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Instituting Ideas: The Reclamation of Scholarly Subjects in the High Qing (1723-1795)

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Instituting Ideas:

The Reclamation of Scholarly Subjects in the High Qing (1723-1795)

Ziyao Ma

A DISSERTATION

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OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study investigates Qing institutions and its ventures of conveying ideology in the eighteenth century. It begins with portraying the sovereign's felt challenges from the scholar-officials' placement. The Qianlong emperor's solution utilized commissions to impose bureaucratic trials upon the candidates' perceived merits. In particular, he made heavy use of the education commissions, which bridged literary policies between the imperial center and the provinces, as the premier venue of evaluation. The commissioners came with the best scholarly credentials. Their omnipresence in compilation, education, and examination tasks had brought ideological production and propagation together under the throne's heedful observation.

Empowered by this new role, the commissioned academicians were able to fulfill an ambitious vision of textual promulgation, moral cultivation, and literary training to achieve an unprecedented level of ideological conformity among the educated sector of the populace. They earned imperial attention and support as a result of the Qianlong emperor's professionalized approach to a Yongzheng-era reform. In return, newly-minted Classical commentaries produced at the imperial court were distributed through these commissioners to reach the empire's lettered communities. The outcome, proven by substantial reports, was positive in both the emperor and the commissioners' favor. Invested in a reciprocal relationship, these commissioners' efforts were intertwined with the state's avid agenda for cultivation, education, and examination reforms. This process refreshes our knowledge about this era's state capacity of ideological practice as well as the state's institutional integration with scholarly elites during the Yongzheng-Qianlong continuum.

The ideological activism of this era was motivated by multiple factors that were highly dependent on the institutional premises. Hence, it was developed as a governing tool as opposed

to an imminent need or interest. I use the archives of memorials and edicts to describe and analyze the institutional precondition, logic, setup, function, and logistics of utilizing scholars and delivering ideas. I focus on the institutional changes and their impact on collective performance. I argue for a strong correlation between emperorship and organizational coherence in the use of intellectual projects and the intra-bureaucratic discussions on pertinent topics. Consequently, the institutions of conveying ideology became an organic part of the imperial rule.

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Chapter I: **Introduction**

1.1 ***Overview***

1.1.1 Context and Approach

Claiming the throne in 1735, Emperor Qianlong experienced no political struggle as the regime's legitimate successor, nor was he challenged by recognition from the conquest dynasty's wavering cultural elites. Rapid and aggressive ideological construction did not appear to be of necessity. But conversely, his rule had featured in late imperial China's most active and ambitious undertakings about the conformity of ideas. These government-sponsored agendas encompassed textual production and dissemination, educational supervision, literary surveillance, moral cultivation, much less the proclamation and implementation of countless literary and examination policies. Even under the "High Qing" promise of material abundance and grandeur, the sheer magnitude of such tasks was daunting to an agrarian state that traditionally preserved minimum activism to reach into its subjects. This phenomenon merits more explanation than the emperor's personal liking. How and why did ideological matters relevant to the Qing rule, after its foundation years and before the modern crisis?

When I pursued this puzzle at the Qing archives, my attention was drawn by the group of officials who carried out pertinent missions: the compilers, the commentators, the education supervisors and instructors, various "discourse" officials who raised textual debates, and the Board of Rites officials who processed them. Their memorials responded dutifully to the emperor's initiatives with no lack of spontaneous ideas. As intriguing as these first-hand resources already are, I find the memorialists' inter-bureaucratic linkage too palpable to ignore: Approximately all literary-educational positions shared similar institutional background. The same names appeared on one suitable occasion and then another, representing different career stages or commissioned

tasks. A compiler of the emperor's demanded texts would also distribute those texts on a supervisory trip of provincial education. The second question thus comes to the fore: What institutional norms did the Qing establish and utilize to facilitate the propagation of ideas?

The existing literature soon led me to revisit the Yongzheng reign (1723-1735) when the zestful emperor and his bureaucracy developed new communication mechanisms, through which he progressively extended censorial obligations, or rather privilege, to replenish the shrinkage of inspection offices since the Kangxi era (1661-1722). In the context of rapid institutional standardization, the Education Commissioners (*Xuezheng* 學政) became one of the early beneficiaries. Through the period of the Qianlong reign (1735-1796), the records about them have a strong archival presence that perfectly matches what I was looking for. Their reports, primarily in the form of palace memorials, comprised the execution of education-examination policies, debates about Classical learning, the distribution of the latest compilations, and the inculcation of literati.[1] Equally important, as commissioned officials, they retained their original titles in the capital. The bureaucratic functions of those positions echo with my previous observation about a shared institutional background.

A closer look confirmed that since this group of officials' career trajectories gravitated toward each other, they shared traits in common. The Education Commissioners uniformly carried titles from the Hanlin Academy. Judged by credentials, they represented some of the best scholars in the Qing officialdom. I was initially swayed by the popular perception of a late imperial government that was, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln's words, "of the gentry elites, by the gentry elites, for the gentry elites" under the centralized leadership of the Manchu court. I assumed a fair

[1] The first letter of "Classics", "Classical", "Classicist", etc. is capitalized in this dissertation to denote that these words only refer to the orthodox corpus of Confucian texts. After the Song, thirteen of them were officially recognized and shall be introduced later on in the dissertation.

percentage of these officials powerful and influential alongside their bannerman peers. However, my biographical surveys put forward an alternative story. The majority of this group during the Yongzheng-Qianlong continuum earned neither political power nor fame. Their occupation pathways had largely missed territorial administration and powerful offices in the central government. Instead, they were mostly deployed in the aforementioned, semi-professionalized venues.

This discovery is essential to form a conceptual pillar of my dissertation. Literary-educational officials were not mere concierges who answered and catered to the government's call. Rather, they were standing on the stage inside. I began to treat official appointment as an analytical tool of the empire's ideological landscape. For scholar-officials, historians are well aware that their Ming-style prevalence was not commonsensical to expect in the Qing government. Personnel arrangement was a power completely resided in the Manchu sovereign, and it visualizes the latter's approach to a ruling order. The deployment pattern being revealed here is not about the dichotomy between bannermen and civil degree-holders or the Chinese gentry's suppressed share of political power. It is distinctly contingent on the new institutional inventory and much more specific in the exertion of controlled career development.

The Qianlong emperor's take on using his father's institutional legacy was perhaps founded on his grand expectation of himself being a sagely ruler in the secure, stable, and empowering political environment he was left with. Benefiting from the updated memorial system and more direct conversations traveling between the monarch and the officials, the imperial system was more effective than ever for the synchronization of ideological matters within the officialdom and beyond. The emperor launched commentarial research projects from the outset. His edicts gave one guideline after another. Furthermore, he announced a "professional" requirement for

educational supervision: The education office was given the responsibilities to tutor the literati and scrutinize their performance of arts (*wenyi* 文藝). Because this position was so critical, only seasoned scholars of good reputation could carry the burden.[2] The choice of prospective scholar-officials thus became a priority.

In such a superficially honorable quest, the emperor had left hundreds of interview notes that evaluated the candidates' qualification, which was not only about the mission itself but also the prospect being a capable official. These notes gave me clues why the Hanlin scholars often followed a non-administrative, commission-oriented pattern of deployment. Despite brutal pragmatism and the habitual use of depreciation, the emperor's evaluation remarks addressed the rationale behind which he placed scholar-officials. It is apparent that he had maintained clear separation between scholarly merits and bureaucratic performance. The majority of the candidates could not obtain high rating in the screening procedure for the latter. They were thus put on tracks that were more suitable for the former. The emperor purposefully considered commissioning itself as an "intern" venue of bureaucratic selection, testified by various channels of reference.

Additionally, this arrangement was not just a simple placement consideration. The emperor was simultaneously able to conserve "the essence of the state" (*guoti* 國體), an intrinsic concept behind his governance. The bannerman establishment never required advanced degrees nor hard-earned political intimacy to be entitled to occupy critical positions. Hefty scholarly credentials were not necessarily a bonus for a civil administrator, not to mention a military officer. The Qianlong emperor had openly reminded his audiences about this reality on several occasions. Although not

[2] Entry "Yongzheng 13-10-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu* 高宗純皇帝實錄 (The Veritable Records of the Qianlong Emperor), *juan* 5. Scripta Sinica.

brought to the forefront of this dissertation, it lurks in the undercurrent of the seemingly innocent institutional stories and adds to the emperor's "professional" approach to official appointment.

The Hanlin scholars were thus concentrated in their pertinent positions. On the flip side, the imperial bureaucracy did not expand to the extent that it created enough subsidiary positions for the throne's ideological vision. Another institutional device has to be mentioned. For the education office, the Hanlin academicians were consecutively commissioned in one province or multiple provinces. Throughout career, some of them were commissioned multiple times. This phenomenon was empowered by the heavy use of the commissioned bureaucracy on top of the normative one: Functionaries of different background were sent to supervise salt or fabric business, inspect regions, appease unrests, compile books, hold examinations, etc. The rupture between an official's original title and his actual duty was commonplace. In contrast with most of the other irregular and temporary tasks, the education commissioning was unique on its own terms: Fixed duration, stable shifts, and foreseeable chores. It had kept all features pertinent to a regular office and was used like one by the Qianlong emperor.

A fair percentage of Hanlin academicians was put in these circling commissions. Through this mechanism, they had maintained unique presence in the Qing government. A commissioner's power came from exclusive responsibility, which neither ranking nor title could precisely predicate. In this regard, the commissioners were also able to enjoy elevated status for the duration of their service. An intricate and reciprocal arrangement was formed, and it had objectively invigorated the ideological institutions that run on commissioning basis.

I do not perceive this subtle yet critical solution a fully intended outcome, especially given its implication was well beyond an institutional preference. When a multitude of Hanlin-background officials were mobilized by book compilations, examination errands, and provincial education in

long-term, recurrent, and transposable fashion, a much larger picture can be put together. Can one imagine that these men, as the couriers of the ideological instruments at hand, interweaved ongoing textual production, literary policies, examination topics, with the power of everyday inculcation? If held veracious, it would attest to the hypothesis that the Qianlong emperor's ideological exercises were not only fueled by his individual activism. More truly, these events were the concomitants of the empowering nexus between the sovereign and a unique official group. The latter themselves were scholarly subjects to the former, and they had obtained the agency to project ideas to a larger circle in which the empire's literate populace was the target. This answer, which shall be explicated as the dissertation advances forward, has defined the theme of my research: A history of the emperor's ideological governance, told by the duo of scholar-officials and local literati who were placed on different and hierarchical loops of institutional intendance.

Within this analytical framework, I followed to the source of the education commissionership and this office's share in the provincial structure. The education office not only represented a specialized venue of official appointment to the throne. It was unique on its own terms, possessing features that attached credence to its subjects' tighter alignment with new policies. The imperial government was consistently assertive to guarantee the independent exertion of power in education and examinations, while the commissioners' agency was further supplemented by the fact that they were "from the literati; to the literati", an inherent affiliation that compensated the disciplinary aspect of governing. The Education Commissioners' teacherly figure was ubiquitous in moral cultivation, literary supervision, and examination-related lectures. To ordinary literati, they were more than bureaucrats; To the emperor, their teaching function and scholarly self-image had inspired autonomous efforts to play the part of the ideological middlemen. Professionalization as an identity-empowering mechanism provides support to the other half of this dissertation.

Institutional identity had an effect on collective behavior. To the literary-educational officials of the Qianlong era, the swift, centralized, and professionalized mobilization in their bureaucratic life was a distinct feature that set them apart from those of the early Qing. Both the Kangxi and the Qianlong emperors had ardently invested in textual productions. But the Kangxi-era compilations were often done offshore, funded by individual advocates, and stuffed by the rusticated Hanlins. Sometimes these were mere submissions accepted by the court as opposed to fresh compilations per the imperial order. Such organizational details made a huge difference. In contrast, later compilers were typically sourced from the in-service academicians who worked at specific bureaus of the central government. Their participation was intrinsically a bureaucratic event. Their knowledge and viewpoints were grouped in line with the state. When these officials' career moved onward at pertinent venues, this experience was also carried over.

The same thing can be said about the propagation of these texts. When the Qianlong emperor waged the campaigns of textual dissemination, his endeavor was facilitated by collective woodblock management, provincial finance, merchant involvement, and more important, voluntary dedication from his Education Commissioners. On top of following general directives, the latter fervently adopted many localized solutions. Their autonomous acts and proposals evince that the ideological propagation of this era was beyond the volition of any individual actor. In the joint venture of all parties, the imperial court's newest productions were timely distributed to many literati across the empire. Their input was further strengthened by the new texts' integration with the examination system. Infrastructural capacity, geographical disparities, fiscal restraints, etc. had pulled the success stories away from the ideological conformity more achievable in modern context. Nevertheless, these stories had demonstrated institutional vigor that was disanalogous enough with the dynasty's earlier references.

The use of regularized tools had witnessed correspondent phenomena. During this era, the meaning of moral cultivation evolved from an individualized, neo-Confucian, "up in the cloud" kind of concept to an explicit bureaucratic term that pointed to the social roles of the literati and their conduct. The latter were measurable by set benchmarks, which were routinely reported by all levels of education officials. The civil service examinations, as the most powerful tool available to the throne, were constantly updated with new components under the provincial level. This process was filled with the dynamic exchanges of opinions between the educational-censorial officials and the imperial government.

Navigating through these topics, I see a series of institutional events and political motives that had remodeled both the scholar-officials and the rest of the literati under the imperial gaze. Scholarly merits became bureaucratized standards. The sagely utterances of the emperor personated the roles traditionally reserved by the Classics. By using commissioned books, essays, edicts, and casual remarks, the emperor was able to emphasize points of political importance to his mandarins. The compilation bureaus, which were centered around the throne, provided the foundation for in-need textual production. The recipients included but were not limited to the government personnel. Officials who carried literary and educational duties frequently served as intermediaries connecting the state and the lettered subjects. In different phases of their careers, tutors, policy makers, governors, or censors further participated in this realm with ideological interactions. This dissertation aims to capture this moment. It showcases the practice of transmitting ideas as a governing tool in eighteenth-century China.

The majority of supporting materials come from the Qing archives. My biggest challenge in the process of writing has been finding tenable connections from snippets of information. In comparison, a thousand repetitive and dry documentations on the same subject were a blessing.

This experience is due to the nature of these archival pieces, which are often potent on their own but missing the beginning, the follow-ups, and/or the ending to construct an event, not to mention a chronicle of events. I have been fortunate to be able to locate instances that are ample enough for this study, and I kept imagining a broader world embedded in those random, mutually isolate, "unusable" accounts. Built on a rather shattered source base, the history presented in the dissertation is the opposite of being "eventful". It is organized around collective phenomena versus individual actors and their stories. In a way, I resonate with the Qing compilers who hoarded and tagged fragments from China's literary and commentarial tradition. But instead of rallying around the Classical texts, my topics are anchored by the imperial edicts. Given the centrality of the emperor in my theses, this is also a choice of writing.

1.1.2 Historiographical Retrospection

The inception of this study was more of an intellectual history than an institutional-political one. At the early stage of preparation, I was mostly interested in the clerical input and content creation as seen in new commentaries and textual debates within the Qing officialdom. The first few archival visits allowed me to pinpoint the exact sources. Then I began to notice the matching offices and their functions. The existing scholarship immediately led me to the Yongzheng reforms.

Historians of eighteenth-century China are familiar with the Yongzheng reign from a variety of aspects: effective fiscal policies, the invention of the Grand Council (or an early version of it), reformulated memorial system, increasingly regulated bureaucracy, anti-factionalism, and so on. It was an era when rapid institutional transformation took place. The popular perceptions alternatively favor human factors, stressing on the emperor's political struggles after succession

and idiosyncratic persona. These aspects provide a foundation for anyone to learn about the Yongzheng years and legacy.

An outstanding portion of my archival findings was submitted by the Education Commissioners. Their political status, which had been adjusted by the Yongzheng emperor, had an impact on how the messages were conveyed to the policymakers. Hence, I chose the tactics of political communication as my historiographical focus. The works by Silas Wu, Yang Qiqiao, Beatrice Bartlett, Zhuang Jifa, etc. offer wisdom to examine this topic.[3] In particular, their inquiries into the evolution of institutions gave me inspirations.

Based on these works and archival evidence, I found that while the bureaucratic standardization continued to develop under the Qianlong rule, there were subtle modifications in terms of how the officials were deployed. The Yongzheng emperor's rule featured building rapport with a selective circle of officials and actively extending political privileges to those he could gather information from. His agenda helped to build a mission- and talent-based system, which gave the bureaucracy much flexibility. It was short-lived, however, not only because of the abrupt ending of the Yongzheng reign but also due to the high maintenance it placed on the emperorship. In the Qianlong era, we see the development of the Grand Council that both expanded and diversified personal imperial power.[4] The bureaucracy consisted less of personal ties with the monarch, and rather increasingly was filled with regulated, routinized, and pedigreed components. The emperorship of the new period reflects such a transition, which is showcased by the use of

[3] Silas H. L. Wu, *Communication and Imperial Control in China: Evolution of the Palace Memorial System, 1693–1735* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970). Yang Qiqiao 楊啟樵, *Yongzheng di ji qi mizhe zhidu yanjiu* 雍正帝及其密摺制度研究 (Study on the Yongzheng Emperor and His Secret Memorial System) (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian 三聯書店, 1985). Beatrice S. Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ch'ing China, 1723-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Zhuang Jifa 莊吉發, *Qingchao zouzhe zhidu* 清朝奏折制度 (The Memorial System of the Qing Dynasty) (Beijing: Gugong chubanshe 故宮出版社, 2016).

[4] See chapters 5 and 6 in Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*.

education officials (discussed in Chapter III). This observation let me depart from the published literature on the Education Commissioners.[5] It also set the tone for this project, accenting the continued development after the Yongzheng period.

The routinization thesis echoes with Pierre-Etienne Will's study on eighteenth-century bureaucracy.[6] As Will' book reveals, before the extra-bureaucratic tradition became prevalent again in the nineteenth century, the Qing government had demonstrated admirable capacity in famine relief. This achievement was guaranteed by the highly institutionalized routine tasks that urged the officials to perform as required. At the same time, the emperor often took the initiatives to impose irregular yet powerful executive interventions. The combination of the two effectively invigorated the bureaucracy. Moreover, censorial liability upon all levels of participants helped to secure organizational integrity. These insights are helpful to my grip on the workings of Qing institutions, albeit in the ideological arena. Will also compared Qianlong-era state capacity with the political decay during and after the Daoguang reign in the nineteenth century, pointing out that the institutional norms became less responsive to reality when both challenged by fiscal difficulty and the lack of autonomous interest from the participating parties. I did not prioritize the post-Qianlong history in my research. Nevertheless, we should notice the general underperformance of the late Qing government in respective fields. It is better understood under the lens of intra-dynastic comparison.

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[5] The existing scholarship emphasizes the Yongzheng reform of the provincial education office and its censorial origin. An Dongqiang 安東強 pushed our understanding further by placing the Education Commissioners on par with the governors and considering this reform a key aspect of the Qing imperial order. See An, *Qingdai Xuezheng guizhi yu huangquan tizhi* 清代學政規制與皇權體制 (Regulations of Xuezheng and the Imperial System in Qing Dynasty) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe 社會科學文獻出版社, 2017). I appreciate An's discussions on the Yongzheng emperor's use of commissionership but disapprove his exaggeration and overgeneralization of the commissioners' role and status by applying Yongzheng norms to the remainder of the Qing.

[6] Pierre-Etienne Will, trans. Elborg Forster, *Bureaucracy and Famine in Eighteenth Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

One of the principal duties of the Education Commissioners was to prepare examination candidates for the triennial Provincial Examinations. Benjamin Elman's pioneering and all-encompassing study on China's civil service examinations provides a solid foundation for any further inquiries in this field.[7] The imperial state's concern about the licentiates' social roles directly connects me to the education officials' discussions of cultivation. Frequent curricular reforms at the Qianlong court are reconfirmed by plenty of memorials. Together, these references opened the window for me to investigate the dynamic implementation practices below the provincial level (discussed in chapter V). Unlike Chang Chung-li and Ho Ping-ti, Elman uses social analysis of knowledge to join the debate of late imperial China's social mobility.[8] Classical learning helped to reproduce socio-political status quo, which is also essential to decipher Chinese meritocracy.[9] In recent years, scholars have approached state-elite relations with institutions other than the examination system.[10] My thesis of the Qianlong emperor's using the education office as a post-examination venue of evaluation (discussed in chapters II and III) is as well a response to this enduring question.

As a theoretical tool, Classical knowledge does not function on its ingrown sanctity alone but rather the cultural, political, and institutional conditions of the subject. Instead of social reproduction, this study focuses on ideological conformity as a means of political domination in

[7] Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
[8] Chung-li Chang, *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in Nineteenth Century Chinese Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955). Ping-ti Ho, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368–1911* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).
[9] Benjamin A. Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).
[10] Lawrence Zhang, "Legacy of Success: Office Purchase and State-Elite Relations in Qing China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 73, no. 2 (December 2013): 259-297. Also see Elisabeth Kaske, "Justifying Office-selling for Famine Relief in Nineteenth-century Qing China," *European and Chinese Histories of Economic Thought: Theories and Images of Good Governance*, ed. Iwo Amelung and Bertold Schefold (London: Routledge, 2021), 19-32.

which the Qianlong state utilized the sacred factor from both the Classics and the image of the sovereign. The compilation projects, for instance, are not perceived as a demonstration of state-elite cooperation.[11] It is worthy to say that these activities had created a space of middle ground for the empire's scholarly elites to participate and improvise. However, the existing literature has largely overlooked the intra-dynastic differences between the Qianlong era and the other moments. These differences prove that the Qianlong-era compilations were predominantly a state behavior. Consequently, we should notice the substantial rupture between state-sponsored projects and the surging scholarship in the Jiangnan academic community. The factual presence of the latter at the imperial center did not automatically translate into the political vision of the former.

After seeing sizable samples in which the Qianlong emperor appropriated the sagely role to avail himself of Classicism and the ministers repeated his words in the form of lip-service, I kept revisiting the Levenson thesis on China's Confucian tradition.[12] Over-generalized literati image aside, the fundamental hypothesis that I find incompatible with my study is to understand the cultural elites as the primary bearers of intellectual continuity under the overarching concept of Confucianism. Around the same time, Mary Wright similarly attributed China's modernization process to the departure from Confucianism in the wake of a failed struggle.[13] I conversely find a tangible departure already existing in the Qianlong era, if not many times before, and that the cultural elites were not an autonomous part of the story. The emperor, his institutions, and the scholar-officials around him together invented an ideological tradition. In the meantime, other departures concurrently happened in society. The origin of the New-text Confucianism, for

[11] As discussed by R. Kent Guy in his *The Emperor's Four Treasures: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).
[12] Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958).
[13] Mary C. Wright, *Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ng-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

example, was a Classicist reaction to political challenge and the ideological opposition to the Heshen faction of corruption.[14] These departures were not so drastic as the modern ones. They were nevertheless unique to both the political and the intellectual lives of their time.

Lastly, this project examines state capacity and bureaucratic performance in textual distribution and inculcation. Traditional scholarship has been contributing the emperor's literary achievement to his personal liking, which is not entirely satisfactory to address the functional roles that ideas had played in the Qing government. Max Weber's works serve as a remote reference for theoretical concerns, although my discussions are less about a structural analysis than showcasing how the bureaucrats reacted to political tasks and pressure (mainly discussed in chapter IV). In this regard, this study shares certain similarities with Philip Kuhn's study of sorcery scare.[15] However, most of my cases lack the political tension and complexity that Kuhn's story possesses. The actors experienced more about the boundaries of their missions due to fiscal and geographical constraints rather than conflicting manipulations caused by the scarcity of autonomous agency and political power. The Qianlong emperor's ideological campaigns thus seem to be more streamlined, undemanding, and even cheerful. In addition, the emperor and his scholar-officials' joint ventures are almost a strange antithesis to Kuhn's idea of the modern state.[16] Political legitimacy that is supposed to have derived from elite consensus gave way to top-down institutionalization and ideological projection; The role of local elites was subject to imperial scrutinization, and their upward participation was constructively replaced by the intra-bureaucratic mobilization of scholar-officials; Public interest, in its conceptual form, was presented in the sovereign's view of the literati

[14] Benjamin A. Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
[15] Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).
[16] Philip A. Kuhn, *Origins of the Modern Chinese State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

as the exemplar population, which legitimized the acts of cultivation and education by the government. These episodes may point to the birth of an "education state" that is glaringly alien to what Kuhn referenced as the Anglo-American tradition of political modernity (or "constitutional agenda" in his terminology). Historians always have contrasting perceptions of China's experience in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. But more important, if we look at today's China where all CCP cadres are required to study Xi Jinping's words on their mobile phones via the *Xuexi qiangguo* 学习强国 (Strengthening the Nation through Learning) platform, does it resemble more of Qianlong China? Or the image preserved by our knowledge about late imperial China's local society, "public sphere", elite activism, etc., which were popular in history writing during the last twenty years of the twentieth century?

In my writing of the chapters, either due to the lack of direct reference or the fact that archival materials alone could sustain discussions, secondary literature often played a minimal role. Historiographical guidance had been indispensable, however, for the preparation of this study and my responses to these larger questions.

1.2 ***Summary of the Chapters***

Following the introduction chapter, chapter II uses the Hanlin Academy to demonstrate how the Yongzheng and the Qianlong emperors perceived scholarly merits in the government. Their attitude, which had been overall consistent, had largely arbitrated the ways scholar-officials were deployed. Deviating from the Southern Song and the Ming, the Qing was characteristic in its approach to literary meritocracy. Degrees were not the most important credential for bureaucratic placement. The Yongzheng and the Qianlong emperors' approach reveals that because the assumed bureaucratic competence was not guaranteed by scholarly or literary excellence, the

examination degree-holders' placement had to be appraised, ideally, based on the pairing merits. The proper utilization of scholar-officials thus presented a challenge to the Qing rule.

Chapter II continues with the Qianlong emperor's institutional solution by analyzing the Hanlin academicians' career pattern and using the Education Commissioners as a primary example of the emperor's vision for post-examination reassessment. Aside from literary roles from book compilers to lower-tiered Grand Secretaries, the Hanlin academicians could expect to be assigned the positions of real administrative power: From prefectural magistrates and circuit officials to provincial treasurers and governors. However, they must be observed beforehand. The Education Commissioners were dispatched in a way like professionalized bureaucrats: After the "intern" phase, the throne deemed some candidates more suitable as the officials of "literary affairs" and deployed them in those fields. Within this purposeful arrangement, many Hanlin-background officials experienced professionalized careers.

Under the Qianlong rule, the education office was treated like an institutional trial for the academicians to demonstrate their magisterial talent without local liabilities. Chapter III traces the origin of this office and the reform that let it rise to such a unique position in the imperial bureaucracy. After a general introduction of the office and a sample analysis on its infrastructural role in light of literary surveillance, I discussed the Education Commissioners' political status in the ruling structure and provincial governance. The throne treated the education office as a highly specialized venue similar to the examination commissions, although the latter was a more occasional position. In these positions, all the appointees had little interference with local governance and were considered professionals to evaluate the target candidates. In the provinces, they became the emperor's permanent envoys of ideological control.

Empowered by this institutional framework, both the emperor and his literary-educational officials were actively invested in textual production and promulgation. In chapter IV, the first section investigates the fact that the textual compilation activities during the Qianlong reign score the highest frequency in the imperial history of China. The Qianlong emperor was known for modeling his grandfather by building the image of a sage king. Now he was empowered to achieve this goal by different means. From the angle of intra-dynastic comparison, the chapter reveals that the Qianlong compilations were distinctly centralized and regulated in contrast with those in the Kangxi reign. Compilation offices also served as an important venue for the academicians' career. The following sections discuss how the Education Commissioners transmitted the literary policies and the newly complied texts to the local literati. Although challenged by fiscal difficulties and disparate local situations, they managed to spread these texts with enthusiasm. Furthermore, many of them experimented with these texts in the new education policies. Their reports testified that a considerable portion of the empire's literate populace was exposed to the imperial center's contemporaneous production of commentarial texts. The synchronization of the commissioned texts demonstrated the strength of ideological conformity in this era.

Chapter V discusses the Qianlong government's efforts in moral cultivation and the installment of new ideals through the examination system. It starts with the Yongzheng emperor's theory about the literati's function in local society, a theory that was adopted and developed under the Qianlong rule. Between cultivating talents and correcting literati ethics, the latter always occupied the center stage. A serious believer of moral cultivation may wonder: How was the government's vision applicable? It would be a perennial task to cultivate oneself, let alone a population. The answer is simple: The actual goal was not to transform every person into sagehood. At least most Education Commissioners did not treat themselves as moralists instead of disciplinarians in the first place.

Throughout the Qianlong reign, leading imperial subjects through the education of literati was an active agenda. The cultivation efforts, presented in the form of a political quest, were not just a concept but substantiated by accumulated criteria that were implementable by the education officials. The rest of the chapter inspects the education campaigns in the context of examination curricular changes. Motivated by different causes but primarily the emperor's wish to adopt new literary ideals, the Qing state had gradually pushed forward a series of new requirements on essay writing, Classical learning, poetry, etc. These changes were forcefully integrated with the examination system at all levels, remodeling Chinese literati to the empire's desired image.

The epilogue further elaborates the institutional bridge between the emperor and the literary officials that helped to strengthen the ideological aspects of governance. Beyond personal interest, the Qianlong activism in ideological practices represents an organic part of governance that was jointly motivated by the peculiar placement arrangement and the scholar-officials' responses, out of which the throne's constant exposure to pertinent information was a subtle but important factor. The emperor relied on bureaucratic mobilization to attain active results. Most participants paid little attention to permanentizing training protocols, not to mention the intellectual content itself. At the end, the concluding remarks point to the post-Qianlong decline of ideological institutions. The continuity and rupture of emperorship provide a feasible interpretation.

Chapter II: **The Emperor's Intern Project**

This chapter discusses the political capital of scholarly merits during the Yongzheng-Qianlong continuum. It is organized around the sovereign's perception and deployment preference of his scholar-officials. As the highest achievers of the examination system, a large percentage of the Hanlin academicians received noncrucial appointments throughout their career. I situate this phenomenon in its political context and explain why the venue of commissioning became the Qianlong emperor's "intern project" for training and utilizing Hanlin-background officials. The emperor's new approach had further implications in the institutions of education and ideology. This chapter thus provides a foundation for the rest of the dissertation.

2.1 ***The Throne's Perceived Roles of Examination Achievers***

2.1.1 The Question of the Hanlin Academy

At the beginning of the Yongzheng reign, the Hanlin group remained under-utilized, as it was since the early Qing. To the emperor's advantage, the Hanlin academicians who came from the civil service examinations instead of bannermen channels started to represent a rising political force. The Yongzheng emperor famously preferred individual allegiance over the establishment. Those who had demonstrated both administrative talent and personal loyalty rose to significant positions. Under the new condition, examination achievers could expect more opportunities in the officialdom. But they were soon challenged by the emperor's pragmatic approach to bureaucratic placement.

The Hanlin Academy was traditionally encouraged to offer policy suggestions upon the enthronement of a new emperor. On that occasion, in the Spring of 1723 (Yongzheng 1), the chief academicians (*zhangyuan xueshi* 掌院學士) gathered the resident Hanlins and brought them a one-

time permit to submit memorials to the throne.[17] Thirty-three amongst fifty-four existing records were from the provisional members (*shujishi* 庶吉士), many of whom were to be assigned to various government positions after the placement examination (*sanguan* 散館).[18] This opportunity incentivized them to demonstrate the worthiness of training. The rest mostly came from the junior members (*bianxiu* 編修 and *jiantao* 檢討). They possessed the best credentials the system could offer and were expected to be the most talented.

It was the first formal encounter, albeit hardly a rewarding experience to begin with, between the Yongzheng emperor and the academicians. These policy suggestions encompassed Classical learning, schooling, examinations, censorship, book projects, history writing, ritual debates, bureaucratic arrangements, and various statecraft topics. Not leaving any remarks on them, the emperor circled a few parts out and disregarded the rest. These archival clues suggest, that from a range of issues, he seemed to only consider public utilities (e.g., flood control and irrigation work), official performance and selection, customary malpractices (*lougui* 陋規), etc. noteworthy. The long discussions in the realm of scholarly concerns, such as textual and ritual subjects, were largely neglected.

The ground on which the emperor dismissed those memorials was not solely the nature of imminence. They were not formal proposals, meaning that the reviews were not set to be routed to the Boards and then followed by an executive decision. There was no evidence that suggested the paucity of importance either, although the emperor did reveal little keenness to engage in the dialogue.

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[17] FHA#04-01-38-0057-014. Not everyone was obliged to participate.

[18] See "Xuanju san 選舉三" (Selection and Recommendation, 3) in the *Qingshi gao* 清史稿 (The Draft History of the Qing), *juan* 180.

The Yongzheng emperor's lack of investment in such topics, as manifested along his rule, was hardly a result of disinterest in the lettered population. On the contrary, his activist policy unprecedently reached deep into the literati. His edicts and essays, for example, focused on the disciplinary indoctrination that attempted to govern behavior and opinion.[19] "Scholar-officials studied the Classics to be of use in serving the sovereign and the people." In an edict denouncing corruption, the emperor explained why he assumed that scholar-officials should be preferable over the others in governance. But his judgement was contested by this group's propensity to factionalism and self-indulgence. To address this issue, he specifically singled out the importance of "shizheng 實政 (concrete performance in state affairs)" as opposed to "xuwen 虛文 (unsubstantiated gestures)".[20] The latter was directly associated by the emperor with "words of flattery", which he deemed a form of moral and intellectual depravity.[21]

In a later edict, the emperor re-clarified that he expected scholars to "study the Classics for the sake of resourcefulness (讀書明理)". It should be taken for granted, he argued, despite that he found many officials through the examination channel ("kejia zhi ren 科甲之人") disappointing. Again, his criticism led to the discordance in what Classical training ideally enabled scholars to do and the typical presentation of the group. Textual skills, for instance, was often used toward describing "breeze, cloud, moon, and dew" instead of "managing the world (經世)" and "decorating the state (華國)". When a Hanlin academician became an official, he was still prone to "self-identify as a literary person (自負文人)". He thus could not use his full talent to perform

[19] This feature of the Yongzheng emperorship, which was carried on in the Qianlong era, shall be addressed in chapters IV and V.
[20] Entry "Yongzheng 05-02-03" in the *Shizong xian huangdi shilu* 世宗憲皇帝實錄, *juan* 53.
[21] Entry "Yongzheng 04-10-16" in the *Shizong xian huangdi shilu*, *juan* 49.

the specializations of the assigned duty. The emperor found these signs (along with corruption and factionalism) worrying and preventing him from further deployment of scholars ("雖欲用科甲之人而有所不可").[22]

From another edict of the same day, the emperor mentioned two historical figures in defense of a related point. They came from literary references that were popularly cited to prove scholarly worthiness might not be appreciated by the sovereign. Forcefully refuting the true worthiness of both purported wisemen, an argument that was associated by him with the performance of the Hanlin academicians, he doubted how much historical truth was preserved by literati writing. More important, these writings had negative consequences that caused the misrepresentation of the sovereign's perspective. His critique was empowered by several key comments: "pedantic, dragging, and thus hard to follow in the real world (迂闊難行)", "riding on empty words (託諸空言)", "arbitrary and intemperate (詭激)", "overweening and absentminded (狂疏)", etc., all of which were useless traits to assist a competent ruler.[23]

In the response the emperor gave to a Hanlin-background official (who proposed expanding the schooling system based on a Classical idea that was re-interpreted by Zhu Xi), a recurring phrase "pedantic and excessive (迂闊)" was adopted by the rescript. It proclaimed that the memorialist's "way of viewing (所見)" had made his proposal downright unnecessary.[24] Such rhetoric had been consistent throughout the Yongzheng reign. It signified the appraisal and utilization of scholarly merits in the imperial government, which were arbitrated by the examination system and typically

[22] Entry "Yongzheng 07-10-24" in the *Shizong xian huangdi shilu*, *juan* 87. In this edict, the emperor's major criticism was still corruption and factionalism.
[23] Ibid. Its main purpose was to validate the compilation project of his edicts.
[24] FHA#04-01-38-0180-008. Memorialist Yan Sisheng 晏斯盛 (1692-1752).

in the form of textual excellence. Essentially, the emperor threw an alarming question upon all scholar-officials: Why, instead of loyal and resourceful bannermen and bondservants, should he deploy scholars who tended to be pedantic, factionalist, and self-serving?

Nevertheless, the importance of Classical training was duly acknowledged by the throne. Scholars always had their place in literary positions, and the relative importance of the Hanlin group continued to grow. The political environment did not stay the same either. The rather harsh imperial gaze appeared to have withdrawn when the Qianlong emperor started to reign.

Right after enthronement, the Qianlong emperor issued a series of edicts that defined his literary policies. One of them was a passionate defence of scholars. He targeted against the rhetoric found in many censorial memorials: "being a scholar, he underperforms in the office (書生不能勝任)", "bookishness not cleansed (書氣未除)", etc. The Governors-general and the Governors often used this kind of characterization to charge scholar-officials, resulting in their disqualification in magisterial positions. Some of them would be removed from office. Some others would be transferred to teaching positions, bearing the lowest civil ranks, and having little chance to go further in career.[25]

The new emperor was dissatisfied with this phenomenon in principle. He argued that textual study was for the sake of pragmatic application. The guidelines of self-cultivation, managing the people, serving the lord, running the government, etc. were all written in books. By summoning a brigade of Classical references, the emperor forcefully maintained that textual knowledge ought to be critical to governance:

> Therefore, Fu Yue advises his lord: Learn from ancient teachings so that executive experiences can be ingathered.

[25] Entry "Yongzheng 13-10-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu* 高宗純皇帝實錄, *juan* 5.

故傅說之告其君曰：學于古訓，乃有獲。[26]

Fu also says: One keeps thinking about and devotes himself to learning.

又曰：念終始典于學。[27]

King Cheng preaches to his ministers and says: One studies ancient texts and then serves an office. He discusses policies with institutional references. In this way, governance will not be mistaken.

成王訓其臣曰：學古入官、議事以制，政乃不迷。[28]

He also says: If an administrator does not study, he is nothing but facing a wall and seeing nothing. When he runs an office and handles things, he will feel nothing but embarrassment.

又曰：不學，牆面。蒞事惟煩。[29]

Citing Mencius, the emperor then concluded that if one does not learn anything from books, he will suffer from improper judgement and disorganized execution. "These habits rise from one's mind and shall do injury to government".[30] If a magistrate was indeed worthy of scholar's name, it would be another way around: The emperor combined words from the *Classic of Rites* and the *Zuo Commentary of the Chunqiu*, proclaiming that a magistrate should "use the heart of compassion, integrity, dedication, and fidelity (易直子諒之心) to direct a government of leniency, harmony, charity, and benevolence (寬和惠愛之政)."[31] Then all the people under his jurisdiction would be blessed.

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[26] Chapter "Shuoming xia 說命下" in the *Shangshu* 尚書 (Classic of Documents). A side note: This part had been contested by many Classical scholars as fabricated, especially since the early Qing and notably by Yan Ruoqu 閻若璩 (1636-1704). Later on, his argument was well received by the scholarly community. But the Qing state did not withdraw its support of the chapters proven to be inauthentic, leaving a jarring gap between state ideology and academic consensus.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Chapter "Zhouguan 周官" in the *Shangshu*. This chapter is also a post-Han fabrication.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Chapter "Gongsun Chou shang 公孫丑上" in the *Mencius*.
[31] Chapter "Yueji 樂記" in the *Classic of Rites* and entry "Zhuanggong 9 莊公九年" in the *Zuo Commentary* of the *Chunqiu*.

Thus, the emperor continued, those Governors-general and Governors who dismissed scholars misjudged the situation. They criticized some underperforming magistrates on the ground of being like scholar, without realizing that books were exactly the victim of their underachieving scholarship. The edict ended with the emperor's proclamation of his strong alignment with scholars and scholarly merits:

> I am only afraid of men not being worthy enough of scholar's name, how can one advise against becoming a scholar? If being scholar is not advisable, then what does this idea make of me who have been studying Classical texts in palace since childhood and never stopped reading and reciting for twenty years, which factually makes me a scholar? … As to "bookish flair", this is especially valuable. Once a man can indeed delve into books and be nurtured with "bookish flair", his further accumulation of righteous deeds will eventually bring out the habitual manifestation of sagely teachings… Hence, "bookish flair" is exactly the quality to patiently cultivate so that it may properly thrive. How can one advise others to purge it and construe those who possess it as sick?
>
> 朕惟恐人不足當書生之稱，而安得以書生相戒乎？若以書生為戒，朕自幼讀書宮中、講誦二十年未嘗少輟，實一書生也。…至於書氣二字，尤可寶貴。果能讀書，沈浸醞釀而有書氣，更集義以充之，便是浩然之氣。…是書氣正宜從容涵養以善培之，安可勸之使除而反以未除者為病乎？

In this edict, the sovereign was not just put alongside the Classically educated population. Rather, the Qianlong emperor included himself in the civil officials around him and many others in the empire. This statement was an amiable gesture to jump-start his complex relationship with scholar-officials in the next sixty-four years. For a limited time, the magistrates who were charged "bookish" likely served office with ease. The emperor further associated "bookish flair (書氣)" with "the habitual manifestation of sagely teachings (浩然之氣)", a core concept from Mencius.[32]

[32] Chapter "Gongsun Chou shang" in the *Mencius*. The word "haoran 浩然" literally means the magnificent scene of overflowing water, which can be used to describe a dignified passion or expression.

His argument had the potential of ideological importance, for the reason that the panache Confucian believers aspired to carry as a natural result of their moral cultivation could now be gained via scholarly growth. But this ideological stance was not sustained well. While the other literary policies issued on the same day remained active afterwards, the optimism of this edict did not last long.

The switch of attitude was almost palpable. Like his father did, shortly after enthronement, the Qianlong emperor sought guidance from scholars in the Hanlin Academy. The existing archives do not lead to many records from all Hanlin members. Nevertheless, the remaining ones suggest more generous feedback.[33] The positive bubble burst quickly, however, when three of his recently promoted officials of senior Hanlin background submitted policy suggestions that were not particularly helpful.

Among these three, the first memorialist tried to propose his own commentaries on the Great Learning (*Daxue* 大學) and the Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhongyong* 中庸). In that memorial, he contended that it was the sagely time to elaborate upon the original teachings of Confucius, Zengzi 曾子, Zisi 子思 and Mencius only, and one should not be confined by Song commentators like Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, Cheng Yi 程頤, Zhang Zai 張載, and Zhu Xi.[34] The second official gave copious advice, which focused on expanding the set of Confucian sages who were entitled to state sacrifices.[35] The third person submitted two memorials in the same day. One topic is on adding some Song figures to the sacrifice list at the Halls of Ultimate Achievement (Dacheng dian 大成

Mencius uses it to indicate a moral instinct that compels and empowers believers to act per the image of sages. In this context, I translate *haoran zhi qi* as the habitual manifestation of sagely teachings.

[33] E.g., FHA#04-01-30-0417-016, FHA#04-01-30-0417-017, etc.

[34] FHA#04-01-38-0002-003.

[35] FHA#04-01-01-0012-027.

殿), but mainly talks about *xingli* 性理 (Nature and Coherence) scholarship;[36] the other one argues that the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經) should be printed and disseminated together with the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. In doing so, the examination curriculum would be improved.[37]

These documents have intellectual merits of their own.[38] They also had weight considering the positions the writers held: a left vice censor-in-chief (*zuo fu duyushi* 左副都御史, rank 3a), a deputy censor-in-chief (*qian duyushi* 僉都御史, rank 4a), and a censor of the Jiangnan Circuit (*Jiangnan dao jiancha yushi* 江南道監察御史, rank 5a). The ranks were from upper-middle to upper tiers among the civil officials, and the positions were important. Having read their memorials, the Qianlong emperor issued an open edict denouncing them for putting him in an embarrassing position. He was displeased about the proposals because, from the sovereign's perspective, they were generally "inappropriate for actual implementation (無當於實用)" and "impinging on the essence of the state (有關於國體)". He then commented:

> All of these men were widely regarded as established scholars but underwent a long time not being deployed. Now I promote and deploy them, and their insights and proposals are like this. Should not they be ashamed by the virtuous discourse amongst many fellow scholars and the grace of special promotion extended by me?
>
> 夫此數人者，皆輿論所推服為讀書人而久不見用者也。今朕拔而用之，而數人之識見若此、陳奏若此。豈不有愧於士林之清議與朕特擢之恩乎？[39]

[36] FHA#04-01-14-0001-005.
[37] FHA#04-01-38-0002-002.
[38] For example, the first memorial seized the opportunity at the beginning of a new reign to propose a radical return to the Classical origins. It is a bold contention given the context of the Song Learning as the state-sponsored ideology.
[39] Entry "Qianlong 01-02-16.2" in the *Shangyu dang* 上諭檔 (Archive of Edicts).

Disenamoured of these scholars, the novice emperor might have reflected on why they were underused by his father. This kind of instances connect us to a pressing problem he faced. For the remainder of the long Qianlong reign, the emperor constantly found himself under pressure from the scholar-officials' place in the bureaucracy. He had to adopt and develop several approaches to remodel this group to his own advantage.

2.1.2 Questing Solutions

Out of the traditional accoutrements, the emperor unsurprisingly chose to restrengthen the existing departments of Classical training. All examination sectors should have a purpose in the preparation for serving the state. In an edict of a curricular reform, he reiterated this idea by explaining why certain elements were incorporated: the Classics could check a person's foundation; the discussion essay could measure his wisdom; the ceremonial essay could assess his erudition; the judicial essay could test his judgement; the policy essay could inspect his statecraft viewpoints. Every field of learning was designed for "the literati's pragmatic application (士人之實用)". However, this great intention had been abused both by the examinees' malpractice and the examiners' negligence.[40] Throughout the Qianlong reign, the emperor had been active in issuing literary policies, espousing curricular changes, sponsoring textual compilations and dissemination campaigns, etc. These activities are discussed in chapters IV and V.

Lecturing had been another common means to use. Both the Yongzheng and the Qianlong emperors had given unprecedented attention to the power of imperial speech. Since the Yongzheng era, not only edicts were selected, censored, and broadcasted, the emperors would also seize every opportunity to comment on individual official's opinions. For those they considered politically

[40] Entry "Qianlong 09-07-24" in the *Shangyu dang*.

relevant and worthy of setting an example, some of these words were publicized. In this context, the Qianlong emperor revisited the image of scholar in his government.

One typical scenario was redirecting the scholar-officials' attention from textual/ritual debates to the affairs pertinent to their own office. When the emperor received a book consisted of Song-style statecraft essays submitted by a Judicial Supervisor, he fiercely criticized this act. He maintained that the content, while being worthless, was forgivable if it was submitted by an official of censorial or Hanlin background. A senior official like Judicial Supervisor had enough specialized duties to care for.[41] On another occasion, the emperor publicly dismissed textual discussions. To a memorial that argued against offering state sacrifice to Gaozi 告子, a pre-Qin figure who believed in the villainous nature of human mind (*xing'e* 性惡) and was the opposite of Mencius, alongside the other Confucian sages, the emperor commented:

> This point is fairly reasonable. I have already routed your memorial to the Nine Ministers for discussion. However, it is also a matter that absolutely generates no real consequences to the world.
>
> You scholars always wastefully prioritize this kind of argument.
>
> 尚屬有理，已批九卿議奏。然亦絕無關繫之事。
>
> 讀書人每於此等處沾沾置辨。[42]

The emperor group-labeled this phenomenon as the scholars' problem. For this time, he unequivocally did not include himself as a part of it. He refused to acknowledge the appropriateness of bringing such a ritual-textual issue, which was important by principle to the Classicists, to him, by denying its relevance to governance. Although the debates of similar nature never ceased to play a role in the scholar-officials' policy proposals, archival evidence suggests

[41] Entry "Qianlong 16-06-04" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 392.
[42] Entry "Qianlong 21-01-04" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 504.

that the majority of them became the memorialists' unrequited expression. Their forlorn cause marks a conspicuous disconnection between textual scholarship and the imperial attention.

Equally important, this rescript reconfirms a further departure from the earlier reference. The emperor stopped using disappointment as a rhetorical tool. The sarcastic tone, his all-time favorite, became even more prevalent in later speeches and implied stronger disaffection. At the same time, he discouraged the bannermen from being scholar, denouncing those who acted like one.[43] Words and phrases like "rusheng 儒生 (Confucian scholar)", "wenren 文人 (literati)", "shusheng zhi jian 書生之見 (bookish opinion)", etc., often saw their derogatory uses in the edicts. The earliest rhetoric thus never appeared again in the Qianlong emperor's speeches. He distinguished the sovereign by alienizing his scholar-officials from an idealized image, which no one could embody except himself and the dead. As shown in numerous denouncement edicts, the emperor's scholarly self quickly evolved into a patronizing teacher-sage figure.

The ways in which the throne's disposition actually affected the scholar-officials as a group are hard to define. Nevertheless, aside from lecturing and disciplining, he did see a possibility to address the perceived issue in an institutional arrangement. In the following part, I shall discuss how the Qianlong emperor treated the venue of commissioning as a trial of the officials' capability.[44] This is also why several supervision policies, such as governors reporting the reputation of the Education Commissioners, were issued during this period.[45] Beyond the degrees

[43] E.g., entries "Qianlong 13-07-16", "14-03-26", etc. in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 321, 337.
[44] In the interview notes, the emperor often wrote comments like "(this person) can only serve the Office of Education Affairs (不過學政之材)". FHA#04-01-12-0083-103. Or he would comment "(this person) is merely a decent literatus (好文人而已)", which means the same. FHA#04-01-13-0108-006. These comments usually had negative effects career-wise, meaning that they did not pass the trial for the administrative positions of importance. More references to be discussed below.
[45] See the next section.

and under the watchful eyes of the emperor himself, the ladder of success started to witness a new challenge after the scholars passing the thorny gate of examination.

2.2 Beyond the Degrees: A Placement Perspective

2.2.1 The Prospect of an Academician Career

In the *Qingshi gao*, the drafters glamorously described how the Hanlin academicians had met great expectations in the imperial government:

> The Hanlins either served the inner court or were commissioned in the provinces. In literary positions, they advanced either through book compilation rewards or by invitation into the secretarial cabinet… Their career development was more prestigious than the officials from the other channels. Throughout the Qing dynasty, most grand councilors came from this background. Those who did not become grand councilor belonged to the high echelon of the central government or were entrusted with the authority of territorial administration. Such instances are beyond enumeration.
>
> 或供奉內廷、或宣諭外省、或校書議敘、或召試詞科 …遷調異他官。有清一代，宰輔多由此選。其餘列卿尹、膺疆寄者，不可勝數。[46]

Despite being well-written, to a professional historian of our age, the latter part of the above statement is not factually correct. This wrong impression has left a negative print on the popular perception and writing of Qing history. Growing up in the late nineteenth century, the drafters witnessed the post-Taiping rise of Han scholar-officials who filled up a large portion of critical positions. However, that transient era does not represent the entire dynasty.

Degree-holders seldom occupied the central stage of the Qing bureaucracy. The overall percentage of bannerman officials was 14.2% if all channels of selection are considered. Already being the highest against all provinces, 35.9% of bannerman officials could enter the upper tier.

[46] "Xuanju san" in the *Qingshi gao*, *juan* 180.

This percentage is much higher than non-bannermen regardless of background.[47] Most of these bannerman officials did not have a degree.[48] During the eighteenth century, in particular, the majority of the Governors-general and the Governors were bannermen who did not take the civil service examinations. The bannerman group also assumed over a half of the top positions in the Boards and other ministries in the central government. Most military positions, especially those with commanding authority, excluded non-Bannerman officials.[49] Virtually all the administrative positions assigned by the imperial government to the borderland territories, such as Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang, excluded non-Bannerman officials as well. While it is true that many Grand Secretaries and Grand Councilors rose from civil background, they were principally in charge of drafting edicts and non-critical commissions, usually led by more powerful bannerman peers or the members of the imperial clan.[50] This image contrasts sharply with that of the nineteenth century.

Admittedly, the examination achievers living under the Qianlong rule might not necessarily believe in a new world of "Pax Manchurica": Their training and career expectations did not depart

[47] Wang Zhiming 王志明's book provides a rudimentary data analysis, see Wang, *Qingdai zhiguan renshi yanjiu* 清代職官人事研究 (Research on the Personnel Appointment of Qing Officials), (Shanghai: *Shanghai shiji chuban jituan* 上海世紀出版集團, 2016).

[48] Bannermen (including the members of the imperial clan) could take the civil service examinations, although exact policies varied across time (see the corresponding chapters in the different versions of the *Huidian* for comparison). The percentage could get to 20%, see Wang's book. Their participation was limited, both for the reasons of not taking quota from civilians and the other easier channels of selection available. Obviously, the majority of degree-holders were non-Bannermen. This distinction is important to analyze the bureaucratic placement of most examination achievers, especially the Hanlin academicians.

[49] Non-Bannerman officials often saw to logistical affairs in the army. The Qianlong emperor explained that the Manchus were professional soldiers whereas the Han could facilitate warfare if they had familiarized themselves with the logistics. See entry "Qianlong 13-11-29" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 329. But this kind of appointment was restricted because of distrust. See entry "Qianlong 24-03-01" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 582.

