

Yu-chih Lai

From Commercialism to Cultural Politics: Revitalizations of *Xiqing Antiquities* from the Late Qing to the Republican Era

The imperially commissioned *Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑 (Illustrated catalogue of the Xiqing antiquities; henceforth *Xiqing Antiquities*) was a grand endeavor aimed at cataloging the collection of ancient bronzes within the imperial repository. Comprising 40 volumes and a total of 17,529 objects, it follows the editorial format of *Xuanhe bogu tu* 宣和博古圖 (Illustrated catalogue of antique objects from the Xuanhe Era), a work compiled under the patronage of Emperor Huizong of the Song (r. 1100–1126). The *Xiqing Antiquities* project was officially announced in 1749 and reached completion by 1751,¹ but it wasn't until 1755 that the work was published by Wuying Palace, the official imperial printing office.² In 1778, this monumental edition was first included in *Qinzhao tang siku quanshu huiyao* 摘藻堂四庫全書薈要 (Essential selections of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries of Qinzhao Hall), an early selection edited for the aging Qianlong Emperor (r. 1735–1796) from the ongoing compilation of *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete library of the four treasuries; henceforth *Siku quanshu*). Following this initial integration, *Xiqing Antiquities* was officially incorporated into the *Siku quanshu* in 1781.

Upon completing *Xiqing Antiquities*, the Qianlong Emperor commissioned the production of additional works following its editorial structure and style, namely, *Ningshou jiangou* 寧壽鑑古 (Illustrated catalogue of the Ningshou antiquities; henceforth *Ningshou Antiquities*) and *Xiqing xujian* 西清續鑑 (Supplement to the illustrated catalogue of the Xiqing antiquities; henceforth *Xiqing Supplement*), both consisting of an A and B part. These four works catalog the collection of bronze artifacts housed within the palace and, due to their common use of the character *jian* 鑑 (mirror) in their titles, are collectively referred to as the “Four

1 “Shangyu” 上諭 (Imperial Edicts), *Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑 (Illustrated catalogue of the Xiqing antiquities), in *Xingdian banhua huikan* 清殿版畫匯刊 (Collection of woodcuts and paintings from Qing palaces), vol. 6 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1998), 1–2; “Ba” 跋 (Postscript), *Xiqing gujian*, in *Xingdian banhua huikan*, vol. 7, 907.

2 See E Ertai 鄂爾泰 and Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉, comps., *Guochao gongshi* 國朝宮史 (Palace history of the reigning dynasty), in *Jingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Complete library of the Four Treasuries of Wenyuan Pavilion, photomechanically reproduced), vol. 657 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1986), 588.

Mirrors of Xiqing” or the “Four Mirrors of Qianlong.”³ However, it is worth noting that those bearing the name “Xiqing” were not exclusively dedicated to the documentation of the palace’s collection of bronze artifacts. In 1778, an additional endeavor was undertaken to organize and illustrate the collection of both ancient and contemporary inkstones, resulting in the compilation of the 24-volume *Xiqing yanpu* 西清硯譜 (Illustrated catalogue of the Xiqing inkstones; henceforth *Xiqing Inkstones*), which was later included in the *Siku quanshu* in its 1776, 1781, 1784, and other editions.⁴ Regardless of exact contents, these large-scale pictorial catalogues, known as “Xiqing,” were compiled and illustrated to organize the collection of antiquities in the imperial court, thereby not only serving as important materials for understanding the collection of ancient artifacts in the Qing palace but also demonstrating the achievements of Qing imperial epigraphic studies.

Moreover, the significance of this series of imperial Xiqing catalogues extends to their reproduction and revitalization in the thriving market of the late Qing printing revolution, and also reaches into the Republican era and the Manchukuo period (1932–1945). As early as 1884, *Xiqing Antiquities* was published using copperplate printing in Japan, and by 1888 it had entered Shanghai, and became a fierce competitor for lithographic editions. In the 1910s, the Shanghai Commercial Press also reproduced part A of both *Xiqing Supplement* and *Ningshou Antiquities*.⁵ After the founding of the Republic of China, the newly established first national museum, the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities, published part B of *Xiqing Supplement* in 1931.⁶ Additionally, during the “Manchukuo National Treasure Exhibition” (Manshūkoku kokuhō tenrankai 滿洲國國寶展會) jointly held by the Cultural Association of Japan and Manchukuo (Nichiman kyōkai 日滿協会) and the Tokyo Imperial Museum (Tōkyō teishitsu hakubutsukan 東京帝室博物館) in 1942, the *Siku quanshu* edition of *Xiqing Inkstones* was exhibited, replicated, and published in Japan.⁷

3 For more on the contexts surrounding the production of *Xiqing Antiquities*, see Hsiao-yun Wu 吳曉筠, “Xiqing gujian chengshu de shidai mailuo” 《西清古鑑》成書的時代脈絡 (Period context in the appearance of the catalogue *Xiqing gujian*), *Gugong xueshu jikan* 36, no. 1 (September 2019): 115–155.

4 Zheng Jiahua 鄭家華, “Xiqing yanpu guyan” 西清硯譜古硯 (Ancient inkstones of the *Xiqing Inkstones*), *Gugong xueshu jikan* 167 (February 1997): 22–32.

5 The advertisement in *Shenbao* states *Xiqing Supplement*, but only part A of the work can be seen, which is a lithographic reproduction made in 1911 by the Shanghai Commercial Press of the Ningshou Palace edition. See *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Supplement to *Siku quanshu*), vols. 1107–1108 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997).

6 John Calvin Ferguson [Fukaisen 福開森] and Kang Nanhu 康南湖, eds., *Xiqing xujian yibian ershi juan* 西清續鑑乙編 二十卷 (Part B to *Xiqing Supplement*: Twenty volumes) (Beiping: Guwu chenlie suo, 1931).

