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# In Pursuit of Temporal Illusion: the Reproduction and Imitation of Antiquities under the Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723–35)

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## Abstract

The practice of reproducing and imitating antiquities during the Qing period (1644–1911) has attracted the attention of many scholars, especially those specialised in Qing imperial art production, who have delved into such practice initiated particularly under the Kangxi (r. 1662–1722) and Qianlong (r. 1736–95) emperors. The Yongzheng reign (1723–35), however, appears relatively overlooked in the ongoing discussion. This article aims to fill this research gap by examining the reproduction and imitation of archaic ceramics under the Yongzheng emperor. Both two-dimensional pictures and three-dimensional objects produced after archaic ceramics will be examined together with relevant imperial archival records in order to penetrate how antiquities would take on new forms, functions, and meanings and speak to an imagined, multi-layered past constructed at the court. Building upon this, the article will re-examine the definition of ‘antiquities’ in the Yongzheng context and unveil the pattern of thinking behind the illusionistic archaising practice in relation to Emperor Yongzheng’s dual identity as the Manchu ruler and a cultivated literatus engaged with Han Chinese traditions.

## Keywords

Yongzheng reign – ceramics – *fang/jia* – antiquity – illusion

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## 1 Introduction

The Yongzheng era of the Qing dynasty (1723–35), albeit its brief duration, witnessed a notable flourishing of artistic and cultural endeavours, driven by initiatives undertaken at the imperial court. One of the major activities during this time was the reproduction and imitation of antiquities, ranging from the manufacture of three-dimensional copies to the creation of two-dimensional pictures of objects from preceding dynasties. Meanwhile, partly due to the richness of extant visual and textual sources related to the Kangxi (1662–1722) and Qianlong (1736–1795) eras, existing scholarship has devoted considerable attention to archaising practices launched at the Qing court during these periods. These studies have brought significant insights into the Kangxi period practice of reproduction and the resulting products, such as porcelain wares with apocryphal reign marks from earlier periods, as well as Emperor Qianlong's commission of what is known as *jia guwan* 假古玩 (lit. fake ancient playthings).<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the constructed chronological trope 'Kang-Qian shengshi' 康乾盛世 (prosperous age between Kangxi and Qianlong reigns) strengthens the homogenisation of the three emperors' working and living habits, their strategies and priorities in managing imperial household affairs, as well as their attitudes towards antiquities and the past.<sup>2</sup>

The Qianlong emperor, in particular, has often been considered the major promoter of this type of practice, who would employ new techniques and materials to achieve greater verisimilitude in reproducing antiquities or create

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- 1 Chen Chih-en 陳之恩, 'Fooling the eye: trompe l'oeil porcelain in High Qing China', *Les Cahiers de Framespa* [online], no. 31 (2019), accessed 01 November 2023, <https://doi.org/10.4000/framespa.6246>; Stacey Pierson, 'True or False? Defining the Fake in Chinese Porcelain', *Les Cahiers de Framespa* [online], no. 31 (2019), accessed 01 November 2023, <http://journals.openedition.org/framespa/6168>. Stacey Pierson, 'Authentic Ceramics with Fake Reign Marks: Characterizing Xuanhe Nian Zhi Wares of the Qing Dynasty', *Orientalis* 46, no. 8 (2015): 58–65.
  - 2 The term has been commonly adopted in Chinese-language scholarship, but also occasionally accepted in English-language scholarship, often known in the alternative English term as 'High Qing era'. The term was coined in the late 20th century and roughly spans the timeframe from 1683 to 1839. On the definition of 'High Qing era', see Susan Mann, 'Gender', *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 19–20. The later exhibition 'China: The Three Emperors' held at the Royal Academy of Arts, London in 2005–2006 continued to adopt this temporal scheme and present the Yongzheng emperor as the intermediary ruler, who inherited his father's governance strategies and enacted a more centralised form of rulership, which came to fruition during his son's reign. See Evelyn S. Rawski, 'The "prosperous age": China in the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong Reigns', in *China: The Three Emperors, 1662–1795*, eds. Evelyn S. Rawski and Jessica Rawson (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005), 32–33.

innovative imitation products transcending the boundaries of time, space, and media.<sup>3</sup> The present-day museum display further enhances this discourse by showcasing individual section dedicated to Qianlong period ceramic imitations of antiquities and contemporary objects made of different materials. For instance, in their current permanent display of Qing dynasty art, the Musée national des arts asiatiques-Guimet presents a vitrine designated to Trompe-l'œil porcelain objects, all dated to the Qianlong period (as per the display on 25 June 2023). The featured items include such archaic objects as two *hu*-shaped vases (G1567; G3274), which are exhibited in juxtaposition with a porcelain imitation of a Tibetan-style wooden Mdong-mo butter tea churn (G1841), often used for banquets and Buddhist rituals in the Qing context. Additionally, imitations of organic objects like a chestnut (G1971) and a coral branch (G1923) are also displayed as part of the demonstration of the rich practices of illusionism under Emperor Qianlong.

Considered as the mediator between his father and son, the Yongzheng emperor, together with his artistic and cultural enterprises, has often been understated. In the meantime, previous scholars have shed some light on the aesthetic taste of the emperor with the aid of extant Qing imperial archives, especially the *Neiwufu zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdang* 內務府造辦處各作成做活計清檔 (Archival Records from the Workshops of the Imperial Household Department, hereinafter referred to as *Huojì dang*).<sup>4</sup> Yu Pei-chin, in particular, delved into the *Taocheng jishi bei* 陶成紀事碑 (Stele with a memorial on accomplished porcelain) composed by Tang Ying 唐英 (1682–1756), who played a significant role in the development of the Imperial Porcelain Factory at Jingdezhen during the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods. In her article, Yu provided a contextual study of both the archaic and innovative porcelains produced in the Imperial Porcelain Factory under the Yongzheng emperor

3 Chen, 'Fooling the eye' [online]; For literature on the imitation of ancient paintings during the Qianlong reign, see, for example, Zhao Yanzhe 趙琰哲, *Rugu hanjin: Qing Qianlong chao fanggu huihua yanjiu* 茹古涵今: 清乾隆朝仿古繪畫研究 [Harmony between the Past and the Present: A Study of Qing Qianlong Archaic-style Painting], Nanning: Guangxi meishu chubanshe, 2017.

4 Lin Shu 林姝, 'Cong Zaobanchu dang'an kan Yongzheng huangdi de shenmei qingqu' 從造辦處檔案看雍正皇帝的審美情趣 [An Examination of the Aesthetic Sensibilities of the Yongzheng Emperor in Light of the Archives of the Zaobanchu], *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 [The Palace Museum Journal] 116 (2004): 90–119. Yu Pei-chin 余佩瑾, 'Cong Tang Ying "Taocheng jishi bei" kan Yongzheng guan yao de fanggu yu chuangxin' 從唐英〈陶成紀事碑〉看雍正官窯的仿古與創新 [An Examination of the Practice of Archaism and Innovation at the Official Kiln of the Yongzheng Reign based on the Stele with a Memorial on Accomplished Porcelain by Tang Ying], *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊 [The National Palace museum monthly of Chinese art], no. 319 (2009): 64–74.

with reference to the 57 types of newly invented glazes mentioned in the *Taocheng jishi bei*, which were meant to ‘emulate the past and embrace the present’ as described by the author.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the emperor’s contribution to the growth of the Imperial Household Department and his agency in advancing various archaising projects at the court has not yet been discussed in detail. Gradually reaching its maturity during the Kangxi period, the Imperial Household Department, known in Chinese as *Neiwufu* 內務府, was a bureaucratic institution responsible for the management of miscellaneous daily affairs of the court.<sup>6</sup> Under the Yongzheng emperor, the Department’s employment rate experienced significant growth, surpassing that of the Kangxi period more than threefold.<sup>7</sup> What is more, the emperor adopted a relatively liberal approach in comparison to his father and son, putting efforts to implement policies to tackle the problem of low incomes experienced by eunuchs working in the Department.<sup>8</sup>

One of the major duties of the Imperial Household Department was to supervise the *Zaobanchu* 造辦處, or imperial workshops. Mainly located in the outer palace of the Forbidden City and later in the Yuanmingyuan, the *Zaobanchu* was a key sub-department that played a vital role in facilitating the archaising projects commissioned by the emperor. Delving into the *Huoji dang*, it becomes revealing that Emperor Yongzheng was actively engaged in commissioning and overseeing the reproduction and imitation of antiquities, notably ceramic wares, at the *Zaobanchu*. More interestingly, as the current article unfolds, it appears that these contemporary products would be placed in juxtaposition with genuine antiquities as items for display in palatial compounds. This phenomenon hints that both types of objects seemed to be treated equally at the court, and, in turn, leads to the following questions: 1) What was ‘antiquities’, a supposedly historically bounded category of object, referring to during the Yongzheng period? 2) What did the concepts of *fang* 仿 (lit. copying; reproduction) and *jia* 假 (lit. fake) entail in the Yongzheng context and how were they represented in different art forms produced at the court? 3) Why would the emperor commission the production and display of archaised objects within the imperial space?