[50] As the Qianlong emperor put it, "our dynasty's established rule is to let the Manchu Grand Secretary lead the Secretariat (我朝定制，內閣係滿大學士領班)". See entry "Qianlong 10-05-23" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 241.

much from the tradition. Like those lived in the previous dynasty and the drafters of the *Qingshi gao*, they habitually (and stubbornly) shared an optimistic vision of what degree-holders could and would accomplish. The emperor who thought otherwise often brought them to the reality. He had frequently demonstrated distrust toward the administrative capability of the scholar-officials, particularly those from the Hanlin background. In a typical scenario, he commented that a Grand Secretary from the examination channel "was only entrusted with literary assignments and never missions of significance (祇令司文墨，未嘗加之重任)".[51] Even preeminent figure like Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672-1755) was considered only worthy of "drafting edicts".[52] The clash of two images did create conflicts (e.g., some literary inquisition cases featured in the interpretation of the Manchu regime) but did not dissuade the literati from pursuing ideal.[53]

Meanwhile, not completely relying on the scholar-officials, the emperor gradually devised a set of schemes designated to the proper utilization of this group. At the beginning of the Qianlong rule, the power of personnel appointment was not completely resided in the sovereign. The emperor initially relied on the recommendations from the Grand Secretaries and the ministers of the Six Boards. Due to the lack of acquaintance with most candidates, even the direct appointments (*jianren* 簡任) were conducted in this fashion.[54] But the emperor soon learned to rely less on his

[51] Entry "Qianlong 04-04-12" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 90.
[52] Entries "Qianlong 14-12-17" and "15-04-17" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 355, 363.
[53] The most infamous inquisitions were always associated with topics pertinent to the "the institution of proper appearance and the essence of the state (衣冠制度)", as the cases of Wang Xihou 王錫侯, Xu Shuxie 徐述夔, Yin Baoshan 殷寶山, Cheng Shuliu 程樹榴, etc. demonstrated. Such cases were perceived by the emperor as "slandering the regime and arbitrarily attacking state affairs (謗訕國家、肆詆朝政)", see entry "Qianlong 22-12-26" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 553. Even mild discussions such as positioning the military examinations were scolded, and the memorialists were punished. See entry "Qianlong 25-10-01" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 622. But despite of all the alerts, archival evidence shows that this kind of topics continued to appear on the throne's desk.
[54] Entry "Yongzheng 13-10-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 5.

ministers. According to his later claim, all the officials were screened under his watchful eyes.[55] This was especially true for direct appointments, in which the Board recommendation list was merely for the throne's reference. He then personally selected and interviewed every individual.

This institutional arrangement had created an archival procedure, in which the emperor wrote down his interview notes for future reference.[56] These notes often (but not always) predicted the candidates' placement in the bureaucracy.[57] It is evident to believe that the Qianlong emperor had outlined a few background factors as his criteria of choice. Aside from personal relationship with the emperor and family connection with the regime, which could and often did override the other credentials, the most important ones were typically about the candidates' overall compatibility with specific roles. For the examination achievers from civil background, their career pattern usually involved either secretary (in the central government) or magistrate (in the provinces) positions. The former was primarily reserved for the Hanlin academicians and encompassed censorial, literary, and educational duties, while the latter was largely administrative, fiscal, and judicial. Both required certain merits to achieve satisfactory performance and, based on the combination of track record and individual perception, only had the potential of entering the high echelon of the imperial bureaucracy if trusted by the throne.

The Qianlong emperor kept evaluating the academicians to have them properly placed in his government. The Office of Education Affairs (*Xuezheng yamen* 學政衙門)'s heads were all

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[55] As the emperor put it, he personally screened every county magistrate ("我大清朝乾綱坐攬… 事無大小，何一不出自朕衷獨斷？即月選一縣令，未有不詳加甄別者。"). See entry "Qianlong 14-12-14" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 354. Although exaggerated, archival evidence does suggest that he did careful interviews and kept good memory of many candidates.

[56] This kind of reference was different from the *Lüli dang* 履歷檔 (Archives of Résumé), which is already published by the FHA.

[57] I accumulated these interview notes at the FHA in Summer 2017. Zhang Yichi 張一馳, a then Ph.D. student at Renmin University, had run a similar search and discussed this subject with me. Our ideas overlapped in utilizing the same archival genre but differed in what we used the data for (which we did not share with each other entirely). This footnote is to acknowledge that conversation.

commissioned either directly from the Hanlin Academy or with Hanlin credentials, making it a good venue to observe their character. In the second year of the Qianlong reign, the emperor specifically asked the Education Commissioners to submit policy proposals.[58] By the next year, he had received proposals from all the provinces. Disapproving nuanced textual debates[59] and reform on a large scale (which made it impractical)[60], only a few of them were positively received. Then, in the next round of commissioning, the emperor started to use a specific set of criteria for the junior Hanlin candidates. This practice continued until the end of his reign.

2.2.2 Commissioning as a Venue of Selection

The following two forms offer the Qianlong emperor's placement criteria and how these criteria affected the sample groups.[61] The first one is about the correlation between the emperor's general rating of the candidates' career prospect and the latter's actual accomplishment on the bureaucratic ladder toward the end of their career:

General Rating[62]	Good (*you chuxi* 有	Good with reservation	About average[63]	Below average (*buguo zhongcai*	Bad (*wu chuxi* 無	Uncertain (*zaikan* 再看,	Positively adjusted	Negatively adjusted

[58] See FHA#04-01-38-0180-037. Memorialist Chen Xiangshu 陳象樞 (1696-1753).

[59] E.g., FHA#04-01-38-0059-031. Memorialist Zhou Xuejian 周學健 (?-1748).

[60] E.g., FHA#04-01-38-0059-028. Memorialist Li Guang'ao 李光墺 (1671-1738).

[61] The examples I use cover a fair percentage of the target group and thus are representative enough for a rudimentary analysis. Nevertheless, the sample size for some categories is still too small to have statistical significance. Due to human errors and the inadequacy of search tools, which is caused by both a huge number of mistakes while building entries and the dereliction of duty in subsequent maintenance, the FHA database gave me a hard time to build an exhaustive collection. I stopped at where I believe more data can only add nuances instead of altering my preliminary conclusions.

[62] 1) Because the interpretation of these ratings can be subjective, the same keyword may have a spectrum of connotations in different interview notes. I have included the emperor's original texts in the footnotes for the readers' reference. 2) If several indicators appear in the same interview note and do not share tonality, the one with stronger undertone or more substance overrides the others. External references are not adopted. 3) The data used for every column/row are mutually exclusive.

[63] "Zhongping 中平 (average and ordinary)" and "tuodang 妥當 (proper)", in particular, were used in both positive and slightly negative scenarios. The emperor's undertone seems to range from meaning "fairly decent" to "hopelessly unexceptional". I principally categorize these two criteria as an "average" rating unless the remaining reference points suggest otherwise.

Ranking at the End of Career	出息, *keyong* 可用, *mingbai* 明白, etc.)	(*sihao zaikan* 似好再看, *sikeyong* 似可用, etc.)	(*zhongcai* 中材, *yike* 亦可, *zhongping* 中平, *pingchang* 平常, etc.)	不過中材, *bushen manyi* 不甚滿意, etc.)	出息, *bu mingbai* 不明白, *buxiao shiwu* 不曉事務, etc.)	*mankan* 慢看, etc.)		

3b and above	24[64]	10[65]	6[66]	1[67]	1[68]	0	0	0

[64] Qian Chenqun 錢陳群 (1690-1774), FHA#04-01-38-0057-050 (“小伶俐人。”), rank 1a; Kaitai 開泰 (?-1763), FHA#04-01-12-0012-074 (“此去似有出息的人，頗沉靜而曉事。”), 04-01-15-0019-042 (“向來看似有出息。今在外五年，似又老練些。人沉靜，好。”), rank 1b; Zhao Dajing 趙大鯨 (1681-1749), FHA#04-01-38-0060-049 (“通順江浙人。頗有文名，詞章之學原好。”), rank 3a; Jin Shen 金甡 (1702-1782), FHA#04-01-13-0109-013 (中上妥當。), rank 2b; Li Zhiyun 李治運 (1710-1771), FHA#04-01-13-0109-083 (“此人甚專深，有出息。已特用榆林知府。”), rank 3a; Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (1714-1779), FHA#04-01-15-0021-023 (“中平。明白人。”), 04-01-13-0013-004 (“妥當。去得。”), rank 1a; Song Bangsui 宋邦綏 (?-1770), FHA#04-01-15-0021-041 (“此人頗有出息。”), rank 2b; Xingtai 興泰 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0056-032 (“當去得、有出息。”), rank 3a; Cheng Yan 程巖 (1714-1768), FHA#04-01-12-0062-072 (“人妥當、有出息。”), 2b; Luo Yuanhan 羅源漢 (1707-1782), FHA#04-01-12-0062-076 (“人竟有出息。”), rank 1b; Feng Qian 馮鈐 (1711-1770), FHA#04-01-17-0027-115 (“人聰明。道即可，餘再試。”), rank 2b; Tang Pin 湯聘 (1707-1769), FHA#04-01-12-0083-075 (“此人應可。”), rank 2b; Zhong Lanzhi 鍾蘭枝 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0101-024 (“亦伶俐。小有出息者。”), rank 2b; Wang Tingyu 汪廷璵 (1718-1783), FHA#04-01-12-0083-101 (“妥當。頗去得。”), 2b; Liu Zun 劉墫 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0047-028 (“人竟可以用府道。”), rank 3a; Liu Yong 劉墉 (1720-1804), FHA#04-01-12-0083-060 (“聰明。有出息。”), 04-01-13-0104-014 (“有出息可用者。”), rank 1a; Wang Jie 王杰 (1725-1805), FHA#04-01-13-0033-008 (“人竟似可用者。”), 04-01-13-0106-001 (“此人有出息。竟好。”), rank 1a; Li Tingyang 李廷扬 (1732-1806), FHA#04-01-30-0050-012 (“有出息者”), rank 3a; Sun Shiyi 孫士毅 (1720-1796), FHA#04-01-12-0139-003 (“此人將來或可用”), 04-01-12-0163-016 (“此人可用”), rank 1a; Wang Xin 汪新 (1730-1798), FHA#04-01-12-0139-121 (“明白妥當，此任去得。”), 2a; Yang (Xu) Sizeng 楊(徐)嗣曾, FHA#04-01-12-0145-059 (“明白。此任去得，還可出息。”), rank 2b; Liu Quanzhi 劉權之 (1739-1818), FHA#04-01-13-0056-011 (“竟可出息。”), rank 1a; Yao Yi 姚頤 (?-1788), FHA#04-01-13-0056-009 (“人明白。此任可。”), 04-01-12-0196-008 (“果好。”), rank 3a; Wu Jing 吳璥 (1747-1822), FHA#04-01-13-0082-006 (“去得。竟可以河道用。吳嗣爵之子。”), rank 1a.

[65] Cui Ji 崔紀 (1693-1750), FHA#04-01-13-0106-050 (“中平。性情褊急，是其端。然尚為正派一道者。”), rank 2b; Lu Chi 呂熾 (?-1778), FHA#04-01-01-0144-050 (“中平妥當。有議其操守者，已教訓矣。”), rank 3a; Sun Hao 孫灝 (1700-1760), FHA#04-01-24-0060-001 (“人聰明。南人而已，非大器。好亦不過提學侍郎之選。學政似當可。”, rank 3a; Cao Xiuxian 曹秀先 (1708-1784), FHA#04-01-13-0034-012 (“此任竟可，餘再看。”), rank 1b; Li Zongwen 李宗文 (1716-?), FHA#04-01-13-0022-001 (“妥當。似有出息，但恐假時日。”), rank 2b; Wang Shifen 王士棻 (1722-1796), FHA#04-01-12-0204-064 (“拮据。可道府而非大局面。”), rank 3a; Sun Jiale 孫嘉樂 (1733-1800), FHA#04-01-13-0057-027 (“妥當道府材，局面略小。)”, 04-01-30-0050-002 (“人明白。藩臬都可。”), rank 3a; Wu Shouzhao 吳綬詔 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0126-010 (“妥當文人，過了慢用可也。”), rank 3a; Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818), FHA#04-01-13-0445-038 (“似有出息。此任可。”), 04-01-13-0078-034 (“學問好。人亦可。”), 04-01-13-0082-001 (“學問好。亦可。”), rank 2b; Zhou Xingdai 周興岱 (1744-1809), FHA#04-01-12-0242-010 (“似可。較父略明白。”), rank 1b.

[66] Liu Xingwei 劉星煒 (1718-1772), FHA#04-01-12-0083-002 (“妥當南方人而已。”), rank 2b; Lu Xixiong 陸錫熊 (1734-1792), FHA#04-01-13-0078-004 (“學問好，和顏悅色。中材。”), 3a; Wang Tingyu 汪廷璵 (1718-1783), FHA#04-01-12-0083-103 (“妥當通順人。不過學政之才。”), 04-01-12-0083-101 (“妥當，頗去得。”), rank 2b; Feng Yingliu 馮應榴 (1740-1800), FHA#04-01-13-0043-029 (“此任可。”), rank 2b; Wu Xingqin 吳省欽 (1729-1803), FHA#04-01-13-0047-027 (“此任可。”), 04-01-12-0203-007 (“才回。或仍可慢用。”), rank 1b; Wu Xinglan 吳省蘭 (1737-1810), 04-01-13-0081-026 (“文人而已。”), rank 2b.

[67] Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805), FHA#04-01-12-0095-069 (“文亦可。學差或可試而不甚滿意。”), rank 2a.

	(57%)	(36%)	(15%)	(11%)	(12%)	(0%)	(0%)	(0%)
4a ~ 4b[69]	3[70] (7%)	8[71] (29%)	6[72] (15%)	2[73] (22%)	3[74] (38%)	0 (0%)	1[75] (25%)	1[76] (33%)

[68] Qian Zai 錢載 (1708-1793), FHA#04-01-38-0087-023 (“學問好。不解事。”), rank 2b.

[69] I consider advancing into rank 4b as truly entering the mid-tier for the Hanlin-background officials. Before this phase, many of the academicians would earn Censor (5b), Supervising Censor (jishizhong 給事中, 5a), and various Hanlin-related positions by default. None of these titles had significance. In the central government, 4b-ranking titles like Lecturer-in-waiting academician (*shijiang xueshi* 侍講學士) or Reader-in-waiting academician (*shidu xueshi* 侍讀學士) started to bear higher responsibilities in the Academy and the Secretariat while 4a-ranking included vice ministers in the courts. For positions in the provinces, which were considered more important and desirable, only becoming Prefecture Magistrate (4b) and Circuit Intendent (4a) meant being entrusted with territorial responsibility. Hence, both in the capital and the provinces, ranking 4b and 4a was a critical stage that often led to upper-tier positions upon evaluation.

[70] Chen Guisen 陳桂森 (1729-1790), FHA#04-01-12-0203-006 (“伶俐人。”), rank 4a; Zhang Yaocheng 張姚成 (1742-1798), FHA#04-01-13-0068-045 (“似明白，可出息。”), 04-01-12-0242-009 (“明白。”), rank 4a; Shi Mengqi 史夢琦 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0204-062 (“此人似可。”), 04-01-13-0065-017 (“此人竟可用。”), rank 4b.

[71] Hu Shaonan 胡紹南 (1726-?), FHA#04-01-13-0101-004 (“此人若不假，必有出息。再看。”), rank 4a; Xia Tingzhi 夏廷芝 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0109-020 (“人明白，小些。其神情材學都略似汪**。”), rank 4b; Songgui 嵩貴 (1733-1789), FHA#04-01-12-0146-030 (“已經留任過，不用了。人卻似有出息。”), rank 4a; Mao Huizu 毛輝祖 (1709-1774), FHA#04-01-13-0109-106 (“似能此任。”), rank 4a; Yu Chen 于辰 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0100-003 (“聰明妥當江南派之人而已。”), rank 4b; Dai Diyuan 戴第元 (1728-1789), FHA#04-01-12-0126-002 (“此人似有心。再看。”), rank 4a; Zhu Yundong 祝雲棟 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0106-032 (“此人竟可慢用。”), rank 4a; Zheng Jitang 鄭際唐 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0079-013 (“此任似可。平妥。), rank 4b.

[72] Chen Qining 陳其凝 (?), FHA#04-01-15-0021-049 (“中平。妥當人。”), rank 4a; Lü Guangheng 呂光亨 (1722-?), FHA#04-01-13-0100-040 (“中平。讀書人而已。”), rank 4b; Hong Pu 洪朴 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0056-025 (“亦可。”), rank 4b; Li Mu 李棨 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0067-047 (“能此任。餘再看。”), 04-01-13-0078-012 (“好不過府道才。”), rank 4a; Chu Tingzhang 褚廷璋 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0108-004 (“此任竟可。妥當。”), 04-01-12-0141-006 (“妥當蘇州派。”), rank 4b; Li Minxing 李敏行 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0126-004 (“老實。”), rank 4a.

[73] Gui Chaodong 眭朝棟 (1713-?), FHA#04-01-13-0109-079 (“妥當，但局小些。”), rank 4a; Ye Guanguo 葉觀國 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0108-006 (“好文人而已。”), 4a.

[74] Xu Guangwen 徐光文 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0043-025 (“此任似可。獃些。”), 04-01-12-0162-063 (“不甚明白。只可此一次矣。”), rank 4a; Zhu Yun 朱筠 (1729-1781), FHA#04-01-13-0043-028 (“亦可。然只可司文。”), 04-01-13-0059-030 (“只可司文而已。無出息。”), rank 4b; Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728-1804), FHA#04-01-13-0106-001 (“讀書人不曉事務者。就好不過學政，尚宜遠省遲用。”), rank 4a.

[75] Luo Dian 羅典 (1719-1808), FHA#04-01-13-0101-024 (“無大出息。”), 04-01-30-0050-011 (“當屬解事者，似欠誠實。”), rank 4a.

[76] Zheng Jiang 鄭江 (1682-1745), FHA#04-01-13-0109-037 (“中平文人而已。臨去時記得是好的，此次大不如前。”), rank 4b.

5a and below	5[77] (12%)	4[78] (14%)	21[79] (51%)	4[80] (45%)	2[81] (26%)	1[82] (33%)	0 (0%)	1[83] (33%)

[77] Ni Guolian 倪國璉 (?-1743), FHA#04-01-13-0109-002 (“中上妥當，司文之差甚去得。”), rank 5a; Guan Xianyao 官獻瑤 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0106-047 (“中上。有出息。”), rank 5a; Wen Changshou 溫常綬 (1733-1797), FHA#04-01-13-0068-046 (“不但司文，人竟可好。”), 04-01-13-0078-008 (“好府道才。”), rank 5a; Mei Liben 梅立本 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0034-009 (“妥當。去得。”), rank 7a; Liu Zhongzhi 劉種之 (?-1810), FHA#04-01-13-0102-025 (“可用府。”), rank 6b.

[78] Li Zhongjian 李中簡 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0096-060 (“人似有心。不然是一有出息大好的。再看。”), 04-01-30-0048-018 (“學政才回，餘當慢看。”), 04-01-13-0043-027 (“去得。”), rank 7a; Xu Ligang 徐立綱 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0078-029 (“似可。”), 7a; Qin Chao 秦潮 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0241-054 (“當可者。”), rank 7a; Wen Ruyu 溫如玉 (1728-?), FHA#04-01-13-0021-001 (“似明白。妥當。”), rank 5a.

[79] Cao Xiling 曹錫齡 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0068-001 (“亦可。再看。”), 04-01-13-0079-018 (“妥當小心而小。”), rank 5b; Sun Renlong 孫人龍 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0062-074 (“中平。江浙小材而已。”), rank 6a; Su Linbo 蘇霖渤 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0109-038 (“忠厚有餘而亦解事”), rank 5b; Chen Benzhong 陳本忠 (1728-1787), FHA#04-01-13-01-5-028 (“中材平常。”), rank 7b; Mao Yongxie 毛永燮 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0083-059 (“妥當**者”), rank 5b; Fei Zhenxun 費振勳 (1738-1816), FHA#04-01-38-0099-016 (“中等。似可。”), rank 5b; Wang Yingcai 王應綵 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0109-034 (“中平。人尚妥當。”), rank 5b; He Qirui 何其睿 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0109-056 (“人竟當可。向紀平常，細觀衡文之任當可。”), rank 7a; Ge Derun 葛德潤 (1702-1771), FHA#04-01-12-0062-073 (“中平妥當。”), rank 5a; Cao Xibao 曹錫寶 (1719-1792), FHA#04-01-13-0108-019 (“中平。文人而已。”), 04-01-12-0162-062 (“中材。竟無大出息。”), rank 5a; Ye You 葉酉 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0062-071 (“中平。當在京官。”), rank 5a; Wang Ruyang 汪如洋 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0108-026 (“妥當竟可。”), 04-01-13-0085-057 (“中平妥當。”), rank 6b; Wu Shouchang 吳壽昌 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0104-044 (“平妥人。”), 04-01-13-0085-058 (“中材。”), rank 5b; Yu Ding 于鼎 (?-1786), FHA#04-01-13-0068-002 (“中材。妥當而已。”), rank 7a; Chen Quan 陳荃 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0105-031 (“此任似可。神氣似陳德華。”), 04-01-13-0100-064 (“老實。此任當可。”), rank 5b; Meng Chaoran 孟超然 (1730-1797), FHA#04-01-13-0037-003 (“像學者。本分。”), rank 5a; Rui Yongjian 芮永肩 (1736-1788), FHA#04-01-13-0078-033 (“平常。”), rank 5b; Cao Renhu 曹仁虎 (1731-1787), FHA#04-01-13-0078-026 (“尚可。”), rank 5b; Pan Zengqi 潘曾起 (1745-?), FHA#04-01-13-0078-003 (“亦可。”), rank 5b; Zha Ying 查瑩 (?), FHA#04-01-38-0094-020 (“妥當。才回來的。”), 04-01-13-0108-032 (“妥當。可。”), rank 5a; Qin Chao 秦潮 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0082-004 (“妥當。”), rank 7a.

[80] Wu Sifu 吳嗣富 (?), FHA#04-01-01-0143-036 (“妥當。”, “只可為此等差而已，不及吳**遠矣。”), 04-01-12-0083-107 (“竟是杭州文人。就不過司文尚可，無甚用處。”), rank 7a; Wu Hong 吳鴻 (1726-1763), FHA#04-01-12-0084-036 (“此任似可。非大有出息者。”), 5b; Shi Yimo 史貽謨 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0022-002 (“老實妥當勝其兄規樸，才情則大不及。”), rank 6b; Xiao Guangyun 蕭廣運 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0056-005 (“不過司文之任。”), 04-01-12-0196-010 (“還可。僅用司文。”), 5b.

[81] Shen Weizu 沈慰祖 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0058-001 (“人似不可信，亦俗些江浙派。久未升用，亦不足之應也。”, rank 6b; Shen Changyu 沈昌宇 (1700-1744), FHA#04-01-13-0109-015 (“妥當軟善人，無大出息。當僅可此等司文處用之，大省猶不可。”, rank 7a.

[82] Xiao Jiucheng 蕭九成 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0242-046 (“仍可慢用。”), rank 7b.

[83] Ge Dai 戈岱 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0060-012 (“妥當。當可出息之人。外任不宜，內用頗可。”), 04-01-12-0196-031 (“只可慢用，學差而已。”), rank 5b.

Promoted above 3b after the end of the Qianlong reign	4[84] (10%)	3[85] (11%)	5[86] (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2[87] (67%)	1[88] (25%)	0 (0%)
Dismissed, demoted, or	3[89] (7%)	2[90] (7%)	1[91] (2%)	1[92] (11%)	1[93] (12%)	0 (0%)	1[94] (25%)	1[95] (33%)

[84] Guan Huai 關槐 (1749-1806), FHA#04-01-12-0223-037 (“聰明人。學問可。”), rank 2b; Shao Hong 邵洪 (1743-1811), FHA#04-01-13-0066-002 (“竟可出息。”), rank 2b; Dai Quheng 戴衢亨 (1755-1811), FHA#04-01-12-0205-081 (“明白。有出息。”), 04-01-13-0078-002 (“竟可用。”), rank 1a; Liu Fenggao 劉鳳誥 (1762-1830), FHA#04-01-12-0239-007 (“學問好。年少聰明，甚宜慢用。”), 04-01-13-0098-021 (“聰明、學問好。”), 2a.

[85] Qian Yue 錢樾 (1743-1815), FHA#04-01-13-0079-016 (“似可。”), 04-01-13-0068-050 (“似明白。”), rank 2b; Shi Yunyu 石韞玉 (1756-1837), FHA#04-01-13-0098-020 (“似明白。”), rank 3a; Dai Junyuan 戴均元 (1746-1840), FHA#04-01-12-0241-109 (“竟可慢用。”), 04-01-13-0116-022 (“亦可。”), rank 1a.

[86] Liu Shi 刘烜 (?-1805), FHA#04-01-12-0204-061 (“中材。”), rank 2b; Li Changsen 李長森 (?), FHA#04-01-38-0099-018 (“中材。竟平常。”), rank 2b; Shao Hong 邵洪 (1743-1811), FHA#04-01-13-0085-054 (“妥當。”), rank 2b; Qiu Tinglong 邱庭漋 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0102-021 (“明白。亦可。”), rank 2b; Chu Pengling 初彭齡 (1749-1825), FHA#04-01-12-0244-099 (“此任可。”), rank 1b.

[87] Ping Shu 平恕 (1748-1804), FHA#04-01-13-0068-049 (“學問好，人再看。”), rank 2b; Zhou Zhaoji 周兆基 (1757-1817), FHA#04-01-38-0184-041 (“文差可慢用。”), rank 1b.

[88] Tong Fengsan 童鳳三 (?-1801), FHA#04-01-13-0100-058 (“明白。恐非大材具。”), 04-01-12-0126-001 (“人似明白有出息。”), rank 2b.

[89] Li Yinpei 李因培 (1717-1767), FHA#04-01-012-0061-015 (“學問應好，人亦去得。若不入於時習，則未可重也。”), 2b demoted to 3a, and then executed; Li Tiaoyuan 李調元 (1734-1803), FHA#04-01-13-0056-010 (“似可。”), 04-01-12-0194-060 (“竟可用。”), dismissed and banished to Xinjiang; Liu Xigu 劉錫嘏 (1745-1804), FHA#04-01-13-0056-024 (“此人竟可有出息。”), 04-01-12-0196-009 (“竟可用。”), permanently dismissed by the Jiaqing emperor.

[90] Mao Yuanming 茅元銘 (1744-?), FHA#04-01-13-0082-003 (“人似可。”), 04-01-38-0184-040 (“當可慢用。”), demoted from 4b to 6a; Hong Liangji 洪亮吉 (1746-1809), FHA#04-01-13-0102-015 (“明白妥當。再看。”), 04-01-13-0110-027 (“似可。”), banished to Xinjiang and permanently dismissed by the Jiaqing emperor.

[91] Li Diantu 李殿圖 (1738-1812), FHA#04-01-13-0056-026 (“亦可此任。”), demoted from 2b to 5b at the end of career.

[92] Zhou Yuezan 周曰贊 (?), FHA#04-01-38-0080-002 (“應不過中材，況做過兩任，下次應換矣。”), dismissed due to the misinterpretation of a literary case and wrongfully attempting to start inquisition.

[93] Zhu Quan 朱荃 (?-1750?), FHA#04-01-12-0083-072 (“聰明少材具，未必穩當。”), committed serious corruption and was charged unfiliality for not filing filial mourning, then died by accident, or fled away (case never closed, see FHA#04-01-12-0071-001, 02-01-07-13811-001, etc.).

[94] Fan Shi 范栻 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0043-016 (“中材。無甚出息。”), 04-01-12-0163-017 (“中上之品，聽其自進可也。”), demoted to 5b.

[95] Zhang Tao 張燾 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0078-031 (“似可。”), 04-01-13-0053-005 (“中材。使不得。”), demoted due to giving improper examination questions.

other penalties								
Other (early decease, early retirement, lack of data, etc.)	3[96] (7%)	1[97] (3%)	2[98] (5%)	1[99] (11%)	1[100] (12%)	0 (0%)	1[101] (25%)	0 (0%)
Total number	42 (100%)	28 (100%)	41 (100%)	9 (100%)	8 (100%)	3 (100%)	4 (100%)	3 (100%)

It is instrumental to understand this form through its hierarchical layout. But before immersing into the world of bureaucratic fortune, I must caution the readers about the dynamic nature of the subject matter. First and foremost, bureaucratic ranking did not always translate to status. Several other indicators worked together to dictate a person's spot in the hierarchy. One who handled fiscals or personnel appointment necessarily had more influence than sitting at a "see-through-water yamen". Similarly, stronger connection with the throne automatically guaranteed higher status. An official's relative position to the others was also defined by more temporary factors. Commissions, for instance, could elevate the commissioner's status by granting him exclusive power to specific affairs. In the high-ranking offices where power was more concentrated, it is especially helpful not to be confused by ranks and titles. Many candidates in the form above

[96] Zhang Hao 張灝 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0109-003 ("中平。聰明妥當人。"), no data afterwards; Chen Dagun 陳大瞗 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0083-024 ("明白妥當，能勝任。還可有出息的。"), no data; Wang Dahe 王大鶴 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0108-025 ("此人竟可用，有出息。"), early retirement due to sickness.
[97] Menglin 夢麟 (1728-1758), FHA#04-01-12-0079-012 ("明妥，似有出息"), rank 2b, died of disease.
[98] Xia Zhirong 夏之蓉 (1697-1784), FHA#04-01-13-0106-044 ("中平。伶俐人。"), rank 7b, early retirement; Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717-1795), FHA#04-01-13-0099-040 ("妥當浙派。此任可。"), retired early and spent the rest of life as a renowned Classicist.
[99] Jiang Wei 蔣蔚 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0058-046 ("人忠厚，知府亦只可簡缺。"), no data afterwards.
[100] Wang Shihuang 汪士鍠 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0042-049 ("中平。無甚出息。"), no data afterwards.
[101] Wu Yanxuan 吳延選 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0093-024 ("中平。"), 04-01-13-0102-012 ("似可出息。"), no data afterwards.

became a member of the high echelon as the vice minister of the Board of Rites, which was not so prestigious unless they were on the path of entering the Grand Secretariat and the Grand Council.

Secondly, evaluations in the Qing bureaucracy had adopted a situation-oriented system that complicates our datafication of ranking. Every official lived in a "recording (jilu 記錄)" bureaucratic life in which his merits and demerits were constantly recorded and calculated. Together with titles, rank, commission, and promotion/demotion, these records were all presented on the memorials he submitted and defined who he factually was at a specific moment. One might have a dozen demeriting records and several ranks demoted while still retaining his office and having the same things to do, indicating that his actual status did not fundamentally change. "Stay at the office with titles deprived (gezhi liuren 革職留任)" was very common amongst officials with territorial responsibility. Even culprits could "serve as a sinner (daizui xiaoli 戴罪效力)". Their status on paper completely unmatched what they were entrusted with and could be easily restored under the throne's discretion. Under these dynamic conditions, ranks might not match with titles/offices and vice versa. None of them could precisely indicate status or career advancement.

Mechanically using ranks to understand Qing bureaucracy is thus oversimplification. With this idea in mind, ranking remains to be the most quantifiable amongst all the indicators of the status hierarchy. I choose to use it not only for the ease of discussion. Ranking is also the most stable factor in long-term observation. While an official might experience ups and downs, his rank toward the end does talk much about his career. In large numbers and by isolating certain scenarios, a nuanced approach does not take ranking away as an important analytical tool. This form is one uncomplicated exercise that derives from this principle.

Most of these interview notes were taken when the candidates were still at relatively humble positions of the bureaucratic ladder, meaning that many carried the ranks from 7b to 5a. A smaller percentage ranked 4b and 4a. In most provinces, they served as the primary source for commissions. Ranking above 3b would bring one to the deck of "qing'er dayuan 卿貳大員" (eminent officials of court ministers and Board vice ministers), only next to the top tier (1b and above) of civil officials at the central government. The emperor would typically assign high officials to the most important regions. The division between the two tiers applied to the interview procedure as well. The emperor's interview notes were more detailed and utilitarian for the junior candidates, while being casual (if not omitted completely) for the already aquatinted ones. Both in sheer numbers and the ways to be used, his ratings were primarily about the Hanlin-background officials who were not deployed in critical positions yet. The emperor's glancing prediction of the candidates' potential thus provides key information about what he thought of proper placement and its pairing merits in the bureaucratic hierarchy.

The first three rating categories provide more substantial data than the rest. They jointly showcase that the statistical linkage between the emperor's positive impression and the Hanlin candidates' career advancement is conspicuous: Nearly two in three candidates whom the emperor explicitly deemed "good" eventually entered the high echelon. The percentage rises above 70% if we incorporate the later demoted/punished officials and those who climbed to that stage after the end of the Qianlong reign. Only less than 20% of this group stayed below 5a throughout their career. In contrast, over a half of the candidates would not be able to go beyond 5a in the "average" rating category.

Such a strong correlation suggests, unless we trust the absolute impartiality of the throne's snap judgement together with the inner workings of his personnel appointment, that the following causal

factor must be involved in the interview procedure: A high rating not just predicted but also largely determined better placement, and vice versa. In the examples above, a candidate's ascendant career could be guaranteed if he was consecutively well-perceived. It is self-evident that the imperial attention was critical since the power of personnel appointment resided in the sovereign. More important, the interview notes explicitly revealed the desirable qualities in the throne's eyes. While the candidates' performance might objectively reconfirm the ratings, it was this intellectual premise that had dictated their selection.

The second form dives deeper into the Qianlong emperor's keywords by connecting his specific comments of the individual candidates and the latter's career paths. I draw data from the same database used by the first list but exclude those without such message:

Specific Comments[102] / Career Path after Interview	Track specified (*zhike siwen* 只可司文, *buke waiyong* 不可外用, *fudao cai* 府道才, etc.)	A (mere) literatus/scholar (*wenren eryi* 文人而已, *xuewen hao* 學問好, etc.)	Having Southern flair (*nanren eryi* 南人而已, *Jiangnan ren* 江南人, *jiangzhe pai* 江浙派, etc.)	More suitable for humble deployment and deferred promotions (*manyong* 慢用, *mankan* 慢看, etc.)	Resourceful (*jieshi* 解事, *lingli* 伶俐, *mingbai* 明白, etc.)	Versatility in doubt (*laoshi* 老實, *zhonghou* 忠厚, *benfen* 本分, etc.)

[102] If the emperor used several keywords to describe an interviewee's character, I identify the overtone and categorize accordingly. A combination of specific keywords usually suggests overlapping qualities, which will be discussed below.

Censorial or secretarial track	9 matches out of 9[103] (100%)	9[104] (82%)	8[105] (100%)	7[106] (88%)	11[107] (60%)	6[108] (86%)

[104] Zheng Jiang 鄭江 (1682-1745), FHA#04-01-13-0109-037 ("文人而已。臨去時記得是好的，此次大不如前。"), Hanlin and compiler positions; Cao Xibao 曹錫寶 (1719-1792), FHA#04-01-13-0108-019 ("文人而已。"), served at the central government after a short period of supervising food circuit in Shandong; Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818), FHA#04-01-13-0078-034 ("學問好。人亦可。"), 04-01-13-0082-001 ("學問好。亦可。"), various literary and Hanlin positions; Lu Xixiong 陸錫熊 (1734-1792), FHA#04-01-13-0078-004 ("學問好，和顏悅色。"), 3a; various literary and censorial positions; Ping Shu 平恕 (1748-1804), FHA#04-01-13-0068-049 ("學問好，人再看。"), served Hanlin and Board positions before becoming a Vice Minister; 錢大昕 (1728-1804), FHA#04-01-13-0106-001 ("讀書人不曉事務者。就好不過學政，尚宜遠省遲用。"), stayed at the Academy and served as examiner and Education Commissioner, then retired for filial mourning and spent the rest of life as a renowned Classicist and educator; Qian Zai 錢載 (1708-1793), FHA#04-01-38-0087-023 ("學問好。不解事。"), Qian was already a Vice Minister of the Board of Rites before this interview and served as a chief compiler of several textual projects; Ye Guanguo 葉觀國 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0108-006 ("好文人而已。"), Hanlin positions; Wu Xinglan 吳省蘭 (1737-1810), 04-01-13-0081-026 ("文人而已。"), Hanlin positions while carrying the title of Vice Minister of the Board of Rites.

[105] Zhao Dajing 趙大鯨 (1681-1749), FHA#04-01-38-0060-049 ("通順江浙人。頗有文名，詞章之學原好。"), various Hanlin and censorial posts; Sun Renlong 孫人龍 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0062-074 ("中平。江浙小材而已。"), typical Hanlin posts; Yu Chen 于辰 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0100-003 ("聰明妥當江南派之人而已。"), stayed at the Academy; Shen Weizu 沈慰祖 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0058-001 ("人似不可信，亦俗些江浙派。", Hanlin posts; Sun Hao 孫灝 (1700-1760), FHA#04-01-24-0060-001 ("人聰明。南人而已，非大器。好亦不過提學侍郎之選。學政似當可。", various posts at the central government; Liu Xingwei 劉星煒 (1718-1772), FHA#04-01-12-0083-002 ("妥當南方人而已。"), typical Hanlin positions and then served the Boards; Chu Tingzhang 褚廷璋 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0141-006 ("妥當蘇州派。"), Hanlin and compiler posts; Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717-1795), FHA#04-01-13-0099-040 ("妥當浙派。"), retired after serving this term.

[106] Li Zongwen 李宗文 (1716-?), FHA#04-01-13-0022-001 ("似有出息，但恐假時日。"), typical Hanlin positions and then Vice Minister; Li Zhongjian 李中簡 (?), FHA#04-01-30-0048-018 ("學政才回，餘當慢看。"), stayed at the Academy; Mao Yuanming 茅元銘 (1744-?), FHA#04-01-38-0184-040 ("當可慢用。"), stayed at Hanlin positions; Wu Xingqin 吳省欽 (1729-1803), FHA#04-01-12-0203-007 ("或仍可慢用。"), various positions at the central government; Dai Junyuan 戴均元 (1746-1840), FHA#04-01-12-0241-109 ("竟可慢用。"), served several high positions at the central government after the end of the Qianlong reign and then became a Grand Secretariat; Zhou Zhaoji 周兆基 (1757-1817), FHA#04-01-38-0184-041 ("文差可慢用。"), served various Hanlin positions before becoming Board ministers in the Jiaqing reign; Liu Fenggao 劉鳳誥 (1762-1830), FHA#04-01-12-0239-007 ("學問好。年少聰明，甚宜慢用。"), 04-01-13-0098-021 ("聰明、學問好。"), served various Hanlin posts and Vice Minister of several Boards in the Jiaqing reign.

[106] Li Zongwen 李宗文 (1716-?), FHA#04-01-13-0022-001 (“似有出息，但恐假時日。”), typical Hanlin positions and then Vice Minister; Li Zhongjian 李中簡 (?), FHA#04-01-30-0048-018 (“學政才回，餘當慢看。”), stayed at the Academy; Mao Yuanming 茅元銘 (1744-?), FHA#04-01-38-0184-040 (“當可慢用。”), stayed at Hanlin positions; Wu Xingqin 吳省欽 (1729-1803), FHA#04-01-12-0203-007 (“或仍可慢用。”), various positions at the central government; Dai Junyuan 戴均元 (1746-1840), FHA#04-01-12-0241-109 (“竟可慢用。”), served several high positions at the central government after the end of the Qianlong reign and then became a Grand Secretariat; Zhou Zhaoji 周兆基 (1757-1817), FHA#04-01-38-0184-041 (“文差可慢用。”), served various Hanlin positions before becoming Board ministers in the Jiaqing reign; Liu Fenggao 劉鳳誥 (1762-1830), FHA#04-01-12-0239-007 (“學問好。年少聰明，甚宜慢用。”), 04-01-13-0098-021 (“聰明、學問好。”), served various Hanlin posts and Vice Minister of several Boards in the Jiaqing reign.

[107] Qian Chenqun 錢陳群 (1690-1774), FHA#04-01-38-0057-050 (“小伶俐人。”), typical Hanlin positions and served the Boards; Xia Zhirong 夏之蓉 (1697-1784), FHA#04-01-13-0106-044 (“伶俐人。”), served as compiler, examiner, and Education Commissioner; Xia Tingzhi 夏廷芝 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0109-020 (“人明白，小些。其神情材學都略似汪**。”), stayed at the Academy; Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (1714-1779), FHA#04-01-15-0021-023 (“明白人。”), served at the central government before becoming Grand Secretariat; Chen Guisen 陳桂森 (1729-1790), FHA#04-01-12-0203-006 (“伶俐人。”), various posts at the central government; Liu Yong 劉墉 (1720-1804), FHA#04-01-12-0083-060 (“聰明。”), served at the central government before becoming Grand Secretariat; Zhong Lanzhi 鍾蘭枝 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0101-024 (“亦伶俐。”), became Vice Minister; Tong Fengsan 童鳳三 (?-1801), FHA#04-01-13-0100-058 (“明白。恐非大材具。”), 04-01-12-0126-001 (“人似明白有出息。”), various Hanlin positions and then served the Boards; Guan Huai 關槐 (1749-1806), FHA#04-01-12-0223-037 (“聰明人。學問可。”), Hanlin posts and then Vice Minister of the Board of Rites; Qian Yue 錢樾 (1743-1815), FHA#04-01-13-0068-050 (“似明白。”), various positions at the central government; Hong Liangji 洪亮吉 (1746-1809), FHA#04-01-13-0102-015 (“明白妥當。再看。”), served Hanlin and literary posts before being dismissed at the early stage of career.

[108] Shi Yimo 史貽謨 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0022-002 (“老實妥當勝其兄規樸，才情則大不及。”), stayed at the Academy; Su Linbo 蘇霖渤 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0109-038 (“忠厚有餘而亦解事”), Censor; Chen Quan 陳荃 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0100-064 (“老實。”), stayed at the Academy; Meng Chaoran 孟超然 (1730-1797), FHA#04-01-13-0037-003 (“像學者。本分。”), served minor positions at the Boards; Li Minxing 李敏行 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0126-004 (“老實。”), Board and censorial positions; Xu Guangwen 徐光文 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0043-025 (“獃些。”), 04-01-12-0162-063 (“不甚明白。”), typical Hanlin positions.

Administrative track	6 matches out of 8[109] (75%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5[110] (28%)	0 (0%)
Traversed tracks	N/A	2[111] (18%)	0 (0%)	1[112] (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other (No data)	N/A	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2[113] (12%)	1[114] (14%)
Total number	N/A	11 (100%)	8 (100%)	8 (100%)	18 (100%)	7 (100%)

The Qianlong emperor adopted a series of keywords to give ratings. These keywords expressly reflected the conceptual labels he felt convenient to use. A person's demeanor, temperament, literary achievement, family association, and place of origin all served as strong indicators of what

[109] Li Zhiyun 李治運 (1710-1771), FHA#04-01-13-0109-083 ("此人甚專深，有出息。已特用榆林知府。"), from Prefecture Magistrate to Judicial Supervisor; Liu Zun 劉墫 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0047-028 ("人竟可以用府道。"), various posts of provincial administration; Li Mu 李棨 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0078-012 ("好不過府道才。"), from Board positions to magistrates; Wang Shifen 王士棻 (1722-1796), FHA#04-01-12-0204-064 ("拮据。可道府而非大局面。"), Judicial Supervisor; Wen Changshou 溫常綬 (1733-1797), FHA#04-01-13-0068-046 ("不但司文，人竟可好。"), 04-01-13-0078-008 ("好府道才。"), typical censorial track; Sun Jiale 孫嘉樂 (1733-1800), FHA#04-01-13-0057-027 ("妥當道府材，局面略小。)", 04-01-30-0050-002 ("人明白。藩臬都可。"), appointed Circuit Intendent and lastly Judicial Supervisor; Liu Zhongzhi 劉種之 (?-1810), FHA#04-01-13-0102-025 ("可用府。"), typical Hanlin positions; Wu Jing 吳璥 (1747-1822), FHA#04-01-13-0082-006 ("竟可以河道用。吳嗣爵之子。"), reassigned to river circuit right after interview, served various high posts of territorial administration, and lastly the Boards.

[110] Kaitai 開泰 (?-1763), FHA#04-01-12-0012-074 ("頗沉靜而曉事。"), Governor-general; Qiu Tinglong 邱庭漋 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0102-021 ("明白。亦可。"), Provincial Treasurer; Wang Xin 汪新 (1730-1798), FHA#04-01-12-0139-121 ("明白妥當。"), served various high posts in the province before becoming Governor-general; Yang (Xu) Sizeng 楊(徐)嗣曾, FHA#04-01-12-0145-059 ("明白。此任去得，還可出息。"), served various high posts in the province before becoming Governor; Zhang Yaocheng 張姚成 (1742-1798), FHA#04-01-13-0068-045 ("似明白，可出息。"), 04-01-12-0242-009 ("明白。"), Circuit Intendent.

[111] Lü Guangheng 呂光亨 (1722-?), FHA#04-01-13-0100-040 ("讀書人而已。"), from Board positions to Prefecture Magistrate at the end of career; Wu Shouzhao 吳綬詔 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0126-010 ("妥當文人"), from magistrate to the Office of Transmission at the end of career.

[112] Zhu Yundong 祝雲棟 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0106-032 ("此人竟可慢用。"), from Censor to Circuit Intendent.

[113] Zhang Hao 張灝 (?), FHA#04-01-13-0109-003 ("聰明妥當人。"), no data afterwards; Zhu Quan 朱荃 (?-1750?), FHA#04-01-12-0083-072 ("聰明少材具，未必穩當。"), purportedly died right after serving one term.

[114] Jiang Wei 蔣蔚 (?), FHA#04-01-12-0058-046 ("人忠厚，知府亦只可簡缺。").

and how he could fit in the imperial government. Despite the ideal image transmitted through Classical training, the interview notes truthfully reflected the real factors of deployment concerns. This form selects six common sets the emperor used to describe Hanlin-background officials, every one of which often arbitrated the latter's career pattern.

The professionalization of a scholar-official's bureaucratic life was not fixed at the beginning. With the highest degree obtained, he was supposed to start from serving as a "literary and consulting official (文學侍從之臣)".[115] Ideally, such a degree-holder in the Qing could expect the following path: He entered the Hanlin Academy and secured his title by passing the placement examination. Then he served various positions reserved for the likes of him (*zhongyun* 中允, *zanshan* 贊善, *shuzi* 庶子, *jijiu* 祭酒, etc.), during which he was commissioned to supervise the civil service examinations and provincial education. Shortly after this critical phase, he earned the opportunity to be entrusted with heavier responsibilities. It was at this stage that a scholar-official begun to try secretarial chores or territorial administration, whichever suited him better. Consequently, he advanced into either the ministries or the high offices in the provinces. Only a small percentage of officials could go back and forth between both tracks.[116] In either case, he started to carry upper-tier titles in the central government until the end of service.

Some degree-holders did achieve this career goal.[117] However, many others could not go beyond the first stage. They typically stopped at a censorial/educational position or a lower-ranked

[115] Entry "Qianlong 02-05-04" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 42.
[116] See the third row in the second form.
[117] Cui Ji 崔紀 (1693-1750) was a 3a official who had experienced a life like this. At the end, he sentimentally reviewed this journey and wrote his last words with great satisfaction. See FHA#02-01-03-04805-012.

job at the Boards/ministries.[118] The interview notes lead to why and how they experienced this watershed moment. In the first column, the Hanlin members' bureaucratic tracks were explicitly tied with what the emperor saw in them. One hundred percent of those who he considered "only suitable for the education commission (只可司文)", "should serve in the capital (當在京官)", "alright to be deployed here (內用頗可)", etc. stayed at the central government. Three out of four candidates who he thought appropriate for territorial administration were eventually sent down to the provinces. These examples are not to reconfirm the aforementioned "imperial attention" factor. They also shed light on the value hierarchy the emperor imposed upon two paths.

The latter exhibits a high percentage because the overall tendency of Hanlin officials was to stay in the capital. More important, those who were assigned this path also had a better chance to enter the high echelon: After being entrusted with a prefecture (4b) or a circuit (4a), one with Hanlin background was likely to become a Judicial Supervisor (3a) or a Provincial Treasurer (2b). The emperor's other remarks accordingly attest that there was a correlation between his high rating and positive comment on the candidate's potential to carry administrative job. These instances always point to the quality of resourcefulness. Phrases like "laolian 老練 (seasoned and experienced)", "xiaoshi 曉事 (understands how to handle things)", etc. were frequently adopted to indicate the ability of managing and coordinating with people.[119] The fifth column, which collects similar comments, demonstrates that the interviewees roughly had a one-per-three ratio of becoming top-tier administrators. In contrast, the other categories' numbers on the same row are

[118] Li Minxing 李敏行 (?) was representative in this group. He first served several intern positions in the Boards and then was transferred to censorial positions ("試用銓曹、擢遷科道。"). During those years, he was commissioned to supervise examinations and education in borderland provinces ("典試粵西、視學黔南。"). See FHA#04-01-12-0126-004. His career stopped advancing further and his name soon disappeared in the archives. Similar story can be applied to many of his peers at the Academy.
[119] E.g., FHA#04-01-12-0012-074, 04-01-15-0019-042, etc.

all zero. Therefore, unless explicitly labeled, the Hanlin officials would have slight chance of being deployed on the track of provincial administration. The reality was harsh for many Hanlins since being deployed in the provinces (*wairen* 外任) was often more desirable than staying at a low-salary, low-status, and powerless office in the capital.

Parallel to this story, the other columns further denote that some assumptions of the Hanlin candidates were often stereotypical and contrary to the capable image. In the first form, we have already seen that the emperor used rhetoric like "merely a literatus (文人而已)", "merely a scholar (讀書人而已)", etc. toward lower-rated interviewees. The second form additionally reveals that although these traits were not purely undesirable, they were tied with non-administrative tracks. The emperor reserved the majority of censorial and literary seats for these candidates. Only a few of them could earn enough trust to become his consultants and be deployed in high positions.

Following this division was the conceptual separation between the candidate as an official and as a scholar. It was clearly and intensively expressed in the examples of column two. These candidates were frequently placed in compilation projects (see Chapter IV) but rarely as magistrates. Some of the "thunderstriking" names in intellectual historians' ears, such as Zhu Yun 朱筠, Lu Wenchao 盧文弨, Qian Daxin 錢大昕, etc., were labeled as incompetent ("would not achieve anything 無出息", "does not know things 不曉事務", etc.) by the emperor. The education commission would be the best venue they were capable to serve ("就好不過學政", "不過提學侍郎之選", etc.), he noted. The fifth column provides an alternate solution. Sometimes these candidates were trained with prolonged lower-tier deployment so that they could gain more fieldwork experience.

The other columns also speak to this subject. Column three shows the emperor's geographic bias, which both denote the opposite image of the idealized bannermen and an association with certain undesirable traits of the stereotypical Jiangnan literati. He strived to fix this perceived issue by imposing designated literary policies and cultivation project on the Jiangnan population (See Chapter V). The sixth column introduces an exemplar of the emperor's doublespeech. Words like *laoshi* 老實 (straightforward and veracious), *zhonghou* 忠厚 (faithful and tolerant), etc. wonderfully represent some rhetorical expressions in the Chinese language that supposedly have positive meaning but often insinuate negative connotations. With no exception, the emperor determined that this group was less accommodating to withstand heavy-duty administration. He did not automatically relate good-natured character to making a decent appraisal of work performance. This judgement was comparable to that of the scholarly merits.

All these comments were different utterances of the Qianlong emperor's optimum image of statemen who had the character and the trained ability to process the intricacies of governance. Classical learning was commonly believed to offer necessary instruction. In reality, the emperor found few scholar-officials could give him such confidence. The pre-commission interviews were critical to their career development. If nothing else, they needed to be further tested for this purpose.

As short conversations might not suffice it, the Qianlong emperor turned to his trusted administrators for more input. In 1775, he issued a reminder edict that asked the Governors-general and the Governors to continue reporting the Education Commissioners' performance.[120] In addition to the examination reputation, he specified two criteria of evaluation: "talent and passion

[120] Entry "Qianlong 40-01-12" in the *Shangyu dang*. This edict uses the term *xianglai* 向來 ("it has always been"), which indicates that the emperor was referring to an established practice. However, I did not find any earlier reference.

in handling tasks (banshi caiqing 辦事才情)" and "worthy of assignment to specific office or mission (zugong renshi 足供任使)". Both criteria resonated with his interview details.

The emperor showed his governors examples of high officials who came from the Hanlin background and once served the Office of Education Affairs. Due to the lack of observation, he only got to know the potential of these men by either meeting them while touring or in interviews when they returned to the capital. He complained that very few of them were discreetly recommended by governors. Accusing the governors of negligence, the emperor reiterated the importance of the education commission as a venue of official selection. He then asked that all governors henceforth must report on the following three evaluations: 1) Does the evaluated official excel at scholarship and not embarrass himself if given a tutoring position on Classical learning ("不愧師儒之席")? 2) Did he manage the office according to the regulations and only marginally fulfill the duties ("止堪勝任")? 3) Was he smart and swift in terms of expertise and insights, and also knowledgeable of administrative skills, so that he is eligible enough to be appointed Circuit Intendant, Prefectural Magistrate, Provincial Treasurer, or Judicial Supervisor ("可用為道府及兩司")?

In terms of bureaucratic placement, the academicians who were commissioned in non-critical provinces (which excluded Zhili and Jiangnan) played a significant role in supplementing mid-range civil officials. They usually carried ranks from 7a to 4a (excluding those higher-ranked adjunct ones) at the Academy and its pertinent agencies (e.g., the Household Administration of the Heir Apparent, the Six Offices of Scrutiny, the Investigation Bureau of Circuits, etc.).[121] But only

[121] Most start-ups were *Jiantao* 檢討 (7b), *Bianxiu* 編修 (7a), and *Xiuzhuan* 修撰 (6b), then they would move on to *Shidu* 侍讀 (5b) and *Shijiang* 侍講 (5b), and then *Shidu xueshi* 侍讀學士 (4b) and *Shijiang*

a small percentage of them were deployed in the middle to upper-range posts in the provinces, which the emperor was mostly concerned about. The Education Commissioner's office base was usually close to the provincial administration compound. When he toured around the province, he would frequently get in touch with the prefectural magistrates. It is then practical for the emperor to deploy the relatively unexperienced Hanlin scholars to these positions after their service in provincial education. This intention became clear when a follow-up edict was issued one month later.

