

Yang Shoujing's Search for Books in Japan and the Fruit of His Efforts: With Books on the Lesser Learning in the Guanhai Hall Collection as the Object of Study

Hsu Yuan-ting
Department of Rare Books and Documents
National Palace Museum

Abstract

In 1880, Yang Shoujing (1839-1915) was recruited by He Ruzhang (1838-1891), the envoy to Japan, to become a member of his retinue in Japan. Although there for a little over four years, he was able to purchase and bring back many precious Chinese rare books, Korean woodblock-printed books, and Japanese manuscript and woodblock-printed books, marking a major event in the history of Sino-Japanese bibliographic exchange. In his recollection of searching for and collecting books during his trip to Japan, Yang Shoujing found that “many of the books are about medicine, but few on the ‘Lesser Learning.’” referring to philological, linguistic and semantic studies. The research in this study indicates that, despite the fact that books on the Lesser Learning are far fewer than those related to medicine, they represent a group that Yang Shoujing most actively devoted attention to. This study explores how Yang Shoujing expended considerable energy in collecting books on the Lesser Learning that had ended up in Japan by means of his considerable scholarship and the letters that he wrote while in Japan to Mori Risshi. The study next organizes and draws conclusions from books on the Lesser Learning in the National Palace Museum originally from Yang Shoujing's Guanhai Hall, representing his devotion to book collecting and the fruits of his efforts, also providing further understanding of books on the Lesser Learning in the history of bibliographic exchange between China and Japan.

Keywords: Yang Shoujing, Mori Risshi, Guanhai Hall, Classics category, books on the Lesser Learning

Translated by Donald E. Brix