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Research in Domestic Spreading of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*

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Abstract: *The earliest version of Collected Works of Zeng Guofan was printed by Chuanzhong Publishing House, titled Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng. Later, Collected Works of Zeng Guofan was published by Yuelu Publishing House. In this edition, Zeng Guofan's family letters were included. Both of these editions have been printed and republished many times by a number of publishing houses, with the 6th edition and 12th printed the most. And some publishing houses even printed it twice within a year. Collected Works of Zeng Guofan spread so widely in China that the readers extended all over every stratum of society. There are three reasons for this. First, Zeng Guofan, who was very industrious when young and gained high official rank, was esteemed as a successful model in literati and officialdom (in feudal China). He was like a mainstay that made vigorous endeavors to turn the situation for better. Later, he was titled the highest official rank in imperial China. And he was a senior statesman of three emperors in succession. So his influence cannot be underestimated. Second, Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng was compiled by Li Hanzhang and Li Hongzhang who were both the first-rank members of the Qing Dynasty. They compiled this great work by the imperial decree of Emperor Guangxu. Many of the writers who participated in the compilation were Zeng Guofan's former subordinates or old friends. The compilation team was really unusual. Third, in 1990, the saga novel Zeng Guofan written by Tang Haoming became a bestseller. At the same time it drove the publication of Collected Works of Zeng Guofan. Many well-known and unknown publishers published a large number of Collected Works of Zeng Guofan by feat of the best-selling novels to entertain the readers.*

Keywords: *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan; China; Publish*

Zeng Guofan, who was born in 1811 and died in 1872, was given another name Bohan by the person who was of noble character and high prestige in his clan system. On his death, he was respected as Wengzheng, the highest honour given by the Emperor. Although he was not talented or intelligent at the young age, he was diligent in learning. At the age of 14, in Changsha, he was ranked the best in the beginning tests of the successive examinations, which were taken by people who yearned to get scholarly honor or official rank in feudal times. At the age of 27, he did very well in the highest imperial examination that was held once every three years, and was recognized as Jinshi, a successful candidate in the exam. He abode by the way of being an official. His ranks changed seven times to a higher one in ten consecutive years. He was promoted to the second-rank official. Later he was transferred and promoted to the first-rank governor of border provinces. He served as the ministers of five government departments (the Ministry of War, the Ministry of Rites, the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs, the Ministry of Revenue, and the Ministry of Works). And he served three emperors, Emperor Daoguang, Emperor Xianfeng and Emperor Guangxu. He also recommended more

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than 1,000 persons of his subordinates, disciples and old friends to serve as officials, over 40 of whom were ranked governor-generals. After his death, he was given the posthumous title Wenzheng, the highest honor given by the Emperor. Two top-ranking officials Li Hanzhang and Li Hongzhang were held responsible for compiling Zeng's anthology by the Emperor's decree. With such a huge halo, Zeng Guofan was regarded as a successful model by scholar-officials, and was praised by later generations as a model. There goes a saying that "Learn from Zeng Guofan if you want to be a top official, and learn from Hu Xueyan when you wish to be a top businessman". Naturally, Zeng became a figure attracting people's attention. Different publishing houses have successively published various collections of Zeng Guofan. The publishing houses not only won profits but also gained popularity. *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* is widely spread in China nowadays and its printing circulation exceeds over 10 million. The reason for its spreading deserves our careful and in-depth study. The research results also provide significant references for the dissemination of other anthologies.

The research in the dissemination of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* can be divided into three categories. The first category is the summary report of the researches on Zeng Guofan. The materials of the publications were also included. Here is the research from Cheng Xiaojun (1997), a scholar who did research on Zeng Guofan. Cheng took the founding of the People's Republic of China as a pause. Cheng firstly stated that there were more than ten editions of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* over the years from Zeng' death in 1872 to the founding of the PRC. Secondly, the publication of the research works and the research materials on Zeng Guofan during the 45 years from the year 1949 to the year 1996 is discussed, including the publication of the various volumes of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* by Yuelu Press from 1986 to 1993. And the publication of the compilation of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* in the year 1994 is also discussed. The second category is the research on the spreading of Letters from Zeng Guofan to His Family Members. Let's take Han Dewei (1996) as an example. Han made comments on Zeng Guofan's letters and analyzed the letters. The third category is the research on the spreading of Zeng Guofan's books. Tang Haoming (2008) vividly described his mental journey from his personal editing of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* to do research on Zeng Guofan. Cao Yu and his fellows (2017) summarized Zeng Guofan's archive compilation results from four aspects: complete works, special topics, selections, and supplements after they did related research on Zeng Guofan. These three types of researches have not systematically discussed the spreading of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* or the reasons for the spreading.

