

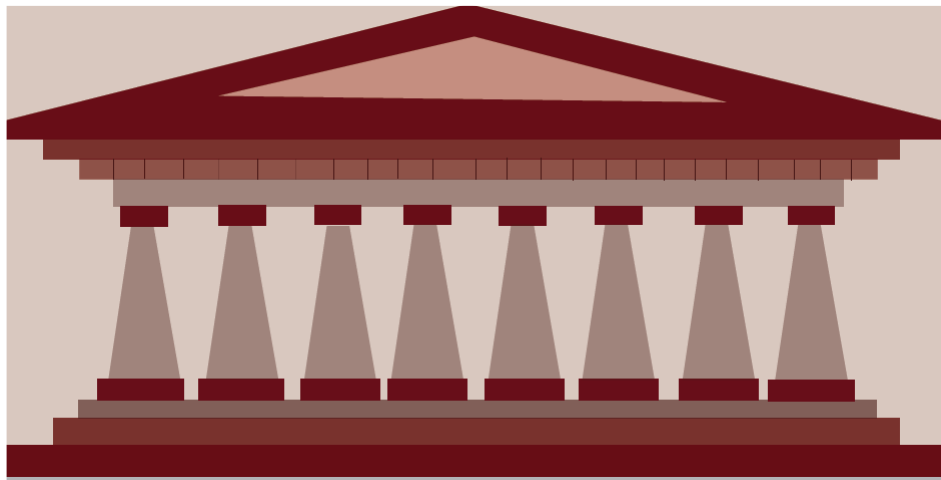
# Athens Journal of History

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April 2026

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## Studying Abroad: The Mightiest Movement in Modern Chinese History

By Yucheng Qin\*

*After the 1980s, as China implemented its economic reform and open-door policy, Chinese interest in overseas education intensified among not only scholars but also the general public, and the number of Chinese students going abroad has grown sharply. Their increasing visibility also attracted scholars' attention and some works dealing with Chinese students were published. But even these studies and all studies on Chinese students and intellectuals in the West failed to provide a comprehensive picture of their contributions to China and leave a crucial lacuna in judging the extent and the influence of the movement.<sup>1</sup>*

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\*Professor, University of Hawaii at Hilo, USA.

1. See, for example, China Institute in America, *A Survey of Chinese Students in American Universities and Colleges in the Past One Hundred Years* (New York, 1954); Rose Hum Lee, "The Stranded Chinese in the United States," *Phylon* 19 (Summer 1958); Chinese Y.C. Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West, 1872-1949* (Chapel Hill, N.C. 1966); Derald Sue and Barbara Kirk, "Differential Characteristics of Japanese-American and Chinese-American College Students," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 20 (March 1973); Leo A. Orleans, *Chinese Students in America: Politics, Issues, and Numbers* (Washington, D.C., 1988); Weili Ye, "Crossing the Cultures: The Experience of Chinese Students in the U.S.A. 1900-1925" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1989); Jesse Chain Chou, "a Survey of Chinese Students in the United States, 1979-1987" (Ed. D diss., Columbia University Teachers College, 1989); Qingjia Edward Wang, "Guest from the Open Door: The Reception of Chinese Students into the United States, 1900s-1920s," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 3:1 (Spring 1994); Weili Ye, "'Nu Liuxuesheng' The Story of American-Educated Chinese Women, 1880s-1920s," *Modern China*, 20:3 (1994): 315-346; Yan Zhang, "Chinese Students in the United States." *China Today* 44:4 (Apr 1995): 20; Huping Ling, "A History of Chinese Female Students in the United States, 1880s-1990s," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 16:3 (Spring, 1997); Michael Agelasto, Bob Adamson, *Higher Education in Post-Mao China*. (H.K.: Hong Kong University Press, 1998); Jiang Xin, *Zhongguo jindai liuxuesheng yanjiu* (A study of China's overseas students) (Jinlin Renmin chubanshe, 2013); Madeline Y. Hsu, "Chinese and American Collaborations through Educational Exchange during the Era of Exclusion, 1872-1955," *Pacific Historical Review*, 83:2 (May, 2014); Tobin, Kathleen. "Engineering Dreams." In *Chinese America: History & Perspectives*. San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 2014; Lu, Yixi; Jean, Jason; Lu, Zheng, "To Study Abroad or Not, and Why? Exploring University Students' Postgraduate Intentions." *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 49:18 (2023); Zhu, Tiejun, and Mengzhen Gu. "The Application and Implications of Science and Technology innovation in the Management of Education for Chinese Students Studying Abroad in China in the Epidemic Era." *PLOS One* 19:8 (8/16/2024); Yang, Tianyu, Wei Bao, Barbara Belfi, and Carla Haelermans. "Chinese University Students' Intention to Study Abroad in Times of Covid-19: The Important Role of Student Background Characteristics." *Higher Education*, 88:6 (Dec 2024); Yang, Pei; Xiangge Zhao, Xinxin Zhang, and Anren Li. "Intercultural Competence of Chinese Students Abroad: An Investigation under Sino-Foreign Cooperative Education Programs." *PLOS ONE* 20:2 (2/5/2025).

Indeed, despite its obvious significance, China's Study Abroad Movement has long been an under-researched subject. This paper will shed new light on its role and importance in modern Chinese history: The Study Abroad Movement has determined the trajectory of modern Chinese history; many of those who have returned from studying abroad were the leaders and escorts of modern Chinese political, economic, social and cultural developments. The current studying abroad policy was uttered by the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping who delivered a speech on March 18, 1978 advocating scholars and students studying abroad. Deng deeply believed that sending Chinese students to study overseas would help China grow stronger and better. Since the arrival of 52 Chinese in the United States on December 26, 1978, more than seven million Chinese have traveled abroad to study, which is the largest wave of studying abroad in the history of the world. Deng's policy, however, was old when it was articulated.

### The Origin of the Movement and Its Early Influence

The Study Abroad Movement and its immense influence actually began in the mid-nineteenth century which was called by many Chinese the "Century of Humiliation" after the Opium Wars. A fortuitous figure Yung Wing happened to initiate this movement by more an accident than any design. Born to a poor peasant family in 1828 in a small village called Nanping not far from Macao, he was sent to a missionary school by his father who realized the value of a Western education for future opportunities. He later transferred to the Morrison Education Society School in Hong Kong because his original school suddenly closed. Yung was a smart student and when Rev. Samuel R. Brown, a Yale educated minister and the Principal of the school, returned to the United States in 1847, he brought Yung with him. Yung entered Yale College in 1850, and earned a B.A. degree four years later. He was exposed to Western ideas of democracy, science, and nationalism; his time in the United States was indeed transformative. When returning to China in 1855 he personally witnessed the devastation and humiliation of the Opium Wars and the treaty system. He wanted to help strengthen China and counter foreign domination and pressure. His life mission, as stated in his *My Life in China and America*, was to use the knowledge he gained in the United States for the benefit of his homeland. Soon after his returning he became one of the pioneer reformers in the Self-Strengthening Movement and helped Zeng Guofan establish the General Bureau of Machine Manufacture of Jiangnan or Jiangnan Machine Works for short in 1865, China's earliest industrial complex.<sup>2</sup> It in fact inaugurated modern industrialization in China. He then was appointed as a diplomat and China's spokesman in the United States

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2. For more about the Jiangnan Machine Works, see Meng Yue, "Hybrid Science versus Modernity: The Practice of Jiangnan Arsenal, 1864-1897," *East Asia Science, Technology, and Medicine* 16 (1999), 13-52.

while China in its foreign relations transformed from the traditional tributary system to the modern nation-state system.<sup>3</sup>

Yung Wing further took more action on the Studying Abroad Movement. In 1867 Yung Wing's proposal to Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang for sending children to acquire Western knowledge in the United States, in the hopes of strengthening China against foreign powers, was accepted by the Qing government. Being appointed the Deputy Commissioner of the newly established Chinese Educational Commission, he presided over the selection of 120 young Chinese students for that purpose. It was the first wave of the Chinese Study Abroad Movement.<sup>4</sup> When studying abroad, these young Chinese boys were anxious to learn not only new knowledge but also new ideas. They began to address in Western styles abandoning their Manchu-style robes, and many of them cutting off their queues and even becoming Christians. Due to the Westernization of their thoughts and actions against Chinese traditions—a direct threat to the core values of the dynasty, they were forcibly recalled by the government.

Although the Chinese Educational Mission was cut short in 1881, its impact on China was far-reaching. Returning students brought back Western habits, including Western-style uniforms and suits. These Chinese youths actually foreran one of the biggest social transformations in Chinese history to stop dressing in traditional Chinese clothes and cut off Chinese queues at the beginning of the twentieth century. Before and after the 1911 Revolution, this social remodeling swept across the country. Clothing became more than fashion; it was a symbol of modernization vs. tradition. On 1 May 1922, even Puyi, the final monarch of the Qing dynasty, removed his own queue. Chinese and Western costumes complemented each other, and "hundred flowers" bloomed for a while. The change in the traditional concept of foot binding also liberated Chinese women's feet. This social transformation was an important turning point in the history of Chinese clothing which greatly changed the concept and the form of Chinese dress. From then on, Chinese clothing began to converge with that of the West; the first step towards the international community has been taken. This transformation, which was started by the young Chinese students in the United States, is undoubtedly one of the biggest social revolutions in Chinese history.

Some of these students also introduced advanced knowledge and technology to China and became leaders in modernization. Zhan Tianyou, one of the young students, is known as the Father of China's railway and the Father of China's

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3. For Yung Wing, see, "Yung Wing Papers," Archives at Yale; Edmund H. Worthy, Jr., "Yung Wing in America," *Pacific Historical Review* 34:3 (Aug., 1965): 265-187; Paul W. Harris, "A Checkered Life: Yung Wing's American Education," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 2:1 (April, 1994): 87-107.

4. Thomas E. LaFargue, "Chinese Educational Commission to the United States: A Government Experiment in Western Education," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 1:1 (Nov., 1941): 59-71; also see, Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Stepping Forth into the World the Chinese Educational Mission to the United States, 1872-81*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011.

modern engineering.<sup>5</sup> After graduating from Yale University in 1881, he returned to China. As the chief engineer, he presided over the construction of China's first railway, the famous Beijing-Zhangjiakou railway, which shocked China and the rest of the world. This is the earliest of China's advanced railway system in today.

The Study Abroad Movement did not stop because of the miscarriage of the Chinese Educational Commission to the United States; in fact, one wave after another of the movement surged high and swept forward after 1881. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the push for "Self-Strengthening" was more urgent than ever. The self-strengtheners who believed China must learn from the West to resist the West, continued to send young Chinese students to study in Europe which offered another model for study. The first Sino-Japanese War was a shock for many Chinese and it created a sense of urgency for deeper reforms. Many Chinese concluded Japan's reform was a model China should study and the Qing dynasty began to send students to study in Japan, and after the Russo-Japanese War, the number of students studying in Japan reached a climax. Furthermore, in 1908, for more American cultural, political, and economic influence in China, the U.S. Congress passed the Joint Resolution to return to China the excess of the Boxer Indemnity. President Theodore Roosevelt's administration decided to establish the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program to educate Chinese students in the United States, which promoted another climax of the Study Abroad Movement. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War (War of Resistance against Japan), due to the need to rebuild China, the Nationalist Government continued to send a lot of Chinese students abroad, especially to the United States. After 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded under Mao Zedong, the relationship between communist China and the United States declined sharply. Studying in the United States stopped, but the People's Republic of China selected students to study in the Soviet Union because of the communist solidarity. After 1978 Deng Xiaoping launched the open door policy and economic reforms, and encouraged studying abroad because China was in deep crisis after decades of central planning and the Cultural Revolution. From 1978 to present, nearly 100 years after the late Qing program for children studying abroad, the biggest wave of the Chinese Study Abroad Movement took shape. The impact of this long-lasting and magnificent Study Abroad Movement, indeed, deserves further in-depth discussion on China's development.

### **The Study Abroad Movement and the Trajectory of Modern Chinese History**

For understanding the trajectory of modern Chinese history, there is no denying that brief attention must be paid to the background of the movement

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5. For more on Zhan Tianyou, see, Jin Kaicheng, *Zhan Tianyou yu zhingguo jindai tielu* (Zhan Tianyou and modern Chinese railway), Jilin: Jilin Literature and history Press, 2012; "Jame Tien Yow, Sheffield Scientific School class of 1881," Yale University library.

first. Before 1800, China was at the forefront of the world and established a China-centered international order in East Asia. After the Opium War, a series of wars and unequal treaties brought China to a humiliating state. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the situation in which China would be carved up by foreign powers was formed, and Chinese nation reached a dangerous moment. The 1911 Revolution is the result of the call of history after an explosive culmination of decades of internal decay and external pressure.

The leader of this great political transformation and revolution was Sun Yat-sen, who had studied in Hawaii and been deeply influenced by American democracy and republicanism there. In 1879, Sun went to Honolulu to join Sun Mei, his brother who had a business in Hawaii. He was enrolled in the Anglican missionary Iolani School and in 1883 graduated from the Oahu College. During this period though Hawaii was still an independent kingdom, it was rapidly influenced by the United States, especially the ideas of democracy and republicanism; some Americans and local progressives were preparing to overthrow the kingdom. We may face the essential fact that the political development in Hawaii had a strong influence on young Sun Yat-sen during the formative stage of his life. There is little question that at this stage of his life the seeds of his future values, plans, and eventual contributions to modern China were planted. After being back in China, he advocated and initiated revolutionary activities to overthrow the Manchu rule. The success of the 1911 Revolution and the establishment of a Western-style republic marked the end of the Chinese dynastic history of about 4,000 years first time, a great political turning point in Chinese history. Sun Yat-sen is therefore recognized by both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China as the Father of Modern China.<sup>6</sup>

We may also accept the essential fact that two other returnees of the Study Abroad Movement then turned back the forces of restoration for the old system and saved the young Republic in 1916 and 1917. After the 1911 Revolution, Yuan Shikai stole power in an attempt to restore the imperial system, and the Chinese nation faced a crisis of regression. Cai E, who had studied military strategy and been exposed to concepts of constitutionalism, nationalism and modernization in Japan, immediately opposed Yuan Shikai's claim to be emperor. Cai established his "National Protection Army" to fight Yuan and defended the Republic in the National Protection War, also known as the Anti-Monarchy War. Cai E led the triumph over the troops of Yuan Shikai. Because of his outstanding contribution to the nation, Cai E became the first person in the history of the Republic of China

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6. Yansheng Ma Lum and Raymond Mun Kong Lum, *Sun Yat-sen in Hawaii: Activities and Supporters* (Honolulu: Hawaii Chinese History Center, 1999), 11; Harold Z. Schiffrin, *Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley, 1968), 27; Albert Pierce Taylor, "Sen Yat Sen in Honolulu," *Paradise of the Pacific*, 41:8 (Aug, 1928), 8; L. T. Chen in Sun Yat-sen *San Min Chi I: The Three Principle of the People*. Frank W. Price (tr), L.T. Chen (ed.) (Shanghai, 1927), xii; Lorenz Gonschor, "Revisiting the Hawaii Influence on the Political Thought of Sun Yat-sen," *Journal of Pacific History*, 52:1 (2017), 53.

to enjoy a state funeral after his death. He is known in China the “first person to rebuild the republic” and “the god of the protector army”.<sup>7</sup> Soon after that in July 1917, Zhang Xun attempted to reinstate the last Qing emperor, Puyi, to the royal seat. Duan Qirui, who had his military training and education in Europe which exposed him to constitutional monarchies and republican institutions, immediately mobilized his “National Protection Army” in Tianjin and marched to Beijing against the restoration. It goes without saying that Duan’s European military education made him value modern state structures over imperial rule, which explains why he opposed the monarchist restoration and instead protected the republic. Indeed, his foreign training made him more pragmatic, so he supported the Republic of China as a framework to preserve order and modernize the state, rather than clinging to monarchist loyalty.<sup>8</sup> Both Cai E and Duan Qirui’s roles were indeed crucial in keeping the young Chinese Republic alive in its smashable early years.

The returnees not only decisively shaped China politically but also culturally. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a group of them, who studied in the United States and Japan and were deeply influenced by Western studies and eager to rescue the country culturally, were mainly Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, and Li Dazhao. They felt that China’s weakness was rooted not only in politics and military power, but in its traditional culture. Believing Confucianism was the ideological root of China’s political failures and scientific backwardness, they proposed to deny it that had been the mainstream of Chinese culture for more than 2,000 years; and they have effectively shaken the dominance of feudal orthodox and have given China a baptism of Western democratic and scientific thought. By aiming to overthrow traditional Confucianism and replacing it with new values of democracy and science, this New Cultural Movement is undoubtedly one of the greatest cultural revolutions in Chinese history.<sup>9</sup>

In particular, Hu Shi, who returned to China after studying in the United States, was the first to take the initiative for establishing the vernacular as the official written language, a literature revolution in Chinese history. After graduating from the Chinese Public Institute, he won a Box Indemnity Scholarship to study in the United States. He earned his B.A. in 1914 from Cornell University and completed his doctoral dissertation under John Dewey at Columbia University in 1917. During his years in the United States, Hu Shi was influenced by Harriet Mouroe’s *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, which advocated verse writing in plain language. While at Cornell in 1915, he began to promote vernacular writing in the written form of modern

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7. Xie Benshu, *Cai E dazhuan* (complete biography of Cai E) (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2013).

8. See Andrew Nathan, *Peking Politics 1918-1923: Factionalism and the Failure of Constitutionalism* (Center for Chinese Studies, 1998): 131-4; Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co.), 285.

9. Tan Chung, “China’s Unending Quest for ‘Mr. D and Mr. S,’” *Economic and Political Weekly* 34:23 (1999): 1411-1412; also see Tse-tsung Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960).

Chinese. After returning to China, he published in 1917 an article entitled "On Literature Reform," which launched the Vernacular Movement. The movement without doubt is a literature revolution, one of the most important turning points in Chinese cultural history. It has erected a distinctive boundary monument in the history of Chinese literature, marking the end of classical literature and the rise of modern literature. This was a great and thorough literary revolution unprecedented in Chinese history. It fundamentally reshaped how Chinese communicate, learn, and think, and its legacy is obvious in every aspect of Chinese cultural life today. His push for vernacular Chinese instead of classical Chinese changed Chinese culture forever.<sup>10</sup>

The initial republican system and the New Cultural Movement, however, did not do enough to alleviate the national crisis. After Yuan Shikai's death, warlords fought against each other and caused a great disaster for China; the Western powers brazenly trampled on China's sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Foreign powers still controlled treaty ports and spheres of influence. China has reached a moment of crisis again, and history was calling for a new political force that was able to save the country and the nation from dire straits. A historical milestone event occurred in 1921. Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao became the founders of the Chinese Communist Party with the mission of rescuing China from internal weakness and foreign domination.

Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao were all returnees of the Study Abroad Movement. Chen Duxiu in 1902 enrolled in the Tokyo Higher Normal School and studied at Waseda University in Tokyo, a known center for political activism in Japan, in 1906. Li Dazhao also studied political economy from 1913 to 1917 at Waseda University before returning China. Their experience in Japan was part of a larger pattern where Japan acted as the primary conduit for the flow of Western radical thought, including Marxism, into China in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Li and Chen lived through the collapse of the Qing, the failure of the early Republic, the rise of warlordism, and foreign domination, and wanted a radical path to save the nation. After the Russian Revolution, Li spread Marxism to Chinese by publishing articles, establishing Marxist Research Society, and urging students to go to the countryside to disseminate "humanism and socialism." Assisted by Comintern agents, Chen Duxiu founded the first Communist group in Shanghai in May 1920, arranged for the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* late in the same year, and was elected the first General Secretary of the provisional central committee of the Chinese Communist Party in July 1921. We may face the essential fact that as the vanguards and the founders of the party, Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu initiated the

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10. Gang Zhou, "The Chinese Renaissance: A Transcultural Reading," *PMLA* 120:3 (2005): 783-795; John DeFrancis, Gang Zhou, "The Chinese Renaissance and the Vernacular," *PMLA* 121:1 (2006):298-300).

magnificent Chinese Communist Movement.<sup>11</sup> Today, Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao were called the founding Fathers of Chinese Communism.

We may cite another example of Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese political and military leader from 1928 to 1945. After studying for a short time at the Baoding Military Academy, Chiang Kai-shek went to Tokyo Shinbu Gakko (Tokyo Shinbu Military Academy) in 1907 where he spent three years for his military studies. He also served in the Japanese Army from 1909 to 1911. In Japan he joined *Tongmenghui* (Chinese United League), a precursor of the *Kuomintang* (KMT or Nationalist Party); he returned to China in 1911 and served in the revolutionary forces. Under his leadership, KMT launched the Northern Expedition (1926-1928), which led to the end of the warlord disorder and realized military unification of China. Chiang Kai-shek established the Nationalist Government in Nanjing in 1928.<sup>12</sup> The military knowledge he acquired in Japan provided him with the strategic, tactical, and organization expertise necessary to build a modern army and lead it to victory.

During the period of the Nationalist Government, returnees from the Study Abroad Movement continued their contributions. Song Ziwen (T.V. Soong), who graduated from Harvard University with a Bachelor's degree in Economics, made great contributions to the fiscal reform of ending the monetary chaos and unifying the currency since the end of the Qing dynasty as the Governor of the Central Bank. This reform is known as the most thorough monetary reform in China's modern history. Due to the economic achievements of the national government, this period (1927-1937) in China is called the Golden Decade. Song's education directly equipped him to become one of the most important financial architects in modern Chinese history. In fact, the four major families of Chiang, Song, Kong, and Chen, who controlled the political and economic lifelines of China during this period, all had the background of studying abroad, and all were returnees of the Study Abroad Movement. Kong Xiangxi had his educational background at Oberlin College and Columbia University. Chen Lifu had attended Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) and then graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with his Master's degree in 1925.<sup>13</sup> While the "Four Big Families" were often criticized for corruption and authoritarianism, they also made great contributions to the Gold Decade: Chiang Kai-shek and the Northern Expedition ended the warlord era and created a central government in Nanjing. The government, especially Kong Xiangxi, promoted modern economy, especially industry, railroads, highways, postal service, and banking reforms. The Chen brothers, Chen Lifu and Chen Guofu, emphasized party machinery, but also promoted literacy and modern

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11. Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

12. Tatsuo Yamada, "Chiang Kai-shek's Study in Japan in His Memories," in *Chiang Kai-shek and His Time: New Historical and Historiographical Perspectives*, ed. Laura De Giorgi and Guido Samarani, 13-36. Venice University Press, 2017.

13. Kuo Tai-chun, Lin Hsiao-ting, *T.V. Soong in Modern Chinese History* (Stanford University, Hoover Institution Press, 2003).

curricula. With German advisers, Chiang modernized parts of the Chinese army. Though still weak compared to Japan, China's military modernization began during this period. The Song family, especially Song Meiling, helped win international support for China, especially from the United States. It was a period of nation-building and modernization, but also indeed a period of preparation, consciously or not, against Japanese aggression.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War, or the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945) was an unprecedented anti-aggression war in Chinese history, and the Chinese nation reached one of the most critical moments. During the war, Chiang Kai-shek led China to fight one of the bloodiest wars ever fought in Chinese history. Obviously like other Chinese returnees, Chiang regarded China with great affection and wanted to serve the country of his birth. Almost all the most important generals of the KMT (the Nationalist Party) and the CCP (the Chinese Communist Party) during the war were from the *Whampoa* Military Academy where Chiang was the Principal. It can be said that the academy has created many political and military talents and occupied an important position in modern Chinese history that cannot be ignored. China held out for eight years in the war with an enemy army with absolute superiority. Compared with France, which surrendered after resisting for only six weeks, the resistance of the Chinese army was a miracle. Chiang Kai-shek during the war was not lackluster; he was the supreme commander of China. And he refused to surrender and preserved the last dignity of the Chinese nation. History chose Chiang Kai-shek, who had studied military in Japan and served in the Japanese army for three years, to lead this war of anti-aggression unprecedented in Chinese history.

In 1941, the War of Resistance against Japan had lasted for four years, and China was exhausted; and without external intervention, the consequences would be unimaginable. The United States and Japan began secret negotiations to resolve their contradictions. For their own interests, the two countries reached a draft compromise. In the midst of this crisis for China, Hu Shi, then the Chinese ambassador to the United States, united with the Great Britain resolutely opposed. President Roosevelt therefore withdrew the compromise draft on November 26. The failure of the negotiations between the United States and Japan led to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the outbreak of the Pacific War. Japan's defeat was just around the corner. Indeed, this famous returnee from the Study Abroad Movement saved the Chinese nation in a sense.<sup>14</sup> Hi Shi's lobbying did influence American attitude toward helping China and his efforts contributed to U.S. policies against Japan. Without U.S. support, China would have struggled far more to sustain its resistance against Japan from 1937 to 1945.

After WWII, the CCP and KMT were incompatible and the civil war broke out. Chiang Kai-shek was defeated and fled to Taiwan. In 1949 the People's Republic of

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14. Chih-ping Chou, Carlos Yu-kai Lin, *Power of Freedom: Hu Shih's Political Writings* (University of Michigan Press, 2022).

China was established. The founders and most important leaders of this Communist army almost all had the background of studying abroad. Zhou Enlai, who once went to study in France, was the Secretary of the Front Committee for the Nanchang Uprising on August 1, 1927, which is celebrated annually as the People's Liberation Army Day. Zhu De, who once went to Germany to study military, was the Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army, the Commander-in Chief of the Eighth Route Army, and the Commander-in-Chief of the People's Liberation Army.

Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the CCP and the People's Republic of China, also embarked on the path of Communist revolution because of the Study Abroad Movement. He was indeed a staunch Marxist. In order to realize Communism, he advocated permanent revolution and launched one after another magnificent mass movement after 1949, such as the Land Reform Movement, the Three-Anti and Five-Anti movements, the Resist America and Aid Korea Movement, the Hundred Flowers Movement, the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Great Leap Forward Movement, and the Cultural Revolution. Mao Zedong, however, entered on Communism due to the influence of Cai Hesen who was Mao's best friend during his period as a student at Hunan First Normal University. During his study in France, Cai Hesen read a large number of Marxist works and had close correspondence with Mao Zedong to discuss Marxism. "Indeed, it is said by most scholars that Cai's letters to Mao from France advocating the founding of a Chinese Communist Party were every influential in Mao's turn to Marxism."<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, almost all the most important first-generation leaders of the People's Republic of China were returnees from studying abroad: Liu Shaoqi, who had studied in the Soviet Union, was the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress from 1954 to 1959, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (1956-1966), Chairman of the People's Republic of China (1959-1968). Zhu De, who had studied in Germany, was the Commander-in-Chief of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Vice Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (1956-1966), Vice Chairman of the People's Republic of China (1954-1959). Zhu also oversaw the PLA during the Korean War within his authority as Commander-in-Chief. Zhou Enlai, who had studied in France, was the first Premier (1954 to 1976) and first Foreign Minister (1949-1958) of the People's Republic of China. Deng Xiaoping, who had studied in France and Soviet Union, was the party's Secretary-General under Chairman Mao Zedong and Vice Premier under Premier Zhou Enlai in 1950s. All of them saw Marxism as more than just a class struggle theory; for China, it was a tool for national salvation. Under their leadership, China's international status has been greatly enhanced. In the Cold War era, China was the only one in the world that dared to challenge both the United States and the Soviet Union.

