

## Additional Texts

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### *Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project and the Project to Re-compile Qing History*

Since the 1990s, under the support of the Chinese government, the Chinese social scientific academic community has successively engaged in two projects of history compilation. The first project, the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project began in May 1996 and in 2000 was partially completed. The Project to Re-compile Qing History began in 2002 and is estimated to finish in 2012.

This short essay will introduce and expound the aforementioned two projects with the aim of bringing these two historical projects to the attention of the wider international academic community.

### **Academic Achievements of the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project<sup>1</sup>**

The Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project is the first major research endeavor to combine the methods of the natural and social sciences in twentieth century China.

The purpose of the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project is to bring the methods of science and quantification to bear on the study of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou periods of history and to lay the foundations of the study of our ancient history.

Since its inception in May 1996, the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project has progressed smoothly. In the year 2000, target goals had already been achieved: from the establishment of the timeline of the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties to the determination of dates of reigns of Shang rulers and Western Zhou kings. These initial achievements are based on scientific proof.

In order to give readers an overview of the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project, and to provide researchers of the Three Dynasties periods research materials, we have compiled the *Xia-Shang-Zhou Periodization Anthology*, including the following three serials:

1. Research Newsletter: reports on the topics and research projects undertaken by the project.
2. Archaeological Report: reports on excavations of Xia-Shang-Zhou sites and the research progress made to date based on archaeological discoveries.
3. Research Article Anthology: gathers information and research based on texts used in the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project. It includes the research notes on the contents of the primary texts, the calculations of astronomical signs, timeline of the project, and records of scientific discoveries.

The project has combined the scholarship of over 200 scholars. It has gathered the findings of an older generation of researchers as well as the new generation. It has also attracted the attention of new inter-disciplinary researchers and encouraged the growth of the scholarly field through the growing numbers of researchers interested in this project.

The Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project has also brought to light new research directions. The relevant parties concur that research should move forward by bringing together more disparate research topics and the introduction of scientific and technological research methods to the study of the origins of Chinese civilization. Henceforth, new scholarly contributions will be made on the study and history of the origins of early Chinese civilization.

### **Project to Re-Compile Qing History: Its Origins and Launch**

#### *1. Origins*

On December 12, 2002, the National Committee on the Compilation of Qing History held its first conference in Beijing. The committee comprised of experts in Qing history, including Professor Dai Yi as committee chair. The committee was responsible for the structural organization of how to compile Qing history.

The committee's first and foremost duty was to establish the scope of the project.

After much discussion and collaboration, the committee established the following aims:

- 1). Project to Re-Compile Qing History (hereafter, referred to as The New Qing History) consists of three portions: principal, foundational, and supplementary parts.
- 2). The principal portion will consist of approximately 100 volumes, or approximately 3000 words.
- 3). In order to guarantee the quality of The New Qing History and to salvage and conserve cultural artifacts from the Qing period, the editors have differentiated between primary and secondary projects. Thus, besides the principal task of rewriting Qing history, the committee has established foundational and supplemental projects. The foundational projects include the collection, organization, and translation of Qing archival documents written in Chinese and non-Chinese languages. Supplementary tasks include the publication of related archival documents and online research sources.

#### *2. Explanation of the five sections in the Qing History Index.*

Qing history scholar Professor Dai Yi has gone beyond collecting various scholarly viewpoints; in February 2004, he drafted a sixth version of the index, headed by 5 subheadings comprising of 92 volumes in total. Each volume includes approximately 350,000 words. In total, there are 32,200,000 words.

##### 1). General Annals

The General Annals are the nucleus, backbone, and essence of the entire compilation. They present the content, facts, and viewpoints of Qing history systematically, accurately, and clearly. It should not only present the historical flows and ebbs but also the progression of history, including the special characteristics of each time period. The General Annals should at the same time, by way of a concise, comprehensive discussion, demonstrate the historical linkages between various historical phenomena.

##### 2). Statutes

The Statutes document Qing Dynasty regulations and laws. Using the methods of local history, the project records statutes such that there is a standardized overarching format that expounds each regulation.

##### 3). Biographies

The Biographies not only narrate stories of historical individuals, but should also reflect the wider context of the times in which they lived. Including Biographies section counters the trend of writing macro-histories of social structures and social trends devoid of people. Individual biographies and collective biographies are written in accordance with the availability of materials. Moreover, depending on the career and professional life of the person under research, differentiation can also be made along the lines of principal biographies and supplementary biographies.

##### 4). Historical Tables

Traditional historians held historical tables in esteem for the way by which they listed years and rankings of officials in a clear and orderly fashion. The tables dispensed with superfluous information and for these reasons, the tables are still a favored mode of

presenting historical information today. Tables not only display the meaning of historical phases and evolution, but also reveal each period's unique characteristics. The purpose behind relaying information on a historical epoch spanning several time periods is to reveal in concise ways the cause and effect and entire process of significant events.