To answer these questions, this article will probe into varied archaising practices initiated at the Yongzheng court addressed in the *Huoji dang*. Given

5 Yu, ‘Taocheng jishi bei’, 65–66.

6 Preston M. Torbert, ‘A General View of the Imperial Household Department: Organization’, *The Ch’ing Imperial Household Department: A Study of Its Organization and Principal Functions, 1662–1796* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1977), 27–28.

7 Torbert, ‘A General View’, 29.

8 *Ibid.*, 44–51.

that ceramics is one of the most frequently mentioned types of objects associated with the archaising practice in the archives, the article will draw specific attention to the production and consumption of archaised ceramic wares at the court, starting from two *Huoji dang* entries addressing the making and display of *fang* and *jia* ceramic wares. Relevant visual sources, including extant ceramics and paintings of ceramic-like vessels modelling after or inspired by pieces from earlier dynasties, will be examined in conjunction with the imperial records. Through this contextualised case study, the article aims to bring insights into the mode of thinking behind these archaising practices, uncovering how the temporal concept of *gu* 古 (ancient; past) was defined, fabricated, and visually represented under Emperor Yongzheng.

## 2 *Fang* Ceramics and the Choice of Prototypes

On the 26th day of the fifth lunar month in the sixth year of the Yongzheng reign (1728), eunuchs Liu Xiwen 劉希文, Wang Taiping 王太平, and Wang Shougui 王守貴 sent 30 types of vessels to the Lacquerware workshop, along with the emperor's commission for the production of bespoke display stands for the vessels. On the 8th day of the eighth lunar month, Haiwang 海望, the director of the Imperial Household Department, selected ten vessels and ordered artisans to craft designated wooden stands for them, which were then submitted to the emperor for review. Upon receiving the emperor's approval of the design, the workshop began working on the task and eventually finished making the lacquered stands for all the delivered vessels by the end of the fifth lunar month in the following year. Subsequently in the first day of the sixth lunar month, Haiwang collected the vessels, each accompanied by their bespoke stands, and displayed them within Jiuzhou qingyan 九洲清晏 (Nine Continents in Peace), a main residential complex in the Yuanmingyuan built upon nine man-made islets.<sup>9</sup>

Among the delivered items, 29 of them can be identified as ceramics, as they are denoted in the *Huoji dang* entry either directly by the character *ci* 磁 ('porcelain' in English ceramic terms), or by specific kiln names or glaze colours, like *Longquan yao meiping* 龍泉窯梅瓶 (prunus vase from the

9 The First Historical Archives of China and Chinese University of Hong Kong Art Museum (hereafter shortened as FH Archives and CUHK Art Museum), eds., *Qinggong neiwufu zao-banchu dang'an zonghui* 清宮內務府造辦處檔案總匯 [The General Collection of Archival Records from the Qing Imperial Household Department Workshops], vol. 3 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005), 214.

Longquan kiln) and *baiyou shuanghuan ping* 白釉雙環瓶 (white-glazed vase with double rings). Interestingly, 22 out of the 29 types of ceramic vessels are described as ‘fang’ 仿. Surveying the language used in the imperial records, one will notice that during the Yongzheng period, the term *fang* adopts the meaning of ‘reproduction’, which bears the connotation of copying faithfully after certain prototypical models, presumably using same materials with a close formal likeness.<sup>10</sup>

In this case, each *fang* vessel is linked to a specific kiln site or reign period from earlier dynasties. As shown in the following bar chart (Figure 1), their prototypes mainly comprise wares associated with the Song (960–1279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties, predominated by Longquan kiln ware, Ding kiln ware, and Xuan kiln ware, followed by Ru kiln ware, Dongqing kiln ware, Guan kiln ware, and certain ‘purple-gold’ glazed *meiping* from the Song dynasty with no clear indication of their kiln sites.

The Guan, Ru, and Ding wares, in particular, have been appreciated in Ming and Qing ceramic discourses as items for imperial use during the Song period. For instance, the 1815 *Jingdezhen taolu* 景德鎮陶錄 (Record of Jingdezhen Ceramics, hereafter shortened as *Taolu*), originally written by Lan Pu 藍浦 (act. 1736–95), lists the three wares at the beginning in the section on ‘Reproductions of Ancient Kiln Wares from Jingdezhen’. The book is the first specialised monograph on the history and production of ceramics at Jingdezhen, which also addresses the management and products of Qing imperial porcelain factory under the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong reigns.

In this section, each entry contains a detailed description of the ware’s production date, kiln location, and formal characteristics, while highlighting the patronage extended by the Northern and Southern Song courts.<sup>11</sup> A preference for earlier imperial wares as models for the ceramic reproduction has, thus, unveiled. A similar inclination towards imperial wares is also evident in the selection of Ming prototypes, as indicated by the reference to five wares in the

10 See a detailed explanation in Kexin Ma, ‘Recreating the Past: *Guwan tu* Handscrolls and Practices of Illusionism under Emperor Yongzheng’ (PhD thesis, SOAS University of London, 2024), 254–55.

11 Lan Pu 藍浦 (act. 1736–95) and Zheng Tinggui 鄭廷桂 (act. 1815), ‘Zhen fang guyao kao’ 鎮仿古窯考 [Investigation on Reproductions of Ancient Kiln Wares from Jingdezhen], *Jingdezhen taolu* 景德鎮陶錄 [Record of Jingdezhen Ceramics] (primarily based on the Yijing tang edition published in the 20th year of the Jiaqing reign [1815]), vol. 6, in *Zhongguo gu taoci wenxian jiaozhu* 中國古陶瓷文獻校注 [Edited and Annotated Collection of Historical Documents on Ancient Chinese Ceramics], ed. Chen Yuqian 陳雨前 et al. (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2015), 767–71.

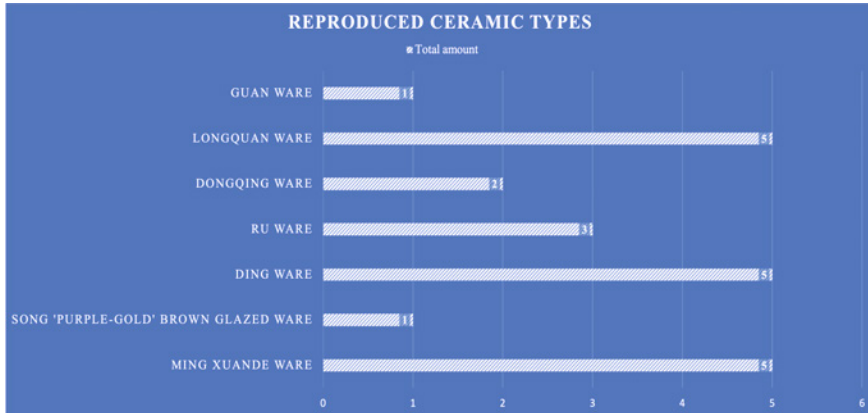


FIGURE 1 Bar chart showing the prototypes for the *fang* ceramic vessels addressed in the *Huojidang* entry (26th May 1728)

entry denoted as '*fang* Xuan yao' 仿宣窯, that is, 'reproduced after the imperial kiln [wares] of the Xuande reign (1426–35)'.<sup>12</sup>

Specifically, the entry for Ru ware suggests the Ru kiln was commissioned by the Song court to produce celadon vessels in replacement of the Ding ware, which was originally used at the court but later deemed as unsuitable due to the roughness of its unglazed mouth rim.<sup>12</sup> This information can be found in the early Ming compilation *Nancun chuogeng lu* 南村輟耕錄 (Notes from a Southern Village while Resting from the Plow, hereafter shortened as *Chuogeng lu*), in which the author Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (act. 1360–68) suggested the original source was *Tanzhai biheng* 坦齋筆衡 (Notes from the Tranquil Study), a literati jotting dated to the Southern Song period (1127–1279).<sup>13</sup> How, then, was this information transmitted during the Qing period? Since it was not customary for Qing authors to include details of references in their writings, it cannot be confirmed that the information was directly sourced from the Southern Song work. At the same time, the *Chuogeng lu* was reprinted several times

12 Lan and Zheng, 'Zhen fang guayao kao', 769. The unglazed mouth rim is resulted from the *pushao* 覆燒 firing process, invented by artisans in the Ding kiln. During the process, the wares will be stacked over each other and fired upside down in the kiln. It is, thus, necessary to leave the mouth rims unglazed to prevent sticking, but also to minimise the risk of warping.