7 For more on the surveys and exhibitions of antiquities carried out by the Japanese during this period, see Lin Chih-Hung 林志宏, “Zhiming zhishi de shengchan yu zai jiangou: ‘Manzhou guo’

These continuous reincarnations of different versions involved technological shifts in mechanical reproduction, commercial competition, and markets of varying tastes and social strata. But just as leading scholar Roger Chartier proposes in his research on the new history of reading, the material form of the text is essential in understanding the practice of reading and the culture of books, as reading itself must be established through interacting with works as physical entities.⁸ The materiality of a book determines how readers receive, define, and understand information. The re-birth of *Xiqing Antiquities* in different material forms in different time periods not only raises issues in a bibliographical sense, but also highlights the external cultural circumstances that affected its (re)positioning and understanding.

The present chapter, by analyzing material forms and styles of *Xiqing*, explores how the reproductions in different periods, namely, the imperial woodblock editions in the high Qing, the copperplate editions imported from Japan in the late Qing, the lithographic editions of the same period, and the reprints by the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities and the “Manchukuo National Treasure Exhibition,” spoke to different readers. How were they situated in different cultural contexts and, therefore, how did they function in their respective societies? And consequentially, how did their cultural implications differ? By considering these questions, this chapter hopes to unveil a story about the significance of *Xiqing* propelled through time by the ever-complicated relationship among changing political regimes, technological evolution, and rising consumer culture. It also seeks to shed light on our understanding of how antiquities engaged with modernity from the late Qing dynasty through to the early twentieth century.

The Editions of *Xiqing Antiquities* and their Significance

There are at least nine editions of *Xiqing Antiquities*. Apart from its earlier editions, including the original woodblock-printed version published by Wuying Palace in 1755, the manuscript transcribed in *Essential Selections of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries of Qinzao Hall* in 1778, the ones included in the seven versions of *Siku quanshu* from 1781 to 1784, and an undated colorfully illustrated fragment,

shiqi de guwu diaocha gongzuo” 殖民知識的生產與再建構——「滿洲國」時期的古物調查工作 (Production and reconstruction of colonial knowledge: Antiquities surveys and activities in the Manchukuo period), *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 87 (March 2015): 1–50.

8 Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

a second wave of republishing *Xiqing Antiquities* reached a peak in the vibrant printing market of the late nineteenth century. Among these later editions, notable ones include the Japanese copperplate version by Maisong Bookstore (Maisong shuguan 邁宋書館) in 1888, the lithographic version by Hongwen Bookstore (Hongwen shuju 鴻文書局) from the same year, the lesser-known copperplate edition published by the Japanese Chishin Hall (Chishin dō 知新堂) in 1884, the abbreviated and re-edited version *Shishō seishin kokan* 新鈔西清古鑑 (Newly transcribed Xijing antiquities) by Azuma Kenzaburō 吾妻健三郎 in 1892, and the lithographic edition by Jicheng Book Company 集成圖書公司 in 1908. Looking at the publishing years, the political upheaval that characterized the transition from the Qing to the Republican era seemingly did not reduce the market's fervor for reproducing *Xiqing Antiquities*, which even extended to other *Xiqing* publications.⁹ Moving into the Republican era, the publication of *Xiqing Antiquities* continued to evolve, exemplified by the lithographic version published by Cottage of Yunhua Residence (Yunhua julu ben 雲華居廬本) in 1926 and, notably, *Xiqing Inkstones* which was the latest in the broader *Xiqing* series to garner attention.¹⁰

Much research has been conducted on the compilation of *Xiqing Antiquities* and on the related *Xiqing* family, as well as their relationship with the imperial collection of antiquities.¹¹ Compared to the focus in these studies on the work's contents and compilation processes, however, this chapter primarily examines the transformative journey of *Xiqing Antiquities*—a classic text of the “old” empire—during the turbulent transition from the empire's twilight to a new era

marked by political and social change. Throughout this period, the most influential publication among the series of *Xiqing* catalogues was arguably the 1888 Maisong Bookstore edition of *Xiqing Antiquities* printed in Japan using copperplates. Liu Yu 劉雨, the earliest scholar to conduct a comparative analysis of the various editions of *Xiqing Antiquities*, lauded its “exceedingly fine print and illustrations, which are often superior to the ‘Wuying Palace edition.’” At the same time, Liu deemed the latter to be “the best among all published editions,” thereby suggesting that the quality of the 1888 illustrations surpassed all other versions.¹² The influence of the Maisong version was so profound that it has frequently been misidentified as the original imperial Wuying Palace edition, and even served as the basis of the 1903 Jicheng Book Company lithographic version which claimed to be a “replica of the Wuying Palace edition.”¹³ In fact, the officially registered copperplate edition of the Wuying Palace *Xiqing Antiquities* held in the Shenyang Imperial Palace is also a reproduction of the Japanese copperplate version by Maisong Bookstore,¹⁴ and the 1926 lithographic version by Cottage of Yunhua Residence was likewise based on this copperplate edition.¹⁵ Even more modern-day publications often fail to distinguish between the Japanese copperplate and the woodblock-printed Wuying Palace editions.¹⁶ So why has this copperplate edition remained so popular? What is the background of Maisong Bookstore that enabled it to produce such a large-scale book that matches the quality of the Wuying Palace edition, largely considered to be the pinnacle?

Regrettably, there are few sources on the background of the Maisong Bookstore. What we do know, however, is that the newspaper *Shenbao* 申報 published an announcement about reprinting *Xiqing Antiquities* titled “Order the Japanese Copperplate-Printed *Xiqing Antiquities*” (Qing ding Riben tongban *Xiqing gujian* 請定日本銅版《西清古鑑》), which was signed by the “Japanese Firm Maisong Bookstore,” indicating that Maisong was a Japanese business.¹⁷ Regardless, Mai-

9 These include parts A and B of *Xiqing Supplement* published by the Shanghai Commercial Press and the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities, respectively, as well as the printing of *Ningshou Antiquities* by the Shanghai Commercial Press.