#### 5). Illustrations

The Illustrated Catalogues are a new addition to Qing history compilations. It uses visual images to supplement historical facts, deploys images to explicate history, and utilizes images to verify history. Visuals are particularly able to reflect styles and features of the past. The illustrated catalogues are subdivided into the following categories: land, production, trade, rites, military affairs, local customs, architecture, art, religion, portraits and so on.

#### *3. Progress to date since 2003*

If the year 2003 is best described as the year during which the project's content and format was decided, then one might describe the period between 2004 and 2005 as the year during which each research group was conceived. In 2005, evaluation for each research group began. Starting 2006, evaluations for initial progress of each research group commenced, and became the committee's task-du-jour. It is estimated that by 2010 the entire project will begin its comprehensive evaluation period.

Between 2004 and 2006, the New Qing History Project inaugurated 14 separate conferences focused on research group evaluation. In total, there were 267 research groups, of which there were 159 principal research groups, 92 foundational research groups, and 16 supplementary research groups. During the latter half of 2005, we not only initiated evaluations of research groups, we began contemporaneous reviews of individual research groups and to systematize related research groups. To these ends, we discussed the methods, order, and standards of evaluation, drafted the criteria for evaluation, initiated experimental evaluations, and implemented reviews organized along specialized research topics as well as by research group. Hitherto, the work of establishing research groups for compiling the primary historical narrative is almost complete. Each research group thus successfully submitted their research progress and large scale review followed soon after.

#### **Some Expected Scholarly Contributions of the New Qing History Project:**

As narrated above, the results of the New Qing History Project should seek to reflect contemporary Chinese research on the Qing Dynasty. To be able to achieve this goal depends on the unrelenting efforts of the involved experts and researchers. Whether the project ultimately achieves this goal or not will also be determined by the appraisal of academic peers and all interested persons.

In the last five years during which this project has been undertaken, the four following objectives have been reached:

1. The scope of the materials used has broadened and thus set the foundation for a new understanding of Qing history.

The breadth and depth of materials used in this project has surpassed all prior research on Qing history. To use archival materials as an example, by the end of year 2006, a total of 12 different instances of 49 separate Qing archival categories were filed. This included 2,300,000 archival files, and totaled 20,000 catalogue entries. Ultimately, the committee counted 29 separate archival categories, totaling 1,900,000 archival files. Of these 1,900,000 documents, 17 fell under central archive categories, and 12 were categorized as local archival entries. This totaled 1,600,000 separate documents and 300,000 documents respectively.

Presently several compilations have been published, based on these archival findings: *Gengzi Incident Archival Materials*, 18 vols.; *Rehe Archival Materials*, 18 vols.; *Puningsi Archival Materials*, 2 vols.; *Zhongnanhai Archival Materials*, 30 vols.; *Qing Dynasty Grand Secretariat Correspondences*, 40 vols., etc. Also published are collections of papers and documents such as: *Li Hongzhang Collected Writings*, 38 vols.; *New Compilation of Documents of the 1911 Revolution*, 8 vols.; *Diaries Kept in Yueman Hall*, 18 vols.; *Xue Fucheng diary*, 2 vols., etc.

Another contribution of this project to Qing historical research has been the discovery of previously unused historical sources on border regions and minorities in China. Some invaluable additions include: Tibet research materials, Manchu language government correspondences, South County in Sichuan documents, and Jilin local archives and materials, etc.

The project has also made full use of foreign language materials. Among the translations of foreign language materials the project has made available for research include these following publications: *English Language Materials on Qing History*, *Japanese Materials on Qing History*, *French Language Materials on Qing History*, *Selections of French Foreign Affairs Documents*, *Reports of Late Qing Japanese Ambassadors to China*, etc. The most complete of these materials collected and used are the documents and archival materials that detail how foreigners viewed China during the Qing dynasty.

## 2. Innovations in style and format of research materials on Qing history:

The New Qing History Project will be composed of general annals, statutes, biographies, chronology tables, and illustrations. In terms of style and format, the first four headings follow traditional Chinese historiographical categories, while the last, the illustrations, is a new addition to compilations of history in Chinese scholarship. The illustrated section also has the possibility of contributing to innovations in the field of the study of visual images.

In terms of content innovations, below is a comparison of the biography and chronology tables sections of the Qing Shigao (hereafter referred to as, Draft History) and the New Qing History Project:

### A . Biography

According to the sixth version of the Qing History Index, the biography section comprises of 28 volumes. The following three points list the main differences between the biography section of the former Draft History and the New Qing History:

Firstly, from the perspective of total people accounted, the Draft History includes 4740 people whereas the New Qing History covers only 3400. However, the older historical work has limitations in terms of the types of people included. The New Qing History includes biographical entries about emperors, empresses, princes, officials, frontier officials, Ming loyalists, Qing loyalists, Adherent people locations of literary gatherings, schools of thought, commemorative writings, accounts of conduct, leaders of social uprisings, grouped biographies, revolutionaries, artisans, and influential foreigners who may have held rank in the Qing government, etc. This list is far more representative of the human landscape than that of the Draft History.

Secondly, broader array of sources consulted for the compilation of biographical entries.