13 Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (act. 1360–68), 'Yaoqi' 窯器 [Kiln Wares], *Nancun chuogeng lu* 南村輟耕錄 [Notes from a Southern Village while Resting from the Plow] (China: Maoshi jigu ge, 1621–44) (Electronic reproduction. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Library Preservation, 2016; T 9153 7232), vol. 29 (seq. 541), accessed 01 November 2023, <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:27817130>.

throughout the Ming and Qing periods and had also been incorporated into the massive encyclopedia *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (Collections of Pictures and Writings from the Past and the Present), which was commissioned by Emperor Kangxi and fully completed under Emperor Yongzheng. It is, thus, likely that the Qing court, together with officials in charge of the manufacture of the reproductions of Ru wares, obtained such information about the Song court's commission of Ru wares for imperial use from Ming references.

Specifically, One of the vessels mentioned in the *Huoji dang* entry is *fang Ru yao danping* 仿汝窯膽瓶, a reproduction of certain Ru ware vase in 'gallbladder' shape. An extant piece dated to the Yongzheng period (Zhong-ci-000413) (Figure 2) from the National Palace Museum in Taipei (NPM) sheds light on the possible appearance of this vase. The selection of *danping* as the prototypical model was by no means random, since this particular vessel form had long been appreciated as an appropriate addition for scholars' studios since the Song period, as evidenced in contemporary poems on things, such as the one by Lou Yue 樓鑰 (1137–1213) entitled *Xiti danping jiao* 戲題膽瓶蕉 (Written in jest about banana plant in *danping*). In his poem, the Southern Song literatus specifically pointed out the new ceramic *danping* used to hold the banana plant was from the Ru kiln (垂膽新瓷出汝窯). Similar poems that associate *danping* with varied flowers often recreate the setting of a scholar's studio, in which the vessel could be positioned by the window, on the desk, or beside the couch-bed where the owner of the studio would be immersed in reading and contemplation, as commented in the poem by the Southern Song poet Lin Xiyi 林希逸 (1193–1271).<sup>14</sup> With this poetic imagery, *danping* started to become a symbol of literati aesthetics that demonstrated the refined taste and self-cultivation of an ideal scholar.

During the Ming period, *danping* from the Song dynasty was particularly singled out as a proper type of vessel for flower arrangement. For instance, *Pinghua pu* 瓶花譜 (Manual on Vases and Flower), a late Ming specialised monograph on flower arranging by Zhang Qiande 張謙德 (1577–1643), mentioned ceramic *danping* as one of the 'miraculous items' for flower display in scholars' studios.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, he highlighted the Ru ware as the foremost

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- 14 Liao Pao-Show 廖寶秀, 'Guan yao danping yu e'jing ping: lue tan shuzhai huaqi zaoxing' 官窯膽瓶與鵝頸瓶: 略談書齋花器造型 [Guan ware Danping and Goose-Neck Vase: Remarks on the Shaping of Flower Vessels for Scholar's Studio], *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊 [The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art], no. 340 (2011): 92.
- 15 Zhang Qiande 張謙德 (1577–1643), 'Pin pin' 品瓶 [Appraising Vases], *Pinghua pu* 瓶花譜 [Manual on Vases and Flowers] (based on the Baoyan tang edition) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 2.





FIGURE 2 *Fang Ru* ware *Danping* (with detail showing its base), Yongzheng period (1723–35), H: 26.5 cm, Diam. (mouth): 3.0 cm, Diam. (foot): 7.5 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei (Zhong-ci-000413)

cherished type, followed by Guan, Ge, Ding, and Xuande wares, which were praised as the most precious kind at his time.<sup>16</sup> The Xuande ware, listed among the Song ceramics, was also appreciated in Ming connoisseurship texts as one of the most esteemed products of the Ming imperial kiln at Jingdezhen. Authors like the late Ming arbiter of taste Gao Lian 高濂 (1573–1620) and literatus Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578–1642) further praised the blue and white ware

16 Zhang, 'Pin pin', 1.

as the signature type of the Xuande kiln.<sup>17</sup> Similar comment, in turn, appears in *Taolu*, suggesting the prevalence of this connoisseurship discourse about the Xuande blue and white ware.

Referring back to the *Huoji dang* entry, all the aforementioned wares were adopted as prototypes for the reproduction pieces, which were then displayed in the emperor's private residence within the Yuanmingyuan. Some items, such as the *fang Ru yao su huagu* 仿汝窯素花觚 (reproduction of an unadorned *gu*-shaped flower vase after the Ru kiln ware) and the *fang Xuan yao qinghua baidi qiguan huacha* 仿宣窯青花白地七管花插 (reproduction of a blue and white seven-tubed flower vase after the Xuande [imperial] ware), would serve as flower vessels just like the *danping*, contributing to the aesthetic experience engendered within the private quarters of the Yuanmingyuan based on Ming discourses on the ideal literati lifestyle.<sup>18</sup> Here, another aspect of the selection preference for the prototypes is gradually revealed, which is associated with the mid- and late Ming connoisseurship discourses constructed by contemporary literati through their writings. All the Song prototypes mentioned above had been once discussed in these writings, including connoisseurship texts and manuals on the art of living, like Gao Liao's work.

As Yu suggests, based on Tang Ying's memorial on the *Taocheng jishi bei*, the models for the *fang* products mainly consist of objects from the imperial collection largely inherited from the Ming regime, as well as sherds collected at ancient kiln sites in Jingdezhen, including those from the earlier Song kilns and the former Ming Imperial Factory.<sup>19</sup> In the meantime, the selection of prototypes and the production of the archaistic ceramics at the Yongzheng court appear to be based on prevailing ceramic discourses as well as subjective connoisseurship and aesthetic judgments made by the emperor and officials

17 Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578–1642), 'Ciqi' 瓷器 [Porcelain], *Bizhou xuan shengyu* 敝帚軒剩語 補遺 (Lingering Remarks from the Humble Broom Pavilion, with addendum), in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 [Complete Collection of Works from [Various] Collectanea: First Series], ed. Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1937), vol. 2, 36. Gao Lian 高濂 (1573–1620), 'Lun Raoqi xin yao gu yao' 論饒器新窯古窯 [On Wares from Old and New (Imperial) Kilns at Jingdezhen], *Yanxian qingshang jian* 燕閒清賞箋 [Notes on Things for Pure Appreciation in Life of Leisure], from *Zunsheng bajian* 遵生八箋 [Eight Discourses on the Art of Living], 1591 (Microfilm. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard College Library Imaging Services, 2006), vol. 7 (seq. 815), 50a, accessed 12th May 2023, <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:27666276?n=815>.

18 The Palace Museum in Beijing houses a comparable Ru-style flower vase in the shape of *gu* (GU00148636), an archaistic shape itself derived from ancient ritual bronzes popularised during the Shang (c. 1600–1046 BCE) and Zhou (c. 1050–221 BCE) periods.

19 Yu, 'Taocheng jishi bei', 66–68.

at the Imperial Porcelain Factory. Specifically, the aforementioned Dongqing kiln, written in Chinese as ‘冬青窯’ in the *Huoji dang*, has been accepted as an alternative name for the Eastern kiln (‘東窯’ or ‘東青窯’; the latter specifies the kiln was known for its celadon ceramic products). This modern interpretation aligns with the discussion on the nomenclature of the kiln from the *taolu*.<sup>20</sup>

In his book, Lan Pu identified the Dongqing ware as a reproduction product itself, emulating the Guan ware from the Song official kilns. Meanwhile, The Eastern kiln is now recognised as the Ming designation for the Longquan kiln complex, which also contains kilns that produced Guan-style ceramic wares for the imperial court.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it could be suggested that the Dongqing and Longquan wares used as prototypes for reproductions during the Yongzheng period were two types of Longquan wares possibly produced in different workshops within the kiln complex, but also in distinct time periods spanning from the Song to Ming eras. As noted in *Taolu*, the Dongqing ware was typically covered with pale celadon glaze in contrast to the Longquan ware, whose glaze would appear in more saturated hue.<sup>22</sup> This difference in glaze colours, thus, might become one of the criteria for distinguishing the two wares from each other at the Yongzheng court, which was then deployed as a production guideline at the Imperial Porcelain Factory.