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15. Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World* (Duke University Press, 2010), 13.

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the stagnation of the Chinese national economy and the backwardness of science and technology called for new policies. This time, Deng Xiaoping saw that China had fallen behind again, just as it was in his youth experiencing industrial capitalism firsthand in France. He was a real communist, but also learned that ideology alone was not enough; real progress required industrial strength and science. When leading reforms, Deng stressed “science and technology are primary productive forces,” a view rooted partly in what he saw in Europe. His early experiences in France had a real connection to the way he thought about a reform to make China strong. He was successful. After 1978, due to the reform and opening up, China entered a stage of economic take-off, and its GDP growth rate surpassed the historical records of economic growth in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Japan. This is one of the greatest economic miracles in the history of the world, and Deng Xiaoping, who had the background in studying in Europe, was the chief designer and initiator of the miracle. Therefore, all the facts suggest that returnees from the Study Abroad Movement were at the helm for China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The Studying Abroad and the “Fathers” of Modern Science/Technology**

The people who returned from studying abroad were not only the leaders and escorts of the political, social, and economic developments of modern China, but also savers of the country through education, science, and technology. Before the Opium War, China’s education, science, and technology were largely traditional, little industrial or scientific revolution happened. Generally speaking, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, China was far behind the West and Japan in science and technology. The Opium Wars, the Sino-French War, the Sino-Japanese War, the Boxer Rebellion, all revealed China’s military and industrial weakness. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan and the West raced far ahead in science and technology, while China struggled with warlordism, poverty, and weak modernization. The returnees’ overseas experience made them painfully aware of China’s weakness and they returned to devote their knowledge and expertise to “save the nation.” Many of the returnees brought back cutting-edge knowledge in fields China had barely developed, and therefore they became pioneers or founders in their respective scientific fields and disciplines, and cultivated new generation talents for the country, so that these new fields could develop further. Because of them, these areas of science bloomed from nothing; they were therefore the engines of national take-off. Without them, the gap between China and the West would have been unthinkable. Because of their contributions, many of them were known as the fathers of their respective fields in China. They actually launched into the biggest educational transformation in Chinese history.

Some of them became the best presidents of modern Chinese universities. It is time that we place special emphasis on Cai Yuanpei. After studying in the University of Leipzig of Germany from 1907 to 1911, Cai became the leading

liberal educator of China. He was known for being the first Minister of Education of the Republic of China, President of Peking University and the founder of Academia Sinica, the highest national academic institution. John Dewey once compared Cai Yuanpei with presidents of such prestigious universities as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and Columbia and pointed out that these Western university presidents were no match for Cai Yuanpei because Cai had turned Peking University into China's first modern university. Evidence indeed suggests that the complete Chinese modern education system began from Cai Yuanpei. Behind all his work for improving China's education system lay the values and knowledge which had become part of him during his European days. Cai Yuanpei is recognized in China as the Father of modern Chinese universities.<sup>16</sup> We may mention more examples: After returning to China, Tang Guoan, one of the Qing Chinese Educational Mission students, became the first president of Tsinghua University, one of the best universities in contemporary China. He participated in the initiation of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program for Chinese students to be educated in the United States, laid the foundation of Tsinghua University, made unremitting efforts, and died of illness as the president of the university.<sup>17</sup> Mei Yiqi, another famous president of Tsinghua University, had gone to Worcester Polytechnic Institute as one of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program students and received his bachelor's degree in 1914. In 1931, he became the President of the National Tsinghua University. Today, he is revered by both Tsinghua Universities in Beijing and Taiwan as their eternal President.<sup>18</sup>

Also, we may recognize the essential fact that most of the pioneers or founders of China's academic disciplines graduated from institutions of higher learning in the United States. For example, upon receiving the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, Chu Coching (Zhu Kezhen) studied at Harvard University and received his Ph.D. degree in meteorology in 1918. Then he returned to China and taught at Nanjing University and Zhejiang University. He is respected as the "Father of meteorology in China".<sup>19</sup> Zhao Yuanren received his B.A. in mathematics from Cornell University in 1914 and his Ph.D. degree in philosophy from Harvard in 1918. Then he was recruited by Tsinghua University in Beijing and helped Chinese linguistics emerge as a modern discipline. He is revered in China today as the Father of Chinese linguistics.<sup>20</sup> Wu Mi arrived in the United States in 1917 and received his Bachelor of Arts and Masters

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16. Lin Sumai, "Is Yuanpei College A Legacy of Cai Yuanpei? A Historical Comparative Study on High Education Reform in China," Hong Kong University Dissertation, 2014.

17. Tang Shaoming, *Qinghua xiaozhang Tang Guoan: yiwei zaoqi liumei xuesheng de baoguo zhilu* (Tsinghua President Tang Guoan), Tsinghua University Press, 2016.

18. Chang The-kuang, "Tsinghua University," in Zha Qiang, Ruth Hayhoe, Heidi Ross, et al., *Education in China: Educational History, Models, and Initiatives* (Berkshire, 2013): 158-159.

19. Wang Zuoyue, "Practicing Mr. Science: Chinese Scientists and the May Forth Movement from Zhu Kezhen to Fang Lizhi," *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal* 16:3 (2022): 327-348.

20. Zhang S. *Yaoyao changlu: Zhao Yuanren* (A long road: Zhao Yuanren) (Hong Kong, 1999).

of Arts degrees from Harvard University in 1920 and 1921. Then he taught at Nanjing University and Zhejiang University where he introduced Western classics, such as Greek and Roman thought, into Chinese scholarship. Today he is honored as the Father of the study on China's comparative literature.<sup>21</sup> Mao Yisheng earned his master's degree from Cornell University and then the first Ph.D. ever granted by the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) in 1919. He returned to China as a pioneer in bridge construction and designed some of China's most famous modern bridges. He is known today as the Father of Chinese bridges.<sup>22</sup> Liang Sicheng, known as the Father of modern Chinese architecture, was also a returnee of the Study Abroad Movement. He studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania funded by the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program. After returning to China, he became the founder of the Architecture Departments at Northeastern University in 1928, and at Tsinghua University in 1946.<sup>23</sup> We may cite more examples. After Dong Tiebao graduated from Jiaotong University in 1939, he went to the United States to study and work at Purdue University and the University of Illinois from 1945 and in 1949 received a doctorate. He returned to China in 1956 and taught at Peking University. He is known as the Father of Chinese computers.<sup>24</sup> Ye Qisun, who received his doctorate in physics at Harvard in 1923 and published an article "A Remeasurement of the Radiation Constant by Means of X-Rays" in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States*, founded the Department of Physics at Tsinghua University and became the first chair.<sup>25</sup> While Ye Qisun laid the ground for Physics research and education in China, the title, "Father of Chinese Physics" most often attributed to Wu Dayou who obtained his doctorate from the University of Michigan in 1933. He returned to China and taught at Peking University. Two more Chinese returnees from the University of Michigan, Zheng Zuoxin and Zeng Chengkui, are

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21. Wang Songlin, "I.A. Richards and Wu Mi: Basic English, Vernacular Chinese, and 'Chung Yung'," *The Cambridge Quarterly* 41:1 (2012):66-81.

22. Li Haijing, Sally K. Church, "Science and Politics in China's Official Water System: The Management of the Qiantang River (1927-1949)" *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 52/52 (2020): 51-89.

23. Harold Kalman, "'Chinese Spirit in Modern Strength': Liang Sicheng, Lin Huiyin, and Early Modernist Architecture in China," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 58 (2018), 154-188; Sidney Wong, "The Planning Connection between Clarence Stein and Liang Sicheng in Republican China," *Planning Perspectives* 28:3 (2013), 421-439.

24. Wang Tao, "Dong Tiebao dui zhongguo jisuanxue de gongxian" (Dong Tiebao's contributions to China's computational Mathematics) *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University* 6 (2019): 499-503.

25. Hao Yu, Yanfu Huang, *Zhongguo kejide jishi: Ye Qisun he kexue sashimen* (China's foundation stone: Qisun Ye and masters of sciences), (Fudan University Press, 2000); Duane W., Palmer, H. H., Yeh Chi-Sun, "A Remeasurement of the Radiation Constant by Means of X-Rays" in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States* 7 (8), 1921: 237-242.

also honored respectively as the “Father of Chinese ornithology,” and the “Father of marine botany” in China.<sup>26</sup>

Evidence suggests that after the Mukden Incident in 1931, many of them studied military technology. Shu Xingbei, renowned as the “Father of Chinese radar,” studied at many universities in the United States and Britain, such as, the University of California–San Francisco, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Cambridge, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before returning to China in 1931. He taught at the Whampoa Military Academy, Zhejiang University, and Jinan University.<sup>27</sup> Qian Xuesen travelled to the United States in 1935 and studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and California Institute of Technology in 1936, and received a doctorate in 1939. He returned to China in 1955 and helped establish the Chinese space program. For his contributions in the field of aerodynamics, he achieved recognition as the “Father of Chinese Rocketry.” He is also recognized as one of the founding fathers of “Two bombs, One Satellite.”<sup>28</sup> Wang Chenshu, a female scientist, received her Ph.D. degree from the University of Michigan in 1944. She returned to China in 1956 working as an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a professor at Peking University. Because of her contributions in China’s nuclear program, she was revered as “Marie Curie of China.”<sup>29</sup> Chen Nengkuan received his master’s and doctor’s degrees from Yale University in 1948 and 1950 respectively. After returning to China, he was an academician in the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Because of his contributions, he obtained “Two Bombs and One-Satellite Achievement Medal,” the top award for Chinese nuclear weapon program.<sup>30</sup> Guo Yonghuai was also a returnee of the Study Abroad Movement and one of the fathers of two bombs and one satellite. After graduating from Peking University in 1933, Guo studied at the University of Toronto and California Institute of Technology from 1940 to 1945. From 1946 he became an associate professor and later a professor at Cornell University. He returned to China in 1956 and became a founder of mechanics in China. Due to his contributions in explosive mechanics and China’s nuclear weapons, he won the “Two Bombs, One-Satellite Achievement Medal.”<sup>31</sup> Deng Jiaxian earned his doctorate in physics at Purdue University in 1950 and then returned to China. Due to his pioneering work and contributions in China’s nuclear theoretical research, he

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26. Ting-kuo Lee, “A biographical Sketch of Dr. Ta-You Wu,” *AAPPS Bulletin* 17:5 (2007): 3-4.

27. Liu Haijun, *Shu Xingbei: yige tiancai wulixuejia de mingyun* (The archives on Shu Xingbei: the fate of a genius physicist) (Beijing: Writers Press, 2005).

28. Ning Wang, “The Making of an Intellectual Hero: Chinese narratives of Qian Xuesen,” *The China Quarterly* 206 (June 2011): 352-371.

29. Wang Zuoyue, “Transnational Science during the Cold War: The Case of Chinese American Scientists,” *Isis* 101:2 (2010): 367-377.

30. “Cheng Nengkuan: yi’weiguozuoshi’ wei shiming” [www.cas.cn](http://www.cas.cn) accessed 2024-04-10.

31. “Guo Yonghuai: yongyuan zhide huainian de ren,” Museum of Peking University History, Retrieved 2024-04-10.

is recognized as the “Father of China’s Atomic Bomb.”<sup>32</sup> Liang Sili, Liang Sicheng’s youngest brother and the founder of China’s missile control system, also had education experience in the United States. He received his bachelor’s degree with a major in electrical engineering in Purdue University in 1945 and his doctorate in missile control from the University of Cincinnati in 1949.<sup>33</sup> Xu Guangxian, known as “The Father of Rare Earth” in China, similarly benefitted from his education and training in the United States. He traveled to the United States in 1948 to study at Washington University in St. Louis and Columbia University. After receiving his Ph.D. degree in 1951, he returned to China and began his teaching career at Peking University.<sup>34</sup>

Many of the returnees also received their degrees from elite universities in Europe, Canada and Japan. Li Siguang studied in Osaka Technical College in Japan and the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. Upon his return from abroad in 1920, he became a geological professor at Peking University and Wuhan University. Because of his outstanding contributions, he is admired as the Father of China’s geomechanics.<sup>35</sup> Tong Dizhou received his Ph.D. in 1934 from the Free University of Brussels of Belgium. He then became a professor at Shandong University and an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. As the founder of experimental embryology, he is honored as “the Father of biological cloning” in China.<sup>36</sup> After studying at Cambridge University, Hua Luogeng returned in 1938 to Tsinghua University where he was appointed full professor. He educated many mathematicians, and his influence lasting several generations. English mathematician Harry Bateman once praised him as “China’s Einstein.” Due to his contributions, he is regarded as “the Father of China’s modern mathematics.”<sup>37</sup> Qian Sanqiang, again a returnee of the Study Abroad Movement, is often called the Father of China’s nuclear program. After graduating from Tsinghua University in 1936, he moved to France to study at the College de France. Qian returned to China in 1948. In 1955 he advised Mao Zedong to build

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32. “Deng Jiaxian, China Scientists Developed Nuclear Weapons,” *New York Times* 4 August 1986.

33. “Sili Liang, “Cangqiong daye chizixin” (Liang Sili: the pure heart for the sky and great cause) in *Qiushi*, 18 December, 2015.

34. Xing Ling Staff, “Xu Guangxian: Father of Chinese Rare Earths Chemistry,” *Bulletin of the Chinese Academy of Science* 23:2 (2009), 5; Jilie Michelle Kinger, *Rare Earth Frontiers: From Territorial Subsoil to Lunar Landscapes* (Cornell University Press, 2017), 13; Seth C. Rasmussen, ed., *Igniting the Chemical Ring of Fire: Historical Evolution of the Chemical Communities of the Pacific Rim* (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2018), 115-119.

35. Hou Li, *Building for the Oil: Daqing and the Formation of the Chinese Socialist State* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2021).

36. Yang Shaoyi, “Contribution of Late Professor T.C. Tung to Experimental Embryology of Amphioxus: In Memory of the 20th Anniversary of Professor T.C. Tung’s Death,” *Development, Growth, and Differentiation* 41 (1999):503-22.

37. Wang Yuan, *Hua Loo Keng: A Biography* (Springer, 1999).

an atomic bomb. He served as the administrative head of the project and oversaw its first test in 1964, on his 51<sup>st</sup> birthday.<sup>38</sup> Wang Zhizhuo, the “Father of remote sensing in China,” is again a returnee of the Study Abroad Movement. He traveled to Europe to study at the University of London and the Technical University of Berlin from 1935 to 1939. He was the first Chinese to obtain a doctorate in aerial survey. After graduation he returned to China and became a professor at Tongji University and Wuhan University.<sup>39</sup> Again, after graduating from Tsinghua University in 1936, Wang Daheng went to England to study at Imperial College London and the University of Sheffield in optical physics and technology. In 1948, he returned to China and became a founding member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering. He is considered as the “Father of Optical Engineering in China.”<sup>40</sup> Qian Weichang received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Toronto in 1942. In 1946, Qian returned to China and served as mechanics professor of Tsinghua University, Peking University, and Yanjing University. He is acknowledged as the “Father of modern mechanics in China.”<sup>41</sup> Yang Chengzong studied in the University of Paris and received his doctorate in 1951. After returning to China, he became a radiochemist professor at the University of Sciences and Technology of China. He established the first radiochemical laboratory in China and many young successful radiochemists emerged from there. For these achievements, he is honored as the “Father of radiochemistry in China.”<sup>42</sup> Sun Jiadong in 1951 studied aircraft engines at Zhukovsky Air Force Academy in the Soviet Union and graduated in 1958 with “the highest honor.” After returning to China, Sun is a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and known as the “Father of Chinese Satellites.” As the former chief designer of the Beidou navigation system, he is also considered the “Father of Beidou.”<sup>43</sup>

Obviously, these returnees had profound sense of patriotism to use their knowledge to help rebuild China, which had been devastated by long lasting wars, especially the War of Resistance against Japan, and the Chinese Civil War. They

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38. Mark Matthews, “Sense and Sensibilities” *ASEE Prism* 31:1 (2021) 34-37; Nicholas Kristof, “Qian Sanqiang, Chinese Physicist on Atom Bomb Team, Dies at 79,” *New York Times* 8 November 2018.

39. Yang Kai, “Remote Sensing—the Modernized Development of Photogrammetry,” *Geomatics and Information Science of Wuhan University* 10:3 (1985) 19-24.

40. Gan Fuxi, *History of Modern Optics and Optoelectronics Development in China* (World Scientific, 2014):27-29.

41. Xiaoguang Wang, “The ‘Techno-Turn’ of China’s Official Discourse on Nationalism,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 53:4 (2020): 220-239.

42. W. -Q. Shi, Y. -L. Zhao, Z. -F. Chai, “Nuclear and Radiochemistry in China: Present Status and Future Perspectives,” *Radiochimica Acta* 100 (2012): 529-539; Liu Pei, Zhang Zhihui, “Yang Chengzong and the University of Science and Technology of China,” *Cultures of Science* 1:2 (2018): 93-106.

43. Eric Hagt, “China’s Beidou: Implications for Individual and the State,” *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 34:1 (2014): 129-140.

believed it was their duty to contribute to the strength and modernization of their native country. They used their overseas learning to create the foundations of modern Chinese science, technology, and education. Returnees from the Study Abroad Movement were surely the key drivers for a scientific and educational modernization in China.

### Conclusion

The Chinese Studying Abroad Movement is in itself a long-lasting and influential event deserving attention which is sure to attract. Due to its massive and comprehensive influences, it is simply the mightiest movement in modern Chinese history. The reason is inextricably linked to its historical background. China's proud international status and order were broken by the West in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and China became a semi-colonial "sick man of East Asia." Therefore, many Chinese with lofty ideals realized that China was lagging behind and needed to learn from the West and Japan in order to return to the top of the world. When they went abroad, they carried strong desire to find an example that could save and modernize China. Under this background, the Study Abroad Movement has become a main theme of modern Chinese history.

When Deng Xiaoping made his speech in 1978 stressing China would send more students to study abroad, he fully realized how important it was to China's future progress. The speech was evident at the outset of the wisdom of this sagacious statesman though the policy was not new. It is, therefore, apparent that the power of young Chinese mind has been, and will continue to be, kindled by overseas education and burn on the land beneath which rest the bones of the inventors of gunpowder, of paper, of compass, and of printing. The influence of the Study Abroad Movement is so particularly noteworthy and all-round in modern Chinese history that we cannot fail to regard it as one with peculiar significance and importance.

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## The Lifanyuan Study to the Manchu and Inner Asian Studies: A Concise Source and Topic Guide<sup>1</sup>

By Chia Ning\*

*The Lifanyuan study is a vital part of Qing history (1636-1911) of imperial China. It currently faces the challenge of advancing beyond existing scholarship. This Concise Source and Topic Guide aims to provide scholars in Qing studies with essential research sources and innovative ideas to further the investigations of this important governing institution. Established by the ruling Manchu, the Lifanyuan is unique in the institutional history of dynastic China, with responsibilities primarily focused on the Qing empire-building in Inner Asia. This guide specifically seeks to clarify the relationship between the Lifanyuan study, Manchu study, and Inner Asian study—areas that have not been systematically examined together but should be so to promote collaborative growth among the three fields. By highlighting the Lifanyuan study alongside these closely related areas, the suggested research topics, drawn from historical archives and documentary materials, will assist scholars in Qing, Manchu, and Inner Asian studies in exploring new research opportunities, with the Lifanyuan study leading the way.*

### Introduction

Since the 1980s, the publication of archives and historical records in the administrative languages of the Qing Empire (1636-1911), which were Manchu, Chinese, and Mongolian<sup>2</sup>, has provided a wealth of research resources for studying the Lifanyuan and its role in Manchu statecraft and Qing Inner Asia, collectively referred to as “three studies” in this article. The newly available research materials have transformed the research environment from the pre-1980s situation, in which a lack of primary sources significantly hindered Lifanyuan research. Now, the archival documentation of the Lifanyuan’s operational routines in Inner Asia supports extensive investigations into various Lifanyuan topics. However, these resources have not been effectively utilized to advance Lifanyuan scholarship to the level it deserves, and the close connections among the three studies, each with its own boundaries, focuses, and perspectives, have not received adequate attention. Thus, a

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\*Professor Emerita of History, Central College, USA.

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2. For a reference reading of the Qing administrative languages, see Chia Ning, “Language Translations and the Treaty of Nerchinsk: Linguistic Aspects of the Seventeenth-century Qing-Russian Diplomacy.” *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies* 6.2 (2025):121-65

concise guide has been developed to encourage a shift in scholarship. This guide aims to enhance researchers' understanding of the relationships among different types of source materials related to Lifanyuan. The guide includes a list of previously overlooked research topics, highlighting what can be explored further in the study of the Lifanyuan and its connection with Manchu and Inner Asian studies. By providing a comprehensive overview of both research sources and Lifanyuan subjects, this guide will lay a strong foundation for scholarly advancement.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the reprinting of primary sources in Chinese, along with the accessible archives in Manchu and other Inner Asian languages, opened new avenues for research on the Lifanyuan. Publications from this period primarily focused on explaining the structure of the Lifanyuan and detailing its functions across various regions of Qing Inner Asia. Simultaneously, the new research on the unique characteristics of the Manchu-ruled Qing dynasty and the deeper exploration of Qing Inner Asian frontiers suggested a stronger connection among the three studies, each reinforcing the other two. Even though research on the Lifanyuan at this stage was still heavily reliant on official Chinese-language sources, the intention to use Manchu and other Inner Asian-language sources was evident. The first quarter of the 21st century has seen significant scholarly advancements in this direction. With more archival and documentary resources available through digitized photocopies, original or edited reprints, and database-generated reproductions of primary materials, scholarship has evolved to incorporate both micro and macro analyses, along with improved resource utilization and research methodologies. The Lifanyuan study has expanded to include more case examinations of the Manchu administration in Inner Asia, and in tribute and Russian affairs.<sup>3</sup>

Current scholarship across the three studies indicates that without understanding the Lifanyuan, Manchu architecture within the multi-national Qing Empire would lose the operational ground to stand on, and the Manchu study would miss a crucial aspect needed to comprehend the changes that took place in Inner Asia. These changes include various systems, such as the banner-league for the Mongols, the Dalai-amban structure in Tibet, the *beg* system in the Muslim Southern Xinjiang,<sup>4</sup> and the *Butha* organization for the Solon hunting population in Northern Heilongjiang. Conversely, without the Manchu study and Inner Asian study in the Lifanyuan study, it is difficult to explain the existence of the Lifanyuan as part of the Qing court and its accomplishments in facilitating the building of the Great Qing Empire.

Current Lifanyuan source availability and the existing Lifanyuan scholarship indicate that there are numerous topics related to Lifanyuan studies, as well as Manchu and Inner Asian studies, that remain unexplored. To enable the potential of

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3. For a reference reading of the publications of the Lifanyuan from 1980s to 2016, see Dittmar Schorkowitz and Chia Ning, eds., *Managing Frontiers in Qing China: The Lifanyuan and Libu Revisited* (Brill, 2017), Introduction, 1-42, here 15-21 and other chapters.

4. The term "Xinjiang" did not come to use in 1884; it is used here to mean the territory under that name.

these three areas to significantly contribute to Qing historiography, the concise source and topic guide in this article will act as a "reference room" for scholars interested in investigating sources, analyzing topics, and fostering innovative discoveries. This guide will assist researchers in utilizing various primary sources, understanding their interconnections, and recognizing the wide range of research topics that the available sources can support. Ultimately, the guide will provide a researcher with an overarching perspective on the three areas of study before diving into specific topics.

### Boundaries and Connections of the Three Studies

The Lifanyuan study focuses on its institutional responsibilities within Inner Asian governance. This governance was characterized by a distinct Manchu ruling style, which differed from both the dynastic traditions of previous Chinese dynasties and the practices of earlier non-Chinese dynasties. Three key features of the Lifanyuan administration underscore the Manchu approach to ruling the diverse Qing Empire. The first was the establishment of the Lifanyuan as an Inner Asia-centered court institution, consisting exclusively of staff from Manchu and Mongolian backgrounds.<sup>5</sup> The second was to maintain the Manchu language in official correspondence between the court and Inner Asian authorities by utilizing Mongolian as a means to translate between Manchu and various Inner Asian native languages.<sup>6</sup> The third was to oversee the administration of specific social organizations within Inner Asian societies by creating official routines between the Manchu court and various Inner Asian regions. This management transformed the leadership structure of Inner Asia into part of the Qing officialdom, while still retaining elements of each Inner Asian people's native social organization, political, and cultural traditions.<sup>7</sup>

The Manchu study encompasses all aspects of the Manchu people and society before, during, and after the Qing dynasty, including their language, history, beliefs, social organizations, government, folklore, art, and more. Among the key aspects of Manchu history is the Lifanyuan, a unique institution established by the ruling Manchu of the Qing dynasty. The extensive administrative network of the Lifanyuan maintained Inner Asian societies in their innate distinctiveness even amid the change to a significant extent and positioned them inside the Qing Empire alongside China proper. The Lifanyuan's role in managing the unprecedented bilateral relationship with the Russian empire further underscores it within the Manchu governing system.

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5. Chia Ning, "Lifanyuan and Libu in Early Qing Empire Building," in Schorkowitz and Chia, *Managing Frontiers in Qing China*, 43-69, here 51.

6. Chia Ning, "Language Translations and the Treaty of Nerchinsk: Linguistic Aspects of the Seventeenth-century Qing-Russian Diplomacy," in *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies* 6.2 (2025):5-49.

7. Chia Ning, "Lifanyuan and the Management of Population Diversity in Early Qing (1636-1795)." Max-Planck-Institut für ethnologische Forschung, Working Paper 139, June 2012, at [http://www.eth.mpg.de/cms/de/publications/working\\_papers/wp0139.html](http://www.eth.mpg.de/cms/de/publications/working_papers/wp0139.html).

No previous dynasty had the same relationship with any external policy that included a treaty following a modern diplomatic convention.<sup>8</sup>

The Inner Asian study within the Qing empire focuses on the diverse non-Chinese regions located outside the Great Wall. The populations were distinct from one another, having varied histories, and under their own authorities, even under the Manchu rule. The area studies about them have been named as Mongolian studies, Tibetan studies, Qinghai studies, Jun Gar<sup>9</sup> studies, Uyghur studies, Solon studies, Uranghai studies, and more. While the overall administration of the Lifanyuan can connect these regions into a cohesive history of Qing Inner Asia, the Lifanyuan is considered a part of the various area studies.

The three studies share a significant amount of research resources, even though the source focus within Inner Asia varies from area to area. Drawing on these sources, the comprehensive list of topics related to the Lifan Yuan highlights the Lifanyuan's daily operations, which are deeply rooted in Manchu rule, actively involved in the governance of Inner Asia, and significantly address issues in areas with mixed populations.

In the following three sections, the first section will focus on the significance of the Lifanyuan within the context of Manchu studies. The second section will analyze various types of source materials, illustrating how they link the Lifanyuan to Inner Asia from different perspectives. The third section will outline topics related to the Lifanyuan that require further research for advancement. Emphasizing these connections highlights the potential for simultaneous progress in all three studies.

