

The Emperor Qianlong's Ideal Imperial Kiln, as Seen in the *Illustrated Album of Ceramics Making*

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Abstract

Two entries, dated 1736 and 1743, in the Workshop Archives of the Imperial Households Department clearly documented how the Qianlong Emperor decreed the commission of the *Illustrated Album of Ceramics Making*. His Majesty not only hand-picked the illustrators, but also assigned Ying Tang to write the accompanying texts. The Emperor's intent for the album is visibly shown: to present the production process of the imperial kilns. For discussion purposes, the present album owned by a Taipei collector, as the copy's binding, illustrators' inscriptions, and seals of collection correspond closely to literature descriptions for the one mentioned in the Workshop Archives, enough to be treated as such.

In addition, Tang's texts for the album stress specifically the raw materials, techniques, and finished products of the imperial kilns, comparing the Emperor's policy in ceramic making, which was incorporated into his overall cultural policy. By tracking the past of the imperial kilns that Emperor Qianlong devoted, we can also comprehend his ideal imperial kilns.

Keywords: Emperor Qianlong, the *Illustrated Album of Ceramics Making*, Ying Tang, the Imperial Kilns