The subjectivity in producing the *fang* ceramics becomes even more evident when comparing the reproductions with their models. For instance, the aforementioned Yongzheng *danping* vase (see Figure 2) seems to be more slender and relatively bottom-heavy in comparison to a Northern Song (960–1127) Ru ware *danping* (Gu-ci-004372) (Figure 3) from the NPM. The glazed surface also takes on a glossy, smooth light-blue appearance, contrasting with the translucent greyish-blue surface of the Song piece with interlaced crackles. The base of the vase is applied with a layer of brownish glaze, either for conservation purpose or for representing the stoneware body of the Song prototype.

What is noteworthy is that the Song *danping* has now been identified as an altered piece, with its original rim being cut off and replaced by a circular bronze mount. Its initial appearance would resemble what is now referred to as the goose-neck vase characteristic of a flared rim and a bulbous body, which is one of the major vase forms among the specimens excavated from the Northern Song Ru kiln site located in Qiangliangsi at Baofeng county, Henan

20 Lan and Zheng, ‘Zhen fang guyao kao’, 771.

21 Thanks to Professor Stacey Pierson for sharing this information.

22 Lan and Zheng, ‘Zhen fang guyao kao’, 771.



FIGURE 3 Ru ware *Danping*, Northern Song period (960–1127), H: 17.8 cm, Diam. (mouth): 3.6 cm, Diam. (foot): 8.4 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei (Gu-ci-004372)

province since the 1980s.<sup>23</sup> The Yongzheng reproduction, in fact, looks closer to the Guan ware *danping* (Gu-ci-008288) (Figure 4), which could be traced back to the Southern Song period. In Liao's discussion of the origin of *danping* and the goose-neck vase, she proposed that these two vase forms were not distinguished from each other during the Song period. The differentiation in their naming started to emerge in Ming literati's writings and was later officially standardised in Qing imperial archives.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, even within discursive framework where *fang* implies faithful copying, the Yongzheng reproductions, like the Ru ware *danping*, can still be considered as syncretic products combining formal features of multiple earlier prototypes. In this case, the Yongzheng

23 One comparable goose-neck vase with carved lotus design, excavated in 1987, is currently housed in the Henan Museum in Zhengzhou. See its image in Zhang Bai, ed., *Zhongguo chutu ciqu quanji 12: Henan* 中國出土瓷器全集 12: 河南 [Complete Collection of Ceramic Art Unearthed in China 12: Henan] (Beijing: Science Press, 2008), 112.

24 Liao, 'Danping and e'jing ping', 93–97.



FIGURE 4 Guan ware *Danping*, Southern Song period (1127–1279), H: 14.9 cm, Diam. (mouth): 2.0 cm, Diam. (foot): 5.9 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei (Gu-ci-008288)

*danping* blends the designated characteristics of the Ru and Guan wares formalised during the Qing period, often with reference to preexisting Ming discourses.

### 3 *Jia* Ceramics and the Construction of an Archaised Space

In addition to the *fang* ceramics, the Yongzheng period also witnessed a growing interest in creating *jia* ceramics. Moving beyond the act of faithful copying embedded in the concept of *fang*, *jia* conveys the meaning of inventive imitation, which emphasises the delusive nature inherent in any form of representation, regardless of how convincingly naturalistic the representation may be. In

the Yongzheng period *huoji dang*, *jia* was often employed to describe practices of illusionism that entailed transitions from three-dimensional to two-dimensional forms or cross-media transformations.<sup>25</sup> For instance, on the 10th day of the fourth lunar month of the sixth year, Haiwang ordered the Painting workshop to work on a *jia manzi hua* 假幔子畫, that is, an imitative painting of curtain. The painting was then brought by a court mounter named Li Yi 李毅 into the Wanzi fang 萬字房 (Swastika House), the present-day Wanfang anhe 萬方安和 residence in the Yuanmingyuan and pasted inside the attic for devotional purpose as an illusionistic representation of a real curtain.<sup>26</sup>

With regard to the current discussion, the following entry dated to the fifth year (1727) showcases the manufacture of *jia* ceramics as display objects for the Yuanmingyuan and the emperor's direct involvement in the manufacture process:

On the first day [of the sixth lunar month], according to the notice from the Yuanmingyuan, director Haiwang conveyed His Majesty's decree on the 30th day of the fifth lunar month:

The bookcases lined the two sides of Room No. 1 in the Lotus Lodge are quite empty and spacious. If concerning that antiquities would be too heavy to display, you should produce bespoke boxes in imitation of books, with their heights varying in accordance with the forms of the bookcases. Use *ageli* (wood burr) or *tongcao* (tetrapanax papyrifera) to make flowers and objects for play, or use horsetail to weave flower baskets and vessels for fragrant items. Then, display them inside the boxes. Respect this.

... On the 17th day of the third lunar month in the seventh year (1729), an imitative agate celestial deer in wood burr, an imitative Jun ware 'pomegranate' vase in paper ... an imitative Ying stone mountain-shaped brush holder ... four imitative porcelain chrysanthemum-petal-style dish in pasteboard ... [as well as] 12 brocaded boxes in miscellaneous colours, 24 woven silk boxes in azurite blue ... In place of corporal Bai Shixiu and others, director Haiwang brought [all the items] in and displayed [them] inside the bookcases in the Lotus Lodge, thus completing the current task.<sup>27</sup>

25 See a detailed explanation in Ma, 'Recreating the Past', 255.

26 FH Archives and CUHK Art Museum, *Huojidi dang*, vol. 3, 304.

27 FA Archives and CUHK Art Museum, *Huojidi dang*, vol. 2, 724.

初一日，據圓明園來帖內稱，五月三十日郎中海望奉旨：

蓮花館一號房內兩傍書閣上甚空大，若陳設古董惟恐沉重，爾等配做假書式匣子，其高矮隨書閣隔斷形式，匣內或用阿格里，或用通草做花卉玩器，或用馬尾織做盛香花籃器皿，欽此。

……於七年三月十七日做得阿格里胎假瑪瑙天鹿一件、紙胎假鈞窯磁石榴罇一件……阿格里胎假英石硯山一件……合牌胎假磁菊花瓣式盤四件……糊各色錦匣一百十二件、石青絹匣二十四件……郎中海望代領催白士秀等持進，安設在蓮花館書格內訖。

As exemplified by the entry above, the sense of liberty in manufacturing the *fang* ceramics becomes more pronounced in the production of *jia* ceramics, including an imitative Jun ware ‘pomegranate’ vase, presumably with a pith paper body made of *tongcao*, and four imitative porcelain chrysanthemum-petal-style dish made of *hepai*, or paper pasteboard. Alongside the ceramics, other *jia* items, such as the agate celestial deer and the mountain-shaped stone brush holder made of wood burr, further demonstrates the creativity and technical virtuosity of the court artisans in producing these *jia* objects. What is more intriguing is that the entry unveils the *jia* ceramics, along with the other imitative objects in different materials, were displayed in replacement of authentic antiquities, which, in the emperor’s words, ‘would be too heavy to display’. Accompanied by the bespoke boxes, also deemed as *jia* possibly due to its formal likeness to packs of books, these bookcases in the Lotus Lodge underwent a metamorphosis into illusionistic display cabinets. Within these cabinets were items that invoked the historical and aesthetic values of antiquities but, at the same time, obscured the boundaries of time, space, and material.

The paper ceramic wares, unfortunately, do not seem to have survived to the present day, likely due to their fragile quality. Meanwhile, extant *jia* ceramics in other forms, notably those in two-dimensional painting, can potentially contribute to the understanding of how both *fang* and *jia* ceramics were once utilised as part of the interior design for the imperial palatial compounds, including those in the Yuanmingyuan. One such example is the hanging scroll entitled *Gathering of Auspicious Signs* (Figure 5) (Gu-hua-000803) by the prominent Italian Jesuit painter Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766, Ch. Lang Shining 郎世寧) at the beginning of the Yongzheng reign (1723). Rendered in a rather naturalistic manner capturing the interplay of light and shadow, the painting depicts a celadon vase filled with flower and plants that signified heavenly blessings for the new reign, including double lotus blossoms, lotus pods, and double grains. The flower vase with the archaistic string pattern, in particular, has been recognised as a *fang* piece that take on the form and glaze palette



FIGURE 5  
Giuseppe Castiglione,  
*Gathering of Auspicious Signs*,  
1723, hanging scroll, ink and  
colour on silk, 173 × 86.1 cm,  
National Palace Museum,  
Taipei (Gu-hua-000803)

of the Song Ru and Guan wares, as demonstrated by a comparable piece in the NPM (Figure 6).<sup>28</sup> The painting, in turn, which may have once been hung

28 The National Palace Museum, 'The Years Before and After Coming to China', Portrayals from a Brush Divine: A Special Exhibition on the Tricentennial of Castiglione's Arrival in China, accessed 23rd April 2020, <https://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh104/giuseppecastiglione/en/index.html>.