10 The Shanghai Commercial Press, for example, republished *Xiqing Inkstones* from 1934–1935 based on the 1781 edition in *Jingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu*. Another version was produced by the “Manchukuo National Treasure Exhibition” in 1942 based on the Wensu Pavilion edition of *Siku quanshu*.

11 For just a few examples, see Liu Yu 劉雨, *Qianlong sijian zongli biao* 乾隆四鑑綜理表 (Comprehensive tables of the Four Mirrors of the reign of the Qianlong Emperor) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989); Hui-Chun Yu, “Bronzes from Afar: Ch'ien-lung's 'Hsi-ch'ing Hsü-chien Chia-pien Fu-lu',” *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 31 (September 2011): 151–204, 323; Yen-wen Cheng, “Tradition and Transformation: Cataloguing Chinese Art in the Middle and Late Imperial Eras” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2010), 157–160; Hui-Chun Yu, “The Intersection of Past and Present: The Qianlong Emperor and His Ancient Bronzes” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2007), 21–71; Xu Yuanting 許媛婷, “Tan Qianlong Huangdi chibian ‘Sijian’ yu jinxia zhizuo” 談乾隆皇帝敕編「四鑑」與鏡匣製作 (On the imperially edited “Four Mirrors” by the Qianlong Emperor and the production of mirror boxes), *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 352 (July 2012): 34–43; Wu, “*Xiqing gujian*,” 115–155.

12 Liu Yu 劉雨, “Ba kaogu yanjiu suo cang caihuiben *Xiqin gujian*” 跋考古研究所藏彩繪本《西清古鑑》 (Postscript to the illustrated editions of *Xiqing Antiquities* held at the Institute of Archaeology), *Guwenzi yanjiu* 16 (September 1989): 239.

13 Liu Yu, “Ba kaogu yanjiu suo cang caihuiben *Xiqin gujian*,” 239.

14 Liu Shuwei 劉樹偉, “Shilun Guojia zhengui guji minglu zhong de jichu quehan” 試論《國家珍貴古籍名錄》中的幾處缺憾 (On a few regrettable places in the *National Directory of Rare Ancient Works*), *Tushu qingbao gongzuo* 19 (October 2009): 135–137.

15 Xu Jianxia 徐建霞, “Qiantan guojia bowuguan *Qinding siqing gujian*” 淺談國家博物館《欽定西清古鑑》 (On *Xiqing Antiquities* held in the National Museum of China), *Shoucangjia* 5 (2014): 36.

16 For example, see the copies published by Datong Bookstore in 1983 and Xueyuan Publishing House in 1998.

17 *Shenbao* (August 27, 1891), 10.

song Bookstore seems to have been quite familiar with the operation of the Shanghai book market and the national book distribution network throughout China. Starting in March 1888, it published a series of announcements in *Shenbao* titled “Announcing the Scheduled Copperplate Reprint of *Xiqing Antiquities* Faithfully Based on the Imperial Edition”:

The book *Xiqing Antiquities* truly is a paragon of antiquities, and collectors who obtain this book can consider their collection unparalleled. Because the palace edition is rarely circulated and difficult to purchase, our bookstore has notified collectors who own the book that we wish to faithfully reproduce it. However, we have struggled to find a good method. If it were to be imitated by lithography, the larger details would lose their authenticity and the smaller ones would be uncommendable; furthermore, the intricate parts of the bronzes would inevitably be blurred. But then, we observed the exceptional quality of Japanese copperplate printing, which surpasses all other editions. Sparing no expense, we took the original book overseas to have masters attach the original onto copperplates for engraving who have achieved a level of detail that ensures the product is as fine as the original without any discrepancies. . . . Each set costs thirty silver dollars in total. At this time, a deposit of ten silver dollars should be first made, and upon receipt, a preorder form and a sample page of the printed book will be provided. In April, you may use this form to receive half of the completed volume with an additional ten silver dollars. As for the paper, ink, and binding, all are of the highest craftsmanship. Each set, which includes *Qian lu* 錢錄 (Book of ancient coins), consists of twenty-four books and comes in an exquisite wooden case. . . . As this book is a faithful reproduction of the palace edition, should there be any discrepancies in size or style, impurities in the paper, or narrow margins, you may choose not to accept the completed work, and your deposit will be returned. . . . Preorders will be taken until the end of the third month of the year; thereafter, the full set will be sold at a fixed price of fifty silver dollars, with no discounts applied.¹⁸

The lengthy passage highlights that *Xiqing Antiquities* is a classic within the field of epigraphy and an essential for any collection. But considering its rarity, a reproduction was required. Lithographic printing was deemed unsatisfactory as it would likely blur the details of the antiquities and so, after witnessing the precision of Japanese copperplate printing, the decision was made to take the book to Japan, no matter the cost, to have a master craftsman produce an unrivaled replica.

Copperplate replications at the time reportedly went through processes such as “polishing the plate,” “applying wax,” “outlining the image,” “mounting the plate,” “carving the wax,” “etching the copper,” and “refining the plate.”¹⁹ The

process of “outlining the image,” more specifically, refers to “covering the image with glass paper . . . carefully outlining, and penetrating a half layer of the paper,” and then “using cotton to apply a red powder, which enters the breaks in the paper . . . One then covers this paper over the waxed surface of the plate and rubs the back of the paper with a smooth round object, making the powder transfer onto the wax,” thereby transferring the image.²⁰ Therefore, the above “attach [ing] the original” likely refers to this process and the use of glass paper to prevent the work from being damaged – a process that truly “spared no expense.”