The Governors-general's and the Governors' reports soon arrived at the emperor's work desk. Although they did examine the Education Commissioners per the aforementioned three criteria, some of the memorialists misconstrued the boundaries of evaluation. The emperor then felt it necessary to clarify what he was asking for. He quickly made an example of the Governor of Henan who reviewed his colleague. The latter was a vice minister in the Board of Rites, a 2a-ranked official, before being commissioned to the Henan Office of Education Affairs.[122] The emperor found it ridiculous for a Governor to evaluate his peers of parallel or higher ranking that the emperor had already been acquainted with.[123] He blamed this Governor for "not knowing things (bu xiaoshi 不曉事)", and explained that the evaluations should be done only if the Education Commissioner's background was pertaining to the Academy and their rank was 4a or below.[124] In other words, he was not simply overseeing the local execution of literary policies. He sought supplementary opinions on those Hanlin-sourced Education Commissioners, with the

xueshi 侍講學士 (4b). The actual workings were more complicated considering those adjunct or commissioned positions.

[122] FHA#04-01-12-0163-023. Memorialist Xu Ji 徐績 (1726-1811). All Education Commissioners would carry their original ranks. More on this topic in the latter half of this chapter.

[123] Provincial Governors typically ranked 2b with extra titles in the Qing.

[124] Entry "Qianlong 40-02-13" in the *Shangyu dang*.

assistance of which he could more accurately locate talents to fulfill the occupational visions for his government. Penalties would follow if the governors failed to truthfully report limitations.[125]

Under this guideline, the feedbacks had been active and precise in the following years. In a remarkably way, these evaluations were often accordant with the emperor's own. Sun Shiyi 孫士毅 (1720-1796), for instance, was a rising star in the seventeen-seventies officialdom. He was noted worthy of observation upon the departure interview for the Guizhou Office of Education Affairs.[126] When he stood in front of the throne six years later, the following interview acknowledged his excellence and paved the way for an outstanding career.[127] Sun's merits were further reconfirmed by the evaluation memorial submitted the Deputy Governor of Guizhou, in which he was noted "understands the circumstances (心地明白)", "handles things sophisticatedly and precisely (辦事精細)", and always paid attention to local governance. Hence, Sun was recommended to be appointed Circuit Intendent or Prefectural Magistrate.[128] In another Guizhou example, the Governor praised the Education Commissioner Hong Liangji 洪亮吉 (1746-1809) for being highly recognized by public opinions.[129] He then disclosed Hong's accomplishments in detail.[130] Those stories echoed with the emperor's positive impression before and after Hong served the education office.[131]

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[125] For instance, the Governor of Shanxi did not mention the incompetence of the Education Commissioner due to age. When the emperor noticed this problem, the Governor was denounced and punished. See entry "Qianlong 60-12-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1493.
[126] FHA#04-01-12-0139-003.
[127] FHA#04-01-12-0163-016. Sun was soon appointed a Provincial Treasurer and eventually became one of the prominent officials in the late Qianlong reign.
[128] FHA#04-01-38-0088-012. Memorialist Wei Qianheng 韋謙恆 (?).
[129] FHA#04-01-12-0250-082. Memorialist Feng Guangxiong 馮光熊 (1721-1801).
[130] FHA#04-01-12-0254-033.
[131] FHA#04-01-13-0110-027, 04-01-13-0102-015.

The negative ratings also tended to align in the same row. Fan Shi 范栻 (?), an Education Commissioner of Guangxi, was rated mediocre in the emperor's interviews.[132] The Governor of Guangxi gave the same evaluation. On the memorial, he commented that Fan was neither a superior scholar ("學問未見優長") nor an adept administrator ("才識未見明敏"). Therefore, although Fan was still physically vigorous, managing busy prefectures or circuits would probably lead to a letdown. He then recommended that Fan could be appointed magistrate of a remote region.[133] The emperor agreed with his overall observation and added: "Why must we accommodate this person so hard (何必為此遷就)?" Fan's name disappeared in the official documents thenceforth.

Was bureaucratic worthiness measured true to some tacitly understood standards? Given the governors had no accessibility to the emperor's interview notes, these independent evaluations provide credence to this hypothesis. Otherwise, they would not be able to effectively come to similar conclusions to suggest an individual's potential deployment. This collective effort, which excluded taking examination credentials into account, contributed to the institutional maturing of a supplementary yet critical selection procedure. A Hanlin-background official could hardly break the glass ceiling unless he passed such an "intern" test.

Aside from ethno-political factors, the Qianlong emperor was motivated by both bureaucratic pragmatism and specific intellectual premises to challenge the established perception of the examination achievers. The education commissioning then both evolved into an important starting venue and a finish line: As a starting venue, one could be quickly promoted or deployed in the province if he was rated worthy. As a finish line, an official's future promotion/deployment could

[132] FHA#04-01-13-0043-016 ("無甚出息"), 04-01-12-0163-017 ("聽其自進可也").
[133] FHA#04-01-38-0088-007. Memorialist Xiong Xuepeng 熊學鵬 (?-1779).

be hindered if he was deemed "only" good for the education office.[134] This channel of selection went beyond the degrees by adding "post-examination internship". Meanwhile, as the following sections and Chapter IV will demonstrate, individuals who earned the most advanced degree but failed the test did not necessarily face the end of career. Their potential was recognized by the emperor's occupational approach, in which some officials became "professional" Education Commissioners, lecturers, and compilers. This approach found its way to utilize "impractical" scholarly merits and fulfill a new vision in the Qianlong government.

2.3 ***The "Professional" Turn***

2.3.1 The Double-meaning of Professionalization

On several occasions, the Qianlong emperor proclaimed his approach to untangling diverse proposals and complex situations. He cited a slang "ask manservants for sowing and maidservants for sewing (耕當問奴，織當訪婢)" as a principle: If a decision was too specialized to make, it should be delegated to someone with expertise. If a topic was too technical, it would be routed to the pertinent agencies for discussion. One in the ruling position needed to go above specific details and be strategic. He could not pretend to "know" when he did "not know". Those who were at the advisory positions, on the other hand, should avoid unnecessary arguments that were harmful to the essence of state.[135] The emperor himself did not always follow this rule. Nevertheless, his attitude had an impact upon bureaucratic placement as well as the overall political environment.

Qing officials as a whole were not a group of specialists. Except the military, most government sectors did not require specialized training and most officials were eligible for any post. One could

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[134] For example, the emperor did not think Ge Dai 戈岱 suitable for any advanced offices except supervising education ("只可慢用，學差而已") and Ge's career never went beyond this point, see FHA#04-01-12-0196-031. More examples can be located in the forms above.

[135] Entries "Qianlong 13-07-12", "18-10-23", "25-10-01" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 318, 449, 662.

also transfer between offices. The civil service examinations provided a foundation for this arrangement. Degrees primarily ensured credential for Classical scholarship and essay writing, while a degree-holder's expertise was more tied with individual knowledge and experience. Coming from this training background, many officials had a broad sense of responsibility to the sovereign and society. It was not uncommon for one to assume agency and submit proposals across departments. A Treasurer might discuss schools because he had an opinion on Classical learning, or he might comment on another province's governance because of his familiarity with the place. In general, the emperor would not dismiss such act.

Alarms were often triggered not by the issue of "specialization" as opposed to political relevancy. Invested in tightening the order of the Manchu state, the Qianlong emperor always found the content inappropriate if the perceived position of the memorialist mismatched the nature of his topic. Censors who were traditionally in charge of surveillance and countering proposals, for example, were dissuaded from unsolicited squabbles in late Ming fashion.[136] Generalized statecraft advice was not preferred either. Zhang Zhijun 張之浚 (?), a *jinshi* degree-holder who was appointed the Judicial Supervisor of Shanxi, challenged this tacit etiquette by offering a book to the throne.[137] Textual offerings like poetry were allowed, or even welcomed, in the Qianlong reign, especially if the purpose was to "decorate the state". Zhang's book was neither a literary piece nor aiming to put forward technical solutions. Rather, it delivered a series of broad suggestions on how to run the state. The Qianlong emperor unsurprisingly issued a denouncement.[138] The rebuttal edict explains why he discouraged this kind of policy discussions. More important, it helps us to understand how the order of specific offices and official discourse

[136] For an exemplar case, see entry "Qianlong 25-10-01" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 662.
[137] FHA#4-01-01-0203-036.
[138] Entry "Qianlong 16-06-04" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 392.

was aligned in the emperor's eyes. The latter leads to his perception of bureaucratic tracks and, eventually, the "professionalization" of them.

As a rhetorical tactic, the emperor started with refuting the worthiness of Zhang as an official and the value of Zhang's book. He sarcastically commented that it was a sudden gift since Zhang had not submitted a single word about judicial affairs after nomination. However, he continued, the book was so redundant that it contributed nothing to "genuine governance (shizheng 實政)" because the latter could only be achieved by the "genuine heart (shixin 實心)". Then he released a provocative message to those who blindly believed in the role of the sovereign in moral cultivation and textual propagation:

> Given the sovereign cannot follow the teachings himself, even though he picks and solemnly recites the texts from the Six Classics and the Nature and Principle every day, and he publishes them in his edicts in order to indoctrinate the ministers and the people, how can such acts be beneficial to genuinely substantiate his governance?
>
> 苟不能見之躬行，雖日取六經性理之書而莊誦之，時時布之詔令、宣示臣民，其於實政何裨？

To substantiate governance, an official should make himself useful to the sovereign by discussing subjects he was entrusted to discuss. Only the Hanlin-background offices were in the position to give unsolicited statecraft advice:

> Those literary and censorial officials who take research and offering advice as their specialty can state their own opinions. Those discussions may have the slight effect of me seeing in the eyes and being warned in the heart. Still, they are not allowed to pick words that are unsubstantiated.
>
> 此在詞苑諫垣、專以論思獻納為職者，敷陳己見，或可效觸目警心之一得。尚不許摭拾浮辭。

The high officials of weighty responsibility, no matter in the central government or in the provinces, should refrain from engaging with such dialogue:

As to the Ministers and the Deputy Ministers in the capital and the Governors-general, the Governors, the Treasurers, the Judicial Supervisors in the provinces, they all serve specialized roles in the workings of governance. For those who are entrusted to cater to the livelihood of the people and the functioning of government, even with energy being exhausted, they would be afraid of not investing enough. If they just take pride in copying empty words, I must hold them accountable for the negligence of official duty.

至內而尚書、侍郎，外而督、撫、藩、臬，則政理各有專司。民生吏治職有應為者，盡心力而為之，猶恐不給。苟徒以剽竊空言相尚，其貽誤官守，尚可問乎？

In the following argumentation, the emperor dismissed the idea that an official under his rule could gain fame by writing statecraft essays. He also found many proposals in Zhang's book absurd and erroneous. As a result, Zhang was demoted to a borderland circuit. He never came back to the high echelon.

The emperor's rebuttal has several nuanced meanings in its political context. His main point was to warn high officials like Zhang against opportunity-seeking acts. In this case, he insinuated that Zhang attempted to win imperial attention by playing with statecraft discourse. Textual gifting was chiefly a tool of governance to the throne as opposed to a backdoor for his ministers (albeit one could get more love if done properly). In addition, Zhang's fate was doublechecked by the fact that the emperor resented some of his ideas. Four examples were listed, two of which particularly racked the emperor's nerves: How ridiculous for one to propose that Confucian texts should be translated into Tibetan and then ask the Lamas to teach them? How many scholars can do archery on the horseback and why do they have to? These topics had wandered into the sensitive field where the emperor ever internalized as "the essence of the state". Punishment thus followed.

Furthermore, this edict was organized within a larger conceptual framework. The emperor started with a claim that both the sovereign and the officials needed to be genuine with governance on top of the Classical principles. Toward this end, he asked those with different government

responsibilities to be disciplinary and substantial in their policy discussions. His line of reasoning stopped at a rhetorical question of horseback archery, in which the subtext was to emphasize the civil role of the literati. Therefore, behind the form of a textual debate, this edict declares the conceptual distinctions between the Classical principles *vis-à-vis* "genuine governance", the Hanlin officials who raised these principles as their job *vis-à-vis* administrators in the field, the limited agency of examination achievers *vis-à-vis* the "as is" foundations of the empire.

This debate is an example of the Qianlong emperor's cognitive grip on how to run his government. It resonates with his habits of personnel appointment, which was also primarily measured by both the perceived merits and the perceived order. In the section above, I have shown the high percentage of the Hanlin scholars staying in the capital and unable to be entrusted with serious responsibilities. Most of them were dispatched to the censorial and literary positions. To further digest and mobilize this group, the emperor favored commissions as a tool of temporary deployment and training. The most common ones included literary commissions (compilation projects), examination commissions (*shichai* 試差), and education commissions (*xuechai* 學差). All three were built into Hanlin credentials, and some officials served the same commission consecutively or multiple times. Although there was few direct evidence for us to propound a hypothesis of institutional experiment, this deployment pattern did partially transfer the non-specialist scholar-officials into more specialized bureaucrats.

2.3.2 The Deployment Patterns as Seen in Education Commissioning

The new institutional bond between the Hanlin Academy and the Office of Education Affairs had brought the Hanlin-examination-education officials together. They constituted an organic division in the Qing bureaucracy. "The only difference between education affairs and the examination commission is the essays being reviewed (學政與試差但閱文不同)", said the

Qianlong emperor.[139] Since the Yongzheng reform, examination and education commissioners were often dispatched together. All provincial examinations were supervised and graded by the *jinshi* degree-holders of Hanlin background. After admission to the Academy, an ordinary academician could wait for half to more than a decade to go on an examination trip.[140] Even so, this honorable experience was hardly a leap-forward in their career. The commissions were neither promotion nor demotion. They were no more than credentials. By good fortune, however, this situation could be remedied by procuring credentials in a row. The examination commissioners were eligible for the next round of education commissioning right after the provincial examinations, and the possibility of being selected was high. Upon serving one term, some of them could continue with the duty (either in the same province or being assigned to another). The multiple appointment could be accumulated to three terms (nine years) and up.[141] As a result, these commissions became a major career phase for some Hanlin-background officials.

The following form is an observation of eligible appointees during five consecutive rounds.[142] Their names are quoted from the commissioning lists between the sixth and twenty-first year of the Qianlong reign:[143]

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[139] FHA#04-01-12-0253-008.

[140] E.g., FHA#04-01-12-0192-036, 04-01-13-0068-046, 04-01-13-0099-032, etc.

[141] There was no written regulation on how many terms could a commissioner serve. In one rescript, the Qianlong emperor explicitly noted that three terms would be too many. See FHA#04-01-13-0078-030. But in reality, the official he was referring to had served two additional terms (15 years in total) in the education office. It is hard to pinpoint the reasons behind this phenomenon: lack of candidates at the moment, one way of digesting Hanlin officials, proven performance in education affairs, etc.

[142] Every three years after the Provincial Examinations, the emperor would routinely announce new appointments, transfers, and those who remained in the same province. The latter two could take half of the quota, though numbers varied. Instead of using an exhaustive data set, I believe five consecutive rounds of shifts, which covered fifteen years of education commissioning, are sufficient to prove statistical probability.

[143] 1) These names and lists are easily attainable via the *Veritable Records*. The transitioning period between Yongzheng 13 and Qianlong 6 was not adopted because of its irregularity. For the same reason, I removed those who experienced irregular career changes. For the full set after Qianlong 6, see entries "Qianlong 06-12-09", "09-12-07", "09-12-08", "09-12-19", "12-10-19", "15-08-16", "18-09-16", "21-09-27", "24-09-20", "27-09-03", "30-09-07", "33-09-08", "36-09-02", "39-09-01", "42-08-19", "45-08-23", "48-07-24", "51-09-01", "54-08-16", "57-08-11" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 157, 230, 231, 301,

Qianlong 6-21 consecutive appointments	Terms served in lifetime	Total time spent in entire career[144]	Career summary
Wu Sijue 吳嗣爵 (1707-1779)	Once in Hubei (Qianlong 6-9), and then transferred to Fujian (Qianlong 9-12)	6 out of 47 years (Yongzheng 8 - Qianlong 42)	Various posts of territorial administration
Shen Weizu 沈慰祖 (?)	Once in Guangxi (Qianlong 6-9), and then transferred to Yunnan (Qianlong 10-12)	6 out of 18 years (Yongzheng 8 - Qianlong 13)	Hanlin posts, education commissioner, examination commissioner
Chen Qining 陳其凝 (?)	Once in Shaanxi (Qianlong 5-7), once in Zhejiang (Qianlong 9-12), and then transferred to Shandong (Qianlong 12-13)	8 out of 18 years (Yongzheng 8 - Qianlong 13)	Hanlin posts, Board secretary, censor, examination commissioner, education commissioner
Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (1714-1779)	Served in Shandong (Qianlong 9-12), and then transferred to Zhejiang (Qianlong 12-15), served in Shandong again for a few months (Qianlong 18-19)[145]	7 out of 42 years (Qianlong 2-44)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, Board deputy, compiler, Board minister, Grand Secretary
Guan Xianyao 官獻瑤 (?)	Served in Guangxi (Qianlong 9-12), and then transferred to Shaanxi (Qianlong 12-15)	6 out of 14 years (Qianlong 1-15)	Education instructor, Hanlin posts, compiler, examination commissioner, education commissioner
Xia Zhirong 夏之蓉 (1697-1784)	Once in Guangshao, Guangdong (Qianlong 10-13), and then transferred to Hunan (Qianlong 13-16)	6 out of 26 years (Yongzheng 4 - Qianlong 17)	Education instructor, compiler, Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner
Lin Zhichun 林枝春 (?)	Once in Henan (Qianlong 6-9), once in Jiangxi (Qianlong 12-15)	6 out of 22 years (Yongzheng 8 - Qianlong 17)	Grand Council secretary, Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, compiler, education commissioner
Shuangqing 雙慶 (?-1771)	Twice in Anhui (Qianlong 13-18)	6 out of 38 years (Yongzheng 11 - Qianlong 36)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, Board deputy
Luo Yuanhan 羅源漢 (1707-1782)	Twice in Guangxi (Qianlong 14-18), twice in	8 out of 49 years (Yongzheng 11 - Qianlong 47)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, Board deputy

371, 447, 521, 597, 670, 744, 818, 892, 966, 1039, 1113, 1185, 1264, 1337, 1410. Some Education Commissioners were appointed in between. They are not included in these lists. 2) Most biographical details come from the CBDB database. If a name cannot be located or a record is missing, I shall supplement archival reference in the footnote.

[144] I count the beginning of career from the first year serving an office, or the year of Hanlin entrance, whichever was earlier. The end of career is marked by retirement, or the last office served, whichever was later. If either one is unclear, it is arbitrarily decided by the year of the first/last-time appearance. In case of insufficient data in determining both the beginning and the end, the area is left "unknown".

[145] FHA#02-01-03-05106-002.

	Shuntian (Qianlong 39-42, 44-45)		and then minister, other high posts
Ge Derun 葛德潤 (1702-1771)	Once in Fujian (Qianlong 12-15), and then transferred to Hubei (Qianlong 15-17)	6 out of 19 years (Yongzheng 11 - Qianlong 17)	Board secretary, censor, examination commissioner, education commissioner
Ye You 葉酉 (?)	Once in Guizhou (Qianlong 12-15), and then transferred to Hunan (Qianlong 15-18)	6 out of 19 years (Qianlong 4-23)	Hanlin posts, compiler, examination commissioner, education commissioner
Debao 德保 (1719-1789)	Once in Shanxi (Qianlong 12-15), and then transferred to Shandong (Qianlong 15-17), once in Shuntian (Qianlong 30-32)	7 out of 51 years (Qianlong 2-53)	Hanlin posts, compiler, examination commissioner, education commissioner, Board deputy, high posts of territorial administration, Board minister, imperial tutor, concurrently carried Bannerman military titles
Wu Sifu 吳嗣富 (?)	Once in Hunan (Qianlong 11-12), and then transferred to Guangshao, Guangdong (Qianlong 12-15), and then transferred to Shaanxi (Qianlong 15-18)	7 out of 14 years (Qianlong 4-18)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner
Cheng Yan 程巖 (1714-1768)	Twice in Guangdong (Qianlong 13-15 in Zhaogao, 15-18 in the annexed office), once in Shuntian (Qianlong 27-30)	8 out of 27 years (Qianlong 4-31)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, Board deputy
Lei Hong 雷鋐 (1697-1760)	One year in Zhejiang (Qianlong 15-16), and then transferred to Jiangsu (Qianlong 16-18), and then transferred back to Zhejiang (Qianlong 18-21)	6 out of 26 years (Yongzheng 8 - Qianlong 21)	Education instructor, Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, head of the Office of Transmission, education commissioner
Ge Junqi 葛峻起 (?)	Once in Sichuan (Qianlong 15-18), and then transferred to Yunnan (Qianlong 18-21)	6 out of 25 years (Qianlong 9-34)	Board secretary, censor, education commissioner
Wang Cheng 王宬 (?)	Once in Yunnan (Qianlong 15-18), and then transferred to Sichuan (Qianlong 18-21)	6 out of 25 years (Qianlong 7-32)	Board secretary, education commissioner, prefecture magistrate
Zhang Baigeng 張拜賡 (1711-?)	Once in Shaanxi (Qianlong 18-21), and then transferred to Jiangxi (Qianlong 21-24)	6 out of 21 years (Qianlong 10-31)	Board secretary, examination commissioner, education commissioner, magistrate (?)

Zhang Yingchen 張映辰 (1712-1763)	Once in Hubei (Qianlong 4-6), once in Jiangxi (Qianlong 18-21), and then transferred to Shaanxi (Qianlong 21-24)	8 out of 30 years (Yongzheng 11 - Qianlong 28)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, Board deputy, Censorate deputy
Zhuang Cunyu 莊存與 (1719-1788)	Once in Henan (Qianlong 18-21), and then transferred to Shuntian (Qianlong 21-24). One year in Shandong (Qianlong 39), and then transferred to Henan (Qianlong 39-42).	10 out of 41 years (Qianlong 10-51)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, compiler, Board deputy
Li Yinpei 李因培 (1717-1767)	Twice in Shandong (Qianlong 13-15, Qianlong 20), three times in Jiangsu (Qianlong 20-24, Qianlong 27-29), and serviced in Zhejiang in between (Qianlong 24-27)	13 out of 22 years (Qianlong 10-32)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, Board deputy, high posts of provincial administration
Jiang Yuanyi 蔣元益 (?-1778)	Twice in Shanxi (Qianlong 18-24), once in Shandong (Qianlong 27-30), once in Jiangxi (Qianlong 39-42)	12 out of 40 years (Qianlong 2-42)	Grand Council secretary, Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, censor, Censorate deputy, Board deputy
Dou Guangnai 竇光鼐 (1720-1795)	Once in Henan (Qianlong 17-18), five times in Zhejiang (Qianlong 20-24, 47-51, 54-57)	13 out of 53 years (Qianlong 7-60)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, Board deputy, Censorate deputy, other high posts in the capital, compiler, imperial tutor
Li Youtang 李友棠 (?-1798)	Twice in Fujian (Qianlong 21-25), once in Zhejiang (Qianlong 39-42)	7 out of 32 years (Qianlong 10-42)	Hanlin posts, examination commissioner, education commissioner, censor, compiler, Board deputy

This list confirms that those who were commissioned consecutively had a chance of being commissioned multiple times in different locations for the rest of their career. Other than this point, the list alone does not reflect a clear template of career pattern. However, before analysis, two variables need to be taken into consideration: 1) There was usually a long runway (5-10 years on average in the examples above, exceptions applied) between an official's Hanlin placement and his first appointment. This "blank" period is necessarily counted in as a part of his career.

Therefore, longer/shorter time spans in active duty should be of concern on individual basis. 2) High-ranking officials were treated differently and separately. In principle, the candidate lists were divided into "high officials of 3b and above" and "officials of 4a and below".[146] The former were frequently commissioned to Shuntian, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and to a lesser degree, Anhui. They were never sent to borderland provinces like Guangxi, Yunnan, and Guizhou. As the emperor's "top-drawer" candidates, most of them had already passed the "intern" phase. Their career pattern is thus more complicated.

If we take out the top provinces in the hierarchy and only count active service, the new list starts to show a correlation:

Qianlong 6-21 consecutive appointments (Non-critical provinces)	Time spent in active service (Ratio from high to low)	Worked in the provinces/capital	Entered the high echelon (Ranking 3b and above)
Shen Weizu 沈慰祖 (?)	6 out of 7 years (Qianlong 6-Qianlong 13)	Capital	No
Wu Sifu 吳嗣富 (?)	7 out of 9 years (Qianlong 9-18)	Capital	No
Guan Xianyao 官獻瑤 (?)	6 out of 14 years (Qianlong 1-15)	Capital	No
Xia Zhirong 夏之蓉 (1697-1784)	6 out of 18 years (Yongzheng 4 - Qianlong 1, Qianlong 9-17)	Capital	No
Ge Derun 葛德潤 (1702-1771)	6 out of 18 years (Yongzheng 13 - Qianlong 17)	Capital	No
Zhang Yingchen 張映辰 (1712-1763)	8 out of 25 years (Qianlong 3 - Qianlong 28)	Capital	Yes
Ye You 葉酉 (?)	6 out of 19 years (Qianlong 4-23)	Capital	No
Jiang Yuanyi 蔣元益 (?-1778)	12 out of 40 years (Qianlong 2-42)	Capital	Yes

[146] See entry "Qianlong 60-08-18.2" in the *Shangyu dang*.

Zhang Baigeng 張拜賡 (1711-?)	6 out of 21 years (Qianlong 10-31)	Both	No
Lin Zhichun 林枝春 (?)	6 out of 22 years (Yongzheng 8 - Qianlong 17)	Capital	No
Ge Junqi 葛峻起 (?)	6 out of 25 years (Qianlong 9-34)	Capital	No
Wang Cheng 王宬 (?)	6 out of 25 years (Qianlong 7-32)	Both	No
Wu Sijue 吳嗣爵 (1707-1779)	6 out of 47 years (Yongzheng 8 - Qianlong 42)	Provinces	Yes

Most names of the vice ministers along with the administrators are gone in the new list. Eight out of thirteen candidates stayed in typical Hanlin positions (educator/examiner, compiler, censor, secretary, etc.) and had a non-administrative, lower-ranked Hanlin career. In the remaining five candidates, three of them were later promoted to higher positions and only one of these three dispatched to the provinces. Their relative time span in the education office also occupied smaller percentages in entire career. In contrast, the following list collects those who were only commissioned once in the same time framework, and their career patterns were distinctly more diverse:

Qianlong 6-21 non-consecutive appointments (Non-critical provinces)	Disappeared in records after commission	Primarily worked in the provinces/capital	Entered the high echelon (Ranking 3b and above)
Li Zhiyun 李治運 (1710-1771)	No	Provinces	Yes
Wu Huasun 吳華孫 (?)	Yes	N/A	N/A
Liang Wenshan 梁文山 (?)	Yes	N/A	N/A
Jin Hongquan	No	Provinces	No

金洪銓 (?)			
Yang Tingdong 楊廷棟 (?)	Yes	N/A	N/A
Song Bangsui 宋邦綏 (?-1770)	No	Provinces	Yes
Wang Shihuang 汪士鍠 (?)	Yes	N/A	N/A
Xingtai 興泰 (?)	No	Capital	No
He Qirui 何其睿 (?)	Yes	N/A	N/A
Tang Pin 湯聘 (1707-1769)	No	Provinces	Yes
Feng Qian 馮鈐 (1711-1770)	No	Provinces	Yes
Cai Yangzong 蔡揚宗 (?)	Yes	N/A	N/A
Wang Jihua 王際華 (1717-1776)	No	Capital	Yes
Zhou Mei 周浼 (?)	Yes	N/A	N/A
Wang Tingyu 汪廷璵 (1718-1783)	No	Capital	Yes
Chen Guizhou 陳桂洲 (?)	Yes	N/A	N/A
Li Zongwen 李宗文 (1716-?)	No	Capital	Yes

Mao Yongxie 毛永燮 (?)	No	Capital	No
Shi Yimo 史貽謨 (?)	No	Capital	No

In contrast to the majority of the previous list, only three out of these nineteen appointees on this list stayed at the non-administrative, lower-ranked Hanlin positions throughout career. Another three candidates also stayed in the capital, but they were quickly promoted to higher-ranked positions. Many of the rest became magistrates right after the first commission. Among them, four administrators grew to high posts later on. Those who "disappeared" were likely appointed lower-tier magistrates or remained nobody at the Academy. In either case, their consequent presence was not recorded in the existing official documents.

Within the capacity of this chapter, my tentative observation supplements the aforementioned "internship" thesis: Many novice Hanlins would be given the opportunity of supervising the provincial examinations and/or provincial education. As the third list demonstrates, a fair percentage of this group experienced a career shift after a three-year probation in the education office. This phenomenon reconfirms that the Qianlong emperor did utilize this venue as a screening procedure. Based on the impression and the feedbacks, he placed these officials on different bureaucratic tracks. The second list hints at a pattern that the longer and more frequent one was sent to serve the education office, the more likely he stayed at typical Hanlin positions upon returning to the capital. In combination with the first list, which does not exclude critical provinces, we can reasonably infer that the use of prolonged fieldwork in the education office was not only a way of digesting underutilized Hanlin potential but also a significant signal of the positive association between scholarly merits and educational/literary/censorial/secretarial functions in placement considerations.

In a larger historical context, there were signs of professionalization both in schooling institutions and official discourses during the eighteenth century. Since the first year of the Yongzheng reign, all school instructors were at least required of a *juren* degree.[147] The Qianlong emperor carried on this approach and adopted additional measures. For instance, he incorporated the instructors in the ranking system and granted them full salary.[148] He regularized the inspection of these instructors.[149] He also asked the Governors-general, the Governors, and the Education Commissioners to follow a series of protocols to inspect the directors of local academies.[150] Some other measures were occasional while sending a strong signal. For instance, he replaced the head of the *Guozi jian* 國子監 (Directorate of Education) because the latter had a less recognized degree.[151] Some officials, especially the Hanlin-background ones, catered to this tide. From the selection of the ritual and musical students in local Confucian temples to the tutors at the Hanlin Academy, there were voices of professionalized training and deployment.[152] From nominating the drafters of the imperial diary (*qiju zhu* 起居注) to assessing the lower-tier academies that included those in the counties, there were such voices as well.[153]

[147] See the "Hanque chuxuan 漢缺除選" (Appointment and Selection of the Han Openings) section under the Board of Personnel chapter in *Daqing huidian* 大清會典 (*The Great Qing Administrative Code*), the 1732 version, *juan* 11.
[148] Entries "Yongzheng 13-11-01" and "Qianlong 01-01-21" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 6 and 11.
[149] Entry "Qianlong 06-11-29" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 155. For more information, see Chapter V.
[150] Entry "Qianlong 40-02-15.2" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[151] Entry "Qianlong 19-04-01" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 460.
[152] See FHA#04-01-38-0062-047, memorialist Li Zhiyun 李治運 (1710-1771); FHA#04-01-38-0062-051, memorialist Li Zhichun 林枝春 (?); FHA#04-01-012-0044-064, memorialist Jin Deying 金德瑛 (1701-1762).
[153] See FHA#04-01-12-0064-063, memorialist Li Yinpei 李因培 (1717-1767); FHA#04-01-01-0414-013, memorialist Qian Yue 錢樾 (1743-1815).

Was the utilization of Hanlin scholars in education and other specialized projects a part of this trend? Or was there such a trend? Notwithstanding that the throne's willful intervention was critical in forming placement decisions, the rationale behind his arrangement puts forward a clear separation from the intellectual premise that ties Classical training with statecraft ability. The examination achievers were thus evaluated against this premise. Their perceived merit became an organic component of the placement criteria. However, the evidence presented is not conclusive to call this phenomenon a technocratic or professional turn in personnel appointment. The "internship" approach epitomized neither meritocracy nor technocracy because it was less about governmentality as opposed to a mere institutional device. On the one hand, the regime prioritized loyalty (often manifested in family association) and resourcefulness over scholarly expertise for most administrative posts. On the other hand, it had to balance the conquest and the native groups in the way that plenty of candidates were deployed without endangering the "essence of the state".

The placement of civil officials was increasingly a challenge since the Yongzheng era, caused by both more people entering officialdom via examination channels and the aggressive empire-building initiatives that witnessed an expanding bureaucracy. The clash between academic credentials and work performance was likely a problem whenever the examinations were the major means of selection. But during the eighteenth century, the aforementioned sources indicated that it was more exposed to the ruler's eyes. Thus, an institutional solution was devised. It went beyond the degrees and career expectations by having the Hanlins selected, interviewed, and commissioned to pertinent venues. At the same time, the military and most high offices of territorial administration remained at the hands of the ruling elites.

Overall, the logic of commissioning differs from traditional deployment. Instead of moving upwards or downwards, these officials were parallel to their original office in the capital. It was

an astute way to draw from the same pool of talents regardless of the original ranks and offices. The Education Commissioners, in particular, fit in a newly developed scheme in the bureaucracy and of the imperial order. This group and its political application will be further discussed in the following chapters.

The new approach redefined the status of the Hanlin Academy as well as its advanced degree-holders. In contrast with those in politically trusted positions, many officials from this group were only in charge of specific affairs from time to time. The latter's "pettier", mission-dependent, and yet "semi-professional" position had refreshed the imperial bureaucracy by showcasing a new type of elite officials who were closely tied with the sovereign and catered to a specific vision. It leads to the ideological connection between the imperial center and the provinces in Chapter IV and the curricular micro-reforms presented in Chapter V.

Chapter III: The Sent-down Academicians at the Office of Education Affairs

In this chapter, the collective body of Education Commissioners (*Xuezheng*) is formally introduced as the bridging agency between the emperor's ideological vision and the empire's literate populace. Starting from the Yongzheng era (1723-1735), this group of officials was exclusively commissioned from the Hanlin Academy and its graduates. As a selected few in the pool of the highest degree-holders, they were given the exclusive responsibility of supervising all the local schools, (sub-provincial) examination candidates, and the licentiates. Following an overview of what the education office was about and how they served a role of literary surveillance, this chapter discusses the Yongzheng reform and its implications, one of which was the elevated status of the Education Commissioners. It primarily reviews the post-Yongzheng political status of the commissioners, arguing that following a transient period, this group evolved from representing the throne's individual emissaries empowered by censorial liability to an office of regularized duties and partially going back under provincial supervision. Different from the past, the Education Commissioners were more professionalized, institutionally closer to the monarch, and thus became the "permanent envoys" of literary policy to the lettered subjects in the provinces.

3.1 ***Itinerary Tours and Everyday Reigning***

3.1.1 An Overview

The Offices of Education Affairs (*Xuezheng yamen* 學政衙門) were usually stationed in the vicinity of provincial administration compound. As physically immobile as these offices were, the Education Commissioners embodied the "nomads" in the Qing bureaucracy: They had to keep touring around the provinces twice during their three-year tenure. On the trip, the most important duty was holding the *Suishi* 歲試 (Licensing Examination) and the *Keshi* 科試 (Qualifying

Examination) in each prefecture. The former was to award and renew the *Shengyuan* 生員 (Licentiate) degree for both civil and military candidates; The latter was held thereafter (sometimes concurrently in specific regions) to offer admittance to the next-level *Xiangshi* 鄉試 (Provincial Examination), which determined the *Juren* 舉人 (lit. Elevated Figure) degree. Therefore, in terms of institutional design, the Education Commissioners were chiefly the superintendents for the entry-level civil and military examinations. Their itinerant tours were indispensable to producing licentiates and the preparation of qualified candidates for the Provincial Examination, in which their three-year tenure coordinated this triennial event.

Aside from their critical role in the Civil Service Examination system, the Education Commissioners' daily responsibilities included supervising local schools, instructors, and licentiates. The guidelines of these works, along with the examination affairs, were documented in the *Administrative Code*, the *Xuezheng quanshu* 學政全書 (Compendium of Education Affairs), and the accumulated directives issued by the Board of Rites.[154] The Education Commissioners had no access to the appointment of school personnel, a power reserved by the administrative branch.[155] But they were fully empowered to review instructors, licentiates, licentiate candidates

[154] As memorialized in the FHA, the *Compendium of Education Affairs* were first compiled in the Kangxi reign and then actively updated and revised in the Qianlong reign. Apart from those basic guidelines that could also be found in the *Administrative Code*, the compendium collected new policies and the Board decisions of specific issues to provide a comprehensive reference. Between revisions, the commissioners would have to rely on the archives of government newsletters or start new discussions in order to address the issues that were not documented in the present compendium.

[155] Although at the bottom tier, the school instructors had been a formal part of the Qing bureaucracy since 1725 (Yongzheng 3). They were selected from the "Regular Path" (*Zhengtu* 正途) degree-holders (usually *juren* but up to *jinshi* at the prefectural level; deputy instructors came from the group of advanced licentiates) and ranked from 8b to 7a. See FHA#02-01-03-03333-013. Therefore, their appointment and dismissal must go through the Board of Personnel. Nevertheless, the Education Commissioners could recommend their promotion together with the Governors-general and the Governors, see "Linxuan 遴選 (Screening and Selection)" in the *Administrative Code*. Starting from 1764 (Qianlong 29), the provincial administration must notify the Education Commissioner upon the

(*Tongsheng* 童生), and the other licentiate groups. The Board of Personnel would always recognize the evaluator's judgement against corrupt or misbehaving school instructors and have them dismissed.[156] In case disciplining was involved, the Office of Education Affairs could solely arbitrate the degree status of licentiates and licentiate candidates. The existing archives reveal that charges against instructors and punishments of licentiates were a common occurrence. The Education Commissioners thus wielded tremendous influence over the majority of the empire's Classically educated subjects who never acquired more advanced degrees.

The itinerant tours also served as a measure of general surveillance for the throne. Wherever the Education Commissioners travelled to, they regularly submitted reports to the emperor about their observation of local situation such as weather, crops, custom, commodity price, and the literary competence of the lettered population. The Qianlong emperor considered these reports an independent source of information, which was needed to supplement and testify the accounts made by the stationary officials.

Defying this purpose, once exposed, would solicit denunciation. In 1761 (Qianlong 26), there were excessive amounts of rain across North China Plain in the Fall. The Education Commissioner of Shuntian described weather and farming scene in euphemistic tone without mentioning the flooding and the consequent calamities.[157] The emperor, who experienced the recent climate himself, found this memorial disappointing. He wrote: "You do not have local liabilities. This is exactly why you should tell the truth so that people's difficulties can be heard. This year's Fall

assignment of the teaching positions. See FHA#03-0753-103 and entry "Qianlong 29-08-17" in the *Veritable Records*.

[156] I found no exception in the archives. The appeal procedure, if available, is unclear. On most occasions, the dismissed instructors would be further penalized under the judicial review of the Governor.

[157] The title was usually written as Shuntian, a prefecture of Zhili that roughly represented modern-day Beijing. But the office was in fact supervising the education affairs of entire Zhili, which included modern-day Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, and parts of Henan.

deluge has been affecting the entire region. Who does not know it? You, as a cultured person (dushu ren 讀書人), chose to write such obscure words. This is gravely mistaken."[158]

In a straightforward way, the Qianlong emperor pointed out the unique position of the Education Commissioners in his information network. He also openly invited them to participate in the intelligence production employed by his everyday reigning.[159] To answer this call, many commissioners regularly updated him with regional reviews. Thereby they partially carried the duties of the censors who were not institutionally deployed in localities. Unlike regional inspection, these duties were not censorial in nature. The reports merely served as reference points for various departments of governance: farmland[160], social welfare[161], disaster relief[162], etc. Sometimes the Education Commissioner's report provided essential information for the emperor to make decision.[163]

Few positions were regularly obligated to tour around the provinces without administrative responsibilities. Bureaucratic disengagement had made the Education Commissioners' observation worthy on its own terms. At the same time, they earned experience from local conditions and coordinating examination affairs with all levels of provincial officials. These works

158 FHA#04-01-23-0045-007. Memorialist Zhang Taikai 張泰開 (1688-1774).

159 The emperor asked the Education Commissioners to submit policy advices from the outset of his reign. See entry "Qianlong 01-05-16" in the *Shangyu dang*. For a sample memorial following this order, see FHA#04-01-38-0059-001.

160 E.g., an Education Commissioner of Henan discussed the issue of "assarting barren land" after he toured around the province. He determined that the so-called barren lands were in fact already claimed lands that were relisted for more taxes. FHA#04-01-22-0003-104. Memorialist Zhang Kao 張考 (?). A similar survey was conducted in Shanxi. FHA#04-01-22-0003-112. Memorialist Shen Wengao 沈文鎬 (?). Both were escalated to the top-echelon agencies for further discussion.

161 E.g., an Education Commissioner of Jiangxi argued for more deployment of lifesaving boats along the waterways. FHA#04-01-36-0020-008. Memorialist Yu Chen 于辰 (?).

162 E.g., an Education Commissioner of Hubei asked for a fire disaster relief based on what he saw. FHA#04-01-01-0024-024. Memorialist Kaitai 開泰 (?-1763).

163 E.g., the emperor issued an edict based on an Education Commissioner's report of the drought in Zhejiang. FHA#03-0536-107. Memorialist Lei Hong 雷鋐 (1697-1760).

alone had generated various reports and helped to prepare them as future administrators. The emperor, on the receiving end, was not only able to obtain information but also learn about the commissioners' performance in coordination with civil affairs. Together with the feedbacks from the provincial oversight, he could more efficaciously assess these potential candidates of his upper-tier assistants -- A theme that echoes with Chapter II.

3.1.2 Perspectives into the Infrastructure: The Example of literary Surveillance

Aside from the function of casual informant, the Education Commissioners were the emperor's key monitors against literati dissidents. Literary surveillance (and its extreme form, inquisition), discussed extensively in both scholarly and popular literatures, was often regarded as a natural byproduct of political struggle and ideologically motivated campaigns. Under the Qianlong emperor's oversight, those cases of inquisition and censorship earned a reputation for scoring the historical highest both in terms of quantity and political magnitude. His harsh actions against disaffected and potentially sabotaging books were also well known. I do not attempt to revisit such a large topic. Instead, I discuss surveillance as an infrastructural setup in everyday governance: The direct overseers' functions and roles, the occasions that could trigger and escalate inquisition cases, and the boundaries of surveillance campaigns. These perspectives help us understand why the Education Commissioners became critical in the empire's ideological control even though their names were often not mentioned in the most famous inquisitions.

In the existing cases, most officials, education-related or not, were highly sensitive about writings. If an official received a letter of political nature from a stranger, he would be wise to tell the emperor right away and wait to get cleared.[164] To be safe, one must take precautions whenever

[164] E.g., FHA#04-01-12-0180-097. Memorialist Dai Diyuan 戴第元 (1728-1789). The rescript reads: "It is not related to you. Why are you afraid? (與汝無關, 何必懼也)", which was the most comforting to the memorialist.

he encountered literary works. It was possible to get away from punishment by using preemptive measures. Alternately, one would face grave trouble if a case was concealed or not reported properly.

For those presumed accountable, the typical penalty was dismissal from office plus title deprival/demotion. But the directly responsible ones were punishable to death. In an inquisition case, a military licentiate in Anhui presented his book to the Education Commissioner who found it containing "outrageous discourses on state affairs (謬論官常)".[165] Not only the offender was executed, but those who helped him transcribe were also heavily punished.[166] All the school instructors who ever taught the offender, including those who were later promoted magistrates, were deprived of title.[167] Comparing with some other cases that involved many more heads being chopped off, these sentences can be considered lenient.

Being the closest to literati and the direct supervisor of schools, the Education Commissioners were theoretically held liable for any literati misconduct. The prevention of such events was always a priority. In doing so, they constituted a corner stone of the empire's daily surveillance over the literary subjects. The provincial administration, from the governors to the magistrates, was additionally responsible for investigation, incarceration, and interrogation. In this network, the officials were available to the emperor not only as top-down campaign agents. They were proactively engaged.

Such engagement required more than the call of duty. The logic of liability was straightforward in the Qing government: Regardless of the exact cause, an official was accountable for anything happened under his supervision. A modern reader may find it beyond reason: One Education

[165] FHA#04-01-38-0080-034. Memorialist Defeng 德風 (?-1786). Submitted in 1769 (Qianlong 34).
[166] FHA#04-01-38-0046-022. Memorialist Funihan 富尼漢 (1709-?).
[167] FHA#02-01-03-06403-006. Board of Personnel decision.

Commissioner had to supervise about a hundred school instructors and numerous literati in a province. He could not possibly inspect every individual and be in the know. Nevertheless, he would be liable for crimes committed by any of these subjects. This principle was essentially founded on relational bond rather than factual causation. Tenable or not, it was the given rule. The burden of surveillance was thus heavy.

Because the exposure of truly discontent ones was rare, surveillance was mostly against literati misconducts and instructor malpractices. A large portion of the Education Commissioners' memorials was corruption charges against school instructors. These instructors collaborated with the Education Commissioners to supervise the local literati and report any misconduct, and they were subject to supervision themselves. If a licentiate or licentiate candidate was involved in serious offenses, his school instructors would be the first ones held accountable and then the Education Commissioner.

To prevent that from happening, surveillance pressures were reassigned from high to low in the hierarchy. After all, the Education Commissioner was not able to know all the local literati, but the instructors should know them. The commissioner could preemptively charge the questionable instructors so that himself might be in a safer position. Failure of exposure would result in penalty. In 1756 (Qianlong 21), the Education Commissioner of Henan failed to report an instructor who was liable for a licentiate offense. This commissioner was consequently dismissed and demoted.[168] In 1789 (Qianlong 54), a Hunan licentiate was found out that he took examinations during filial mourning. The former Education Commissioner was first punished with demotion. But when the emperor recalled that this official never submitted censorial memorials during his two terms in Hunan, demotion was escalated to the deprival of all titles.[169]

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[168] FHA#04-01-02-0120-063. Memorialist Li Zongwen 李宗文 (1716-?).
[169] Entry "Qianlong 54-09-26" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1339.

To be clear, being proactive was not a guarantee to reduce one's own risk. The above cases merely reveal that worse things would happen if one was not. Unless the emperor said otherwise, everyone in the overseeing position was presumed to have infinite responsibility. In 1770 (Qianlong 35), certain licentiates were involved in a proscribed gathering in Guizhou. The newly arrived Education Commissioner submitted a palace memorial to report two instructors and himself.[170] The emperor found this form of self-criticism nonsensical. The edict confirmed that the two instructors would be dismissed. But the Education Commissioner was always accountable, the emperor insisted, no matter he was new to the office or not ("學政本有應得處分，並不係於到任之久暫"). Therefore, it was unnecessary to turn oneself in like this. Penalties would follow when the case was officially reviewed by the Board.[171]

The overtone of this conversation is not complicated: The Education Commissioner reported himself in an attempt to explain and get an exemption order from the emperor. The emperor recognized his intention but refused to acknowledge the underlying request: It was fair play with rules, not a game of finger-pointing. Nevertheless, the emperor did grant exemptions from time to time. In 1754 (Qianlong 19), the Education Commissioner of Fujian was informed that a licentiate wrote policy suggestions of insubordinate nature (*wangyi* 妄議). The emperor simply wrote "you are not guilty" and the commissioner was exempted from penalties.[172] Such act was not adding irregularities to the given rule. Rather, it recapitulated on the only exception in this hierarchy, which was that only the emperor could override the rule at his discretion.

[170] FHA#04-01-38-0081-012, 04-01-12-0137-040. Memorialist Wang Shifen 王士棻 (1722-1796).
[171] Entry "Qianlong 35-04-04" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[172] FHA#04-01-38-0042-003. Memorialist Wang Tingyu 汪廷璵 (1718-1783).

If literary inquisition was involved, the context could become even more subtle. First of all, the emperor must be the person in the know. One must both report to the emperor and inform the provincial administration in the event of a literary case. In 1785 (Qianlong 50), a commoner in Hunan wrote or/and compiled ("bianzao 編造") a book and delivered it to the Office of Education Affairs. The Education Commissioner only informed (*zi* 咨) the Governor-general and the Governor. He was consequently punished by the emperor for not personally reporting the case.[173] Moreover, there was a fine line between being dutiful and being oversensitive. In 1769 (Qianlong 34), the Education Commissioner of Shuntian considered that a licentiate's examination poem was satiric ("語涉譏訕"). This commissioner immediately deprived the licentiate degree of the suspect and asked the local authorities to arrest him. After two rounds of interrogation (local and the Education Commissioner's), he forwarded this case to the Governor-general and confidently escalated it to the emperor. Upon reading the poem in question, however, the emperor decided that there was no malice in it. Furthermore, there was no need to deprive this licentiate's degree.[174]

To a 2b official whose relation was close to the emperor, such miscalculation could just be an embarrassment. The same thing might bring more serious consequences to lower-ranked officials. Two years before this drama, the Education Commissioner of Henan checked upon a licentiate who wrote books that the commissioner believed "containing numerous disaffected words (內含訕刺難以枚舉)".[175] This commissioner circled those parts out and escalated the case. But the emperor disagreed entirely. After several rounds of investigation, the case backfired, and this

[173] Entry "Qianlong 50-09-11" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1238.
[174] FHA#04-01-38-0046-026. Memorialist Ni Chengkuan 倪承寬 (1712-1783). Ni was the Deputy Minister of the Board of Rites, rank 2b.
[175] FHA#03-1401-040. Memorialist Zhou Yuezan 周曰贊 (?). Zhou was a 5b official.

Education Commissioner was dismissed.[176] Other than telling a Qing-version Soviet joke, these examples present us a dilemma: If enabling the emperor's omniscient view was a double-edged sword to the informants themselves, how should the informants judge "to let know or not to let know"?

The emperor himself had a theory to evaluate what was "unfair (guodang 過當)" for literary offenses. In 1757 (Qianlong 22), the newly arrived Governor of Hunan found a local licentiate's works "mutinous and erroneous (beimiu 悖謬)". He reported the case to the emperor and passed the books to the Education Commissioner for evaluation.[177] The latter remarked that these works were "anti-Zhu Xi and audacious (背朱狂放)".[178] Then the Governor confidently filed an inquisition report.[179] Similar to the two aforementioned cases, the emperor disagreed with their judgement. He first criticized the manufacturing of this case: The Governor was new to his position and (as a Manchu) not an expert on scholarly topics. Once hearing a "mutinous" case, he was eager to make an example. And since the Governor was so determined, the Education Commissioner had to collaborate so that he would not be charged for covering it up. Following this comment, the emperor then analyzed the nature of this licentiate's works: The two commentaries on the *Daxue* and the *Zhongyong* were not entirely following Zhu Xi's. But this was due to the author's limitation of learning. Additionally, the suspect's poetry collection did have disaffected words. But these were not "slandering the regime and arbitrarily attacking state affairs (謗訕國家、肆詆朝政)", which the emperor perceived as the most important criterion for evaluating a literary offense. Lastly, he preached:

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176 FHA#02-01-03-06202-014. Board of Personnel decision.
177 FHA#04-01-38-0043-013. Memorialist Fulehun 富勒渾 (1722-1795).
178 FHA#03-1161-026. Memorialist Mao Huizu 毛輝祖 (1709-1774).
179 FHA#04-01-38-0043-015.

When senior officials with territorial responsibilities encounter this kind of business, they should know what is the most appropriate to do. If the person uses his false imagination to slander without any respect, he is certainly punishable so that the others are warned. If there is no more than this kind of writing mistakes, then many people before us could not be exempted. Besides, what Chen Anzhao wrote can barely be called serious works. Picking on his writings is not the way to cultivate his mind. Conversely, it might invite people to tell on each other. The ignorant ones would declare nowhere to put their hands and feet. I handle various affairs with utmost justice. I expect the most appropriate results whether the sentences are light or heavy, and overdoing is worse than not doing enough.

封疆大吏遇此等事，當識大體。如果逞臆謗誹、肆無忌憚，自不得不懲一儆百。若不過此等筆墨之過，則前人亦往往有之。况陳安兆所作並不足稱為著述，於此而加以吹求，轉無以服其心。且恐開告訐之漸，無知者遂謂無所措手足。朕辦理庶務大公至正，輕重務期得中，過猶不及。[180]

In light of this directive, it would be wise if the officials chose to react only when the case was "explicit" or fit into an ongoing agenda. For example, "the attire and headdress system (衣冠制度)" was one of the most sensitive topics in the Qing. It touched upon the Manchu institution and appearance, which the Qing emperors perceived as the essence of the state (*guoti* 國體). In 1752 (Qianlong 17), a Fujian licentiate delivered a list of policy discussions to the Governor Chen Hongmou 陳宏謀 (1696-1771). Seeing that it contained no sensitive topics, Chen simply turned him away despite the fact that licentiates were not allowed to submit policy suggestions. This licentiate did not realize it was a dangerous act. Not happy with being neglected, he drafted a new one. He added a discussion on attire and hairstyle and tried again after the new Governor Zhongyin 鍾音 (?-1778) arrived. The new draft effectively triggered the escalation of this case. In the end, the emperor praised Zhongyin for passing a death sentence on this licentiate and denounced Chen

[180] Entry "Qianlong 22-12-26" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 553.

Hongmou for going light on him.[181] Both Governors' reactions were situational and did what the officials would typically do. However, the result did not satisfy the emperor either. Given the evaluation of literary works was so subjective and those involved were punishable to such a grave extent, being "appropriate" was ever a conundrum for every overseeing official to figure out.