FIGURE 6 Celadon Vase, 1723–35, porcelain with archaic string pattern after Song Ru and Guan wares, with Yongzheng reign mark, H: 44.1 cm, Diam. (mouth): 11.2 cm, Diam. (foot): 16.5 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei (Zhong-ci-005521)

inside certain palace halls, was itself a *jia* object that showcased the transition from the three-dimensional *fang* vase into a two-dimensional picture.

Extending beyond the conventional painting format, another type of imitative picture of antiquities, mainly referred to as *jia gudong pian/hua* 假古董片/畫, *gudong huapian* 古董畫片, or *guwan pian* 古玩片, was often commissioned by the emperor as interior decoration.<sup>29</sup> A *Huoji dang* entry dated to the sixth year of the Yongzheng reign has brought some insights into the manufacturing process of these pictures. On the 20th day of the sixth lunar month, the emperor commissioned Castiglione to create a European-style painting of a plane-ended table displayed with eight antiquities based on an approved

29 FH Archives and CUHK Art Museum, *Huoji dang*, vol. 2, 266; vol. 3, 306, 485; vol. 7, 182.

design drawing. The pictures of the antiquities were, then, ordered to be cut from the painting and made into *tuo hepai jia gudong hua* 托合牌假古董畫, that is, imitative paintings of antiquities backed with *hepai* pasteboard.<sup>30</sup> What is more, the emperor also offered his own suggestion for the production, proposing the use of copper sheets as mounts for the *hepai* pictures in order to keep the pictures flattened when inserting them into a *gudong banqiang* 古董板牆, or 'antiquity' wall, in Xifeng xiuse 西峰秀色 (Majestic Sunset-Tinted Peaks of the West Hills), another residential compound within the Yuanmingyuan particularly favoured by the emperor.<sup>31</sup>

A recent discovery in the Changchun shuwu 長春書屋 (Study of Eternal Spring) of the Hall of Mental Cultivation has shed light on the possible appearance of the 'antiquity' wall. The remains of a wooden panel attached to the south wall inside the study showcases a number of niches carved into various shapes, including one resembling the form of the archaic celadon vase in Castiglione's painting (see Figure 1 in Zhang's article, 106). According to Zhang Shuxian, the niches were likely to be reserved for the *hepai* pictures mentioned in the *Huoji dang*, which featured the shapes and formal characteristics of different antiquities.<sup>32</sup>

The popularisation of using two-dimensional and three-dimensional representations of antiquities as interior decoration is in line with a rising interest in pursuing formal verisimilitude through techniques that could facilitate visual illusion. In the seventh year of the Yongzheng reign, Nian Xiyao 年希堯 (1671–1739), a high-ranking official who had also served as the superintendent of the Imperial Porcelain Factory at Jingdezhen, completed an illustrated monograph on the mechanism of European perspective drawing entitled *Shixue* 視學 (The Study of Vision) with the aid of Castiglione. The monograph was reprinted in 1735 and distributed as a guidebook of European painting techniques.<sup>33</sup> In this context, the imitative *hepai* pictures of antiquities may have been rendered in the European-inspired painting style in order to achieve the illusionistic visual effect of real antiquities appearing embedded into the walls of palace halls. These pictures would either be painted by Jesuit painters

30 FH Archives and CUHK Art Museum, *Huoji dang*, vol. 3, 305–6.

31 Ibid., 305.

32 Zhang Shuxian 張淑嫻, 'Yangxin dian Changchu Shuwu guwan qiang de qi yuan he yanbian' 養心殿長春書屋古玩牆的起源和演變 [The Origin and Evolution of the 'Antiquity' Wall in the Long Spring Study of the Mental Cultivation Hall], *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 [The Palace Museum Journal] 197, no. 3 (2018): 105–113.

33 See an in-depth discussion about the monograph in Kristina Kleutghen, 'The Study of Vision', *Imperial illusion: Crossing Pictorial Boundaries in the Qing Palaces* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), 59–102.

like Castiglione or by Manchu and Han Chinese court painters, who would acquire knowledge of European painting techniques through direct learning from the Jesuit painters and consulting specialised book like *Shixue*. Similar to the hanging scroll by Castiglione, the imitative pictures might also represent syncretic *fang* antiquities that featured a combination of assorted formal features derived from multiple prototypes appreciated in prevailing connoisseurship discourses.

From the above discussion, it can be suggested that the co-existence of these pictures, the *fang* and *jia* pieces, as well as authentic antiquities in the palatial compounds played a role in nurturing the creation of an archaised space within the imperial living quarters, notably in the residential area of the Yuanmingyuan. This archaised imperial space displays a heterochronic nature, as multiple temporal layers of the past and present collapse into one another when the authentic antiquities from different historical times were juxtaposed with their contemporary reproductions and imitations. The flexibility in adopting both the authentic and reproduced pieces as models for representations of antiquities across diverse art forms further hints at an unconventional stance regarding antiquities prevalent at the Yongzheng court. What did 'antiquity' mean in the Yongzheng context? What was the emperor's attitude towards these relics from the past and their contemporary reproductions and imitations?

#### 4 Redefining 'Antiquity'

The two *Huoji dang* entries above showcases the popularity of the *fang* and *jia* ceramics at the Yongzheng court, while calling for the reconsideration of the definition of 'antiquity', which could be associated with the Chinese terms *gudong* 古董 or *guwan* 古玩. Both terms are now adopted to generically denote a wide range of art objects from the remote past, including ancient bronzes, jades, ceramics, but also paintings and calligraphy. During the Yongzheng period, the two terms were used interchangeably, but their meaning appears to differ from what they signify nowadays.<sup>34</sup>

Based on a survey of the two terms in the Yongzheng period *Huoji dang*, it can be inferred that 'antiquity', as a category of objects, demonstrated a high degree of flexibility and feature an expansive group of items varying in material and chronological attribution. Specifically in the sixth year of the Yongzheng reign, the emperor ordered Haiwang to bring out a total of 643 *yuqi guwan*

34 See the discussion on the interchangeability of *guwan* and *gudong* in the Yongzheng context in Ma, 'Recreating the Past', 116–17.

玉器古玩 (jade objects and antiquities) in four trays and rearrange them into *baishijian* 百事件, or assemblages of hundred curios. The objects mentioned in the entry under the category of *yuqi guwan* encompass jades, ceramics, bronze vessels, and objects made of precious stones, such as polychrome agate, amber, and glass. Some of them are accompanied with accessories like *zitan* wood stands (for a white jade tripod water pot in the 4th tray, for instance), gilt spoons and sticks for incense burning (for a Ding ware ceramic water pot in the 1st tray), and copper inner tube and lid (for a blue and white porcelain jar in the 1st tray).<sup>35</sup> What is intriguing is that a few reproduction and imitative objects, including a *fang hanyu yishou shuizhu* 仿漢玉異獸水注 (water dropper in the form of mythical creature after Han jade prototype, 2nd tray) and a *tong shaogu yishou* 銅燒古異獸 (bronze mythical creature burned with archaised colour, brought out later on the 17th day of the tenth lunar month) are also included in the list of objects under the category of *guwan*.

This diversity of the *guwan*, or ‘antiquity’, category, which transcends the boundary between the past and the present is further visualised in the two Yongzheng period handscrolls entitled *Guwan tu* 古玩圖 (Pictures of Ancient Playthings) currently housed in the British Museum (PDF,X.01) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (E.59–1911) in London. Thanks to their illusionistic representation, the scrolls provide insights into the visual appearances and the potential functions of different antiquities at the Yongzheng court. The two scrolls feature a collection of more than 480 objects, primarily composed of ceramics, bronzes, and jades, among other varied materials. Delving into the scroll from the Sir Percival David Collection (hereafter referred to as PDF scroll) in the British Museum specifically, one will discover that most of the depicted *guwan* are accompanied with bespoke display stands and racks (Figure 7a), along with others painted in pairs (Figure 7b) or stacked together as if they were stored in certain limited space within a container or cabinet, as shown by the image of a set of blue and white bowls with ‘children at play’ motifs (Figure 7c), whose decorative style could be dated to the 15th century.