### **The Manchu Identity of the Lifanyuan and Its Governance in Inner Asia**

*Turlergi golo be dasara Jurgan*, the Manchu name of the Lifanyuan 理藩院, was established in 1638. In both languages, the name meant "the ministry which manages the outer [non-Chinese] regions." The brief predecessor of the Lifanyuan, which existed from 1632 or 1634 to 1638, was *Monggo yamun* or *Monggo jurgan* in Manchu and *Menggu yamen* 蒙古衙門 in Chinese<sup>10</sup>. This type of governing institution at court

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8. Chia Ning, "Lifanyuan and Libu in the Qing tribute system," in Schorkowitz and Chia, *Managing Frontiers in Qing China*, 145-183, here under the subtitle "Russia vis-à-vis the European Countries – European versus Asian Tributaries," 163-168.

9. The Manchu "jun gar" is used in this writing for Zunghar, Dzungar, or the Chinese zhunga'er 準噶爾.

10. The PRC Mongolian scholar Jakhadai Chimeddorji pointed out that the founding of *Menggu yamen* should have been between 1632 and 1634. See his article "'Menggu yamen' yu qi shouren chengzheng ashdarhan" "蒙古衙門" 與其首任承政阿什達爾汗 [The Mongol Yamen and its first director with the title of *chengzheng* Ashdarhan], in *Neimenggu daxue xuebao* 39.4 (2007):29-33, here 30-31. For the comprehensive summary of PRC scholars' discussion about the starting year of this Manchu-created office (with different time suggestions), see Cheng Chongde 成崇德 and Naranchogt 那仁朝格圖, *Qing ruguanqian dui*

was new in China's dynastic history. It operated the official working routines between the Manchu court and the Qing Inner Asian regions – Mongolia, Tibet, Qinghai/Kokonor, the Jun Gar Northern Xinjiang, the Uyghur Southern Xinjiang, the Kobdo/Khovd and Urangkai/Uriangkhai Western Mongolia, and the Solon Northern Heilongjiang/Amur region. In 1906, Lifanyuan was renamed Lifanbu 理藩部 and was dissolved following the 1911 Revolution.

Without the crucial role of the Lifanyuan in the early Qing empire-building, the Qing court would not have been able to establish Manchu rule in Inner Asia and expand the regional Manchu power in Manchuria into the Great Qing Empire, comprising two distinct sections: China Proper and Inner Asia. Such a contribution grants the Lifanyuan a special place in the Manchu study, along with the Qing court's direct administration in Inner Asia during the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong periods, helped shape not only the Great Qing Empire but also the China known to the world today. The Lifanyuan stands out as a pivotal institution in the Manchu experience.

The Qing official writings described the Lifanyuan as *benchao teshe* 本朝特設, meaning a unique establishment of this dynasty. It emphasized the institutional identity of the Lifanyuan as a sole Manchu institution. Reviewing the government settings of previous non-Chinese dynasties, to which the Manchu Qing dynasty was on the same non-Chinese line, can help clarify this Qing statement. The dual administration of the Khitan Liao (916-1125) and Jurchen Jin (1115-1234) dynasties, which managed the North (their own people) and the South (the Chinese population) separately, shows a similarity to the Manchu governance over Inner Asia under the Lifanyuan and China proper under the Six Boards from the Chinese governmental tradition. During the Mongol-ruled Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), the Zongzhiyuan 總制院 (Supreme Control Commission) (1264-1288), which later became Xuanzhengyuan 宣政院 (Commission of Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs) (1288-1368), appeared as an institutional model further similar to the Qing institutional setting. But none of these systems was comparable to the Qing Lifanyuan in terms of the geographical coverage, diverse population management, and, more importantly, the governing capacities. The Liao, Jin, and Yuan did not handle Inner Asia on the diverse level and with the same scope as the Lifanyuan did, nor were their overall institutional systems as complex as the Qing system. The Yuan court brought Tibet into the Empire and appointed the Tibetan Buddhist head to charge over the Supreme control commission and the Commission of Buddhist and Tibetan affairs. But that office was limited to “administer Tibet and to supervise government

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*menggu shizheng yu chuangjian Mengguli* 清入關前對蒙古施政與創建《蒙古律》 [Early Qing governance and creation of Mongolian code], in *Xibu menggu luntan* 4(2020):5-9, here 7, and Zhao Yuntian 趙雲田, *Qingdai lifan zhidu yanjiu* 清代理藩制度研究 [Study of the system to manage the Non-Han Chinese peoples during the Qing dynasty] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2021), 76-82. *Monggo yamun* can appear as *Monggoi yamun* in Manchu archives.

relations with the Buddhists,"<sup>11</sup> far from the mature level of the institutional setups of the Lifanyuan, which performed full official duties in the political, social, religious, economic, and legal arrangements in all parts of Inner Asia. Thus, the Lifanyuan's governance in Inner Asia was unprecedented in the lengthy history of East and Inner Asia, taking both the Chinese and non-Chinese dynasties into account.

Among the eight executive bodies of the Manchu court, collectively called *bayamen* 八衙門 (eight boards or ministries),<sup>12</sup> the Lifanyuan was the only one not derived from Chinese dynastic traditions. The other seven were the Six Boards (Appointment, Revenue, Rites, Military, Punishment, and Public Works) and Duchayuan 都察院 (The Censorate), which were, like they did in pre-Qing Chinese dynasties, responsible for affairs of China proper – the heartland of the Han-Chinese population south of the Great Wall. The overall role of the Lifanyuan in Qing Inner Asia reflects the Manchu effort in building, governing, and maintaining one of the most diverse empires in world history. The great characteristic of the Lifan Yuan is its institutional identity, which could not stand alone without the Manchu. The Manchu-ruled empire in the dynastic history of China was characterized by integrating diverse Inner Asia through the Lifanyuan's work.

The difficulty in studying the Lifanyuan before the 1980s arose from the view of this governing institution as an isolated office within the central government, when the research materials were limited to the Chinese documents with the court's stipulation of its functions. This led to a lack of direction in the Lifanyuan study concerning both perspective and methodology. The increasing availability of archival sources in the past four decades has provided valuable evidence of the Lifanyuan's activities across political, social, cultural, religious, economic, military, and ethnic aspects of the Qing Inner Asian societies. The essence of the Lifanyuan lies in its extensive operations, which involved a complex administrative network connecting the Manchu court to Inner Asia. This network included each Mongol banner, Tibetan Buddhist temple, Amdo/Qinghai *tusi* (aboriginal head), Uighur *beg*,<sup>13</sup> and hunting

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11. For the Liao dual system of government, see Denis Twitchett and Klaus-Peter Tietze, "The Liao," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 6 *Alien Regimes and Border States 907-1368* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 43-143, here, 76-80. For the Jin dualism, see Herbert Franke, "The Ch'in [Jin] dynasty," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 6, 215-320, here 267-8. For the Yuan *Zongzhiyuan* and *Xuanzhengyuan*, see Morris Rossabi, "The reign of Khubilai khan," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 6, 414-489, here 461 (the page for the quotation) and 478, and Elizabeth Endicott-West, "The Yüan government and society," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 6, 587-615, here 588 and 606-7.

12. *Qingchu neiguoshiyuan manwen dang'an yibian* 清初內國史院滿文檔案譯編 (Translated volumes of early Manchu archives from the Qing Dynasty of Guoshiyuan), Vol. 1. Translated by Number One Historical Archive (Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1986), 340.

13. Since the Manchu court designated the Lifanyuan to oversee Russian affairs and the communication language with Russia was only in Manchu, the Sino-Russian relationship fell into the Lifanyuan study. Since this writing will not discuss this part of the Lifanyuan work, readers can read this article as reference: Chia Ning, "Monggo Yamun and Tulergi Golo

cohort of Solon and Urianghai, all contributing to the overall fettle of the Qing empire. In this direction, the Lifanyuan scholarship came into the publication titled *Managing Frontiers in Qing China: The Lifanyuan and Libu Revisited* (Brill, 2017), featuring international scholars' contributions. This process underscores the Lifanyuan's institutional identity, deeply attaching Manchu and Inner Asia.

The language application, which processed the Lifanyuan governing routines in the highly multilingual Inner Asia, served as another indicator of the Lifanyuan's attachment to the Manchu study. Under the Qing policies, Manchu and Chinese were the dual official languages for government correspondence in China proper at the beginning of the dynasty. The tendency moved toward the gradual decline of the use of Manchu and the domination of Chinese as the dynasty proceeded. In Inner Asia, however, Manchu was and remained the mandatory official language from the Court and the Lifanyuan to all Inner Asian locales. All Inner Asian authorities used their native languages, in return, to write or respond to the court and the Lifanyuan. Mongolian was designated as the translation language between the Manchu court and a language-specific Inner Asian authority.<sup>14</sup> According to Manchu scholar Wu Yuanfeng, the Lifanyuan's official correspondence with the Manchu emperors, other court institutions, and the Inner Asian local *yamen* before 1681 was mandatorily Manchu. After that year, Manchu-Mongolian combined writings emerged for

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*be Dasara Jurgan* in Early Qing: The Lifanyuan in Manchu Archives and Russian Source Materials," in *Saksaha: A Journal of Manchu Studies* 19 (2023):73-101.

14. See Li Baowen 李保文, *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan mengguwen dang'an de shoucang he zhengli yu kanbu qingkuang* 中國第一歷史檔案館蒙古文檔案的收藏和整理與刊布情況 (The collection, arrangements, and publication of the Mongol archives at the First National Historical Archives), in *Xibu menggu luntan* 2 (2011):53-74. According to Wu Yuanfeng, from the central government to local offices, the Manchu and Mongolian officials of the Qing dynasty must use Manchu to write official correspondence, prohibiting the use of the Chinese language. See Wu Yuanfeng 吳元豐, "Manwen yu manwen guji wenxian zongshu" 滿文與滿文古籍文獻綜述 (A review of Manchu language and the Manchu-language historical literature), in *Manzu yanjiu* 1 (2008):100-128, here 102. In the sample frontier cases of the Manchu language use, see Chen Di 陳頌, *Qianxi Heilongjiang sheng dang'anguan guancang Heilongjiang jiangjun yamen manwen dang'an de wenhua jiazhi* 淺析黑龍江省檔案館館藏《黑龍江將軍衙門滿文檔案》的文化價值 [On the cultural value of the archives at the Heilongjiang General's Yamen which stored at the Heilongjiang Provincial Archive], in *Heilongjiang dang'an* 224.5 (2017):31-33, here 31; Tong Yonggong 佟永功, *Dui qingmo zhi minguo nianjian hulunbei'er defang gongwenzhong shiyong manwen qingkuang de kaocha* 對清末至民國年間呼倫貝爾地方公文中使用滿文情況的考察 [A survey of the Use of Manchu in the Local Official Documents in Hulunbeir between the end of the Qing dynasty and the Republic of China], in *Manyu yanjiu* 31.2 (2000):20-25, here 20-21; *Qingdai Alashan heshuote qi manwen dang'an xuanbian* 清代阿拉善和碩特旗滿文檔案選編 (The selected volume of Manchu archives of the Alashan Khoshut banner of the Qing dynasty) (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2016) which shows the Manchu language in official communication until 1911; and Wu Yuanfeng 吳元豐, *Qingdai xinjiang lishi manwen dang'an gaishu* 清代新疆歷史滿文檔案概述 (Summary on Xinjiang historical Manchu Archives in Qing dynasty), *Manyu yanjiu* 2 (2010):81-87, here 85.

Mongolian, Tibetan, and the later Uyghur affairs alike.<sup>15</sup> To the court-and-Tibetan communication, Mongolian served as the mediating language as early as Qing Taizong Hung Taiji (1626-1643)'s court before 1644.<sup>16</sup>

After 1644, *Neige Menggutang* 內閣蒙古堂 (The Mongolian Documentation Office in the Grand Secretariat) did tremendous translation work between Manchu, Mongolian (Khalkha and Clear both), Tibetan, Uighur, and also Russian.<sup>17</sup> These translations supported the overall official communication of the Qing Empire. Regularly, the Lifanyuan correspondence with the Grand Secretariat and the Grand Council was in Manchu. Occasionally, it was in Mongolian.<sup>18</sup> On the Mongol side, writings from different branches of the Mongol leadership to the Qing court through the Lifanyuan were in Mongolian up to 1636 for the Inner Mongols, 1691 for the Khalkha Mongols, 1697 for the Alashan Mongols, 1725 for the Qinghai Mongols, and 1758 for the Northwestern Mongols,<sup>19</sup> depending on each group's political relationship with the Manchu court. After these years, the Lifanyuan responded to

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15. *Qingchao qianqi Lifanyuan Man-Mengwen tiben* 清朝前期理藩院滿蒙文題本 (Early-Qing Manchu and Manchu-Mongolian regular memorials) (Huhehaote: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 2010), Preface. Wu Yuanfeng 吳元豐, "Qingdai Lifanyuan manmengwen tiben jiqi yanjiu jiazhe" 清代理藩院滿蒙文題本極其研究價值 (Manchu and Mongolian *wesimbure bithe* from *tulergi golo be dasara jurgan* in Qing Dynasty and Its Researching Value), in *Manzu yanjiu* 2 (2012):55-57, here 55. Heilong 黑龍, *Qing neige manmengwen hebi wenshi de xiangcheng liucheng, shuxie geshi ji yuwen tezheng* 清內閣滿蒙文合璧的文書形成流程、書寫格式及語文特徵 (The procedure, writing format, and the language features of the Manchu-Mongolian documents in the Mongolian Documentation Office in the Grand Secretariat), in *Minzu yanjiu* 4 (2016):88-95, here 89 gives the year of 1689 as the emergence of Manchu-Mongolian-combined writings. Please note that in the examples given later in this writing, some Manchu archival publications of Inner Asian peoples or affairs include a small number of Chinese archives. These Chinese archives were not written by the Lifanyuan but by other institutions on the subject.

16. Uyunbilig 烏雲畢力格, "Menggu yuwen zai qingdai Xizang – Yi Xizang zizhiqiu dang'anguan suocang qingdai mengguwen gongdu weili" 蒙古語文在清代西藏 – 以西藏自治區檔案館所藏清代蒙古文公牘為例 (Mongolian language in Tibet during the Qing dynasty – Taking the Mongolian documents of the Qing in the Archives of Tibetan Autonomous Region as examples), Center of Tibetan Studies of China's website [http://www.tibetology.ac.cn/2022-04/15/content\\_41940813.htm](http://www.tibetology.ac.cn/2022-04/15/content_41940813.htm), posted 2022-04-15, accessed February 26, 2026. Also see Li Baowe, *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan mengguwen dang'an de shoucang he zhengli yu kanbu qingkuang*, 55-56.

17. Hei Long, *Qing neige manmengwen hebi wenshi de xiangcheng liucheng, shuxie geshi ji yuwen tezheng*, 89.

18. Li Baowen, *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan mengguwen dang'an de shoucang he zhengli yu kanbu qingkuang*, 56.

19. Li Baowen, *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan mengguwen dang'an de shoucang he zhengli yu kanbu qingkuang*, 55 and Heilong, *Qing neige manmengwen hebi wenshi de xiangcheng liucheng, shuxie geshi ji yuwen tezheng*, 88-95, here 89.

the Mongol reports in Manchu first,<sup>20</sup> and then Manchu-Mongolian combined writings were issued to communicate with the Mongols.<sup>21</sup> The deep embrace of the Manchu language in Lifanyuan's official duty is a profound aspect of the Manchu study and a characteristic of the Lifanyuan study.

In 1669, the Kangxi emperor accepted the suggestion from Ma Qi (1652-1739), deputy director of the Board of Public Works of the time, to include Chinese for Lifanyuan's work. There are a considerable number of Lifanyuan archives in Chinese in the First Historical Archive in Beijing today.<sup>22</sup> But these Chinese-language archives were translated from the Manchu. This component of Chinese documents does not change Manchu as the required administrative language in the Qing Inner Asia. The comprehensive and overall study of the Lifanyuan administration will still rely on the Manchu archives.

Beyond the language aspect, the court in 1683 established the position of the General who guards the Heilongjiang and its surrounding regions, which was *sahaliyan ula i jergi babe tuwakiyara jiyanggiyūn* in Manchu and *Zhenshou heilongjiang denchu defang jiangjun* 镇守黑龙江等处地方将军 in Chinese.<sup>23</sup> This position appeared in the Qing documents frequently as *Heilongjiang jiangjun* or Heilongjiang General. His official duty in the Heilongjiang/Amur River region was the northernmost area of historical Manchuria. A primary part of this General's administration—managing banners of the Butha/hunting Solon and banner garrisons along the Heilongjiang River—was under the Lifanyuan supervision.<sup>24</sup> This administrative setting separated the Heilongjiang domain from other parts of Manchuria—Fengtian/ Liaoning and Jilin—where the Lifanyuan did not play a role of authority. In this case, all three parts of Manchuria belong to the Manchu study, but the study of the Heilongjiang General's administration under the Lifanyuan supervision belonged to the Lifanyuan study. The list of the Lifanyuan research topics under “Institutional Studies of the

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20. Li Baowen 李保文, “Qingchao Mengguli de timing jiqi lishi zuoyong” 清朝《蒙古律》的提名及其歷史作用 (The use of “the Mongol Laws” in the Qing dynasty and its historical foundation,” in *Gugong xuekank* 2006:485-527.

21. Li Baowen, *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan mengguwen dang'an de shoucang he zhengli yu kanbu qingkuang* 56. For the process of cross-language translation to conduct the Qing official documents, see Yuxia Gao, Riccardo Moratto, and Di-kai Chao, “The Role of Translation Officials in the Qing Dynasty,” in *TRAlinea: online translation journal* 2023 at [https://www.intrali.nea.org/archive/article/the\\_role\\_of\\_translation\\_officials\\_in\\_the\\_qing\\_dynasty](https://www.intrali.nea.org/archive/article/the_role_of_translation_officials_in_the_qing_dynasty) accessed February 26, 2026.

22. About Ma Qi, see Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC, reprint 1991), Volume 1, 560. For the Chinese archives of the Lifanyuan, see Zhao Yuntian, *Qingdai lifan zhidu yanjiu*, 74-5 and 85.

23. For the Manchu and Chinese title of this position, see the official seal stamp printed on the text of the Treaty of Nerchinsk from the treaty image on page 199 in Ye Baichuan 葉百川's book *E'guo laihua shituan yanjiu 1618-1807* 俄國來華使團研究 1618-1807 (Study of the Russian delegation to China, 1618-1807) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010).

24. See Chia Ning, “The Qing Lifanyuan and the Solon People of the 17th-18th Centuries” in *Athens Journal of History* 1:4 (October 2015):253-266.

Manchu Court” and “Manchu and Heilongjiang Studies” below presents numerous aspects to understand such a unique mingling.

Furthermore, Qing Inner Asian study consists of numerous area studies, to which both the Lifanyuan and Manchu studies were an important part. Under the term Mongol, there were various groups and communities, such as Inner Mongols, Outer/Khalka Mongols, Tomed Mongols, Chahar Mongols, Qinghai Khoshud Mongols, Ordos Mongols, Alashan Mongols, the Jun Gar, Turghut, Uranghai, etc. Other distinct Inner Asian areas are Tibet, Amdo/Qinghai (the mixed-living area of Khoshud Mongol and the *fan* population with Tibetan origin), the Uighur of southern Xinjiang, and the Solon in Northern Heilongjiang. These regions together formed the geographical “Lifanyuan zone” and the “Manchu linguistic world.”<sup>25</sup>

With this knowledge of the relationship of the three *studies*, understanding the available source materials will be the key to successful research.

### The Research Materials

The recently published Manchu archives provide valuable insights into the working procedures of the Lifanyuan in Qing Inner Asia. They demonstrate the interplay of the Lifanyuan with Inner Asian local societies through administrative routines. They illustrate the interactions between the Lifanyuan and local societies through administrative routines. Researchers can use these archives to assess the Lifanyuan's achievements and failures from a local-to-central perspective based on its daily functions. These archival sources have been accompanied by continued publication of annotations and compilations of the court-level Lifanyuan or Lifanyuan-related documents in the Chinese language. These Chinese sources lean strongly towards a center-to-periphery perspective. The reprinting of non-official personal notes further enhances the information available across all three studies.

This introduction and analysis of various key Lifanyuan sources will improve the overall understanding of the Lifanyuan documentation. This understanding benefits the use of not only those currently available but also those not yet to be included or will be forthcoming, and also those in other Inner Asian languages, such as Mongolian, Tibetan, and Uyghur. By addressing how the effective use of sources correlates with successful research, this understanding will contribute to improved scholarly work.

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25. For the discussion of “Lifanyuan zone,” see Chia Ning, “Lifanyuan and Libu in the Early Qing Empire Building,” in Dittmar Schorkowitz and Chia, *Managing Frontiers in Qing China*, 43-69, here 44. For “Manchu linguistic world,” see Chia Ning, “*Monggo Yamun* and *Tulergi Golo be Dasara Jurgan* in Early Qing: The Lifanyuan in Manchu Archives and Russian Source Materials,” in *Saksaha: A Journal of Manchu Studies* 19 (2023):73-101, here 88.

## The Key Manchu Archival Sources from the Imperial Palace

The palace memorials (*zouzhe* 奏摺) and regular/or routine memorials (*tiben* 題本) in Manchu are the first kind of court-level sources for the Lifanyuan research. These archives are now stored at the First Historical Archives of China in Beijing and the National Palace Museum in Taiwan. The incompleteness of them due to historical reasons and the unavailability of them in Manchu scripts for public use should be in our knowledge, but those available to our research will, if effectively and fully used, lead to great scholarly outcomes.

As early as 1841, the Lifanyuan official had already reported that the Lifanyuan archival storage suffered impairment by water leak and document mildew. Many documents were ruined. A fire in 1850 destroyed a huge number of archives, and the continued disrepair of this storage smashed the archival collection even further. While compiling *Daqing huidian shili* 大清會典理藩院事例 (The collected statutes of the Qing dynasty in the Lifanyuan cases) during 1886-1899, the Guangxu court (1875-1908) encountered a troublesome source deficiency.<sup>26</sup>

The Lifanyuan archives stored at *Neige daku* (Grand Secretariat Storage) suffered from great damage as well. In late Qing times, besides damage from mildew, moths, and fire, to solve problem from storage space, many past memorials were burned, causing great loss of the Grand Secretariat memorials.<sup>27</sup> In 1899 Li Hongzhang witnessed and pointed out such damage. The 1921 trauma of the “eighty thousand abandoned bags” —selling the archives from the *Neige* Storage to a paper-making factory at extremely low prices—led to even worse losses, hurting the Lifanyuan collection badly.<sup>28</sup>

Even in such a situation, the chances to recover the surviving Lifanyuan records existed due to Qing documentation policies and practices. For example, according to Qing regulations, the Lifanyuan collected and stored all the Inner Asian correspondence, both originals and translations. The Mongolian Documentation Office of the Grand Secretariat was to keep a copy of each piece of correspondence that the Lifanyuan stored.<sup>29</sup> The surviving archives at the Mongolian Documentation

26. *Daqing huidian shili* 大清會典理藩院事例 (The collected statutes of the Qing Dynasty of the Lifanyuan cases) (1818, Beijing: Center for Tibetan Studies, 1991 reprint), Preface. *Qinding Lifanbu zeli* 欽定理藩部則例 (Imperial endorsed regulations of the ministry which manages the non-Chinese) (1908, Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan suowei wenxian fuzhi zhongxin, 1992 reprint), 27.

27. Wu Yuanfeng, “Qingdai Lifanyuan manmengwen tiben jiqi yanjiu jiazhe,” 56.

28. Li Pengnian 李鵬年, “Neige daku – Qingdai zui zhongyao de dang’anqu” 內閣大庫—清代最重要的檔案庫 (Grand Secretariat Storage – The most archival storage of the Qing dynasty), in *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 2 (1980):53-60, here 57-8 and Wu Yuanfeng, “Qingdai Lifanyuan manmengwen tiben jiqi yanjiu jiazhe,” 56.

29. Heilong, *Qing neige manmengwen hebi wenshi de xiangcheng liucheng, shuxie geshi ji yuwen tezheng*, 90. Liu Kai 劉凱, *Qingdai baijian zhenxi mengguwen dang’an zhenegli yanjiu pingjie* 《清代百件珍稀蒙古文檔案整理研究》評介 (Comments to Organizing and researching

Office, therefore, saved the archives that the Lifanyuan storage lost. One typical example is *Neige liucun Lifanyuan jishidang* 內閣留存理藩院記事檔 (The Grand Secretariat-stored archives on the Lifanyuan) which was included in Li Baowen 李保文's (edited) *Shiqi shiji mengguwen wenshu dang'an (1600-1650)* 十七世纪蒙古文文书档案 (1600-1650) (The seventeenth-century Mongol documentary and archival files, 1600-1650) (Huhehaote: Neimenggu shaonian ertong chubanshe, 1997). Many of them were in Manchu.<sup>30</sup>

Extraordinary efforts have rescued the regular memorials published in *Qingchao qianqi Lifanyuan Man-Mengwen tiben* 清前期理藩院滿蒙文題本 (Early-Qing Manchu and Manchu-Mongolian regular memorials) (Huhehaote: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 2010, twenty-four volumes) and *Qingchao houqi Lifanyuan Man-Mengwen tiben* 清後期理藩院滿蒙文題本 (Late-Qing Manchu and Manchu-Mongolian regular memorials) (Huhehaote: Neimenggu kexue jishu chubanshe, 2013, forty-two volumes).<sup>31</sup> These volumes significantly remedy the scarcity of the Lifanyuan sources and led to immediate scholarly development of the Lifanyuan study, such as Uyunbilig and Song Tong 宋瞳's 2013 article *Guanyu qingdai menggu huimeng zhidu de chuxing—yi Lifanyuan manwen tiben wei zhongxin* 關於清代蒙古會盟制度的雛形—以理藩院滿文題本為中心 (Prototype of the Mongol league system of the Qing dynasty—Centered at the Lifanyuan regular memorials)<sup>32</sup>; Song Tong 宋瞳's book *Qingchu lifanyuan yanjiu — yi Shunzhichao Lifanyuan manwen tiben wei zhongxin* 清初理藩院研究—以順治朝理藩院滿文題本為中心 (Study of the Lifanyuan at the beginning of the Qing dynasty—Centered at the Lifanyuan regular memorials of the Shunzhi court) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2015); Kong Lingwei's article “Tao Min zangchuan fosi ruqing zhi xingshuai jiqi beihou de menggu yinsu—Yi Neige daku dang yu Lifanyuan manwen tiben wei hexin 洮岷藏傳佛寺入清之興衰及其背後的蒙古因素 — 以《內閣大庫檔》與《理藩院滿蒙文題本》為核心 (The development of Tibetan monasteries in Amdo and the Mongolian factors during the Ming and Qing dynasties: Study on Tibetan monks in the Manchu-Mongolian regular memorials of the Lifanyuan) *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 86.4(2016):855-910; Chia Ning “Liangjian manwen tiben yu qingdai he zhongguo minzushi zhong de guanyin wenhua” 两件滿文題本与清代和中国民族史中的官印文化 (Two Manchu *tiben* and the official seal culture in the Qing and Chinese history), in *Xiyulishiyuyan yanjiu jikan* (History and language studies of China's western regions) 9 (2017):39-56, and

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on the one hundred rare Mongolian archives of the Qing dynasty), in *Heilongjiang minzu congkan* 2 (2022):121-124 and 150, here 121.