Among those relatively "explicit" cases, there was still a difference between an "unruly (bu anfen 不安分)" offense, which often resulted in degree deprival, and a "mutinous case (ni'an 逆案)", which always led to capital penalties. For example, in 1755 (Qianlong 20), a Shanxi licentiate delivered his book to the Education Commissioner during an examination event. Upon the commissioner's initial evaluation, the book was "mostly incomprehensible talks with some insubordinate signs (語多不解且有狂悖之處)".[182] How insubordinate could it be if the language was mostly incomprehensible? When this licentiate was sent to the Governor's, his sentence depended on how the Governor and ultimately the emperor interpreted those "insubordinate signs".[183] To fit in the emperor's own criterion, the aforementioned examples in Zhili, Henan, and Hunan all belonged to the former category as there was no clear evidence in the offenders' writings to prove political calumniation and disaffected discourses on state affairs.

In comparison, literary inquisitions of the latter category were generally more context-dependent than sporadic. They could occur in clusters during political campaigns that mobilized and incentivized the bureaucracy to search for offenders. For example, between 1773 (Qianlong 38) and 1782 (Qianlong 47) when the *Siku quanshu* project was in the phase of active preparation and compilation, the emperor extensively issued edicts that asked the provincial administration

[181] Entry "Qianlong 19-12-07" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 478.
[182] FHA#04-01-38-0042-005. Memorialist Jiang Yuanyi 蔣元益 (?-1778).
[183] FHA#04-01-38-0042-006. Memorialist Hengwen 恒文 (?-1757).

and the education offices to scout out, censor, confiscate, and destroy anti-regime literature.[184] At the early stage, he wanted to eradicate the works of some Ming loyalists during the Ming-Qing transition.[185] But as the scavenger hunt of the "lost books (遺書)" was on the agenda, the occasion could not be more suitable for enforcing censorship.[186] Inquisition cases with the bloodiest outcomes happened during this period. Many of them were brought to the daylight by the locals' malicious reports as opposed to the officials. Without top-down pressures, on the other hand, the boundaries of inquisition were often more refined as the offenders of "unruly" nature existed in much larger quantity than the "mutinous" ones.

Given the steadfast participance of the provincial administration that was procedurally higher than the education office in handling these cases, the Education Commissioners were certainly not the only actor in both scenarios. Nevertheless, they were fundamental in supporting the empire's infrastructure of literary surveillance. If we approach this topic with the iceberg metaphor, it was the service provided by the education office that disclosed the tip. The commissioners were often the first-hand witnesses of literary offenses, thus filtering the light and the heavy. They were the sole arbitrator of light offenses, including those "unruly" literati who were likely punished through regular reports. The latter only led to degree deprival instead of physical demise. Political pressure had intermittently swayed individual commissioners toward the harsh end. But being overly sensitive was never a good choice. As far as the campaigns of moral cultivation went (Chapter V),

[184] E.g., entries "Qianlong "38-03-28", "38-03-29", "39-08-05", "39-11-09", "39-11-10", "40-01-09", "40-10-14", "40-11-10", "41-11-16", "43-10-18", "43-11-1", "44-11-24", "45-11-20", etc. in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 929, 964, 970, 974, 992, 996, 1021, 1069, 1070, 1095, 1119, etc.
[185] Entries "Qianlong 34-06-06", "34-06-25", "34-08-29", etc. in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 836, 837, 841, etc.
[186] Entries "Qianlong 37-01-04", "38-03-28", "38-03-29", "39-08-05", "40-01-09", "40-01-20", "40-10-14", "40-10-17", "41-11-16", "41-12-13", "45-11-20", etc. in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 900, 929, 964, 974, 975, 992, 995, 1021, 1119, etc.

the Education Commissioners had good reasons to prefer turning literati into sound scholarly subjects as their *tour de force* of work performance.

3.1.3 On the Enabling Factors

With the emperor's personnel arrangement already introduced, one may wonder why this Hanlin-commissioner group merits more attention than its institutional background and normative functions. In the section above, I have used literary surveillance to exemplify the circumstances under which the Education Commissioners constituted the cornerstone of the empire's ideological control. On the one hand, due to their limited agency in the process of inquisition, the governors had to step in. On the other hand, they were not exactly put under the provincial oversight. The Governor-general, the Governor, and the other high officials in the province did not have direct command over the education office. The Education Commissioners evidently occupied a unique position in the bureaucracy, inviting further explication.

Before delving into the specific intricacies that gave rise to the Education Commissioners' uniqueness during the Yongzheng-Qianlong continuum, readers need to understand their roles in the power dynamics of imperial politics as well as the provincial structure. There are several historically contingent factors that empowered the education office to be more than a professionalized venue for the underutilized academicians. In particular, the commissioners were dissimilar to the other provincial officials in the following three aspects: 1) Albeit working locally, they were institutionally capital officials; 2) As the designated overseers from the capital, they could bypass the local authorities if collaboration was not required per the nature of the subject matter; 3) Under the veil of specialization, this group of officials encompassed the literary, the educational, and the pertinent decision-making positions in the imperial government. In other words, despite individual variations, those who produced texts and those who propagated them

were sourced from the same pool of talents; Those who submitted pertinent policy proposals and those who reviewed them in the Board of Rites also belonged to the same group of officials at different career stages.

The education office's direct affiliation with the capital represented an independent branch extended from the imperial center that was parallel to the existing structure of provincial government. It also meant a much closer relationship with the sovereign, especially given the Hanlin Academy was designed for providing him "literary and consulting officials (文學侍從之臣)". This status had granted the Education Commissioners privileges in communication and autonomy. Their typical career trajectory, on the other hand, tells a story about an interconnected scholarly officialdom that was relatively independent from the rest.

These factors had enabled both the sovereign and his literary-educational officials to accomplish the enterprise described in chapters IV and V. However, they were not given but rather developed under different needs felt by two emperors. The rest of this chapter will connect readers to the historical formation of the Education Commissionership.

3.2 *Academicians and Education Supervision in the Yongzheng Reform*

It is common knowledge, that for the duration of late imperial China, education affairs were kept separate from other civil affairs. But under this institutional premise, the office itself went through a few nuanced adjustments that were contingent on the political objectives of the time. The Qianlong emperor's "intern" approach to Hanlin placement, as discussed in the previous chapter, was his long-term solution to utilize the Academy. This section explains how the education office had come a long way before taking its mature form per the priorities of the Qianlong era. It helps us position the commissioned academicians' political capacity, status, and

more important, intended roles to play in specific eras, which ultimately determined the ways they interacted with the imperial center.

For the last two hundred years of the Qing dynasty, the Education Commissioners belonged to one of the most eminent groups in the commissioned bureaucracy. Since this position was directly appointed by the throne, they could also submit direct memorials to the emperor --- a political right reserved by the upper echelon of the Qing bureaucracy. They uniformly came from the Hanlin Academy, representing the most prestigious group of scholar-officials. Fully in charge of education affairs, they toured around the provinces and selected local talents for the examination pool. The provincial officials, no matter how high-ranking, could not impinge on this power. Upon returning the capital, this service would become an important reference for career development. Hence, the education office was one of the most desirable positions among the Hanlin academicians.

The Education Commissioners did not obtain such status automatically. Rather, it was a result of the institutional reforms in the early eighteenth century.[187] This story begun under the Yongzheng rule, upon whose legacy many innovative facets of the Qianlong emperorship were built. The Yongzheng emperor famously survived the perilous struggles during the succession of

[187] Scholars have done research on this institutional reform since 1950s. Araki Toshikazu 荒木敏一 insightfully discussed its historical importance in his paper "*Yōsei jidai ni okeru gakushinsei no kaikaku* 雍正時代に於ける學臣制の改革" ("The Reform of the Education Officials System in the Yongzheng Era") in *Tōyō shi kenkyu*東洋史研究 (1959), 18(3): 267-283. Hwang Tsun-mu 黃春木 discussed the institutional origins of the education office in "Qingdai Xuezheng yanjiu 清代學政研究" ("The Study of the Provincial Director of Education in the Qing") in *Jiaoyu yanjiu jikan* 教育研究集刊 (Bulletin of Educational Research) (2002), 48(3): 119-150. Recently, An Dongqiang 安東強 thoroughly covered this topic in his book *Qingdai Xuezheng guizhi yu huangquan tizhi* 清代學政規制與皇權體制 (Regulations of Xuezheng and the Imperial System in Qing Dynasty) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe 社會科學文獻出版社, 2017).

power. He was also renowned for his battle against factionalism.[188] To secure sovereign rule, secret memorials (*mizhe* 密摺) and direct appointment (*jianren* 簡任) were institutional innovations contingent on the emperor's felt needs.[189] The evolution of educational supervision was built upon these two bases. In short, the throne found his intendents of education affairs a relatively independent government agency in the provinces. He reinforced the independence of the education office by separating education affairs from provincial administration, directly commissioning the Hanlin academicians to this position, and allowing them to personally communicate with the throne. In doing so, he oversaw the provinces with more assurance.

Along with the reform on the institution of education affairs, the form and function of ideological exercises started to change. The Yongzheng emperor did not send books to his officials as gifts and expect them to report back. Nevertheless, he was renowned for publicly circulating his rebuttals against the Ming loyalist Lü Liuliang's works.[190] From the existing archival records, we know that those books were formally sent to the provinces for indoctrination purposes.[191] Because of the aforementioned reform, the intendents who carried this duty were further empowered to

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[188] The Yongzheng emperor wrote a famous rebuttal "Yuzhi pengdang lun 御製朋黨論" ("The Emperor's Opinion on the Discourse on Factions") against the Song literatus Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072)'s "Pengdang lun 朋黨論" ("Discourse on Factions"). He argued that factions were inherently detrimental to the virtue of politics. This essay was widely spread across the empire. See entry "Yongzheng 02-07-16" in the *Shizong xian huangdi shilu* 世宗憲皇帝實錄 (The Veritable Records of the Yongzheng Emperor), *juan* 22. Scripta Sinica.

[189] The Yongzheng emperor went through brutal political struggles during and after his succession. Some of his institutional reforms, especially the measures concerning the concentration of sovereign power, had their origin in this background. This topic has been copiously discussed by historians such as Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定, Yang Qiqiao 楊啟樵, Feng Erkang 馮爾康, etc. Admittedly, both secret memorials and direct appointments were not invented by the Yongzheng emperor per se. But their uses were greatly expanded under the Yongzheng rule.

[190] A complete story can be found in Jonathan D. Spence, *Treason by the Book* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001).

[191] When an Education Commissioner arrived at or left the office, he would submit a report that included a booklist of his library. These reports can be found in the FHA *Lìke tiben* 吏科題本 collection (some of them are sorted into the *Lǐke tiben* 禮科題本 due to human error).

effectively transmit the emperor's will. The new body of educational supervision thus went beyond its specific context and became indispensable from the literary campaigns after the Yongzheng era.

How different was the education office before this significant transformation? In the Ming dynasty, education affairs were delegated to a subordinate office under provincial administration.[192] The Qing initially inherited the Ming institution, only giving special attention to Zhili and the Jiangnan areas. The candidates were decided by the Board of Personnel.[193] But beginning in 1726 (Yongzheng 4), the provincial superintendent for education affairs was universally designated as a commissioned position.[194] The Education Commissioners were then dispatched by the throne, from whom they directly took orders. The Qing government thereafter regarded this group of officials as representing an independent branch that was largely parallel to the provincial administration, which was supervised by the Governors and the Governors-general.[195]

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[192] This position was usually filled by an assistant official from the Surveillance Commissioner's office (*Ancha shisi* 按察使司). The Northern and Southern Metropolitan Areas (*Nanbei zhili* 南北直隸) were exceptions. See the "Waiguan 外官" ("Outer Officials") section under the Board of Personnel chapter in *Daming huidian* 大明會典 (*The Great Ming Administrative Code*), the 1502 version, *juan* 4.

[193] See the "Hanque tuisheng 漢缺推陞" (Recommendation and Promotion of the Han Openings) section under the Board of Personnel chapter in *Daqing huidian* 大清會典 (*The Great Qing Administrative Code*), the 1690 version, *juan* 8. Before 1726, this office was called *Xuedao* 學道 (Education Circuit) in most provinces as opposed to *Tidu xuezheng* 提督學政 (Commissioner for Education Affairs) in Zhili and the Jiangnan areas. There were minor adjustments back and forth during the Kangxi reign.

[194] See the "Waiguan" section under the Board of Personnel chapter and the "Tidu xuezheng" section under the Board of Rites chapter in *Daqing huidian*, the 1732 version, *juan* 5 and *juan* 75. Officially, this was a universal change from *Xuezheng* 學政 to *Xueyuan* 學院. But the phrases *Xuezheng*, *Xueyuan*, *Xuechen* 學臣, *Xuetai* 學臺, etc. were used interchangeably. I loosely translate the pre-reform *Xuezheng* as the "provincial superintendent for education", although the drafters were not strict with terminology in the original text.

[195] A good example is that these officials would have equal status in a ritual scenario, which implies equality in power structure. According to the statutes, "the Education Commissioners should greet the governors-in-general and the governors with the equal-counterpart rite" ("Xuezheng yu Du, Fu xiangjian, yong diti yi. 學政與督、撫相見，用敵體儀。"). See the "Xiangjian li 相見禮" ("Rites of Greeting") section under the Board of Rites chapter in *Qinding Daqing huidian zeli* 欽定大清會典則例

The new selection of candidates was primarily based on academic credentials as opposed to any other indicators of qualifications: Now all of them must either come from the Hanlin Academy or be honored with a corresponding Hanlin title.[196] While in office, the Education Commissioners could enjoy an institutionally "equal status" with the other government branches and use palace memorials to communicate with the emperor. After finishing a three-year tenure, they would lose these privileges unless being assigned to the positions that had such worth.

The Yongzheng emperor favored a meticulously developed web of personal connections over the often-factionalized bureaucratic establishment. The commissioned officials could enjoy an elevated status by being the throne's independent informants. This moment, as I shall discuss below, was transient. When the political environment became less dreadful, the communication privilege extended from the throne became increasingly regularized.[197] Then the rather special appointment of the Education Commissioners had gained merits in its own right. Reigning from 1735, the Qianlong emperor kept the appointment routine alive but used it differently. He saw this position as a good venue to select scholar-officials. Its status and function also shifted accordingly.

The extension of communication privilege had a unique historical context. At the outset of the Yongzheng reign, only a few provincial superintendents of education affairs were allowed to submit secret memorials that could bypass the Office of Transmission (*Tongzheng shi si* 通政使司). This privilege was granted by the emperor in person. When the senior Hanlin compiler Ren

(*Supplementary Statutes and Exemplary Cases of the Great Qing Administrative Code, Imperially Sanctioned*), the 1764 version, *juan* 34. Even though the seeming equivalence did not entirely covert to the actual status nor the political power itself, it greatly boosted the Education Commissioners' prestige in the Qing bureaucracy.

[196] See the "Hanque tuisheng" section under the Board of Personnel chapter in *Daqing huidian*, the 1732 version, *juan* 12.

[197] Silas H. L. Wu argues that the Yongzheng emperor adopted the secret memorial system to better control his officials and thus improve bureaucratic efficiency. See Wu, *Communication and Imperial Control in China: Evolution of the Palace Memorial System, 1693–1735* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 107-123.

Lanzhi 任蘭枝 (1677-1746) walked out of the palace in the winter of 1723 (Yongzheng 1), he knew that he was entrusted with an additional task. Ren's conversation with the new emperor was recorded in the first memorial he wrote after arriving at the Sichuan office.[198] In that conversation, the emperor started with the question of greeting memorials (*qing'an zhezi* 請安折子).[199] He first acknowledged that there was no previous instance of an education official handing in these memorials. Nevertheless, he regarded Ren as a servant of the "inner court".[200] Ren might want to be in the know of the emperor's wellbeing. To ease off this "discomposure", a special arrangement was in effect: Ren obtained the permission of sending someone to directly bring the memorials to the palace, and the emperor would then give them back with assurance.

But as the conversation continued, it turns out that the Yongzheng emperor was not really concerned about receiving greetings. He commented that given the long distance from Sichuan to Beijing, it was inconvenient to frequently send people back and forth. For regular greetings, Ren should simply hand the memorials over to the Governor. The Governor would route them in bundles. If it was about "essential business" ("yaojin shi 要緊事"), however, Ren must send a direct memorial:

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[198] FHA#04-01-30-0125-002.

[199] Scholars have debated on whether or not the greeting memorials represented the origin of the secret memorial system. Silas Wu was a proponent of this argument. See Wu, *Communication and Imperial Control in China*, 36-38. Chuang Chi-fa 莊吉發 opposed Wu's opinion, arguing that the palace memorial system was a continuation of the existing Ming memorial system. See Chuang, *Qingdai zouzhe zhidu* 清代奏摺制度 (The Qing Memorial System) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1979), 20-33. The example I use here was created later than those used by Wu and Chuang. But judging by the emperor's words, it seems like he frequently bundled the two together while giving instructions to the memorialists. Chuang made his argument from the perspective of institutional evolution, which does not necessarily conflict with the Qing emperors' preference of using the greeting memorials as the venue to gather secret reports. I believe there was a strong association between the two.

[200] Ren worked in the *Nanshufang* 南書房 (Southern Studyroom) before this appointment. Therefore, he was a "neiting xingzou de ren 內廷行走的人" ("pedestrian of the inner court") for the emperor.

"When you arrive there, pay close attention to inspecting the reputation of every official: from high to low, from the Governor-general and the Governor to those in the prefectures and in the counties. This is like the idea of establishing a Regional Inspector… You must send someone for this kind of matters. Everything must be careful and confidential. If the lord does not keep the secret, he loses his servant; If the servant does not keep the secret, he loses his life."

"你到那裏，凡大小官員的賢否，督撫至各州縣，俱要留心訪查，就如設立巡按的意思。…此等事，是必要差人來的。凡事須要緘密。君不密，則失臣；臣不密，則失身。"

The conversation ended with a typical Yongzheng threat, emphasizing confidentiality that this mission was all about. This is one of the earliest records in which the provincial superintendent of education was explicitly commissioned with the task of the Regional Inspector (*Xun'an* 巡按). It hence demonstrates the origin of the aforementioned institutional reform. In the following years, a few more officials were given the same job. They served all across China Proper and thus broke the convention of only bestowing such privileges upon the commissioners of pivotal regions. To trace these conversations, the Yongzheng emperor further enhanced the archival procedure. In 1725 (Yongzheng 3), he asked every official who had received edicts in person write the message down in secret memorials. Consequently, several superintendents of provincial education sent in memos to reconfirm their new duties. For example, the education superintendent of Shandong recorded:

"In Shandong, you should not merely teach the examination candidates some writing skills… In the places you travel to, you need to pay attention not only to education affairs but also to everything you hear and see about the pros and cons of governance. Once confirmed, you must submit a memorial. It must be confidential."

"爾到山東，不但教士子做幾篇文字。…所過地方，不但學政事務爾要留心，凡有利弊見聞，既確，俱要啟奏。須密。"[201]

[201] FHA# 04-01-30-0114-008.

Not long after these assignments, the emperor consolidated the office of provincial education affairs into an entirely commission-based system. All the Education Commissioners, regardless of rank and the assigned region, now had a uniform institutional background. Before leaving for the office, an interview with the emperor was mandatory. If being directed, they could use the secret memorials to perform the duties similar to those of the Regional Inspectors.

This adjustment implies a strong association with the malfunction of the censorial branch of the Qing government. In the Ming commission system, the Regional Inspectors were among the most important officials because they represented the surveillance body. The inspectors theoretically carried the weight of the emperor despite the fact that this group was of low ranking (7a), a feature shared with many Education Commissioners in the Qing. They exerted the imperial authority to review all divisions of the local government, including jurisdiction, finance and food, education, ceremonies, and even military.[202] In the event of exposing corruption, they were given considerable jurisdictional power to dictate the subsequent measures.[203] During the Ming-Qing transition, however, this censorial tradition was contested. The new Manchu regime brought its own group of ruling elites, whereas its Censors were filled with Han Chinese of Ming background. The office of Regional Inspectors was established and then abolished three times during the Shunzhi reign (1643-1661). In 1660, the emperor charged the inspectors with corruption, extravagance, irresponsibility, idleness, etc. Then the practice of dispatching inspectors was

[202] See the "Ducha yuan 都察院"("Censorate") section in the *Ming shi* 明史 (The History of the Ming), *juan* 73. Scripta Sinica. For details, see the "Chuxun shiyi 出巡事宜" ("Tasks of Regional Inspection"), "Fu'an tongli 撫按通例" (General Rules for Xunfu and Xun'an), "huidao kaocha 回道考察" ("Evaluation upon Return") sections in *Daming huidian*, *juan* 210-11. Scripta Sinica.

[203] As summarized in the *History of the Ming*, the Regional Inspector could arbitrate "small matters" at his own discretion, and ask for imperial verdict on significant ones ("大事奏裁, 小事立斷"). Ibid. The *Administrative Code* gives an example of this power: Starting from 1542 (Jiajing 21), the inspectors could arrest and try the officials of rank 6a or lower, and write an impeachment memorial against those of 5b and above ("六品以下徑拏, 五品以上參題"). Ibid.

eventually terminated by the succeeding Kangxi administration in 1661.[204] The throne then relied on his close bondservants to monitor the key regions, leaving the rest to the ever-powerful Governors-general and Governors.

Depleted of political power, the censorial positions became rather insignificant in the Qing government. Some Hanlin members, potentially out of career concerns, tried to argue the necessity of reestablishing the Regional Inspector. Shortly after the Yongzheng emperor was enthroned, the junior Hanlin *Jiantao* Li Lan 李蘭 (1692-1736) submitted a memorial that attacked the flawed structure of provincial administration. In Li's opinion, the reason why massive fiscal deficits occurred in the late Kangxi reign was due to the lack of surveillance over the Governors-general and the Governors. He concluded that only restoring the system of Regional Inspection could solve this problem.[205] At the same time, another *Jiantao* Yan Wenzai 嚴文在 (?) suggested a reconciliation between a complete censorial restoration and the lack thereof. He saw the provincial superintendents for education affairs good candidates to carry the surveillance duty. Upon the end of their three-year tenure, they could submit an additional report that evaluates local governance. The Governors-general and the Governors would not be able to cover things up, and thus the government regulations could be enforced without fraud.[206]

Yan's proposal was close enough to the Yongzheng emperor's later reform, yet there was a glaring difference. The Education Commissioners were never entrusted with the formal duty of administrative surveillance. Thus, they did not have censorial power that was comparable to the previous Regional Inspectors. They could neither persecute a subject official nor access the various

[204] See the "gechai jiuli 各差舊例" ("Obsolete Regulations of Various Commissions") section in *Daqing huidian*, the 1690 version, *juan* 147.
[205] FHA#04-01-30-0001-005.
[206] FHA#04-01-30-0413-015.

places for inspection. Their investigation on government misconduct had to be largely based on hearsay, which would be reckless to put in a report that was held accountable. More important, the emperor was undoubtedly aware of this reality as revealed in his subsequent reforms. In the end, the "inspector" job was neither a side hustle nor a nominal title for the Education Commissioners. The emperor purposefully implied it as an insider secret, and it functioned like one.

It is evident that the Yongzheng emperor only intended to make a subtle adjustment. He partly restored the jurisdictional inspection in 1725 (Yongzheng 3).[207] By adding new measures, the defunct Regional Inspection was rejuvenated for a while. This example shows the emperor's interest in a censorial reform itself, which was separate from empowering the Education Commissioners. The latter was deployed in a different context: The emperor chose the lower-ranked Hanlin academicians and granted them the privilege of direct communication while commissioned. Through building rapport, he could gather local information from a relatively independent source. These commissioners supposedly served as an additional means to counterbalance the Governors-general's and the Governors' dominance in the provinces. Given the subtlety of this political setting, this censorial function was only tangible when context applied.[208] A year after the reform, the emperor even invited the Education Commissioners to

[207] See the "Xuncha gesheng 巡查各省" ("Inspecting the Provinces") section under the Censorate chapter in *Daqing huidian*, the 1732 version, *juan* 224. This practice was region-dependent and only in effect for a short period. See entry "Qianlong 05-01-22" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 108.

[208] As shown in the archives, there were plenty of feedbacks and proposals on local situations whereas the investigative charges against provincial officials were very rare. But it is hard to be sure how many of such memorials went to the archives. The Yongzheng emperor once said there was more than "one crate of accusing reports" ("謗書一篋") against Governor-general Yue Zhongqi 岳鐘琪 (1686-1754). See entry "Yongzheng 05-07-03" in the *Shizong xian huangdi shilu*, *juan* 59. If we take this claim literally, the existing archival evidence cannot substantiate it at all.

secretly recommend officials.[209] Such measures were temporary in nature and far from fundamentally altering the established structure.

The Yongzheng emperor eventually backed off on strengthening the Censors. In the long run, his reforms had further concentrated political power both at the imperial center and in the provinces.[210] This legacy was well inherited until the late Qing. Nevertheless, the Education Commissioners did enjoy an elevated status through the reform. This status upgrade was partially derived from the empowerment of secret memorials, which inherently signified a role of surveillance. Another factor of no less importance was this group's regularized association with the Hanlin background, which indicated examination prestige and career prospect.

The latter factor was less contingent on emperorship, and thus had a longer-lasting implication. When the Yongzheng rule ended abruptly in 1735, the Qing empire was left with an increasingly standardized and expanding bureaucracy. The Qianlong emperor continued steadily with imperial activism while worrying less about political insecurity than his father did. The Education Commissioners, now solely outsourced from the Hanlin Academy (and those with a Hanlin title), had henceforth developed a career association with the highest degree-holders.

3.3 ***The Institution of Education Commissionership under the Qianlong Rule***

3.3.1 The Status Conundrum

Commissionership, in its literal sense, suggests having the mandate to a specified mission. It necessarily implies both the authority of asking for cooperation and independence from parallel

[209] Some of these recommendations did have an impact on personnel selection. For instance, the Education Commissioner of Guizhou recommended a censor that he knew of. According to the recommended traits, this censor was then dispatched to the same education office three years later. See FHA#04-01-30-0047-021.

[210] In 1727, a new censorial adjustment made the Governors-general and the Governors the sole agency that handled the capital appeals, a censorial power previously reserved by the Judicial Supervisors. See the "Shangshu chenyan 上書陳言" ("Submission of Opinions and Grievances") section under the Board of Punishment chapter in *Daqing huidian*, the 1732 version, *juan* 164.

government departments. The commissioners' status was contingent on the emperor's delegation of missions, which were not entirely relatable to standard indicators such as rank, office, and regulation codes. The lack of formality and the tacit perception of relative positions often made it subtle. In comparison, subtlety was resisted by regularized government agencies that were dictated by set bundles of protocols and routines. The education office, unlike either situation, ambiguously stayed in between. This section discusses the political status of the Education Commissioners, through which I explain the institutional identity of this group and how the emperor defined its functions in his government.

3.3.1.1 *A Shift of Emphasis*

In Chapter II, I discussed the question of the Hanlin Academy: If a scholar's merit could not meet the requirements of an official, what were the institutional outcomes of this challenge? One of the Qianlong emperor's answers was starting to treat the commissioning activity as a useful venue to observe performance. Therefore, the Office of Education Affairs started to evolve into an evaluation hub for the Hanlin academicians. While retaining the character of the system's initial design, it started to be perceived differently in the bureaucracy. The new commissioners' service in the provinces partly functioned as a post-Hanlin "examination" for those who had already earned the highest degree and gone through training at the Academy. This was especially meaningful for the lower-ranked scholar-officials who had not been promoted to an important administrative position yet. The censorial function, on the other hand, became minimal.

To the Qianlong emperor, this appraisal process was primarily based on two channels of information: His personal evaluation of all the Hanlin and the Censorate members; and the assessment reports from the provinces. This is why several supervisory policies about the

Education Commissioners were installed during the Qianlong period.[211] These measures put the Education Commissioners under the oversight of the Governors-general and the Governors, which further marked the retreat of their censorial role.

An obvious political outcome was that the mission of education affairs gained more weight in its own right. On the one hand, this shift marked a professional attention given to the education office; On the other hand, because of the unique status being the commissioner, this office was desirable as a career choice for the academicians who got stuck in noncritical positions.

3.3.1.2 *"Equal Status" Debunked*

The Education Commissioners' unique status should not be confused with the aforementioned "equal status" with the governing body of the provinces, which the Education Commissioners never actually had. This common misconception stems from the fact that the education branch was independent from the provincial administration. Education affairs were solely delegated to the commissioners, thus indicating an elevated and "parallel" status.

To the Qing government, this institutional arrangement did imply empowerment. Notably, it became the very reason for the abolition of this office during the late Qing reforms. The decision document used language that regarded the Education Commissioners as the "diti 敵體 (equal-counterpart)" to the Governors-general and the Governors. Because of this status, the provincial

[211] The most notable measure was asking the Governors-general and the Governors to independently report the reputation of the Education Commissioners. See Chapter II. Other supervisory policies included reporting the assistant personnel employed by the commissioners, self-report about certain tasks, etc. The Qing government required self-report since the Kangxi reign when the education superintendents needed to claim the absence of "Ten Malpractices" ("Shi bi 十弊") upon leaving the office. See the "Tidu xuezheng" section in *Daqing huidian*, 1690 version, *juan* 51. In the Qianlong reign, more supervisory requirements were added. For example, because several cases involved the misconduct of the commissioner's assistants, the provinces were required to report the number and background of this group. See entries Qianlong 33-10-21, 38-11-28, 39-04-09 in the *Shangyu dang*. Being aware of this issue, some commissioners voluntarily stated the background of their relatives and assistants in palace memorials, e.g., FHA#04-01-38-0079-013. This practice put the commissioned office's extra-governmental body under supervision.

oversight could not easily coordinate education affairs. The late Qing reformers considered the institution of education commissionership a hinderance.[212] But there are problems if the readers of later generations take this statement at face value.

Etymologically, the phrase *diti* is a ritual notion that signals role-based independency in a formal scenario. And it was used as such in the Qing texts.[213] Parallel structure in government is not necessarily a sign of equal status in politics.[214] Moreover, the former feature did not historically come with education commissionership. It was an established norm that existed much earlier.

Institutionally, the supervision of provincial education has an origin in the censorial department. In the Ming system, the education superintendents of the two Metropolitan regions were the Censors (*Yushi* 御史) dispatched by the imperial government, while the rest were mostly from the local judicial office. Installed with special mission, the Censors gained exclusive access to education affairs:

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[212] In 1906 (Guangxu 32), Prince Qing Yikuang 奕劻 (1838-1917) made a Board decision on the abolition of Education Commissioners. The memorial acknowledged that the commissioners had a "relatively high status" ("分位較尊"). They were an "equal-counterpart" to the Governors-general and the Governors, and a "guest official" ("客官") to the local magistrates. Therefore, it was hard to report and coordinate things. See FHA#03-7217-004.

[213] In this particular example, the memorialist was quoting from the Qing *Administrative Code*. See footnote above. This concept has its classical original in the *Yili* 儀禮 (*Etiquette and Ceremonial*) and the *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of Rites*). It describes ritual hierarchies in government, marriage, social settings, etc. For example, on the meaning of "pin 聘 (betrothal)", Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) commentated: "To be betrothed is to (properly) ask. (The meaning of) wife is to say in alignment. To ask (the prospect wife's household) according to the rites, then (the wife) becomes an equal-counterpart of the husband." ("聘，問也。妻之言齊也。以禮則問，則得與夫敵體。"). See the *Neize* 內則 (Family Guidelines) chapter in Yuan Yuan 阮元 et al. collated, *Liji zhushu* 禮記註疏 (Commentary and Exegesis of the Book of Rites), 1815, *juan* 28. In marriage, the wife was ritually an "equal counterpart" to the husband. But judging it from the context of the *Neize* chapter, this agreement is based on the gendered and exclusive roles within family and society rather than the power relations in actual life. The same logic applies to all the texts that directly drew from these ritual classics.

[214] An Dongqiang's recent book takes this reference as the key identifier of "equal" political status and unfortunately builds the entire argument on it. See An, *Qingdai Xuezheng guizhi yu huangquan tizhi*. His point is conceptually mistaken.

All the commissioned education censors are conferred with special imperial mandate in regard to the promotion and demotion of talents. The Grand Coordinators and the Surveillance Commissioners are not allowed to intervene.

凡提學御史，進退人材，奉有專敕。撫、按官，毋得干預。[215]

After the Qing conquest, the new regime continued this practice.[216] A policy was passed by the court in 1652 (Shunzhi 9). It was modeled after the Ming version:

The intendents of education affairs are mandated by the imperial government to supervise schools. The Governors-general, the Governors, the Provincial Treasurers, and the Judicial Supervisors are not allowed to infringe upon their responsibilities.

學政奉敕專督學校。督、撫、布按兩司，不許侵其職掌。[217]

One year later, the selection of Zhili and the Jiangnan education intendents was delegated to the Hanlin Academy instead of the Censorate. Henceforth, the Qing government stopped dispatching Censors to supervise education affairs in these areas.[218] This new policy reconceptualized this position to be less concerned with the censorial-judicial tradition but more about a professional (scholarly) background. It became the precedent of the full-scale reform during the Yongzheng reign.

The censorial origin of the Education Commissioners gave their office the institutional independency from the provincial administration. This tradition was kept and, after the Yongzheng reform, expanded to all the provinces. In principle, education affairs were no longer subordinate to provincial administration until 1906.

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[215] See the "Tixue 提學 (Commission of Education Affairs)" section under the Censorate chapter in *Daming huidian*, *juan* 210.
[216] See the "Gechai jiuli" section in *Daqing huidian*, the 1690 version, *juan* 147.
[217] See the "Xuexiao 學校 (Schools)" section under the Board of Rites chapter in *Daqing huidian zeli*, *juan* 68.
[218] "Gechai jiuli" in *Daqing huidian*, the 1690 version, *juan* 147. The specified rank was *Shidu* 侍讀 and below. See the "Hanque tuisheng" section, *juan* 8.

3.3.1.3 *Understanding Commissionership by Specialization*

Because the Hanlin academicians were commissioned to a well-defined office, it was the functional role in routinized tasks as opposed to unconventional attention from the throne that delineated the Education Commissioners' identity in the long run. This point is crucial to understand the official status of this group.

As discussed above, the Yongzheng emperor gave the Education Commissioners censorial liability but did not turn them into actual censorial functionaries. Although many appointees carried a censor title, the education office only evolved further apart from the censorial branch. The post-reform status of the education office was essentially manifested in two ways: Its authority directly extended from imperial center and its affiliation with the Hanlin Academy. With both characteristics in mind, the office itself performed everyday functions that had little to do with what we recognize as political influencer.

Participance in policy discussions may serve as one identifier of involvement in the Qing officialdom. It is not uncommon to see memorialists discussing matters not directly related to their daily concerns. For instance, an Education Commissioner of Shandong grew up in Southern Fujian and toured in Taiwan; this background was valid enough for him to offer policy advices on those regions.[219] In the Qianlong-era memorials, however, such discussions were not a common practice among the Education Commissioners. They mostly submitted generic reports and wrote on education-related affairs. Touching upon other areas might invite punishment. This was particularly true if sensitive topics, such as military matters, were concerned. An Education Commissioner of Shandong submitted a memorial that discussed the condition of the stationing soldiers. The emperor scolded him and wrote: "Even if what you said is correct, your proposal

[219] FHA#04-01-11-0001-001. Memorialist Li Guang'ao 李光墺 (1671-1739).

should not be considered." Although Qing officials sometimes submitted reports across departments, it was clear that an academician was not supposed to join such discussion. This official's career then stagnated for many years despite a promising start.[220] In another example, when an Education Commissioner of Guizhou bothered the emperor with a lengthy talk on improving the military personnel's Classical training, the emperor removed him from office.[221] In comparison to the other officials of high echelon, the Education Commissioners seldom wrote on subjects other than those of their own field.

This phenomenon brings out a key aspect in regard to the Education Commissioners' status in the Qing government and the political objective behind it. The institutional background of this office was undoubtedly elevated after the Yongzheng reform. But its actual identity had gone through a subtle transformation. If political status by and large depends on what the subject was empowered to influence, the delineation of the Education Commissioner's duties suggests a limited and rather excluded position in the provincial structure. The education office was never given enough political trust and institutional support to fulfill a censorial function despite a theoretical surveillance role. On the contrary, we saw the gradual reduction of its censorial-judicial obligations during the Yongzheng-Qianlong continuum. The magistrates' dealing with the licentiates was no longer hindered by the degree-deprival procedure. The Education Commissioners themselves were put under the oversight of the Governors-general and the Governors, despite the fact that they no longer had official affiliation and were technically "parallel". Over the course of the Qianlong-era institutional development, the throne was cautious to empower the Education Commissioners outside of their routine. This routine concretized the political perception of this office and serves as the key identifier of what the throne intended to

[220] FHA#04-01-01-0176-058 and FHA#04-01-12-0069-036. Submitted in 1749 (Qianlong 14).
[221] FHA#04-01-38-0074-033 and entry "Qianlong 25-10-01" in the *Shangyu dang*.

utilize it in governance. In other words, it was the deliberate assignment as opposed to the added prestige that explains the institutional attention and most defined this group in the Qing government.

To further elaborate this point, I shall temporarily go back to the topic of greeting memorials. The Yongzheng emperor started off with allowing greeting memorials as a communication privilege, and he later formalized this privilege within the entire Education Commissioner group. But as aforementioned, the actual intention behind it was expanding the throne's sources of information in the format of secret reports. Greeting memorial itself was not the focal point and never routinized for this group. Being a special genre, it still represented a fundamentally rank-based privilege. Among civil officials, for example, only Judicial Supervisors (rank 3a) and above were allowed to submit greeting memorials to celebrate the New Year and the other festive dates.[222] Most Education Commissioners did not carry a designated rank and was therefore excluded from the celebration crowd. If this was the reason, how did the Qing state reconcile with all the privileges that this office was given after the Yongzheng reform?

In 1751 (Qianlong 16), a memorial by the Education Commissioner of Hubei raised such a question. The memorialist argued for the same treatment when submitting greeting memorials like the other high officials. He contended that the official status of the Education Commissioners had changed since the fourth year of the Yongzheng reign, citing the fact that commissioned officials became eligible to submit memorials by themselves instead of delegating the task to the Governors-general and the Governors. He then asked: If the Education Commissioners' "institutional status (tizhi 體制)" only follows after that of the Governors-general and the

[222] See the Kangxi 55 entry in the "*Jinbiao* 進表" ("Submission of Greeting Memorials") section under the Board of Rites chapter in the *Daqing huidian zeli*, the 1764 version, *juan* 63. This rule ceased to apply after 1753 (Qianlong 18).

Governors, why are they not even allowed to submit greeting papers along with the (lower-ranked) Judicial Supervisors and the Provincial Treasurers? Moreover, those who are commissioned will be granted another "post opening (kaique 開缺)" after their service. Even those who are rank 3 and above may be reallocated to a new position. Is the Education Commissioner not already a "primary occupation (benzhi 本職)" despite the fact of "being commissioned (fengchai 奉差)"?[223]

This memorial presents a confusion about status, which puzzled Qing officials twenty-five years after the Yongzheng reform and scholars of later generations alike. On the one hand, because of the codified "equal-counterpart" status, the memorialist perceived his office only next to those of the Governors-general and the Governors; On the other hand, the imperial institution did not provide him the traditional prestige of what he perceived as the sub-Governor officials had attained. If the system fundamentally operated on formalized hierarchy, this arrangement was understandable given every Education Commissioner carried his original rank and titles. In actual practice, however, many commissioners had those reallocated because they were no longer physically in the original office. In this case, were they just being commissioned, or was Education Affairs closer to a regular occupation? If it was such an occupation, why did not the government adapt it to the hierarchical principle and offer uniformity? Confused by the ostensible inconsistency, the memorialist concluded with a criticism: This arrangement seems "lacking ritual appropriacy (yuli youque 於禮有缺)".

This criticism was not unfounded, although the Qing state viewed it differently. In 1749 (Qianlong 14), the Education Commissioner of Guangxi had his original post removed but was not assigned a new one. He wrote a memorial to the emperor, stating that the Education

[223] FHA#04-01-14-0025-015. Memorialist Ge Derun 葛德潤 (1702-1771). Ge was a 5b Circuit Censor when he was commissioned.

Commissioners were "out on duty bearing their own titles (zuoxian chuchai 坐銜出差)". There should be no commissioner whose actual occupation was commissioner. For this reason, he perceived himself as "a person of no occupation (wuzhi zhi ren 無職之人)" and commented that it was "not appropriate (buyi 不宜)".[224] Contrariwise, the emperor did not acknowledge this claim, censuring the act for disrespecting personnel decision procedure. This commissioner was thus accused of abusing his memorial privilege. Instead of getting assigned a new title as requested, he was dismissed.[225] Hence, both the emperor and the Board of Personnel did not seem to consider it necessary for the commissioners to carry their original titles while on duty (although they usually carried them). This attitude did logically make Education Commissioner a "primary occupation", echoing with the aforementioned commissioner's critique on the ritual connotation of the officials' ceremonial entitlement.

Nevertheless, it is very clear that Education Commissioner was not the kind of primary occupation like the other provincial officials. In another case, the Education Commissioner of Henan was denounced for placing "Tidu Henan xuezheng 提督河南學政 (Commissioned Supervisor of Education Affairs in Henan)" in front of his original title.[226] It reaffirms that the government conceptually regarded an Education Commissioner's original titles as primary, and that it treated the formal sequence of official titles seriously. Of course, a "primary occupation" judged by actual service does not necessarily come into conflict with nominal designation. The issue presented here is the respective party's perception of this special group.

[224] FHA#04-01-38-0067-020. Memorialist Hu Zhongzao 胡中藻 (1712-1755).
[225] FHA#02-01-03-04758-005. Board Decision by the Board of Personnel.
[226] FHA#02-01-05-22947-005. Memorialist Lu Mingkai 盧明楷 (1702-1766).

To the court secretaries and the Board discussants, the state of office appeared to be a matter of format; To the emperor, it was presumably about political priority and individual context; To the Education Commissioners, it led to institutional identity. Their disqualification for festive greetings indicates the humble profile of Hanlin academicians, which, as a background denominator, explains why the temporary authorization for education affairs had not offered a "whole package" that was equal to the perceived parallel offices. In particular, the mechanistic notion of a flanker office to the provincial administration was false. Different from most of the other commissioners, the Education Commissioners inherited a professional office that was previously under provincial administration. The Qianlong emperor's indifference to "rectifying the names", such as dismissing the absence of the original titles, denotes his lack of interest in the separation of commissioned capital official and local functionary commissioned from the capital. The latter downplays the commissioners' institutional background, which was cognate with the associated empowerment by the central government. The Education Commissioners' confusion about "primary occupation" was an outcome of this incongruity.

The emperor thus put this office between sent-down highbrows and the provincial carriers of relevant duties, although there was no structural adjustment that decisively catered to either vision. The Education Commissioners had to go along with their rather obscure character. Aside from the prescribed obligations, the relevance of their work was determined by the emperor according to his felt priority. Sun Renlong 孫人龍 (?), the Education Commissioner of Zhaogao, Guangdong between 1744 (Qianlong 9) and 1747 (Qianlong 12), was active in the dissemination of state-compiled books.[227] In 1745 (Qianlong 10), Sun wrote three memorials on this subject and received

[227] The province of Guangdong once held two Education Commissioner's offices, namely Zhaogao 肇高 and Guangshao 廣韶, between 1729 (Yongzheng 7) and 1751 (Qianlong 16). Upon the Education

three different responses. These responses are examples demarcating the boundaries of the Education Commissioners' work.

Sun's first memorial provocatively requested wide and permanent distribution of the Chinese version of the five *Shengxun* 聖訓 (Sacred Teachings). Unlike the *Shengyu guangxun* 聖諭廣訓 (Amplification of the Sixteen Sacred Edicts), which was lectured from village to village, the *Shengxun* were collections of each late emperor's edicts as a reference for the reigning emperor's rule. Hence, the Qianlong emperor sensitively rejected this proposal. He remarked: "The Sacred Teachings are indispensable for governance but irrelevant to the education offices."[228] At this moment, the Qing government had compiled a series of Classical commentaries and actively promulgated their empire-wide circulation.[229] Therefore, in the second proposal, Sun went back to these compilations and mentioned the difficulties in delivering the books to the remote areas. He suggested that the Provincial Treasurers ought to facilitate printing and transportation. However, this measure would require additional investment; and the emperor deemed it non-urgent.[230] The third memorial reported the Qualifying Examination (*keshi* 科試) results in which Sun saw the students' desired progress after the distribution of the imperial commentaries. Seeing that the government could not cover all the costs as requested, Sun self-funded some of the transportation expenses. The emperor confirmed his endeavor.[231]

These memorials typically represent discussions of different nature: The first one was a novel petition that significantly redesigned the purpose of a political tool; The second one raised a

Commissioner of Zhaogao Cheng Yan 程巖's report, the two were reincorporated into a single Guangdong office. See FHA#04-01-38-0182-015; 02-01-03-04862-013.

[228] FHA#04-01-38-0023-025.

[229] Detailed discussion in Chapter IV.

[230] FHA#04-01-38-0023-026.

[231] FHA#04-01-38-0023-032.

technical problem, a solution of which would demand extra administrative and fiscal resources; The last one offered a summary of accomplishments per the existing policy of education affairs, mixed with a dose of the memorialist's savvy reference to his engagement in the story. Most often, the emperor would say no to proposals of the first category, set the second one aside with reservations, and acknowledge the third one.

These interactions not only inform us what were politically commendable. They also provide a context for the contingent autonomy of the Education Commissioners. As shown in the above examples, there was often a jarring gap between a directive and its implementation. The education office had to improvise (such as self-fund) upon many restrictions, despite that the existing guideline inherently demanded institutional attention and support. More power resided in the emperor's real-time concerns on top of the given framework. An Education Commissioner must be congruent to those concerns in order to fulfill his work. Beyond the prescribed duties and the assigned tasks, his elevated status did not lead to further empowerment. Different from the other provincial officials, he had to follow one constantly updated workbook *Xuezheng quanshu* 學政全書 (The Compendium of Education Affairs) as the everyday guide. His connection with local government and society was also limited. Using palace memorials, which were not available to them before the Yongzheng reform, he could appeal for the authorization of a new policy. Whether the emperor gave a verdict or circled it to the Board, the Education Commissioner was not in an autonomous position as policy maker nor as carrier. To carry out a project that asked more than personal resourcefulness, even the most active Education Commissioner would have to rely on the

emperor's discretion. His exertion of power was more limited than the other high officials in the province.[232]

The key differentiator between the two status groups was the way in which the imperial government conceptualized the commissioned offices. In 1769 (Qianlong 34), over a criminal case of school instructor in Yunnan, the emperor punished two Education Commissioners who served there. Meanwhile, he spared the other top officials of provincial oversight. In defense of his legal reasoning, the emperor argued that the Governor-general, the Governor, the Treasurer, and the Judicial Supervisor were "high officials overseeing regional governance (統轄大員)". The Education Commissioners, according to the emperor, were "specialized officials in charge of inspection (專管稽查)". Hence, they were directly liable for letting such offenses happen.[233] From this statement, it is clear that the Education Commissioners were perceived by the throne as a particular kind of censors. The latter by no means considered this group a part of the regional governing body. While maintaining a stronger connection with the imperial center, the office was categorically positioned within the basket of education affairs. Further empowerment always depended on the emperor's volition and discretion.

3.3.2 The Agency of the Education Office in Provincial Governance

The Education Commissioners were nominally independent from the provincial administration. In actual political setting, the Qianlong emperor tacitly placed the education office under the provincial surveillance structure. Because of their connection with literary production as Hanlin compilers and with the lettered populace as educator, the Education Commissioners were put under

[232] The Education Commissioners after the Qianlong era arguably gained more autonomy because of the shift of emperorship. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849), Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909), etc. were powerful examples. More on this topic in the Epilogue.
[233] Entry "Qianlong 34-12-09" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 848.

oversight for related activities. For example, a person in Hunan delivered a book to the commissioner office in 1785. The commissioner did not immediately report this suspicious activity. Hearing it from another source, the emperor soon sent an inquiry. The commissioner was potentially held accountable for not reporting it in time.[234]

But unlike it once seemed to be under the Yongzheng rule, not all parties involved were mutually liable. The Education Commissioners were constantly checked by the Governors-general and the Governors who were responsible for reporting their performance, reputation, and examination fairness. The provincial administration also continued to provide most resolutions for the policy questions in which local affairs were involved. As a general guideline, the Education Commissioners should consult with the Governors-general and the Governors for any policy proposals.[235] In practice, the emperor often did not choose to pass a proposal to the Board or decide by himself. He would sometimes send it back and let the memorialist consult with the Governor of his province.[236] Or he would reassign the task to the Governor directly.[237]

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[234] FHA#03-1432-004.

[235] As the drafters of the *Qingshi gao* wrote, "If there were initiatives and reform proposals, (the commissioners should) meet with the Governors-general and the Governors for implementation. (凡有興革，會督、撫行之)". See "Xuezheng 學政" in *Qingshi gao*, *juan* 116. In the existing archives, a fair amount of the vermillion rescripts can confirmed this procedure. For example, in 1748 (Qianlong 13), the emperor told the Education Commissioner of Shandong to "consult everything with the Governor (凡事與撫臣相商)". See FHA#04-01-12-0062-085.

[236] For example, when the Education Commissioner of Henan planned to be strict on the use of poetry in the preliminary examinations in 1766, the emperor let him consult with the Governor instead of making a decision himself. See FHA#04-01-38-0079-028. Later, the emperor received a formal response from the Governor of Henan. See FHA#04-01-38-0080-001. This topic was entirely examination-related; however, it was the Governor instead of the Education Commissioner who made the final verdict for the emperor.

[237] For example, the Education Commissioner of Fujian proposed a plan for budget reduction on examination shed (*kaopeng* 考棚) renovations. The emperor let him pass this proposal to the Governor, who blocked it. See FHA#04-01-16-0020-028 and entry "Qianlong 10-04-29" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 239. In this particular case, it was an understandable decision given the funding likely came from the provincial treasury.

The Education Commissioners still served as an eye for the throne.[238] But in case the Education Commissioner bypassed the Governor or put the Governor in a questionable position, the emperor usually ruled in favor of the Governor. In 1744 (Qianlong 9), a military licentiate (*wusheng* 武生) in Fujian blocked a county magistrate's office over a criminal dispute. The Governor reported this case to the emperor, who brought up the Education Commissioner's liability for licentiate offenses.[239] Hearing the edict, the commissioner submitted a memorial of self-denunciation before the Governor had reached a judicial decision. Allegedly, he had this idea per the advice of the Governor.[240] But the emperor deemed this act despicable for two reasons. He thought the commissioner was trying to get away from punishment by turning himself in first; And in doing so, the commissioner made the Governor look inadequate in front of the throne.[241] The commissioner's sequent report against the local education instructors did not help with the situation.[242] Eventually, he was removed from office.[243] In this particular case, the emperor copied the corresponding Governor with the Education Commissioner's original memorial and the rescripts.[244] This practice openly defies the purpose of extending the privilege of "secret memorial" to the Education Commissioners, making the readers reconsider the positions of the emperor and the Governor.

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[238] Under the Qianlong rule, the Education Commissioner should still pay attention to local governance while not intervene any ("地方事務例不干涉，然亦留心采訪"). See FHA#04-01-12-0062-085.
[239] Entry "Qianlong 09-06-14" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 218.
[240] A much later source states that the Governor tried to convince him, but he refused to do so. It contradicts with the archival findings. See the biography for Wu Huasun 吳華孫 (?) in *Chongxiu Anhui tongzhi* 重修安徽通志 (General Gazetteer of Anhui, Revised Edition), the 1878 version, *juan* 187.
[241] FHA#04-01-00-1380-037. Memorialist Wu Huasun.
[242] FHA#02-01-03-4266-007.
[243] FHA#02-01-03-4267-005.
[244] FHA#04-01-00-1380-037.

In another instance, the Education Commissioner of Shaanxi wrote about the underperformance of the Governor in a drought.[245] The Qianlong emperor openly disclosed the memorialist, forwarded this secret memorial to relevant officials, and accused this commissioner "eager for fame and willing to buy righteous recognition (haoming guzhi 好名沽直)".[246] As a lasting legacy of the Qianlong institution, the same attitude was inherited by the succeeding emperors. For example, in 1799 (Jiaqing 4), the Education Commissioner of Shanxi reported upon the reputation of the Governor and the Provincial Treasurer. The vermillion rescripts reads: "How is it possible for me not to trust high officials like the Governor and the Provincial Treasurer but to believe a scholar's piece of paper?"[247] These stories indicate the emperor's perception of the Education Commissioners' vulnerable position to the provincial oversight regardless of what the regulation codes said otherwise. For this reason, the Education Commissioners rarely performed the censorial function. This part of the Yongzheng tradition ceased to play into politics.

In the meantime, a part of the Education Commissioners' judicial right over degree-holders was transferred to the local administration. The handling of licentiate offenses is a representative example. The Qing regime was sensitive to licentiate offenses from the outset, and the Qianlong emperor continued disciplining this group and took a tough stance against the offenders.[248] In this process, some of the Education Commissioners' judicial obligations were assumed by the local magistrates. Traditionally, if a degree-holder was involved, the magistrate must get the approval of the Education Commissioner before hearing a case of light offense. For instance, the licentiate

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[245] FHA#04-01-01-0150-009. Memorialist Hu Zhongzao 胡中藻 (1712-1755).

[246] Entry "Qianlong 12-12-13" in the *Gaozong chun Huangdi shilu*, *juan* 304.

[247] FHA#04-01-13-0118-001. Memorialist Mo Jin 莫晉 (?). More on this topic in the Epilogue.