It is noteworthy that the publication of this set, similar to the production of many large-scale books distributed in Shanghai at the time, was realized through a preordering system,²¹ making it evident that Maisong Bookstore had a good understanding of the book distribution network and marketing practices. Furthermore, given the explicit statement, “But then, we observed the exceptional quality of Japanese copperplate printing,” it can be inferred that the author had not previously encountered Japanese copperplate printing. Even though “Japanese” merchant was used to describe the bookstore, it is worth considering whether the owner was indeed Chinese.

The announcement was continuously posted for nearly two months, and by December 1888 the first ten books had been successfully completed, marked by the notice “A Remarkable Book Is Coming from the East” published in *Shenbao*:

The proprietor of Maisong Bookstore has recently had *Xiqing Antiquities* engraved, a book which specifically focuses on the study of inscriptions on ancient metal and stone artifacts and is supplemented with old coins. It is fundamentally a valuable reference in the world of art, yet its readers often lament the rough and blurred printing effects. . . . Now, a good copy of this book has been given to the Japanese to engrave on copperplates. The resulting work is identical in size to the original book, with the engraving so exquisite and unparalleled that even the portrayals of motifs, despite being as fine as ox hair, are as clear as if illuminated by a rhinoceros horn. Currently, the first batch of these twenty-four books is almost ready for binding. The first ten books, which have recently been received from Japan via post, were viewed yesterday and are so pleasing that they are hard to put down. It is clear that no previous lithographically printed books can compare, and even among copperplate books, this one stands out as a giant. I humbly believe that if researchers in antiq-

als on modern printing in China), ed. and annot. Zhang Jinglu 張靜盧 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2003), 298–307.

20 Wang Zhaohong, “Tongke xiaoji,” 305.

21 *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (Compendium of ancient and modern books) is one of many examples that utilized this model. See Dianshi zhai zhuren 點石齋主人, “Chaogu suoyin *Gujin tushu jicheng* qi” 招股縮印古今圖書集成啓 (Raising shares to print a miniaturized edition of *Compendium of Ancient and Modern Books*), *Shenbao* (June 2, 1883), 1.

18 “Keyi dianben fanyin tongban *Xiqing gujian* yuding shuayin qi” 恪依殿本翻印銅版《西清古鑑》預定刷印啓 (Announcing the scheduled copperplate reprint of *Xiqing Antiquities* faithfully based on the imperial edition), *Shenbao* (March 14, 1888), 4. This announcement ran intermittently until May 9, 1888.

19 Wang Zhaohong 王肇鎰, “Tongke xiaoji” 銅刻小記 (Brief notes on copperplate engraving), in *Zhongguo jindai chubanshi ziliao chubenshi* 中國近代出版史料初編 (Compilation of historical materi-

uties received this book as a guide, it would not be difficult to immediately discern the authenticity of metal and stone artifacts.²²

Aside from using ox hair and a rhinoceros horn as metaphors to highlight the remarkable details that can be portrayed using copperplate printing, the text draws a notable comparison with lithography. It states that “no previous lithographically printed books can compare,” and that the work is a “giant” even among its copperplate counterparts—a jab at its competitor to be discussed below.

The entire set of books was finally completed in December 1889. It was branded as a “curious foreign book,” a moniker used in an advertisement featured in *Shenbao* titled “Have a Look at the Curious Foreign Book” (Qingkan haiwai qishu 請看海外奇書):

Our company has reprinted *Xiqing Antiquities* using copperplate printing in Japan. It was earlier meticulously carved without sparing any expense. With an insistence on excellence, it has been carefully collated and has already been printed into a book. It is precisely the same size as the imperial edition of the Qianlong Emperor, and the fineness of the motifs in the ancient vessels is actually superior to the original, which could not be possible without the exquisite precision of copperplates. Compared with the miniaturized lithographic editions of recent times, they are as different as heaven and earth, making it appreciated by antiquity connoisseurs both in China and abroad. . . . The set is now available for sale at fifty foreign dollars for each set printed on top-quality Lianshi paper.²³

This announcement once again tirelessly emphasizes that “[c]ompared with the miniaturized lithographic editions of recent times, they are as different as heaven and earth,” seemingly positioning copperplate printing as one of the most important achievements to surpass lithography.

We can get a fuller picture of exactly how copperplate printing was able to distinguish itself from lithography from an advertisement published in *Shenbao* approximately one month after the set of books began accepting preorders entitled “Books Have Taken a Step beyond Ancient Works”:

Since the advent of lithography, books can be freely resized, and the ingenuity of the human mind has certainly surpassed that of our predecessors. But the only one that can compete with it is the most exquisite copperplate. However, the items that have been engraved as of now are all small pieces, merely convenient for transport. Collectors do not seek to acquire them, and many people doubt whether copperplates are suitable for small items rather than large. It was only when I purchased the preorder for the copperplate re-

print of *Xiqing Antiquities* from Maisong Bookstore yesterday that I realized that copperplates are suitable for both small and large sizes. When this book comes out, copperplates will inevitably become popular throughout the world.²⁴

Here the author stresses the suitability and exquisiteness of copperplate printing. But what did these characteristics entail? And why did the marketing strategy of Maisong Bookstore repeatedly consider lithography to be its primary hypothetical enemy? My previous research has already dealt with the rise of copperplate printing and its competition with lithographic printing, and is thus capable of shedding light on the above questions.²⁵ In sum, the markedly fine and sharp lines characteristic of copperplate printing made it especially suited for handling intricate maps with detailed features as well as miniaturized pocket-sized books. However, when it came to the reproduction of painting manuals, paintings, and calligraphy works, which largely comprised the most profitable market in Shanghai from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, lithography was preferable. In addition to being cheaper, it could easily replicate the soft and more relaxed calligraphy styles and break free from the inherent rigidity of traditional woodblock illustrations—for the first time in history it made it possible for the artist’s “hand” to be copied and reproduced mechanically. Within this commercial context, it is understandable that the more costly copperplate printing was doomed to fail in its competition with lithographic printing, especially in the arena of image reproductions.