According to researches on the book publishing and sales information on the Internet, the author analyzed the domestic dissemination of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*, excluding the publishing of pirated books. The analysis results showed that from the earliest printing and publishing *Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng* by Chuanzhong Bookstore in 1876, different kinds of the lithographs were successively published by Hongwen Bookstore and Hongbao Bookstore in 1903. In 1935, the Oriental Publishing House published *Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng*. Books of this kind were published again and again until 2019. From the publication of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* by Yuelu Publishing House in 1986, the first edition from Guangming Daily Publishing House in 2015, it was reprinted again and again until 2019. From front to rear, 36 publishing houses published *Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng* or *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*, The total printing volume reached more than 5 million copies. According to online sales data analysis, the online sales of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* has exceeded 1.5 million copies. There was no detailed statistics on the sales volume from Xinhua Bookstore. The sales volume from book stalls, bookstores, and book bars of all sizes is also not available, either. The online e-book *Collected*

Works of Zeng Guofan has been downloaded more than 7 million times. Of course, it is not excluded that the above-mentioned various types of data contains elements of business exaggeration. From the perspective of publication and sales alone, the spread of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* in China is relatively successful. It also deserves research.

Why does *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* have such a good dissemination effect? There are three following reasons. First, the author Zeng Guofan was a successful example to ancient scholars. He made the following saying: "If you are a commoner, you should live alone and study to cultivate your mind, and if you are an official, you should benefit the whole world." He became a scholar, which was called Jinshi in ancient China at the age of 27. At the age of 37, he was promoted a second-rank official. After that he was promoted from the first-rank official to the chief governor of border-provinces. For 34 years, he served three emperors--Daoguang, Xianfeng, and Guangxu successfully. So, he was respected as Wengzheng, the name was regarded as the highest honour given by the Emperor after his death. At that time, the literati regarded Zeng Guofan as a great model, and scholars who were still on the road to success regarded him as a benchmark for their struggle. These people successfully used his family style and family as a model to learn from. And “learn from Zeng Guofan if you enter politics and learn from Hu Xueyan if you engage in business”was widely spread. Compared with Hu Xueyan, a red-top businessman--a businessman and official, who was later convicted and killed without any heirs, Zeng Guofan, the three-dynasty veteran and extremely human tumbler in the government, is more worshipped by the world, whose works has accumulated a huge number readers.

Secondly, without today’s photocopying and photographing technology, Zeng Guofan carefully copied all of his manuscripts of poems, articles, letters, memorials to the throne, and even the usual words and phrases that he wrote or handled in his life, and accumulated a lot of first-hand manuscripts. He also specially built a "Fuhoutang" in his hometown in Hunan Province, called *the First Building of the Private Book Collection of Modern Times*, to store his materials. This building was guarded by descendants of the Zeng clan. This provided plenty of original materials for the later compilation of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*.

Third, *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* began with the earliest *Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng*, was born with a jade and enveloped in a halo. The book was compiled one year later after Zeng’s death by Li Hanzhang, the governor-general of Hubei and Hunan Provinces of the day under the imperial decree of Emperor Guangxu. Li Hanzhang was Li Hongzhang’s elder brother. It was annotated by Li Hongzhang, the governor-general of Zhili, provinces around and including Beijing. The book was printed and published by Chuanzhong Publishing House in the fifth year after Zeng’s death. With such a glamorous team of editors, all those scholars who were recommended by Zeng Guofan would prefer to read it at the first sight. In 1982, Yuelu Publishing House began to organize and publish a batch of Hunanese works. Since 1986, the books were organized gradually and published while one book was collected well. In 1993, they published various collections of Zeng Guofan's works. In 1994, they compiled various collections of works published in the previous eight years. Altogether there were 30-volume *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*. These 30 volumes were the second complete works after *Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng* edited by the two brothers Li Hanzhang and Li Hongzhang.

Finally, many celebrities and leaders in modern times have compiled, unscrambled and interpreted Zeng’s life and works. This created waves of "Zeng Guofan hot" invisibly. Driven by market demand and commercial

