

## Chen Huai's Painting and Calligraphy Collection and the Jiaqing Emperor's Third Edition of *Midian Zhulin Shiqu Baoji*

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### Abstract

Focus on the Qing court collection has almost always been on the Qianlong reign, with that of the Jiaqing emperor (r. 1796-1820) being mostly overlooked. The third edition of *Midian zhulin Shiqu baoji*, completed in 1816, not only includes a supplement of omitted works but also new additions to the imperial collection under the Jiaqing emperor. With more than 2,000 works, this edition provides a comprehensive introduction to the art collecting enterprise of the Jiaqing emperor. After Jiaqing ascended the throne, one of the first tasks he initiated was to abolish Chen Huai's post as Jiangxi Surveillance Commissioner, and in the first month of his fourth year on the throne, after Qianlong had died, he began prosecuting his father's favored but corrupt official Heshen while settling accounts with the estate of Bi Yuan, who had already passed away. Residences of the three were searched and possessions confiscated by the state, the ones from Bi Yuan being the most abundant. Masterpieces of painting and calligraphy in the third edition of the imperial catalogue represent not only those from Bi Yuan and his brother Bi Long, but also important pieces from the collections of Chen Huai and Heshen. The Bi family was of considerable renown for its scholarly achievements, while Heshen was limited by his lack of information. Chen Huai, however, was a person of some substance who has seen little scholarly attention, the study of his collection representing a gap in the history of collecting in the Qing dynasty.

The focus of the present study therefore is on Chen Huai's collection of painting and calligraphy in an attempt to recreate an outline of the Chen family holdings. As such, Chen Huai and the Bi brothers emerge as the premier collectors of their time, serving as driving forces among private collectors in the latter Qianlong period. Research in the present study not only analyzes the sources behind the Jiaqing imperial collection, but it also reexamines the contributions and status of painting and calligraphy in the Chen family collection, filling a lacuna in the history of collecting at the time.

**Keywords:** Qing Renzong, Jiaqing emperor, Chen Huai, *Shiqu baoji*, *Midian zhulin*, painting and calligraphy collections

(Translated by Donald E. Brix)