

## **“Illustrations” and the Rites: The Formation of *Illustrated Regulations for Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Imperial Qing Dynasty and Its Influence***

Lai, Yu-chih

Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica

### **Abstract**

Scholars generally consider that the *Illustrated Regulations for Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Imperial Dynasty* (*Huangchao liqi tushi*, hereafter “*Illustrated Regulations*”), initially completed in 1759, to be a large illustrated catalog of life for objects used in various levels of the Qing court. The beginning of its compilation planning was closely related to the reforms for the system of rites during the Qianlong reign. It can be traced at the earliest to the Qianlong emperor in the first lunar month of 1747 ordering the replacement of materials for ritual vessels and the reformation of paraphernalia that occurred in the winter of 1748. The Qianlong emperor not only specifically established a “Hall for Illustrated Ceremonial Paraphernalia,” it also went on to produce various formats and versions of texts, including 1,974 illustrated color leaves in 92 albums now in the Palace Museum in Beijing, the smaller *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu*) and Wuying Palace versions, and various illustrated leaves scattered in museums around the world. The present study clarifies and reconstructs the process to the formation of *Illustrated Regulations* from the beginning in order to understand how the images were produced. It then asks the following questions: What was the difference between the choice of image format and style compared to traditional illustrations of ritual vessels? Did these differences or features reveal a new functional status that the *Illustrated Regulations* held at the court? If it was truly related to the “rites,” how so? And what exactly was the nature of “rites” illustrated in *Illustrated Regulations*? In sum, the materials in *Illustrated Regulations* involve many professions and fields, including the history of rituals, economics, material culture, and the court. The present study quite simply seeks to trace the original formation of this major project and, from the perspective of visual history, pay particular attention to the choice of stylistic origins and the relationship to other images produced at the court during this period. With this foundation, it is hoped that other fields of study can use *Illustrated Regulations* as a basis for further research.

**Keywords:** *Illustrated Regulations for Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Imperial Qing Dynasty*, visual culture of the Qing court, material culture of the Qing court, reforming the system of rites by the Qianlong court, reformation of ceremonial paraphernalia, ceremony at the Altar of Heaven

(Translated by Donald E. Brix)