30. *Qing neimishuyuan mengguwen dang'an huibian* 清內秘書院蒙古文檔案汇编 (The Collection of the Mongolian archives at the Palace Secretariat Academy) at the webpage of the Mongolian Studies Center, University of Inner Mongolia <https://mgxzx.imu.edu.cn/info/1061/1988.htm>, posted 2005-5-30, accessed August 19, 2023.

31. For the rescue process, see Wu Yuanfeng, “Qingdai Lifanyuan manmengwen tiben jiqi yanjiu jiazhe,” 56.

32. This publication was posted April 22, 2013 at the website of China's National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences <http://www.nopss.gov.cn/BIG5/n/2013/0422/c362362-21232927.html>, accessed February 26, 2026.

“Monggo Yamun and Tulergi Golo be Dasara Jurgan in Early Qing: The Lifanyuan in Manchu Archives and Russian Source Materials,” *Saksaha: A Journal of Manchu Studies*, Issue 19, 2023, 73-101.

Another important example is that under the archival management of the Grand Council, the Manchu palace memorials had two or three copied versions stored separately, so the Manchu archives were better preserved than the Chinese archives which were not under such management.<sup>33</sup> The First Historical Archives have classified Grand Council archives in categories of *Lifanyuan (bu) dang* 理藩院(部)檔 (The archives of the Lifanyuan or Lifanbu), *Junjichu lufu zhouzhe* 軍機處錄副奏摺 (Grand Council-copied memorials), and *caizhenglei* 財政類 (financial subject), *neizhenglei* 內政類 (internal administration subject), *minzu shiwulei* 民族事務類 (subject of nationality affairs), *zongjiao shiwu lei* 宗教事務類 (subject of religious affairs) —all of which carry Lifanyuan information. The content of these archives covers political, military, legal, organizational, postal, financial, ritual, educational, etc. affairs, and the Qing administration in the banner-league, Muslim, *tusi*, lama, temple, and Tibetan affairs.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the availability of the palace memorials has been growing significantly with the following publications.

*Kangxichao Manwen zouzhe quanyi* 康熙朝滿文奏折全譯 (Complete translation of the Manchu palace memorials of the Kangxi reign) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1996) and *Yongzhengchao Manwen zouzhe quanyi* 雍正朝滿文奏折全譯 (Complete translation of the Manchu palace memorials of the Yongzheng reign) (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 1998) have some Lifanyuan memorials. The absence of Manchu scripts limits the source value in these translated works,<sup>35</sup> but they still offer valuable information, which the Chinese sources do not offer.

In the twenty-first century, digital technology has brought the publication with the Manchu originals with or without the Chinese translation. *Qingdai Elunchun zu manhanwen dang'an huibian* 清代鄂倫春族滿漢文檔案匯編 (The completion of the Manchu archives of the Oroqen in the Qing dynasty) (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2001) is the first example. This source selected three hundred and eleven archives from the ten million which were stored in the imperial palace and covered the period of 1683-1909. Two hundred and fifty-nine of them were in Manchu, twenty-four were Manchu-Chinese combined and twenty-eight were in Chinese. Among the other examples, *Junjichu manwen zhunga'er shizhe dang huibian* 軍機處滿文準噶爾使者檔譯編 (Grand Council's Manchu archives of the Zhungar envoys) (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 2009, three volumes) recorded the diplomatic, religious, and trading intercourse between the Manchu court and the Jun Gar in present-day northern Xinjiang during 1734-1754, with records of the Lifanyuan's role in the

33. Qu Liusheng 屈六生, *Qingdai junjichu manwen dang'an zongshu* 清代軍機處滿文檔案綜述 (Comprehension on the Manchu archives at the Grand Council of the Qing dynasty), in *Lishi dang'an* 1 (1989):124-129, here 128.

34. Zhao Yuntian, *Qingdai lifan zhidu yanjiu*, 53-54.

35. For the discussion of such a limitation, see Chia Ning, “Monggo Yamun and Tulergi Golo be Dasara Jurgan in early Qing,” 86-7.

relationship. *Junjichu manwen aochadang* 軍機處滿文熬茶檔 (Grand Council's Manchu archives of [Zhungar's] religious journeys [to Tibet]) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2010, two volumes) serves to research of the Jun Gar religious worship journeys from northern Xinjiang to Tibet during 1740-1748. The Lifanyuan official resident of Qinghai managed the journey events on behalf of the Qianlong court.<sup>36</sup> *Jungjichu Yongzhengchao manwen yifudang yibian* 軍機處雍正朝滿文議復檔譯編 (The Grand Council Manchu archives of the repeatedly discussed issues during the Yongzheng reign with Chinese translation) (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2021, thirteen volumes) presents the archives on affairs of the Northwestern and Manchurian frontiers. Since the Grand Council as a rule had the *yifu* memorials in Manchu and Chinese separately and the contents of the two language memorials did not always match each other, this publication of its Manchu section of the Yongzheng reign (1723-1735) is particularly valuable to researchers.<sup>37</sup> *Qianlong chao manwen jixindong yibian qianyan* 乾隆朝滿文寄信檔譯編 (Translated archive of transmitted imperial edicts of the Qianlong reign) (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2011) is even more significant, because some of these archives had no Chinese version at all, but were only in Manchu.<sup>38</sup> This archival sourcebook has a broad coverage of the Qing frontier affairs in all Inner Asian regions with the Lifanyuan information. It also informs the Qing-Khazak and Qing-Russian relations.<sup>39</sup>

*Qinggong zhencang dawo'er manhanwen dang'an huibian* 清宮珍藏達斡爾族滿漢文檔案彙編 (Collection of the Manchu and Chinese archives of the Daur people stored in the Qing palace) (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 2018, three volumes) is an example of retrieving the archives from the Grand Secretariat Storage and *Junjichu Fanglueguan* 軍機處方略館 (Office of Military History under the Grand Council). Before

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36. See Chia Ning, *Cong Qingdai junjichu manwen aochadang kan Qing qianqi bianjiang guanlizhong zhi qinghai diwei* 从《清代军机处满文熬茶档》看清前期边疆管理中之青海地位 (The Manchu aocha archive and the importance of Qinghai in the Qing frontier administration), in *Qingshi yanjiu*, 3 (2020):25-41. This article is fully based on the study of this Manchu archive.

37. See the announcement of this publication in *Lishi dang'an* 1(2022):12 and the "Content introduction" of this publication at website <https://book.douban.com/subject/35640882/>, accessed February 26, 2026.

38. Wang Xiaohong, "Qianlongchao manwen jixindang yibian qianyan" 《乾隆朝滿文寄信檔譯編》前言 (Preface for the *Translated archive of transmitted imperial edicts of the Qinglong reign*), in *Qianlong chao manwen jixindong yibian* (Translated archive of transmitted imperial edicts of the Qinglong reign) (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2011), Preface. Chang Jianhua 常建華, "Cong 'xinqingshi' yanjiu kan Qianlongchao manwen jixindang yibian de shiliao jiazhi" 从“新清史”研究看《乾隆朝滿文寄信檔譯編》的史料价值 (Look at the source value of *Translated archive of transmitted imperial edicts of the Qinglong reign*), in *Lishi dang'an* 1 (2011):132-137.

39. Du Jiayi 杜家驥, "Qianlongchao manwen jixindong yibian xu" 《乾隆朝滿文寄信檔譯編》序 (Foreword for the *Translated archive of transmitted imperial edicts of the Qinglong reign*), in *Qianlong chao manwen jixindong yibian* 乾隆朝滿文寄信檔譯編 (*Translated archive of transmitted imperial edicts of the Qinglong reign*) (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2011), Foreword.

this was published, it was very difficult to study Qing Daur management. The disastrous “eight thousand bags sale” in 1921 hurt the Grand Secretariat’s archival collections the most, and the Daur sources were lost. The archives at the Grand Council were under much better protection but they did not have memorials from before the Yongzheng emperor established Junjichu in 1729. In addition, several million of the Junjichu archives under the categories of *Lufu zouzhe* 錄副奏摺, *Yifu dang* 議復檔 (Archive of discussion and restatement), *Shangyu dang* 上諭檔 (Archive of the imperial edicts), and *Jixindang* 寄信檔 (Archive of transmitted imperial edicts)<sup>40</sup> made Daur source searches impossible. Now this published-subject collection gives researchers a great opportunity to study the Qing Daur administration, the Butha hunting banner yamen in operation, and the hunting bannermen’s fur tribute and military service under the Lifanyuan.

Another subject collection that helps in Lifanyuan research is *Qingdai younghegong dang’an shiliao* 清代雍和宮檔案史料 (The historical archives of the Younghe Temple of the Qing dynasty) (Beijing: Zhongguo minzu shying yishu chubanshe, 2002, twenty-four volumes). Drawing archives mainly from the Imperial Household Department, this collection carries three thousand one hundred archives, most in Manchu. It is a key package of primary sources for studying Tibetan Buddhist affairs in the Qing dynasty, which was an important area of Lifanyuan responsibility.

It should be noted that the 1986 publication of *Qingchu neiguoshiyuan manwen dang’an yibian* 清初內國史院滿文檔案譯編 (Translated volumes of early Manchu archives from the Qing dynasty of the Inner Court of Historiography) (Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1986)—a highly valuable source but without Manchu scripts—offers information of the Menggu yamen’s early work with the Mongols and its transition into the Lifanyuan in 1638. According to Zhao Yuntian, the 1775 recopying of *Manwen laodang* 滿文老檔 (The old Manchu archive) under the Qianlong emperor’s instruction has the Lifanyuan records in both editions, one with and the other without dots and circles.<sup>41</sup>

In conclusion, the court-level archives inform researchers about Lifanyuan’s case-based administrative work, reflecting the interaction between the Lifanyuan from the court and local officials in their Inner Asian political, social, economic, and cultural reality. In the case of Yonghegong, this imperial Tibetan Buddhist Temple, even located inside the capital city, had close ties with the Inner Asian temples in the Tibetan Buddhist world. By using these archives, researchers’ judgment on the credibility of Lifanyuan’s work will be more reality-grounded and perspective-balanced than only using the court-compiled and re-edited source documents to make such judgments.

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40. Wang Xiaohong, “Qianlong chao manwen jixindong yibian qianyan,” Preface.

41. Zhao Yuntian, *Qingdai lifan zhidu yanjiu*, 56.

### The Key Chinese Language Sources Compiled by the Court

The institutional type of the sources (legal codes or regulations) with the Lifanyuan sections or information were mainly written in Chinese. Some of them had the Manchu and Mongolian versions, which were usually translated from the Chinese, or, if not, edited into re-compiled versions.<sup>42</sup> These government documents first include the court-compiled statutes – *huidian* 會典 (collected statutes), *huidian shili* 會典事例 (collected statutes and precedents), and *zeli* 則例 (regulations). The imperial chronicles such as *shilu* 實錄 (veritable records), event-based *fanglue* 方略 (official campaign histories), and other kinds of officially filtered sources also offer significant portion of the Lifanyuan information.

Researchers face two major challenges when using these documents: incorrect recordings in many cases and perspective-oriented interpretation, both arising in the process of court-organized compiling and court-supervised editing. The Qianlong emperor's correction of the previous *Huidian* records of the number of state seals inside the imperial palace and the description for each seal is a representative example of misrecording.<sup>43</sup> The re-creating nature of the *shilu* editing and re-editing of the Shunzhi, Kangxi, and Qianlong editions of the *Daqing taizong wenhuangdi shilu* 大清太宗文皇帝實錄 (Veritable records of Taizong Emperor Wen of the Great Qing)<sup>44</sup> represent a case of fact modification according to a ruler's will. In addition, the *fanglue* compilation was a process of selecting and editing the original archival materials. Taking *Elcin takūraha baitai danse* as an example, its direct Chinese translation should

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42. Xu Li 徐莉, *Daqing huidian manhanwen banben xingcheng kaoshi* 《大清會典》滿漢文版本形成考釋 (The examination of the Manchu and Chinese editions of the *Collected Statutes of the Qing dynasty*), in *Minzu fany* 110.1(2019):49-54, here 51. Hei Long 黑龍 and Zhao Wenbo 趙文博, *Qinding lifanyuan zeli banben liuchuan shukao* 《欽定理藩院則》例版本流傳疏考 (The comprehensive introduction and study of the editions of the *Regulations of the Lifanyuan*), in *Zangxue yanjiu* 31.4(2020):157-160, here 158. Yang Lihong 楊立宏 and Zhu Zhengye 朱正業, *Qingshilu zuanxiu chengxu shulun* 《清實錄》纂修程序述論 (The process of compiling the *Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty*), in *Lishi dang'an* 2 (2014):125-130, here 126-127. Yang and Zhu pointed out that the early *shilu* was written in Manchu first, but after the Kangxi reign, or starting from the Yongzheng reign, the Chinese version came first, and the Manchu and Mongol versions developed as the translation from the Chinese.

43. Guo Fuxiang 郭福祥, *Mingqing dihou xiying* 明清帝後璽印 (The state seals for the emperors and empresses during the Ming and Qing dynasties) (Beijing: Guoji wenhua chubanshe, 2003), 82-3.

44. Xu Li 徐莉, "Manwen *Daqing Taizong wenhuangdi shilu* banben jiqi jiazhi" 滿文《大清太宗文皇帝實錄》版本及其價值 (The version and its value of the Manchu Records of Emperor Taizong Wen in the Qing dynasty), in *Manyu yanjiu* 72:1 (2021):86-94, here 92. Ding Haibin 丁海斌 and Wang Aihua 王愛化, "Zaitan 'dang'an' ciyuan wenti" 再談“檔案”詞源問題 (Another examination of the origin of “archive”), in *Zhongguo dang'an* 3 (2005):31-33, here 32.

be *Qianshi shidang* 遣使事檔 (Archive on the matter of dispatching envoys) but the Qing Chinese translation injected a taste of prejudice to name it *Yishidang* 夷使檔 (Archive of the barbarian [Jun gar] envoys). The comparison of this archive with *Qingshilu* and *Pingding zhunga'er fanglue* 平定準噶爾方略 (The campaign history of pacifying and settling the Zungars), shows the erasing, altering, and misinterpreting of the latter.<sup>45</sup> Once *fanglue* writing was established in the Kangxi era, compiling *fanglue* always took place before the *shilu* writing. As the second-round history editing, *shilu* usually summarized *fanglue* while missing numerous details. Thus, *fanglue* and *shilu* have the same issue of information reliability for two times.<sup>46</sup>

With the challenges from fact modification, perspective orientation, and interpretation prejudice, the Chinese language sources can still not be ignored, for several reasons. They stand for systematical organization of information, clear outlines, and time clarity.<sup>47</sup> *Shilu*, for example, was both edited history and primary source collection. It developed a high quality of structure-building, literary writing, and partially reliable history recording.<sup>48</sup> By an overall evaluation, with the problems from “historical filtering,” “the Chinese voluminous written compilation of histories from various sources in the tradition of Chinese historiography provides relatively complete accounts of people and events throughout the five thousand years of Chinese history.”<sup>49</sup> Many Qing historical documents in Chinese belong to this overall historiography. A mature researcher should be able to master the proper use of the Chinese documentary sources when utilizing the Lifanyuan parts of them. These source materials, like the Manchu archives, belong to the Manchu empire management, a part of the Manchu study.

Zhao Yuantian edited *Qingdai lifanyuan ziliao jilu* 清代理藩院資料輯錄 (Collection of the Qing Dynasty Lifanyuan Records) (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zongxin, 1988) is one of the most important source collections of court legal codes upon the Lifanyuan, reflecting the perspective and the political design of the

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45. *Junjichu manwen zhunga'er shizhe dang huibian* 軍機處滿文準噶爾使者檔譯編 (Grand Council's Manchu archives of the Zhungar envoys) (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 2009, Preface by Zhao Lingzhi 趙令志, page 2 for comparison and page 5 for translation.

46. Zhou Jie 周潔, *Lun Qingdai fanglue de shixue jiazhi* 論清代方略的史學價值 (Historical value of Fanglue in Qing dynasty), in *Hubei guangbo daxue xuebao* 20.2 (2003):81-84, here, 83-4.

47. Jakhadai Chimeddorji, *17 shiji shang banye manmenghantwen dang'an zai mnggushi yanjiu zhogde yingyong: yi neimenggu daxue qingchu mnggushi yanjiu weili* 17世紀上半葉滿蒙漢文檔案在蒙古史研究中的應用：以內蒙古大學清初蒙古史研究為例 (The using of the Manchu Mongol and Chinese accounts in the first half 17th century on Mongol history studies -- Inner Mongolia University Studies on Mongol history in early Qing dynasty), in *Menggushi yanjiu* 11 (2013):21-40, here 22.

48. Li Jianhong 李建宏, *Qingshilu de shiliao jiazhi* 清實錄的史料價值 (Value of the Veritable Records of the Qing), in *Dang'anxue tongxun* 3 (1995):47-49, here 48.

49. Yuxia Gao, Riccardo Moratto, and Di-kai Chao, “The Role of Translation Officials in the Qing Dynasty.”

ruling Manchu to this special governing institution. It contains *Qianlong neifu chaoben Lifanyuan zeli* 乾隆朝內府抄本《理藩院則例》(Handwritten edition of Regulations for the Lifanyuan in the Qianlong reign), *Kangxichao daqinghuidian zhongde Lifanyuan ziliao* 康熙朝《大清會典》中的理藩院資料 (The Lifanyuan records in the Kangxi edition of the Statutory Encyclopedias of the Qing), *Qingzhengchao daqinghuidian zhongde Lifanyuan ziliao* 雍正朝《大清會典》中的理藩院資料 (The Lifanyuan records in the Yongzheng edition of the Statutory Encyclopedias of the Qing), *Qianlongchao daqinghuidian zhongde Lifanyuan ziliao* 乾隆朝《大清會典》中的理藩院資料 (The Lifanyuan records in the Qianlong edition of the Statutory Encyclopedias of the Qing), and *Jiaqingchao daqinghuidian zhongde Lifanyuan ziliao* 嘉慶朝《大清會典》中的理藩院資料 (The Lifanyuan records in the Jiaqing edition of the Statutory Encyclopedias of the Qing). In the end, the editor contributed a commentary essay *Qingdai Lifanyuan, Lifanyuan ziliao he Lifanyuan yanjiu* 清代理藩院、理藩院資料和理藩院研究 (The Lifanyuan of the Qing dynasty, the Lifanyuan sources and the study of the Lifanyuan). Serving as a reference for the Chinese sources about the Lifanyuan, the essay introduced the Lifanyuan's history, structure, and sources of different kinds. Later, Zhao Yuntian published the annotated *Qianlong neifu chaoben Lifanyuan zeli* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2006) as a separate book. He also published his annotated *Qinding daqing huidian Lifanyuan shili* 欽定大清會典理藩院事例 (The imperial compiled collected statutes and precedents of Lifanyuan) (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2006).

*Lifanyuan gongdu zeli sanzong* 理藩院公牘則例三種 (Three Documentary Editions of the Regulations of the Lifanyuan) (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2010, five volumes) is another most important sourcebook for the study of the Lifanyuan. The first of the three parts of this source is the Handwritten edition of the Qianlong reign *Lifanyuan zeli*. Never before published, this work served to the preparation of compiling *Daqing huidian zeli* 大清會典則例 (Regulations of the Statutory Encyclopedias of Great Qing, which was later renamed *Daqing huidian shili*) and *Lifanyuan zeli* which was eventually completed in the Jiaqing reign during 1815-1818.<sup>50</sup> A similar title with that in the Zhao Yuntian-edited sourcebook, this is a different edition of handwritten *Lifanyuan zeli* of the Qianlong reign. according to the following comparison. The comparison of them shows that two editions did not have the same chapter order and arrangements.

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50. Jiang Shaya 姜沙亞, Preface in *Lifanyuan gongdu zeli sanzong* 理藩院公牘則例三種 (Three documentary editions of the *Regulations of the Lifanyuan*) (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2010), 1.

<p><i>Qianlong neifu chaoben Lifanyuan zeli</i> 乾隆朝內府抄本《理藩院則例》 in Zhao Yuntian-edited sourcebook (refereed as 1988 reprint below)</p>	<p><i>Lifanyuan gongdu zeli sanzong</i> 理藩院公牘則例三種 (refereed as 2010 reprint below)</p>
<p>Eight sections with each bureau's name and the section order Luxun qinglisi shang 錄勳清吏司上 Luxun qinglisi xia 錄勳清吏司下 Binke qinglisi 賓客清吏司 Rouyuan qingli zuo (front) si shang 柔遠清吏左(前)司上 Rouyuan qingli zuo (front) si xia 柔遠清吏左(前)司下 Rouyuan qingli you (back) si 柔遠清吏右(後)司 Lixing qinglisi 理刑清吏司 Yinku 銀庫</p>	<p>Eight sections with each bureau's name and the section order Binke qinglisi 賓客清吏司 Rouyuan qingli you (back) si 柔遠清吏右司 Rouyuan qingli zuo (front) si juanyi 柔遠清吏左司卷一 Rouyuan qingli zuo (front) si juan'er 柔遠清吏左司卷二 Lixing qinglisi 理刑清吏司 Luxun qinglisi juanyi 錄勳清吏司卷一 Luxun qinglisi juan'er 錄勳清吏司卷二 Yinku 銀庫</p>

Two editions, however, had the same four bureau names, *luxunsi* 錄勳司 (the honorable bureau which entitled and promoted Inner Mongol nobles to the banner system), *binke* 賓客司 (the reception bureau for the reception of Inner Mongols coming to the court), *rouyuansi* 柔遠司 (the Outer Mongol reception bureau for Khalkha Mongol affairs), and *lixingsi* 理刑司 (the judicial bureau for legal control over all Mongolian banners). The Shunzhi court (1643-1661) in 1661 set up these four bureaus. The Kangxi court in 1709 split *rouyuansi* into two: the Front/Left one and the Rare/Right one. The Qianlong court in 1757 changed the names for three of these bureaus, *luxunsi* into *dianshusi* 典屬司 (the Outer Mongolian bureau), *binke* into *wanghui* 王會司 (the Inner Mongolian reception bureau), and *rouyuanhou* 柔遠後司 (the rare/right wing of the Outer Mongol reception bureau) into *qijisi* 旗籍司 (the Inner Mongolian bureau).<sup>51</sup> Thus, these two different handwritten editions were all developed between 1736 (when the Qianlong reign started) and 1757. Zhao Yuntian gave the year 1756 for the edition in his sourcebook. The 2010 reprint did not mention the edition's year. Looking into details in each chapter of the same bureau, the information was identical. In addition, the 1988 reprint was retyped for publication and did not follow the Qing printing format. The 2010 reprint was a digital copy of the Qing printing, showing the Qing format such as the highlight of the emperor's title, the line arrangements, a circle as the sentence period, etc. Zhao Yuntian pointed out that the unpublished handwritten edition offered information that the printed edition of *Lifanyuan zeli* did not include. For the same subject, the two had different

51. Ji Yun, *Lidai zhiguan biao*, Volume 1, 311.

detailed coverage. Thus, the handwritten edition is very valuable for the Lifanyuan research.<sup>52</sup>

The second part of *Lifanyuan gongdu zeli sanzong* was hand-copied *Lifanyuan xiugai huijiang zeli* 理藩院修改回疆則例 (The Lifanyuan's revision of Regulation for the Muslim Territory) during the Xianfeng reign (1851-1861). This four-volume edition was also never published but served as an internal reference to the government work in the Muslim Region. The third part of this sourcebook is the *Lifanyuan gongdu* 理藩院公牘, a collection of court documents of any kind from the emperor to the officials as long as the writing was about the Lifanyuan's work. These documents were not placed into organized chapters but had eleven sections with more than three hundred entries during the Guangxu reign.

The published *Lifanyuan zeli* 理藩院則例 (Regulations of the Lifanyuan) is certainly a key primary source for the Lifanyuan study. This regulation guide collected Lifanyuan working cases. These cases served as general guidance for the Lifanyuan officials even before the publication of the first edition of *Lifanyuan zeli* (compiled during 1811-1815 and printed in three different language editions—Chinese, Manchu, and Mongolian—during 1815-1817) in the Jiaqing reign (1796-1820). This first edition listed seven hundred and thirteen cases. The Daoguang court (1821-1850) revised the *Lifanyuan zeli* twice; the 1827 edition increased the case number to one thousand, four hundred and fifty-four and the 1843 edition further revised two hundred and three case entries and added one hundred and forty-nine cases. The Guangxu edition in 1890-1891 subjoined another one hundred and thirty-seven cases.<sup>53</sup> *Qinding Lifanbu zeli* 欽定理藩部則例 (Imperial endorsed regulations of the ministry which manages the non-Chinese) (1908, Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan suowei wenxian fuzhi zhongxin, 1992 reprint) was just the continuation of the *Lifanyuan zeli*, without any change for pre-1906 details. An annotated *Qinding Lifanbu zeli*, by Zhang Rongzheng 張榮錚 and Jin Mao 金懋, was published in 1998 by Guji chubanshe in Tianjin.

Two published editions of *Qinding Lifanyuan zeli* 欽定理藩院則例 (The imperial endorsed regulations of the Lifanyuan), easy for present researchers to check out from the libraries, are the 1891 (Beijing: Lifanyuan, 1891) and the 2004 (Beijing: Fuchi shuyuan, 2004) editions. The two annotated editions of *Qinding Lifanyuan zeli* easily available are those annotated by Yang Xuandi 楊選第 and Jin Feng 金峰 (Hohhot: Neimenggu wenhua chubanshe, 1998) and by Hei Long 黑龍, Bao Heping 包和平, and Bao Siqin 包思勤 (Shenyang: Liaoning minzu chubanshe, 2019 reprint), which is based

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52. Zhao Yuntian 趙雲田, *Qingdai Lifanyuan, Lifanyuan ziliao he Lifanyuan yanjiu* 清代理藩院、理藩院資料和理藩院研究 (The Lifanyuan of the Qing dynasty, the Lifanyuan sources and the study of the Lifanyuan), in Zhao Yuntian 趙雲田, edited, *Qingdai lifanyuan ziliao jilu* 清代理藩院資料輯錄 (Collection of the Qing Dynasty Lifanyuan Records) (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zongxin, 1988), 10-14.

53. *Qinding Lifanbu zeli*, 5-27. Also see Hei and Zhao, *Qinding lifanyuan zeli banben liuchuan shukao*, 2-3.

on the 1843 Daoguang edition. Two annotated Mongolian editions of *Qinding Lifanyuan zeli* are available for researchers, by Nirilatu 尼日拉圖 and Jin Feng 金峰 (Hohhot: Neimenggu wenhua chubanshe, 1989) and by Bao Yin hao 包銀海 (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2006).

Over the past three decades, there have been consistent studies of and discussions about the origins and compiling processes of *Lifanyuan zeli*, with disagreements and debates. Hei Long and Zhao Wenbo's article *Qinding Lifanyuan zeli banben liuchuan shukao* (The comprehensive introduction and study of the editions of *The Regulation of the Lifanyuan*) in *Zangxue yanjiu* 31.4(2020):157-160 presents the latest and the most complete to date summary for these studies. Hei Long's article *Qinding Lifanyuan zeli yanjiu shuping* 《欽定理藩院則例》研究述評 (Comments on the studies of the Regulation of the Lifanyuan) in *Heilongjiang minzu congkan* 1(2020):103-108 can serve as the reference to all of these studies and discussions.