24 “Shumai qiangu” 書邁前古 (Books have taken a step beyond ancient works), *Shenbao* (April 11, 1888), 4.

25 Lai Yu-chih 賴毓芝, “Jishu yizhi yu wenhua xuanze: Antian Yinxiang yu 1880 niandai Shanghai tongban shuji zhi jinkou yu liutong” 技術移植與文化選擇：岸田吟香與1880年代上海銅版書籍之進口與流通 (Transplanting technique and cultural selection: Kishida Ginkō and the import and circulation of copperplate-printed books in 1880s Shanghai), in *Jindai Zhongri guanxishi xintun* 近代中日關係史新論 (New discussions on the history of Sino-Japanese relations), ed. Huang Zijin 黃自進 and Pan Guangzhe 潘光哲 (Taipei: Daoxiang chubanshe, 2017), 547–603; Lai Yu-chih 賴毓芝, “Qingmo shiyan de xingqi yu Shanghai Riben huapu lei shuji de liutong: yi Dianshizhai conghua wei zhongxin” 清末石印的興起與上海日本畫譜類書籍的流通：以《點石齋叢畫》為中心 (The rise of lithography and the circulation of Japanese painting manuals in Late Qing Shanghai: A study focusing on ‘Dianshizhai conghua’), *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 85 (September 2014): 57–127; Lai Yu-chih 賴毓芝, “Image, Technology, and Gender in Sino-Japanese Exchanges during the late Qing: A Study of the *Jingying xiaosheng chuiji*” 晚清中日交流下的圖像、技術與性別：《鏡影簫聲初集》研究, *Jindai Zhongguo funüshi yanjiu* 28 (December 2016): 125–214.

22 “Yishu donglai” 異書東來 (A remarkable book is coming from the east), *Shenbao* (December 11, 1888), 5.

23 “Qingkan haiwai qishu” 請看海外奇書 (Have a look at the curious foreign book), *Shenbao* (December 14, 1889), 6. This announcement ran intermittently until January 31, 1890.

From Image Consumption to Cultural Politics

The cost-effectiveness and technical alignment of lithography with traditional brushwork pursuits which seemed to give it an edge over copperplate printing in the realm of painting manuscripts does not, however, address how it fared in the reproduction of imperial epigraphic catalogues. A year prior to the Maisong Bookstore's publicized "Announcing the Scheduled Copperplate Reprint of *Xiqing Antiquities* Faithfully Based on the Imperial Edition," the owner of Chonggu Cottage issued a "Notice of Share Subscription for a Lithographic Version of *Xiqing Antiquities*":

Xiqing Antiquities was commissioned by imperial order . . . and catalogues over one thousand five hundred artifacts from the imperial collection, including bells, cauldrons, and ritual vessels in book form. The artistic renderings are exquisite, and its contents have been verified in detail. When discussing metals from ancient times, none surpass the work's richness and beauty. . . . It begins with an imperial preface and concludes with the sixteen-volume *Book of Ancient Coins*, comprising a total of twenty-four books. However, the palace edition of this work is exceedingly rare and difficult to procure. Using a finely preserved edition from our collection, we have entrusted Hongwen Bookstore to make a lithographic reproduction. The paper quality, ink, and binding will be of the highest craftsmanship. Each set will be made up of twenty-four books, housed in a wooden case, and they are set to be published in March of next year. Subscribers who have preordered will pay an initial six foreign dollars and an additional twelve dollars when they receive each individual set. The final price will be twenty-eight silver dollars after the entire work is published.²⁶

Compared to prices listed for the copperplate version of *Xiqing Antiquities*, 30 foreign (or silver) dollars for a preorder and 50 once production was concluded, the lithographic edition was priced at 18 and 28 dollars, respectively—making the copperplate version one point eight times more expensive. Publishers of the lithographic edition began their share subscription campaign in December 1887 and intensively advertised until June 1888. As late as June 14, in "Announcing the Publication of Various Meticulously Proofed Lithographic and Typographic Books by Shanghai Hongwen Bookstore," *Xiqing Antiquities* was listed as "twenty-four volumes for thirty-six dollars." Several days later in "Notice of Share Subscription for a Lithographic Version of *Xiqing Antiquities*," it was stated that the work will "surely be available this month."²⁷ Evidently, the completion of the lithographic *Xiqing Antiquities* had been extended into June—three months past its initial release date—while the publisher concurrently accepted preorders. The final price for non-

preorders was ultimately set at thirty-six dollars, but it was not until December that we can observe indications of the work's complete publication: solicitations for preorders ceased at this time. It is noteworthy that while publishers of the lithographic version began solicitations for shares approximately three months earlier than their copperplate counterpart, after March 1888, their two fervent promotion periods almost entirely overlapped. Frequently, the two publishers' announcements and notices appeared on the same page and, at times, were even placed adjacent to one another.²⁸ This undeniably made attacks on the lithographic version by publishers of the copperplate edition, such as the ones above, all the more intense and direct.

The entire production process of the copperplate *Xiqing Antiquities* by Maisong Bookstore took from March 1888, which marked the start of solicitation efforts, until its completion in December 1889, spanning approximately 22 months; meanwhile, Hongwen Bookstore, which began its subscription campaign in December 1887, had already printed versions available by June 1888, taking only seven months. The swift production and exhaustive promotion of the Hongwen Bookstore's lithographic version likely exerted considerable pressure on Maisong Bookstore, which explains why in December 1888 they hastily released just the first ten books of the set and specifically pointed out that *Xiqing Antiquities* was "fundamentally a valuable reference in the world of art, yet its readers often lament the rough and blurred printing effects."²⁹ By 1889, when the entire set had been completed, the above comparison of the copperplate and lithographic editions being akin to "heaven and earth" was advertised. At the time, the only version of *Xiqing Antiquities* that connoisseurs could have seen was the Hongwen Bookstore lithographic version, making it evident to what the comments were alluding.