Other objects, such as a polychrome agate water pot (Figure 7d), are accompanied with spoons or copper inner tubes (Figure 7e). In particular, the plum-shaped inner tube for the bronze vessel shown in Figure 8e appear to be comparable to an extant example (Figure 8) made for a Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BCE) Zun-shaped bronze vessel (Gu-tong-000008), which has been identified as an early Qing product.<sup>36</sup> Thus, it can be suggested that the

35 FH Archives and CUHK Art Museum, *Huoji dang*, vol. 3, 315–20.

36 Liao Pao-Show 廖寶秀, ‘Tongdan chahua yun zirao: lue tan huazun, huagu yu neidan’ 銅膽插花韻自饒: 略談花尊、花觚與內膽 [Self-Expression of Spiritual Resonance



a



b



c



d



e

FIGURE 7A-E  
 Details of the depicted objects from the *Guwan tu*  
 (Pictures of Ancient Playthings), 1728, handscroll,  
 ink and colour on paper, 62.5 × 2000 cm (approx.),  
 British Museum, London (PDF,X.01), Courtesy of  
 the Trustees of the Sir Percival David Foundation;  
 © The Trustees of the British Museum



FIGURE 8 *Zun*-shaped bronze vessel with a metal inner tube in the shape of the plum blossom, Bronze *Zun*: late Shang period (1300–1046 BCE), H: 24.9 cm, Diam. (mouth): 20.0 cm, Diam. (foot): 13.3 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei (Gu-tong-000008)

bronze vessel on the PDF scroll was transformed during the early Qing period possibly into a flower vase. Specifically in the Yongzheng context, the emperor once ordered artisans from the Jade workshop to inlay zitan wood panels into four Han jade *zhaowen dai* 昭文帶, originally employed as ornaments for sword-sheaths, in order to refashion the *zhaowen dai* into paperweights.<sup>37</sup> This, in turn, reveals that the Yongzheng court appeared to hold a rather nonchalant attitude towards authentic antiquities, whose forms and functions could be freely altered under the emperor's specific orders.

Based on this brief examination of 'antiquity' from the discursive and visual points of view, it can be concluded that 'antiquity' in the Yongzheng context can be considered as a generic category that covered a wide range of objects encompassing both authentic antiquities and archaic *fang* and *jia* objects. The extensive scope of the category is arguably associated with the reintroduction of antiquities as commodities for appreciation and amusement during the

in Flower Arrangement with Copper Tube: Some Thoughts on *Zun*-shaped and *Gu*-shaped Flower Vases and Inner Copper Tubes], *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宫文物月刊 [The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art], no. 380 (2014): 24–36.

37 FH Archives and CUHK Art Museum, *Huoji dang*, vol. 3, 472.

mid- and late Ming periods. At the time, antique collecting became a socio-cultural experience not just reserved to cultural and political elites, but also pursued by patrons from other social strata and gender group, as long as they could afford the cost. Despite the growing passion for antique objects across the society, acquisition of genuine pieces was strenuous and rarely achieved, as a lot of them had been dispersed or destroyed over the passage of time, while increasingly more forgeries started to flood the market. At local markets and festive fairs, *guwan* would be displayed in juxtaposition with other commercial products, as revealed in the account of the annual Qingming festival fair written by the late Ming literatus Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1689):

During the Qingming Festival in Yangzhou, men and women in the city would all come out to visit the graves of their ancestors ... along the way, itinerant peddlers set up stalls by the roadside, selling antique collectibles and baubles for children.

揚州清明日，城中男女畢出，家家展墓……隨有貨郎，路旁擺設古董古玩並小兒器具。

Consumers wandering in these markets often would fail to discern the authenticity of the *guwan* and ended up acquiring counterfeit ones at a high price. Meanwhile, instead of holding a negative attitude towards forgery shared by present-day art patrons, Ming collectors were sometimes willing to buy high-quality fakes and appreciated the skills of deft artisans in capturing both the formal nuances and the archaic spirit of the ancient originals. Individual artisans specialising in the production of archaistic objects would even receive recognition in literati's writings. For instance, the *Taolu* mentions a figure named Zhou Danquan 周丹泉 (act. late 16th century), whose reproduction of an ancient white Ding ware tripod was especially appreciated. Due to the precise replication of the Ding tripod's colour and decorative design, the collector who owned the original piece eventually purchased Zhou's reproduction to show his admiration for the artisan's technical virtuosity.<sup>38</sup>

Inspired by their Ming precedents, the Qing court continued to adopt this positive attitude towards reproductions and imitations of antiquities, but probed deeper into the realm of visual illusion. The development of the imperial workshops, coupled with the introduction of new technology, raw materials, and the European painting techniques, under the Yongzheng emperor all

38 Lan and Zheng, 'Taoshuo zaban shang' 陶說雜編 上 [Miscellaneous Compilation of Accounts of Ceramics], 796–97.

contributed to the creation of an imperial space filled with two-dimensional and three-dimensional illusionistic representations of antiquities. What, then, might be the mode of thinking behind these archaizing practices?

## 5 Antiquarianism or Archaism

In examining the visual culture surrounding the ceramic reproductions and imitations of antiquities as well as the definition of ‘antiquity’ in the Yongzheng context, the concept of *gu* (ancient; past) emerges as a recurring theme, which has often been associated with the antiquarian mode of thinking. In the discussion above, the current article has deliberately avoided the use of ‘antiquarianism’, which entails the empirical investigation of ancient artefacts and has been generally associated with the *Jinshi xue* 金石學, a scholarly discipline introduced in the Northern Song period, in the Chinese context. The aim here is to provide space for a contextualised reexamination of the Yongzheng initiative of reproducing and imitating antiquities, without directly shoehorning it into the category of antiquarian practice.

Indeed, during the early Qing period, another boom of antiquarian research on Confucian classics and ancient artefacts emerged, after the empire-wide movement of returning to the Antiquity during the Northern Song period. The Qing antiquarian movement was primarily initiated by late Ming loyalists in hope of correcting distorted interpretations of Confucian classics and flawed historical records to reconstruct the glorious past of Chinese origin against the status quo. One of the leading figures in the movement was Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–82), who refused to serve the Qing court and engaged in philological research and *Jinshi xue*, which encouraged empirical investigation of inscriptions on actual ancient bronze and stone carvings.<sup>39</sup> Gu’s political goal of improving the governmental structure of the Southern Ming court through learning from the ancients was not achieved eventually. However, the evidential antiquarian approach promoted by him remained prominent during the Qing period and was reemployed not only within the intellectual circle, but also at the court for different purposes.

One of Gu’s works entitled *Qiugu lu* 求古錄 (Records of Seeking Antiquities) features 55 inscriptions from stone carvings dated from the Eastern Han period (r. 88–105) to the Ming dynasty. All the inscriptions were presented as

39 Paola Demattè, ‘Emperors and Scholars: Collecting Culture and Late Imperial Antiquarianism’, in *Collecting China: The World, China, and a History of Collecting*, ed. Vimalin Rujivacharakul (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 167.



transcribed texts, accompanied with information on the date, provenance, and historical background behind the establishment of the inscribed stelae.<sup>40</sup> In the preface of the work, Gu demonstrated his concern for authenticity of textual history and articulated his intention to use inscriptions from ancient bronzes and stone carvings to testify and revise the contents in contemporary historical records. At the same time, the author particularly addressed the *Jigu lu* 集古錄 (Records of Collecting *Gu*) compiled by the Northern Song antiquarian scholar Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72), an avid collector of stone carvings and a pioneering figure in the field of the *Jinshi xue*. The *Jigu lu* itself had been praised as a canonical work of empirical antiquarian research since the Southern Song period.<sup>41</sup> This direct reference to the *Jigu lu* in Gu's narrative, thus, suggests that the Northern Song discourse on antiquarianism was likely to be a source of inspiration for Qing cultural elites in their antiquarian research and serve to shape their attitude towards *gu* and objects of *gu*.