[248] The number of lower degree-holders rose steadily during the Qing and keeping them in line had always been a challenge to the government. For general information of the Qing control of the licentiates, see Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 228-237.

who assisted with litigation on behalf of the others was subject to trial. But before the trial, he must be deprived of the licentiate degree first, and this deprival process was handled by the Education Commissioner.[249] Starting from 1736 (Qianlong 1), this legal procedure was replaced by going through the trial first.[250] The official explanation was that it would be unfair if the licentiate's degree was deprived before the case was clear at the local yamen. But by taking this procedure away from the Education Commissioners, the Qing government actually removed an essential part of the licentiates' legal privileges and debased them closer to the rest of its subjects. The Education Commissioners still reserved the right of degree deprival, but their exclusive role to the lettered population became limited.

This new rule presumably hurt the "dignity of the literati". For example, the renowned ritual scholar Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717-1796) thought it was an abasement of the licentiate status. In the second year of his term as the Education Commissioner of Hunan, Lu wrote a list of policy suggestions to the emperor. In the memorial, he complained that it was unseemly for the local magistrates to punish a licentiate without briefing the case to the Education Commissioner first. Moreover, the local schools should be integrated into the judicial infrastructure: If a commoner sued a literatus (*minren kong shi* 民人控士), the school instructor should take responsibility and show up in the trial.[251] Disagreeing with every single point in this memorial, the emperor removed Lu from office. In the emperor's eyes, this was a typical act of "selling favor for reputation" (*shi'en yaoyu* 市恩邀譽). The local magistrates' punishment of licentiate suspects was necessary as it sent

[249] See entry "Yongzheng 5" under the "Zhengchi shixi 整飭士習" (Disciplining the Degree-holders' Habits) section in the *Qinding Xuezheng quanshu* 欽定學政全書 (The Complete Guidebook for Education Affairs, Imperially Sanctioned), the 1812 version, *juan* 7.
[250] Entry "Qianlong 1", ibid.
[251] FHA#03-1190-019.

alerts to the rest of their kind. Going easy on the licentiates, on the other hand, would open the door for degree abuses (*shifu zishi* 恃符滋事). As to inviting school instructors to judicial service, it would let the educators interfere with administration. The emperor concluded that given Lu Wenchao's erroneous ideas, he was no longer suitable for the Education Commissioner's job.[252]

Those who supported the emperor's stance were welcomed. In another example, the Education Commissioner of Guizhou tried to simplify the procedure of detaining licentiates. He discussed the problem of licentiate migration and its impact on judicial procedure. In the event of investigation, the licentiates must be firstly called in by their school of registry upon the magistrate's request. However, the licentiate suspect's residence and school of registry were often not in the same administrative area. Paperwork went back and forth, which had generated extra time and cost. The commissioner proposed that the local authorities should be able to call in and detain licentiates without going through the educator's office. The emperor commented that this issue presented a bad practice in the provinces (*waisheng e'xi* 外省惡習). Then he happily accepted this proposal and established it as a rule.[253]

Both examples further suggest the Qianlong emperor's will of minimizing the licentiates' legal privileges and releasing more power previously reserved by the education branch to the local administration. For the Education Commissioners, the ceded part included their right to decide the degree status of a licentiate by reviewing the magistrate's case. It was essentially censorial-judicial power. With it removed, the education office had left few obligations that still interfered with the administrators. Consequently, the boundaries of "education affairs" became more defined.

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[252] Entry "Qianlong 32-12-16" in *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 801.

[253] FHA#04-01-38-0087-005. Memorialist Sun Shiyi 孫士毅 (1720-1796). This rule probably only applied locally after 1773 (Qianlong 38) as I did not find other references that can confirm permanent legislation.

3.3.3 On Ideological Targeting

The post-reform realignment of the education office closely tied its autonomy with emperorship. Under the Qianlong rule, the throne's unique attention on literary achievements had projected beyond the imperial center (Chapter IV). The Education Commissioners thereby catered to this political interest. Their massive engagement with the imperial initiative marks a noteworthy development of the office during this era.

This phenomenon was firstly encouraged by the Qianlong Emperor's gestures. The emperor's gifting practice, for example, was fundamentally rank- or pedigree-based. For the commissioners, only those who carried higher ranks could receive gifts from the emperor.[254] At the beginning of his reign, for instance, the Qianlong emperor sent his newly printed anthology *Leshan tang quanji* 樂善堂全集 (Complete Collection of the Leshan Hall) to a group of officials. The list of recipients included Zhang Tinglu 張廷璐 (1675-1745), the Education Commissioner of Jiangsu.[255] Zhang received a copy because he was a 2b-ranked official, and his original position was the vice minister of the Board of Rites. By virtue of this background, he was entitled to receiving such gifts.[256] In contrast, most of the other Education Commissioners whose ranks were lower were not able to get a copy. On this occasion, gifting books was no different from gifting other objects. From the ritual perspective, it was warranted to match gifts with the hierarchical eligibility of the recipients.

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[254] This group primarily included those who were commissioned to Zhili and the Jiangnan provinces. In the *Administrative Code*, their ranks should be between 6b and 4b. For the other provinces, the candidates should be selected from *Langzhong* 郎中 (5a), senior *Bianxiu* (7a), and senior *Jiantao* (7b). In 1742, a sub-statute was added for the direct appointments from lower-ranked departments. See the "*quanzheng* 銓政" ("Evaluation of Government") section under the Board of Personnel chapter in the *Daqing huidian zeli*, *juan* 5. In reality, the Education Commissioners of Zhili and Jiangsu often ranked 2b if not higher (with some exceptions). It means that their rank was on par with the Governors. Exceptions also applied to the other provinces.

[255] FHA#04-01-12-0008-041. The year was 1737 (Qianlong 2).

[256] For details, see Chapter II.

But this practice soon started to welcome exceptions among the Education Commissioners. In the next year (1738), a lower-ranked Education Commissioner had access to two of the emperor's works at the Governor-in-general's office. He then wrote a memorial to express how he was enamored of the divine words, and that he wanted copies for himself. Surprisingly, the emperor allowed supplemental delivery of these books to this 5b official.[257] By extending imperial grace per request, he broke with the aforementioned convention that strictly tied gifts with eligibility. This is an early example of gifting books to an extended circle of officials, although the precedent was never codified. In later development, the emperor went beyond permission-upon-request. He would initiate sending book to the designated Education Commissioners regardless of their original title and rank.[258]

This example contrasts with the handling of a different office around the same time. In 1740 (Qianlong 5), the Salt Commissioner of Hedong (*Hedong yanzheng* 河東鹽政) made a similar request to the emperor.[259] In the memorial, he listed the occasions when he received books in the past and mentioned that it was conventional for all capital officials whose ranks were 4b and above to obtain a copy from the court. For this reason, he argued that he should be included in the quota for the distribution of the late Yongzheng emperor's anthology. But the emperor denied his

[257] FHA#04-01-38-0002-027. The rescript says "Read (with no objection)". Memorialist Zou Yigui 鄒一桂 (1686-1772), the Education Commissioner of Guizhou. Zou was a Circuit Censor of Yunnan (5b) when commissioned.

[258] From the FHA records, this practice became more frequent in later Qianlong reign. E.g., several of the emperor's own essays and poems (*Ni Bai Juyi xinyuefu* 擬白居易新樂府, *Guxi shuo* 古稀說, etc.) were group-sent to all Education Commissioners between 1780 and 1782; Then *Shigu wen* 石鼓文, *Jingqing weizhuo shitu* 涇清渭濁詩圖, etc. between 1790 and 1791; etc.

[259] The Salt Commissioner of Hedong supervised the delegated salt production, transportation, distribution, and taxation in Shanxi and parts of Shaanxi and Henan. See "*Shihuo* 食貨 (On Food and Commerce)" in the *Qing shigao*, *juan* 123 of the *Zhi* 志 (Treatises).

eligibility of receiving this book.[260] While the reason of rejection was not specified, this anthology was given to the Education Commissioners including those who had lower ranks.[261] To rephrase Shakespeare's words, it constituted a custom more honored in the breach than the observance. The rationale behind this seeming distinction was not based on the conventional eligibility; It more likely took the function of the office into consideration. Apparently, the imperial anthologies were not just items for display. An Education Commissioner of Fujian wrote:

> Every time I visited an examination shed… I instructed the school instructors to studiously teach the schools' respectfully stored imperial anthologies at the monthly lectures so that the students learn the most proper presentation of literary style.
>
> 每至一棚…令各學教官於月課時將學宮尊藏御製詩文集與士子細心講讀，俾識斯文之正。[262]

It is hard to verify whether these Education Commissioners voluntarily instructed the teaching of the emperors' anthologies following the event, or they were directed to do so per the release of these copies. In either case, the throne's choice of distinction had spoken for itself. It is tenable to believe that the delivery of these books at least hinted their use for the recipient officials and the office. There is an inherent difference that separates books from the other gifts: Beyond materiality, books have intellectual properties that transmit ideas. Hence, there was an ideological function added to the material object. The emperor's gifting practice shows his awareness of this function. Moreover, his awareness had allowed exceptions to conventional criteria.

These exceptions attest the linkage between education affairs and the ideological side of the Qianlong emperorship. In the event of an exception, the gifting behavior was not to state the

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[260] FHA#04-01-12-0018-082. Memorialist Dingzhu 定柱 (?). He carried the title of Assistant Vice Censor-in-chief (Qian duyushi 僉都御史), rank 4a. The convention that he mentioned cannot be verified by the *Administrative Code* and the other relevant government books.

[261] E.g., The Education Commissioner of Hubei Zhang Yingchen 張映辰 (1712-1763) was among the recipients. See FHA#02-02-012-00839-033. Zhang was a 5b *Shijiang* when commissioned. See FHA#02-01-003-03610-015.

[262] FHA#04-01-38-0089-034. Memorialist Ji Mengxiong 吉夢熊 (1721-1794).

political entitlement of the officials receiving the items. Rather, it was related to fulfilling the mission those officials carried. The emperor thus chose function in lieu of the ritual/ceremonial standpoint so as to compensate his motive of spreading certain texts. As a result of this practice, the Education Commissioners received unique attention from the throne. Per the existing archival reports, many of them dutifully promulgated books and directives issued by the imperial center. This subject shall be further discussed in the following chapters.

3.3.4 Summary

To conclude, the Education Commissioners had subtly gone through institutional adaptation and status realignment long after the Yongzheng reform of 1726. Under the umbrella of commissionership, these Hanlin academicians were temporarily elevated to the upper echelon of the provincial officialdom. As a matter of nominal structure, the commissioners learned that their institutional status was on par with the provincial leadership. But it was obscure in the actual scenario. The commissioners were largely excluded from the rank-based ceremonies and honorary subsidies. Their performance was also evaluated by the provincial oversight. In the end, it is more accurate to say that this group of officials were chosen from a professional background (academicians as heads of the education office) to carry out a regularized mission. Those non-routinized considerations and duties, if applicable, were results of the throne's attention, a specific commissioner's dedication, or the combination of both.

Because an individual Education Commissioner's leeway of power with education policy was limited, the throne's attention was decisive to anything significant. As political priority went, it was manifested in several ways. The Yongzheng emperor first empowered this group with a censorial identity. Never being formalized, the censorial component quickly withered away after the new emperor came to power. Under the Qianlong rule, the boundaries of the education office

became increasingly defined alongside institutional regularization. The emperor deemed this office instrumental for evaluating the Hanlin scholars' prospect of becoming capable administrators; These academicians also found it a desirable venue to build up career credential.

The institution of education affairs was available to the emperor no less as an ideological intermediary than a tool of everyday governance. The commissioners' routines and everyday functions were not inherently different from the pre-reform ones. Nevertheless, with the Education Commissioners' political status explicated, we see that the emperor was much more informed in the performance of the education office because of the new relationship being forged. The two were consequently able to implement literary policies at nuanced level. To this end, the Qianlong emperor's "intern project" worked together with his ideological undertakings.

From the "intern" perspective, the Education Commissioners' limited involvement in local governance was purposeful in the sense that they were soaked in the bubble of education affairs without administrative consequences. Their itinerary tours were as meaningful to the emperor as to themselves as a source of independent observation, which could be conductive to handling magistrate's works. This experience was additionally helpful in the facilitation of the education office. As presented in chapters IV and V, the individual commissioner's bureaucratic resourcefulness was crucial in the successful execution of the throne's literary policies and campaigns.

Since the Qianlong government saliently invested in the rule of textual propagation, the Education Commissioners were naturally mandated to play an important role. They had engaged in active promulgation and policy discussions in regard to Classical commentaries, imperial anthologies, the rectification of literary style, and the moral indoctrination of local communities. These activities will constitute the themes of the following chapters.

Chapter IV: The Qianlong Moment of Literary Interests

Among many inquiry-inviting activities conducted by the eighteenth-century Qing state, I find the prolificacy of court-led compilations during the Qianlong era puzzling.[263] These projects were sponsored by the emperor, staffed by literary officials, organized case-by-case in temporary bureaus, and published by designated agencies in the name of the court. They were then disseminated across the empire, either to a selective circle of individual officials or institutions for general purposes. This effort differs from the earlier ones in two major ways. First, the sheer quantity of completed projects is much larger than any preceding period (and those afterwards) in the Qing; Second, the agency that carried out the missions switched from occasional workshops at random locations to the imperial court. Despite some descriptive accounts, the driving forces behind these phenomena have not been thoroughly studied. This chapter is thus dedicated to a history of literary projects at the Qianlong court.[264]

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[263] In this study, the "imperial court" physically overlaps with the "central government" of the Qing but conceptually focuses upon the organic functionaries centering around the emperor's exercises of power. For one thing, it is distinguishable from the traditional "outer court", which often refers to the clearly defined but politically depleted Grand Secretariat and the Six Boards. On the flip side, it is more than a masking word for the individual emperor and his "inner" agencies that procedurally transcribe rescripts. It seems like this concept lacks definitive boundaries and yet is ubiquitously adopted. To address this issue (instead of discarding the word), I position the Qianlong "court" in the following dimensions: a) Physically, it shares the same space of the central government where/when the emperor and his deputies are present; b) Institutionally, it includes a dynamic apparatus of political organs that functioned close to the emperor's command, delegation, and surveillance; c) Politically, it is the embodiment of the emperor along with his symbolic representation of the empire; d) Functionally, it is the totality of imperial authorities whose spectrum (contingent on the context) ranges from the throne to the individuals/objects representing imperial power. I hope these attributes help the readers understand the analytical differences between the "court" and the individual emperor or specific agencies. The merit of making such a distinction is to satisfy the need of having a collective term that emphasizes the interrelated and dynamic nature of the enablers involved in political activities. While state/government/dynasty/empire (which all differ in institutional and historical contexts) could serve a similar purpose, they do not necessarily imply a "center" and a relatively confined group of agencies.

[264] In this study, phrases like "literary project", "book compilation", and "textual production" are used interchangeably. The word "literary" does not necessarily denote its narrower meaning, which only refers to the artistic use of written language.

The first part of this chapter is on explaining the differences between Qianlong's projects and his forefathers' (especially Kangxi's). I shall give a summary of what these projects were about and then analyze the reasons why they were politically and institutionally different from the prior ones. Next, I move on to the organizational details. I situate the compilers in the bureaucratic system in which their credentials were evaluated, and their careers were affected.

The emperor's utilitarian and non-Classicist preference in official selection does not mean that Classical learning had stayed away from political life. Instead of slipping into a field where scholars shared their fandom with topics that were no longer deemed relevant to governance, Confucianism as the state ideology had further entangled with imperial power in court-sponsored, avid, purposeful compilation projects and dissemination efforts. Most literati of the empire were covered in this ambitious process. These activities will be addressed in the latter half of this chapter.

4.1 ***Textual Projects at the Qianlong Court***

4.1.1 A Summary of Court-led Textual Productions in the Eighteenth Century

Throughout the Qianlong reign, the Book Compilation Office (*Xiushu chu* 修書處) at the Hall of Martial Valor (*Wuying dian* 武英殿) had been commissioned to print up to more than four hundred kinds of books.[265] This amount occupies more than sixty percent of the office's total number of productions in the dynasty.[266] The annual production also reflects more earnest

[265] The Book Compilation Office was primarily a proofreading, crafting, and printing agency. Actual compilation work was often organized in other bureaus. See Yuliang Yang 楊玉良, "Wuying dian xiushu chu ji neifu xiushu ge guan 武英殿修書處及內府修書各館," *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊, no. 1 (1990): 38.

[266] For the most recent figures, see Xuan Xiang 項旋, "Qingdai Wuying dian xiushu chu yanjiu 清代武英殿修書處研究" (PhD diss., Renmin University, 2017), 51, 400-422. An earlier survey states an estimated number of 350, see Gugong bowuyuan tushuguan 故宮博物院圖書館 and Liaoning sheng tushuguan 遼寧省圖書館, ed., *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti* 清代內府刻書目錄解題 (Beijing: Zijincheng

dedication in the Qianlong era.[267] Although there are discrepancies in scholars' statistics, the general picture is not distorted.[268] It clearly indicates that the Qianlong emperor and his literary officials had a greater interest in compiling books than those of any other era.

The Hall of Martial Valor was admittedly not the only place where imperial publications took place in the Qing. Its subordinate printing office, the Book Compilation Office, was founded in the early Kangxi reign when many "imperially commissioned" books were not produced and printed at the court.[269] Despite the longest reign length, only a total number of a hundred and three imperial projects were commissioned or accepted by the Kangxi court. Ninety-one of them were

chubanshe 紫禁城出版社, 1995), 532. It is important to understand that all studies are based on the existing books instead of the historically catalogued ones. In addition to new findings, cataloguing criteria lead to different calculation results. For example, Xiang's data excluded books not printed by the Book Compilation Office. Meanwhile, he treated every catalogued title as a separate data point (which is a standard practice for bibliography scholars).

[267] According to Xiang's statistics, the annual production (divided by reign length) was nearly seven books in the Qianlong period. By contrast, the other periods show much less commitment (from 0.48 to 4.53 books annually). See pages 50-53. The exact number varies depending on the criteria of cataloguing. The compilers of *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti* would propose 5.83 products per year for the Qianlong reign versus 3.4 products per year for the dynasty on average. My own calculation is about four kinds per year (see the next footnote). In any way, it does not change the conclusion that there was much more enthusiasm for imperial book production in the Qianlong era.

[268] To further elaborate on this point, I shall break down the reasons why numbers can vary using my own calculation as an example. Based on *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, I counted the total book production of the Qianlong court as 239 kinds. The compilers of the same reference book state 350. The extra 91 kinds come from those I have purposely excluded: the annually published *Shixian shu* 時憲書 (Book of Time Conformity); various reeditions/reprints of the same administrative manuals; certain translations that were done by the same group at the same time with the Chinese edition; etc. These are excluded because I treat a standalone project instead of a catalogued title as the most useful unit for historical analysis. A standalone project means a new compilation activity that involved a complete bureaucratic process, including the initiative and assessment, the mobilization and organization, the writing and compiling, the report and review, and finally, the display and dissemination. It represents active political attention and is thus a better indicator of the court's conscious effort than the sheer quantity of texts (volumes or *juan*), the number of self-sufficient compositions ("books" in modern sense), and routinized activities such as the publications of the *Shixian shu*. After my adjustment, the Qianlong era still scores the highest against the other Qing emperors in both the total and the annual numbers.

[269] This office was founded in 1680 (Kangxi 19). A detailed research on its origin can be found in Xiang, "Qingdai Wuying dian," 46.

printed in the Kangxi reign. In terms of production frequency, the number was about the same with that under the Shunzhi rule (about 1.7 versus 1.8 annually).[270]

It is hard to call literary projects in the Kangxi era remarkably active in comparison with the other times. Nevertheless, they set the precedent for the genres that many later compilations followed. Some were reprinted throughout the dynasty and never replaced by newer ones. The Classical commentaries, for example, the Four Books and four of the Five Classics of the *rijiang* 日講 (Daily Lectures) series were commissioned during this time (two of the more difficult ones, namely the *Chunqiu* and the *Liji*, were not completed until the Qianlong reign).[271] These were easier reads in comparison with the more comprehensive commentaries and, therefore, had always been regular reference books for the civil service examinations since their publications. The more scholarly works, such as the *zhuanshuo* 傳說 (Commentary Clarifications) and the *zhezhong* 折中 (Bridging Disagreements) series, were commissioned in the late Kangxi reign. The *Zhouyi zhezhong* 周易折中, which was printed in Kangxi 54 (1715), became the most influential *Yijing* commentary the Qing court had produced. The Kangxi emperor also asked his officials to re-edit some of the influential Song and Ming books. The neo-Confucian reference book *Xingli jingyi* 性理精義 (Gist of Nature and Principles), printed in the same year with the *Zhouyi zhezhong*, had replaced the influential *Xingli daquan* 性理大全 (Compendium of Nature and Principles) issued in the early Ming. A complete anthology of Zhu Xi was edited and published, along with his historical commentary the *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* 資治通鑒綱目 (Outlines of the Comprehensive

[270] My numbers are solely based on the data collected from *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*. This is not an exhaustive survey but close enough to sustain my point. It only includes print editions. Therefore, projects that were hand-copied, such as the famed *Siku quanshu* (except for the *General Catalogue*, which was printed), are not a part of the database.
[271] *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 44, 46.

Mirror in Aid of Governance). Most of these commentaries have Manchu translations, making the Kangxi emperor the first Qing ruler who was keen on translating Chinese classics into Manchu. He was also known for sponsoring collections of literary works in the past. Chen Menglei 陳夢雷 (1650-1741)'s *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (Complete Collection of Illustrations and Writings from the Earliest to Current Times) was the most comprehensive encyclopedia ever printed.[272] Collections such as the *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Complete Collection of Tang Poems), the *Lidai shiyu* 歷代詩餘 (All-time Collection of Ci Poems), etc. were printed during this time. Because of these efforts, compilations in the Kangxi reign became a cornerstone reference for the dynasty's literary enterprise.

The accomplishment of the Kangxi era was especially admired by the succeeding two rulers. The Yongzheng emperor continued to complete the leftover projects from his father. He consolidated the Book Compilation Office and transformed it into a powerhouse that almost monopolized the imperial book production.[273] The office printed fifty-seven books during his reign, making it the second most prolific period in the dynasty (4.4 books annually). The Qianlong emperor inherited this new establishment of book production. Like the Kangxi emperor, he showed a renewed interest in asserting authoritative voice on Confucian classics. In addition to issuing new commentaries and reference books for the Five Classics and the Four Books, which were employed in the examinations, he further expanded the scope to the scholarly realm. The *Sanli yishu* 三禮義疏 (Exegeses of the Three Rites), for example, was a result of a nineteen-year long

[272] Chen submitted it in Kangxi 55 (1716). The compilation bureau operated until Kangxi 58 (1719). The collection was not printed until Yongzheng 4 (1726). See *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 393.
[273] In Yongzheng 7 (1727), the Imperial Household Department (Neiwu fu 內務府) issued official seals for several of its subordinate agencies including the Book Compilation Office. This act shows the institutional recognition of this office as a maturing publication institution according to Xiang, "Qingdai Wuying dian," 45.

project commissioned at the beginning of the Qianlong reign. Among the three, only the *Liji* was a part of the examination curriculum. The *Zhouli* and the *Yili* were largely reserved for Classical scholars.[274] By sponsoring commentarial studies for these two classics, the Qing went beyond the precedents of the Tang and the Ming dynasties.[275] Within the same period, a complete set of traditionally authoritative commentaries for the *Thirteen Classics* was printed between Qianlong 4 (1739) and Qianlong 12 (1747).[276] The enthusiasm for enriching and adjusting the assortment of old and new commentaries of Confucian classics lasted until the late Qianlong reign.

The Qianlong emperor's another great endeavor was producing history books. The "Twenty-four (Official) Histories" were printed between Qianlong 4 (1739) and Qianlong 49 (1784).[277] A special attention was given to Ming history. It was written, published, and then re-edited multiple times.[278] Its commentary, the *Mingji gangmu* 明紀綱目 (Outlines of the Ming Era), which was modeled upon Zhu Xi's *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*, was treated in the same way.[279] In addition to

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[274] Although in theory every classically trained person was supposed to have read, if not versed at, all of them, no institutional infrastructure could enforce this idea. In reality, few policy makers and educators proposed to do so. More on this discussion in chapter three.

[275] The *Wujing zhengyi* 五經正義 (Rectified Exegeses of the Five Classics) by the Tang court and the *Wujing daquan* 五經大全 (Compendium of the Five Classics) by the Ming court both endorsed the *Liji* as the Classic of Rites. The Tang court later accepted Jia Gongyan 贾公彦 (?)'s commentaries of the *Zhouli* and the *Yili*. But they were not initiated by imperial endeavor. In comparison, the Ming's *Wujing daquan* was unarguably for the sole purpose of standardizing and facilitating the civil service examinations. It was uniformly criticized by scholars in the late imperial era for its lack of intellectual integrity.

[276] *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 19.

[277] Ibid., 73.

[278] After going through several drafts, the first edition of *Ming shi* 明史 (History of the Ming) was printed in Qianlong 4 (1739). It was re-edited between Qianlong 40 (1775) and Qianlong 54 (1789). For the reason of re-editing, see entry "Qianlong 40-05-18" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 983, Scripta Sinica online database.

[279] The *Mingji gangmu* was commissioned in Qianlong 4 (1739). It was first printed in Suzhou in Qianlong 11 (1746). In Qianlong 40 (1775), the emperor decided it needed to be corrected in various places. See entries "Qianlong 4.8.7" and "40.5.18" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 918 and 983, Scripta Sinica. The new edition was printed in Qianlong 47 (1782) and changed its name to *Zizhi tongjian gangmu sanbian* 資治通鑒綱目三編 (Outlines of the Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance, Third Composition). It replaced the first edition. The original wood blocks in Suzhou were submitted to Wuying Palace in Qianlong 48 (1783). See *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 87-88.

printing and re-editing histories of the past, the Qianlong emperor was also an avid sponsor of writing the reigning dynasty. The *Guoshi guan* 國史館 (Bureau of Reigning History) was an office for occasional and infrequent compilations of the biographies for the late emperors and senior officials. In Qianlong 30 (1765), the emperor made it a regular establishment for this task.[280] He also added new genres such as the *Erchen zhuan* 貳臣傳 (Biographies of Treacherous Officials) and the *Nichen zhuan* 逆臣傳 (Biographies of Treasonous Officials) to unify the historical assessment of disloyalty during the Ming-Qing transition.[281]

New ways of writing history were not limited to traditional categories. The Qianlong era saw the institutionalization and full-blossom of the *fanglue* 方略 (strategies) genre. *Fanglue* first appeared in Kangxi 21 (1682) as a commemoration of pacifying the eight-year long insurrection caused by the revolt of the Three Feudatories.[282] After this precedent, the Qing court would compile one *fanglue* immediately after a military campaign. The compilation bureau was organized on occasion. In Qianlong 14 (1749), the emperor asked the Imperial Household Department to find a location near the Grand Council for the compilation bureau of the first Jinchuan campaign.[283] Since then, the *Fanglue guan* 方略館 (Bureau of Strategies) had been in operation until the end of the dynasty. *Fanglue* was a new genre of military history that was based on original archives and, after the establishment of the Grand Council, often reviewed by the Grand Councilors who had participated in the campaigns. Because of its close relationship with the Grand

[280] Entry "Qianlong 30.6.23" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 739.
[281] Entries "Qianlong 41-12-03", "43-02-24", "46-10-04", "48-10-25", "54-06-06", "54-12-09", "56-03-20" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1022, 1051, 1142, 1191, 1332, 1344, 1375.
[282] Entry "Kangxi 21-08-13", in the *Shengzu ren huangdi shilu* 聖祖仁皇帝實錄, *juan* 104. First draft submitted in Kangxi 25 (1686), see entry "Kangxi 25-11-10", *juan* 128. This compilation was not printed.
[283] Entry "Qianlong 14-04-07" in *Gaozong chun Huangdi shilu*, *juan* 338.

Council, the bureau became a powerful institution whose duties went beyond compilations.[284] Its institutional vitality in this era was evidently shown in the production numbers. The Qing had introduced twenty-five *fanglue*, eleven of which were compiled under the Qianlong rule.[285]

The majority of administrative codes for various departments of the Qing central government were published during the Qianlong reign.[286] Meanwhile, institutional history was also boosted in this period. Special attention was given to the institutions of the ruling dynasty. The "San tong 三通" ("Three Comprehensives") projects are an example of this passion.[287] After printing the original three in Qianlong 12 (1747), the emperor asked a continuation of the *Wenxian tongkao* to be compiled.[288] In Qianlong 26 (1761), he decided to split the pre-Qing part, and made the rest a standalone work.[289] The continuations of the *Tong dian* and the *Tong tongzhi* were commissioned in Qianlong 32 (1767), and the same policy applied.[290] The compilation bureau thus produced the "huangchao santong 皇朝三通" ("Three Comprehensives of the Glorious Dynasty") series, which

[284] It became an adjunct workplace for the Grand Council. Occasionally, it was responsible for other kinds of compilation projects, most of which utilized archival documents and/or were closely tied to the Qing politics. Examples include *Qingliang shan zhi* 清凉山志, *Rehe zhi* 熱河志, *Xiyu tuzhi* 西域圖誌, *Da Qing yitong zhi* 大清一統志, etc. See Jirong Yao 姚繼榮, "Qingdai fanglue guan yu guanxiu fanglue 清代方略館與官修方略," *Shanxi shida xuebao* 山西師大學報, vol. 29, no. 2 (April 2002): 76.

[285] Shi Li 李石, "Qingdai de fanglue guan yu fanglue shu 清代的方略館與方略書," *Yantai shifan xueyuan xuebao* 煙台師範學院學報, no. 3 (1988): 33-36. Yao Jirong's later article gives the same number.

[286] For printed ones, see *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*. To be noted, there are many short-lived government codes and instruction books in the late Qing, including provincial and local ones that are hard to give an accurate number.

[287] "San tong" refers to *Tong dian* 通典 (Comprehensive Institutions), *Tong zhi* 通志 (Comprehensive Records), and *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (Comprehensive Examination of Literature).

[288] Entry "Qianlong 12-06-15" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 292. A designated compilation bureau was established to carry the duty. In the Qing, *Wenxian tongkao* was first printed in Kangxi 12 (1673). The first draft of its continuation was compiled between Qianlong 12 and Qianlong 32 (1767). See *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 118, 120.

[289] *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 122.

[290] Entry "Qianlong 32-02-02" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 778.

paralleled with the continuations of and the original San tong.[291] This series greatly promoted the uniqueness of the Qing institution and its achievements. As the *Siku* commentators wrote on the *Comprehensive Institutions*, the reigning dynasty fixed the "maladministration of the preceding dynasties (Qianchao bizheng 前朝弊政)" and expanded its dominions far beyond "the old demarcation of the Nine Realms (Jiuzhou jiujie 九州舊界)". Thus, there was no reason to stick to Du You 杜佑 (author of the original Comprehensive Institutions)'s templates. Moreover, the commentators proudly maintained, the reigning dynasty had specific compilations made for every department in its state apparatus. How was Du's fragmentary reference possibly comparable to the abundance of this age?[292] Saying so to this rhetorical question, the Siku commentators not only attempted to establish supremacy over a time-honored classic in its own field but also conclusively announced the emperor's dedication to writing about his empire and administration.

As aforementioned, the literary achievement in the Qianlong reign was inseparable from the utilization of various compilation bureaus and the Book Compilation Office. For the reminder of the dynasty, the institutional status of the Book Compilation Office was not challenged until the late nineteenth century when fiscal and technological circumstances became exceedingly unfavorable.[293] However, its utilization after the Qianlong era had declined quickly and considerably. Only seventy-three productions (3 annually) were done during the Jiaqing reign.

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[291] *Xu wenxian tongkao* 續文獻通考 (Continuation of the Comprehensive Examination of Literature) and *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 皇朝文獻通考 (Comprehensive Examination of the Glorious Dynasty's Literature) were submitted in Qianlong 47 (1782). *Xu tong dian* 續通典 (Continuation of the Comprehensive Institutions), *Huangchao tong dian* 皇朝通典 (Comprehensive Institutions of the Glorious Dynasty), *Xu tong zhi* 續通志 (Continuation of the Comprehensive Records), and *Huangchao tong zhi* 皇朝通志 (Comprehensive Records of the Glorious Dynasty) were compiled between Qianlong 32 (1767) and Qianlong 50 (1785). See *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 118-122.

[292] Entry "Qinding huangchao tongdian 欽定皇朝通典", in the *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (General Catalogue of the Four Parts), *juan* 81, Scripta Sinica.

[293] Xiang, "Qingdai Wuying dian," 73-79.

Many of them were leftover projects from the Qianlong emperor. The Daoguang era saw forty-six books (1.5 annually) produced and none of the subsequent rulers had more than twenty (ranging from 1.5 to 0.6 annually).[294] The post-Qianlong history of imperial book production thus presents a divergence of political interest and institutional endeavor, the trigger of which calls for historians' decipherment.

4.1.2 A Comparative Perspective on Court-led Textual Productions

It seems like there was a moment in the eighteenth century, in which several factors started to work jointly to catapult the Yongzheng-Qianlong era to the pinnacle of imperial book production. And when these factors no longer operated as they did, the conjuncture crumbled quickly. A key comparison can be drawn between the literary activities during the Yongzheng-Qianlong continuum and the earlier Kangxi reign: The imperial court gradually took over the compilation projects, sourced personnel from within, and deployed them in the capital. In the eighteenth century, the initiatives and the privilege of imperial book production shifted from individual officials/local bureaus to the center. This process presents the first institutional divergence in the Qing dynasty's book production.

In the early days, a fair percentage of compilations was not directly commissioned to the designated bureaus. Instead, they were often proposed and submitted by individual officials. Imperial endorsement was granted afterwards.[295] These endeavors were often occasional. Tours and ceremonies, for instance, often warranted receiving literary works and compilations from the officials. The Tang poetry collection *Yuding Quan Tang shi lu* 御定全唐詩錄 (Imperially Approved Complete Collection of Tang Poems) was initially an individual project by a retired

[294] See *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*.
[295] Yang, "Wuying dian xiushu chu," 29.

scholar Xu Zhuo 徐倬 (1623-1712). Xu submitted this work to the Kangxi emperor during his southern tour in Kangxi 46 (1707). Because of the emperor's appreciation, the Imperial Household Department funded the publication of this book under the imperial name.[296] On the same occasion, a former Governor of Fujian submitted his work *Dushu jishu lue* 讀書記數畧 (Brief Notes on the Numbered Subjects in Books Across) and obtained similar endorsement without imperial funding.[297]

These books might not be printed. When printed, the process might not be invested and handled by the government. For example, the Duke of the Sage Descendant (Yanshegn gong 衍聖公) presented the *Xinglu shengdian* 幸魯盛典 (Great Ceremony of the Imperial Visit to Shandong Province) to the Kangxi emperor after his visit to the Confucius Temple. This book was locally printed by the duke and then submitted to the court.[298] While these books were all resulting from the Kangxi emperor's sixth southern tour, each case was slightly different from one another. Such discrepancy was typical to this era.

Prior to the establishment of the Book Compilation Office, imperial printing activity was decentralized. Many books were commissioned to be printed by the emperor's minions in Jiangnan. Heads of the fabric factories (*zhizao* 織造) in Jiangning and Suzhou were often in charge of these projects. Several of the Kangxi emperor's famous ones, such as the *Peiwen yunfu* 佩文韻

[296] *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 405.
[297] Ibid., 388. In this case, the woodblocks were submitted to the court afterwards and the book was published under the imperial name.
[298] Ibid., 130.

府 (Rhymed Depository of Treasured Phrases), the *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*, the *Quan Tangshi*, etc., were printed in Yangzhou.[299]

Printing in the province was not only a technical or fiscal decision. It could mean a different mobilization and organization process from the centralized ones. Take the *Quan Tangshi* for example, the entire compilation group was sourced locally. According to the *Siku* commentators, the Kangxi emperor conceived this project in Kangxi 42 (1703).[300] His minion in Jiangning, Cao Yin 曹寅 (1658-1712), stated in Kangxi 44 (1705) that the compilation bureau would be organized locally and that the project started in the fifth month of this year.[301] The compilers mentioned were allegedly assigned from the Hanlin Academy. At second glance, however, these people did not appear to be in residence at the time. They were retired members living in the Jiangnan region. The chief compiler, Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645-1719), spent most of his official career in absentia.[302] He was called upon by the emperor to lead this compilation.[303] The rest of the main compilers were alike, and they were given temporary in-service status for this occasion.[304] Peng himself took intermittent breaks during work. After the project was completed in Kangxi 46

[299] Ibid., 86, 390, 406. The print center in Yangzhou was called "Yangzhou shiju 揚州詩局 (Yangzhou Poem Bureau)" because of the *Quan Tangshi* project, see page 530.
[300] Entry "Yuding quan Tangshi 御定全唐詩", in *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*, *juan* 190, Scripta Sinica.
[301] See Cao's memorials in *Guanyu Jiangning zhizao Caojia dangan shiliao* 關於江寧織造曹家檔案史料 (Archival Sources Related to the Cao Family of the Jiangning Fabric Factory) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1975), 32-33.
[302] "Fengzheng dafu Hanlin yuan shijiang zeng guanglu dafu Libu youshilang jiayiji Peng gong Dingqiu xingzhuang 奉政大夫翰林院侍講贈光祿大夫吏部右侍郎加一級彭公定求行狀", in Qian Yiji 錢儀吉, *Beizhuan ji* 碑傳集 (Collection of Biographies Inscribed in Stone Tablets) (Taipei: Mingwen shuju 明文書局, 1985), vol. 3, 525-528.
[303] Peng Dingqiu, "Nanyun laoren ziding nianpu 南畇老人自訂年譜", in *Nanyun ji* 南畇集, *juan* 6.
[304] All the compilers were inactive ("zaiji 在籍", lit. "at-home") Hanlin members, see Peng, "Hanlin yuan xiuzhuan Wang jun muzhiming 翰林院修撰汪君墓志銘", Ibid, *juan* 7. Their treatment was "ru xiaojia zhe zhao xianren guanli yiti shengzhuan 如銷假者照現任官例一體升轉 (if in absentia, their positions can be promoted and transferred according to the regulation of active officials)", Ibid.

(1705), he went back home instead of office.[305] Some of the compilers even left in the middle of the project, making its bureaucratic operation relatively unrestrictive and informal to the centralized instances that we see later in the Qianlong reign.[306]

What the *Quan Tangshi* story leads to us is the workings of combining imperial commission and localized circles of literary groups. Cao Yin's poems often depicted local literati visiting the compilation bureau.[307] These literary gatherings not only gave the bureau's work setting a rather casual atmosphere but also constructively incorporated contingent factors into the project. Although it was the emperor who commissioned this task, Cao went beyond the designated group and invited outside participants to join the effort. He became the focal point of all literary interactions pertaining to the project. By doing so, he was not merely a project coordinator for the emperor. He became the actual patron. Through the live connections that he built, the compilation of the *Quan Tangshi* left a long-lasting legacy in the printing culture of the Jiangnan area and among poem critics alike.[308]

Traces of this pattern can be found in the compilation projects that the Kangxi court invested in. On the one hand, patrons often initiated or carried over these tasks; on the other, there were core compilers surrounding these patrons instead of the imperial court. Similar to the minions in Jiangnan, royalties in the capital also built connections with renowned scholars. For example, the aforementioned *Gujin tushu jicheng* was primarily an individual project of Chen Menglei whose

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[305] Peng, *Nanyun ji*, *juan* 6.
[306] *Guanyu Jiangning zhizao Caojia dangan shiliao*, 40.
[307] Hu Shaotang 胡紹棠 wrote about Cao's literary exchanges with the bureau members and some eminent poets in Jiangnan. Many Jiangnan literati visited the bureau while it was in operation, including eminent figures like Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 and Zhao Zhishen 趙執信. They thus formed a literary circle around the bureau. Zhu even participated in related works later because of this occasion. See Hu, "Cao Yin yu Quan Tangshi 曹寅與全唐詩", *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊, vol.6 (2009): 153-160. For more references, see Cao Yin's *Lianting ji* 楝亭集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1978).
[308] Hu, "Cao Yin yu Quan Tangshi", 160.

patron was Prince Cheng (Cheng qinwang 誠親王, tenure 1698-1730).[309] Another active literatus in court-sponsored compilations, Fang Bao 方苞 (1668-1749), worked under Prince Cheng's supervision and served as the heir prince's tutor.[310] Fang also did compilation work for Prince Guo (Guo qinwang 果親王, tenure 1723-1738).[311] In these cases, the court either carried over the project or accepted/published the completed book. Chen's work was deprived of the original authorship as Prince Cheng faced political demise. Fang's book was officially accepted as a textbook at the Qianlong court, hence bringing his literary theory to the Banner students.[312] These examples showcase interplay of private authorship and political condition. More important, there was dual sponsorship: the gray area where official and unofficial connections were often intertwined.

I attribute the cause of this phenomenon partly to the princes' royal background and political position. It was a common practice that the Qing let imperial family members lead the court-commissioned projects. The aforementioned Prince Cheng, along with Prince Zhuang (Zhuang qinwang 莊親王, tenure 1723-1767), were in charge of the *Lüli yuanyuan* 律曆淵源 (Origins of Music and Calendars) series, one of the pivotal works on musical theory, calendrical astronomy, and mathematics in China and Europe.[313] Prince Guo later supervised the sourcebook *Gongcheng*

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309 "Chen bainxiu Menglei zhuan 陳編修夢雷傳", in *Beizhuan ji*, vol. 3, 516.

310 "Fang Wangxi xiansheng Bao xingzhuang 方望溪先生苞行狀", in *Beizhuan ji*, vol. 2, 701.

311 Prince Guo personally invited Fang to compile a textbook of ancient-style essays for the Eight Banner students. See "Fang Bao nianpu 方苞年譜", in *Fang Bao ji* 方苞集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1983), 882. The wood blocks were stored at the Imperial College, and then transferred to the Hall of Martial Valor in Qianlong 34 (1769) per the Qianlong emperor's order. See *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 402.

312 See the preface of *Guwen yuexuan* 古文約選 (Brief Selection of Ancient-Style Essays), Prince Guo in-house print, 1733.

313 *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 57.

zuofa 工程做法 (Instructions for Construction Projects) for the Board of Public Works.[314] They might find it convenient to transfer resources between their own space and the imperial reservoir. But there is further implication behind this scene, which is that up until the late-Kangxi to Yongzheng period, imperial compilation projects were still fairly decentralized and done on occasional basis. Even though printing was conducted at the court in most cases, offshore compilation activities and strong personal touch on the process were prevalent.[315]

As I shall discuss in the next section, the later Qianlong era witnessed the fading-away of minions' and princes' unofficial involvement in the imperial compilations. Compilation workers were no longer rusticated highbrows once enrolled at the Hanlin Academy (*juxiang Hanlin* 居鄉翰林). Instead, most of them were active academicians directly commissioned by the emperor. Their participation itself provided bureaucratic credential, making the compilation workplace a venue for career advancement.

4.1.3 The Inter-bureaucratic Connections via Compilation Projects

The Qianlong emperor rejuvenated the "sage king" image of his grandfather and boosted a series of literary projects from the beginning of his reign. These compilations themselves built up credentials of the participating Hanlin scholars who were closely tied to the commissioning hub and a shared institutional identity. Both compilation offices and commissioners served as evaluation venues for the literary officials. Moreover, they both carried ideological duties and were guided by insider-participants. With supervisory stimulation, this career pattern not only produced

[314] *Qingdai neifu keshu mulu jieti*, 213-214.
[315] The *Ming shi*, one of the most important compilations in the early Qing, is an example of the court-led projects that were consisted of personalized writings. The authorship of individual chapters was extremely complex over the course of a century. For reference, see Huang Aiping 黃愛平, "Mingshi gaoben kaolue 明史稿本考略," *Wenxian* 文獻, no. 4 (1983): 93-108.

professionalized officials but also helped to project ideas to a wider audience within and beyond the bureaucracy. The Qianlong emperor unquestionably played a critical role by his keen interests and personal touches. More important, his deployment of officials had interlinked the imperial government's literary talents in ideological production and propagation alike.

The *Administrative Code* has documented regulations that incentivized scholars to participate in compilation projects. Even the lowest-degree participants were able to be awarded. For example, the licentiate candidates who helped to compile the *Zishi jinghua* 子史精華 (The Gist of Assorted Schools and Histories) were offered enrollment status by the Directorate of Education. The more advanced degree-holders, depending on the occasion, could expect quick appointment to miscellaneous offices.[316] Most compilation bureaus were temporary and dedicated to specific projects.[317] Hence, rewards varied from project to project. The Qianlong era continued with showing generous gestures to compilers. Only after 1781 (Qianlong 46), the Book Compilation Office at the Hall of Martial Valor, the Bureau of Dynastic History, the Bureau of Strategies were regularized under stricter meriting and demeriting protocols while the contributors of temporary projects remained eligible to receive preferential treatment.[318] These institutional supports had attracted civil scholars and scholar-officials alike to discretionarily join the cause.

Starting from the Qianlong reign, the Hanlin academicians constituted a privileged and professionalized group among compilers. Their compilation obligation used to be adjunct as they were temporarily drafted from various offices. In 1740 (Qianlong 5), the emperor commanded that

[316] See the "Man Han qianchu tongli 滿漢遷除通例" (General Rules in regard to the Transfer and the Appointment of the Manchu and the Han Officials) section under the Board of Personnel chapter in the *Daqing huidian*, the 1732 version, *juan* 8.
[317] Yang, "Wuying dian xiushu chu," 36.
[318] See the "Xiushu yixu 修書議敘" (Rewards for Book Compilations) section under the Board of Personnel chapter in the *Daqing huidian shili* (1818), *juan* 59.

in order to value this position, all Hanlin-background compilers at the Hall of Martial Valor must be formally enlisted by his edict.[319] The career prospect of partaking in book compilations was especially bright for these academicians. Li Guang'ao 李光墺 (1671-1738), for example, was commissioned to supervise education in Shandong after working for several compilation tasks.[320] He was then promoted to be the Director of Studies at the Directorate of Education. Lin Zhichun 林枝春 (?), originally a mere *bianxiu* at the Academy, became a *shijiang* after the completion of the *Compendium of Grand Unification* (*Yitong zhi* 一統志) project in which he was recorded (*jilu* 記錄) three times. He was then offered the opportunity to serve the Henan Office of Education Affairs.[321] As bureaucratic mobility went, compilers seldom had to stay for the entire duration. Their early withdrawal would not affect receiving rewards in the end, which was calculated corresponding to individual compilers' input. Dou Guangnai 竇光鼐 (1720-1795), a long-serving Education Commissioner, left the *Rixia jiuwen kao* 日下舊聞考 (An Evidential Study of Bygone Stories in the Capital) project halfway before its finalization. He was still recorded twice when the re-edition was done.[322] This flexible arrangement had mobilized eligible scholar-officials to their full strength while allowing them to take shifts from one pertinent office to another.

In the same vein, compilation also functioned as a venue of redemption. It could "recycle" scholar-officials who otherwise underperformed or politically out of commission. Particularly, owing to the fact that penalties were common and frequent in the Qianlong officialdom, demoted officials could expect to replenish credits by going to compilation bureaus. In a worse scenario,

[319] Entry "Qianlong 05-02-07.2" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[320] Li served at the Book Compilation Office and the Bureau of Grand Unification (Yitong zhi guan 一統志館). FHA#04-01-11-0001-001.
[321] FHA#02-01-003-003940-0010.
[322] FHA#04-01-38-0014-049.

one of a few ways for heavily punished officials to get around permanent discharge was to be employed as tutor or compiler at the emperor's discretion. Li Zhongjian 李中簡 (?), for example, was nine ranks relegated for his negligence of surveillance over licentiate involvement in a rebellion. This decision would have rendered future deployments impossible. When the emperor gave the final verdict, he believed that Li's scholarly performance could be of use. Thus, Li stayed at the Academy and became an imperial tutor.[323] Li soon lost this job because his prince student was caught liaising with a Board official. But once again, the emperor allowed him to retain his Hanlin title being an on-duty compiler of a book project.[324] On the other side, serving in compilation bureaus was as perilous as fulfilling other government obligations. Making mistakes could backfire on one's bureaucratic fortune. Lu Xixiong 陸錫熊 (1734-1792), a renowned scholar and already a high official, was found out improperly censoring a history book without a detailed briefing to the emperor when he was a chief compiler of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library of the Four Treasuries) project. He was deprived of all official titles for eight years and died before the prohibition period ended.[325] In comparison, two thousand taels of silver as the compensation for editing malfeasance may be considered lenient.[326] In either scenario, this work experience was a serious credential to earn and to lose.

Out of all compilation activities, the imperial attention was undoubtedly critical to interconnect scholar-officials across government posts. The Qianlong emperor would even draft compilers from active commissioners in the provinces as early as he started the Three Rites project.[327] He had

[323] Entry "Qianlong 40-05-18.2" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[324] Entry "Qianlong 41-01-02.5" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[325] FHA#03-0225-015, 03-1179-063. Also see entry "Qianlong 52-05-03" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[326] This penalty was a Board decision on Zhao You 趙佑 (1727-1800)'s mistake. See FHA#03-0677-045.
[327] FHA#02-01-03-03527-005. Memorialist Zhou Xuejian 周學健 (?-1748).

evidently kept good memories about the compilers of major projects. Chu Tingzhang 褚廷璋 (?), a participant of the *Compendium of Grand Unification* project, was inquired by the emperor about compilation details when he was interviewed to supervise education in Hunan.[328] As a seasoned compiler, Chu took compilations an innate part of his career even when he was not in active duty. In Hunan, he proposed to be a voluntary compiler for the newest continuation of the *Compendium of Education Affairs*.[329] His request would have the possibility to be honored if it were under the Kangxi rule. Since compilations of this era were only delegated to formal bureaus, Chu's proposal was rejected.[330] Nevertheless, because of his keen interest, he was entrusted with tasks pertinent with the *Ming History* project upon going back to the capital.[331] In all likelihood, one's ideological stance could not be more firm transitioning from a historian of his "own dynasty" (*benchao* 本朝) to the "triumphed dynasty" (*shengchao* 勝朝).

These bureaucratic interconnections were not merely an institutional phenomenon. In a report about Classical learning, a former compiler who was now the Education Commissioner of a borderland province mentioned:

> I was blessed with celestial grace from Your Majesty to be selected a compiler and proofreader of the Stele Classics. Now from time to time, I sincerely and diligently lecture and inquire what I have learnt together with the students. Since the last Qualifying Examination, there have been more and more students who got admitted by passing the recitation test of the Nine Classics or the Eleven Classics.
>
> 臣蒙皇上天恩，選充石經校勘。就臣承學所及，時與諸生敦勉講求。科試以來，漸有以默寫九經、十一經取錄者。[332]

[328] FHA#04-01-12-0141-014.
[329] FHA#04-01-38-0007-024.
[330] FHA#02-01-03-06908-012.
[331] Entry "Qianlong 40-05-15.4" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[332] FHA#03-1185-034. Memorialist Liu Fenggao 劉鳳誥 (1762-1830).

It goes without saying that these participants of ideological production did not keep their knowledge within the inner circle of high-minded elites. The existing bureaucratic interconnections had facilitated broader projection among the educated populace. In the following sections, I will discuss how the compilations were timely distributed across the empire. Moreover, we can reasonably infer that the Hanlin compilers were often sent to supervise education with a clear motive in mind: Immediately after the sentences above, the emperor's inline vermillion rescript (*jiahang zhupi* 夾行硃批) reads: "Good (hao 好)!" After all, was there a better and more effective way to propagate texts and ideas other than using the producers themselves?

4.2 ***Text Dissemination under the Pendulum of Fiscal Promises***

In the conventional story, we know that the education officials of late imperial China would gather students at the Hall of Moral Enlightenment and preach to them on a regular basis. The texts they used were usually published by a few of the early emperors, and the list would rarely change until the end of the dynasty. There was uncertainty about the function of the Qing dynasty's compilation projects: Were they mostly an adornment of the literary enterprise the emperors tried to build, and had little to do with everyday education?

