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216 Luo Feng's Unbelievable Luck! Military Protection Provided! (1)

“Holy cow!”

“Could this really be it?”

Truthfully speaking, Luo Feng was a little baffled at this moment.

What he held in his hands was none other than a part of the Yongle Encyclopedia, commissioned by the Yongle Emperor of the Ming dynasty.

Throughout China's thousands of years of history, there are only a few treasures that have managed to span both the ancient and modern worlds, sought after and coveted by countless individuals. Among them are the twelve animal-head sculptures from the Qing dynasty, the Nine Tripod Cauldrons, the Imperial Jade Seals, and the Yellow Emperor's Xuanyuan Sword.

These artifacts all bear witness to the pinnacle of power. In a sense, if one were to rank these treasures, the Yongle Encyclopedia would undoubtedly take first place. It is not for its exquisite craftsmanship, nor for the impressive materials used in its construction. Rather, it is due to it being a collection of books whose significance surpasses that of any other antique.

So, what exactly is the Yongle Encyclopedia?

The Yongle Encyclopedia is a classified compilation of ancient Chinese texts produced during the reign of the Yongle Emperor Zhu Di, led by Xie Jin and Yao Guangxiao. Originally titled “Wenxian Dacheng,” the emperor himself later wrote a preface and bestowed upon it the name “Yongle Encyclopedia.” The work consists of 22,877 chapters (including a 60-chapter catalog), spanning 11,095 volumes, and containing approximately 370 million characters, drawing from 8 thousand sources from ancient times to the present.

In 1403, the first year of the Yongle era, Zhu Di resolved to create a monumental work that would showcase the might of his nation and benefit future generations. Its purpose was to compile all available works since the beginning of written records, covering a vast array of subjects such as astronomy, geography, yin and yang, divination, medicine, Buddhism, Taoism, and various crafts and techniques. Initially, Xie Jin was appointed to oversee the project, which included a team of 147 scholars. Within a year, they completed the “Wenxian Dacheng,” but Zhu Di was far from satisfied upon reading it. He then appointed Yao Guangxiao as the project supervisor and expanded the team to 2,196 members (totaling over 3,000 participants). The final version was completed in 1407, and Zhu Di personally wrote a preface and bestowed the collection with the name “Yongle Encyclopedia.” The entire work was copied by hand, and was finally finished in 1408.

The existence of the original Yongle Encyclopedia at the Yongling Mausoleum remains uncertain, but numerous copies have suffered a tragic fate, mostly destroyed by fire and warfare. A significant portion was also stolen under the guise of repairs, with only 800 volumes remaining, scattered around the world.

The content of the Yongle Encyclopedia covers classics, history, philosophy, and literature, touching on subjects such as astronomy, geography, yin and yang, medicine, divination, Buddhist and Taoist scriptures, drama, crafts, and agriculture. It encompasses the knowledge and wealth of the Chinese nation over thousands of years. The Encyclopedia Britannica refers to the Yongle Encyclopedia as “the largest encyclopedia in the history of the world” and an important symbol of Chinese culture.

All this information can be found through research, and it is quite complex.

To put it simply, it was the largest encyclopedia in the world to this day.

Consider the popular novel, “Battle Through the Heavens,” which spans several million characters. The Yongle Encyclopedia contains several billion characters, which is equivalent to hundreds of copies of the novel.

Bear in mind that back then, there were no keyboards for typing; everything was transcribed by hand. Furthermore, they had to compile and gather all the information. Unlike modern novels that sometimes use filler text, ancient Chinese writing aimed to be as concise as possible, so each character was meaningful and carefully chosen.

In essence, during the reign of the Ming dynasty’s Emperor Zhu Di, the nation’s resources were gathered to compile all available information, myths, stories, poetry, and strange tales into a single encyclopedia.

Its practical significance truly surpasses that of any other cultural relic.

“Damn! Am I seeing this right? The Yongle Encyclopedia?”

“Is it really the Yongle Encyclopedia?”

“Wow! To see the Yongle Encyclopedia in my lifetime? I must be blessed!”

“Forgive my lack of knowledge, but what is this thing that has everyone so excited?”

Luo Feng, suppressing his excitement, did not immediately open the book. Even though it was well-preserved, he dared not flip through it. If he were to accidentally damage even a single page, the repercussions would be disastrous.

He carefully set down the first volume and picked up another. It was yet another volume of the Yongle Encyclopedia.

Luo Feng was certain that this entire box likely contained more volumes.

“Guys, your host has not only struck it rich this time, but he has also made a significant contribution to the preservation of our nation’s history!”

“This is the original manuscript of the Yongle Encyclopedia!”

“According to the records in the Yongle Encyclopedia, during the Qing dynasty, there were many copies of the encyclopedia back then!”

“However, they were continuously lost. With more than 10 thousand volumes, even during peaceful times, some would inevitably go missing!”

“From the original 10 thousand plus volumes, by the time of the Qing Dynasty, only an estimated of 8 thousand or so remained!”

“Later, during the invasion of the Eight-Nation Alliance, the remaining volumes were either looted or burned; no one knows for sure.”

“In any case, the total number of volumes remaining in the world today is far below the number of its original volumes. Only around 200 volumes remain, and they are housed in various Western nations’ collections. Of course, China’s major museums also store several dozen of its volumes.”

“In other words, from the initial ten thousand volumes, only 200 remain worldwide after centuries of dynastic changes.”

“What a pity! Frankly, if we could find all of them, many historical mysteries might be solved! For example, many lost medical techniques are said to be documented within. Also, personal affairs of the previous dynasties’ Wu Zetian, Li Shimin, and Li Zhi are recorded here. Even some events from ancient times may be included! But many volumes have been lost!”

“Where is Genghis Khan’s tomb from the Yuan dynasty? Where is the real burial site of Zhuge Liang?”

“Perhaps the secrets of Emperor Qin Shihuang’s search for the elixir of immortality can be found within!”

“After all, this monumental work represents the collective effort of the Ming dynasty, a superpower of its time, dedicating half of its financial resources to gather all available literature and records!”