

The Seven Imperial Seals of Mingchang and Related Issues

Wang, Yao-ting
Former Curator
Department of Painting and Calligraphy
National Palace Museum

Abstract

The collections of Chinese emperors over the ages have been the focus of attention among many scholars. The collection of painting and calligraphy at the court of the Jin dynasty came for the most part directly from the holdings of the Northern Song dynasty court. From there, many of them entered the imperial collection of the following Yuan dynasty, making the Jin dynasty an important transition stage in the history of imperial art collecting. This study examines the topic of the collection seals used by the Jin dynasty emperor Zhangzong as well as the related activities at his court and other figures. By studying extant works, we can gain a better understanding of the court collection of painting and calligraphy during the pivotal period of the Jin dynasty.

In order, this study explains the situation concerning the collection of the Jin dynasty court, such as looking at Wang Tingyun, who served at the Painting and Calligraphy Service in the Mingchang Imperial Library, and at the Jin imperial scion Wanyan Shou (Duke of Mi) and his collection. Next, the study uses the “seven imperial seals of Mingchang” to explain how they were used for Emperor Zhangzong’s collection. By comparing the impressions of Mingchang seals on extant works of art, the problem of forgeries can be elucidated among them, the authenticity of “Qunyu zhongmi” and “Mingchang yulan” seals highlighted in particular. Finally, the titles and ciphers of Emperors Zhangzong of the Jin and Huizong of the Song are compared and analyzed.

Keywords: Zhangzong of the Jin, seven imperial seals of Mingchang, Jin dynasty court collection, seven imperial seals of Xuanhe, Huizong of the Song, imperial collection seals

(Translated by Donald E. Brix)