There is a collection of edicts on "banxing shuji 頒行書籍 (Book Dissemination)" under the "xuexiao 學校 (Schools)" section of the *Administrative Code*. Most of them were issued in the early Qing. As early as in 1652 (Shunzhi 9), a list of books was chosen for the local schools to teach. Meanwhile, a restriction on the publication and circulation of non-examination-related books was issued.[333] In 1706 (Kangxi 45), the Kangxi emperor added permission for the merchants

[333] See the "*xuexiao* 學校 (Schools)" section under the Board of Rites chapter in the *Supplementary Statutes and Exemplary Cases of the Great Qing Administrative Code* (*Daqing huidian zeli* 大清會典則例), the 1764 version.

to freely print the court-issued new compilations.[334] Later, in 1714 (Kangxi 53), he reiterated the government's commitment to banning inappropriate books. The sellers who still violated this order would be punished to greater extent.[335] These policies then formed an administrative statute that was applied for the remainder of the dynasty:

> For book disseminations, all the imperially commissioned Classical commentaries, the compendium of *xingli*, the collections of poetry, ancient-styled essays, and the recompiled thirteen Classics, the twenty-two histories, and the Three Encyclopedias (*Tongdian*, *Tongzhi*, *Wenxian tongkao*), etc., are to be sent to the provincial schools. The book merchants are allowed to print and circulate them. As to books contrary to sages and individual works that are not established for the schools, the students are forbidden to study or practice them. Merchants are prohibited from publishing the lewdly written stories; Commoners are not allowed to keep them. During examination tours, the Education Commissioners are responsible for strictly instructing the local officials to carry out the ban.
>
> 凡頒行書籍，御纂經解、性理、詩古文辭，及校訂十三經、二十二史、三通等書，皆頒行直省儒學，並許書賈鐫版流傳。若非聖之書、一家之言，不立於學宮者，士子不得傳習。淫辭小說，坊肆不得刊行，民間不得留藏。學政巡試所屬，嚴飭地方官禁止。[336]

Although the ban on unwanted books was controversial in terms of its effectiveness, book dissemination to local schools was common in the eighteenth century. However, the actual delivery to the intended audience seemed to be limited. Soon after the Qianlong emperor was enthroned, he became aware of the rather tedious procedure that a local student had to go through. The student must apply and then wait for the book. Because he was only able to get one copy at a time, it was a daunting task to replicate the whole set. Under such condition, the imperial compilations could

[334] These books included *Guwen yuanjian* 古文淵鑑 (Deep Mirror of Ancient-Style Essays), *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* 資治通鑑綱目 (Outlines of the Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance), etc. In addition to giving them to senior officials, they were distributed to the provinces. See Ibid.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Ibid.

not possibly be widespread among scholars. The emperor thus issued an order to the provincial governors and treasurers, asking them to recruit merchants who were willing to print the disseminated books. He presumed that the buyers would be plenty so long as the merchants chose to invest in the first place.[337]

In reality, the merchants were reluctant to join the endeavor. The Qing government did offer ready-to-print woodblocks, but it did not offer other supplies or incentives. Since most of these books were fairly voluminous, there would be a considerable investment for labor and materials if merchants decided to take the offer. The prospect of profiting from doing so was not secure either. These books would require a much higher price than the generic prep-books for the civil service examinations, which had abridged content but were guaranteed to sell. Few merchants wanted to take the risk. Later in 1738 (Qianlong 3), the emperor felt the need for more encouragement. He thought few joined the endeavor because of their limited accessibility to the woodblocks, which were stored at the Provincial Treasuries. Therefore, he ordered the governors to make it easy to access them. The woodblocks were to be refurbished so that the merchants could participate without worries.[338]

In addition to reaffirming the welcome policy for the merchants, the emperor further instructed the bureaucracy to facilitate a wider readership. The governors were now encouraged to nominate the imperial compilations that had not been publicly disseminated in the past. The court would consider their requests for the benefit of the scholars. The woodblocks kept by the Wuying Hall, the Hanlin Academy, and the Imperial College would open to printing requests. Even the book

[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid.

collection at the Imperial Household Department became available to the Manchu and Han officials alike, provided that they were willing to print them.[339]

Apparently, the novice emperor was inclined to reach out to a wider audience than his grandfather ever did. He was mindful of the fact that the existing dissemination policy was ineffective at the local level. Nevertheless, his new effort seems to resemble a benevolent gesture instead of a solution. As mentioned, stocking these books was not profitable to the merchants. Since the Qing government was not absorbing the potential loss either, few merchants answered the call. A year later, the Education Commissioner of Jiangsu reported that even the Jiangsu literati, which were among the most erudite in the empire, seldom studied these books. The Jiangsu book merchants, being the largest stockists, were not selling them.[340] The new policy was thus adding little to help with the situation. To a modern reader's eyes, its negligence of executive details brought about another impractical platitude attempted by the imperial government. This assessment would not be far from the fact if the story ends here.

But the story continues. The textual grandeur of the dynasty was by no means an irrelevant player in the reciprocal relationship between the throne and the Education Commissioners in forming the new norm of ideological practice. By the eighteenth century, the intra-bureaucratic channels of book dissemination were well-established: Schools and academies regularly received compilation sets from the government; Offices were kept updated with guidebooks and newsletters relevant to their duties. Since the Yongzheng period, every Education Commissioner had started reporting the catalogue of his office's book collection twice per tenure: the first time when he arrived at the office; the second time when he left. Thanks to the existing archival sources, there are abundant data about the books and other literary items every Office of Education Affairs

[339] Ibid.
[340] FHA#04-01-38-0002-038. Memorialist Liu Wulong 劉吳龍 (1690-1742).

received.[341] Knowing when and what books were sent is helpful for us to assess the actual application of the commissioned books. While the emperor could only direct the government to be more "open" to the book merchants, the Education Commissioners soon became pivotal players as they promoted the books in the field.

As evidenced by some catalogues, the imperial court would send certain textual compilations to the Offices of Education Affairs after it disseminated them to the provinces. The former was to be used as a reference in the examinations; The latter was given to schools and academies (often via the Provincial Treasury using local printing facilities). Most of the widely disseminated texts would be also sent to the education office, although it was not always the case vice versa. Here is a Qianlong-era distribution table based on the catalogues of the Yunnan office:

Qianlong 7 (1742)[342]	
聖祖御製詩篇墨搨	1幅
聖訓	1道
御製朋黨論	1本
聖諭廣訓	1本
上諭	2本
欽定大清律	1部（20本）
上諭	1部
欽定大清會典	1部（100本）
御纂性理精義	1部
欽定詩經傳說彙纂	1部
欽定書經傳說彙纂	1部
欽定春秋傳說彙纂	1部
欽駁呂留良四書講義	1部
學政全書	1本
漢文則例	1部

[341] In the FHA, there are about a hundred and twenty-one Qianlong-era routine memorials that recorded the education offices' library catalogues. Different regions' existing catalogues range from merely one (Shuntian) to fifteen (Yunnan). Due to human errors in the FHA electronic database, some Education Commissioners' official titles were not correctly registered. Hence, there should be a larger number of data points in the physical archives.

[342] FHA#02-01-03-03955-008. Memorialist Yang Tingdong 楊廷棟 (?).

Qianlong 10 (1745)[343]	
欽定大清律例	1部
欽定銓選滿漢則例[344]	1部
督捕則例	1部
漢字中樞政考	1部
Qianlong 15 (1750)[345]	
部頒學政全書	1套
Qianlong 18 (1753)[346]	
文職潔己奉公上諭	2本
續增條例	2本
Qianlong 21 (1756)[347]	
部頒議准各省酌歸簡易條款冊	1本
續增學政全書	1部
Qianlong 24 (1759)[348]	
部頒學政全書	1部
Qianlong 27 (1762)[349]	
樂善堂全集	1部
欽定三禮義疏	1部 (25套)
磨勘簡明條例	1本
續增學政全書	6本
Qianlong 30 (1765)[350]	
上諭	5本
條例	17本
續增學政全書	1部
御製平定准噶爾碑文墨搨[351]	1幅
御製平定回部告成太學碑文墨搨	1幅
續增條例	1部
續纂總類	1部

[343] FHA#02-01-05-22787-002. Memorialist Shen Weizu 沈慰祖 (?).

[344] The following three were forwarded by the Governor-general. Ibid.

[345] FHA#02-01-03-04818-001. Memorialist He Qirui 何其睿 (?).

[346] FHA#02-01-03-05051-018. Memorialist Wang Cheng 王成 (?). Also see FHA#02-01-03-05101-006. Memorialist Ge Junqi 葛峻起 (?).

[347] FHA#02-01-03-05328-014. Memorialist Ge Junqi.

[348] FHA#02-01-03-05587-022. Memorialist Ye Guanguo 葉觀國 (?).

[349] FHA#02-01-03-05829-017. Memorialist Li Zhongjian 李中簡 (?).

[350] FHA#02-01-05-22956-019. Memorialist Yu Wenjun 于雯峻 (?).

[351] The above four items were put in front of those added by the Qianlong 27 catalogue. Because the sequence of this list is supposedly based on the timeline of acceptance, these ones had likely been neglected in the previous reports and added back.

Qianlong 35 (1770)[352]	
No items were added.	
Qianlong 37 (1772)[353]	
硃批上諭	18 函
Qianlong 39 (1774)[354]	
上諭國學崇祀碑文	1 張
重修文廟碑文	1 張
御筆碑文	3 道
Qianlong 42 (1777)[355]	
No items were added.	
Qianlong 43 (1778)[356]	
No items were added.	

These reports offer a fairly complete coverage between 1742 and 1778, representing the prime years of the Qianlong reign. During this period, the borderland province of Yunnan consecutively received texts from the imperial government. Eighteen out of forty-two of the listed scrolls and books were explicitly targeted at literary audience, while most of the rest were to facilitate the Education Commissioner's bureaucratic chores.[357] Interestingly, only six of the eighteen could be directly used toward examination preparation: the *Xingli jingyi* 性理精義 (Essential Exegeses on Nature and Principles) and the commentaries of the Five Classics.[358] The other texts such as the *Shengyu guangxun* 聖諭廣訓 (Amplified Instructions on the Sacred Edict), the *Bo Lü Liuliang Sishu jiangyi* 駁呂留良四書講義 (Rebuttal of Lü Liuliang's Commentary on the Four Books), the

[352] FHA#02-01-05-22996-019. Memorialist Li Tingyang 李廷揚 (1732-1806).
[353] FHA#02-01-05-23013-002. Memorialist Guo Yuanlong 郭元濬 (?).
[354] FHA#02-01-05-23027-037. Memorialist Sun Jiale 孫嘉樂 (1733-1800).
[355] FHA#02-01-05-23051-029. Qi Liao 戚蓼 (?).
[356] FHA#02-01-05-23058-012. Lü Guangheng 呂光亨 (1722-?).
[357] The *Sanli yishu* 三禮義疏 (The Commentaries of the Three Rites) was registered as one set, but it actually contained three separate commentaries: the *Zhouli yishu* 周禮義疏 (The Commentary of the Rites of Zhou), the *Yili yishu* 儀禮義疏 (The Commentary of Etiquette and Ceremonial), and the *Liji yishu* 禮記義疏 (The Commentary of the Classic of Rites). I count this set as three books. According to Weng Lianxi' *Qingdai neifu keshu tulu*, the complete set was printed by the Wuying Hall in 1754 (Qianlong 19) prior to empire-wide dissemination. See Weng, 330.
[358] The *Zhouli* and the *Yili* were not included in the examination curricula despite their Classical status.

Pengdang lun 朋黨論 (Discourse on Factions), the Qianlong emperor's anthology and essays, etc. were presumably for general education purposes. Since the Yongzheng reign, these texts were supposed to keep the literati posted on the throne's ideological interests.[359]

The Office of Education Affairs thus became another venue in which the imperial government promoted its commentated Classics. The Education Commissioners utilized the latest textual projects done in Beijing and urged the entry-level students to learn about them. This effort was to emphasize more on application than physical distribution: Even though these texts were directly associated with the examinations, no commissioner or school instructor could force the students into buying them.[360] Nevertheless, the advocation policy had made a significant difference in the eventual wide spread of these compilations. It created a reciprocal relationship between the promulgators and the examination market. It also created such a relationship between the participating officials and the imperial center.

Most noticeably, the examination system started to provide a "backdoor" policy for the participants who had spent their time on the imperial commentaries. When the Qianlong emperor attempted to encourage merchants to print more of these books, he also directed the Education Commissioners to officially guarantee bonuses to their readers. He proclaimed:

> If there are licentiates and licentiate candidates who study the imperially compiled Classics, either they specialize in one Classic or work on multiple Classics, the education officials will register their names and file the documentation. After the regular examination sessions, the Education Commissioner will hold another session and pick several questions for them to answer. These questions will be drawn from the four Classics where the compilers contested conventional ideas and settled arguments. The students are allowed to answer questions just based on substance. Literary competence will not be required. If they do not deviate from the

[359] More on this aspect in the section: "The Construction of Daily Ideology".
[360] Those who did might face serious consequences. See section "The Grey Zones" at the end of this chapter.

right points, the licentiate candidates among them will be admitted to licentiate status and the licentiates will be admitted to subsidized licentiate status so long as they have fair performance in the other examination papers.

生童中有誦讀御纂諸經者，或專一經，或兼他經，著開名冊報。俟考試文藝之後，該學政就四經中斟酌舊說有所別異處摘取數條，另期發問。只令依義條答，不必責以文采。有能答不失指者，所試文稍平順，童生即予入泮、生員即予補廩。[361]

These incentives were supposedly significant enough to grow the readership. But the majority of the candidates did not seem to be incited consequently. Following the decree, the Education Commissioner of Guangshao further proposed some specifications in the evaluation process. He pointed out that most licentiate candidates were not familiar enough with their Classic of choice (*benjing* 本經). Their examinations did not institute applicable essays either. Therefore, a Classics recitation (*mojing* 默經) test would be necessary to verify eligibility. Many licentiates prepared the examinations by memorizing titles, which was also detrimental to the identification of ideas and argument. The examiners hence must take the initiative to guide them.[362] In the next year, the Education Commissioner of Sichuan noticed that a more pressing concern had to do with the educators. He was in line with the assessment of the licentiates who only studied abridged parts for the sake of passing the examinations.[363] To face this challenge, the school instructors needed to supervise these students and file documentation accordingly. But in reality, only a (unspecified) number of instructors could meet this expectation.[364]

[361] Entry "Qianlong 01-04-27" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 17.
[362] FHA#04-01-38-00180-028. Memorialist Wang Pilie 王丕烈 (?).
[363] As he wrote, most of the licentiates could not even finish their Classic of choice, let alone the new commentaries. FHA#04-01-38-00180-037. Memorialist Chen Xiangshu 陳象樞 (1696-1753).
[364] Ibid.

Some of these issues were subsequently addressed. As described by several Education Commissioners' tenure reports, starting from 1738 (Qianlong 3), it appears like all school instructors must gather the licentiates and the licentiate candidates and lecture them on the imperial commentaries (at least at the time upon the Education Commissioner's arrival).[365] The Education Commissioners themselves also promoted these commentaries. On the day of examination, a recitation test was installed. Those who did well would be selected to the interview session where the Education Commissioner questioned them the differences between the conventional commentaries and the imperial ones.[366] This practice continued after the Qianlong court published new commentaries of the Three Rites. As a 1769 (Qianlong 34) memorial shows, "sijing sanli 四經三禮 (four Classics and Three Rites)" had likely become a jargon phrase in the routinized education scenes.[367]

Now we know that the imperial commentaries, including the latest ones, were actively promoted at the local level with institutional incentives. But did they actually replace the alternative ones? Or was it virtually lip service? Or, to take a middle course, had the imperial version earned a favorable share among the targeted groups? This is where the data points start to become sporadic and somewhat inconsistent. In order to introduce more readers to the commissioned texts, the new ones needed to be proven more useful in the examinations than those in the marketplace. Under the existing policy, the examiners would separately register those who studied imperial commentaries, hold an additional session for them, and then offer an applicable bonus. However, it is unclear to what extent the regular sessions had adapted to these

[365] FHA#02-01-03-03525-020. Memorialist Zhang Kao 張考 (?).
[366] FHA#02-01-03-03582-015. Memorialist Zhou Xuejian 周學健 (?-1748).
[367] FHA#04-01-38-0081-008. Memorialist Wang Tingyu 汪廷璵 (1718-1783).

commentaries. The students were still the outliers of the system if studying the more difficult and expensive textbooks did not give them enough advantage over the others.

This is a hard question to solve even for the most capable Education Commissioners and examiners, especially given the fact that the Civil Service Examinations at all levels were primarily graded according to the performance on the Four Books. Over the course of the Yongzheng-Qianlong continuum, the examination system did move toward the betterment of a diverse, scholarly, and "useful" curriculum (adding back poetry and expanding the scope of Classical learning). But the dominance of the Four Books was not shaken.[368] Thus, the Education Commissioners had to improvise their own ways to persuade more students and let them jump on the imperial Classics bandwagon.[369] Their efforts varied from commissioner to commissioner and from province to province.

At the early stage, the most common measure was to increase the physical amount of the new commentaries. In 1739 (Qianlong 4), the Education Commissioner of Jiangsu coordinated with the Governor and the Treasurer to print more. In addition to the quota allocated by the imperial government, they created a long-term stimulus plan. In the first round, every school was given two more complete sets and every academy was given four. Extra copies were scheduled when the applicable funds became available. To develop a sustainable strategy, the provincial government proposed that the earnings from the school-owned lands (*xuetian* 學田) could be used to reimburse the printing expenses. As this commissioner pointed out, these lands could generate an income of more than five thousand taels of silver every year. After normal expenditures such as refurbishing

[368] See Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 536-568, 736-737.
[369] The commissioned books included those could be used in the Four Books session, such as *Yuzuan xingli jingyi* 御纂性理精義, *Qinding sishu wen* 欽定四書文, etc. But these projects kept ideological consistency with the Cheng-Zhu learning, which means that the other textbooks on the market would suffice.

schools, preparing sacrifices, etc., the surplus was usually up to five hundred taels. The reimbursement of this fund was always subject to the Office of Education Affairs. The commissioner could use it to print imperial commentaries and hand them out to the indigent students who did well in the Licensing Examination. In the subsequent Qualifying Examination, these students would be double-checked to see whether or not they had indeed studied these commentaries. Upon evaluation, reward or penalty would follow. This memorial devised a feasible solution to provide lasting benefits. But it is unclear how much progress this plan had achieved. In the rescript, the emperor put the subsequent investment on hold.[370]

Using government fund to print more imperial commentaries, like Jiangsu had experimented, was nevertheless backed by the throne. He followed up with additional empire-wide disseminations. In 1744 (Qianlong 9), all provinces were mandated to print additional copies. Every school was given two more sets. The school instructors were also asked to lecture on these texts on top of the regular Four Books session.[371] This effort had created another around of promulgation. Its outcome was overall positive, although some provinces had gathered more audience than the others.

Because the provinces were responsible for their own printing and distribution, regional discrepancies mattered. For remote and northern provinces, one significant constraint was the cost. For example, in the summer of 1744, the paper price in Zhili was so high that the roundup cost would make the books unaffordable to both the treasury and regular consumers. Per the Education Commissioner of Shuntian's request, the Governor-general of Jiangnan and Jiangxi arranged waterway transportation of the Jiangxi-printed commentaries (five hundred and sixty-four sets each) to Tianjin and solved the problem. A complete set would be priced at less than two taels of

[370] FHA#04-01-38-0002-038. Memorialist Liu Wulong 劉吳龍 (1690-1742).
[371] Entry "Qianlong 09-10-11" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 226.

silver (with transportation and handling fees added in), which was supposedly reasonable for the Zhili treasury.[372]

Alternatively, the province of Jiangxi adopted a policy that did not depend so much on government investment. The official quota for each school was uniform across the provinces. But as the case of Shuntian shows, the amount each provincial treasury spent varied significantly. In places where the unit price was low, not only the government invested less, but regular buyers could also afford copies themselves. The Education Commissioner of Jiangxi wrote: The reason why the imperial court originally let the provinces print more copies was to invite literati buying them. The Provincial Treasury could first distribute a large quantity to the prefectures. At the time of examinations, the Education Commissioner would advertise these textbooks. The newly admitted students were directed to buy the commentaries of the *Xingli* 性理 (Nature and Principles) and/or their Classic of choice at the cost price (*guanjia* 官價). The other students could also conveniently buy it at will. This Education Commissioner had experimented his method before he proposed it as an empire-wide solution. By 1745 (Qianlong 10), the results had been very positive in this region. The imperial commentaries were widely spread in just a few years ("不過數年之間, 流佈甚廣").[373]

The Jiangxi experience was applicable to some other southern provinces. By cutting off the middlemen (the merchants and government underlings) and not making any profit, the government could utilize its own examination channels to cheaply distribute these texts. In the same year, the Education Commissioner of Guangdong took a similar approach. He focused more on the remote

[372] FHA#04-01-38-0003-027. Memorialist Gao Bin 高斌 (1683-1755). Also see FHA#02-01-005-022775-0010. Board of Rites response.
[373] FHA#04-01-38-0064-041. Memorialist Jin Deying 金德瑛 (1701-1762).

prefectures where few merchants traveled to. Previously served in Yunnan, which was an overall remote province, he used the combination of government network and self-funded means to distribute books. In two examination cycles (four examinations), he had successfully sold about six thousand sets to the participants. In Guangdong, this commissioner's original plan was the same to Jiangxi's. But the emperor did not approve using the provincial treasury's fund for transportation and storage.[374] Thus, he once again self-funded this endeavor. Before the Licensing Examination, he asked the treasury to print four hundred and eighty sets. He then employed assistants to carry them to the examination sheds spanning the remote prefectures of Guangdong. The students there "had never seen" the imperial commentaries. As a result, they bought them with enthusiasm. After one and a half years, at the time of the Qualifying Examination, a fair number of the examinees demonstrated desired progress.[375] In addition to the physical dissemination of textbooks, this commissioner strictly implemented a commensurate guideline of curricular requirements. In both Yunnan and Guangdong, he tested Classical learning in front of the other examination sessions. He also insisted that all school instructors must lecture on the imperial commentaries.[376] These demands were accordant with the emperor's latest decrees.

All four of the aforementioned cases required much local initiative and (sometimes trans-provincial) collaboration. If an Education Commissioner did not actively employ a practical scheme, this imperial campaign would typically disseminate texts to places of little accessibility. This was the case for Fujian, a neighboring province of Jiangxi.

Since the Southern Song, the western and northern parts of Fujian had been a printing center for imperial China. Rich in woodblocks and skilled laborers, this region was known for supplying

[374] FHA#04-01-38-0023-026. Memorialist Sun Renlong 孫人龍 (?). Since the imperial commentary on the Classic of Rites had not published yet, the learners of the *Liji* would buy the *Xingli* instead.
[375] FHA#04-01-38-0023-032.
[376] FHA#04-01-38-0065-019.

affordable books. However, the local market for imperial commentaries was not developed. In 1749 (Qianlong 14), the Education Commissioner of Fujian complained that although he followed the edicts and held an accordant examination session, the results were utterly disappointing:

> Among these visits, there were places where no one in the entire prefecture came to the site despite my announcement. Or dozens of examinees did come, but their responses were not what I inquired about. Some people thinly wrote the essay merely based on what was in the question title. Some others still copied from the deplorable writings by the examination essayists. Only two or three licentiates/licentiate candidates out of the whole province could answer without missing the point. The rest did not actually read the imperially commissioned four Classics.
>
> 其間有示期而通郡無一人至者；有應試數十人而所對非所問者；有循題敷衍成篇者；有仍襲講家陋說者。計全省生童，答不失指者不過二三人，其餘於御纂四經實皆未經寓目。

The commissioner blamed local merchants for not printing enough copies. But he also underlined that in mountainous areas, which were the case for most Fujian prefectures, the transportation expenses became too steep to make money off these books. The market was not mobilized even though the local authorities advertised the imperial policy. Facing this situation, the provincial administration and the Office of Education Affairs did not make any further endeavor.

Nevertheless, this Education Commissioner decided to throw the issue back to the emperor. He suggested: The imperial court should direct the provincial treasuries to double-check the local market across prefectures and counties. The first step would be to let the authorities know whether or not the imperial commentaries were sold locally. For places that were indeed dependent on government provision, they should report the needed number of books according to school sizes. The provincial treasuries would print and distribute them. But instead of fully relying on official efforts, these books were also allowed to be sold to the potential buyers. The prices should be

clearly and publicly marked. All the silver collected would be returned to the treasuries, thus starting a new cycle.[377]

After a Board discussion, this proposal was approved.[378] The subsequent development in Fujian was not specifically stated in the memorials. But the outcome seems to be favorable. Only five years later, this topic was once again brought up by a newly arrived Education Commissioner. This time, the report sharply contrasted with the one cited above:

> Aside from the Eight-Legged essay, I additionally tested them with Classical learning and ancient learning. On the four imperially compiled Classics, plenty of students were able to answer with coherence and clarity. Some of them were capable of poetry or the recitation of the Three Rites… I promoted them in a separate admission row so that they were encouraged.
>
> 八股外，復試以經學、古學。士子於御纂四經，頗有條對明晰、及記寫三禮、作詩賦者。……臣另榜拔取，使知鼓勵。[379]

If all these reports are credible (my default premise unless otherwise disproved), either bureaucratic (local level) or imperial activism led to success in certain provinces. Most of the cases required the reciprocal combination of both. The overall situation is hard to assess due to the lack of a complete archival record. It is also hard to tell how long this promulgation campaign lasted. As a general observation, the officials were more likely to mention their corresponding efforts when there was an active political agenda or a noteworthy event. This rule of thumb applies to text dissemination. As the above table of Yunnan office shows, the active dissemination of textual products had been carried well into the latter half of the Qianlong reign. Discussions in officialdom largely followed the tides.

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[377] FHA#04-01-38-0182-011. Memorialist Ge Derun 葛德潤 (1702-1771).
[378] Entry "Qianlong 14-10-03" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 350.
[379] FHA#04-01-38-0069-037. Memorialist Wang Tingyu 汪廷璵 (1718-1783).

For example, the imperial court issued updated commentaries on the *Zhouyi*, the *Shijing*, and the *Chunqiu* in 1765 (Qianlong 30). Between 1766 (Qianlong 31) and 1771 (Qianlong 36), the Education Commissioner of Guangdong submitted consecutive reports on the actual application of his field work:

> In the last year, I once again received three books: the imperially commissioned Zhouyi shuyi, the Shiyi zhezhong, the Chunqiu zhijie. Now they already have the woodblocks engraved according to the samples. The printed books were sent to the schools in the prefectures, the sub-prefectures, and the counties so that they can be read and studied widely… In every place I toured, I closely read these commentated Classics together with the students at the schools. And I widely encouraged them to study these books… Now every time I examine Classical interpretation, those who can memorize these Classics are quite a few… I thus imprudently request: …If there are people who can memorize the exegeses of these three Classics, all of them will be permitted for admission… Then the students will naturally be more encouraged, and the commissioned books will be even more widely spread and studied.
>
> 茲於上年復奉欽頒御纂周易述義、詩義折中、春秋直解三書，現已依式鋟板，分往各府州縣學廣資誦習。…臣所到各郡與諸學各生童細譯經書，廣為誘掖。…現在每逢考試經解時，能記誦諸經者頗不乏人。…臣愚請…如有能記誦三經之義者，准予一體錄取。…則諸生自當更加勉勵而傳習益廣矣。[380]

When this commissioner served the second term in Guangdong three years later, he saw a substantial increase of the students who would take the test for Classical interpretation. In the following three sub-prefecture and prefectures, the registered number for the examination of Classical interpretation was huge: More than one thousand and two hundred people in Jiaying; Up to two thousand people in Chaozhou; More than three thousand and one hundred people in

[380] FHA#03-1170-050. Memorialist Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818).

Guangzhou.[381] By the time he finished his second tenure, the average numbers in the eastern prefectures further increased:

> The number of the licentiates and the licentiate candidates who can memorize the imperially published commentaries and familiarize themselves to the skills of poetry is between over two thousand to three thousand in all the three prefectures of Guangzhou, Chaozhou, Huizhou, and the sub-prefecture of Jiaying.
>
> 諸生童中能記誦欽頒諸經義及習為詩賦者，則廣州、潮州、惠州三府，嘉應一州，皆有二千餘人至三千人不等。[382]

Around the same time, reports from the other provinces also mentioned effort being made but lacked specific data. The memorialists nevertheless wrote about their emphasis on building a viable curriculum. For example, the Education Commissioner of Henan added two tests following the monthly lectures (*yueke* 月課): One on the interpretation of the imperially compiled Classics; another on history essay. The commissioner himself scrutinized the papers.[383] In Anhui, the Education Commissioner lectured on the imperial commentaries following every examination event.[384]

4.3 ***A Story of Accomplishments***

4.3.1 Battle of Essayists

As text dissemination became unactive in the late Qianlong reign, fewer discussions came along with the Education Commissioners' memorials. Those did raise questions were usually because of a specific issue. For example, the Classicists of the eighteenth century had experimented with ancient texts of mixed ideological nature in order to facilitate their evidential study. These sources

[381] FHA#04-01-38-0081-004.
[382] FHA#04-01-38-0084-013.
[383] FHA#04-01-38-0086-007. Memorialist Xu Guangwen 徐光文 (?).
[384] FHA#04-01-38-0007-001. Memorialist Zhu Yun 朱筠 (1729-1781).

included non-Confucian learning, also known as the *Zhuzi xue* 諸子學 (Learning of Miscellaneous Masters). When scholars of this academic trend took the examinations, they might cite these texts to interpret the Classics. This practice was deemed by most examiners incorrect. During the eighteenth century, some viewpoints and textual choices by the evidential scholars did have a moderate impact on the civil service examinations.[385] But the *Zhuzi xue*, for its perceived non-Confucian nature, was not considered an option. In 1758 (Qianlong 23), the Education Commissioner of Shuntian reported that the Jiangnan literati were used to adopt non-Confucian ideas in their essays. As time moved on, this habit had spread to other provinces.[386] In 1790 (Qianlong 55), the Education Commissioner of Hunan further discussed this phenomenon. He noticed that the best examinees could "use Classics to interpret Classics" (*yijing jiejing* 以經解經). However, some of them also used texts from the likes of the *Guanzi* 管子, the *Xunzi* 荀子, and the writings of Sima Qian 司馬遷, Ban Gu 班固, etc. If the examiner rejected all such papers, he would be too harsh a grader. After all, those who were capable of using these texts were scholars ("dushu zhi ren 讀書之人"). What was worse, depreciating them would drive the literati into the prescribed essays (*shiwen* 時文) on the market. But if the examiner highly appraised these essays, the literati would model after this style and become indifferent with the texts. This commissioner argued: The best solution was to teach these students the value of being selective in learning. In order to be selective, they had to fathom the Classics first. The texts ready to serve this purpose

[385] For an overview of the eighteenth-century Classical studies and its relations with the examinations, see Benjamin Elman, "Early Modern or Late Imperial Philology? The Crisis of Classical Learning in Eighteenth Century China," *Frontiers of History in China* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 3-25.
[386] FHA#04-01-38-0070-016. Memorialist Zhuang Cunyu 莊存與 (1719-1788).

were, of course, the seven commentated Classics distributed by the imperial court. He then further reinforced the school curriculum on these texts.[387]

Unlike the other cases, this discussion did not emerge from an active political context. The memorialist addressed his purist approach on the use of intertextual reference in Classical interpretation. He was not taking an academic stance; Rather, he explained how to resolve an examination issue with the textual arsenal close at hand. The imperial commentaries were mentioned as a tool to fix two patterns: Those who read extensively tended to deviate from the accepted canonical tradition; Those who read few would take a chance with the market-oriented textbooks. The memorialist focused on the former group, while the latter was much more common and multitudinous. This phenomenon brings us to another dimension of the Education Commissioners' role in text dissemination: Aside from political concerns, they relied on authoritative texts to resolve commentarial issues and increase examination performance. The books issued by the imperial court were often not just an ideological package; They were also workbooks in the field.

To the education officials in the first half of the eighteenth century, a complete, reliable, and coherent set of commentated Classics was long overdue. If the merchants were mostly worried about the profit, the Education Commissioners were mindful of the readership. They found themselves constantly battling with the poorly written textbooks in which the Classical texts were abusively abridged. Admittedly, complains had been commonplace since the examination system was introduced. Every participant had to ask himself a question: To study the entire corpus for the sake of real scholarship or the "inferior" ones whose onetime use was taking a shortcut to pass the thorny gates? While this is an inherent paradox of any standardized tests, many educators

[387] FHA#04-01-38-0097-035. Memorialist Zhang Yaocheng 張姚成 (1742-1798).

considered the latter fraudulent. They insisted on more substantial learning. Besides, there were textual issues pertaining to the Classics and their commentaries. The well-researched and imperially sanctioned commentaries were preferable when readers sought an authoritative reference. Notably, the examiners of the Metropolitan Examinations replaced all the other versions with the court-published ones in 1762 (Qianlong 27).[388] In light of these factors (and no less politically invested), the commissioners were aspired to have a more discerning student body of Classical education.

Many abridged textbooks and prescribed essays on the market targeted on the Four Books, which constituted the most important session in the examinations. The default commentary for the Four Books was Zhu Xi's *Sishu jizhu* 四書集註 (Collated Exegeses on the Four Books). In order to pass the examinations, however, simply relying on this book was not enough. Since the Ming times, the literati were accustomed to using the *Sishu daquan* 四書大全 (Compendium of the Four Books) and the *Xingli daquan* 性理大全 (Compendium of Nature and Principle) as their primary reference. During the Kangxi reign, the imperial court issued an abbreviated version of the *Xingli daquan*. It was the *Xingli jingyi* 性理精義 (Gist of Nature and Principle) and became an indispensable textbook at schools. The Kangxi court also compiled the *Sishu jieyi* 四書解義 (Interpretation of the Four Books) as a part of the *Rijiang* 日講 (Daily Lectures) series. These projects, along with the other ones, were partly designed to replace the Ming compilations. But their success was limited.

[388] This practice was established as a rule and applied to the Provincial Examinations in 1771 (Qianlong 36). See the "Gongju 貢舉" (Selection of Talents) section in the *Daqing huidian shili* (the 1818 version), *juan* 289.

At the beginning of the Qianlong reign, the emperor distributed the Sishu jieyi to the provinces. It served a supplement for the study of the Four Books.[389] Two years later, the imperial court published a collection of exemplary essays called the *Qinding sishu wen* 欽定四書文 (Imperially Sanctioned Essays for the Four Books).[390] Compiled by the famous essayist Fang Bao 方苞 (1668-1749), this collection aimed to provide role models of literary style for the examinees. At the same time, the Qianlong emperor lifted the ban on private compilations of examination essays. He argued that the new policy would facilitate the spread of the acclaimed authors' works. Moreover, the participance of book merchants would speed up the publication of the most recent examination papers, from which the examinees could learn.[391]

Despite the emperor's good will, the market responded with chaos. Book merchants chose to sell trendy versions so that the buyers could, for better or worse, distinguish themselves in the end results. In 1744 (Qianlong 9), the Education Commissioner of Zhaogao observed this phenomenon with anxiety. He wrote: The contestants were all potentially going to serve in civil administration. If they imitated extravagant essays in order to be selected, they would be inclined to cater to corrupt customs and become "greasy and flabby" (*zhiwei* 脂韋) officials down the road. He used the popular essayist Zhang Jinmu 章金牧's composition as an example. Because some editors highly praised Zhang's essays, many students sought after the newest printouts as a secret weapon. They even claimed "Those who do not read Zhang Jinmu would not receive admission (不讀章金牧稿不得中式)". If a region so remote like Zhaoqing-Gaozhou was experiencing this phenomenon, it must have been more widespread in the inland provinces of the empire. The commissioner thus

[389] See the "Banxing shuji 頒行書籍" (Book Dissemination) section in the *Xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 12.
[390] Entry "Qianlong 04-04-08" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 90.
[391] Entry "Qianlong 01-06-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 21.

requested that all such publications must be strictly forbidden. The woodblocks should be destroyed. He also proposed that the imperial court should recompile the *Sishu daquan* to replace the Ming version.[392] The already published *Sishu jieyi* was less about settling commentarial opinions. Hence, the schools were in need of a *Four Books* textbook that catered more to the examinations.

The Board of Rites did not approve these requests. In the response, the Board argued that literary trends should be determined by the evaluators' preference. What benefits would be the literati looking for if the examiner could reject the erroneous and extravagant essays they modeled after? The audiences would naturally abandon the likes of Zhang Jinmu. Otherwise, how could the government forbid so many of them? In the end, the Board reiterated the importance of literary rectification. It meant that examination admission must follow the standards of the *Qinding sishu wen*.[393] Behind this decision, the Board officials presumably had to maintain the emperor's liberation policy per the private publication of examination essays. As a result, the textbook market continued to be oversaturated with cheap, poorly printed, and yet always fashionable essay collections. The imperial compilations turned out to be unable to compete with these books. Seeing the stored ones slowly disintegrated in school libraries, some Education Commissioners used their own fund to purchase and distribute more.[394] The overall result had not been positive. Thirty years after the publication of the *Qinding sishu wen*, the Qianlong emperor openly questioned its achievement in front of the palace examinees. "What is wrong with the literary style? Is it the

[392] FHA#04-01-38-0181-021. Memorialist Jin Hongquan 金洪銓 (?).
[393] See the "Lizheng wenti 釐正文體" (Rectification of Literary Style) section in the *Xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 6.
[394] FHA#04-01-38-0073-038. Memorialist Liu Xingwei 劉星煒 (1718-1772). Submitted in 1760 (Qianlong 25).

instructors' fault? Or the examiners?" (其弊安在？將教之者非歟？抑取之未善耶？), he sighed.[395]

4.3.2 Not Just for Display: Disseminating New Commentaries

Apart from the Four Books, equally disturbing was the abridged Classics. The most difficult cases were centered on the *Chunqiu* and the *Liji*. Discussions on ritual learning had arisen after the Qianlong emperor issued new commentaries for the Three Rites, the last ones in the imperial government's Classical compilation sequence. However, in the examination scene, many students had not even read the whole *Liji*. In 1764 (Qianlong 29), the Education Commissioner of Hunan submitted a long report on the abridged *Liji* seen in the market.[396] He stated, "If a literatus has not versed himself in the Classics, he is certainly unprepared for government positions." Now that the emperor had already distributed updated commentaries for four Classics and the Three Rites, all literati knew what to reference should they came across contentious ideas.[397] However, very few of the Hunan literati paid attention to Classical learning. The most notorious example was the *Liji*. He found out that the students seldom studied the complete text. Instead, they used the abridged versions from the book merchants. He listed some common titles of these abridged textbooks and commented that these books only kept less than a half of the complete text. Upon closer look, the sole purpose of the remaining texts was to facilitate the *niti* 擬題 (conjectured questions). If a paragraph or sentence was judged by the editor unlikely to appear in the examinations, it would be taken out regardless of its place in the context. Needless to say, the consequences to true

[395] Entry "Qianlong 34-04-21" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 833. More on the topic of essay evaluation in the next section.

[396] FHA#03-1147-028. Memorialist Li Shou 李綬 (1713-1791).

[397] These books were the outcome of the imperial government's compilation projects on the *Shijing*, the *Yijing*, the *Shangshu*, the *Chunqiu*, the *Zhouli*, the *Yili*, and the *Liji*, which addressed issues of the Seven Classics in their commentarial traditions. They all appeared in the above library catalogue of the Yunnan education office.

scholarship would be detrimental. Therefore, he maintained, the imperial government should take actions in banning abridged books and promoting the correct ones. Meanwhile, the educators should consider how to avoid making questions that were too common and easy to surmise.

The Board, sanctioning the ban, followed up with a legitimization statement on the imperially compiled version. The Board officials denounced the editors of abridged Classics who aimed to serve the indolent learners. They noted that the *Liji* was not commentated by Zhu Xi. Schools had been using the Chen Hao commentary, which sticked to the Cheng-Zhu principles but lacked philological rigor. This was why the emperor ordered a new commentary for the *Liji*. Therefore, the abridged *Liji* textbooks must be forbidden. The students must study the complete text.[398]

In order to implement such a policy, two government branches had to cooperate: The local administration would carry out the ban; The education officials would urge the literati to buy proper books. This institutional infrastructure never seemed to be effective in long-term coordination.[399] Apparently, merchants never ceased to sell such books. The seasoned Education Commissioner Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818) then brought the campaign against abridged Classics to its acme. Weng served as the Education Commissioner in Guangdong, Jiangxi, and Shandong in his career. In Jiangxi, he devoted himself in discouraging the use of abridged Classics. In addition to banning problematic textbooks, he personally wrote a reading list for the students.[400] This list was one of the early efforts preceding Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909)'s famous *Shumu dawen* 書目答問 (Answers to Bibliographical Inquiries) in the nineteenth century. Then, in Shandong, Weng triggered the Qing state's largest campaign against abridged textbooks.

[398] See the "Shufang jinli 書坊禁例" (Book Market Bans) section in the *Xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 14.
[399] More discussion on this topic in the last section.
[400] FHA#03-1179-059.

The political context for Classical learning further evolved in 1788 (the end of Qianlong 52) when the court decided that the participants of the Civil Service Examinations would take all of the Five Classics after a transitioning period.[401] When Weng Fanggang arrived at the Shandong office in 1791 (Qianlong 56), he found the local market was still filled with abridged Classics (especially those of the *Chunqiu* and of the *Liji*). The literati should study all Classics per the court's latest instruction, and yet many of them could not even fathom one Classic due to their negligence of correct versions. Weng first replicated his measures in Jiangxi by posting a list of recommended books in the towns. The merchants were proscribed to sell the wrong ones.[402] However, his approach seemed to be ineffective. Half a year later, Weng decided to ask the emperor for further assistance. He stated that, as Education Commissioner, it was complicated to instruct local authorities. A thorough market inspection would be disruptive to commoners' life as well. In the end, he could only choose to make questions out of the texts that were deleted in the abridged books. As a result, those who did not read the complete set would not be admitted.[403] The Qianlong emperor felt "very ashamed" (*shenkuizhi* 甚愧之) upon reading this report. Hence, he started a sweeping campaign asking all the Governors-general, the Governors, and the Education Commissioners to investigate this issue.[404] It later turned out to be a liminal variant of literary inquisition. From the existing routine memorials, this campaign had created awareness that was carried into the post-Qianlong era.

Actual campaigns aside, Weng's reports do remind us of the relatively mild measures that had been taken within the Education Commissioners' power. They often admonished students and

[401] Entry "Qianlong 52-12-24" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1295.
[402] FHA#04-01-38-0099-004.
[403] FHA#04-01-38-0099-027.
[404] Entry "Qianlong 57-06-26" in the *Shangyu dang*.

merchants against misdemeanors, though the enforcement factor was limited. If we look back at the moment in the early Qianlong reign when the emperor was the most active in the textual production and dissemination of the Classics, the Education Commissioners had already been an organic part of this initiative. Checking on the readership of substandard textbooks was one example within a combination of different means that encouraged the use of alternative versions, which included the court-disseminated ones. The latter was promoted as an obvious outcome. Through lecturing, emphasizing on specific criteria, making tailored questions in the examinations, etc., the students were further pushed to study the imperial commentaries.

4.3.3 The "Silk Voice Broadcast" of Imperial Anthologies

Lastly, we see a number of the emperor's own writings from the Yunnan education office's library. This is not a unique phenomenon for the Qianlong reign.[405] But as the above table shows, it was much more common under the Qianlong rule than any other era in the dynasty. Some Education Commissioners did capture this momentum. They found gifting these texts to individual officials insufficient; Instead, the emperor's works should be widely distributed like the Classics. Collectively representing all literati, the Education Commissioner of Zhejiang asked for extended publication in 1765 (Qianlong 30).[406] The imperial government swiftly approved this request. All provinces thus received the emperor's anthologies to date: the first and second collections of poetry; the first collection of essays.[407] Eleven years later, another Zhejiang commissioner followed up with the latest (the third) poetry collection.[408] The emperor once again allowed it. He

[405] For example, the Yongzheng emperor's widely spread his rebuttal against Lü Liuliang. Even borderland regions had acquired copies. The Taiwan Inspector and Education Commissioner Office continued to report the possession of this book in the Qianlong reign. E.g., FHA#02-01-03-3362-001, memorialist Shan Demo 單德謨 (?); FHA#02-01-03-3606-019, memorialist Yang Eryou 楊二酉 (?); etc.
[406] FHA#03-1147-030. Memorialist Qian Weicheng 錢維城 (1720-1772).
[407] Entry "Qianlong 30-02-22" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 731.
[408] FHA#04-01-38-0011-041. Memorialist Wang Jie 王杰 (1725-1805).

also let this commissioner voluntarily self-funded the printing and distribution in Zhejiang. The other provinces were managed via the treasuries.[409] In Zhejiang, two hundred copies were printed and disseminated to schools across the province. The woodblocks were stored at the Treasury along with the other imperial anthologies, which any merchant could request and print extra copies.[410]

For the remainder of the Qianlong reign, the emperor wrote and published two more poetry collections and two more essay collections. In 1780 (Qianlong 45), the acting Judicial Supervisor and Treasurer of Guizhou petitioned for supplementary dissemination. The emperor rejected the proposal and blamed this official for trespassing on unrelated duties. He believed the already distributed anthologies should be enough to set up a model.[411] The archival records since then had been blank in regard to this endeavor. Single pieces of literary works were still distributed. However, most of them only appeared on the catalogues without mentioning the occasion. Additionally, some of the emperor's edicts were distributed to schools and academies. The Education Commissioners would lecture on them, thus making new policies known to the literati audience.[412]

The overall priority of the emperor's writings was lower than the Classical commentaries both in terms of bureaucratic mobilization and ideological application. Initiated by literary officials instead of the imperial government, the dissemination of these anthologies was more of an

[409] Entry "Qianlong 41-12-15" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1022.
[410] FHA#03-1152-042. Memorialist Wang Jie.
[411] Entry "Qianlong 45-08-02" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1112.
[412] For example, following the emperor's reiteration a literary policy, several Education Commissioners submitted memorials that mentioned the physical distribution of the edict in 1779 (Qianlong 44). This was per the order of the emperor himself. See Entry "Qianlong 44-08-03" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1088, and FHA#04-01-38-0091-041, memorialist Hong Pu 洪朴 (?); FHA#04-01-38-0091-040, memorialist Peng Yuanrui 彭元瑞 (1731-1803); etc. If the emperor did not make it clear, individual commissioners might still print and distribute according to their own understanding. E.g., FHA#04-01-38-0073-030, memorialist Liu Xingwei 劉星煒 (1718-1772).

occasional gesture than a planned outcome. As to their actual function, the education officials applauded that the essays and poems showcased the "sagely learning".[413] The emperor himself also believed these works were nothing but relevant to governance.[414] Still, unlike the officials, the receiving literati had limited access to the venues where they could make use of these texts in a meaningful context. In the end, little association with the examinations entailed fewer audiences. The celebration of these texts was largely an officialdom phenomenon, in which it mattered as a discourse of conformity.

Beyond text dissemination, individual officials spasmodically bridged the emperor's writings and the local audiences. For example, the Education Commissioners who received textual gifts might share them in schools. In Hubei, the students were able to see the emperor's two new poems hung at their schoolhouses in 1780 (Qianlong 45). It was the year the throne sent his poetic pieces to all Education Commissioners (the individual, not the office), and the Hubei commissioner chose to calligraph, print, and display them. He allegedly urged the Hubei literati read these poems out "from dawn to dusk" (*zhaoxi fengsong* 朝夕諷誦).[415] This practice, although varied individually and being a rarer occurrence, did bring the literati to the latest literary message from the imperial center. The connection could be emotionally close given how few layers of contact between the throne and the audiences.

4.3.4 Implications and Consequences

To conclude, text dissemination was frequently used by the Qianlong emperor as a means to mobilize the education officials and spread his ideological vision. Although the official curriculum for the civil service examinations only specified the authoritative commentaries for each Classic,

[413] See the above cited memorials by Qian Weicheng and Wang Jie.
[414] Entry "Qianlong 53-03-19" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1301.
[415] FHA#04-01-12-0190-017. Memorialist Hong Pu 洪朴 (?).

the actual textbooks used could vary significantly both in terms of composition and textual integrity.[416] From the outset of the Qianlong reign, the emperor renewed a literary interest that was previously seen during the Kangxi era. He was keen to further unify Classical interpretation both at and beyond the examination scene. Equipped with fiscal capacity and an institutional infrastructure at its dynastic best, the emperor extensively distributed prints across the provinces and utilized his education officials to achieve the goal of wide readership.

The imperial commentaries were essentially digested and elucidated compilations that were based on a myriad of existing commentaries. They were more voluminous and intricate than the single-authored Song ones. Economically less affordable and intellectually more challenging, the market initially responded with rather little investment. The Education Commissioners thus became an irreplaceable pillar of the dissemination endeavor. Their efforts were empowered by the new examination policies that encouraged the use of the new commentaries. The market was prone to offer inadequate textbooks, which gave the commissioners another reason to push forward the deployment of standardized versions and interpretation.

To a modern reader, the ways of examining specific contents can be nebulous. It also remains unknown whether the merchants eventually decided to step in or not after they saw a potential rise of interests among the literati. Nevertheless, the reports from the Education Commissioners are valid enough to prove that at least a certain percentage of the entry-level students were exposed to

[416] The Qing examination curriculum was modeled after the Ming setup, which nominated the Song dynasty Cheng-Zhu thinkers' works as the authoritative commentaries: Zhu Xi's for the Four Books; Cheng Yi's and Zhu Xi's for the *Yijing*; Cai Shen 蔡沈's for the *Shangshu*; Zhu Xi's for the *Shijing*; Hu Anguo 胡安國's for the *Chunqiu*; Chen Hao 陳澔's for the *Liji*. See "Xuanju san 選舉三 (Selection 3)" in the *Draft History of the Qing*, *juan* 180. In 1792, the Hu commentary of the *Chunqiu* was abolished. It was replaced by the old three, namely, the *Zuo*, the *Gongyang*, and the *Guliang* commentaries. Among the three, the *Zuo Commentary* was set as primary. See Entry "Qianlong 57-12-18" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1419. In actual application, as the aforementioned cases demonstrate, both examiners and examinees might well use other sources. Most notably, the imperial commentaries and the ancient commentaries from the Han dynasty were preferred.

the emperor's latest textual projects. More important, their performance could be evaluated positively if they had demonstrated their knowledge on these commentaries. In an unprecedented way, the time-honored examination system became closely associated with the empire's ongoing ideological construct. Text dissemination even extended beyond the examination compound as the emperor's own writings were promoted along with the Classics. It provides an extraordinary example of imperial activism and its local effectiveness that only those of the modern age can surpass.

Chapter V: The Reinforcement of State Ideology

This chapter addresses how the Qianlong emperor and his commissioners imposed their moralism and reformist approaches to literati training upon the empire's examination populace through educational supervision, under which many literati learned how to behave and study on a daily basis. The Education Commissioners toured around the prefectures where they typically held two examinations in every three years. On the itinerant tours, they led and observed ceremonial practices, disseminated texts, evaluated the examination candidates, and personally lectured the ways to succeed as a good literatus (*shi* 士). They experimented with new measures of Classical learning, many of which were not empire-wide practices and thus reminds us of the institutional boundaries. But when such measures were initiated or confirmed by the Qing state, they were to be integrated into the existing examination system. The increasing number of students capable of meeting the new criteria leads us to reassess the quotidian power of ideological inculcation during this era.

5.1 ***Remodeling the Exemplary Population***

5.1.1 On Principles

Among those reports that were pertinent to education affairs, literary performance and literati ethics constituted two focal topics. In 1729 (Yongzheng 7), the Governor of Guangdong complained that the literati within his purview were not well advised. The government should deploy two Education Commissioners in the province. These two offices would be respectively in charge of "literary evaluation (wenheng 文衡)" and "literati conducts (shixing 士行)". The Yongzheng emperor accepted the proposal of establishing two education offices in Guangdong but divided their duties geographically. By refusing the separation of writings and manners, the throne made it clear that the imperial government's approach to literati education was holistic

(within the Neo-Confucian framework).[417] In the succeeding Qianlong emperor's first round of Education Commissioner appointment, he also stated that the two pillars of the appointees' responsibilities would be "disciplining and guiding the literati (xundao shizi 訓導士子)" along with "instructing and reviewing literary skills (jiaoyue wenyi 校閱文藝)".[418] Henceforth, these criteria frequently appeared in the throne's vermillion rescripts and edicts on education affairs.

The implication of these criteria was beyond examination. Per the Confucian ideal, a world well governed by ritual principles leads people to enlightened and virtuous life.[419] The group that carries the weight of exemplar would be the literati (*shi* 士). As the Yongzheng emperor announced after his reform of the education office:

> The literati are the head of the Four Peoples and the living examples a whole region looks up to. The entire populace respect them and follow them. This is because people believe that since a man reads the books of the Sages and is selected into the schools, his words and deeds can all become the guidelines for the countrymen… If the literati do not have right demeanors, in which way can the common people's practice be corrected? …I figure that the prescription for convert and cultivation is firstly setting the right path at the beginning… Therefore, I directly appoint education officials and select school instructors from the Regular Path. In doing so, I expect that from high to low, the roots are rectified, the source is refined, and actual results can be attained.
>
> 為士者，乃四民之首、一方之望。凡屬編氓，皆尊之奉之，以為讀聖賢之書、列膠庠之選，其所言所行俱可以為鄉人法則也。…士習不端，民風何由而正？ …朕思轉移化導之法，當先端其本原。…故特簡學之臣、慎重教官之職，欲使自上而下，端本澄源，以收實效也。[420]

[417] Entry "Yongzheng 07-12-08" in the *Shizong xian huangdi shilu* 世宗憲皇帝實錄, *juan* 89.
[418] Entry "Yongzheng 13-10-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 5.
[419] As the *Classic of Rites* says, "mentoring and the rectification of customs cannot be provided without ritual principles (教訓正俗，非禮不備)". See "Quli shang 曲禮上" in the *Liji* 禮記 (Classic of Rites).
[420] Entry "Yongzheng 04-09-28" in the *Shizong xian huangdi shilu*, *juan* 48. For a discussion of its historical and institutional context, also see Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 229-231.

The Qianlong emperor was no less enthusiastic about achieving this goal. In an interview with a seasoned Education Commissioner, he listed two kinds of fulfillment: "being competent in office (chenzhi 稱職)" and "being accomplished in office (jinzhi 盡職)". He commented that this commissioner did alright in terms of the former. But to be accomplished, the Office of Education Affairs still needed to focus on "the cultivation of talents (yucai 育才)" and "the rectification of habitus (zhengsu 正俗)".[421] As a demand that was unmeasurable nor executable on bureaucratic terms, it represented more of a political expression rather than an actual task. Its ultimate destination landed at the pan-moralization of population through the education of literati, which was concordant with the Yongzheng emperor's institutional design.

At the time of this interview, there was an ongoing project of the Three Rites at the imperial court. Many Education Commissioners responded with exuberance. They wrote to the emperor about their new emphasis on ritual studies in local examinations. It seems like the high principles from the Classics were reviving, at least in the textual form, among the model population.