The lack of concrete sales data makes it difficult for us to determine the victor in the showdown between the Maisong and Hongwen bookstores but, given the affordability of lithography, it is highly plausible that the lithographic edition of *Xiqing Antiquities* outsold the copperplate version. In terms of the broader competition between the copperplate and lithographic markets, we therefore observe that in addition to losing ground in the price war of books for the imperial civil services examinations, copperplate printing likewise faced challenges in the art reproduction market. The market for copperplate books in Shanghai largely declined from that time onwards, with only the production of Western-style maps barely holding its ground. Therefore, in the context of Sino-Japanese trade, the

26 Chonggu lu zhuren 崇古廬主人, "Shiyin Xiqin gujian chaogu gaobai" 石印西清古鑑招股告白 (Notice of share subscription for a lithographic version of *Xiqing Antiquities*), *Shenbao* (December 1, 1887), 4. This notice ran intermittently until June 22, 1888.

27 *Shenbao* (June 27, 1888), 5.

28 See *Shenbao* (April 1, 1888), 5.

29 "Yishu donglai," *Shenbao* (December 11, 1888), 4.

market for copperplate printed products, as mentioned by Osaka bookseller Miki Sakusuke 三木佐助 (1852–1926), only briefly flourished from 1874/1875 to 1882.³⁰

However, affordability and sales figures might not be able to unveil the full reality of the period. Although the lithographic version potentially outsold its copperplate counterpart, in terms of influence, the precision of the copperplate printing was often mistaken for the palace edition, even becoming the basis for many subsequent lithographic works claiming to be the palace edition. Its broad influence is akin to what *Shenbao* predicted in 1888: “When this book comes out, copperplates will inevitably become popular throughout the world.” While the copperplate technology might not have been as widely accepted as anticipated, the copperplate edition from Maisong Bookstore indeed achieved widespread popularity through continuous replication. One of the significant reasons for this is that the primary readers of *Xiqing Antiquities* were collectors and scholars specializing in the study of metal and stone artifacts. For contemporary research in related fields, it was critical to be able to clearly identify any characters, marks, and inscriptions on the ancient artifacts. The strength of copperplate printing lay in its unique capacity for meticulous and detailed etching, allowing it to display details that perhaps even the best rubbings could not convey. It is thus no wonder that copperplate advertisements could confidently proclaim that “if researchers in antiquities received this book as a guide, it would not be difficult to discern the authenticity of metal and stone artifacts immediately.”

The above, in part, highlights how copperplate printing entered Shanghai through late Qing Sino-Japanese networks and evolved from its initial applications in map production, miniaturized examination books, painting manuals, and reproductions of painting and calligraphy to the printing of images and inscriptions of metal and stone artifacts. Copperplate-produced examination books and painting manuals briefly dominated the market, only to fade away under the challenges and competition from lithography which was cheaper and better aligned with local cultural demands. However, when it came to metal and stone images, the emphasis was not on reproducing the tactile feel of the brush and ink, as it was in reproduction of ink paintings and calligraphy, but on replicating precise details. This likely explains why the copperplate version of *Xiqing Antiquities* managed to defy broader market trends and establish itself as a classic in the reproduction of epigraphic resources.

The publication and subsequent competition between the copperplate and lithographic versions of *Xiqing Antiquities* are deeply rooted in the image reproduction market driven by Dianshi Studio (Dianshi zhai 點石齋), founded by Shen-

30 Miki Sakusuke 三木佐助, *Gyokuen sōwa* 玉淵叢話 (Collection from the Jade Pool) (Tokyo and Osaka: Kaisei-kan, 1920), 31.

bao in the latter half of the nineteenth century by British businessman Ernest Major (1841–1908).³¹ Major took advantage of lithography, originally used only for printing religious texts, to reproduce traditional paintings, calligraphy, and ancient books with unprecedented success. The significance of *Xiqing Antiquities*, however, extended beyond commercial leisure consumption as it served as the most crucial catalogue of bronzes held in the Qing court collections. In the words of the Qianlong Emperor's imperial edict, the book was created “to [allow one to] reflect upon the distant past during leisurely moments and aptly represent the refinement of peaceful times.” Commentaries by officials such as Liang Shizheng 梁詩正 (1697–1763) further clarified that the catalogue “allows the illustrious objects from the early three dynasties onwards to vividly come to mind and represents their ceremonial forms of antiquity rather than merely offering ornamental descriptions.” Here one can note that the volume set was not intended to merely represent superficial artistic matters, but instead to project the prosperity and fate of the state. It was a cultural asset with profound political implications.

A further illustration of how *Xiqing Antiquities* embodies a fusion of commercial and cultural-political meanings is evident in an event from 1893. Shen Bingcheng 沈秉成 (1823–1895), provincial governor of Anhui Province, reported to the imperial court that a gentleman from Guangdong had appointed the circuit attendant (*daotai* 道台) Liu Xuexun 劉學詢 (1855–1935) to purchase the complete set of original copperplates used in the printing of *Xiqing Antiquities* from a Japanese bookseller. The 1,915 plates made of “purple bronze” (pure copper) were all to be dedicated and presented to the court. Furthermore, Chen Mingyuan 陳明遠 (fl. 1890), the expectant *daotai* of Guangdong who had previously served in Japan as a consul, was appointed to inspect and oversee the shipment of the plates back to Beijing.³² Liu Xuexun, who hailed from Xiangshan, Guangdong, acquired the *jinshi* degree in 1888, but never held an official post. In Guangzhou, he operated the examinee “surname guessing lottery” (*weixing* 闍姓), a legal form of gambling which involved guessing who would pass the civil service examinations by buying

31 For Dianshi Studio and their undertakings in the reproduction of artworks, see Rudolf G. Wagner 魯道夫·瓦格那, “Jinru ququxiang tuijin: Shanghai de Dianshizhai huabao” 進入全球想像圖景：上海的《點石齋畫報》 (Entering the global imagination: *Dianshi Studio Pictorial of Shanghai*), *Zhongguo xueshu* 4 (2001): 28–29; Roberta Wue, “Selling the Artist: Advertising, Art, and Audience in Nineteenth-Century Shanghai,” *The Art Bulletin* 91, no. 4 (December 2009): 468–469.

