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THE MANUSCRIPT CATALOGUES OF KUNSTKAMERA ABOUT CHINESE COLLECTIONS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY

Since the very inception of Kunstkamera in St. Petersburg, it was renowned for the wealth of its universal collections. A special and significant part among those consists of the Chinese collections. It had to do with the general tendencies in the development of the European museum's collections as well as with the old ties of Russia with the Qing Dynasty. N. Witsen, the burgomaster of Amsterdam, known not only for his scientific works, but also for the richest collections he obtained, pointed out in his book "Northern and Eastern Tartaria" the gifts that were exchanged by Russian and Chinese ambassadors when the two sides met. Thus in 1689, F. A. Golovin, the Russian ambassador, sent to make a treaty in regards to the borders with the Qing Empire, presented the Chinese ambassador with

an excellent chiming clock, a gilded silver cup and a valuable Armenian caftan. Other ambassadors were presented with pocket watches, mirrors and valuable sabers.

In return

the Great Ambassador of His Imperial Majesty was presented with a saddle, encased in black leather, with a bridle and gilded stirrups, two red horse tails, two golden cups, eight damask carpets, 32 pieces of silk and 12 silk multi-coloured scarfs.

Chinese items were also presented by Mughal princes. The same Witsen noted that in 1678 "the prince of yellow Mughals" presented some valuable gifts, among which were horses, silver, gold, camels, gold cloth, velvet, Chinese "porcelain, knives, cups and bowls, adorned with gems as well as various vessels inlaid with pearls" [1]. However, in spite of the fact that Chinese items, which were exhibited in European museums and kept in private collections, were well-known in Russia, it did not stand in the way of Peter the Great noting in his letter to A. A. Winius from Holland in 1697: "I never saw such Chinese items in Moscow, as I see here" [2].

A good idea about the status of Chinese collection in Kunstkamera in the first half of the 18th century is given by the so-called "drawn museum". From the 1730s to the

1750s all museum items were drawn by artists of the Petersburg Academy of Arts, hence the "drawn museum" [3]. Among the artistic items of the first stocks of Kunstkamera, these made up nearly one third of the entire collection. These were articles of clothing, of religious purposes, fans, vessels, scroll books, and the like. The first museum catalogue, published by the Academy of Sciences in Latin [4], had over 150 descriptions of exhibits, which were attributed as Chinese. Many of them, at that, are described in general terms. For instance, "Figurae Chinenfes in gypfo cauato" are inventoried under the numbers of 159—175, whereas "Figurae Chinenfes in gypfo anaglypho" under the numbers of 176—189 [5]. Chinese exhibits were admitted from and by various sources. Among them there were singular items as well as those that made up of parts of larger collections, as were, for instance, collections of Amsterdam pharmacist A. Seba and General Feldzeugmeister J. Bruce. Chinese articles were located in Kunstkamera in the gallery at the top together with other "artificial". On the right side of the gallery were items made of stone, wood and bone, and on the left side was the ethnographic collection, if we were to employ modern-day language. The ethnographic collection included articles of clothing and religious attributes. Kunstkamera was significantly damaged by a fire that took place on the 5th of December of 1747. Chinese articles, and particularly those that constituted ethnographic collections, were among those items that were heavily damaged.

Taking into consideration that many research works were devoted to the history of Chinese collection in Kunstkamera [6], this article offers the analysis of two manuscript catalogues of Kunstkamera, which are kept in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences Archive. In our opinion they are not only the best sources for the study of the composition of the collections that survived the fire, but also for the study of the collections' purposeful replenishment, arrangement and new ways of exhibiting the articles. The first catalogue is titled "Tools and Artistic Items in the Imperial Kunstkamera, arranged in the Tower and in the Gallery in the Third Apartment" [7]. This catalogue was put to-