

The Gifts for Emperor Kangxi's Sixtieth Birthday and Their Related Problems

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Abstract

Emperor Kangxi (b. 1654; r. 1661-1722) is regarded as one of the greatest rulers in Chinese history. An efficient monarch, he won numerous battles in his early years and eventually brought a long-term of peace and prosperity for his people. He was so deeply revered that his sovereign gave him a sumptuous celebration to show their respect and royalty on his sixtieth birthday in the spring of 1713. Important participants include imperial household members, Manchu clan leaders, Mongol princes, high-ranked officials, local governors, and selected civilians. Well-organized, the celebration included various activities and went on for about ten days. The emperor was so happy that he ordered Wang Yuanqi and a group of scholars to compile a book, entitled *Wanshou shengdian (Records of the Magnificent Celebration for Emperor Kangxi's Birthday)*, which includes a long list of gifts from his sovereign especially on this occasion.

In this paper, the author will analyze the list of the contributors and their gifts (especially painting and calligraphy) and deal with three issues:

1. The power structure of the ruling class of that time;
2. How and what Chinese painting and calligraphy were used as gifts on that occasion and their popularity among members of the ruling class in the early Qing period; and
3. Investigations of some of the paintings and calligraphic works in the perspective of their collection history after entering the Kangxi court.

Keywords: Kangxi, Wanshou shengdian, birthday gifts, Wang Yuanqi, collection history of painting and calligraphy in the Early Qing court