The Education Commissioners' cultivation challenge did not stop at the textual level. In a memorial, the Education Commissioner of Shandong summarized his approach to education affairs. He highlighted the necessity of prioritizing the moral domestication of the literati and wrote:

> I humbly believe that if an Education Commissioner only focuses on literary evaluation without any improvement on customs and human heart, he is not up to the requirement of the post. Therefore, on the days of arrival, I mentor the students untiringly and earnestly. I ask them that upholding one's conduct and fostering familial values must be placed ahead of literary competition.

[421] FHA#04-01-12-0044-093. Memorialist Wu Sijue 吳嗣爵 (1707-1779). Wu was about to begin his second term in a different province.

臣以為學政僅以衡文為事，於風俗人心毫無振作，即為不稱職。故按臨日提撕不憚諄諄，物以植行敦倫先於角藝。[422]

The memorialist earned high praise from the Qianlong emperor who marked these sentences and reconfirmed the importance of this specification. The emperor also commented that most Education Commissioners were lacking this awareness.

While the approach was similar to his father, the Qianlong emperor did show more ambition as well as attention to bring this utopian ideal to life. Notably, he had ample arsenals at his disposal and was willing to use them. The one-on-one lecturing (*shengxun* 聖訓) during interviews was commonplace alongside that in the vermillion rescripts. The receiving officials cited those fresh words as their ultimate guideline. Then they sent back reports and inputs accordingly. On top of it, the court consistently published edicts that declared what needed to be done and denounced those who understood things wrong. The emperor sat commodiously on this loop of ideological governance. He became intimately engaged with the implementation of literary policies, the dissemination of textual offerings, and the doctrinal conformity as a result of these endeavors.

5.1.2 Experiment and Limitation of Non-Examination Evaluations

The Qianlong emperor expected the literati to be worthy of setting an example for all the subjects. This wish was iterated as an explicit request for the Education Commissioners. In the emperor's view, virtue always came first to examination excellence. The connection of the two was not only sequential but also causal. "Put moral cultivation in front of literary skills (先德學而後文藝)," said the newly enthroned emperor to the Education Commissioner of Shandong when the latter was leaving for the office.[423] While reading memorials, the emperor was often pleased

[422] FHA#04-01-12-0064-062. Memorialist Li Yinpei 李因培 (1717-1767).
[423] FHA#04-01-38-0058-038. Memorialist Li Guang'ao 李光墺 (1671-1738).

to see the education office catering to this vision. One commissioner wrote about how the rectification of literary style was dependent on the rectification of literati behavior. He actively punished the licentiate litigators as a part of this effort. The rescript reads: "You are not all about literary evaluation. This is praiseworthy. (一切不獨衡文是可嘉也)".[424]

Behind this seemingly idealistic approach, there was a realistic concern about social unrests caused by the licentiate group. Obedience was more important than talent especially given how few from this group could become appointable degree-holders. In addition to ritualized gatherings and lectures at schools, the Education Commissioners mostly sought to achieve the goal of cultivation through discipline and recommendations. The former was primarily against licentiate involvement in litigation. The latter was typically the selection of the *yousheng* 優生 (excelled licentiates), the *gongsheng* 貢生 (advanced licentiates), etc., which were evaluated based upon both behavior and schoolwork. In most cases, these evaluations were done by the local instructors.[425] It is thus difficult for us to tell the details and how truthful these reports were. Flipping through the archives, however, we do occasionally find names that are familiar to historians of Qing literature and Classicism.[426] Supposedly, these candidates all had good reputation and demonstrated academic excellence.

Starting from 1736 (Qianlong 1), to increase the Education Commissioners' personal role in morality- and scholarship-based licentiate and school instructor recommendations, the emperor

[424] FHA#04-01-38-0076-022. Memorialist Li Yinpei 李因培 (1717-1767).

[425] As admitted by the Education Commissioner of Sichuan Shi Yimo 史貽謨 (?) in FHA#04-01-38-0182-023.

[426] For example, in the following two reports from Jiangsu: The renowned poet Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673-1769) appeared on FHA#02-01-006-0201-010; The Classicist Cheng Yaotian 程瑤田 (1725-1814) was selected along with three other students in FHA#02-02-013-0896-020. Both cases seem to be merit-based evaluation. I only read a few memorials of this topic. Hence, a thorough survey may differ.

asked them to select a few exceptional ones for appointment in the imperial government.[427] Some commissioners answered the call. For example, the Education Commissioner of Anhui recommended two licentiates to the Six Boards. One excelled in Classical learning. Another was versed in history.[428] The Education Commissioner of Shanxi recommended an academy headmaster to be promoted.[429] But either out of liability concerns or executive difficulties, this practice soon became uncommon. One excuse was that routinized recommendation could be imprudent given the possession of both talent and virtue was rare among the licentiates.[430] The academy/school instructors were seldom recommended either.[431]

Upon reviewing a case, the emperor had to reiterate this policy in 1765. He asked the provincial oversight to handle it instead.[432] But as one Education Commissioner pointed out, the Governors-general and the Governors were occupied by administration chores and the Education Commissioners had to hold examinations around the province. There should be a Circuit official designated to this work.[433] The recommendation-based evaluation, which drew attention to the evaluation of the candidates' character, was therefore hardly a supplement to the examinations.

Challenged by this difficulty, the education office had to back off and continue mostly relying on the school instructors' evaluation reports in order to draft recommendations. Nevertheless, motivated by the emperor's aggressive agenda, the commissioners went beyond the routinized chores and experimented with a variety of actions. As much as it was admittedly hard to measure

[427] Entry "Qianlong 01-06-01" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 20.
[428] Entry "Qianlong 03-12-07" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 82.
[429] FHA#02-01-03-3541-002. Memorialist Shen Wengao 沈文鎬 (?). Submitted in 1738 (Qianlong 3).
[430] FHA#02-01-03-3588-005. Memorialist Kaitai 開泰 (?-1763). Submitted in 1739 (Qianlong 4).
[431] FHA#04-01-38-0181-021. Memorialist Jin Hongquan 金洪銓 (?). Submitted in 1744 (Qianlong 9).
[432] Entry "Qianlong 30-10-06" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 746. It seems like the Education Commissioners were dropped from eligible recommenders. The Governors-general and the Governors were initially responsible and would continue with this task.
[433] FHA#04-01-38-0181-021. Memorialist Jin Hongquan.

the exact results, these actions prove that "moral cultivation" possessed tangible meaning and function contingent on the agency of provincial education.

3.1.3 On Execution

A Qianlong-era licentiate would be unlikely to miss all the disciplining signs if he visited school often. On the left side of the Hall of Moral Enlightenment, the couching stele (*wobei* 臥碑) warned him against misdemeanors in family, at school, and in relations with the government.[434] On the days of new and full moon and several other occasions, he would be lectured on various texts of similar nature. These texts were stored at the Chamber of Revering Classics (*Zunjing ge* 尊經閣) where he could access as library: The Kangxi emperor's *Shengyu shiliu tiao* 聖諭十六條 (Sixteen Maxims of the Sacred Edicts) and the Yongzheng emperor's amplification of the *Shengyu guangxun* 聖諭廣訓 (Amplified Instructions on the Sacred Edicts), the Yongzheng emperor's *Pengdang lun* 朋黨論 (Discourse on Factions), the Kangxi emperor's and the Qianlong emperor's *Xunchi shizi wen* 訓飭士子文 (Essay on Cautioning the Literati), some legal codes, etc.[435] This kind of schooling practices and facilities was not designed to be a part of the examination system, which schools and the licentiates were organized around. Rather, it represented the Qing government's interest and investment in the infrastructure of preaching at the local literati. In hope of fostering a desirable licentiate body, various official departments were mobilized. The Education Commissioners were the primary attendants to this pursuit. The section below discusses their roles in building a bastion of moralistic alignment.

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[434] Entry "Shunzhi 9" in "Xuexiao tiaogui 學校條規 (Regulations at School)" in the *Qinding xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 4.

[435] Entries "Kangxi 41", "Yongzheng 2", "Yongzheng 3", "Yongzheng 7", "Qianlong 1", "Qianlong 4", "Qianlong 5", "Qianlong 9", "Qianlong 10", etc. in "Xuexiao tiaogui" and "Jiangyue shili 講約事例 (Instances of Lecturing Bonds)", ibid.

To begin with, the duty of cultivation in the Qing government was not initially allotted to the Office of Education Affairs. As I discussed in Chapter III, the education office had its institutional origin in the censorial department. During the Yongzheng reign, temporary positions like the *Guanfeng zhengsu shi* 觀風整俗使 (Commissioner of Custom Observation and Rectification) and the *Xuanyu huadao shi* 宣諭化導使 (Commissioner of Edict Propagation and Cultivation) were set up to "cultivate, guide, and discipline" a few regions known for social unruliness. Both were principally selected from the Censorate and the Hanlin Academy.[436] In Guangdong, the temporary co-existence of two education offices was originally designed to be in charge of education and moral cultivation respectively. Then the Yongzheng emperor famously announced his approach, which declared that the two were inseparably embodied in raising the paragon of all subjects. Henceforth, Education Commissioners across provinces became responsible for both fields.[437] A commissioner of cultivation could later serve in the education office, indicating the institutional connection of these two positions.[438] Meanwhile, this approach marked a shift from special commissions of cultivation in the early Yongzheng reign, a shift that was continuously developed by the Qianlong emperor.[439] Cultivation became, theoretically and institutionally, a regularized duty under the Office of Education Affairs and local magistrates.[440] In particular, all Education Commissioners must inspect the licentiates' conducts on examination tours.[441]

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[436] See entries "Yongzheng 07-12-08" and "09-03-20" in the *Shizong xian huangdi shilu* 世宗憲皇帝實錄, *juan* 89 and 104.
[437] See Chapter III.
[438] E.g., FHA#02-01-03-03949-014. Memorialist Tongbao 佟保 (?).
[439] In 1747 (Qianlong 12), the emperor rejected a censor's proposal of setting up new commissioners of cultivation. He further denied the effectuality of such missions ("豈欽差巡歷一遍、宣講一番，即能…收捷效於口頰間耶？") and reiterated that cultivation was "exclusive responsibility of the designated office (有司專責)". See entry "Qianlong 12-07-12" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 294.
[440] Entry "Qianlong 05-11-04" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 130.
[441] Entry "Qianlong 07-04-14" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 164.

The meaning of "moral cultivation" was not abstruse to the Qing officials. At least in the field, it could always be construed as "anfen 安分 (contentedly staying where one was expected to be)". If the legally privileged degree-holders took advantage of their status, the local authorities tended to struggle with handling.[442] Hence, they needed to be "cultivated" so that their interference with local order could be minimized. In 1750 (Qianlong 15), the Education Commissioner of Zhaogao proposed the annexation of the Zhaogao and the Guangshao offices in Guangdong. He maintained that after twenty years of cultivation, the Guangdong literati no longer possessed "unrestrained and dissatisfied" character. Therefore, there was no need to deploy two education offices in one province.[443] The Board had the same assessment and agreed.[444] In Guangdong, from the special commission of cultivation to double education offices and then the merger between the two, the state used an uncomplicated criterion for these institutional arrangements. The purpose of "cultivation" was to reduce the licentiate involvement in unsolicited activities such as litigation, publication, taxation resistance, illegal gathering, intervention of local affairs, etc. Based on this criterion, a quiet licentiate body was necessary to meet the expectation.[445]

The social circumstance behind this rationale made it realistic to the imperial government. Most of the licentiate population were unable to obtain higher degrees albeit the triennial temptation. A few regions were known for strong performance in the examinations. Among the rest, licentiates

[442] As the Education Commissioner of Hubei noted in 1739 (Qianlong 4), the magistrates often stayed with the licentiates when they had conflicts with the others. See FHA#04-01-38-0060-038. Memorialist Zhang Yingchen 張映辰 (1712-1763). In 1770 (Qianlong 35), the Education Commissioner of Guizhou observed the tacit agreement between the two: If the matter was deemed not worthy of escalation, the magistrates usually chose to just denounce the offenders in the verdict ("於詞內批斥") or witness corporal punishment with school instructors ("會同教官撲責"). See FHA#04-01-38-0081-021. Memorialist Wang Shifen 王士棻 (1722-1796).

[443] FHA#04-01-38-0182-015. Memorialist Cheng Yan 程巖 (1714-1768).

[444] FHA#02-01-03-04862-013. Memorialist Laibao 來保 (1681-1764).

[445] As summarized in FHA#02-01-03-03582-015. Memorialist Zhou Xuejian 周學健 (?-1748).

often represented the gentry of local society.[446] A solid grasp on this group was politically crucial. As an Education Commissioner put it, the obligations of education affairs included "supervising students (督課士子)", "clarifying literary style (講明文體)", "promoting Classical learning (敦崇經學)", etc. But above all of them, "the most urgent matter was to let the licentiates contentedly stay where they should be (總以安分為急務)".[447] If the literati were cultivated enough to stick to this principal, then all people could naturally behave well ("士習端則民風自正").[448]

To achieve this objective, Qing officials utilized both regularized tools and proactive preventions. The former category mainly included ceremonial preaching and the popularization of legal codes. As a protocol defined by the Compendium of Education Affairs, every Education Commissioner and school instructor needed to lecture (*xuanjiang* 宣講) on the Couching Stele, the Sacred Edicts, both Cautioning the Literati essays, the Great Qing Legal Code, etc. Before the Licensing and the Qualifying examinations, the Education Commissioner would gather the instructors and students in the Hall of Moral Enlightenment for those lectures. In particular, the *Amplification of the Sacred Edicts* was integrated into the examinations. The licentiate candidates, for example, must recite selected texts from it in order to fully qualify for their degree status. Additionally, the Education Commissioner would repeat the state's moralistic expectations of the

[446] For example, when comparing the northern prefectures with those of southern Jiangsu, the Education Commissioner of Jiangsu commented that because the former had produced very few *juren* in the past, the advanced licentiates were considered local authorities ("歲貢生已同鄉宦"). FHA#04-01-38-0090-011. Memorialist Xie Yong 謝墉 (1719-1795). Most areas in the empire were closer to northern Jiangsu as opposed to the southern prefectures like Suzhou, Changzhou, Songjiang, etc. The borderland regions were worse. Hence, what Xie wrote was likely the case elsewhere.

[447] FHA#04-01-38-0080-014. Memorialist Cao Xiuxian 曹秀先 (1708-1784).

[448] Cited from the emperor's interview with Jiangsu Education Commissioner Xie Yong in 1775 (Qianlong 40). FHA#04-01-38-0088-021.

literati in several other occasions.[449] Depending on the latest priorities, temporary contents like the emperor's thesis on the rectification of literary style might also be incorporated.[450]

The latter category was more complex. Shortly after the beginning of the Qianlong era, motivated by the emperor's gestures, policy proposals on how to effectively cultivate the population started to prevail in education officials' memorials. In 1746 (Qianlong 11), the emperor consulted with the former Governor of Henan Yin Huiyi 尹會一 (1691-1748) who were to be commissioned to supervise education in Jiangsu. Soon after arriving at the office, Yin wrote an essay to address the emperor's inquiries. He proposed that ritual theory must cater to ritual customs if the government envisaged it to be applicable. Those in the position of authority often strived to follow Zhu Xi's Family Rites (*Zhuzi jiali* 朱子家禮) as the guideline. Despite their good will, Yin maintained, Zhu's principles were not well received due to obsolesce. The same could be said to the ancient customs. With the ongoing Three Rites compilation project, he saw the possibility of singling out literati rites (*shili* 士禮) as an easy-to-follow prescription for cultivation issues.[451]

This proposal was an annotation to the Qing government's general principle that heavily focused on the literati as the exemplar population. Later in practice, Yin paid a visit to the renowned scholar Shi Jing 是鏡 (1693-1769) and made Shi an example of what a good literatus could become in his lectures.[452] Shi Jing lived a life of austerity without a degree nor an official

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[449] The commissioners usually reported these practices in their routinized "tichu shibi 剔除十弊 (Elimination of Ten Malpractices)" memorials upon leaving the office. E.g., FHA#02-01-03-03613-007. Memorialist Deng Zhongyue 鄧鍾岳 (1680-?); FHA#02-01-03-04818-016. Memorialist Shuangqing 雙慶 (?-1771); etc. Over the course of the Qianlong reign, palace memorials increasingly carried over some functions of routine memorials. This part was thus mentioned in the former as well. E.g., FHA#03-0228-045. Memorialist Guan Huai 關槐 (1749-1806); FHA#04-01-38-0097-026. Memorialist Zhou Zhaoji 周兆基 (1757-1817); etc.

[450] E.g., FHA#04-01-38-0074-004; 04-01-38-0075-048. Memorialist Wang Tingyu 汪廷璵 (1718-1783).

[451] FHA#04-01-01-0131-050.

[452] FHA#04-01-12-0054-014.

title. His quietness and contentment in being a mere scholar was what an education official expected of most licentiates, especially in a "frivolous" region like Jiangsu.[453] The emperor had been keen to praise such efforts.[454]

Yin's critique against Zhu Xi's ritual theory, on the other hand, was hardly a consensus among his peers. Around the same time, the Education Commissioner of the neighboring Zhejiang province Chen Qining 陳其凝 (?) had printed and distributed two of Zhu Xi's works to facilitate the local literati's moral cultivation. The emperor did not take sides in this debate except keeping these commissioners expressly vigilant about this endeavor in Jiangsu and Zhejiang.[455] As he told Chen earlier, it was the "foundation (genben 根本)" of education affairs in this region.[456] When Chen was transferred away, the emperor tirelessly reminded the new commissioner to "curb the streams and show the aim (挽其流而示其的)" in "frivolous" Zhejiang.[457] The regional preferences, as was the case in many other educational endeavors of this era, had defined the target group and the exact meaning of cultivation in different provinces.

The magnitude of cultivation campaigns also varied depending on individuals and localities. Some commissioners undertook this mission more forcefully than the others. For instance, in 1772 (Qianlong 37), the Education Commissioner of Shanxi saw that few school instructors were aware of their duty against licentiate litigation and "causing troubles unpunishable under degree protection (恃符滋事)". The local authorities only lectured on the *Sacred Edicts* in cities, leaving the vast countryside behind. He thus hand copied three major texts, based on which woodblocks

[453] The emperor's conversation with Yin Huiyi. Ibid.
[454] FHA#04-01-38-0060-047. Memorialist Liu Wulong 劉吳龍 (1690-1742).
[455] FHA#04-01-12-0056-045.
[456] FHA#04-01-22-0023-071.
[457] FHA#04-01-12-0056-040. Memorialist Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (1714-1779).

were prepared, and books were printed. All school instructors were mandated to use them as the cultivation textbook. Furthermore, he utilized countryside licentiates as the infrastructure of vernacular lectures. These licentiates were asked to use this textbook to lecture in their own dialect and improvise based on their communal customs. Then from town dwellers to villagers, everyone knew exactly what the emperor expected of him.[458] In 1774 (Qianlong 39), the Education Commissioner of Shaanxi took similar but even stronger measures. He also regarded propagation beyond the literati a problem ("民間講習尚多未通"). To educate the licentiates, he let the students interpret the Classics and then used the *Amplification of the Sacred Edicts* to interreference with these texts. To go beyond the literati, he compiled a phonetically commentated version of this book. It was made a primer for beginners and a prerequisite for Classical education. His phonetic notation further reached out to the illiterate groups. Not only the schools were required to print it, but the book merchants were also mobilized. This policy was applied from Shaanxi to the eastern prefectures of the newly annexed Xinjiang.[459] In Zhili, the commissioner deployed ritual students (*lisheng* 禮生) to read out the cultivation texts. To keep this practice alive, he created a separate documentation that was inheritable by commissioners after him. A local "broadcast" was thus installed.[460] Despite being different from one another, these Education Commissioners contrived to candidly meet the throne's expectation. They did expand the cultivation scope through the literati. Their measures were within the power of the office but slightly went beyond the call of duty, making them relatively uncommon.

[458] FHA#04-01-38-0183-043. Memorialist Cao Xibao 曹錫寶 (1719-1792).
[459] FHA#04-01-38-0010-002. Memorialist Ji Chengqian 嵇承謙 (?).
[460] FHA#04-01-38-0098-032. Memorialist Wu Xinglan 吳省蘭 (1737-1810).

Alternatively, the Education Commissioner could delegate some tasks to the school instructors. In this scenario, cultivation was less about devising a new policy than reenforcing the existing rules. Monthly lectures, for example, were often regarded as an "obsolete routine (juwen 具文)" by schools and licentiates alike. An Education Commissioner of Guangdong believed this was due to the lack of the education office's oversight. He noted that although the instructors were required to send papers to the Education Commissioner, these papers were not usually reviewed and remarked. The instructors' performance was thereby not properly evaluated, and the licentiates were not properly supervised either. This commissioner enforced the reviewing procedure and used the papers as a cross-reference with the evaluation reports of everyday conduct (*suxing* 夙行). He detected a strong correlation between skipping lectures and bad conduct reports, which were often associated with litigation activities. Following this procedure, he could identify those who did not cooperate with the state's cultivation initiative. The school instructors further investigated, and the offenders were disqualified. The specific reasons of disqualification were posted at schools as a sign of warning to the rest.[461] A Guizhou commissioner adopted similar measures.[462] Their approach was more common but required the participants' unwavering dedication to sustain its institutional vigor.

Some Education Commissioners took less imposing but more tailored approaches in the provinces that they served. The most notable ones adopted the Song learning as an essential vehicle to cultivate morality. Upon leaving office in 1738 (Qianlong 3), the Shandong commissioner summarized the local condition and his treatments. Although Shandong was acclaimed as a region of great ritual and textual heritages in the antiquity, the commissioner observed, it no longer

[461] FHA#04-01-38-0084-013. Memorialist Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818).
[462] FHA#04-01-38-0081-021. Memorialist Wang Shifen 王士棻 (1722-1796).

possessed such qualities. Hence, precise countermeasures were needed to curb malpractices and restore virtues.[463] For example, he published selected passages from the Song scholars' works that could lead the Shandong licentiates to the much-needed re-cultivation.[464] Eleven years later, another Education Commissioner of Shandong also found the locals "not attentive to the quality of courtliness". Like-mindedly turned to the Song learning, he attributed this moral problem to the general lack of knowledge in Zhu Xi's commentaries. A new recitation requirement was thus enforced. The Shandong licentiates were impelled into a campaign of memorizing Zhu commentaries. In this campaign, Zhu Xi's works were not only an examination object but also an instrument to rectify "habitual behaviors and human heart (風俗人心)".[465] Notwithstanding the context of the Han learning on the rise, these scholar-officials still utilized the Song learning when they tackled the issue of moral cultivation if not that of Classical training.

The purpose of these propagations was often described as "engendering inborn conscience (感發天良)" to reduce the use of actual penalization, which was a particularly neo-Confucian notion of cultivation.[466] While ideologically and politically potent, one may wonder how these texts effectively illuminated their audiences. There was few (if any) evidence to statistically support a claim of moral cultivation.

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[463] FHA#02-01-03-03526-008. Memorialist Li Guang'ao 李光墺 (1671-1739).

[464] See Li's biography in the *Quanzhou fu zhi* 泉州府志 (Gazetteer of Quanzhou Prefecture), the 1882 version, *juan* 55.

[465] FHA#04-01-12-0064-062. Memorialist Li Yinpei 李因培 (1717-1767).

[466] Zhu Xi developed the legal theories from the *Analects* and the *Shangshu*, which laid the foundation for prioritizing moral cultivation over penalty. Not denying this principle, Zhu reconciled the relationship between the two and argued that both were essential for governance. Both were to stop more penalization. See Zhang Weixin 張維新, "Lun Zhu Xi dui rujia fazhi yuanze de gaizao 論朱熹對儒家法制原則的改造 (On Zhu Xi's Amendments of Confucian Legal Principles)," *Beifang luncong 北方論叢* (Northern Forum) 232, no. 2 (2012):152-156. The Qianlong emperor reiterated this theory upon reviewing a legal case. See entry "Qianlong 43-2-23" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1051.

Perhaps a response to this question, the popularization of legal codes and the surveillance over licentiate involvement in legal cases constituted another major theme. After 1729 (Yongzheng 7), all school instructors must lecture the *Great Qing Code* on the next day of the Monthly Lectures and the Seasonally Examinations (*jikao* 季考). The chosen students were required to interpret three statutes upon the Education Commissioner's arrival. Those who performed well could be recommended.[467] In reality, however, the lack of legal intelligence remained prevalent in licentiate offenses. An Education Commissioner of Shaanxi noted that this was due to the "absence of a designated completion assessment (責成不專)". Hence, the education office needed to hold an annual review of legal education. The school instructors were asked to assess the students' legal knowledge and submit a list of evaluation. Those who did not comply would be charged malfeasance.[468]

Meanwhile, many Education Commissioners were strict about licentiate involvement in legal disputes. The magistrates and the school instructors, a Guizhou commissioner noticed, often chose not to file a noncompliance report when they handled these cases. The offenders thus felt that they were "able to count on the degree protection (護符可恃)" and became further provocative. This situation could be fixed by the education office's surveillance. The commissioner thus asked the authorities to submit a list of licentiates who were involved in litigation, based on which the offenders were punished accordingly.[469] In principle, the emperor supported the hardliners against

[467] Entry "Yongzheng 7" in "jikao yueke 季考月課 (Seasonal Examinations and Monthly Lectures)" of the *Qinding Xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 34.
[468] FHA#04-01-38-0181-008. Memorialist Chen Qining 陳其凝 (?). Submitted in 1741 (Qianlong 6).
[469] FHA#04-01-38-0081-021. Memorialist Wang Shifen 王士棻 (1722-1796). Submitted in 1770 (Qianlong 35).

licentiate misdemeanor. The archives have preserved great quantities of punishment reports that provide statistical evidence of this campaign.

Aside from the discipline of local literati, which was crucial to social order, other undertakings were much more occasional and often involved provincial authorities. The Education Commissioners seldom went beyond the apparatus of schools. If an instructor invited an opera band to the Hall of Moral Enlightenment, he would certainly be prosecuted. The Governor would also be copied to jointly handle the case. In this scenario, the school instructor was punished not because opera was outlawed but for his role and the stage he chose.[470] The education office would also pay attention to the ritual details of school sacrifices, such as the alignment of the sages.[471] In the background of these stories, officials were encouraged by the emperor's patronage of the Three Rites compilation project, which was coincident with other political signals. They henceforth sought opportunities to prioritize and facilitate related proposals.

This collective enthusiasm was a particularly an early-Qianlong phenomenon. During the emperor's Southern Tour in 1748 (Qianlong 13), the Education Commissioner of Shandong witnessed the imperial tribute to the Confucius Temple in Qufu. He quickly followed up with two proposals. First, in order to let the audiences experience ritual formality, all sacrifice instruments (*jiqi* 祭器) for the sages' temples needed to be remade as specified by the ancient replicas in Qufu.[472] Second, there should be accompanying music for the *Dingji* 丁祭[473] dances in lieu of the silent ones at schools. Prior to the emperor's visit, only Qufu and Jinan (the provincial city) had

[470] FHA#02-01-03-04909-017. Memorialist Menglin 夢麟 (1728-1758).
[471] FHA#03-01-00-00294-017. Memorialist Qian Chenqun 錢陳群 (1690-1774).
[472] FHA#04-01-12-0062-086. Memorialist Li Yinpei 李因培 (1717-1767).
[473] *Dingji* was the state-sponsored sacrificial ceremony for Confucius on the upper *ding* day in the second and eighth months of every lunisolar calendar year. See the "Xianshi miao 先師廟" (Temple of the Teacher who Came before All) section under the Board of Rites chapter in the *Daqing huidian*, the 1764 version, *juan* 82.

equipped with a music team. With proper music for ritual dances, the commissioner argued, everyone could get emotional education by "cleansing the mind and getting harmonized through vicarious participation (蕩滌心神、祥祥如在)". He then meticulously discussed the institutional infrastructure of music training in Shandong and argued for empire-wide implementation.[474] Both proposals were personally approved by the emperor. This example tells us how regularized measures were modeled after the individual officials' grip on the everchanging priorities per the emperor's interest. I do not see the same kind of instances in the late Qianlong reign when propagating a government of ritual principles ceased to be an active agenda.

Similarly, the visions of literary and Classical training could only be fulfilled when the imperial attention met with the active engagement of education officials. Many new ideas and initiatives were raised during this era to foster a new literati body that could be better utilized by the state. The sections below will address this process respectively.

5.2 ***Campaigns of Assessing the New Ideal***

5.2.1 On Literary Style

At schools and academies, various sets of criteria were applied toward evaluation. The licentiates and the licentiate candidates, if still desired moving upwards, would take examinations regularly. Those who stopped climbing were also subject to reviews by the instructors and, ultimately, the Education Commissioners. Text dissemination was predominantly a campaign-style imperial endeavor, which the Education Commissioners might not treat as a principal part of their duties in the long run. The evaluation of examination candidates and the licentiate group, on the other hand, constituted the most relevant role of the education office. Although the routinized chores did not change drastically over the course of the dynasty (or even comparing to the Ming),

[474] FHA#04-01-14-0015-045.

the Qianlong activism brought the literati new curricular emphases on moral cultivation, literary style, Classical learning, poetry, and more. The training schemes were not uniform in different localities and under different commissioners. Nevertheless, they all catered to the same vision and consistent efforts were made under the oversight of the throne. This section discusses some of the representative efforts.

The first attempt, which pertained to cultivation, was the "rectification of literary style" (*lizheng wenti* 釐正文體) campaign. It was ingrained in the examination system but theoretically connected with the desirable qualities for every literatus. The Qianlong emperor announced his mandate only two months after enthronement. He first commentated on the decline of literary style since antiquity. "Writings are to convey the Way. This is why they are interconnected with governance," he maintained. In antiquity, the best writings became the Classics. In the Han, people wrote essays that were based on Classical learning. Their writings thus had substance and clarity. From the Wei down to the Six Dynasties, however, literary pieces had been overly decorative. The more they were decorated, the more degenerated they became. The corruption of literary style was concurrent with political decay. Hence, it was not a trivial matter. The emperor continued with his literary theory:

> I expect scholars to write with sincerity and substance. The verity must be the verity of cloth, silk, beans, and grains; The essays must be the essays about cloth, silk, beans, and grains… Now the empire has been peaceful and prosperous for generations. For those who are committed to learning and have been practicing writing, it is time to bath themselves in moral cultivation... Do not chase frivolity and extravagance. Do not adopt fulsome dispositions. In this way, writings can be beneficial to moral character and habitual behaviors.
>
> 朕思學者脩辭立誠、言期有物，必理為布帛菽粟之理、文為布帛菽粟之文。…國家累洽重熙之日，務學績文者，正宜沐浴教化。…勿尚浮靡、勿取姿媚，斯於人心風俗有所裨益。[475]

[475] Entry "Yongzheng 13-10-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 5.

Throughout the Qianlong reign, the emperor reiterated this requirement on many occasions. The key criterion was the Yongzheng emperor's "clean, truthful, elegant, principled, and combines ideas with technique" (清真雅正、理法兼備).[476] In application, the rectification of literary style usually meant two things. For one, although it was not always straightforward to identify which essays were "clean, truthful, elegant, and principled", the examiners looked for those that were not "clean, truthful, elegant, and principled". The bad examples would include the overuse of rhetoric language without substance, the disconnected citation of the Classics and the Histories, the unnecessary demonstration of erudition, writing too long, etc. Among them, the most common problem was the practice of using prescribed templates.[477] Secondly, since the imperial court had issued plenty of commentarial references and sample essays, the sources used in the examination papers needed to be correct. Or, at least, they should not be incorrect. For instance, the citation of the following references could incur secondary placement: Non-Confucian texts that ideologically differed from the Classics; Historical anecdotes that were not verifiable in the official Histories; Stories that were originated from fictions and rhetorical pieces; etc.[478] As the requirement on Classical learning was increasingly emphasized in the later Qianlong reign, the demonstration of related training was perceived favorable.[479]

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[476] See the "Lizheng wenti 釐正文體" (Rectification of Literary Style) section in the *Xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 6.

[477] See FHA#04-01-38-0075-010 and FHA#04-01-38-0076-029. Memorialist Liu Xingwei 劉星煒 (1718-1772). Submitted in 1760 (Qianlong 25) and 1761 (Qianlong 26) respectively. FHA#04-01-38-0079-020. Memorialist Hu Shaonan 胡紹南 (1726-?). Submitted in 1766 (Qianlong 31). Also see Entry "Qianlong 43-04-11" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1054.

[478] See FHA#04-01-38-0070-016. Memorialist Zhuang Cunyu 莊存與 (1719-1788). Submitted in 1758 (Qianlong 23). FHA#04-01-38-0080-041. Memorialist Zhou Huang 周煌 (?-1785). Submitted in 1769 (Qianlong 34).

[479] See FHA#04-01-38-0081-018. Memorialist Dai Diyuan 戴第元 (1728-1789). Submitted in 1770 (Qianlong 35). FHA#04-01-38-0088-021. Memorialist Xie Yong 謝墉 (1719-1795). Submitted in 1775 (Qianlong 40). FHA#04-01-38-0091-041. Memorialist Hong Pu 洪朴 (?). Submitted in 1779 (Qianlong

To showcase what literary style was considered exemplary, the imperial court issued the *Qinding sishu wen*. But as discussed in the previous section, its success was limited. Shortly after its dissemination, in 1743 (Qianlong 8), the Education Commissioner of Shandong analyzed the reasons why it was hard to see improvements. He cited the imperial policy on literary style and interpreted: "Cloth, silk, beans, and grains" represented norms, not everchanging things. As a genre, eight-legged essay writing was different from the other examination subjects such as policy discussion (*celun* 策論). It also differed vastly from poetry. The most fundamental distinction was that essays were written in the tone of the Sages. The writer must emulate the subtlety of how the Sages delivered their message. Hence, containment and limpidity were preferred over extravagance and ostentation. All references must come from the Four Books and the Five Classics, which meant no imprudent use of the miscellaneous masters. Even historical anecdotes should be hidden between the lines. While reading the essay, if the Sages would not use such a rhetorical approach or describe things in such a way, the examiner ought to deem it improper. However, too many students chose to play with words and obscurity. They did so because there were examiners who could be easily swayed by new types of presentation and discarded the veracious ones. So long as this symptom persisted, the dissemination of the *Qinding sishu wen* would hardly overturn the tide.[480]

Knowing this issue was one thing, and how to fix it was another. The imperial government could only reiterate its stance while adding more reviewing protocols (*mokan* 磨勘). The rest of official endeavors varied in different localities under different instructors. During his interviews with the individual Education Commissioners, the Qianlong emperor often lectured on the

44). FHA#04-01-38-0091-040. Memorialist Peng Yuanrui 彭元瑞 (1731-1803). Submitted in 1779 (Qianlong 44).

[480] FHA#04-01-38-0181-016. Memorialist Li Zhiyun 李治運 (1710-1771).

importance of literary policy before dispatching them.[481] This was one of the most long-lasting campaigns in the eighteenth century.

Under general guidelines, a regular Education Commissioner might just lecture the students on using the *Qinding sishu wen*[482] or let them read more exemplary writers' essays[483]. A more serious one might give more specific training instructions, such as hand-copying designated essay collections[484] or giving specific styles to model after[485]. An earnest commissioner, in comparison, would adopt tailored approaches toward the literati living in different regions. This was the case for Li Yinpei 李因培 (1717-1767), the Education Commissioner of Zhejiang between 1759 (Qianlong 24) and 1762 (Qianlong 27). Previously served multiple terms in Shandong and Jiangsu, Li was among the better officials in the emperor's eyes.[486] Upon arriving in Zhejiang, he immediately used field visits and archival survey to assess the socio-cultural characters of the local residents. This pseudo-anthropological practice was popular within the Education Commissioners of this era, as longstanding cosmology led the scholars to believe that human nature could be rationalized by its association with geographical disparities.

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[481] E.g., FHA#04-01-38-0073-038, memorialist Liu Xingwei 劉星煒 (1718-1772); FHA#03-1174-072, memorialist Wang Shifen 王士棻 (1722-1796); etc.

[482] E.g., FHA#04-01-38-0073-028. Memorialist Wang Tingyu 汪廷璵 (1718-1783). Submitted in 1760 (Qianlong 25).

[483] FHA#04-01-38-0091-041. Memorialist Hong Pu 洪朴 (?). Submitted in 1779 (Qianlong 44).

[484] FHA#03-1174-072. Memorialist Wang Shifen.

[485] In general, the essays by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145BC-?), Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824), Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072), Su Xun 蘇洵 (1009-1066), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), Su Zhe 蘇轍 (1039-1112), Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), Zeng Gong 曾鞏 (1019-1083), and the renowned eight-legged essays between 1465 and 1566, which ranged from the Chenghua 成化 to the Jiajing 嘉靖 reigns of the Ming, were considered the greatest samples. See FHA#04-01-38-0070-010. Memorialist Dou Guangnai 竇光鼐 (1720-1795).

[486] Li Yinpei was good both at administration and as scholar, remarked the emperor. See Entry "Qianlong 30-02-30" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 731. As discussed in Chapter II, this was what the emperor expected of all the scholar-officials, but few could qualify.

Li's analysis concluded with a west-east dichotomy: Inhabitants in western Zhejiang were meek, cautious, argumentative, and resourceful, whereas the eastern dwellers (with the exception of those residing in Ningbo and Shaoxing) were austere, impulsive, and parochial. Literati from the west were fond of writing essays and poetry. However, they valued decoration more than substance. By chasing novelty and favoring disagreements, they might not stick to the fundamentals. The eastern literati, on the other hand, were often too rough and lacking literary competencies. Li explained that the key to cultivate a better literati body would be disciplining these groups respectively. He then gave an example of placing examination papers. From the past archives, he found that the examiners only used to drop candidates who were obviously inadequate to essay writing or ideologically erroneous. Had an examinee presented decent literary skills, he would be admitted despite the signs that were substandard to the "clean, truthful, elegant, and principled" criterion. Many students made these mistakes because they copied from the prescribed papers. Now in order to eradicate this habit, the examiners must drop all such papers without hesitation. Specifically, Li targeted against the misguided cases that were common in western Zhejiang. He asserted: If an essay was very talentedly written but derailed from the Classics and the Classical commentaries, the writer must be an incoherent and unrestrained person who seldom paid attention to the basics. Thus, the paper in question ought to be put secondary. Those who favored aberrant vocabulary generally had good brain, but they preferred eccentricity over canonicity. It was necessary to call them out and publicly reveal their graded papers to all the students. Once everyone realized what was shameful, literary style should soon be rectified. Once literary style was rectified, moral character would naturally be cultivated.[487]

[487] FHA#04-01-38-0182-032.

The throne's feedback had been positive, and Li continued with his rather harsh disciplinarian approach. Several months later, Li submitted a follow-up memorial in which he discussed the institutional efforts being made. The government personnel in Zhejiang, according to Li, was by and large unserious to work. Many protocols of education affairs were not enforced. Li pushed hard on the school instructors and coordinated with the other Yamen to get things done. He also forcefully adopted the method described in the previous memorial. By personally supervising and evaluating students, he noticed an overall improvement of literary style as well as literati ethos.[488]

This report was once again praised and endorsed by the emperor whose gesture was indispensable to such an endeavor. To fulfil the exact vision described in the *Compendium of Education Affairs*, the commissioners often needed to work with the magistrates, the Circuit officials, and even the provincial administration. But they were often conservative to mobilizing the bureaucracy outside routinized practices. For one, the Education Commissioners did not have direct authority over these administrators. Collaboration could be an issue.[489] More important, overenthusiasm might intrude upon the target groups to an extent that was deemed gratuitous by the imperial oversight. It would potentially jeopardize stability, and the emperor resented it more than bureaucratic inertia.[490] In Li's case, the emperor's supportive attitude shook off these worries. Li's activism in Zhejiang was therefore not set back by political hindrance.

5.2.2 On Classical Learning

If the eight-legged essay earned such attention because of its central position in the examinations and its doctrinal connection with the moral manifestation of the state, the emphasis

[488] FHA#04-01-38-0074-009.

[489] For instance, the examination coordinators were outsourced by the local magistrates. The Education Commissioners often had difficulties in communication. See FHA#04-01-01-0414-013. Memorialist Qian Yue 錢樾 (1743-1815). Submitted in 1785 (Qianlong 50).

[490] One of the most cited advices to the executive officials was not to cause "zirao 滋擾 (disturbance)". This is my general observation on the *Veritable Records* and the *Administrative Codes*.

on Classical learning, which was more extraordinary, was related to the Qianlong emperor's persistent endorsement for commentarial unity and a shared belief that the study of the Classics could produce more useful officials together with a savvy literati body in general. Throughout the Qianlong reign, the promotion of Classical learning was an active agenda. It was also a challenging one. Because the Classics were more difficult to master and less important in the examinations, it took more than invitation and interest to create more audiences. Nevertheless, many Education Commissioners actively used the tool of evaluation to make progress in this ideological task.

In 1738 (Qianlong 3), the Qianlong emperor announced his directive for the stimulation of Classical learning:

> Ethics and deeds are foremost to the literati; Classical interpretation is primary to scholarship… The state selection of literati rejects extravagance and promotes substantial learning. Now it has been almost a hundred years since our dynasty started nurturing the literati… The state has done everything to look after the literati and wish them would excel. All literati should realize the tremendous grace the state extends to them… As to scholarship, substantial learning requires a foundation. When one studies a Classic, he must fathom its essence… The educators should let their student invest in Classical learning aside from the eight-legged essays as the foundation of self-cultivation and statecraft. The exact measures of testing Classical interpretation according to various local conditions… will be at the Education Commissioners' discretion. The principle is to be suitable for better schooling. Different provinces do not necessarily have to be uniform.
>
> 士人以品行為先；學問以經義為重。…國家之取士也，黜浮華而崇實學。我朝養士已將百年…所以期望而優異之者無所不至。為士者，當思國家待士之重。…至於學問，必有根柢方為實學。治一經，必深一經之蘊。…書藝之外，當令究心經學，以為明道經世之本。其如何因地制宜試以經義…在學政酌量行之。務期有益於膠庠，各省亦不必一轍。[491]

[491] Entry "Qianlong 03-10-22" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 79.

Following this paragraph was the emperor letting the provincial treasuries print more imperial compilations of Classical texts. As previously discussed, the imperial court added requirement about testing commentarial debates from these compilations. It was implemented at the local examinations following textual disseminations to schools. In 1739 (Qianlong 4), it begun to apply to the evaluation of the advanced licentiates (*gongsheng*).[492] In 1743 (Qianlong 8), it replaced the interpretation essay (*jiangyi* 講義) for the licentiate candidates and the licentiates.[493] Along with the codifications, education officials pushed the students to pay more attention to Classical learning. But the first thing they felt difficult was not that few people were reading the disseminated Classics. Many examinees did not know about distinction between the generic and the imperial versions. The worse thing was that they did not study the Classics at all.

Upon receiving the edict, some Education Commissioners had rather pessimistic estimation. The Education Commissioner of Shuntian, for example, complained that few of the Zhili licentiates were good at the Classics. Many licentiate candidates did not even bother to read them.[494] He asked the students to recite Classical interpretations, rewarded those who could and encouraged those who could not. Still, he argued that in order to remedy the situation, there must be rules to follow in the instruction sessions. These would include letting students lecture on the Classics (along with the Four Books) upon the Education Commissioner's arrival, adding Classical interpretation in the school instructors' monthly lectures, adding recitation to the selection of the

[492] See the "Qulu jingjie 取錄經解" (Evaluation of Classical Interpretation) section of the *Xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 24.
[493] Ibid.
[494] FHA#04-01-38-0057-048. Memorialist Qian Chenqun 錢陳群 (1690-1774).

advanced licentiates, etc.[495] Although the Board did not approve all of his requests, some regions had experimented with similar measures.[496]

Several other Education Commissioners further argued about recitation as an effective way of training candidates. Recitation was installed at the local examinations in 1733 (Yongzheng 11) as a measure to ensure that the participants actually studied the Classical texts.[497] The Education Commissioner of Shandong maintained that there was a distinction between fathoming the Classics (*tongjing* 通經), which was about understanding principles, and reading the Classics (*dujing* 讀經), which was about memorizing words. Hence, for the selection of better licentiates (namely, the *yousheng* and the *gongsheng*), the essay on the Classics (*jingwen* 經文) should be replaced by Classical interpretation that required deeper commentarial knowledge.[498] The Education Commissioner of Shaanxi expressed the same opinion. He proposed that a short essay of interpretation had to be added after the recitation. The emperor directly approved this proposal.[499] Four years later, the Education Commissioner of Zhejiang found that a simple interpretation essay did not say much about the examinee's actual grasp of the Classics. He contended that trackable knowledge for specific ideas and statements, such as the interpretation of commentarial debates offered by the imperial commentaries, was more useful in detecting the depth of Classical learning. The Board agreed with this suggestion.[500]

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[495] FHA#04-01-38-0180-014.

[496] E.g., the Education Commissioner of Henan let all schools add a monthly lecture session of Classical interpretation from the imperial commentaries. FHA#04-01-38-0086-007. Memorialist Xu Guangwen 徐光文 (?). Also see FHA#04-01-38-0097-035. Memorialist Zhang Yaocheng 張姚成 (1742-1798).

[497] See the "Moxie jingshu 默寫經書" (Reciting the Classics) section of the *Xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 25.

[498] FHA#04-01-38-0060-026. Memorialist Xu Duo 徐鐸 (1693-1758).

[499] FHA#04-01-38-0060-028. Memorialist Songshou 嵩壽 (?-1755).

[500] FHA#04-01-38-0062-025. Memorialist Peng Qifeng 彭啟豐 (1701-1784). Also see the "Qulu jingjie" section of the *Xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 24.

With the interpretative requirement added and revised, recitation became a meaningful instrument for raising the awareness of Classical learning. Due to insufficient performance in many localities, the imperial court changed this policy to registration-based in 1747 (Qianlong 12).[501] There was also an account claiming that the recitation session was not forcefully installed.[502] Nevertheless, some literati saw it as an alternative venue of getting admitted. The education offices had witnessed growth in the long run. In 1766 (Qianlong 31), the Education Commissioner of Zhejiang announced that those who could recite the Five Classics were going to be individually interviewed for admission. Two licentiate candidates and one licentiate in Haining subprefecture came and surprisingly registered for Thirteen Classics. They were able to recite any paragraph of the examiner's choice.[503] Six years later, when this commissioner served in Zhili, he had nearly fifty licentiate candidates registering for multi-Classic recitation in Jizhou prefecture.[504] While the recitation of the Five Classics was a standard option, literary classics such as the *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature) was also considered.[505] In 1773 (Qianlong 38), the Education Commissioner of Shandong reported that most examinees could perform well on commentarial interpretation.[506]

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[501] See the "Qulu jingjie" section of the *Xuezheng quanshu*, *juan* 24. More discussions on this topic in section "Challenges of Geographical Disparities".

[502] FHA#04-01-38-0070-040. Memorialist Xie Rongsheng 謝溶生 (?-1790). Submitted in 1758 (Qianlong 23).

[503] FHA#04-01-38-0079-014. Memorialist Li Zongwen 李宗文 (1716-?).

[504] FHA#04-01-38-0086-016. In this case, there were two kinds of recitation: 1) writing down the paragraphs of choice in a close-book setting (*mo* 默) or 2) the recital of these paragraphs in a close-book setting (*song* 誦). In the *Compendium of Education Affairs*, recitation means the former. The memorialist did not specify whether the two were evaluated differently or not.

[505] FHA#04-01-38-0079-017. Memorialist Cao Xiuxian 曹秀先 (1708-1784). Submitted in 1766 (Qianlong 31).

[506] FHA#04-01-38-0087-003. Memorialist Li Zhongjian 李中簡 (?).

More emphasis was put on recitation and interpretation after the emperor decided to abrogate Classical specialization in the civil service examinations.[507] The Education Commissioner of Hunan had witnessed candidates who even memorized the commentaries of the Thirteen Classics.[508] Another memorial from Anhui stated that certain examinees recited the Thirteen Classics without any error. Some students were able to interpret all Five Classics.[509] In Guangdong, if a licentiate candidate could recite the Five Classics, he would be selected into the academy regardless of his performance on the essays.[510] In Guangxi, admission bonus was equally applied to four ethnic minority groups. According to the memorialist, an increasing number of students were admitted via multi-Classic recitation.[511]

Memorization was after all a part of elementary education. From the Qing state's perspective, Classical interpretation was installed at the licentiate/sub-licentiate level for the sake of setting foundations. Hence, it did not apply to the Provincial Examination and above.[512] The higher-level examinations required essays on the Classics. To prepare the licentiates for the Provincial Examination, the Qualifying Examination (*keshi*) also required them. Starting from 1728 (Yongzheng 6), the Classics session was required in the Licensing Examination (*suishi*). After 1758 (Qianlong 23), it was permanently set as a prerequisite for all beginners.[513] As aforementioned, examinations at all levels focused on the Four Books. The emperor pushed hard

[507] For the context, see entry "Qianlong 52-12-24" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1295. Also see Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 563-568.
[508] FHA#03-1179-034. Memorialist Qian Feng 錢灃 (1740-1795). Submitted in in 1787 (Qianlong 52).
[509] FHA#04-01-38-0098-002. Memorialist Qin Chao 秦潮 (?). Submitted in 1790 (Qianlong 55).
[510] FHA#04-01-38-0104-032. Memorialist Dai Quheng 戴衢亨 (1755-1811). Submitted in 1794 (Qianlong 59).
[511] FAH#03-1185-034. Memorialist Liu Fenggao 劉鳳誥 (1762-1830). Submitted in 1794 (Qianlong 59).
[512] FHA#02-01-05-23021-013. Board of Rites response. Submitted in 1773 (Qianlong 38).
[513] See "Kaoshi wenyi" in the *Daqing huidian shili*, *juan* 310.

to overturn this situation. Although to little avail in the long run, he had successfully mobilized the Education Commissioners to elevate the status of Classical essays.

As early as in 1745 (Qianlong 10), the emperor declared that the principle of local examination was Classical learning first, eight-legged essays second (先考經學、後考文藝). In Guangdong, the Education Commissioner of Zhaogao understood it as 1) to ask all school instructors to strictly lecture on the imperial commentaries; 2) to register the students who did well on the Classics and put them on a promotion row.[514] This practice was combined with interviewing Classical interpretation. In Hubei, the commissioner held interviews before the formal sessions. He asked questions that were not commonly used in the examination of the Classics. Those who could respond well were directly admitted.[515]

By the middle of the Qianlong reign, nurturing Classical learning as the priority of education affairs (衡文以經術為先) had become a consensus among the Education Commissioners.[516] Many examiners started looking for "shujuan 書卷 (lit. books and scrolls)" as a key criterion, which meant the ability to demonstrate Classical references in the examinations. For hundreds of years, the evaluation had been solely focusing on the presentation of eight-legged essay. The new emphasis on "the radiance of the Classics (經籍之光)" was a major change.[517] This stance was confirmed by examination records. In Shanxi, Shandong, Anhui, etc., examinees who paid

[514] FHA#04-01-38-0065-019. Memorialist Sun Renlong 孫人龍 (?).
[515] FHA#04-01-38-0067-036. Memorialist Song Bangsui 宋邦綏 (?-1770). Submitted in 1749 (Qianlong 14).
[516] As seen in an appointment memorial FHA#04-01-13-0034-012. Memorialist Cao Xiuxian 曹秀先 (1708-1784). Submitted in 1765 (Qianlong 30).
[517] FHA#04-01-38-0094-012. Memorialist Shao Hong 邵洪 (1743-1811).

attention to Classical learning were automatically promoted.[518] In Jiangsu, all the enrolled candidates must demonstrate adequate performance on the Classics.[519] The same applied to Guangdong and Fujian.[520]

For the duration of the Qianlong era, Classical learning was placed above eight-legged essays (of the Four Books) and increasingly became a necessity. This phenomenon was not only caused by the stress on Classical learning itself. In the early Qianlong reign, the imperial policy was to promote students who had demonstrated Classical training even if their essays were mediocre ("書藝即屬平通，亦量行錄取").[521] Moving toward the late Qianlong reign, it was sometimes interpreted another way around: If a student did not adequately prove his Classical training, this student would be rejected even if he did very well in the essays ("雖四書文可觀，概不取錄").[522] In a more exaggerated case, one licentiate candidate was physically punished after he was found plagiarizing from lecture notes. The investigation was initially triggered because he only wrote on the Four Books.[523]

5.2.3 On Poetry and Its Political Role

The furtherance of Classical learning went head-to-head with the other curricular emphases of the Qianlong era, such as poetry, rhymed proses (*fu* 賦), policy essays, etc. At least in theory, a

[518] FHA#04-01-25-0124-008. Lü Guangheng 呂光亨 (1722-?). Submitted in Qianlong 1766 (Qianlong 31). FHA#04-01-38-0090-001. Memorialist Qin Chao 秦潮 (?). Submitted in 1776 (Qianlong 41). FHA#04-01-38-0096-004. Memorialist Zhao You 趙佑 (1727-1800). Submitted in 1786 (Qianlong 51). FHA#04-01-38-0097-039. Memorialist Zou Bingtai 鄒炳泰 (1741-1820). Submitted in 1790 (Qianlong 55).

[519] FHA#04-01-38-0079-034. Memorialist Cao Xiuxian 曹秀先 (1708-1784). Submitted in 1766 (Qianlong 31).

[520] FHA#03-1173-017. Memorialist Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728-1804). FHA#04-01-38-0088-034. Memorialist Ji Mengxiong 吉夢熊 (?). Both were submitted in 1775 (Qianlong 40).

[521] FHA#04-01-38-0060-028. Memorialist Songshou 嵩壽 (?-1755). Submitted in 1739 (Qianlong 4).

[522] FHA#03-1173-017. Memorialist Qian Daxin.