All kinds of Qing historical writings carry records of the Lifanyuan.<sup>54</sup> Among the twelve reigns' *Shilu*, eleven contain numerous records about the Lifanyuan; only Taizu or Nurhaci's did not. In the same chronicle writing style, Wang Xianqian 王先謙's *Donghualu* 東華錄 (The records of Donghua) and *Donghua xulu* 續東華錄 (The continued records of Donghua) are also important sources for the Lifanyuan study. Among the political literatures, these have a rich Lifanyuan information: Liu Jinzao edited *Qingchao xuwenxian tongkao* 清朝續文獻通考 (Continued edition of comprehensive examination of literatures of the Qing), Liu Yong edited *Qingchao tongdian* 清朝通典 (Comprehensive statutes of the Qing) and *Qingchao tongzhi* 清朝通志 (Comprehensive records of the Qing), and Duan Fang et al. edited *Daqing Guangxu xinfa ling* 大清光緒新法令 (The new decrees of the Guangxu emperor of the Qing).

Among the *fanglue* and *jishibenmo* (Historical events in their entirety) types of records these were important for the Lifanyuan study. Wenda 溫達 *Qinzheng pingding shuomo fanglue* 親征平定朔漠方略 (A history of pacifying campaigns over the vast desert under the command of the emperor) (1708, Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1994 reprint), Fuheng 傅恆 *Qinzheng pingding zhunga'er fanglue* 親征平定準噶爾方略 (A history of the war against Jun Gar under the command of the emperor) (1770, Shanghai: Wenhui chubanshe, 1996 reprint), Agui 阿桂 *Pingding liang Jinchuan fanglue* 平定兩金川方略 (A history of the war against the two native kingdoms of Jinchuan), Agui et al. *Huangqing kaiguo fanglue* 皇清開國方略 (History of the founding of the Qing), *Pingding luocha fanglue* 平定羅剎方略 (A history of the war against the Russians), Zhang Mu 張牧 *Menggu youmuji* 蒙古遊牧記 (Records of Mongolian herding lands), Qi Yunshi *Huangchao fanbu yaolue* 皇朝藩部要略 (Essential information regarding the imperial dependencies on the frontier), He Qiutao 何秋濤 *Shuofang beicheng* 朔方備乘 (Detailed records of the North), and Wei Yuan 魏源 *Shengwuji* 聖武紀 (A record of the military achievements of the Qing emperors).

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54. The following lists of the official chronical, political literature, event-based writing, Gazetteer, biographical, and personal note sources are summarized from Zhao Yuantian, *Qingdai Lifanyuan, Lifanyuan ziliao he Lifanyuan yanjiu*, 8-9 and *Qingdai lifan zhidu yanjiu*, 53-68.

Among the gazetteer type of historical writing, the following should be in the research list for the Lifanyuan study. *Daqing yitongzhi* 大清一統志 (Comprehensive gazetteer of unification of the Great Qing), *Weizang tongzhi* 衛藏通志 (Gazetteer of the Wei and Zang), *Wuliyasutai zhilue* 烏里雅蘇台志略 (A brief account of Uriyasutai), *Xiningfu xinzhì* (Gazetteer of Xining Prefecture), *Suiyuan qizhi* 綏遠旗志 (The banner gazetteer of Suiyuan), *Chengde fuzhi* 承德府志 (Gazetteer of Chengde Prefecture), *Menggu zhi* 蒙古志 (Gazetteer of the Mongols), *Xinjiang shilue* 新疆識略 (A brief account of Xinjiang), *Xichui zongtong shilue* 西陲總統事略 (Records for all affairs of the western frontier), *Qinding rixia jiuwen kao* 欽定日下舊聞考 (Imperially-endorsed investigations about hearsay of old matters from under the sun). The list for Qing biographical writings will help the Lifanyuan research, such as *Qinding waifan menggu huibu wanggong biao* 欽定外藩蒙古回部王公表傳 (Imperially-endorsed genealogical tables and biographies of the princes and dukes of the Outer Mongols and the Muslim leaders), *Qingshi liezhuan* 清史略傳 (A collection of biographies of figures in Qing history), *Manhan mingchen zhuan* 滿漢名臣傳 (Biographies of famous Manchu and Chinese statesmen), *Guochao qixianle leizheng chubian* 國朝耆獻類徵初編 (A collection of biographies of persons from the Qing period), *Guochao xianzheng shilue* 國朝先政事略 (Records of the outstanding predecessors of our [Qing] dynasty), and the *liezhuan* (biographical) chapters in *Qingshigao* 清史稿 (Drafted Qing history).

Many personal notes are sources for Lifanyuan research. They are *Wanli xingchengji* 萬里行程記 (Record of the journey of ten thousand li), *Fengshi Ke'erqin xingji* 奉使科爾沁行記 (The envoy's journey to Korchin). Some personal writings also help the Lifanyuan research, such as *Xiaoting zalu* 嘯亭雜錄 (Miscellaneous records of Xiaoting), *Zhanbao zaiji* 詹曝雜記 (Miscellaneous jottings of Zhenbao), *Zhuyeting zaji* 竹葉亭雜記 (Miscellaneous jottings of Zhuyeting), *Chayu kehua* 茶餘客話 (Tea guests' remarks), *Guiji leigao* 癸巳類稿 (The thirtieth year's draft), *Tingyu congfan* (Whilst listening to the Rain or Miscellaneous at Tingyu Hall), *Yangjizhai conglu* 養吉齋從錄 (Records of the Yangji House), etc.

In sum, the court's legal codes help reconstruct the Lifanyuan's work at the central government. They represent the Manchu vision and the court design of this governing institution in overall empire management and offer guiding principles to the Lifanyuan in the Inner Asian administration. However, they had a limited grasp of the Lifanyuan's pragmatic operation. The *Lifanyuan zeli* provided the cases of the Lifanyuan operation but they were court-selected cases for policy considerations. With very brief descriptions or narratives, they offered only the court-side information. Even having a high representation of Lifanyuan's pragmatic work, they did not cover, or sufficiently cover, the integrated local happenings along the Lifanyuan official routines and could not shroud all of Lifanyuan's tasks in Inner Asia. *Daqing huidian Lifanyuan shili* (The Lifanyuan cases in the Collected Statutes of the Great Qing) (Beijing: Center for Tibetan Studies, 1991) helps overcome this shortage by offering more details of the Lifanyuan's work. However, it still stood with a court voice and interpretation. The *fanlue* sources were compiled strictly under the Grand Council's supervision, representing the court's perspective on

critical Inner Asian military events with selected archival information (mainly from the Manchu archives). The state-sponsored gazetteer sources give systematic outlines of time, location, administrative setting, local information of various kinds, etc.; they were officially filtered with the voice of the court and included very limited working processes of the Lifanyuan and other governing institutions. Through the same official filtering, the bibliographical sources listed above recorded important people, individuals, or groups, in their relations to the Manchu court. The well-organized narratives thus very much followed the official line. Personal writings keyed in individual voices and opinions to a certain degree, but they were far from enough into the Inner Asian reality and looked at happenings from the direct interplay between the Lifanyuan and the local Inner Asians.

If they rely only on these Chinese-language sources, researchers will likely ask what new can be done after the existing studies have laid out Lifanyuan's structure, described its responsibilities, and outlined its routine duties based on the court design. A researcher will also easily feel the severe source shortage to the question of what happened on the Inner Asian side. The archives from Inner Asian areas will remedy the defect and give an answer to these questions. A large part of the Lifanyuan information exists, again, in the Inner Asian area archives. These locally based archives carry the Lifanyuan's operation details. Once the Lifanyuan research engages with Inner Asian local studies sufficiently and widens the examination broadly enough into the Lifanyuan's interplay with Inner Asian groups, more research opportunities will open to developing the Lifanyuan study.

### **The Sample Inner Asian Archives<sup>55</sup>**

The Manchu archives between the Lifanyuan and an Inner Asian local yamen reflect the lower, but more critical, segments of the Lifanyuan's work. They were directly involved in Inner Asian societies, recorded the Lifanyuan's concrete management, and noted historical events with reasons, processes, communications, interactions, and resolution methods (whether effective or ineffective). They significantly supplement the court-level sources and testify to or confirm the court documents with event records from the Inner Asian accounts and interpretation. They open a sight to comprehend the seventeenth through the eighteenth century East and Inner Asian world. In this world, the Manchu court, when striving to incorporate all the Inner Asian areas under its rule, was one among the simultaneous centers. Each center could be once powerful, either religiously or militarily. Lifanyuan's role as an active player in Qing Inner Asia implemented the court administration step by step through its interplay with the Inner Asian societies. The local archives are the critical research sources to reveal this interplay and keep a

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55. The following sample list introduces some representative archival publications with the Manchu originals. The researchers who look for complete lists in their specific Inner Asian areas will need to do further investigation for both the past and the latest publications.

necessary balance between the center-to-periphery position of the court and the periphery-to-center standpoint of each Inner Asian region. The recent digitized archival reprints are a significant resource.

*Heilongjiang jiangjyn ya men Datwo'er zu manwen dang'an xuanbian* (Kangxi and Yongzheng chao) 黑龙江将军衙门达斡尔族满文档案选编 (康熙、雍正朝) (Selected Manchu archives of the Daur people at the Heilongjiang General's yamen during the Kangxi and Yongzhen reigns). (Shenyang: Liaoning minzu chubanshe, 2021, eight volumes) and *Heilongjiang jiangjyn ya men Datwo'er zu manwen dang'an xuanbian* (Qianlong chao) 黑龙江将军衙门达斡尔族满文档案选编 (乾隆朝) (Selected Manchu archives of the Daur people at the Heilongjiang General's yamen during the Qianlong reign). (Shenyang: Liaoning minzu chubanshe, 2019, twelve volumes) provide the official correspondence with three layers of the Qing official system. The first was the Heilongjiang General's working correspondence with the Lifanyuan and the other Boards of the central government. The second was the Heilongjiang General's official communication with the Mukden General (Fengtian or Shengjing General) and the Ningutau or Jilin General in Manchuria. The third was the Heilongjiang General's official conversation with the hunting and garrison banners under his authority, as firsthand information of how the Lifanyuan supervised the Solon fur tribute, banner organization, official appointments, garrison management, post station duties, military services, hunting and agricultural activities, disaster relief, etc.

*Qingdai Alashan heshuote qi manwen dang'an xuanbian* 清代阿拉善和硕特旗满文档案选编 (Selected Manchu archives of the Alashan Khoshut banner of the Qing dynasty) (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2016, ten volumes) provides the Manchu records of the Lifanyuan's routine work with the Khoshut banner from 1720 to 1911. It helps examine how this particular Mongol banner connected to the Manchu court through the direct Lifanyuan supervision (which differed from other Mongol banners in the League) and how the Lifanyuan processed its administration over these Mongols in the daily details. *Tumete zuoqi dang'anguan cang tumete lishi dang'an* 土默特左旗档案馆藏土默特历史档案 (Historical archives of the Tümed which are restored in the Archives of the Tümed left-wing banner) (Guilin: Guangxi shifandaxue chubanshe, 2018, fifteen volumes) covers the Tümed banner affairs between 1718 and 1753 and relates how the Lifanyuan connected this banner to the central government and to other parts of Inner Asia as well.

*Qingdai Xinjiang manwen dang'an huibian* 清代新疆满文档案汇编 (Collection of Manchu archives of Qing Xinjiang) (Xining: Guangxi shifan daxue, 2012, 283 volumes) helps investigate the Lifanyuan in the Xinjiang events with strong cooperation with other Qing central institutions and local officials. This work was translated into Chinese and published separately as *Qingdai Xinjiang manwen dang'an hanyi huibian* 清代新疆满文档案汉译汇编 (The translated version of collection of Manchu archives of the Qing Xinjiang) (Beijing: Guji wenxian chubanshe, 2012, ten volumes).

*Qingdai zhongha guanxi dang'an huibian* 清代中哈关系档案汇编 (The completion of the Manchu archives in China-Kazakh relations) (Beijing: Zhongguo dang'an chubanshe, 2006) is an important archival source for the Qing management of

Central Asia with the Lifanyuan information. It collects 526 archives, most of them in Manchu.

For the overall information of the Manchu archives in Inner Asian studies, *Qingdia bianjiang manwen dang'an mulu* 清代邊疆滿文檔案目錄 (Table of contents of the Manchu archives of the Qing frontier regions) (Xining: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 1999, twelve volumes) presents a reference for publications up to the turn of the twenty-first century. Zhao Yanchang 趙彥昌 and Su Yayun 蘇亞雲, *Ershiyi shiji yilai manwen dang'an zhengli yu yanjiu shuping* 21世紀以來滿文檔案整理與研究述評 (Works on Manchu archives and the study of them in the twenty-first century), *Manzu yanjiu* 128.3 (2017): 55-73 updated the information up to 2017. Researchers should keep an eye out for the publications of the Manchu Inner Asian archives since then and the forthcoming announcement for new volumes.

The area-based and people-participated archival sources have a deep engagement of the diverse nationality groups spreading in vast Qing Inner Asia. They unfold the Lifanyuan's practical work in local societies rather than picturing the Lifanyuan in the capital city passing official paperwork up or down. They notify researchers about the engagement process between the Inner Asian peoples and the Lifanyuan. Where court documents only give a quick mention of a people, the archival sources bring in a big story about that engagement. The hunting Solon people in the Heilongjiang region were an example. The Lifanyuan records in *huidian* and *zeli* have very limited information about them, but when research goes to *Heilongjiang jiangjun yamen dang'an* 黑龍江將軍衙門檔案 (Archives of the Heilongjiang General's *yamen*) and other Heilongjiang local records, life stories came into the scholarship about them and the Lifanyuan's work with them.<sup>56</sup>

The knowledge of the overall Lifanyuan documentation and the relationship of different lines of research sources enhances researchers' capability to develop projects over a broad range of research topics. The topic researchers will have a higher level of comprehension of the three studies around the chosen topic.

### Research Topics in Ten Areas of the Lifanyuan Study

The unexplored and less-explored research topics of the Lifanyuan, as listed below, center on the Inner Asian peoples and their societies, with a focus on the Lifanyuan's role within the Manchu court. The list crystallizes the deep interlacement

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56. With such research methods and source use, the author has developed the following articles "The Solon Sable Tribute, Hunters of Inner Asia and Dynastic Elites at the Imperial Center" in *Inner Asia* 20. 1 (2018):26-63; "The Qing Lifanyuan and the Solon People of the 17th-18th Centuries;" and "Xining banshi dachen yu yongzheng shiqi Qinghai duominzu quyu guanli zhidu zhi xing cheng" 西宁办事大臣与雍乾时期青海多民族区域管理制度之形成 [The Grand Minister Resident of Xining and the Qing Administration in the Highly Diverse Qinghai], *Qinghsi yanjiu*, 3 (August 2012):57-70.

of the Lifanyuan study with the Manchu study and the broad interweaving of the Lifanyuan study with the Qing Inner Asian area studies. At the same time, it broadens the Lifanyuan study to the Qing-Russian treaty relationship and the Lifanyuan study in its contribution to world history.

This extensive list serves as a sample topic choice and, as stated above, provides a bird's-eye view of Lifanyuan's work from the central government to the Inner Asian communities. It is by no means a complete list. Researchers can, and are encouraged to, add their own topics beyond the listed topics in their research.

Tremendous changes in these topic areas underwent consistent change through the course of Qing history. Two stages, the early Qing (1636-1795) and the late Qing (1795-1911), serve as a general dividing line when discussing the differences resulting from changes on the same topic. The varied emphasis on the same topic can generate different subjects at different stages. The information from this list shows how broad and deep the Lifanyuan administration had touched the Inner Asian society, and also impacted China proper, which the previous Lifanyuan studies have not pictured.

### **Institutional Studies of the Manchu Court**

The changes that the Lifanyuan brought to the Qing Six Boards, which differed from the Ming Six Boards

The Lifanyuan officials and the Qing bureaucracy: The personnel exchange between the Lifanyuan and Six Boards and other offices

The short-lived merging of the Lifanyuan and the Board of Rites during 1658-1661: Why could not the Board of Rites take over the Lifanyuan's duties?

Explore and explain the reasons and purposes for the portion of the Lifanyuan archives in the Chinese language

Working relationship between the Lifanyuan and the *Neige Menggutang* 內閣蒙古堂 (The Mongolian Documentation Office in the Grand Secretariat)

Explore the *Lifanyuan jishidang* 理藩院記事檔 (The archives which recorded the Lifanyuan Affairs) in the *Qing neige menggutang dang* 清內閣蒙古堂檔 (The archives of the Mongolian Documentation Office in the Grand Secretariat)

The Lifanyuan and the *Xian An Gong Guanxue* 咸安宮官學 (The court-run language schools in the Xian'an Hall inside the Imperial Palace) in Mongolian, Tibetan, Tod Mongolian/Clear Script, etc.

The Lifanyuan and the frontier *Dachen* 大臣 (Grand Ministers) and *Jiangjun* 將軍 (Generals) alongside the Mongol Banner-league system, the *fan tusi* system, and the Muslim *beg* system: A Qing institutional setting with subjoined court-frontier connections

The change of the Lifanyuan work due to the establishment of the frontier Grand Ministers and Generals

Why did the *tusi* 土司heads (indigenous chieftains) under the Lifanyuan appear in the Qing court rituals but not the *tusi* heads under the other Boards?

The special work of the twelve Lifanyuan officials out of the six Lifanyuan Bureaus: *Shenmu lishi siyuan* 神木理事司員 (the judicial administrator in Shenmu), *Ningxia lishi siyuan* 寧夏理事司員 (the judicial administrator in Ningxia), *Rehelishi siyuan*

熱河都統衙門理事司員 (the judicial administrator in Rehe), *Bagoulishi siyuan* 八溝理事司員 (the judicial administrator in Bagou), *Tazigou lishi siyuan* 塔子溝理事司員 (the judicial administrator in Tazigou), *Wulan hada lishi siyuan* 烏蘭哈達理事司員 (the judicial administrator in Wulanhada), *Sanzuota lishi siyuan* 三座塔理事司員 (the judicial administrator in Sanzuota), *Zhangjiakou guanzhan yuanyuailang* 張家口管站員外郎 (post-station supervisor of Zhangjiakou), *Shahukou guanzhan yuanyuailang* 殺虎口管站員外郎 (post-station supervisor of Shahukou), *Xifengkou guanzhan yuanyuailang* 喜峰口管站員外郎 (post-station supervisor of Xifengkou), *Gubeikou guanzhan yuanyuailang* 古北口管站員外郎 (post-station supervisor of Gubeikou), *Dushikou guanzhan yuanyuailang* 獨石口管站員外郎 (post-station administrator in Dushikou)

The cooperative management of the imperial horse pastures: The Lifanyuan, *Taipusi* 太僕寺 (Court of the Imperial Stud), *Shangsiyuan* 上駟院 (Palace Stud), the Ili General's *Tuomachu* 駝馬處 (Office of Camel and Horse affairs), and other horse pastures

The Lifanyuan contribution to the compilation of the Veritable records of the Great Qing, the Comprehensive Gazetteer of Unification of the Great Qing, the imperially endorsed genealogical tables and biographies of the princes and dukes of the Outer Mongols and the Muslim leaders, various *fanglue* volumes, and some other important historical works

The Lifanyuan and the Qing official seal or *guanyin* 官印 system in the Inner Asian administration

## Manchu and Heilongjiang Studies<sup>57</sup>

### Topics for Manchu Studies

The Manchu version of the *Lifanyuan zeli* (There have been studies of the Mongolian and Chinese versions of the *Lifanyuan zeli* but not of the Manchu version)

Manchu language in the Qing administration of the Lifanyuan zone: Central government sectors and the Inner Asian areas

Governing the nationality groups in the Lifanyuan zone and the Eight Banner zone in Manchuria: Differentiation, connection, and interaction between the Generals of Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Fengtian/Shengjing

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57. As Heilongjiang was part of Qing Manchuria, the hunting and garrison banners of the Solon people (with some other minority groups) under the Heilongjiang General's supervision, since 1863, became a separated administrative region from *Jilin* General-supervised area, and Liaoning under the *Fengtian* General and centered in Mukden, or Shengjing, of the Manchu first Capital before 1644 and then accompanying Capital after 1644. As Manchuria's Eight Banner population was under the command of the court-appointed *Dutong* 都統 (Commander-in-chief), the hunting and garrison banners along the Amur River were headed by a court-appointed *Zongguan* 總管 (Supervisor-in-chief) under the command of Heilongjiang General, who worked closely with the Lifanyuan, while the Lifanyuan, generally speaking, had no responsibility to work with the Jilin and Fengtian Generals. Thus, Heilongjiang needs special attention in the Lifanyuan study and Manchu study. For the hunting and garrison banners under the Heilongjiang General, see Chia Ning, "The Qing Lifanyuan and the Solon People of the 17th-18th Centuries."

The Lifanyuan and the Mongol bannermen in the Eight Banner garrisons  
 The “New Manchu” or *Xinmanzhou* 新满洲 in Manchuria—Dividing the ethnic peoples (Solon, Xibo, etc.) under the Lifanyuan or under the Eight Banners  
 The comparison between standard Eight Banners and the Lifanyuan “banners” under the Heilongjiang General - the Butha/hunting banners and the *Zhufang baqi* 驻防八旗 (the garrison banners) along the Amur River  
 The Lifanyuan and the military service of the Manchurian nationality groups all over the Qing empire  
 The Lifanyuan-managed fur tribute in Heilongjiang and the Neiwufu (Imperial Household Department)-managed fur tribute in Jilin  
**Topics** for Heilongjiang studies  
 The Lifanyuan’s role to the hunting/indigenous populations, their social organizations, official appointments, fur tribute, tribute-related rewards and marriage, military services, etc.  
 The hunting/indigenous groups between the Qing and the Russian empires  
 The Heilongjiang hunting banners and garrison banners in comparison and their ritual duties at the imperial court under the Lifanyuan’s management  
 The Qing communication with the Russians through the Heilongjiang General to the Lifanyuan

## Mongol Studies

The Mongols served as the Lifanyuan staff for not only the Mongolian affairs but also the Tibetan and Muslim affairs  
 The Lifanyuan officials with duties in Mongolian Leagues and Banners  
 The Lifanyuan and the Mongol nobles and their Tibetan Buddhist leaders  
 The Lifanyuan responsibilities for Tibetan Buddhist temples in the Mongol societies  
 The Lifanyuan and Qing policies in different sectors of the Mongols: Inner, Outer/Khalka, Qinghai, Alashan, Zunghar, Urianghai, Torghut, etc.  
 The work and effect of the Chahar supervisors in the Lifanyuan positions (starting in the first year of the Yongzheng reign)  
 The working relationship between the court-appointed military generals in Mongolia and the Lifanyuan, and their relationship with the banner heads and league leaders  
 The Grand Minister of Resident to Xining: Responsibilities for the league meeting, noble/official salaries, and border trading affairs of the Khalkha Mongols  
 The Lifanyuan and the “Nine white Tribute” of the Khalkha Mongols to the Manchu court  
 The Lifanyuan management in the Mongol-and-Chinese border markets in Guihau (Hohhot)  
 The Lifanyuan management in the Mongol-Russian border markets in Kulun (Ulan Bator) and Khiakhta  
 The Lifanyuan’s role in the imperial intermarriage with the Mongol nobles and the court ties with the Mongol sons-in-law  
 The hereditary Mongol nobles without official ranks and duties in the Lifanyuan records: This *xiansan* 閒散 noble group in the Qing dynasty  
 The Lifanyuan sources and the study of the Mongol Banner-League system with the model of the Eight Banners

The Lifanyuan sources and the study of Manchu nobility about the Qing reshaping the Mongol nobility

The Lifanyuan and the court-assigned contact agent with Russia: Transitions from the Heilongjiang General of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the Mongol TüsHEET khan of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and then from TüsHEET khan to the Grand Minister Resident of Kulun in 1762

The pre-1644 *Menggu lü* 蒙古律 (Regulations for the Mongols) and the post-1644 *Lifanyuan zeli* (Regulations of the Lifanyuan)

The Mongolian Lifanyuan *lüshu* 理藩院律书 (The legal regulations to the Mongols written in Mongolian language) and *Menggu lüli* 蒙古律例 (The legal regulations to the Mongols) written in Manchu, Mongolian, and Chinese by the court

## Tibetan Studies

The Lifanyuan's role in the court-Dalai Lama relations

The Lifanyuan's role in the court-Panchen Lama relations

The Lifanyuan's working relationship with the Qing ambans in Tibet or Zhizang dachen 駐藏大臣 (Grand Minister Resident to Tibet)

The Lifanyuan and the Tibetan Buddhist temples in Tibet

The Lifanyuan's role between the Tibetan Buddhist leaders in the capital temples and the Tibetan/Qinghai/Gansu temples

The Lifanyuan's role in dividing the *fan* population into the Tibetan and Qinghai sectors

The Lifanyuan's role in managing the Zunghar issues in Tibet (political, religious, and warfare)

## Qinghai Studies

The Lifanyuan's work in Xining—the court-Tibet hub, the court-Hami/Turfan axis, and the court-Jun Gar pivot

The Lifanyuan and the Amdo/*fan* population

The Lifanyuan and the Qinghai Khoshuts

The Lifanyuan and the Qinghai *tusi*

Why the Mongol banner-league system could not work for the *fan* population and the Lifanyuan's role in the policy and administrative adjustments

*Xining Qinghai fanyi chengli* 西宁青海番夷成例 (The legal regulations for the *fan* population in Xining and Qinghai): The unpractical law code to govern the *fan* population in the Lifanyuan experience

The Lifanyuan and the Board of Rites in Tibetan Buddhist temple affairs of the Xining region—Reassigned responsibility division and cooperation

Reassigned responsibilities between the Lifanyuan and the Board of Rites in Tibetan Buddhist temple affairs in the Shaanxi-Gansu regions next to Qinghai

## The Jun Gar and Xinjiang Studies

- The Lifanyuan and the court-Jun Gar communication, negotiation, and military actions
- The Lifanyuan officials in Xinjiang: their life and work
- The Lifanyuan and the Muslim banners in Hami and Turfan
- The Lifanyuan *Laiyuansi* 徠遠司 (Eastern Turkistan Bureau) and the Qing administration in the Hui territory (southern Xinjiang)
- The Lifanyuan and the Grand Ministers and Generals Resident of Xinjiang
- The Lifanyuan's role under change in the banner administration: The case of *Manying* 满营 (the Manchu garrison), Solon ying 索伦营 (the Solun garrison), Siboying 锡伯营 (the Siboying garrison), Chahar ying 察哈爾营 (the Chahar garrison), Eluts/Eluuths/Oirds ying 厄魯特营 (the Eluts garrison) under the Ili General
- Huijiang zeli* 回疆則例 (Regulations of the Muslim territory) and *Lifanyuan zeli* 理藩院則例 (Regulations of the Lifanyuan)

## Study of Qing Central Asia

- The Lifanyuan and the Qing-Kazakh relationship through the Jun Gar and in the post-Jun Gar time
- The Lifanyuan and the Bulut/Bürd/Burud (the modern Kyrgyz/Kirghiz)
- The Central Asian entities between the Qing and the Russian Empire: Lifanyuan's role
- The Central Asian nobles at the court rituals under the Lifanyuan arrangements

## The Sino-Russian Relations

### Topics on the Qing side

- The communication between the Lifanyuan and the Russian Senate with the Grand Secretariat and *Menggufang* in the back and Grand Council in decision-making
- The Mongol mediation in the Sino-Russian relations and communication under the Lifanyuan management
- The Lifanyuan and the Sino-Russian treaties (Nerchinsk 1689 and Kyakhta 1727-8)
- The Lifanyuan and the Qing delegations to Russia
- Why the treaty negotiation relied on Jesuits' translation in Latin but not on the Russian bannermen already living in Beijing: the Lifanyuan and the matter
- The Lifanyuan and the Russian language school in Beijing, *E'luosi wenguan* 俄罗斯文馆 and the Russian studies *E'luosixue* 俄罗斯学
- The Lifanyuan and the Russian Zuoling 佐領 (company) in the Qing capital city (There were also Korean Zouling, Uighur Zouling, *fanzi*/Tibetan Zouling, and Annan/ Vietnam Zouling)
- The Lifanyuan's work to the Russian students in Beijing: Their education in Manchu and Chinese and the rise of Chinese studies in Russia
- The Lifanyuan and the Russian Orthodox Church in Beijing
- The Lifanyuan records on the Sino-Russian trade in Beijing and the Qing border markets
- The Russian privileges from the Manchu court: Why not given to the other European nations during the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century?