The Draft History relied primarily on the *Veritable Records of the Qing*, documents of the Qing Historical Office. By contrast, the New Qing History primarily uses Manchu and Chinese language archival documents, various veritable records, as well as public and private documents, genealogies, steles, collected writings of specific individuals, and related materials from local gazetteers. From this we can say that the New Qing History biographical section relies upon a far more diverse set of sources than that of the Draft History.

Thirdly, in terms of the format, narrative content, and details included in the biography section, the New Qing History is also exceptional. The Draft History includes only sparse details and does not adopt a standardized approach to writing each of the biographical entries. To write a biography, one must include both a person's words and actions. In the Draft History, one or the other is often missing. In terms of levels of detail, while the Draft History has numerous biographical entries, each entry covers each person's life roughly, often in descriptions not surpassing 10 or 20 words. Most of the biographical entries are less than 1000 words, chronicles a person's life too generally, and thus overlooks the basic objective of a biographical entry. The New Qing History ardently strives for a unified biographical format, to record accurately and eloquently a person's life, actions, and words, and ultimately to capture the essence of a person's life. Each entry must be no shorter than 2000 words and can be as long as 10,000 words.

## B. Historical Tables

According to the sixth version of the Qing History Index, the Historical Tables section comprises 13 volumes, roughly equivalent to 14% of the entire project. The New Qing History Historical Tables section distinguishes itself from the Draft History in the following ways:

Firstly, the number of tables far surpasses that of the Draft History's. The Draft History has a total of 13 types of tables, and all list people as its main content. By contrast, the New Qing History has a total of 31 types of tables. In addition, the New Qing History includes 11 new types of people-centered tables, such as the Officials of Vassal States Table, Four Living Buddhas Table, Imperial Consorts, Conferred Imperial Degrees Table. Tables and lists of treaties with foreign countries, periodicals and newspapers, historical events, and even foreign diplomats in China, missionary cases, are among the many additions to this section in the New Qing History. The Imperial Consorts Table lists imperial consorts and kings of tribute countries. The foreign diplomat tables lists all the Qing foreign ambassadors sent from China and the foreign diplomats in China also comprise a separate table.

Secondly, the Draft History tables record only the dates of an official's terms of office. The New Qing History also includes information on the official's hometown and place of birth. The New Qing History also seeks to present information on an official's entire term of service. The Draft History only documents officials and their subordinate officials, whereas the New Qing History tables section lists a broader array of officials in government agencies. For these reasons, the New Qing History can comprehensively portray the situation of a person taking office. According to initial records, the New Qing History has collected information for 70,000 people, and over 10,000 events and cases.

Thirdly, the format of the tables is innovative in its graphic design and convenience for researching. The Draft History lists people according to year, and is convenient for searching by year but leaves space unused. The New Qing History also presents information about an official's dates of terms. However, most of the tables are position-name specific. The tables are organized by official position and there is no need to flip the page to see the entire history of a position's various office holders.

## 3. Innovations in research group management and organization.

The participants of the New Qing History Project, as of December 2006, total 1,609 scholars who represent all twenty-nine provinces, cities, autonomous regions of China proper, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. This project has gathered three generations of Qing experts. The project is organized by research group, each of which is headed by a group chairperson. The organization binds together the various projects and carries out research groups in a systematic and level-by-level fashion.

In order to strengthen the organization of projects in progress, the organization depends on a triumvirate of criteria, including quality, progression, and length of proposed research article.

4. The writing of Qing history is now conducted from a global historical perspective.

First, the compilers have a global perspective. We deliberately evaluate and research Qing history from the perspective of world history. Not only must we analyze the historical changes from within the territorial boundaries, we must also analyze change stemming from factors outside the Qing territory. We do not examine Qing history simply from the perspective of Chinese history alone.

Second, we pay attention to the world historical context. In other words, attention should be given to how people at that specific historical moment perceived the world. These are all factors that are given consideration when analyzing Qing history.

Lastly, the project's researchers combine the significant achievements and contributions made by recent studies in Qing history in the academy worldwide. While we may not agree with all their conclusions, we can still gain important insights and enlightenment from such studies.

Just as what all those involved in the compilation project have explained, the project to compile Qing history must respect the past as much as it reflects the spirit of the present times. The scholarship must build upon the past research, and also achieve new research progress. It must be specific to Chinese history but also connect to world history. Only in this way, can the project achieve coherency, originality, and can Chinese people understand their history from a global perspective and in turn understand world history in a new systematic fashion. The re-compilation of Qing history is relevant not only to China but to the whole world.

In conclusion, this re-compilation of Qing history is a watershed moment for the academic study of Qing history. It is both the inheritance and pinnacle of 20th century efforts to study Qing history. Furthermore, it breaks new paths in the study of Qing history.

1. These are the main books or articles referenced in this article: The specialist team for the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project: *A Stage Report for the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project from 1996 to 2000 (simplified version)*. World Book Publication Company, 2000; "The New Way to Historical Periodization: the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project", in *CASS Review*, May 24, 2007.