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interests, various publishing houses have also risen in response to the trend and published *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*. Every wave of market craze will drive a group of publications into action. This is also one of the important reasons why *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* was widely spread in China. Starting from the first edition of the *Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng* published by Chuanzhong Publishing House, since it was the Emperor's decree, of course, the Emperor wanted all officials to follow the example of Zeng Guofan. At that time, it must be standard that every official at a certain level and above had a copy of Zeng's works. This should be the first wave of spreading craze. Later, Liang Qichao, one of the leaders in the Reform Movement of 1898, compiled *Zeng Guofan's Classic Words* and Cai E, one of the revolutionist in modern times, compiled *Quotations of Zeng & Hu' ideas on Army*. Chiang Kai-shek complimented Zeng Guofan in the preface of *Supplementing the Quotations of Zeng & Hu's Ideas on Army* for being "a great model for us all" and "a model of national salvation". Comparing Zeng Guofan with Chiang Kai-shek, Jiang Xingde, a contemporary writer, wrote *Zeng Guofan's Life and Career* in response to the situation. Starting from the first edition of this small booklet in October 1935, the Commercial Press published six consecutive editions and printed dozens of times. It can be imagined that this should be the second wave of Zeng Guofan hot. Tang Haoming, who participated in the compilation and publication of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* by Yuelu Publishing House, wrote the novel *Zeng Guofan*. The first part of the novel was published by Taiwan Liming Publishing Company in 1990. Three months later, Hunan Literature and Art Publishing House also published the same part of the novel. In the following two years, the second and third parts of the novels were published almost simultaneously on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. They were reprinted many times in the same year, and the supply fell short of demand. At that time, the trilogy of this novel were published by People's Literature Publishing House, Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House and Writer Publishing House and more than 10 other publishing houses. This should be the third wave of "Zeng Guofan Rush". After China came to the stage of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, President Xi Jinping called on all Party members to "rectify the family tradition". So another group of people showed interest in different kinds of family letters and family tradition and were interested in Zeng Guofan's family letters. This also invisibly enhanced the publication and dissemination of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*. More than a dozen domestic publishing houses such as Zhonghua Book Company, Shanghai Classic Books Publishing House, Commercial Press, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, etc. printed and reprinted several times. In the short period of the years 1994 and 1995, dozens of different editions of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* were published.

The genuine and pirated editions were carried out at the same time. Just in response to market demand, a large number of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* were issued. This resulted in a disordered publication, with varying quality. Ranging from small book stalls to large bookstores, Xinhua Bookstores in different areas had entire shelves and cabinets of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*, and even some erratic booksellers sold them at a price of a few yuan per catty. According to this kind of over-saturated distribution, we can imagine the massive publication and widespread dissemination in the wave after wave of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*.

Now let's discuss the second question. Why did the Emperor Guangxu decree that the two brothers Li Hanzhang and Li Hongzhang should preside over the compilation of *Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng*? Naturally, the relationship between the Zeng family and the Li family is considered as an important factor. Zeng Guofan and the two brothers Li's father, Li Wen'an, were scholars of the same equal

Jinshi in Daoguang eighteenth year (1838 AD). At that time Li Wen'an was 35 years old and Zeng Guofan was only 27 years old. Li Wen'an made good friends with Zeng Guofan. He also asked his two sons, Li Hanzhang and Li Hongzhang, to worship Zeng Guofan as their teacher in terms of 'Nianjiazi', which means good friend and classmate's children. Later, Zeng Guofan formed the Hunan Army to suppress the Taiping Rebellion. Li Hanzhang served as the grain officer of the Hunan Army for many years. He was in charge of logistics supplies to the Hunan Army and he was highly appreciated. After that he was recommended by Zeng Guofan as the governor of Guangdong and Guangxi. After Li Hongzhang's apprenticeship, Zeng Guofan kept him in the core leadership of the Hunan Army to participate in major decision-making, until later recommended him to establish the Huai Army. It is conceivable that Zeng Guofan had a deep understanding and cultivation of Li Hanzhang and Li Hongzhang brothers. From the elegiac couplet that Li Hongzhang wrote to Zeng Guofan on Zeng's death, we can see the profound friendship between the teacher and the two students. The elegiac couplet goes like this: 'Teaching us for nearly 30 years, he had spent the best time to pass his spirits to us, built his house and let us be his first students; He is famous across 90,000 li, and he was hustling inside and outside, he was rare in the world.' From the elegiac couplet, we can also read Li Hongzhang's respect for Zeng Guofan. Therefore, it is indeed the most appropriate for Li Hanzhang and Li Hongzhang brothers to convene a group of literati and officials who were former friends and colleagues of Zeng Guofan's old ministry to compile *Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng*. There is no wonder the whole writing team was naturally united and dedicated.

Conclusion: *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* started from its predecessor *Collected Works of His Honour Zeng Wenzheng*, the Emperor decreed to form an excellent editorial team. The author Zeng Guofan kept a wealth of first-hand information with utmost care. Under China's reform and opening up policy, the Institute of Historical Documents and Literature Research of Xiangtan University, and the Institute of Classic Books Research and other related organizations, together with Yuelu Publishing House, formed a team to compile *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*. It has always been compiled by an official organization and an excellent team. It certainly has high quality and can be summarized as a jade and born in a noble state. The admiration of successive officials, the admiration of scholars, and the following of mortals have provided a broad space for the spread of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*. The publication and mass distribution of numerous research works, biographies, and literary works on Zeng Guofan also promote power for the spreading of *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan*. All these reasons formed an overwhelming form of dissemination, which lasted for a long time and have become a successful example of work dissemination.

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