In a letter from Ouyang to a young scholar Zhang, the scholar made the following comment:

Books of Yao and Shun both suggested 'as one investigates *gu*'. Fu Yue [the minister under King Wu Ding of the Shang dynasty] once stated 'not behaving according to the teaching of *gu* was what I had not heard'. [In commenting on his own character,] Confucius said, 'I was one who appreciated *gu* and strived most earnestly to pursue it'. All the *gu* addressed [in these texts] refer to issues regarding rulers and officials, superiors and subordinates, rites and music, as well as penalties and laws.<sup>42</sup>

堯、禹之《書》皆曰「若稽古」。傳說曰「事不師古，匪說攸聞」。仲尼曰「吾好古，敏以求之者」。凡此所謂古者，其事乃君臣、上下、禮樂、刑法之事。

40 Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–82), 'Qiugu lu' 求古錄 [Records of Seeking Antiquities], from *E-SKQS*, accessed 01 November 2023.

41 Zhou Bida 周必大 (1126–1204), 'Ouyang wenzhonggong Jigu lu houxu' 歐陽文忠公集古錄後序 [Postface of *Jigu lu* by Ouyang, Lord Wenzhong], *Wenzhong ji* 文忠集 [Collected Works of Lord Wenzhong], vol. 52, from *E-SKQS*, accessed 10 August 2023.

In the *Jinshi lu* 金石錄 (Records of Bronze and Stone Carving Inscriptions), a collection catalogue compiled by Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 (1080–1129), the author stated that his work was modelling after the *Jigu lu*. Zhao, 'Preface', *Jinshi lu*, from *E-SKQS*, accessed 10 August 2023.

42 Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72), 'yu zhang xiucai diershu' 與張秀才第二書 [The second letter to Xiucai Zhang], in *Luling wen chao* 廬陵文鈔 [Prose of Luling], vol. 11, in *Tang Song badajia wenchao* 唐宋八大家文鈔 [The Collected Essays of the Eight Masters of Tang and Song Dynasties], vol. 39, from *E-SKQS*, accessed 10 August 2023.

In this remark, Ouyang offered a concise but specified definition of *gu* in reference to quotes derived from Confucian classics, including the *Book of Documents* and the *Analects*. *Gu* in this rhetoric context became identified as the knowledge of Confucian values, beliefs and practices. This concern for authentic Confucian canons first took shape during the mid-Tang period (618–907), when the ambitious poet and government official Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) initiated the Confucian revival movement in the literary field, that is, the *Guwen Yundong* 古文運動 (Classical Prose Movement) against the increasingly influential Buddhism and Daoism.<sup>43</sup>

Inspired by Han Yu's initiative, Ouyang advanced the cause of Confucian revival to a broad movement of returning to the Antiquity that resonated in the world of material objects. The initiation of the movement formally claimed objects of *gu* as records that faithfully demonstrated Confucian canons, which could be employed to correct distorted interpretations of classical knowledge and flawed records of ritual standards generated by earlier scholars.<sup>44</sup>

The *Jigu lu* can be viewed as an essential product that spoke to Ouyang's aim of reviving the Confucian way and reconstructing the glorious past by studying and preserving ancient artefacts, which was shared by Song antiquarian scholars and reclaimed by the Qing scholars. Interestingly, the anachronic phenomenon of juxtaposing multiple temporal layers also appears in the *Jigu lu*. The work was created as a catalogue of Ouyang's collection around 1060s, after Ouyang's collecting activities that lasted for nearly twenty years. It contained a thousand ink rubbings of inscriptions mostly from commemorative

43 In his essay *Yuan dao* 原道 (Tracing the Origin of the Way), Han Yu strived to promote the reestablishment of the original Confucian way of humaneness and righteousness against the perverse ways of detachment introduced by Buddhism and Daoism. To valorise Confucianism by associating it with virtuous rulers from ancient times, Han highlighted the link between the unadorned style of classical texts and the ancient rulers' upright characters and actively promoted the *guwen* as models for literary works in contrast against the ornated style of *pianwen* 駢文 (parallel prose), which was deemed as futile and immoral.

On Han Yu and his philosophical thoughts and political conducts, refer to Paul Rouzer, 'Defenses of Literature/Literary Thought/Poetics', in *the Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature (1000 BCE–900CE)*, eds. Wiebke Denecke, Wai-Yee Li, and Xiaofei Tian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 356–8; Qian Mu 錢穆, 'Songxue zhi xingqi' 宋學之興起 [The rise of Song learning], *Song ming lixue gaishu* 宋明理學概述 [An Introduction to Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism], vol. 9 from *Qian Binsi xiansheng quanji* 錢賓四先生全集 [The Complete Works of Mr. Qian Binsi], (Taipei: Linking Publishing Company, 1998), 1–3.

44 Chen Fang-mei 陳芳妹, 'Song gu qiwxue de xingqi yu song fanggu tongqi' 宋古器物學的興起與宋仿古銅器 [The Rise of Sung Antiquarianism and the Imitation of Archaic Bronze], *Taida Journal of Art History* No. 10 (2001), 47. doi:10.6541/TJAH.2001.03.10.02.

or funerary stelae dated from the Western Zhou (1047–772 BCE) to the Five Dynasties period (907–60), with a few from ritual bronzes and special objects like an iron weight dated to the Qin era (221–206 BCE).<sup>45</sup>

As scholars like Egan and Sena have argued, *gu* in Ouyang's mind represented a generalised collective past. The rubbings of miscellaneous objects from the imagined glorious past, thus, served both as indexes of the objects and as 'material evidence for a conceptual embodiment of Chinese antiquity'.<sup>46</sup> This idea is supported by the fact that Ouyang had categorised objects from both remote and recent past as *gu* in his catalogue. Meanwhile, by providing earlier textual accounts that uncovered the provenance and socio-cultural value of the objects in his collection, the *Jigu lu* presented itself as a historical work that linked each collected object to its origin.<sup>47</sup> Inspired by the Song antiquarian discourse, the early Qing scholars continued to recognise objects denoted by *gu* as sources of classical knowledge and solutions to social and political problems. Meanwhile, how would the Qing court understand this conceptualised *gu* of Han Chinese origin, which presumably served to define the identity of antiquities collected from the past?

Since the Kangxi period, the Qing court also started to initiate large-scale antiquarian projects, ranging from publications of dictionaries and literary encyclopedia in support for classical Confucian learning to compilations of illustrated catalogues of antique art objects. In 1726, the aforementioned encyclopedia *Gujin tushu jicheng* was completed and featured 10,000 volumes of assorted literature collected from earlier time to the Qing era. The volumes consist of six thematic series ranging from celestial matters, geography, statecraft, human relationships, moral principles, and broad knowledge of things, including art and craft.<sup>48</sup> This kind of ambitious enterprise is reminiscent of the compilation of the *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (Great Canon of the Yongle Reign [1402–24]) by the preceding Ming court, but also the grand cataloguing

45 Ouyang Xiu, 'Qin duliang ming' 秦度量銘 [Inscriptions on Qin weight], *Jigu lu* (Records of Collecting *Gu*), vol. 1. E-SKQS, Accessed 01 November 2023.

46 Yun-Chiahn C. Sena, 'Ouyang Xiu's Conceptual Collection of Antiquity', in *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Alain Schnapp, Lothar von Falkenhausen, Peter N. Miller, and Tim Murray (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 225; Ronald Egan, 'Rethinking "Traces" from the Past: Ouyang Xiu on Stone Inscriptions', *The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 7–59.

47 Sena, 'Ouyang Xiu's Conceptual Collection', 215.

48 Benjamin A. Elman, 'The Story of a Chapter: Changing Views of the "The Artificer's Record" ("Kaogong ji" 考工記) and the "Zhouli", in *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History*, eds. Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010), 349.

project initiated under the Huizong emperor of the Northern Song dynasty (r. 1100–26), which culminated in the production of the *Xuanhe Bogu tu* 宣和博古圖 (Illustrations of Antiquities of the Xuanhe [Hall], shortened as *Bogu tu*). Apart from their academic contribution, both the Qing and the Northern Song imperial academic projects can be seen as part of the rulers' political campaigns of enhancing the discursive and cultural power of the court in the society and claiming the inheritance of authentic ancient knowledge and values.

Meanwhile, the difference in how the Qing and the earlier rulers associated themselves with Chinese classical traditions led to a discrepancy in the purpose of their antiquarian projects. The primary aim of Emperor Huizong's project, for instance, was to bring back the glory of antiquity under his reign and redeclare the court as the cultural centre of the society, which had been gradually dominated by scholar-officials at the time.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, The Manchu emperors, as the new ruling power with a distinct ethnic identity, launched the antiquarian campaign partly to claim their cultural legitimacy. The initiation of the antiquarian projects, on the one hand, allowed Han Chinese scholar-officials to get access to the grand imperial collections of classical literature and art objects and enjoy higher social and political status as court officials. On the other hand, the court would also be able to gain favour within the Han Chinese intellectual community by showing their concern for classical learning, while maintaining control over the community by bringing scholars into the court under their commands. Antiquities, thus, did not serve collectively as a nostalgic symbol of a conceptualised past in the Manchu belief system, but more as a useful tool to unite the empire and a representation of power over the past and the present.