32 See “Zouwen weipai Chen Mingyuan guan jie zitong shuban jin jing: Qing chashou zhuan jin you” 奏聞委派陳明遠管解紫銅書板進京，請查收轉進由 (Presented Memorial to appoint Chen Mingyuan to oversee the transport of the pure copperplates to the capital; see attached and forward), submitted on the fifteenth day of the twelfth month of the nineteenth year of the reign of the Guangxu Emperor [1893], “Guji” 故機 130607, Office of Military and Political Affairs folder item “Junjichu dang zhejian” 軍機處檔摺件 129868, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

tickets marked with the surnames of examinees. Through this activity, Liu established connections with influential figures and amassed considerable wealth, enough to financially support Sun Yat-sen's 孫中山 (1866–1925) revolutionary activities.

According to an 1893 memorial presented by Shen Bingcheng to the Office of Military and Political Affairs, the plates Liu purchased were carved to an exceedingly exquisite degree. Moreover, besides voluntarily donating the printing plates to the court, Liu submitted a trial print of the book bound in yellow brocade for the emperor's inspection. Shen in turn praised Liu, describing him as "eager to learn and achieve, and having laudable virtuous conduct." By presenting the Japanese copperplates of *Xiqing Antiquities*, which symbolized imperial prosperity and destiny, Liu garnered official approval, an act which further solidified his connections with the upper echelons of certain political networks.

It is worth noting, however, that more than a year before Shen's memorial, on August 27, 1891, *Shenbao* published the abovementioned notice, "Order the Japanese Copperplate-Printed *Xiqing Antiquities*":

Notice: Our company previously had the . . . palace edition of *Xiqing Antiquities* engraved in Japan, the engraving work of which has been praised by both Chinese and foreigners. Recently, with the support and recommendation of . . . officials, it was presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the emperor of China's review. As a result, we have transported all the copperplates to Shanghai. We plan to print the books on the finest Japanese Mino paper, and after printing one thousand copies, the plates will be ground away and used for engraving other books. Each set is priced at fifty taels of silver. For Chinese and foreign merchants and scholars who wish to preorder this book, a deposit of thirty taels is required, half of which is to be paid upfront.³³

The text indicates that the copperplate edition had been presented to the emperor and, therefore, the entire set of plates was moved to Shanghai where they would be reused. It is not entirely clear if Liu Xuexun purchased the plates directly from Japan or after the bookseller had brought them to Shanghai, and the potential relationship between Maisong Bookstore and Liu Xuexun likewise eludes us. Although many questions remain unanswered, what is known is that the copperplates were not ground off, and that the bookseller capitalized on their cultural and political value to maximize their commercial interest before they entered the palace.

The copperplates were then received and housed in the imperial palace. However, during the intervention of the Eight-Nation Alliance, they were plundered and, regrettably, only fragments were returned following the Boxer Protocol in 1901. Regarding this history, a note penned in 1932 can be found inscribed on one of the plates held in the National Museum of China in Beijing:

Reprint of the Surviving *Xiqing Antiquities*, One Volume, Seventy-Eight Leaves

This is printed from the fragmentary copperplates returned by the Allied Forces after the Boxer Protocol of 1901. They were held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs largely unnoticed. Xiaobin 效彬 was the first to discover them when working at the ministry and decided to reprint the work. It is said that the original copperplates are of exquisite craftsmanship. . . . At the time of its production, no inscriptions recorded the whole story of the matter. Without this knowledge, one might mistake it for a mere compilation of remnants, unaware that these seventy-eight leaves were reprinted from the existing plates.³⁴

The "Xiaobin" mentioned here is Zhang Wei 張瑋 (fl. 1912), a graduate of the University of Cambridge. Zhang was appointed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1912 to 1922 and was then expatriated abroad for a number of years, returning to the ministry in 1927. The fragmentary edition of *Xiqing Antiquities* which survived the ravages of the Eight-Nation Alliance had been left untouched in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until the early years of the Republic of China. At this point in time, the reproduction of this surviving edition was undoubtedly driven not by commercial interests, but a cultural and political sense of commemoration, a context which notably differs from the flourishing book market of the late Qing where commercial interests largely took precedence. *Xiqing Antiquities* on its own carried a heightened sense of cultural and political significance due to its imperial background, but the tumultuous changes brought about by the dynastic transition inverted the relationship between commerce and politics in the life history of *Xiqing Antiquities*, foregrounding its symbolic meanings.

Coda: Manchukuo Treasures, Chinese Cultural Essence, and Japan

Xiqing Antiquities was not the only volume in the line of imperial *Xiqing* publications that garnered the attention of contemporary publishers. On the eve of the founding of the Republic of China in 1911, the Commercial Press marketed the lithographic edition of *Xiqing Supplement* as the "secret preeminent volume of the nation."³⁵ Although the Commercial Press published *Ningshou Antiquities* in 1914 after the establishment of the Republic, private publishers gradually played a di-

³⁴ The inscription here has been taken from Xu Jianxia, "Qiantan guojia bowuguan," 35.

³⁵ See "Hainei diyiben miben *Xiqing xuejian* fashou yuyue juan" 海內第一秘本西清續鑑發售預約券 (Selling preorder vouchers for *Xiqing Supplement*, the secret preeminent volume of the nation), *Shenbao* (December 23, 1910), 1.