## Topics on the Russian side

Evaluating the Russian records and the Lifanyuan in, but not limited to, these sources:

1. Bantysh-Kamenskii, Nikolaï Nikolaevich (Бантыш-Каменский, Николай Николаевич). *Diplomaticheskoe Sobranie Del' Mezhdu Rossiiskim i Kitaiskim Gasydarstvami s' 1619 po 1792-i God* Дипломатическое Собрание Дель Между Российскимъ и Китайскимъ Государствами съ 1619 по 1792-й Годъ (Diplomatic affairs meeting between the Russian and Chinese states from 1619 to 1792). Казань: Типография Императорскаго Университета, 1882.
2. *Russian-Chinese Relations, 1689-1916* (Русско-китайские отношения. 1689-1916. Официальные документы. Издательство: Издательство восточной литературы.) Место издания: М. Год издания: 1958.
3. *Treaties Between Russia and China, 1689-1881*. (Die Verträge zwischen Russland und China, 1689-1881: Faks. d. 1889 in Sankt Petersburg erschienenen Sammlung mit d. Vertragstexten in russ., lat. u. franz. sowie chines., mandschur. u. mongol. Sprache / hrsg. u. eingel. von Michael Weiers....) Bonn: wehling, 1979.
4. There are more titles and volumes of the treaties

## The Russian translation of *Lifanyuan zeli*

Biographies or autobiographies of the Russian students who studied in Beijing: the Lifanyuan's work with them

Discover the Russian archives: correspondence between the Lifanyuan and the Russian authorities, which are not yet in the published sourcebooks

The Russian records of the Orthodox Church in Beijing and the Lifanyuan

## Lifanyuan's Work and the Han-Chinese in Border Regions

Lifanyuan's special officials, *Lishisiyuan* 理事司员, in managing the Han population in the Inner Asian border regions

The Lifanyuan and the Board of Punishment in managing legal cases in the Han and non-Han mixed-living border areas (Chengde and some border places in Inner Mongolia and Qinghai-Gansu)

The Lifanyuan management of the Han traders/merchants' activities in the Mongolian markets and the Qing-Russian border markets by issuing trading certificates, supervising market activities, and dealing with trading problems, etc.

The Lifanyuan-associated border Generals and Grand Ministers with administrative authority over the local Han communities (The Heilongjiang General, the Grand Minister Resident to Xining, the Ili General, etc.)

## Lifanyuan Study in World History

Comparative study of the governing institutions over the diverse populations. (A study of the Qing Lifanyuan and the Russian empire has been developed; a comparison with other empires needs development.)

The early Sino-Russian treaties in the modern international treaties

The Qing encounter of the world during the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century: Managing the European countries separately from the Lifanyuan's management of the Russian Empire

Different trading patterns with the European countries in the Lifanyuan zone and the Libu zone

This topic list tells us that a complete picture of the Lifanyuan and a comprehensive understanding of this governing institution at the Manchu court will be found in its daily operations on various levels of the Qing empire, through all its administrative routines in Inner Asia, over its responsibilities within and outside the Qing borderlands, and regarding its contemporary counterparts in world history. The depth and breadth of new research on these topics, along with potential areas yet to be explored, will escalate the Lifanyuan scholarship to a remarkable new stage. Otherwise, we will continue to have very limited knowledge about the Lifanyuan.

### Conclusion: The Outcome of Using this Source and Topic Guide

This source and topic guide demonstrates where the Lifanyuan study could and should have developed if the available sources had been fully researched. A great degree of "visualizing" the Manchu and Inner Asian studies in the guide demonstrates the nature of the Lifanyuan study, encouraging efficient and effective cooperation of these three *studies* at a higher level of comprehension. Such encouragement, again, does not erase each study's boundary, focus, and perspective. Each promotes the other, rectifies the other (when necessary), and enriches the other.

The source list in the guide offers different lines of primary sources to engage researchers in historical records with different sets of facts, standpoints, and perspectives when investigating and analyzing. The officially compiled Chinese language sources and Manchu archival sources shift the focus of the Lifanyuan between the central government's directives and practical management in daily Inner Asia. Sources can lead to new inquiries into important themes, such as how the Lifanyuan administration involved, helped, or problematized an Inner Asian group in the center-periphery or periphery-center's interplay and interaction.

The guide not only encourages researchers to explore numerous under-researched topics given in the list but also inspires them to initiate new avenues of inquiry. For instance, the Lifanyuan has traditionally been seen as solely responsible for Inner Asian affairs, with little involvement in managing the Han Chinese population. However, judicial administrators holding titles such as *Lishi xiyuan* 理事司員 and *Yuanwailang* 員外郎 within the Lifanyuan officialdom were tasked with

resolving conflicts between Mongols and Han Chinese in areas where both groups cohabited. Discovering these Lifanyuan officials in their management cases will add a new subject matter to the overall Lifanyuan study. Another subject matter worth exploring is that the Chinese traders, traveling from the heartland of China proper deep into the Ulga/Ulaanbaatar or other frontier markets, operated their trading activities under the Lifanyuan supervision. The Lifanyuan's role in overseeing trade between Han traders and Mongols, and Russians in many cases, has remained largely unexamined in current scholarship. Furthermore, to inspire researchers to be productive, creative, and innovative, the guide introduces some topics with high complexity. In the section "Manchu and Heilongjiang Studies," for instance, the topic of the "New Manchu" (Xinmanzhou 新滿洲) in Manchuria will address the division of the same ethnic groups, such as the Solon as well as the Xibo, either under the Lifanyuan administration or within the Eight Banners, which fell outside the Lifanyuan's jurisdiction. Currently, there has been no systematic investigation of this special issue regarding the institutional and ethnic boundaries of some of the Qing Inner Asian population.

An overview of the research sources and topics in the guide will help researchers "depict" Inner Asia in the Manchu empire-building, highlighting the Lifanyuan influence. It is also helpful for creative researchers identify subjects that extend beyond the traditional scope of Lifanyuan studies. One such subject is "The Lifanyuan in World History," which is currently an emerging but challenging area in Lifanyuan scholarship. The development of it will bring a fruitful contribution to the three studies in Qing history and the broader field of world history.

Along with the Manchu archives, the Qing Mongolian and Tibetan archives in relation to the Lifanyuan have also flourished in recent decades. The more accessible archives and sources in Uyghur, Tod/Clear Mongolian, Kazak, and potentially other languages will assist in further advancing the Lifanyuan study by scholars with language capabilities. This direction of cooperation is an important note to attach to the source and topic guide.

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## **War as an Investment Opportunity Purchasing Imperial Officers in the Kingdom of Bohemia during the Thirty Years' War**

*By Marek Starý\**

*The Thirty Years' War broke out in 1618 with the uprising of the Bohemian estates against Emperor Ferdinand II. After its suppression, against the backdrop of ongoing military conflict, two fundamental interventions by the monarch took place in the Kingdom of Bohemia, dramatically changing internal conditions. The first was an order to confiscate properties, which affected a large part of the Bohemian estates. The monarch then sold the confiscated estates cheaply to his loyal subjects. The second change was the issuance of the Renewed Land Constitution (1627), a code of law that in many respects weakened the powers of the estates and, conversely, strengthened the power of the monarch. Among other things, it reserved the right for the emperor to decide which foreigners would be accepted as residents of the country and given the right to acquire real estate (castles, towns, fortresses, domains). The combination of these two factors led to the assimilation of a large number of commanding officers of the imperial army into the Bohemian aristocracy and the lower nobility. Due to the partially "entrepreneurial" model of army building, where the commanders were responsible for building individual units and subsequently billed their costs (certainly not without profit) to the imperial treasury, it became a relatively common phenomenon that the claims of colonels, lieutenant colonels, and possibly other officers were compensated by the transfer of some of the confiscated estates (usually in the form of a sale, where the buyer's claim was taken into account when settling the purchase price). The study attempts to outline the legal context of granting Bohemian residential right (inkolat) in the 17th century and, based on a preserved collection of land reversals, through which new residents formally registered themselves in the land, and to estimate the number of officers who made up a significant part of them (over 35% in the period 1627–1653).*

### **Introduction**

The Thirty Years' War, as the conflict that lasted with certain interruptions from 1618 to 1648 is called, and which, given its scope, is sometimes considered the first pan-European war. Its beginning is traditionally considered to be the uprising of the estates of the Kingdom of Bohemia against the Austrian Habsburgs, which broke out in the summer of 1618. It should be added, however, that this rebellion was not an isolated phenomenon and that it took place in the context of increasing tensions in Europe, linked to religious conflicts, but also to the longer-term delineation of spheres of political influence. When both the Habsburgs and the Bohemian estates began to seek foreign support intensively, the spread of the conflict was almost inevitable.

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\*Associate Professor, Charles University, Faculty of Law, Czech Republic.

The war began "in the east," that is, in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown and also in Hungary, whose aristocracy traditionally had a very tense relationship with the ruling Habsburgs. However, its center of gravity soon shifted westward, and the main battles took place in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, where the Habsburgs, after defeating the Bohemian Revolt, sought to assert their hegemony and suppress the resistance of the Protestant princes. The Danish King Christian IV soon came out in support of them against Emperor Ferdinand II and later his son of the same name, and after the failure of his military campaign, the "lion of the north," Swedish King Gustav II Adolf, became the protector of the empire's Protestants. The united Dutch provinces, striving for complete independence, also fought fiercely against the Austrian and Spanish Habsburgs, and Stuart England briefly joined the fighting. As part of the Europe-wide turmoil, smaller military campaigns also took place in other regions, such as the War of the Mantuan Succession from 1628 to 1631.

Although the war may have initially appeared to be a purely religious conflict, various non-confessional power ambitions gradually came to bear, as best illustrated by the alliance between Catholic France and Protestant Sweden, concluded in 1635. France's involvement then moved the conflict even further westward. The formal conclusion of peace was not accepted until 1648, when the final negotiations took part in the cities of Münster and Osnabrück.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, this did not bring peace to Europe. Between 1653 and 1659, war broke out again between France and Habsburg Spain, while in the northeast, the Polish-Russian War (1654-1667) and the Polish-Swedish War (1655-1660), expressively called the "Swedish Deluge," were raging. However, these were only local conflicts that did not ignite the flames of war across the entire old continent.

Decades of war had a devastating impact on the lives of millions of people. It resulted in a sharp demographic decline, affecting not only men who died directly on the battlefield, but above all the civilian population, which suffered from combat operations, epidemics, and, last but not least, starvation.<sup>2</sup> However, as in any war, there were groups of people for whom war was a path to success, social rise, and wealth. In addition to those who were economically linked to the construction and maintenance of armies, i.e., suppliers of weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and other equipment that had to be continuously replenished over time, this also included the officers of the warring armies themselves.

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1. From the rich literature on the Thirty Years' War, see e.g. ASCH, Ronald G.: *The Thirty Years War. The Holy Roman Empire and Europe 1618–1648*, Basingstoke 1997; WILSON, Peter H.: *The Thirty Years War. Europe's Tragedy*, Cambridge 2011; MÜNKLER, Herfried: *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Europäische Katastrophe, deutsches Trauma. 1618–1648*, Berlin 2017; FUKALA, Radek: *Tricetiletá válka 1618–1648 [The Thirty Years War 1618–1648]*. 2 Volumes, Praha 2018; MEDICK, Hans: *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg: Zeugnisse vom Leben mit Gewalt*, Göttingen 2019; KILIÁN, Jan: *Tricetiletá válka. Stručná historie [The Thirty Years War. Brief History]*, Praha 2023 and many others.

2. OUTRAM, Quentin: *The Socio-Economic Relations of Warfare and the Military Mortality Crises of the Thirty Years' War*. *Medical History*, 45 (2), 2001, pp. 151-184.

## Confiscations and Financing of the Army

In the Habsburg Monarchy, as well as in a number of other European countries, the building of armies was partly based on a kind of entrepreneurial model, whereby regimental commanders were tasked with ensuring that their regiments were fully staffed and equipped, and with continuously securing further supplies. In most cases, their expenses were reimbursed by the state retrospectively, based on settlements submitted by the colonels. The state had only limited control mechanisms at its disposal, so it can be assumed that the amounts claimed (significantly) exceeded the actual expenses of the officers rather than the contrary.

The Thirty Years' War offered colonels and other officers a unique opportunity to capitalize on their investments. The aim of this article is to show how their financial investments were transformed into more or less extensive land holdings within the Kingdom of Bohemia, under what legal circumstances members of the officer corps were able to settle in Bohemia, and how significant a proportion of new immigrants they constituted during the period of the war and the years immediately following it.

The costs of the war placed an enormous burden on the budgets of the belligerent states. For example, the National Archives in Prague hold documents containing an overview of the money paid out by the Bohemian Chamber from the Battle of White Mountain (November 8, 1620) until the end of 1622 in connection with the unfolding war. The total amount reaches almost 7 million Rhenisch guildens, which was a very considerable sum in itself.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that this was only money from the budget of the Kingdom of Bohemia, which was only part of the vast empire ruled by the Austrian Habsburgs, and that, moreover, the payment of this money was far from settling the claims that individual commanders of the Habsburg armies had against the treasury.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately for the Austrian Habsburgs, however, they had a good opportunity to deal with their colonels without having to pay them from the perpetually empty imperial treasury. Both within their hereditary lands and within the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, which they practically continuously ruled on the basis of the election of the prince-electors (Churfürsten), they had a number of opponents whose estates could be confiscated and used as material compensation for those who remained loyal to them.

Confiscation processes took place in all countries ruled by the Habsburgs in the first half of the 17th century,<sup>5</sup> but the aforementioned Kingdom of Bohemia represents

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3. Národní archiv [National Archives] Praha, fund České oddělení dvorské komory IV [Bohemian Department of the Court Chamber], sign. Čechy 7/15, cart. 29, fol. 947r – 950v.

4. According to the above-mentioned document, Count Adolf of Altheim was paid 66,000 Rhenisch guildens, but he claimed a disproportionately higher amount of 526,000 guildens.

5. In the broader Central European context, confiscations are mainly observed in KNOZ, Tomáš: *Pobělohorské konfiskace. Moravský průběh, středoevropské souvislosti, obecné aspekty* [Post-White Mountain Confiscations. The Moravian Course, Central European Context, General Aspects], Brno 2006.

an exemplary and unrivalled case in terms of its scope. It was here that the Thirty Years' War began in 1618, when the protestant Bohemian estates rebelled against Emperor Matthias and, a year later, after his death, elected their own king, Frederick V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, instead of the previously designated successor, Ferdinand II of Styria. However, the rebels failed to gain sufficient foreign support, and the Battle of White Mountain marked the complete collapse of the rebellion. Some of the most compromised leaders of the uprising fled abroad with Frederick and their estates were naturally confiscated for the benefit of the emperor. However, the emperor decided to go much further in punishing the Bohemian estates than their members could have imagined, and after the execution of 27 leaders of the uprising in June 1621, he initiated confiscation proceedings, in which even those who had not actively participated in the fight against the Habsburgs were affected.

Moreover, the mechanism of the proceedings was set up in such a way that even those who were sentenced to lose part of their property (half, a third, a quarter, or even less) had their estates confiscated and were to receive adequate financial compensation for the part that was to be retained. However, the payment of this compensation was generally postponed for a long time. The result of these processes was that the emperor accumulated enormous real estate holdings, which the royal authorities had no realistic chance of managing effectively and which were, from the outset, intended to be transferred to other persons.<sup>6</sup>

If we were to look for the greatest military entrepreneurs, it would be difficult to choose anyone other than Albrecht von Wallenstein. Originally a poor nobleman, he acquired considerable wealth in Moravia before the Thirty Years' War and became one of the imperial colonels. After 1620, he developed his unique organizational talent. Compared to most of his peers, who expected rewards for their loyalty, Wallenstein realized that the emperor desperately needed to borrow money and was willing to make all his resources available, even going into debt himself, just to bind the monarch to him. He was well aware that sooner or later it would inevitably be the confiscated estates that would be used to pay off the imperial debts. And that the transactions through which this redistribution of confiscated property would be carried out would undoubtedly be advantageous for those loyal to Ferdinand who would be allowed to participate in them. This assumption was undoubtedly reinforced by his first two loans in February and March 1621, when he was granted the estates of the deceased 'arch-rebel' Albrecht Jan Smiřický, one of the leaders of the uprising (and also Wallenstein's distant cousin), for 110,000 guildens. Their actual value was many times higher.<sup>7</sup> Admittedly, for the time being it was only a pledge,

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6. A detailed overview of Bohemian confiscations was provided on the basis of archival materials by BÍLEK, Tomáš Václav: *Dějiny konfiskací v Čechách po r. 1618* [The History of Confiscations in Bohemia after 1618], Praha 1882–1883.

7. Later, these estates were sold to him for more than 500,000 guildens, and even this price was certainly undervalued. More details in STARÝ, Marek: *Terra felix. Dějiny Valdštejnova frýdlantského vévodství. Díl I. Geneze a rozsah vévodství* [Terra Felix. History of Wallenstein's Duchy of Frýdlant. Part I. Genesis and Extent of the Duchy], Praha 2024, pp. 26–41.

and moreover, the estates had not yet been formally transferred to the monarch, but there was little doubt that intensive involvement in the trade in confiscated property would be a promising path to personal enrichment.

This opportunity was open to many, but Wallenstein surpassed them all with his ambition, aggressiveness, and incredible generosity. On January 1, 1620, Ferdinand II issued him a promissory note for 80,535 guildens,<sup>8</sup> which was probably the total amount of all his claims against the emperor at that time, then from July 1622 to March 1624 he bought up estates in the Kingdom of Bohemia with a total value exceeding 3.5 million guildens. He resold some of them immediately, while for others he remained indebted to the treasury and the previous owners, but in any case, he suddenly began to think and trade in amounts incomparable to what he could have dreamed of two years earlier. And he did not even use the money from his Moravian estates inherited from his first wife, which he gradually disposed of. From estates worth 4.5 million guildens, he quickly built the feudal Duchy of Frýdlant in northeastern Bohemia, which was literally a state within a state.

After becoming generalissimo in 1625, i.e. commander-in-chief of the imperial armies, whose ongoing financing he took upon himself, Wallenstein's claims against Vienna began to grow astronomically. The emperor had to settle at least part of them by ceding entire principalities – thus, in 1627, the generalissimo acquired the Silesian Duchy of Zaháň, and in 1632, the neighbouring Duchy of Hlohov.<sup>9</sup> A completely unique acquisition, which was far beyond the limits of what a Bohemian nobleman could even consider, was the acquisition of the North German Duchy of Mecklenburg. The emperor first gave it to him as a pledge at the beginning of 1628 for 1,450,000 guildens,<sup>10</sup> and then in June 1629 granted it to him as a vacant imperial fief (the previous dukes having been deprived of their estates by the emperor's decision for rebelling against him).<sup>11</sup> Of course, he did not have to pay the money, as

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8. Its text was published by DVORSKÝ, František: *Albrecht z Valdštejna až na konec roku 1621. Nové listy do knihy třistaleté paměti* [Albrecht von Wallenstein until the End of 1621. New Pages in the Book of three hundred Years of Memory], Praha 1892, pp. 160–161, footnote 66.

9. The most detailed elaboration of Wallenstein's rule in Zaháň is still provided by ARTHUR, Heinrich: *Wallenstein als Herzog von Sagan*, Breslau 1896. Hlohov was held by Wallenstein for only a very short time and he did not significantly influence its fate, which is reflected in the lack of interest in the literature to date. The study FUKALA, Radek: *Albrecht z Valdštejna jako hlohovský kníže a jeho slezské epizody* [Albrecht von Wallenstein as Prince of Hlohov and his Silesian episodes]. In: *Wielki Głogów. Między blaskiem dziejów i geniem ruin*, red. B. Czechowicz – M. Konopnicka, Głogów – Zielona Góra 2010, pp. 183–189 also offers just a few modest reflections.

10. Namely, on January 26, 1628, he pledged to him for 700,000 guildens the Duchy of Mecklenburg, the Principality of Venden, and the County of Schwerin (Schwerin) with the lands of Rostock and Stargard, and for another 750,000 guildens, he also gave him the bishopric of Schwerin and other ecclesiastical estates in Mecklenburg. *Státní oblastní archiv* [State Regional Archives] Praha, fund *Rodinný archiv Valdštejnů* [Waldstein family archive], *Listiny* [Charters], sign. N-24, No. 39; *Valdštejniána*, sign. I-H2, No. 2367.

11. *Státní oblastní archiv* Praha, *Rodinný archiv Valdštejnů*, *Listiny*, sign. N-34, No. 47.

it was deducted from the emperor's debt, the full repayment of which remained a distant prospect. On the other hand, it is fair to say that Wallenstein did indeed have to raise the money he charged the emperor, or at least a substantial part of it, himself and invest it in the army.

It was precisely these growing and more or less unpayable debts, alongside unconvincing military results, that were the main reasons why Wallenstein, who was called back to lead the armies two years after his dismissal in 1630, was declared a traitor without a proper trial and physically eliminated in Cheb in February 1634.<sup>12</sup>

Wallenstein's fate is quite exceptional in many respects, but it shows that, contrary to popular belief, it was not only foreigners who benefited from Bohemian confiscations after 1620. In fact, the second largest amount of confiscated property was acquired by a member of the Bohemian estates – or, more precisely, a female member, Marie Magdalena Trčková of Lobkovice. Her family, however, became closely associated with Wallenstein and shared his tragic fate when Marie's son Adam Erdman, an imperial colonel and Wallenstein's brother-in-law, was murdered alongside him in Cheb.<sup>13</sup>

### **Legal Regime governing the Settlement of Foreigners in the Kingdom of Bohemia**

However, this study focuses primarily on foreign officers whose fates intersected with the Kingdom of Bohemia during the Thirty Years' War, when the emperor allowed them to settle here and join the local estates. The estates they acquired were then largely left to them in direct connection with their war claims related to the financing of their troops.

Before the outbreak of the estates uprising, the settlement of foreigners in Bohemia was relatively effectively controlled by the local estates. The roots of this situation can be traced back to the early 14th century, when, after the extinction of the domestic Přemyslid dynasty, the Bohemian royal throne began to be occupied by members of foreign families, who tended to come to Bohemia with their own advisors and courtiers, who then, with royal patronage, had relatively broad opportunities for advancement, to the detriment of the domestic aristocracy. Already in the privilege issued in 1311 by the young King John of Luxembourg to the inhabitants of the Margraviate of Moravia, he promised not to appoint foreigners to

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12. For more details on the legal aspects of Wallenstein's liquidation, see KAMPMANN, Christoph: *Reichsebellion und kaiserliche Acht. Politische Strafjustiz im Dreißigjährigen Krieg und das Verfahren gegen Wallenstein 1634*, Münster 1992.

13. On the punishment of the Trčka family see in particular DOSTÁL, Josef: *Z historie trčkovských konfiskací* [From the History of the Trčkas' Confiscations]. *Český časopis historický* 2/L, 1949, pp. 165–184.

provincial offices and not to transfer castles or estates to them.<sup>14</sup> A very similar commitment apparently appeared in the draft inauguration diploma presented to John at the same time by the Bohemian nobility.<sup>15</sup> And to prevent the second of these prohibitions from being circumvented, a customary rule was eventually established that not only the monarch, but no one else, could transfer estates to foreigners on any legal basis. This prohibition was explicitly and definitively formulated in the code of Bohemian land law, issued in 1500. The norm was accompanied by a severe sanction, whereby the transferor was to be stripped of his honour and expelled from the country, and the incriminated estate was to be forfeited to the monarch.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, it was not possible, nor was it desirable, to strictly prevent foreigners from settling in Bohemia if they were willing to submit to local rules and integrate into the local community. However, the first preserved norm dealing with this issue dates back only to 1486 and is very general: any sale of property to a foreigner had to be subject to the monarch's permission, which could not be issued without the "land council", and the immigrant in question was required, before taking possession of the property acquired in Bohemia, to guarantee that he would have no other hereditary lord than the crowned King of Bohemia and that he would comply with all the obligations of the other inhabitants of the Kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, however, in the Land Constitution of 1500, in addition to the "council" a land "permission" also appeared.<sup>18</sup>

This shift in wording corresponds to the fact that, although the monarch's consent was formally listed as the first sine qua non condition, in reality the Land Diet, i.e. the assembly of representatives of the privileged estates (the higher and lower nobility and royal cities), assumed the decisive role in accepting foreigners into the country. They decided at their discretion which foreigners they were willing to accept, while the monarch's role was limited to addressing the assembly with his

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14. The original of the repeatedly confirmed privilege has been preserved and is stored in Moravský zemský archiv [Moravian Land Archives] Brno, fund A 1 – Stavovské listiny [Estates' Charters], sign. 2.

15. The requirements are preserved only in transcripts; they were first printed by PALACKÝ, František (ed.): *Ueber Formelbücher, zunächst in Bezug auf böhmische Geschichte. Nebst Beilagen, I. Lieferung*, Prag 1842, pp. 331–333, No. 129. From the literature, compare, for example KOSS, Rudolf: *Zur Kritik der ältesten böhmisch-mährischen Landesprivilegien*, Prag 1910.

16. KREUZ, Petr – MARTINOVSKÝ, Ivan (ed.): *Vladislavské zřízení zemské a navazující prameny (Svatováclavská smlouva a Zřízení o ručnicích)*. Edice [Vladislaus' Land Constitution and Related Sources (The Treaty of St. Wenceslas and the Regulation on Handcuffs). Edition], Dolní Břežany 2007, pp. 222–223, Art. 432.

17. PALACKÝ, František (ed.): *Archiv český čili staré písemné památky české i moravské [Bohemian Archive, i.e. Old Written Monuments from Bohemia and Moravia]*. Díl [Tom.] V., Praha 1862, pp. 427–428, No. 32.

18. KREUZ, P. – MARTINOVSKÝ, I. (ed.): *Vladislavské zřízení zemské a navazující prameny (Svatováclavská smlouva a Zřízení o ručnicích)*. Edice, pp. 222–223, Art. 432.