Under this mindset, antiquities underwent a process of demystification and became subject to reproduction and alteration as showcased in the previous two sections on *fang* and *jia* ceramics. This, in a way, serves to explain why the juxtaposition of authentic antiquities with their reproductions and imitations would be allowed and encouraged in the Qing context. At the same time, the concept of *wan* 玩 (play) comes into play and could have been served as a component of the mindset that guided the Yongzheng practice of reproducing and imitating antiquities. According to the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), the act of play 'renews itself in constant repetition' and

49 Patricia Buckley Ebrej, 'Strains in Emperor-Literati Relations during the Reform Era', 'Collecting and Cataloguing Antiquities', *Accumulating Culture: The Collections of Emperor Huizong* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008), 42–75; 150–203.

is not associated with ‘any goal that would bring it to an end.’<sup>50</sup> Reflecting on manufacture of *fang* and *jia* ceramics, it appears that the emperor’s consistent commissions of various archaic products are in line with the repetitive character of ‘play’. The residential compounds in the Yuanmingyuan, as addressed several times in the *Huoji dang* entry above, could be, thus, considered collectively as a private ‘playground’, where the emperor took on the role as a cultivated literatus and fully exercised his agency in recreating an idealised scholar’s studio filled with ‘antiquities’. The history-laden *fang* and *jia* pieces manifest the deconstruction of authentic antiquities’ corporeal forms, together with the repositioning of concept of *gu* from a temporal term to an aesthetic register under the Yongzheng emperor.

The pursuit of visual illusionism in producing the *fang* and *jia* antiquities further conforms to the experiential nature of ‘play’. Meanwhile, this characteristic often had a negative connotation during the Ming and Qing periods, implying things for play might stimulate excessive indulgence in sensory pleasure and lead to the deterioration of one’s moral character. In one of the stories surrounding an exquisite brocade Buddhist robe owned by Master Sanzang in the canonical Ming novel *Journey to the West*, the Buddhist robe has been described as a *zhenqi wanhao zhiwu* 珍奇玩好之物 (rare and treasurable thing of pleasure). In response to Sun Wukong against his intention to show off the robe, Master Sanzang addresses the danger of exposing *wanhao* in front of people’s eyes, the gates to the human heart, and suggests people, especially the avaricious kind, would be disturbed, when luxurious things for *wan*, or their images, enter the hearts through their eyes.<sup>51</sup> The use of the term with its negative meaning in this type of vernacular novel, written by a scholar-official and accessible publicly through constant reprinting in the Ming and Qing eras, indicates the widespread prevalence of the negative perception of *wan* across different social strata.

The Yongzheng emperor himself also showed his concern through issuing multiple edicts to instruct provincial officials to stop squandering their stipends and presenting *guwan* to the court.<sup>52</sup> Antiquities, in this context,

50 Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘Play as the clue’, *Truth and Method* (2nd edition) (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), 103.

51 Wu Cheng’en 吳承恩 (c. 1501–82), ‘Chapter 16: The Monks of the Guanyin Monastery Plot to Take the Treasure; The Monster of the Black Wind Mountain Steal the Cassock’, *Journey to the West*, from *Chinese Text Project*, accessed 10 August 2023, <https://ctext.org/xiyouji/ch16>.

52 Aisin gioro Yunlu 允祿 (1695–1767), ed., *Shizong xian huangdi shangyu neige* 世宗憲皇帝上諭內閣 [Emperor Yongzheng’s edicts to the Grand Secretariat], vol. 75, E-SKQS, accessed 01 November 2023.

became a symbol of extravagance and over-indulgence, which would lead to inefficiency in carrying out official responsibilities and providing benevolent governance. Meanwhile, although the emperor rhetorically claimed his disinterested attitude, the ubiquitous presence of antiquities and their representations in the imperial space in forms of paintings, decorative furnishings, and utilitarian vessels, betrayed his intention to acquire sensory pleasure from them. How, then, could he possibly justify his construction of a space of antiquity for play? In discovering its answer, it becomes evident that the concept of *wan* in the Qing context also entails the notion of savouring and investigating repeatedly.<sup>53</sup> This notion, then, corresponds to the concept of *gewu zhizhi* 格物致知 (investigating things and extending knowledge). It was first introduced as a pseudo-empirical approach by the Song Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), which encouraged meticulous examination of all things in the cosmos to penetrate the knowledge and moral principles in the classics.

During the Qing period, *gezhi* was appropriated and employed as a term referring to evidential scholarship as well as the study of natural sciences and practical knowledge.<sup>54</sup> Specifically in the categorised encyclopedia *Gezhi jingyuan* 格致鏡原 (Mirror of Origins Based on the Investigation of Things and Extending Knowledge), the compiler Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍 (1652–1736) reorganised the accounts on *guwan* in Ming literati's manuals on the art of living into separate sections on vessels and objects for daily use and for leisurely appreciation in residential areas.<sup>55</sup> What is significant about this work is the referential relation between *gezhi* in its title and the categorised *guwan*. Assorted under the name of *gezhi*, *guwan* can be subsequently recognised as part of the wide range of subjects for evidential investigation. Furthermore, the *Gezhi jingyuan* itself was compiled under the order of the Kangxi emperor and was printed in 1735 under Emperor Yongzheng.<sup>56</sup> Its scholarly tone in deal-

53 Zhang Yushu 張玉書 (1642–1711) et al., *Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典 [Kangxi Dictionary] (first published in 1716) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1933), 3481.

54 Benjamin A. Elman, 'Evidential Research and Natural Studies', *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550–1900* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 223–80.

55 One account in the encyclopedia discusses the superiority of ancient jade *wanqi* (vessels of pleasure) over ceramic wares, except for the case of seal paste container, when the Song Guan, Ge, Ding wares were particularly cherished. Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍 (1652–1736), *Gezhi jingyuan* 格致鏡原 (Mirror of Origins Based on the Investigation of Things and Extending Knowledge), in *Siku quanshu: zibu*, vol. 40, from *Hytung Book and Periodicals electronic database*, accessed 10th August 2023.

56 Chau Y. W. 鄒穎文, ed., 'East Asian Languages Collection', *Shuhai lizhu: xianggang zhongwen daxue tushuguan zhencang zhujì* 書海驪珠：香海中文大學圖書館珍藏專輯

ing with *guwan*, thus, could be considered as a shared mode of perception also held by the Manchu rulers. The incorporation of assorted *guwan*, including the *fang* and *jia* pieces, at the court would subsequently be justified as a symbol of rational contemplation on the history and nature of antiquities.

## 6 Conclusion

Based on the above discussion on the diverse practices of reproducing and imitating antiquities at the Yongzheng court, it is emerging that antiquity was adopted as a loosely defined category of art objects largely conditioned by canons of objects and antiquarian discourses developed by literati during the Ming period. Under the assistance of the newly introduced illusionistic mode of representation, different types of antiquities could be transformed into images onto various pictorial surfaces, or destructuralised into several formal elements (vessel shapes, decorative motifs, colours ...). These elements would then be rearranged into archaistic products, like the celadon vase imitating the Ru and Guan ware (see Figure 6). The historicity of authentic antiquities would be transmitted onto the *fang* and *jia* pieces through this process. The resulting objects and pictures were, then, displayed and used at the court, contributing to the transformation of the palace interior into a multi-layered space, where the idealised Han Chinese scholarly space and the lavish Manchu imperial space merged in harmony.

Actively appropriating and reshaping earlier visual languages and discursive traditions for practical purposes, the Yongzheng emperor constantly adjusted his identity within the Han Chinese past, his own ancestral past, and the present time when he served as the ruler. Antiquities, as a group of living objects associated with a socio-cultural past of Chinese origin, was employed as a practical tool for claiming association with the Chinese community and legitimising the court's dominant position in the socio-cultural sphere. In the meantime, the emperor took the anachronic practice of bringing the past to the present to a more intense and private level by filling the palatial interiors with imprints of culturally prestigious antiquities. The fact that the antiquities were subject to endless reproduction and alternation at the court further indicates the emperor's intention to employ the agency of antiquities to declare his power over the past and the present of the Chinese realm.

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[From the Treasure House: Jewels from the Library of the Chinese University of Hong Kong] (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2014), 32–3.

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