³³ *Shenbao* (August 27, 1891), 10.

minishing role in reproducing the imperial *Xiqing* publications, underscoring the deepening cultural and political undertones and symbolism associated with them. Most notably, the Beijing Antiquities Display Institution in 1931 published part B of *Xiqing Supplement*, and in 1942, as mentioned above, the “Manchukuo National Treasure Exhibition” was held, showcasing *Xiqing Inkstones* from *Siku quanshu*, which was subsequently replicated and published in Japan.³⁶ The former treated *Xiqing* as the essence of Chinese culture, while the latter categorized them as Manchukuo treasures.

Of particular interest here is the “Manchukuo National Treasure Exhibition.” Both the *Asahi Shimbun* 朝日新聞 and the *Yomiuri Shimbun* 読売新聞 newspapers extensively covered the event, notably focusing on the reproduction of *Xiqing Inkstones*. The *Asahi Shimbun* first featured a lengthier article titled “The Bond of Japanese-Manchukuo Culture: Replicating *Xiqing Inkstones* from *Siku quanshu*” (*Nichiman bunka no chigiri: Shiko zensho Seisei kenpu o fukusei* 日滿文化の契り: 四庫全書西清硯譜を複製):

The famous and invaluable Manchukuo national treasure *Xiqing Inkstones* from *Siku quanshu*, comprising twelve volumes and one thousand eight hundred pages, is set to be replicated by the Cultural Association of Japan and Manchukuo. . . . This edition of *Xiqing Inkstones* from *Siku quanshu* was prominently showcased last year at the Imperial Museum during the “Manchukuo National Treasure Exhibition,” held in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the founding of Manchukuo. The Cultural Association of Japan and Manchukuo aims to preserve this work in Japan for a long time, ensuring its replication matches the authenticity and precision of the original. It has been decided that this effort will be one of the main cultural exchange initiatives of the association for the next fiscal year. Japan’s leading-edge technologies will be fully utilized for this endeavor. . . . Once the photography is complete, the original will be formally returned to the government of Manchukuo and displayed at the National Treasures Exhibition in the new capital [Shenyang]. The completion of this replica is gathering high expectations from stakeholders and is believed to play a significant role in fostering Japan-Manchukuo cultural exchanges.³⁷

This essay emphasizes that under the leadership of the Cultural Association of Japan and Manchukuo, Japan would use unique and advanced technologies to reproduce *Xiqing Inkstones*, which was then expected to play a crucial role in

36 The reproduction of *Siku quanshu* was an arena in which China and Japan competed for hegemony over traditional culture. See Lin Chih-hung 林志宏, “Jiu wenwu, xin renting: *Siku quanshu* yu minguo shiqi de wenhua zhengzhi” 舊文物, 新認同——《四庫全書》與民國時期的文化政治 (Old documents, new identities: *The Siku quanshu* and cultural politics in Republican China), *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 77 (September 2012): 61–99.

37 “*Nichiman bunka no chigiri: Shiko zensho Seisei kenpu o fukusei*” 日滿文化の契り: 四庫全書西清硯譜を複製 (The bond of Japanese-Manchukuo culture: Replicating *Xiqing Inkstones* from *Siku quanshu*), *Asahi Shimbun* (May 12, 1943), 3.

Japan-Manchukuo exchanges. On the same day, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* similarly highlighted “Japan-Manchukuo Cultural Exchange: Replicating *Xiqing Inkstones* from *Siku quanshu*.” The text used similar language and emphasis: “[t]he replica will be made with impeccable precision to match the original,” “this national treasure embodies the mutual cultural exchange between Japan and Manchukuo,” and “unique and superior Japanese technology.”³⁸

Both sources emphasize that the reproduction symbolized a fusion of Manchukuo cultural heritage and Japanese technological expertise, representing a cultural exchange and alliance between the two. Given that I have yet to examine this specific edition of *Xiqing Inkstones*, it remains uncertain to what the “unique and superior Japanese technology” specifically refers. But it is known that by this time, the selection of printing techniques used in graphics had diversified to include collotype, halftone copperplates (screened photogravure), and electroplated copperplates, among others, with collotype or halftone copperplates most likely to have been used due to the Western eclectic style and chiaroscuro shading employed in the work.³⁹

Regardless, Japanese copperplate technology of the 1880s assisted the Shanghai market in reproducing what can be considered the most truthful reproduction of the imperially commissioned *Xiqing Antiquities*, a reproduction that was brimming with cultural and political significance, to the extent that its life history extended into the Republican era. The original copperplates even crossed the seas to find a new home in the imperial court, but following the fate of the Qing dynasty, they too became a remnant in the face of national calamity. But when the Cultural Association of Japan and Manchukuo decided to reproduce what they deemed the treasures of Manchukuo, why did they select *Xiqing Inkstones*—part of the “*Xiqing*” family to which *Xiqing Antiquities* belonged—from the vast collection of *Siku quanshu*? It is worth pondering whether the role played by Japanese copperplate technology in replicating *Xiqing Antiquities* beginning in the late Qing dynasty was taken into consideration. Reports on the “Manchukuo National Treasure Exhibition” repeatedly emphasized the combination of “technological Japan” and “traditional Manchukuo” but, undoubtedly, these notions of technology and tradition were not temporally limited to the exact moment of the exhibition; instead, they also elicit a continued tradition, one which could legitimize collaboration between Japan and Manchukuo.

38 “*Nichiman bunka no kōryū: Shiko zensho Seishin kempu o fukusei*” 日滿文化の交流: 四庫全書西清硯譜を複製 (Japan-Manchukuo cultural exchange: Replicating the *Xiqing Inkstones* from *Siku quanshu*), *Yomiuri Shimbun* (May 12, 1943), 3.

39 Dai Jingsu 戴景素, “Guanyu yinshua zhi changshi” 關於印刷之常識 (On the general knowledge of printing), *Shenbao* (February 22, 1921), 17.