"intercession" on behalf of a specific applicant. On the other hand, it is true that without this intercession, it was not possible to appear before the Land Diet at all.<sup>19</sup>

However, the Diet resolution did not in itself establish the residential right (for which the term "inkolat," derived from the Latin "ius incolatus", was later adopted); the person to whom it applied still had to meet certain requirements, which had been established at the end of the 15th century. Specifically, they were first required to issue a parchment reverse under their own seal, which contained certain binding promises aimed at full integration into the new environment, and to deliver this reverse to the office of land tables. In addition, the newly accepted foreigner had to make a similar promise orally. This so-called confession to the land could also be made elsewhere, but always in the presence of at least some minor land officials. It was then recorded in the land tables, special official books in which the agenda of various estates institutions was recorded, as well as a lot of acts of a private law nature.<sup>20</sup>

The entire process was regulated in more detail by resolutions of the Land Diet at the beginning of the 17th century, the most extensive of which was adopted in 1610 – a six-week period was set for sealing the reverse and making an oral confession, during which newly admitted foreigners were also required to purchase a property in the land, have their children taught the Czech language and prove their membership of the relevant estate corporation before representatives of that corporation. All this was subject to the penalty of invalidity of the Diet acceptance if the obligations were not fulfilled within the above specified period. The binding nature of this resolution was partly retroactive, i.e., it also applied to foreigners who had gone through the approval procedure in the past.<sup>21</sup>

Formally, all legal rules relating to the settlement of foreigners remained in force even after the Battle of White Mountain. However, the victorious Ferdinand II had no intention of being constrained by them. Even before the final collapse of the uprising,

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19. From the period before the Battle of White Mountain, there is only one known case in Bohemia where admission took place without this intercession (although this was not intentional, but rather an administrative oversight).

20. For a very detailed comparison of land tables, see BURDOVÁ, Pavla: *Desky zemské (Rozdělení po stránce obsahové a formální)* [Land Tables (Classification by Content and Form)]. *Sborník archivních prací* 2/XLIII, 1993, pp. 347–439.

21. Similar conditions had already been adopted in 1608 by the Diet of the neighbouring Margraviate of Moravia, which had been inseparably linked to the Kingdom of Bohemia since the Middle Ages. The local estates also explicitly reserved the right to reject a candidate for settlement in the country, and at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, candidates for citizenship coming from the neighbouring Kingdom of Hungary were thoroughly investigated to determine whether they or their ancestors had behaved in a hostile manner towards Moravia. More about the situation in Moravia JANIŠOVÁ, Jana – JANIŠ, Dalibor: *Postavení cizinců a inkolát podle moravského zemského práva v 16. a na počátku 17. století* [The Status of Foreigners and Inkolat according to Moravian Land Law in the 16th and Early 17th Centuries]. In: *„Morava jako zrcadlo Evropy“*. *Etnické menšiny na Moravě do roku 1918*. *„Mähren als Spiegel Europas“*. *Etnische Minderheiten in Mähren bis zum Jahr 1918*. XXXI. Mikulovské sympozium, 13.–14. října 2010, Brno 2010, pp. 191–201.

he did not hesitate to dispose of the rebels' estates at will and hand them over to foreign officers. An extreme case was the transfer of the extensive estates of Petr of Švamberk, worth more than 1 million guildens, to General Charles Bonaventure de Buquoy, originally from France.<sup>22</sup> As already mentioned in connection with Albrecht von Wallenstein, from 1621 onwards, the estates of rebels were pledged as a guarantee for war loans, and in 1622–1623 a 'great sale' took place, i.e. the first wave of sales of confiscated estates. Among the buyers were again a number of foreigners who, although not eligible to purchase property in Bohemia under the law, were not prevented from doing so in the new political landscape. The only external reflection of the fact that these transactions were somewhat unorthodox was that a special book was created for them in the land tables, and from 1622 onwards, sales of estates to domestic residents and foreigners were registered in parallel.<sup>23</sup>

However, the emperor did not go so far as to grant citizenship rights himself. On the other hand, the Land Diet, which was responsible for granting citizenship, was not convened at all after the Battle of White Mountain. For this reason, no foreigners were legally incorporated into the Bohemian estates for several years. It was not until the Renewed Land Constitution, which Ferdinand II approved and ordered to be printed in 1627, that a fundamental change in the legal regulation of the settlement of foreigners in Bohemia took place. The decision to grant the residential right (*inkolat*<sup>24</sup>) was transferred entirely to the monarch as one of his important prerogatives.<sup>25</sup> The estate community itself could no longer interfere with it. The strengthened position of the monarch was also symbolised by another administrative step, newly incorporated into the whole process, namely the oath of hereditary allegiance, which every newly admitted foreigner had to take at the Bohemian Court Chancellery.<sup>26</sup> Of

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22. BÍLEK, T. V.: *Dějiny konfiskací v Čechách po r. 1618*, pp. 651–656. For more on General Buquoy and his era, see a recent monograph MAREK, Pavel – NOVÁKOVÁ, Anna et al.: *Karel Bonaventura Buquoy a jeho doba* [Charles Bonaventura Buquoy and his Era], České Budějovice 2022.

23. Národní archiv Praha, fund. Desky zemské [Land Tables], sign. DZV 153.

24. At that time, the term 'inkolat' began to refer not only to the residential right as such, but also to the document by which the monarch authoritatively granted it. See BRŇOVJÁK, Jiří: *Šlechticem z moci úřední. Udělování šlechtických titulů v českých zemích 1705–1780* [A Nobleman by Official Authority. The Granting of Noble Titles in the Bohemian Lands, 1705–1780], Ostrava 2015, esp. pp. 104–105. For a comparison of the regime of residential rights before and after 1620, see BRŇOVJÁK, Jiří, STARÝ, Marek: *Residential Right in the Course of Time: Changes in the Legal Institution of the Inkolat in the Bohemian Crown Lands*. In: GAŁĘDEK, Michał, KLIMASZEWSKA, Anna (eds.) *Modernisation, National Identity and Legal Instrumentalism. Volume 2: Public Law. Studies in Comparative Legal History*, Leiden–Boston 2020, pp. 1–32

25. JIREČEK, Hermenegild (ed.): *Obnovené právo a zřízení zemské dědičného království Českého. Verneuerte Landes-Ordnung des Erb-Königreichs Böhmen 1627*, Praha 1888, pp. 28–31, Art. A XX.

26. This oath was introduced into the legal system as mandatory for all nobles who had reached adulthood.

the pre-White Mountain elements, the parchment reverse and oral confession of allegiance to the land at the office of the land tables remained, while other estates' demands enacted at the beginning of the 17th century were abolished. In 1627, residential right was granted to a large number of people, including many who had purchased property in Bohemia in previous years.<sup>27</sup>

### **Post-White Mountain Immigration and Imperial Officers: Statistical Evaluation**

Thanks to the fact that the reverses to the land were concentrated over time into a single archive fund, which is now stored in the National Archives in Prague, it is possible to statistically examine the phenomenon of aristocratic immigration to the Kingdom of Bohemia relatively easily. However, certain methodological difficulties cannot be ignored, which somewhat relativise the persuasiveness of the results of statistical analysis. First of all, it should be noted that some immigrants in Bohemia purchased estates, especially in the 1620s, without subsequently issuing a reverse to the land. One example is the imperial prince and colonel Henry Julius of Saxe-Lauenburg, who built up a relatively extensive landholding in western Bohemia, consisting of several estates. After inheriting his father's principality, he found himself in the somewhat schizophrenic role of sovereign imperial ruler and landowner, subject to the authority of the King of Bohemia. This combination of roles was not entirely unique.<sup>28</sup> In any case, it should be borne in mind that the collection of reverses cannot be considered a 100% reflection of the group of foreigners who immigrated to Bohemia.

In the pre-White Mountain period, residents of other lands that were linked to the Kingdom of Bohemia in a complicated constitutional entity known as the Bohemian Crown (the Margraviate of Moravia, the Duchy of Silesia, and initially also the Margraviates of Upper and Lower Lusatia, which was later ceded to the Elector of Saxony under the Peace of Prague in 1635) also had to issue reverses to the lands. They also had to declare their allegiance to the land verbally. However, they were not considered foreigners in the true sense of the word, and therefore, before the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, they were not forced to apply for admission to the

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27. Even so, a large number of foreigners remained in Bohemia illegally, which Emperor Ferdinand III complained about in his patent in 1637. WEINGARTEN, Johann Jacob: *Codex Ferdinando-Leopoldino-Josaeaphino-Carolinus*, Pragae 1720, p. 23.

28. Individual cases were concentrated by STARÝ, Marek. *Souveräne Untertanen. Die im Reich regierenden Fürsten und die Reichsfürsten als Einwohner des Königreichs Böhmen in der Frühen Neuzeit*. *Biuletyn Polskiej Misji Historycznej. Bulletin der Polnischen Historischen Mission* 17, 2022, pp. 77–110.

provincial assembly, or, after the issuance of the Renewed Land Constitution, they did not have to submit a similar request to the monarch.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, the above statement is also valid because it covers other cases where, on the contrary, some foreigners formally obtained Bohemian residential right but were unable to actually exercise it. That is, they did not purchase any property and did not assimilate into Bohemian society in any way. Their reverses, or any other legal acts that have been preserved regarding their admission to the country, thus only reflect the process of granting residential right, but not the actual personnel changes in the ranks of the nobility of the Kingdom of Bohemia.

It should also be noted that the individual legal acts mentioned above may have been separated by a relatively long period of time and that the date of the reverse alone may not be very indicative of when and in what broader context a particular person sought to acquire Bohemian residential right and was granted it by the monarch. Unfortunately, no complete collection of the relevant imperial decrees exists, and drafts or copies of the relevant documents can be found (without any guarantee of completeness) in the extensive Stará manipulace archival fund, in which various archival materials were concentrated in the second half of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century, primarily related to the functioning of the three central authorities of the Kingdom of Bohemia, namely the Bohemian Court (Royal) Chancellery, the Bohemian Governors' Office and the Bohemian Chamber.<sup>30</sup> Within this collection, under the reference number J 21, there are 38 cartons containing documents related to residential rights.<sup>31</sup> However, it should be added that there is also a significant amount of archival material relating to the oaths of hereditary allegiance that Bohemian nobles swore to the emperor. Furthermore, the materials are arranged alphabetically by family name, making the search for imperial deeds remarkably similar to looking for a needle in a haystack.

If, with the above reservations, we analyse the set of reverses from 1627–1648,<sup>32</sup> we can reach the following conclusions (also shown in the table below):

From the time of the publication of the Renewed Land Constitution for the Kingdom of Bohemia (May 10, 1627) to the conclusion of the Peace of Westphalia,

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29. It should be added that in the period after the Battle of White Mountain, it became customary for the monarch to grant citizenship once for all the lands of the Bohemian Crown, so that its holders could then settle freely in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia.

30. More about the establishment of the fund PROKEŠ, Jaroslav: Archiv Ministerstva vnitra v Praze v letech 1918–1934 [Archive of the Ministry of the Interior in Prague in the Years 1918–1934]. Sborník Archivu Ministerstva vnitra Republiky československé VIII, 1935, pp. 12–18; KOLLMANN, Josef: Archivář J. J. Klauser (K 200. výročí jeho úmrtí) [Archivist J. J. Klauser (On the 200th Anniversary of his Death)]. Archivní časopis 4/XXI, 1971, pp. 234–247.

31. Národní archiv Praha, fund Stará manipulace [Old Manipulation], sign. J 21, inv. no. 1522–1544, cart. 1002–1039.

32. In line with the above, the term *post quem* is postponed until the moment when the process of granting residential rights was revitalized in a modified form after the Battle of White Mountain.

which finally ended the Thirty Years' War (October 24, 1648), a total of 220 reverses to the land have been preserved.<sup>33</sup> A large part of them (130) date from 1627–1633, and within this period, the year 1627 itself is key, as 81 were issued in that year alone,<sup>34</sup> i.e. more than a third of the total number.

The assassination of Albrecht von Wallenstein in February 1634 was undoubtedly a significant turning point. It was followed by another wave of confiscations, with the estates of the slain generalissimo and his 'co-conspirators' being quickly divided up. While imperial officers already accounted for a relatively large proportion of newly admitted foreigners (28 %) between 1627 and 1633, this proportion rose to more than half (52 %) in the five years following Wallenstein's assassination. However, this is entirely logical given that it was precisely these officers who participated in Wallenstein's downfall and among whom a significant portion of the confiscated estates were divided. From another point of view, the massive absorption of foreign officers by the Bohemian estates can be seen as a clear programmatic effort by the emperor to strengthen loyalty within the officer corps. This trend continued in the last years of the war, when a high number (40%) of officers still appeared among the sealers of reverses. The situation did not change significantly even after the conclusion of peace, when between 1648 and 1653 the proportion of military commanders among all new inhabitants remained at 41%. This is clearly an echo of the war, and to a certain extent it can also be assumed that after the end of the fighting, some officers sought opportunities for their future employment outside the army hierarchy.

Among the precisely 100 officers who submitted their reverse to the land between 1627 and 1653, the decisive part was made up of colonels – they were 64. This is entirely logical, because it was the regimental commanders who were, from the perspective of the Viennese court, the most important representatives of the armed forces and who could most easily obtain imperial permission to settle in Bohemia. Without exception, these were also men who had to have sufficient economic credit, so that it was realistic for them to be able to finance the purchase of a table estate. Following the colonels, but at a considerable distance, is the second subset of the entire group, consisting of 19 lieutenant colonels, while other lower-ranking officers, numbering 17, are a clear minority.

Although the figures cited cannot be considered methodologically unassailable, i.e. they are based on formal criteria,<sup>35</sup> they undoubtedly show that the Thirty Years'

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33. Národní archiv Praha, fund Reversy k zemi [Reverses to the Land], inv. no. 293–512.

34. This number does not include the reverse of Martin Knisen of Kopach, issued on January 18, 1627, as it dates from before the issuance of the Renewed Land Constitution and applies to residents of a secondary crown land, who did not have to be granted residential right and it was not granted him.

35. It is based strictly on the position of the sealer himself. In some cases, however, there may have been a situation where the issuer of the reverse was not an officer, but the acquisition of the Bohemian inkolat was undoubtedly a direct result of military activity or efforts made by certain imperial officers. One example is colonel Jakub Strozzi († 1635), who received the

War created unique conditions for the ruling elite in the Kingdom of Bohemia to undergo far-reaching changes, and that officers of the imperial army and their descendants became a very significant part of it.

*Table 1.* Number of Persons who sealed the Reverse to the Kingdom of Bohemia between 1627 and 1653

	1627–1633	1634–1638	1639–1648	1648–1653	Total
Colonels	21	21	9	13	<b>64</b>
Lieutenant Colonels	9	4	-	6	<b>19</b>
Other Officers	6	1	7	3	<b>17</b>
Officers Total	36	26	16	22	<b>100</b>
Reverses Total	130	50	40	54	<b>274</b>
	(28 %)	(52 %)	(40 %)	(41 %)	<b>(36 %)</b>

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Hořice estate from Emperor Ferdinand II after Wallenstein's assassination. However, due to his early death, he did not manage to complete the process of admission to the land, and the reverse was issued in 1636 by his sons Petr and Oktavián. Similarly, colonel Walter Butler († 1634) died shortly after receiving the Doksy estate as a reward for his part in Wallenstein's liquidation, and the reverse was therefore issued by his widow Anna Maria of Donín together with his daughter Eleonora Constance. Národní archiv Praha, Reversy k zemi, inv. no. 442 and 462.

## Conclusion

Although formally, in accordance with the law, imperial officers were only allowed to settle in Bohemia from 1627, when a new code of law changed the existing legal regulations, in fact, Bohemian estates fell into their hands as early as 1620, when the Bohemian Revolt was defeated and Emperor Ferdinand II gained complete control over the Kingdom of Bohemia and the lands annexed to it. He also reserved for himself and his descendants a key role in deciding who would be allowed to obtain residential right in Bohemia and be given the opportunity to purchase estates. It is entirely logical that the recipients of the relevant decisions included a large number of high-ranking officers, whose loyalty was crucial at a time of protracted war. It can be added that the confiscation processes that took place in Bohemia in the 1620s and 1630s created a unique opportunity for these officers to invest their war profits in Bohemian estates. It was an opportunity that was not to be repeated in the future.

Based on preserved land registers, the number of officers initially approached 30% of the total number of those who formally became privileged residents of the Kingdom of Bohemia. After the assassination of Generalissimo Wallenstein in 1634, it rose to over 50%, then remained at around 40% until the end of the Thirty Years' War and even immediately after its conclusion. These initial statistics are undoubtedly very remarkable in themselves, but they need to be supplemented by other types of sources (imperial decisions in the registry of the Bohemian Court Chancellery, entries in the land registers, etc.), as it cannot be assumed that all foreigners who received the monarch's consent actually issued such a reversal.

Similarly, further research into specific cases and deepening our knowledge of individual immigrants and their families, or rather the mechanisms that were applied in practice when granting Bohemian citizenship, and last but not least, the extent of property they managed to acquire in the Kingdom of Bohemia or other countries of the Bohemian Crown, remains an urgent challenge not only for Czech historiography. In a broader context, this involves understanding migration flows and the convergence of political elites across Europe, topics that are as relevant today as they were four hundred years ago.

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## Artificial Intelligence in the Museum Experience: Comparative Perspectives from Beijing, Turin, and Harvard

By Vincenzo De Masi\*, Jin Xuetao<sup>‡</sup> & Andrea Nanetti<sup>°</sup>

*This article examines how artificial intelligence is transforming the contemporary museum from a static repository of objects into a dynamic system of interpretation, participation, and imagination. Through a qualitative comparative analysis of three emblematic case studies from Beijing, Turin, and Cambridge, the study explores how different cultural, political, and epistemological frameworks shape the integration of AI in museological practice. The Beijing case illustrates a state-led infrastructural model in which AI supports large-scale heritage governance and digital sovereignty. The Turin case highlights a participatory and human-centered approach, where AI functions as a mediator aligned with ethical design, community engagement, and sustainability. The Cambridge case, represented by Harvard University's Chinese Art Media Lab, presents an experimental paradigm in which AI operates as a creative and imaginative partner in immersive reconstruction and algorithmic aesthetics. Drawing on digital hermeneutics, phenomenology, and actor-network theory, the article argues that AI acts simultaneously as technological infrastructure and interpretive agent, redistributing authority among curators, visitors, and machines. The intelligent museum thus emerges as a cognitive ecosystem where cultural meaning is co-produced through human-machine collaboration, raising new ethical, epistemological, and aesthetic questions for the future of digital museology.*

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence; Digital Museology; Cultural Heritage; Human Computer Interaction; Immersive Media

### Introduction

The twenty-first-century digital transformation of museums can be used to showcase how societies are reshaping the creation and dissemination of cultural knowledge using computational technologies (Nanetti et al. 2021). Artificial intelligence has become a vital element in this process, widening the museum's role from merely storing objects to actively engaging in content interpretation and co-creation of new knowledge. The incorporation of intelligent systems into museum practice alters both institutional logic and visitor experience, introducing new forms of curation, conservation, and narrative interaction (Parry and Dziekan 2021).

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\*Associate Professor, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, School of Journalism and Communication, China.

<sup>‡</sup>Dean, Communication University of China, Faculty of International Media, Beijing, China.

<sup>°</sup>Distinguished Professor, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, Research Centre for Digital Humanities, Guangzhou, China.

Museums have historically mediated between memory and imagination, between the tangible presence of artifacts and the symbolic frameworks that give them meaning (Hooper Greenhill 1992, Nanetti 2021, Murawska-Muthesius and Piotrowski 2015). With the rise of artificial intelligence, the museum becomes a dynamic network where objects, data, and human experiences interact (Caramiaux 2023). This transformation reflects what Fiona Cameron describes as a broader heritage complex, in which digital objects and technologies are embedded within an institutionalized culture of practices and ideas that actively shape value, interpretation, and mediation in museums (Cameron 2007). In 2021, Andrea Nanetti, Zaqeer Razdi, and Davide Benvenuti reviewed the secondary literature in English on the strengths and weaknesses of web-based learning tools in museum systems, as highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (Nanetti et al. 2021).

Artificial intelligence contributes to this evolution by enabling predictive conservation, automated classification, and adaptive storytelling that adjusts to audience behavior (Caramiaux 2023). The redefinition of the museum through artificial intelligence signifies not only an institutional change but also a philosophical one. The lines between material and digital heritage are blurring as algorithms contribute to the creation of meaning. As Rafael Capurro explains, digital culture necessitates a hermeneutic approach where understanding develops through the interaction between human and artificial intelligences (Capurro 2010). Museums can therefore be seen as dynamic cognitive ecosystems in which visitors, curators, and intelligent systems collaboratively generate experiences and knowledge.

Our research team compared three notable case studies from different cultural contexts and museographical approaches (Beijing, China; Turin, Italy; and Cambridge, Mass., USA) to demonstrate how artificial intelligence is reshaping the technological, ethical, and epistemological roles of cultural institutions. Each case study embodies a distinct paradigm of technological integration. The Beijing case study illustrates a state-led model in which artificial intelligence serves as cultural infrastructure, integrating heritage preservation with national digital strategies (Peng 2022). The Turin case study examines the I-Muse project, which embodies a participatory, human-centered model that links artificial intelligence to ethical design, community engagement, and environmental sustainability (Politecnico di Torino 2023). The Cambridge case study highlights Harvard University's Chinese Art Media Lab (CAMLab), which offers an experimental aesthetic model in which artificial intelligence serves as a creative partner in reconstructing lost cultural experiences through immersive visualization (Kenderdine 2021).

The comparison of these three models highlights the diversity of approaches to artificial intelligence in museology and the different cultural, political, and ethical assumptions underlying them. It addresses three central research questions. First, how does artificial intelligence reshape the epistemological and ethical dimensions of museums? Second, how do different sociocultural frameworks influence the adoption and interpretation of intelligent technologies? Third, what theoretical paradigms emerge from the comparative study of Eastern, European, and North

American experiences? By situating artificial intelligence within the broader field of cultural production, this article aims to develop a critical theory of the intelligent museum. The analysis is rooted in the intersection of media studies, cultural theory, and digital humanities. It argues that integrating artificial intelligence into museology is not merely a technical process but a redefinition of the museum's communicative and cognitive functions. As Elisa Giaccardi notes, in a participatory culture heritage is less a static collection of artifacts than an ongoing, socially constructed process sustained through repeated interactions among people, places and digital media (Giaccardi 2012).

In this context, artificial intelligence serves as both a medium and a metaphor. It enables museums to extend their reach beyond physical boundaries and to engage audiences in new ways, while also reflecting broader transformations in how societies conceptualize knowledge, memory, and creativity. The comparative perspective adopted here seeks to show that the museum is not only adapting to artificial intelligence but also contributing to its cultural meaning. Through this dialogue between technology and interpretation, the museum becomes a site where human understanding and machine cognition meet in the continuous re-creation of heritage.

### **Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

The methodological structure of this study is based on a qualitative comparative approach that integrates interpretive analysis, critical hermeneutics, and actor-network theory. This study examines how artificial intelligence interacts with institutional, technological, and cultural systems across different national contexts. Instead of measuring the quantitative impact of technology, this research investigates how meaning, participation, and authority are renegotiated through intelligent mediation within museums (Latour 2005).

Each of our three case studies (Beijing, Turin, and Cambridge) represents a distinct configuration of technology, governance, and cultural ideology. The study adopts a comparative case analysis method that enables the identification of convergences and divergences among these systems, showing how the museum's epistemological role changes under artificial intelligence. The approach is interpretive rather than positivist; it seeks to understand how artificial intelligence and automated systems operate as agents with their own forms of agency, intelligence, and cognition, reshaping the relations between humans and heritage (Cameron 2021).

The first theoretical axis grounding this analysis is digital hermeneutics, which views understanding as an interactive process between human cognition and technological systems (Nanetti 2023). In this framework, artificial intelligence is not a neutral instrument but an interpretive partner that generates and transforms cultural meaning. Rafael Capurro argues that digital hermeneutics requires recognizing the co-agency of technology in the construction of knowledge, since interpretation increasingly occurs through algorithmic mediation (Capurro 2010). Applied to

museology, this means that algorithms, databases, and recommendation systems participate in the creation of historical and aesthetic narratives.

The second axis is actor-network theory, which conceptualizes museums as networks composed of human and nonhuman actors. Curators, visitors, digital interfaces, sensors, and machine learning models all contribute to the construction of museum discourse. Artificial intelligence, within this perspective, is not external to the museum but part of its communicative and ontological fabric. Latour defines this relational ontology as one in which agency circulates among interconnected entities, dissolving the boundaries between subject and object (Latour 2005). The museum thus becomes a distributed field of interpretation where knowledge emerges from interaction rather than instruction.

The third theoretical axis is phenomenology of experience, emphasizing that perception is the foundation of understanding. The French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), in his seminal book *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945), situates meaning in the embodied encounter between the subject and the world (Merleau-Ponty 2010). Artificial intelligence expands this phenomenological domain by introducing interfaces that sense, respond, and adapt to human presence. In contemporary museums, interactive and socially networked media can shift visitors from passive spectators to active co-creators of meaning and shared experience (Giaccardi 2012). Through these interactions, visitors no longer passively receive information but can participate in the production of cultural significance.

Our research combined documentary analysis, literature review, and case observation. Primary materials include institutional reports, exhibition records, and policy documents from the museums under examination. Secondary materials include recent peer-reviewed literature in museum studies, digital heritage, and artificial intelligence ethics (Peng 2022, Zhu and Liu 2025). These sources provide empirical and theoretical grounding for understanding how intelligent systems reshape conservation, accessibility, and participation in cultural institutions. The integration of these methodologies allows the research to go beyond merely descriptive analysis. By examining technological infrastructures alongside philosophical and social dimensions, the study situates artificial intelligence within a broader cultural framework. This interpretive approach recognizes that technology is never purely instrumental but always embedded in systems of meaning. Artificial intelligence in museums, therefore, functions as both a practical tool and a theoretical challenge, questioning traditional notions of authorship, authenticity, and authority.

Finally, our methodology approach follows a hermeneutic cycle, moving between the particular and the general. Insights from each case study inform the overall theoretical model, which in turn reframes the interpretation of local practices. This cyclical process reflects the mutual shaping of theory and observation. It also aligns with the epistemological assumption that artificial intelligence, as both an analytical and creative agent, modifies not only how museums operate but how they think. The museum, in this framework, is conceptualized as a living system where

human interpretation and algorithmic reasoning interact continuously in the co-production of knowledge.

### **Beijing: Artificial Intelligence as Infrastructure**

In Beijing, the application of artificial intelligence to the museum sector reflects a distinctive model in which technological innovation and cultural policy are integrated within a unified state vision. Artificial intelligence has become a structural component of China's cultural modernization, linking the preservation of national heritage to the strategic goal of digital sovereignty. Museums in Beijing thus operate as laboratories for testing the role of intelligent technologies in governance, education, and the formation of social identity (Peng 2022).

