

An Overview of the “First Editions” at the Jin Yong Gallery

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Jin Yong’s novels were first serialised in the *New Evening Post* in 1955, but later several offprints (known as “the First Editions”) were also published. They were to be followed by other editions revised by the author himself: the first was edited in the early 1970s, entitled *The Jin Yong Novel Collection* (referred to as “the Revised Editions”); and the second was further revised and compiled based on “the Revised Editions” (known as “the New Revised Editions”) towards the end of the 20th century. Among them, the First Editions are the most highly valued and avidly sought after by Jin Yong’s fans because the contents have been rewritten over and over again by the author himself in the later editions, and they would like to find out what was in the earliest versions. But with the many decades in between, those old copies are very hard to find today, and this adds to the public’s curiosity for the unknown.

“The First Editions” is a generic term that covers not only the nascent versions before Jin Yong started revising them in 1972, but also the printed versions published in various newspapers, magazines, offprints etc. The Jin Yong Gallery of Hong Kong Heritage Museum has on display physical copies of published works and contents that are the most representative of Jin Yong’s novels. In other words, they have lifted the veil from the mysterious unknown, and revived contents that have intrigued Chinese readers in all parts of the world over the last half century.

If we are to talk about the “original version”, perhaps there is nothing more so than the author’s manuscripts. It is the hardest to come by because there can only be one and only true copy, with no duplicates possible, especially when they were written in the pre-photocopying era, and this makes Jin Yong’s manuscripts even more precious and rarer than the printed First Editions. The manuscript of *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer* displayed in the Jin Yong Gallery is the first ever exhibit showing the original contents of the nascent edition.

Jin Yong’s First Editions can be divided into two categories – the serials in the newspapers, and the book versions. The timeline of these serials is again divided with the founding of the *Ming Pao Daily News* as the watershed. Between 1955 and May 1959, Jin Yong’s *The Book and the Sword*, *The Sword Stained with Royal Blood*, *Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain* and *The Eagle-shooting Heroes* were published variously in the *New Evening Post* and *Hong Kong Commercial Daily* as serials. When Jin Yong founded the *Ming Pao Daily News* with his own funds on 20 May 1959, all his novels

written thereafter – from *The Giant Eagle and Its Companion* to *The Deer and the Cauldron* – could only be read in *Ming Pao Daily News* and its sister publications: *Su Xin Jian* in the *Southeast Asia Weekly*, *The Young Flying Fox* in the *Wuxia and History* magazine, *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer* in the *Shin Min Daily News* of Singapore, and *Sword of the Yue Maiden* in the *Ming Pao Evening News*.

One thing worthy of note is that at that time, Jin Yong's serials appeared daily in the newspapers with an illustration, except *The Book and the Sword*. One possible reason was that it was his debut work, and the editor was uncertain of the readers' reception and was therefore wary of investing on it. Another reason might be that owing to the time constraint, the *New Evening Post* was unable to find a suitable illustrator. Whichever it might be, the answer has yet to be found out.

The book versions of the First Editions can be categorised into the authorised and the pirated. The authorised versions may be divided into two streams, with *Ming Pao Daily News* as the watershed. Prior to the founding of *Ming Pao Daily News*, *The Book and the Sword* (in eight volumes), *The Sword Stained with Royal Blood* (in five volumes) and *The Eagle-shooting Heroes* (in sixteen volumes) were published by San Yu Stationery & Publishing Co. Popularly known as the "San Yu editions", they were printed in the format of five chapters per volume, with new illustrations at the beginning of each chapter by the artist Yun Jun. Although the contents of the San Yu editions were taken from the serials in the newspapers, Jin Yong did make some revisions such as rearranging the chapters and titles, editing some of the texts etc. before putting them to print.

At the time, piracy of Jin Yong's novels was rampant, and some of the pirated versions were released even earlier than the authorised versions. To curb this, Jin Yong authorised Kwong Sup Kee and Wu Shi to publish book versions, starting with *The Giant Eagle and Its Companion*. They were to release a paperback edition of the contents serialised in the newspaper over the week, with that of the seventh day included on the day of release. This succeeded in foiling the pirate publishers' attempt to "overtake" the authorised release.

Today, a few decades later, these paperback editions are also highly valued as collectables, because they include not only the earliest printed versions of the stories, but also the day-by-day illustrations that appeared with them. In addition to the paperback editions, there were also bound editions. The format was that each would contain four paperback editions, complete in content but not all of the 28 illustrations

due to the page limits (*The Giant Eagle and Its Companion* was an exception). This is also the reason why the paperback editions are more popular than the bound editions.

From 1972 on, Jin Yong began revising all his first-edition novels with changes to some of the characters and plots. Some of the contents which were deleted or rewritten have been revived in e-book format in the Jin Yong Gallery. One is an extract from *The Giant Eagle and Its Companion*, which tells a different story about how Yang Guo and Xiaolongnu discovered the *Jiuyin Zhenjing* (*The Nine Yin Manual*) engravings by Wang Chongyang. In the original version, Xiaolongnu found a piece of white cloth among the belongings of the late Sun Popo, with handwritten instructions “*Master Chongyang passes on his kung fu to the future generations through the hints given by his finger in his portrait*”. Xiaolongnu and Yang Guo then found from the portrait that the finger pointing upward had many tiny characters on it, which indicated there was another stone chamber under Lin Chaoying’s stone coffin. They opened the coffin, but Lin Chaoying’s body was not there. They found a device that opened the bottom slab of the coffin which led to a secret chamber. Now in the revised edition, Xiaolongnu was injured and she laid inside the stone coffin with Yang Guo. They discovered sixteen characters that read, “*The Jade Maiden Heart Sutra defeats the Quanzhen Sect. Engraved by Wang Chongyang, it surpasses all martial arts masters*” and many small characters besides. This inspired them to look for a stone chamber under the coffin, where *Jiuyin Zhenjing* was engraved.

Also, in the first edition of *The Eagle-shooting Heroes*, Qin Nanqin was Yang Guo’s biological mother, but she was not Yang Kang’s beloved. As revealed in the e-book’s revived version in the Jin Yong Gallery, she told Guo Jing, Huang Rong and Mu Nianci how she was raped by Yang Kang. Her character was later merged with Mu Nianci in Jin Yong’s revised edition.

There are other incidents or descriptions of ingenious conceptualisation in the First Editions, such as the battle between toads and frogs and the hunting of the Diablo in *The Eagle-shooting Heroes*, and the Jade-faced Fire Monkey on Ice Fire Island in *The Heaven Sword and Dragon Sabre*. They had been taken out but are revived for rediscovery in the Jin Yong Gallery.