jade Bottle Carved with a Poem and a Dragon

Qing

Height: 34.4 cm Internal Diameter: 5.2-6.2 cm

Preserved in the Yantai Museum

This is an item of furnishing made of white jade. It features an oblong mouth, straight neck, wide belly and ring foot. An openwork design of a dragon coils around its neck, with one claw protecting a pearl. The exterior wall of its belly is carved in intaglio with a poem with seven characters in each line in gold-filled regular script, followed by a signature "Inscribed by Emperor Qianlong".





17. Flat Jade Bottle with Animal Pattern

Qing

Height: 18.5 cm Internal Diameter: 4.4-6.6 cm

Preserved in the Palace Museum in Beijing

This is an item of furnishing made of yellow jade with some natural brown spots. The vessel is characterized by an oval mouth, flat belly, ring root and a cover with a lotus-shaped button. On one side of its belly is an openwork phoenix, which serves as a handle and on the other side is a double horned immortal unicorn throwing out its chest. Designs of clouds and banana leaves can be found on its neck, shoulder and foot.

18. Flat Jade Bottle with Flower-shaped Ears

Qing

Height: 15.2 cm Width: 9 cm Maximum Bottom Diameter: 5.4 cm

Preserved in the Hebei Museum

This is an item of furnishing made of gray jade. It has a long flat neck, flat belly and a ring foot. There is a pair of flower-shaped ears on its neck and belly respectively, shaped like curling leaves and buds. Each of the ears originally had a movable loop. There are five layers of bas-relief designs of lotus leaves and lotus flowers with coiling stalks on its body from the brim to the bottom. The wall of the hollow bottle is thin and transparent. Inside its foot is a two-tiered platform.





19. Jade Bowl Inlaid with Spun Gold and Gems

Qing

Height: 6.2 cm Internal Diameter: 12 cm Foot Diameter: 4.7 cm

Preserved in the Shanxi Museum

This is a container made of blue jade with an open mouth, arched belly and ring foot. Its interior wall is inlaid with guava-shaped patterns, its inside bottom is inlaid with carbuncles to form a field of pearls and its exterior wall has four medallions comprised of spun gold and carbuncles and emeralds. It is an imitation of some of the jade articles from Hindustan at that time.

20. Ridged Melon-shaped Handled Jade Pot with Sheep-Head-Shaped Spout

Qing

Height: 10.5 cm Internal Diameter: 8.5 cm

Preserved in the Palace Museum in Beijing

This is a pot made of Hetian suet-white jade used to store wine. The round melon-shaped vessel has a round mouth, sheep-head-shaped spout, a cover with a button and a ring foot. It also has a tripod-shaped enamel handle. No design is found on its body. In the center of its bottom is a square seal carved in intaglio with four Chinese characters “Jia Qing Yu Yong (For Emperor Jiaqing)” in official script. It is the only surviving jade article of its kind.