The Chinese government has identified cultural heritage as a key domain for the implementation of artificial intelligence. National programs such as "Digital China" and the "Smart Museum Initiative" promote the use of machine learning, computer vision, and data analytics to manage vast collections and enhance public access. The Palace Museum, the National Museum of China, and the Capital Museum have all experimented with AI-driven tools such as image recognition, 3D modelling and advanced search interfaces to support restoration, cataloguing and interpretation of large collections, in line with broader developments in "smart museum" services in China (Peng 2022). These initiatives transform the museum into a complex digital infrastructure where algorithms govern not only the classification of artifacts but also the ways in which audiences encounter them.

Artificial intelligence aids preventive conservation by constantly monitoring environmental conditions and detecting micro-deterioration. In collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage, several Beijing museums have implemented intelligent sensors that gather real-time data on humidity, temperature, and light exposure. The integration of these systems has lowered restoration costs and improved the accuracy of conservation planning (Zhu and Liu 2025). Through these mechanisms, artificial intelligence enhances the museum's ability to preserve material culture while also creating extensive data archives that contribute to national digital resources. At the same time, the Beijing model demonstrates how artificial intelligence fits within a broader ideological framework. The automation of curation and the personalization of digital experiences are aimed at strengthening the narrative of cultural continuity and national unity. Algorithms not only recommend exhibitions or generate multilingual captions but also shape interpretive hierarchies that align with state-approved historical narratives (Peng 2022). Artificial intelligence thus functions both as a mechanism of access and as an instrument of cultural governance.

The Palace Museum's intelligent guide services exemplify this duality. In line with wider developments in smart museums, experimental systems combine computer vision, facial recognition, natural language processing and behavioural analytics to tailor information and routes to different visitor profiles, while simultaneously

collecting data that can be used to redesign circulation patterns and exhibition layouts. This combination of personalization and surveillance reveals a tension inherent in Beijing's technological paradigm: the museum is both an open educational space and a managed environment of information exchange (Wen and Ma 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, the Beijing model demonstrates how artificial intelligence transforms the museum into a cybernetic institution. It aligns with Latour's concept of the networked actor, in which agency is distributed among humans, machines, and institutions (Latour 2005). The museum's curatorial authority becomes a system of coordination among technical and human actors rather than an expression of individual expertise. Curators rely on predictive algorithms to identify audience interests, while administrators use analytics dashboards to allocate resources and measure engagement. In this environment, artificial intelligence becomes a co-author of cultural interpretation. This infrastructural paradigm has significant implications for accessibility and international collaboration. Online exhibitions powered by artificial intelligence, such as the "Virtual Forbidden City," have attracted millions of visitors worldwide, demonstrating the capacity of Chinese museums to expand cultural influence through digital diplomacy (Zhu and Liu 2025). The project's immersive environments and AI-driven translation systems enable cross-cultural interaction, while simultaneously projecting a curated image of national heritage consistent with policy objectives.

The strength of the Beijing model lies in its coherence and scale. It mobilizes public institutions, universities, and technology companies in a shared effort to digitize heritage and educate citizens through intelligent media. Its limitation resides in the restricted openness of interpretation, which can reduce the diversity of perspectives and the autonomy of audiences. Artificial intelligence, in this context, reinforces the institutional framework rather than destabilizing it. Nevertheless, the model provides a powerful example of how technology can serve both cultural preservation and state strategy. The Beijing case reveals that artificial intelligence operates as infrastructure, governance, and ideology simultaneously. It integrates technological efficiency with symbolic production, turning the museum into an interface between culture and policy. Understanding this system is essential for evaluating the global future of artificial intelligence in museology, as it highlights both the possibilities of innovation and the risks of centralization. In Beijing, the intelligent museum is not only a site of knowledge but a site of power, where data and heritage converge in the construction of a digital civilization (De Masi et al. 2024).

### **Turin: Artificial Intelligence as Mediation**

In contrast to Beijing's centralized and policy-driven approach, the Turin model represents a participatory and decentralized vision of how artificial intelligence can transform the museum experience. Italian museology has historically emphasized cultural heritage as a living process that connects communities, education, and place. In this participatory framework, digital technologies are conceived less as instruments of control and more as mediators of meaning within collaborative, human-centred heritage practices (Giaccardi 2012). One example of this approach is the I-Muse project, developed by the Politecnico di Torino in collaboration with regional museums and cultural partners (Politecnico di Torino 2023). The initiative applies artificial intelligence to support accessibility and audience engagement by offering personalized interpretive pathways and recommendations that connect artworks and collections across institutions. By analysing interaction data and patterns of use, the system can suggest tailored routes and content sequences that respond to visitors' interests while preserving curatorial coherence and narrative intent. The approach does not seek to predict or govern human behavior but to establish a dialogical relationship between visitors and space.

The Italian framework aligns closely with the European Union's Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence, which stress transparency, accountability, and human oversight (European Commission 2021). These principles shape both the technological architecture and the philosophical foundations of projects like I-Muse. Artificial intelligence is treated as a collaborator in interpretation, assisting curators and educators in organizing content while preserving the human dimension of decision-making. This approach contrasts sharply with models that prioritize efficiency over participation, positioning ethical design as an integral component of digital transformation.

Participation in Turin extends beyond the museum's physical boundaries. Local schools, universities, and cultural associations contribute to the creation of digital materials, ensuring that communities remain active producers of heritage. Workshops and training programs encourage citizens to generate new content and reinterpret existing collections, making the museum a participatory hub of cultural production (Russo 2025). This co-creative structure supports what Ross Parry defines as the "distributed museum," a networked ecosystem where authority is shared among institutions, professionals, and the public (Parry 2010, Parry and Dziekan 2021). Artificial intelligence can also contribute to sustainability at the level of operations and logistics. Predictive analytics can support attendance forecasting and capacity planning, informing scheduling decisions and the distribution of visitor services across time and space. In this sense, technological innovation is aligned with responsible management of visitor flows, staff workload, and institutional resources (Politecnico di Torino 2023). In this sense, technological innovation becomes part of a broader ecological ethic that connects digital efficiency to environmental awareness.

The intelligent museum in Turin thus emerges as a hybrid system in which cultural, social, and ecological sustainability reinforce each other.

A key characteristic of the Turin model is its interdisciplinary collaboration. Engineers, designers, historians, and sociologists work together throughout the design process, ensuring that artificial intelligence applications reflect both technical feasibility and cultural sensitivity. The design process is iterative and participatory, incorporating user and stakeholder feedback, so that digital technologies support an ongoing, reflexive relationship in which heritage institutions learn from their interactions with the public (Giaccardi 2012). Artificial intelligence becomes not only a tool for personalization but also a mirror that reveals how institutions engage with their communities.

From a theoretical perspective, the Turin model embodies what Rafael Capurro describes as the hermeneutic dimension of digital culture, in which understanding emerges from continuous interpretation between humans and machines (Capurro 2010). Algorithms in I-Muse do not replace curatorship but extend it, providing insights into audience engagement that curators reinterpret within broader cultural narratives. This process preserves the interpretive autonomy of human actors while recognizing the analytical power of intelligent systems. The result is a balanced model of co-agency between technology and human creativity. Ethical responsibility remains central to this model. Transparent data management, informed consent, and algorithmic explainability are treated as non-negotiable conditions for technological adoption. These practices reflect a European commitment to cultural democracy and digital citizenship (European Commission 2021). In Turin, artificial intelligence is not merely a technical innovation but an ethical statement about the values that guide the relationship between culture and technology.

The Turin case demonstrates that artificial intelligence can enrich rather than replace human mediation. Its focus on participation, transparency, and sustainability positions it as a counterpoint to Beijing's infrastructural model. If the Chinese museum represents artificial intelligence as a system of governance, the Italian museum represents it as a space of dialogue. In both cases, technology transforms the relationship between culture and public, but the Turin model shows that such transformation can remain deeply human, inclusive, and ethically grounded.

### **Cambridge: Artificial Intelligence as Imagination**

The case of Cambridge, represented by the Chinese Art Media Lab (CAMLab) at Harvard University, illustrates a third paradigm in the relationship between artificial intelligence and the museum: the paradigm of imagination. Unlike the infrastructural orientation of Beijing or the participatory mediation of Turin, CAMLab approaches artificial intelligence as a philosophical and aesthetic instrument. Here, technology is not limited to management or accessibility but becomes a creative medium for reinterpreting historical consciousness and visual culture (Kenderdine 2021).

CAMLab's research explores how digital reconstruction and algorithmic visualization can reanimate lost or fragmented cultural experiences. Projects such as the Cave Dance project and the Embodied Architecture reconstruction of the Shakya Pagoda harness artificial intelligence to synthesize data from mural depictions, archaeological surveys, photographic archives, and art historical documentation. These reconstructions use machine-learning models trained on datasets of Dunhuang mural figures and motion-capture recordings of professional dancers to generate human-computer collaborative choreographies and immersive environments that allow audiences to experience ancient artistic spaces in new ways. The result is not a simple replication of historical reality but a creative translation of it into new sensory and cognitive forms (Cave Dance 2026).

In this framework, artificial intelligence acts as a co-creator. Algorithms analyze patterns of color, motion, and composition to generate plausible reconstructions that extend the interpretive process beyond human limitation. This collaboration between human imagination and computational inference exemplifies what Kenderdine defines as "algorithmic aesthetics," a mode of artistic production in which data becomes a medium of expression (Kenderdine 2021). The museum is increasingly conceptualized as a site of simulation and performance, where visitors engage with cultural heritage not as passive spectators but as participants in a process of re-creation.

CAMLab's work is grounded in the philosophy of digital phenomenology, which treats technological mediation as an extension of perception. The immersive installations produced by the laboratory do not aim to reproduce the past but to evoke its experiential essence. Through artificial intelligence, the act of viewing becomes an act of remembering and imagining at once. As Bolter and Grusin argue, digital media function through remediation, continually translating old forms into new interfaces (Bolter and Grusin 1999). CAMLab's installations exemplify this principle by transforming the archive into an event of presence, where history becomes performative.

The laboratory's interdisciplinary orientation reinforces its theoretical depth. Collaborations among art historians, computer scientists, engineers, and philosophers foster a research environment that bridges humanistic inquiry and technical experimentation. This synthesis reflects what Ross Parry describes as the distributed condition of the museum in the digital age, in which knowledge emerges through the interaction between disciplines, tools, and sensibilities (Parry 2010, Parry and Dziekan 2021). Artificial intelligence, within this ecology, operates as a cognitive partner that amplifies rather than replaces human creativity.

One of CAMLab's most significant contributions lies in its exploration of AI-driven storytelling. Using natural-language generation and visual synthesis, the lab creates adaptive narratives that evolve in real time based on audience input. These interactive systems can be understood as what Cameron and Kenderdine call "multi-perspectival narratives", in which meaning is not predetermined but dynamically constructed (Cameron and Kenderdine 2007). The museum thus becomes a

dialogical field of interpretation, where visitors negotiate their own understanding through continuous engagement with data and simulation.

The imaginative potential of this model raises critical philosophical questions about authenticity and authorship. Traditional museology associates authenticity with the originality of objects and the authority of curators. In contrast, the AI-driven museum redefines authenticity as a relational quality that emerges through interaction. The German philosopher and media theorist Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), reflecting on the “aura” of the artwork, suggested that technological reproduction diminishes the uniqueness of artworks (Benjamin 2019). Within the context of artificial intelligence, this same aura can instead be reinterpreted as the affective intensity generated by the digital presence. Authenticity, in this sense, resides not in the object itself but in the network of relations that constitutes its meaning.

CAMLab’s projects also engage with ethical and epistemological issues surrounding the simulation of cultural heritage. The use of predictive algorithms to fill gaps in incomplete artifacts raises questions about interpretation and responsibility that resonate with broader debates on AI-driven restoration and neural rendering in cultural heritage. Rather than treating algorithmic outputs as neutral reconstructions, CAMLab foregrounds the speculative nature of its interventions, emphasizing that any digital restoration or immersive visualization is a reversible, virtual layer added to the historical record. The lab addresses these challenges by maintaining transparency about its methods, documenting datasets, workflows, and aesthetic choices, and explicitly presenting its installations as interpretive experiments rather than definitive restitutions. This reflexivity positions CAMLab’s practice within the emerging field of critical digital heritage, which insists on linking technical innovation with accountability, explainability, and respect for the plurality of historical interpretations (Colace 2025).

The Cambridge model demonstrates that artificial intelligence can expand the museum’s ontological boundaries. It shifts attention from the preservation of material objects to the cultivation of experiential knowledge. The integration of immersive environments, data visualization, and interactive storytelling transforms the museum into a space of epistemic experimentation. This aligns with Rafael Capurro’s concept of hermeneutic dialogue between human and artificial cognition, where meaning arises from reciprocal interpretation (Capurro 2010). The museum becomes an arena, in which the past, the present, and the virtual coexist within a single dynamic field of imagination.

In contrast to Beijing’s emphasis on infrastructure and Turin’s focus on mediation, Cambridge proposes an aesthetic and speculative engagement with artificial intelligence. Its strength lies in the ability to transform data into experience and experience into thought. By integrating art, science, and philosophy, CAMLab articulates a new role for the museum in the digital age: not as a container of memory but as a generator of possible worlds. The laboratory’s practice suggests that the future of museology may depend not only on how technology preserves the past but on how it enables humanity to reimagine it.

## **Comparative Insights and Global Implications**

The comparative analysis of Beijing, Turin, and Cambridge reveals that artificial intelligence functions simultaneously as infrastructure, mediation, and imagination. These three models correspond to different configurations of cultural values and institutional priorities; however, they share a common tendency to redefine the museum as a dynamic network of human and nonhuman actors. The convergence of algorithmic systems, sensory environments, and participatory design demonstrates that artificial intelligence is not merely a technological upgrade but reshapes the epistemological foundations of museums and digital heritage (Cameron 2021).

In Beijing, artificial intelligence operates as a technological and political infrastructure. It embodies the logic of centralized coordination, aligning cultural preservation with national strategy. The emphasis is on scale, efficiency, and the integration of heritage into the broader framework of digital governance. Algorithms manage vast datasets and construct narrative coherence within a state-defined horizon. This system reinforces cultural identity by synchronizing narratives of heritage with narratives of modernization, producing a museum that exemplifies technological mastery yet remains constrained by institutional hierarchy.

In Turin, artificial intelligence serves as a mediator. It connects technology with ethics, data with community, and innovation with sustainability. The I-Muse project demonstrates that artificial intelligence can operate as a dialogical tool that enhances transparency and inclusion rather than authority (Politecnico di Torino 2023). This model embodies a European humanistic tradition that prioritizes participation, empathy, and ecological responsibility. It reflects the belief that technology should enrich human experience rather than replace it.

Cambridge, by contrast, represents artificial intelligence as imagination. Through CAMLab's research, the museum becomes a site of creative speculation and philosophical inquiry. Algorithms reconstruct lost cultural experiences, generating immersive encounters that blend historical fidelity with artistic experimentation (Kenderdine 2021). The Cambridge model thus extends museology beyond preservation toward the creation of new interpretive and sensory realities. Artificial intelligence is redefined as a cognitive collaborator that expands human perception and creativity.

Taken together, the three models outline a comparative topology of digital museology. They demonstrate how artificial intelligence simultaneously supports material conservation, ethical participation, and aesthetic innovation. These dimensions can be mapped onto the technical, interpretive, and existential layers of digital hermeneutics (Capurro 2010). The technical layer corresponds to Beijing's focus on infrastructure and automation; the interpretive layer corresponds to Turin's participatory mediation; the existential layer corresponds to Cambridge's imaginative exploration of perception and meaning. The intelligent museum thus emerges as a stratified system in which technology, ethics, and art are inseparable.

Despite their differences, the three contexts reveal several shared challenges. One is the question of authenticity. In all cases, artificial intelligence destabilizes traditional

notions of originality and authority. Authenticity becomes a relational quality that arises from interaction rather than a property inherent in the object (Benjamin 2019). Another shared issue is transparency. As intelligent systems mediate interpretation, it becomes necessary to ensure that algorithms remain accountable and comprehensible. The European model has addressed this through public documentation of algorithmic design (European Commission 2021), whereas in the Chinese model, transparency is subordinated to governance priorities.

A third challenge concerns ethics. The use of artificial intelligence to personalize cultural experience raises questions about surveillance, consent and data ownership. In both China and Europe, cultural institutions face the dilemma of balancing innovation with privacy, especially as AI systems collect and process sensitive behavioural data from visitors (Zhu and Liu 2025). As Ludovica Russo noted in a recent essay on AI and museums, initiatives such as *Historica* imagine AI as an infrastructure for mapping cultural objects, mediating visitor attention and enabling decentralized participation across borders (Russo 2025).

At the same time, the three models share a common aspiration to democratize culture through digital means. Whether through Beijing's online exhibitions, Turin's participatory networks, or Cambridge's immersive reconstructions, artificial intelligence expands access to knowledge and fosters new forms of intercultural dialogue. Chinese initiatives such as large-scale digitization of the Palace Museum's collections and "Digital Dunhuang" have increased the international visibility of national heritage by making high-resolution images, 3D models, and immersive experiences accessible to global audiences. Similarly, European and North American institutions increasingly collaborate across borders, creating hybrid platforms for shared research, co-curated exhibitions, and online educational programs (State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2021).

From a theoretical standpoint, the comparison suggests that artificial intelligence is producing a new kind of museological consciousness. The museum is no longer confined to the display of artifacts but extends into a distributed cognitive environment where knowledge is generated through interaction among people, technologies, and institutions (Latour 2005). This shift requires a rethinking of curatorial authority, which becomes less about control and more about facilitation. Curators now act as mediators between algorithmic systems and human audiences, translating data into meaning and meaning into experience.

The global implications of these transformations are profound. The intelligent museum challenges the traditional separation between technology and culture, revealing that digital infrastructures are not neutral but carry ideological, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions. It also calls for new forms of professional training that combine humanistic sensitivity with computational literacy. As Ross Parry demonstrated, the success of digital heritage depends not only on technological sophistication but also on institutions' capacity to cultivate reflective and inclusive practices (Parry 2010).

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of Beijing, Turin, and Cambridge illustrates that artificial intelligence is redefining the ontology of the museum. It transforms conservation into prediction, exhibition into interaction, and curation into collaboration. Each model contributes a different dimension to the global evolution of museology: the structural intelligence of Beijing, the ethical intelligence of Turin, and the imaginative intelligence of Cambridge. Together, they outline a new paradigm in which the museum becomes an active participant in the ongoing dialogue between humanity and technology.

### **The Future of Museums in the AI Era**

The integration of artificial intelligence into museum practice marks a decisive shift in the cultural and epistemological functions of these institutions. The museum is evolving from a repository of memory into an intelligent system that generates, organizes, and communicates knowledge through interactive and adaptive technologies. Artificial intelligence introduces a reflexive dimension in which museums become laboratories for exploring cognition, emotion and collective imagination (Cameron and Kenderdine 2007, Cameron 2021).

The future of museums shaped by artificial intelligence will depend on three interrelated dimensions: cognition, participation, and sustainability. In the cognitive dimension, artificial intelligence will act as a collaborator in research and interpretation. Algorithms capable of analyzing visual, textual, and contextual data will assist curators in identifying patterns and connections that were previously invisible. The process of meaning-making will thus become a hybrid dialogue between human interpretation and machine inference (Capurro 2010). This collaboration will not diminish human creativity; instead, it will expand the interpretive horizon of museums by incorporating computational insights into historical and aesthetic understanding.

The participatory dimension concerns the democratization of cultural experience. Intelligent systems can personalize interaction without erasing collective meaning. Emerging AI techniques such as natural language interaction and adaptive, emotionally aware interfaces can be understood as new tools for making museum communication more responsive, furthering the shift from spectatorship to participatory engagement that Giaccardi associates with social media-driven heritage practices (Giaccardi 2012). However, this transformation also entails ethical responsibility. As Derda and Predescu argue, the use of artificial intelligence in cultural institutions must remain human-centred, ensuring transparency, inclusivity and accessibility. The success of the intelligent museum will depend on how effectively it balances personalization with public accountability (Derda and Predescu 2025). The success of the intelligent museum will depend on how effectively it balances personalization with public accountability.

Sustainability will constitute the third and increasingly urgent dimension of future museology. The environmental impact of digital infrastructures and large-scale computation cannot be ignored. Projects such as I-Muse have demonstrated that artificial intelligence can support sustainable museum management by improving the coordination of visitor services through recommendation systems and predictive analytics, enabling better scheduling, capacity planning, and the mitigation of overcrowding (Politecnico di Torino 2023). Future museums will need to adopt “green AI” principles that promote energy efficiency and ethical hardware production while maintaining the creative and educational functions of technology. Sustainability, in this context, refers not only to ecology but also to the long-term cultural and social viability of digital heritage.

The ethical dimension will continue to shape the future of the intelligent museum. The questions of privacy, authorship, and authenticity will require continuous reflection and negotiation. Artificial intelligence challenges conventional notions of authority by redistributing agency among curators, visitors, and machines. It also introduces new forms of authorship in which creative responsibility becomes shared. As Benjamin reminds us, technological reproduction alters the “aura” of the artwork, but in the digital age, this alteration can lead to new forms of emotional and cognitive engagement (Benjamin 2019). Authenticity in the intelligent museum will not depend on the originality of objects but on the integrity of the interpretive process that connects them to audiences.

Global collaboration will define the next stage of digital museology. The networked nature of artificial intelligence facilitates exchanges of data, expertise, and creativity among institutions across continents. Transnational initiatives linking China, Europe, and North America are already demonstrating the potential for shared infrastructures that support cross-cultural understanding. Chinese digital heritage projects increasingly participate in international networks, contributing datasets, technical expertise, and immersive content to global platforms for cultural exchange. At the same time, European and North American museums experiment with AI-enabled touring exhibitions, joint digital catalogues, and shared research infrastructures, indicating that the intelligent museum can become a central platform for global cultural dialogue (Hawthorne 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, the future of museums will require a synthesis between technological rationality and humanistic imagination. Latour’s concept of actor networks provides a valuable framework for this synthesis, showing that meaning arises through the interaction of diverse agencies rather than through unilateral control (Latour 2005). As Ross Parry observes, digital technologies have broadened participation and widened museums’ creative horizons, helping to define a new cultural role for museums rather than serving efficiency alone (Parry 2007).

## Conclusions

The findings presented in this article suggest that artificial intelligence is not simply being “added” to museums as a new layer of technological enhancement. Rather, it is reconfiguring the museum’s epistemic architecture by shifting how cultural knowledge is produced, validated, and experienced. Across Beijing, Turin, and Cambridge, AI appears less as a neutral tool than as an interpretive infrastructure that redistributes agency across institutions, datasets, interfaces, and publics. The museum increasingly operates as a dynamic cognitive ecosystem, where interpretation emerges through relations among human and nonhuman actors rather than through a one-directional transmission of expert knowledge (Latour 2005, Capurro 2010). This transformation compels a reframing of digital museology: the decisive issue is not whether AI improves efficiency, but how it reorganizes authority, authenticity, and cultural meaning within the museum field.

The comparative framework developed here clarifies that AI-driven museology is evolving along at least three ideal-typical paradigms: infrastructure, mediation, and imagination. The Beijing model demonstrates the infrastructural paradigm, where AI is integrated into large-scale governance frameworks that connect heritage preservation with national digital strategies. In this context, intelligence is primarily institutional and cybernetic, expressed through system-wide coordination, predictive conservation, and algorithmic management of access and interpretation. The Turin model illustrates AI as mediation, where intelligent systems are designed to support participation, transparency, and human oversight, aligning technological innovation with social responsibility and sustainability principles (European Commission 2021, Politecnico di Torino 2023). The Cambridge case develops AI as imagination, where immersive reconstruction, simulation, and algorithmic aesthetics reposition the museum as a laboratory of possible worlds, extending heritage from preservation toward experiential knowledge and speculative interpretation (Cameron and Kenderdine 2007, Kenderdine 2021). Considered together, these paradigms show that the “intelligent museum” is not a single destination but a plural field of institutional choices, shaped by political cultures, ethical norms, and epistemological traditions.

These models also highlight a shared tension around authenticity and interpretive legitimacy. As AI contributes to restoration, narrative adaptation, and immersive simulation, authenticity becomes less a property of the object and more a quality of the interpretive process and its transparency. The museum’s authority is increasingly grounded in the credibility of its workflows: the visibility of data provenance, the disclosure of algorithmic assumptions, and the capacity to communicate uncertainty and multiplicity to publics. In this sense, AI does not merely challenge the museum’s traditional aura, it displaces the locus of aura from the uniqueness of the artifact to the affective intensity and relational meaning generated by the encounter, whether physical or digital (Benjamin 2019). This shift can enrich cultural experience, but it also increases institutional responsibility, since

algorithmic outputs may harden speculative reconstructions into seemingly “objective” truths if epistemic humility is not structurally built into exhibition design.

Ethics therefore cannot remain an external constraint applied after implementation. The analysis suggests that ethical governance must be treated as part of museological design itself, particularly in relation to personalization, behavioural data collection, and the risk of turning cultural experience into a space of implicit surveillance. Visitor-centred systems can deepen engagement and accessibility, yet they can also introduce asymmetries of power when data ownership, consent, and algorithmic explainability are insufficiently addressed (European Commission 2021, Derda and Predescu 2025). This is not only a matter of privacy compliance. It is a question of cultural citizenship: the museum’s public mission is undermined if visitors cannot understand how their behaviours are translated into curated pathways, recommendations, or interpretive hierarchies. For this reason, the intelligent museum should be conceived as a pedagogical institution not only about heritage, but also about algorithmic mediation itself, fostering public literacy concerning how AI shapes perception and meaning.

Sustainability further expands the scope of responsibility. The museum sector increasingly faces a dual obligation: to protect heritage while acknowledging the environmental footprint of digital infrastructures. AI-enabled optimisation of climate control, energy consumption, and maintenance systems indicates real potential for reducing ecological costs, but this potential must be evaluated against the broader material and energetic demands of computation, storage, and hardware cycles (Politecnico di Torino 2023). The future of digital museology will therefore require a more explicit convergence between ethical AI and green AI principles, in which computational ambition is balanced with ecological accountability. Sustainability should be understood in a comprehensive way that includes environmental impact, institutional resilience, and the long-term integrity of digital heritage preservation.

Several limitations of this study should also be acknowledged. The comparative design, while conceptually productive, is based on a limited number of emblematic cases rather than on a broad quantitative mapping of global practices. In addition, the rapid evolution of generative AI, multimodal interfaces, and immersive infrastructures means that institutional models are likely to change faster than scholarly frameworks. Future research should therefore extend this comparative topology by including additional regions and governance regimes, with particular attention to the Global South, where infrastructural constraints and cultural priorities may generate alternative paradigms of intelligent museology. Further work is also needed on evaluation methods capable of measuring not only usability or satisfaction, but interpretive pluralism, perceived legitimacy, and ethical trust. Longitudinal studies would be especially valuable for understanding how repeated exposure to AI-mediated heritage reshapes learning, memory, and cultural identity over time.

Ultimately, the central implication of this article is that the success of AI in museums will not be determined by the sophistication of algorithms alone. It will depend on the institutional capacity to integrate technological innovation with

epistemic transparency, ethical governance, participatory legitimacy, and ecological responsibility. The museum of the AI era can preserve the past while generating new interpretive futures, but only if it treats intelligence as a cultural relation rather than as an automated substitute for human meaning-making. The intelligent museum, in this sense, is best understood as a continuously negotiated interface between memory and prediction, where the renewal of cultural meaning remains the primary criterion of progress.

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