[523] FHA#04-01-38-0098-028. Memorialist Ji Mengxiong 吉夢熊 (?). Submitted in 1791 (Qianlong 56).

student must be good at all these fields in order to be admitted ("諸體皆備，乃始得中選"). This was especially true for the advanced licentiates.[524]

Among these subjects, poetry constituted another major theme. After the Southern Song, it was merely a post-examination expertise for the literary officials. Not every literatus must acquire this skillset. In 1757 (Qianlong 22), the emperor added poetry to the Metropolitan Examination.[525] Per the censor Yuan Fangsong 袁芳松 (1713-?)'s request, poetry was consequently installed at the Provincial Examination.[526] Then it was extended to the local examinations from 1758 (Qianlong 23) and to all beginners from 1760 (Qianlong 25).[527] In 1782 (Qianlong 47), poetry was moved to the first session of the Provincial and the Metropolitan examinations.[528] The first session had always been the most decisive session for examination success. Hence, poetry became even more important than Classical learning as an examination subject. It gradually gained a status close to that of the eight-legged essay ("實與四書文並重").[529]

The style of choice was the five-syllable and eight-rhyme regulated verse (*wuyan bayun pailüshi* 五言八韻排律詩), which was fully developed during the Tang dynasty (It was considered a sub-genre of the *Tanglü* 唐律, "Tang regulated verse"). Because of its strict prosodic rules and

[524] FHA#04-01-38-0090-012. Memorialist Qian Zai 錢載 (1708-1793). Submitted in 1776 (Qianlong 41).
[525] Entry "Qianlong 22-01-28" in the *Shangyu dang*. The Metropolitan Examination of this year did not ask all candidates to follow this rule. The emperor gave the literati three years to familiarize themselves with the subject. See Entry "Qianlong 22-02-01" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[526] FHA#03-1168-006.
[527] The Education Commissioner of Yunnan Ye Guanguo 葉觀國 (?) requested the installment of poetry in the Licensing Examination and the Qualifying Examinations. See FHA#04-01-38-0070-021. Per the proposal by the Education Commissioner of Anhui Liu Xingwei 劉星煒 (1718-1772), the beginners would also have to do poetry in the exams. See FHA#04-01-38-0073-031 and the Board approval FHA#02-01-05-22923-005.
[528] Entry "Qianlong 47-07-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1161.
[529] FHA#04-01-38-0097-037. Memorialist Ru Fen 茹棻 (1755-1821). Submitted in 1790 (Qianlong 55).

shorter length, the examiners were more at ease to rank the papers.[530] However, adding such a new exam sharply increased the difficulty level for many participants (discussed below). In contrast to the other examination subjects, poetry was the least applicable to statecraft. It is thus perplexing to explain why the Qing state passionately endorsed this endeavor as it did. In other words, what made these policy decisions on poetry politically relevant? Or was poetry just for training poets?

The remarriage between poetry and the examinations was arguably a return to the Tang ideal of *belles-lettres*.[531] Therefore, to begin with, it was for training poets. The question is why the state needed more poets. The Qianlong emperor did show support for this curricular change, although he was less enthusiastic about poetry as opposed to Classical learning/ essay writing as an ideological vehicle.[532] Initially, he only meant to replace the ceremonial essay (*biaowen* 表文) in the Metropolitan Examination for technical reasons:

> …one ceremonial essay was added to the Metropolitan Examination. As the examinees have already earned their place in the book of talents (the juren degree), they have the potential to be selected for the literary commissions of the sagely court. Prosody, phonology, and parallel writing shall naturally become their field of study. Now I rethink about it, the length of ceremonial essay is a bit too long… Moreover, under the categories of current affairs, sacrifices, and ceremonies, there were just a few topics available from the past examinations… In the second session of the next Metropolitan Examination, ceremonial essay can be replaced by a five-syllable and eight-rhyme Tang regulated verse.

[530] Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 553-556, 561. The emperor also took this point into consideration ("司試事者得從容校閱，其工拙尤為易見"). See entry "Qianlong 22-01-28" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[531] For a complete discussion on poetry and ancient prose in the examinations, see Elman, 544-562.
[532] Not to be confused with his zeal to write poems himself, as discussed in Chapter IV.

…會試則加試表文一道，良以士子名列賢書，將備明廷制作之選。聲韻對偶，自宜留心研究也。今思表文篇幅稍長…且時事謝賀，每科所擬不過數題。…嗣後會試第二場，表文可易以五言八韻唐律一首。[533]

Apparently, the emperor's primary reason was related to examination performance and integrity. A ceremonial essay was written in parallel and ornate style. It was difficult to conceive, and the allotted time might be too tight for its completion. But because the available questions were limited, the examinees could prepare templates beforehand. Thus, ceremonial essay might not effectively select the talents that the emperor desired. Eighty days prior to this change, the ceremonial essay was just added back to the second session. The edict was clear with its intention of this reinstalment: The best Metropolitan candidates would "be selected for the literary commissions of the sagely court (明廷制作之選)". The criterion for the ideal candidate was also clear: "Erudite, specialized, and good at commanding words to be considered a polymath (淹長爾雅，斯為通材)".[534] It was reiterated in the new edict, in which poetry was considered an alternative and better vehicle to meet the expectation. As the emperor subsequently explained, the two genres were connected, and poetry was an easier option.[535] Yuan Fangsong's memorial also stated that in comparison to ceremonial and judicial essays, the mastery of poetry should be more obtainable.[536]

In a rebuttal to an Education Commissioner's proposal of terminating this policy, the Qianlong emperor further elucidated the reason why poetry was chosen:

[533] Entry "Qianlong 22-01-28" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[534] Entry "Qianlong 21-11-08" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 526.
[535] Entry "Qianlong 22-01-28" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[536] FHA#03-1168-006.

In the past examinations, the ceremonial and judicial essays were often found identical, plagiarizing, or following deplorable templates. Thus, I changed this part to regulated verse so that all examinees can conceive their own.

前因科場表判多涉雷同剿竊陋套，是以改試排律，使士子各出心裁。[537]

Twenty-two years later, the emperor agreed to move poetry to the first session. The motive was, again, purely technical:

It is easy to sneak collusion in the discourse (on nature and principles) of the first session of the Provincial and Metropolitan examinations. To avoid this, discourse should be put after the Classical essays of the second session. The regulated verse of the second session should be reallocated to the first session following the eight-legged essay. The examiners and the deputy examiners will start to review the second and the third sessions after they have already recommended the first-session papers. Upon reviewing the second- and the third-session papers, they can no longer recommend the first-session ones.

The edict says: This memorial incisively tackles the malpractice of our time. The proposal is approved.

鄉會試頭場論內易藏關節，請移置二場經文後。將二場排律詩移置頭場制藝後。主考、同考等官於頭場卷閱薦畢始分閱二、三場。既閱二、三場卷，即不得復薦頭場。

得旨：此奏深切時弊。依議行。[538]

This decision was designed to reduce the cheating factor but objectively raised the importance of poetry, which henceforth occupied the top position along with the eight-legged essay. To conclude, from the start of adding poetry, technical concerns about examination integrity were always the primary reason behind every change. Most of the other curricular changes were similarly triggered by such factors. For example, Hu Anguo 胡安國 (1074-1138)'s commentary of the *Chunqiu* had been attacked by the Qing imperial commentaries since the late Kangxi

[537] Entry "Qianlong 25-10-01" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[538] Entry "Qianlong 47-07-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1161.

reign.[539] But the Hu commentary continued to enjoy authoritative status in the examinations until the end of the Qianlong reign when the Board of Rites finally proposed to abrogate it, which was subsequently approved by the emperor. The memorialist listed three reasons for the abrogation. The first one was that the Hu commentary "has left too many parts of the Classical text uncommented, which resulted in a quite limited question pool (有經無傳者多, 出題處甚少)". Then it was followed by the other two reasons that ideologically justified the disqualification of the Hu commentary based on the imperial commentaries and the Qianlong emperor's own writings on this topic.[540]

Nevertheless, this is not to deny the ideological-political context in which poetry was promoted. The Tang standard of *belles-lettres* set the bar for poets and parallel essayists alike, and this bar was high. As early as in 1744 (Qianlong 9), the emperor openly expressed dissatisfaction toward the examinees' performance on ceremonial essay. He was especially disappointed at the southern (Jiangnan) literati who historically supplied the best Hanlin academicians. The learning of phonology and rhyming (*shenglü* 聲律), as he saw it, should be easier for these southerners who chose not to work hard on their skill.[541] This sentiment eventually led to the aforementioned series

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[539] The Kangxi emperor criticized the Hu commentary for "arbitrary opinions and overly strict on picking instances (持論過激、抉隱太嚴)" in his preface of the *Rijiang Chunqiu jieyi* 日講春秋解義 (Daily Lectures on the Interpretation of the Chunqiu). Compiled in 1729 (Yongzheng 7); Published in 1737 (Qianlong 2). He additionally deemed that the Hu commentary had plenty of "farfetched and false analogies (穿鑿附會)" in the preface of the *Chunqiu zhuanshuo huizuan* 春秋傳說彙纂 (Collected Commentaries of the Chunqiu). Compiled in 1699 (Kangxi 38); Published in 1721 (Kangxi 60). The Qianlong emperor's preface of the *Chunqiu zhijie* 春秋直解 (Definite Interpretations on the Chunqiu) says: (In the Hu commentary), "false analogies and strained interpretations are often unavoidable (傅會臆斷往往不免)." Compiled and published in 1758 (Qianlong 23). For a full review of these opinions, see Kang Kailin 康凱琳, "Lun Qingchu guanfang dui Hu Anguo Chunqiu Hushi zhuan de piping 論清初官方對胡安國「春秋胡氏傳」的批評 (Early Qing Official Criticism of Hu Anguo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals)," *Hanxue yanjiu 漢學研究* 28, no. 1 (2010), 295-323.

[540] FHA#04-01-38-0110-026. Memorialist Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805). Also see entry "Qianlong 57-12-18" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1419.

[541] Entry "Qianlong 09-07-24" in the *Shangyu dang*.

of adjustments: the temporary abrogation, reinstalment, and then replacement of ceremonial essay. As discussed in Chapter II, the Qianlong emperor had unique assessment of the scholar-officials. His assessment often affected bureaucratic placement. For the Hanlin academicians, before becoming administrators (if they ever could), they were first of all "literary and consulting officials (文學侍從之臣)", and their specific role was forming "the reservoir of drafting edicts, documents, and the other writings (備制誥文章之選)" for the state. Judged by this criterion, the emperor was not satisfied with their overall performance from the beginning of his rule.[542] His stress on the effective evaluation of literati competence was thus not only for technical reasons. The emperor needed better candidates for his vision of literary grandeur, and poetry eventually replaced the other genres of rhymed writing for this evaluation task.

The emperor and many examiners contended that poetry was easier to do. But unlike the often-prescribed ceremonial essay, it was allegedly much harder to surmise the poetry question and cheat by memorizing templates. Hence, the examinees would feel more pressure to perform well on poetry. The emperor asked the examiners of the 1758 (Qianlong 22) Metropolitan Examination to go easy on the performance and granted a three-year grace period for transitioning.[543] But as the poetry requirement subsequently applied to all levels of examinations, three years were not enough. The increased difficulty level brought headaches to the Education Commissioners as well as the majority of lower-level examinees.

All of a sudden, the situation became dire and especially so in the borderland provinces. Soon after poetry was added to the local examinations, the Education Commissioner of Yunnan submitted a disheartening report on the underperformance of the licentiate candidates. He had

[542] Entry "Qianlong 02-05-04" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 42.
[543] Entry "Qianlong 22-02-01" in the *Shangyu dang*.

thenceforth held examinations in two prefectures. Only ten candidates could do poetry, and the quality was barely acceptable. Thus, he proposed that there should be an additional three-year transitioning period for the licentiate candidates. The emperor approved this request.[544] In Guizhou, the Education Commissioner reported that poetry competence was rare even among the licentiates. About forty percent of the licentiate examinees left the poetry section blank. He requested an extension of the grace period to the licentiates. The emperor once again agreed.[545]

The grace period would end eventually. On the one hand, no official dared to challenge the poetry instalment since the Education Commissioner who objected this policy was publicly denounced and then removed from office.[546] On the other hand, the examination system would be undermined if the rules were strictly followed and only a few examinees could pass the beginner level. The educators faced a larger issue than that of enforcing Classical learning. The latter had at least been a part of general requirement. Poetry was not. As opposed to an examination subject, it belonged to the literary tradition that was better inherited in the Jiangnan region than the rest of late imperial China. The Qianlong emperor initially did not plan to expand this campaign to all the literary subjects. But since he did, the education officials must find a way to comply.

To that end, the first thing was to make poetry regularly taught. Given many students had zero training background, the instructors must add poetry to the monthly lectures. In Shanxi, the commissioner quickly specified curricular priorities including rhyming patterns and Tang regulated verses.[547] Another major challenge was the conflict between dialectic traditions and the

[544] FHA#04-01-38-0074-001. Memorialist Li Zhongjian 李中簡 (?). Submitted in 1760 (Qianlong 25).
[545] FHA#04-01-38-0076-007. Memorialist Tang Xianjia 湯先甲 (1712-1778). Submitted in 1761 (Qianlong 26).
[546] The dismissal was a result of several policy suggestions that the emperor deemed unfavorable. The memorialist's objection to poetry was one of them. See entry "Qianlong 25-10-01" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[547] FHA#04-01-38-0070-041. Memorialist Jiang Yuanyi 蔣元益 (?-1778). Submitted in 1758 (Qianlong 23).

correct phonetics in poetry. In Fujian, the commissioner stressed on the importance of distinguishing local pronunciations and prosodic tones.[548] He further instructed the schools to familiarize the students with Mandarin (務令熟習官音，勿以方言自囿).[549] Equally important, the examinees needed reference books that would facilitate writing poetry. In the response to an Education Commissioner's request of compiling new poetry selections of every dynasty, the Board of Rites recommended using the already-disseminated ones that covered Tang, Song, and the current dynasty's works.[550] It also agreed to print rime sets for the local examinations.[551] But there were few disseminated books circulating in borderland provinces. In Guizhou, to fill the gap, the commissioner self-funded the printing and dissemination of the *Peiwen shiyun* 佩文詩韻 (Prosodic Rimes of Esteemed Literature) and a collection of Tang examination poems. The former was the official rime dictionary compiled in the late Kangxi reign.[552] Similar measures were adopted in the other provinces.[553]

The results varied. Both progressions and despairing noncompliance were sporadically reported in the following decades. In Sichuan, the Education Commissioner claimed a great victory soon after the poetry requirement. Within one year, he had increased the rate of poetry literacy to nearly

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[548] FHA#04-01-38-0074-004. Memorialist Wang Tingyu 汪廷璵 (1718-1783). Submitted in 1760 (Qianlong 25).

[549] FHA#04-01-38-0075-048. There is a difference between Mandarin and the prosodic rules of rhyming. Here the phrase "guanyin 官音" might just mean official rimes. The dialectic conflict was not only a southern phenomenon. It existed in virtually all reports on poetry underperformance.

[550] FHA#02-01-005-022912-0030. The compilation background of the recommended references (*Yuxuan Tangshi* 御選唐詩, *Huang Qing wenying* 皇清文穎, *Yuxuan Tang Song shichun* 御選唐宋詩醇, etc.) is discussed in Chapter III.

[551] FHA#04-01-38-0070-035. Memorialist Li Yinpei 李因培 (1717-1767). Submitted in 1758 (Qianlong 23). Also see the "Xuezheng gongji 學政供給" (Supplies for Education Affairs) section in the *Daqing huidian shili*, *juan* 296.

[552] FHA#04-01-38-0070-033. Memorialist Gui Chaodong 眭朝棟 (1713-?). Submitted in 1758 (Qianlong 23).

[553] Data points: FHA#04-01-38-0080-038, FHA#04-01-38-0079-035, FHA#04-01-38-0086-007, FHA#04-01-38-0086-023, FHA#04-01-24-0064-011, FHA#03-1175-026, etc.

ninety percent.[554] Judging from the other data points, his claim is grossly questionable. In the neighboring Shaanxi province, the commissioner reported that only one or two could do poetry among every hundred licentiate candidates.[555] This rate is more accordant with the other accounts.[556] In Shanxi, despite four Education Commissioners' consecutive efforts, the situation had not been improved to satisfaction. In 1772 (Qianlong 37), the new commissioner noted that nearly a half of the examination papers were without poetry.[557] He thus strictly enforced a "no poetry, no consideration" policy: Without poetry, the licentiates would be put secondary; the licentiate candidates would not have their papers reviewed ("生員無詩者，不列優等；童生無詩者，束卷不閱"). After a year, the outcome was a hundred percent compliance rate.[558] We can reasonably believe that if a region adopted an equally harsh policy, the compliance rate would also be high.[559]

Similar to Classical learning, there were places where the local literati saw poetry as a venue to get admitted. For example, Kaizhou county in Zhili suddenly had over a hundred poetry examinees in the year of 1773 (Qianlong 38). All of them could complete writing, although the style and rhyming were not perfect.[560] The story behind this scene is unknown. But it is possible that these students were encouraged by their school instructors to take advantage of the institutional bonus and that they were specifically trained for this purpose. A number of students used a rime

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554 FHA#04-01-38-0071-041. Memorialist Shi Yimo 史貽謨 (?). Submitted in 1759 (Qianlong 24).
555 FHA#04-01-38-0079-037. Memorialist Wu Shouzhao 吳綬詔 (?). Submitted in 1766 (Qianlong 31).
556 The Education Commissioner of Guangdong wrote a report on the monthly lecture papers (*yueke juan* 月課卷) and provided raw data on this subject: Each school only had several students who could do poetry well. See FHA#04-01-38-0086-013. Memorialist Jin Shisong 金士松 (1729-1800). Submitted in 1772 (Qianlong 37). Of course, this rate was much higher in southern Jiangsu, southern Anhui, and parts of Zhejiang where poetry was traditionally studied by literati.
557 FHA#04-01-38-0086-020. Memorialist Cao Xibao 曹錫寶 (1719-1792).
558 FHA#04-01-38-0087-011.
559 E.g., FHA#04-01-38-0070-040, FHA#04-01-38-0079-037, etc.
560 FHA#04-01-38-0087-008. Memorialist Li Zongwen 李宗文 (1716-?).

dictionary that was locally printed.[561] Moreover, the memorialist did not find multitudes of poetry examinees in the other counties.

Such examples lead us to believe that the poetry issue was pertinent to varying local conditions. Even in the same province, performance could drastically alternate back and forth. After a Qualifying Examination, the Education Commissioner of Hunan reported less than twenty percent of the examinees unable to do poetry. Then, in the next examination, this rate increased to nearly a half with one county counting to eighty percent. Facing such sharp decline, he mandated the local schools to stop accepting examination papers without poetry.[562] Hence, it is hard to assess the overall success of this curricular reform. But based on these archival accounts, the least we can say is that several generations of Education Commissioners were institutionally mobilized to guide the literati toward the Qianlong emperor's vision of poetry literacy.

Poetry underperformance was still reported toward the end of the Qianlong reign. Noticeably, dialectic errors had always been an issue in most provinces.[563] The prosodic rules of rhyming, which were developed before the late imperial period, were not consistent with any of the Chinese vernaculars in the eighteenth century. In fact, they could be utterly arbitrary and not based on the linguistic realities of any era. If a poet-to-be wanted to avoid rhyming errors, the only way was first to memorize a commonly used rime dictionary (In the eighteenth century, it would be the state-issued *Peiwen shiyun*. But there were plenty of alternative options on the market). Then he needed to practice since childhood. It was not a secret that just the Jiangnan literati were

[561] Unfortunately, the locally printed *Shiyun cunzhu* 詩韻寸珠 (Tiny Pearls of Prosodic Rimes) was not entirely accordant with the state-issued rime dictionary (*Peiwen shiyun*), which the Education Commissioner urged the students to use. As a result, the non-official dictionaries (*Shiyun cunzhu*, *Li Yu shiyun* 李漁詩韻, etc.) were confiscated. Ibid.

[562] FHA#04-01-38-0086-019. Memorialist Chu Tingzhang 褚廷璋 (?). Submitted in 1772 (Qianlong 37).

[563] E.g., FHA#04-01-38-0086-007, FHA#04-01-38-0086-023, FHA#04-01-38-0080-038, FHA#04-01-38-0083-039, FHA#04-01-38-0086-017, FHA#04-01-38-0095-003, FHA#04-01-38-0095-034, etc.

traditionally versed in this field. The rest of the empire generally suffered from the lack of training.[564]

Nevertheless, the Jiangnan poets were not necessarily able to turn this advantage to their favor. Another issue was challenging some of the skillful. Same to essay, the state had specific expectations on how an examination poem should be written. Good poetry in a literary critic's eyes was likely different from that in an examiner's eyes. It was a view about content as opposed to competence. For instance, love affairs and their metaphoric forms were not considered as proper ways of rhetorical expression. But if an examinee drew strength from the great pieces in the past, he must consciously keep off all the references that could be deemed excessive. Not fostering this awareness could result in examination failure. One Education Commissioner of Jiangsu noted that many students in Songjiang (parts of modern Shanghai) and Suzhou prefectures were prone to write lines with female-related connotations ("奩體閨情之句"). He rejected all such papers, and the emperor praised him well done.[565] In Zhenjiang, he considered the local literati "frivolously and extravagantly minded (風氣浮靡)". During a Licensing Examination, for example, nearly all the participants wrote extensively about effeminate feelings and the physical appearance of women. The commissioner publicly exhibited these papers in the form of denunciation. By literary standards, there were talented candidates. They failed the examination regardless. In this way, the commissioner was able to curtail these attempts in the following Qualifying Examination.[566]

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[564] As an Education Commissioner pointed out, those in Jiangsu and Zhejiang usually studied poetry alongside the eight-legged essay. This was not the case in most of the other provinces. ("江浙大省習舉業者，八股而外往往兼究聲律… 至於邊省士子，留心詩學者絕少，甚至平仄體式多屬茫然。"). See FHA#04-01-38-0070-021.

[565] FHA#04-01-38-0088-021. Memorialist Xie Yong 謝墉 (1719-1795).

[566] FHA#04-01-38-0090-010.

References of lustful nature ("筆涉香艷") should be easy to identify and stay away from. Some other pitfalls might not be so obvious. As this commissioner explained, the key was to be "refined and compliant (yaxun 雅馴)".[567] This criterion may sound obscure to modern readers. But it was not so hard to follow in the examination context. The Shijing (Classic of Poetry), for example, had long been the most popular Classic among the examination participants. While even the author of the widest accepted *Shijing* commentary acknowledged the fact that it contained plenty of folk songs, the Classical interpretations of these poems were focused on "poetry as the manifestation of political and moral cultivation (詩之所以為教)".[568] With the rise of the Han learning, this exegetical tendency was further strengthened by the revival of the *Mao Commentary* and its flanker scholarship. It was the context that all examination subjects should be compliant with. This Education Commissioner summarized it as "be rooted in the Six Classics and elaborate on the rectitudinous learning (原本六經、闡明正學)".[569] In the examiners' eyes, every student should understand such an association without being told to.

Thus, examination poetry was not just catering to the emperor's objective of preparing writers for certain literary tasks. It was itself a carrier of an ideological vision in harmony with the other curricular demands during the Qianlong reign. The *Liji* says, "The teaching of poetry is about modesty, gentleness, solidarity, and benevolence (溫柔敦厚, 詩教也)".[570] And a Qianlong-era examiner would say:

> Needless to say, the ostentatious and flirtatious ones cannot be enrolled. For those who ever slightly venture beyond the norms and those who write essay and poem in sharp, bitter, pompous, and disgruntled tones, even

[567] FHA#04-01-38-0088-021.
[568] See Zhu Xi's preface of the *Shi jizhuan* 詩集傳 (Accumulated Annotations on the Shijing).
[569] FHA#04-01-38-0089-009.
[570] See the "Jingjie 經解 (Meanings of the Classics)" chapter of the *Liji*.

if their writings are skillful, I refute and relegate every single one of them so that I can prevent these ignorant and noncompliant authors from distorting propriety and betraying the Way from the outset.

其浮艷者固不登錄，而於稍涉險怪及詩文內氣味尖刻、露兀岈不平之氣者，文雖工，一一批駁降等，俾無知妄作者預絕其詭正畔道之萌。[571]

Under such a unifying vision, there was little space left for literary creativity and self-expression. Contemporary critics and historians of Chinese poetry despise the likes of examination poems. How absurd was it if the best poets ever lived would not qualify by these standards? Next to exegetical association, the actual function of poetry was another factor that supported the rationale behind this seeming absurdity. The ritualistic and politically conformist nature of literary interactions between the sovereign and his officials applies to this scenario. Poetry, as one of the most adopted forms in such interactions, had a primary function of applauding the splendor of an event, the cultivation of the state, the grace of the emperor, etc. When the Education Commissioners started to evaluate candidates, their expectations were derived from this context. In their memorials, the role of poetry was explicitly declared to be the following: "eulogizing over prosperity and tranquility (鼓吹昇平)"[572], "embellishing the virtuous dominion of harmony and vibrancy (潤色休明)"[573], "singing praises of this affluent and orderly age (歌詠太平)"[574], etc. Clerical works aside, these were what "forming the reservoir of drafters" necessarily implied and what the "literary and consulting officials" were deployed to do.

[571] FHA#04-01-38-0089-009.
[572] FHA#04-01-38-0079-035. Memorialist Hu Shaonan 胡紹南 (1726-?).
[573] FHA#04-01-38-0074-033. Memorialist Feng Chengxiu 馮成修 (1703-1797).
[574] FHA#04-01-38-0086-007. Memorialist Xu Guangwen 徐光文 (?).

5.3 ***The Last Reform and A Conclusion***

Since the poetry installment and the further requirement on rhymed prose, the education officials' consensus for training literati had become "stress more on studying the Classics; pay attention to poetry and ancient learning (多讀經書、留心詩古)".[575] The former part subsequently evolved into "stress more on studying the complete set of the Classics (多讀全經)".[576] The emphasis on grasping the entire Classical corpus (the *Shijing*, the *Shujing*, the *Liji*, the *Yijing*, the *Chunqiu*, and their commentarial packages) was the last major reform of the examination curriculum under the Qianlong rule.

In 1787 (Qianlong 52), the imperial government abrogated Classical specialization in the Provincial and the Metropolitan examinations.[577] Each Classic was tested on a revolving basis until 1792 (Qianlong 57). After that year, all five were required. The new requirement was formally added to all levels of examinations in 1788 (Qianlong 53).[578] Thenceforth, examination became even more difficult for all of its participants, and the Education Commissioners gained another mission to worry about.

The implementation stories were not much different from one another. The prepping steps included the dissemination of the reform edict, asking the schools only to send examinees who had demonstrated familiarity with all the Five Classics, making clear of its relevance in the enrolment

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[575] FHA#04-01-38-0083-039. Memorialist Chu Tingzhang 褚廷璋 (?). Submitted in 1771 (Qianlong 36).
[576] FHA#04-01-38-0102-005. Memorialist Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849). Submitted in 1793 (Qianlong 58).
[577] Entry "Qianlong 52-12-24" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1295. For a detailed discussion on its historical context, see Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 563-568.
[578] Per the proposal by the Education Commissioner of Guangdong Guan Huai 關槐 (1749-1806), see FHA#03-0429-023. Board approval can be found in entry "Qianlong 53-09-22" of the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 1313.

process, integrating it into the recitation session, etc.[579] It appears that the literati had grown used to the new policy in just a few years.[580]

For centuries, the examination system required all of its participants to maintain a specialization profile. They would strictly adhere to that profile in the examinations (except for a few special occasions). Most literati, unless intellectually driven, would not study more than one Classic either.[581] The emphasis on Classical learning over the course of the Qianlong reign did raise the awareness of reading more extensively. But as aforementioned, multi-Classic recitation was so rare an occurrence that the Education Commissioners considered it worthy of reporting to the emperor. This situation started to change only after the rather vague stimulus policy evolved into an explicit and mandatory one. Hence, in its own trajectory, the abrogation of Classical specialization can be perceived as the acme of the Qianlong-era curricular turn. Similar to poetry installment, it also considerably increased the difficulty level. The system further leaned toward the candidates more prepared for the higher bar. These candidates likely came from affluent regions and families, leaving the less-cultured rest in the already over-saturated competition.[582]

The reform itself was straightforward. Nevertheless, the drastic reversal of the specialization policy does shed lights beyond its own context. To begin with, switching between specializations used to be a form of fraudulence that leads us back to the technical aspect. In 1765 (Qianlong 30), the Education Commissioner of Guizhou discussed how Classical specialization, which the examination compound was physically organized upon, might invite opportunists to cheat. He

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[579] E.g., FHA#03-1180-009, FHA#03-1181-010, FHA#04-01-38-0099-018, FHA#04-01-38-0104-022, etc. Even ethnic minorities were actively included in this campaign, see FHA#03-1184-015.

[580] As the Education Commissioner of Hubei reported, there was an increasing number of examinees who studied the complete set of the Classics ("誦習全經者較前漸多"). See FHA#03-1184-041. Memorialist Chu Pengling 初彭齡 (1749-1825). Submitted in 1794 (Qianlong 59).

[581] As mentioned in FHA#04-01-38-0080-038. Memorialist Ni Chengkuan 倪承寬 (1712-1783).

[582] Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 235-238, 240-260, 565.

argued that since the admission quotas were also allotted by the Classics, participants could easily calculate success rates based on the numbers of examination cells.[583] The Board thus reaffirmed the ban against "altering specialization in the compound (臨場改經)" in the years of the Provincial and the Metropolitan examinations.[584] Then, after the following Provincial Examination, the overseers found out that the juren degree were conferred to four violators in Hubei: Two students of the *Shijing* and one student of the *Yijing* switched to the *Liji*; One student of the *Chunqiu* switched to the *Shujing*. Upon investigation, the former three did so for better admission rates in a less-chosen specialization ("小經人少易中"), and the latter was because of his underperformance in the chose specialization ("本經不利"). Their juren degree was consequently deprived along with corporal punishment.[585] With a similar case exposed, the Education Commissioner of Guangxi proposed a further ban on changing the originally chosen specialization.[586] The Board acknowledged his suggestion: All licentiates, regardless of the occasion, must stick to the specializations they first registered for examinations. Violators would have their degree deprived.[587]

The rationale behind this decision was a reinforced vision of Classical specialization. Technically, the Board maintained, one would only change his registration for two reasons: "Either lack of practice on the chosen specialization, or fewer people major in the other ones (非本經荒蕪即以別經人少)".[588] Following this logic, changing specialization would be an act of fraudulent

[583] FHA#03-1170-025. Memorialist Li Minxing 李敏行 (?).
[584] Entry "Qianlong 30-07-26" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 741.
[585] FHA#02-01-005-022986-0016. Investigation memorial submitted by the Governor of Hubei in 1769 (Qianlong 34). The Education Commissioner of Hubei was removed from office and demoted. See entry "Qianlong 33-11-15" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[586] FHA#04-01-38-0082-014. Memorialist Tong Fengsan 童鳳三 (?-1801).
[587] Entry "Qianlong 35-11-17" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 873.
[588] Ibid.

nature and thus should be forbidden. But it disregarded the other possibility, which was that a student objectively found another Classic more suitable for his potential. The proposer of the ban dismissed this possibility. In his view, the state adopted Classical learning as a means of selection in an effort to employ Classical specialists, and only specialization could lead to practical use. Hence, even if one had demonstrated the potential of multi-specialization, there was no excuse to hop around the other Classics at the expense of his own. One must concentrate when it came to Classical learning ("專心經學").[589]

This stance, while espoused by the state, was not necessarily a common belief. The literati were often not settled in a single Classic. Some of them changed their specializations back and forth and only realized the ban upon being caught.[590] Behind such opportunism existed a long-term and structural problem: The majority of students gave preference to the *Shijing*, the *Yijing*, and the *Shujing*. In most times, the percentages for the rest two, namely the *Liji* and the *Chunqiu*, were both below 10%.[591] The state was forthcoming in recognizing this issue.[592] But it did not take effective measures to balance the numbers. As a result, the *Liji* and the *Chunqiu* became the "lonely Classics" that the opportunists often found convenient to take advantage of. The exposed cases tell us about this structural issue and how it could be manufactured against the system: Success with an advanced degree could be achieved by calculated conversion to a different specialization on site.

[589] FHA#04-01-38-0082-014.
[590] FHA#04-01-38-0082-015. Investigation memorial submitted by the Governor of Guangxi in 1770 (Qianlong 35).
[591] Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 282-283.
[592] The emperor denied a request to add the *Zhouli* and the *Yili* to the examinations based on his awareness that the *Liji* was already less studied. He listed the *Chunqiu* as another "lonely Classic (gujing 孤經)". See entry "Qianlong 23-02-28" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 557.

Now since the ban had sealed up this loophole, the situation for the *Liji* and the *Chunqiu* had worsened. Four examination cycles after, a censor witnessed a drastic decline in the registration of these two Classics. Because changing specialization was forbidden, most students were reluctant to take chances with them. In some provinces where examination success was traditionally unremarkable, the numbers even dropped to only a few examinees for each of the two.[593] Reduced participation resulted in several consequences. Politically, it made the emperor's promotion of Classical learning look bad by leaving two Classics unread. Ideologically, the representation of the Classics was incomplete ("經義偏廢"). Technically, the examiners might find recommendation more difficult when there were given quotas and only a limited quantity of papers available to choose from ("不敷選擇"). More important, fewer papers meant easier operation in case of examination bribery ("易涉關通").

The Qianlong emperor found this proposal meriting consideration. Following discussion, the government revoked the ban.[594] Switching specialization on the examination site or within the years of the Provincial/Metropolitan examinations was still forbidden. Doing it upon the other occasions were once again allowed so long as officially documented. Merely five years later, Classical specialization was abrogated for anti-fraudulence concerns.[595] These concerns along with the awkward reality of the two less-studied Classics were immediate reasons behind the

[593] FHA#03-1175-027. Memorialist Shi Xuelian 施學濂 (1726-?). Submitted in 1782 (Qianlong 47).
[594] FHA#03-1175-030-9.
[595] This cause was added retrospectively by the Jiaqing government ("高宗純皇帝以分經閱卷易滋弊竇, 改為五經輪試"). See entry "Jiaqing 11" in the "Mingti guizhi 命題規制 (Regulations on Making Questions)" section in the *Daqing huidian shili* (1886 version), *juan* 331. I assume there were discussants who participated in the original decision-making or the archival records at that time confirmed this background.

abrogation. They constituted structural factors the government had to respond inasmuch as it still sought activist policy.

At the local level, the Education Commissioners were in an ambiguous position amongst such reforms. On the one hand, many of them enthusiastically embraced the stimulus directives such as multi-Classic recitation. On the other hand, the state did not promptly address some of its policies' conspicuous inconsistencies with the specialization request. The officials did not have consensus over this topic either.[596] This condition brings out the question of policy discrepancies, a theme coexisted with the success stories.

Moreover, it best illustrates the autonomy of the Education Commissioners for the evaluation task. Most policies in regard to schooling and evaluation were accumulated through the Education Commissioners' field work, which were reviewed and judged by the Board of Rites. Officials with other obligations, especially the censors, contributed to policy discussions too. The emperor seldom stepped in, although he did reserve the power to make a ruling, except for major decisions or some ideas that he found erroneous. Neither the education officials nor the central government intervened evaluation procedures merely based on ideological accounts. The vague and rather unsuccessful campaign on eight-legged essay aside, most initiatives on poetry and Classical learning had immediate and technical factors behind them. These factors were empowered by larger ideological and political contexts. But they did not automatically warrant a decision, which often came in the form of a sudden edict.

[596] Was the Five-Classic requirement too harsh and the implementation too hasty? How to master difficult Classics given many literati could not even do well on the chosen one? How to address the principle of Classical specialization? The officials became silent after the emperor punished those who voiced their opinions about the reform. After the Qianlong emperor died, the specialization question was raised again. E.g., FHA# 04-01-38-0115-038. Memorialist Yang Zhao 楊昭 (?). But the Jiaqing emperor refused to reconsider.

Being field workers, the Education Commissioners were less involved in the fermentation of curricular reforms. New requirements of poetry and Classical learning made both educators and students vulnerable in the event of drastic change. In those cases, the existing criteria were forcefully overridden by the imperial verdict. Many regions became victims of higher standards, which the majority of examination candidates were never accustomed to. Abridged Classics became more popular as a new means to take a shortcut, and those who were unable to properly acquire prosodic skills never became "good enough poets". These results further intensified the struggle between the emperor's vision and the empire's infrastructural reality. When imperial activism faded away, the succeeding sovereigns did not roll back these policies. They instead insisted on maintaining the status quo, without the Qianlong-era astuteness and energy, at the expense of the structurally impoverished groups.[597]

The story of candidate evaluation was thus not as straightforward comparing to textual dissemination. Notwithstanding the restraints, it did demonstrate remarkable strength. Throughout the Qianlong reign, the evaluation of examination candidates was closely tied with the latest curricular emphasis imposed by the state. The wide dissemination of imperial compilations further enhanced the effect. Classical interpretation required the participants to "thoroughly list the commentarial references and conclude with the imperially sanctioned answer (詳舉註疏然後衷以御案)".[598] This act instilled the imperial version of Classical learning right from the start.

[597] Facing an objection against the abrogation of Classical specialization, the Jiaqing emperor responded: "This censor is from Yunnan. Of course, he considered reading all the Five Classics difficult. In advanced provinces such as Jiangsu and Zhejiang where the literati strive to learn, how can the mastery of the Five Classics be hard? (該御史係雲南人，自以五經全讀為難。若江浙大省士子彬彬向學，何難五經俱熟？)". See entry "Jiaqing 11" in the "Mingti guizhi" section in the *Daqing huidian shili* (1886 version), *juan* 331. Here, the Jiaqing emperor's insensitivity and indifference to geographical challenges contrasted with the Qianlong emperorship. More discussions in Chapters V and VI.

[598] As summarized in FHA#04-01-38-0087-003. Memorialist Li Zhongjian 李中簡 (?).

Moreover, evaluation was not only instrumental to adhere literati to the skillset promoted by the imperial government. As a discipline factor, it also tells how they were expected to learn both as the leading group of society and as the literary talent of the empire. The evaluation criteria toward essay writing strictly delineated what how literary expression was associated with moralistic ethos. The insertion of poetry made examination poets desirable. The abrogation of Classical specialization redefined the way to approach Classical learning. Behind all these new standards, the emperor evidently aspired to produce a new literati body for the empire. It was an attempt of limited success but infinite ambition.

Chapter VI: Epilogue

The epilogue reviews and further elaborates the connections between government agenda and bureaucratic behavior in the ideological enterprise that was co-developed by the Qianlong emperor and his literary-educational officials. As shown in chapters IV and V, both parties had maintained a delicate equilibrium that ensured the implementation of pertinent policies. This equilibrium can be regarded as a collateral effect of the institutions and the institutional arrangements presented in chapters II and III. Its continuity was not well conserved, however, after the end of the Qianlong rule. What had the succeeding Jiaqing emperor (reign: 1796-1820) and those after him done differently, or were there disruptions in the political, institutional, social circumstances that had steered the historical actors to another direction? Given that no subsequent reforms in the production nor the deployment of scholar-officials took place, the place of ideological practices in emperorship seems to be the most tangible factor amid all answers to this question.

Two analytical components are indispensable to the ideological practices in this study. First, the activities about the transmission of ideas that were intended, approved, or/and observed by the sovereign. Next, the agencies that carried out functions of fulfilling these activities. For the most part, the activities can be specified by compilation projects, book disseminations, textual discussions, policies about adopting commentaries, the emperor's wishful display of the literary achievement of himself and the empire, etc. As to the agencies, bureaucratic organs such as the compilation offices, the printing centers, the offices that processed dissemination, the education office, and the local functionaries were all necessary ones. In terms of staffing, the rising Hanlin-trained scholar-officials turned out to be more relevant to the Qianlong reign. These officials came from the theoretical "reservoir of talents" for the dynasty. The posts that they served were by no

means limited to literary production and education. But in contrast to the later developments, the Qianlong era witnessed the emperor's peculiar uses of this group of officials.

No matter through participation or representing provincial education, the Education Commissioners of this period were crucial players to keep the institutions of ideological practice intact. Their work had bridged the gap between the contemporaneous projects at the court and an audience beyond the imperial center. Further shaped by the newly developed evaluation and selection criteria, they had demonstrated an institutional identity with literary-educational professionalization. This institutional background had empowered plenty of officials to be autonomous in the field, which explains why they could often voyage beyond the call of duty. In the dissemination campaigns that only had a vague directive, for instance, some commissioners spread as many books as possible and examined them as strictly as possible. As a result, the degree-hungry part of the local population was unprecedently exposed to freshly compiled texts. Many educational officials were active in proposing literary policies and debating on textual issues, suggesting that their enthusiasm was not limited to the fulfilment of top-down tasks.

The source of such enthusiasm merits a closer look. Was it merely a byproduct of the ways in which the Hanlin scholars were deployed? Their career prospects, accentuated by the emperor in his interview notes and proven by actual placement choices, do convey a sense of institutional integrity. The Hanlin scholars who typically experienced compiler, examiner, censor, educator, etc. likely had more input in these fields. But interest, familiarity, or serving an agency itself would hardly be suffice for facilitating the transmission of ideas beyond an in-group collective behavior. Either in terms of consensus or resources, the processing of pertinent activities necessarily involved more coordination. In our stories, it was the Qianlong emperor who played the role of the grand overseer. His attention, however, was not guaranteed by a few edicts over the course of time.

Most proposals on education and textual questions were rerouted to the Board of Rites. These issues were comparatively "trivial" and less imminent, if not unimportant, and as the emperor openly admitted, topics about examinations should take technocrats instead of the ruler himself to scrutinize.[599] Why was the activism so palpable, then, if neither the throne nor the bureaucracy kept it fueled for maximum performance?

This inquiry leads to a subtle factor that had become a magnet for both parties. Now historians have commonly accepted that the Yongzheng emperor's "secret memorial" system became regularized in the Qianlong reign.[600] Eligible officials exceedingly chose to use this venue to submit memorials, thus blurring the boundaries between secret and regular reports. This new phenomenon increased the sheer number of documents read firsthand by the emperor, although many were eventually transferred to the Boards and the other agencies. As a result, his attention to ideological policies was kept up by the education- or text-related topics raised constantly by the scholar-officials. These topics were initially not allowed in this format.

During the early Yongzheng reign, the emperor would demand the memorialist to resubmit in regular memorial if the topic did not warrant special handling. He became more lenient toward such mistakes later on. The Qianlong emperor tacitly allowed the misuse of memorial genres, seldom asking for resubmission. In the chapters above, we can see a fair number of his edicts were responses to the officials' minor opinions. These opinions were mostly from the regular reports that used to be addressed via another channel of communication. When the emperor was exposed to more nuanced information, his reactions would be specific and detailed, too. Since he was also loquacious and opinionated, his directives were often filled with extensive sidenotes, which then entered the officialdom as the sagely utterance.

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[599] Entry "Qianlong 25-10-01.01" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[600] E.g., Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*, Zhuang, *Qingchao zouzhe zhidu*, etc.

In this setting, the emperor was able to gain active results without specifying an agenda. Archival record shows that the Education Commissioners of the Qianlong period had submitted memorials on educational/textual issues in larger quantity than any other period in the dynasty. Despite the long span of the Qianlong rule, the frequency of submission was still the highest. This energy of the Qianlong activism was not only a part of the standardizing bureaucracy but also an indicator of the political culture, in which both sides were constantly signaling and being signaled by each other's intimate input.

This facet of activism has been overlooked by the conventional wisdom about the eighteenth century. A large portion of the above chapters also focused on the policies that brought tangible outcomes, such as implementing literary censorship, installing new texts, amending the examination curricula, etc. Apparently, the text-related proposals can be far more abstract and less applicable than the immediately noteworthy ones. Those on warfare and famine were unlikely to have a lower priority than those on how to teach the *Classic of Filial Piety*. Consequently, most of the latter category were simply dismissed by the emperor or eventually received disapproval from the Board of Rites. The response rate was low. Because of the seeming lack of policy importance, few "failed" documents were picked up by the Veritable Records compilers or later historians. The established sources then leave an impression that ideological experiments scarcely ever took place. Yet by neglecting the shelved proposals, we miss the opportunity to explore the collective vitality they represented.

The persistent reports from the Education Commissioners exhibited active textual discussions within the officialdom. The emperor also frequently sent texts to his trusted officials. In forming the activism, unwritten institutionality was characteristic in the joint role of the two parties. Many decisions were done through memorial exchanges on a case-by-case basis. Prior to the Qianlong

era, the emperor only sent gifts to governors, nobles, and miscellaneous officials above certain ranks. When the Qianlong emperor started to send texts to the Education Commissioners, the target group became an exception to this rule. If we check the *Administrative Code*, however, this practice was not recorded. On the one hand, it completely relied on the throne's discretion and did not exist on a regularized or routinized level. On the other hand, the commissioned officials actively raised textual issues and requested texts in the early years of the Qianlong reign; this fact makes them an indispensable factor in the institution's development. Since this development is not traceable in the regulations, we have to go through individual cases to understand it. For example, how did texts morph from a supposedly generic kind of gift into something with an ideological function? A common pattern was the official initiating a practice with the emperor's approval, while the latter could take the initiative as well.

Representing the default intermediary between the throne and the local literati, the Office of Education Affairs was a key vassal of the imperial government's new and sometimes experimental initiatives. This role made the Education Commissioners sensitive to the priority of the time. Unlike the case of the examinations, which were about standardized measures, the progressing policies and initiatives about literati education held sway over the commissioners when they undertook the corresponding tasks. Thus, on top of the daily duties required by the book, the Education Commissioners closely engaged with the empire's ongoing politics. This is why they were so important to ideological control.

At the policy-making level, two common scenarios were involved. Most proposals would go through the Board of Rites or be assigned to a group of officials. Sometimes the emperor determined that the issue should be resolved within the province. In that case, the governors would step in to discuss its applicability. No matter where the provisional decisions were made, the

emperor kept reminding all the officials that he was in the know. On one occasion, he received proposals during a hunting tour and believed the memorialist had seized this opportunity to implant suspicious messages amongst technical discussions. He thus issued an edict denouncing this attempt and reiterating that he scrutinized every word instead of "handling over to the Board after one glance (yilan fubu 一覽付部)".[601] Aside from a warning, it assured the memorialists that their essays had him as the reader, and that he did pay attention to whatever they wrote.

Despite this confidence, most proposals failed beyond the discursive level. The reasons could be attributed to canonicity, technicality, wrong cause, the lack of applicability, the limitation of state capacity, etc. Some of them not only resulted from socio-political reality but also represented a philosophical stance. Government intervention, for instance, was always reserved by the emperor and his councilors as the last resort. Too much activism was dangerous to good governance, the emperor argued, just like too much weeding and plowing would hurt the crops. "One who governs the people should keenly refrain from the frequent use of orders (深戒夫長民者之好煩其令)", he concluded.[602] In the rescript to a cultivation proposal, the emperor acknowledged its general principles but still rejected the idea. The rationale was that he was "afraid of the administrators' inadequate execution (恐有司奉行不善)".[603] Although the Yongzheng-Qianlong era had witnessed expansive empire-building, the attitude traditionally held by a small, low-tax, agrarian state was still prevalent. It had effectively blocked the activist proposals, most of which would require designated government personnel and fiscal support.

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[601] FHA#04-01-38-0074-033. Memorialist Feng Chengxiu 馮成修 (?). Entry "Qianlong 25-10-01.01" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[602] Entry "Qianlong 12-07-12" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 294.
[603] FHA#04-01-22-0002-056. Memorialist Zhou Shu 周澍 (?).

In this circumstance, the magistrates and the commissioners often found themselves in a dilemma of imperial activism. For example, the handling of literati misconducts was a delicate work. On the one hand, the Qianlong emperor was usually a hardliner against licentiate offenses. An Education Commissioner worried about the use of provisional disciplinary measures would encourage the yamen underlings to hurt the "literati ethos" (*shiqi* 士氣). The rescript apprised him of not coddling it.[604] On the other hand, the commissioners would prefer adopting lectures as opposed to preventive acts to persuade the literati to be submissive.[605] The fear about the difficulties of government involvement and interference with local order was escalated by the distrust toward sub-official functionaries. The realism with the political boundaries, which was acknowledged by the emperor and most of his officials as common sense, was more powerful than the activist impulses.

To situate these conditions within the Qianlong emperorship, it is important to realize that the communication factor helped to create a more governance-oriented as opposed to interest-oriented scheme in ideological practices. At the beginning, much of the institutional attention for education- and literature- related contents moved upwards from the Grand Secretariats to the individual emperor. The bureaucracy, especially the education office, provided potent information that generated attention at the center. Many regular reports about provincial education flowed via the emperor, making him the institutional hub for the ideological side of governance. The responses he gave the memorialists also formed an organic part of how he run the empire. As paternalistic as the emperor could become, his decisions and opinions reflected a holistic approach to governance.

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[604] FHA#04-01-38-0104-030. Memorialist Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849).

[605] E.g., FHA#04-01-38-0101-041. Memorialist Zha Ying 查瑩 (?). FHA#04-01-38-0094-012. Memorialist Shao Hong 邵洪 (1743-1811). Etc.

The new approach was unlike what the earlier monarchs could apply toward the same affairs, which did not go through such an intimate channel. Hence it is not overexaggerating to say that the throne and the literary-educational officials represented the symbolic institution of ideological practice in this time period. I see this development as one of the key differences between the Qianlong emperorship and the earlier Kangxi one, which was also known for literary enterprises. The compilation activities, dissemination campaigns, cultivation efforts, examination reforms, etc. were all functional and governance-oriented instances under such an institutional premise.

Most textual compilations at the imperial court, for example, were no longer just for display. They have intellectual contents, and they were meant to be read or even articulated by certain groups of people. When they were given as gifts to the officials, these officials would elaborate on the content. When they were sent to schools, now we know that the education officials (or at least some of them) would treat these books as supplementary textbooks. We are confident to believe that the empire's literary pieces, as the material manifestation of ideas, had reached deeper into the literate populace of the empire. We also acknowledge the bureaucratic cooperation in attaining this result. In particular, the Education Commissioners became propagandists when the throne called for the rectification of literary style; They were ideologists while censoring contents; They promulgated and installed new texts first time after the court's completion of new commentaries. These activities had created ideological conformity, which, as shown in the literary exchanges with officials, was desired by the emperor.

However, these executive measures were not attached to what the inculcated ideas actually embodied in the imperial government. Chapter II has already shown the Qianlong emperor's distrust toward scholars not only in their bureaucratic performance but also in their presentation of ideas. There are fundamental questions in this arrangement: Since the textual content was so

detached from the perceived reality in application, what did the state see it in its ideological foundation? What was the intended use of the Classics and their commentarial tradition in these gestures? Was it closer to ideological propagation in modern era, which leads to the separation of ideology to believe in and ideology to let believe in? Or was it constitutionally given, in which the maintenance of uniformity was the primary concern?

In the eyes of the Qianlong emperor, being versed in Classical learning was far from possessing any utilitarian meaning. Unlike his grandfather, he was reluctant to appoint erudite scholars to offices except temporary compilation tasks. The recommendation (*jianju* 薦舉) of Classicists was occasionally held by the Qianlong government as a tradition. But the emperor openly cautioned the officials that he did not want the candidates to "staff the Hanlins whose selection is based on literary talent (充翰林才華之選)" nor "be given an office of administration and expect actual performance from bureaucratic service (授以政事、責其當官之効)".[606] Aside from his two main categories for civil officials, there was little room left for deployment. One must go through the designated examinations to transfer Classical knowledge to political capital. However, although not explicitly expressed, examination achievement was not believed to possess utilitarian meaning either with the exception of "decorating the state" with literary excellence. Thus, the most effective examination reforms during the Qianlong reign moved toward the latter, increasingly emphasizing the candidates' literary training.

The gap between the empire's textual production and adoption attests to a fact that the ideological practices of this era had few reformist elements in the content itself. It lived on in the emperor's approach to scholarly merits in officialdom, in his deployment pattern of the Hanlin

[606] Entry "Qianlong 16-05-16" in the *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu*, *juan* 391.

officials, and in his everyday exertion of power. Behind the governance-oriented approach, the emperor did not focus on actually resolving intellectual questions for the Classicists or reconstructing new ideology for the state. While some of his Education Commissioners were interested in doing so, their independent status of did not empower them with greater autonomy. Rather, they were empowered by being closer to the sovereign. Their performance was thus largely dependent on how the imperial power facilitated career, building credential-based prestige that signaled career prospects of potential upper-tier civil officials. This aspect is crucial to understand this group's functioning in the nineteenth century when many facets of the Qianlong emperorship were not well inherited.

Swiftly executing Heshen in 1799, the Jiaqing emperor noticeably had aversion to some Qianlong decisions during the early years of his reign. His attitude toward scholar-officials was tested by the case of Yin Zhuangtu 尹壯圖 (1743-1808). Yin, a former Hanlin academician, was trialed by the Qianlong emperor for "smearing" on the empire's fiscal deficiency. Pardoning Yin's life, the emperor deprived his title.[607] The Jiaqing emperor reversed this sentence immediately after his father's death, reinstalled Yin as a censor, and praised him of being forthcoming by telling the truth.[608] Yin was allowed to submit memorials in retirement. However, the subsequent proposals from Yin let the emperor regret his decision. Only two years later, Yin was forbidden to speak his "empty words" again.[609]

Yin's case epitomizes how the Jiaqing emperor handled the Qianlong legacy for the remainder of his rule. He gradually backed off from a revisionist approach and tried to return to his father's track of governance. As the Shilu compilers picked up, "guarding the established" (*shoucheng* 守

[607] Entries "Qianlong 55-01-10.1" and "55-02-04.1" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[608] Entry "Jiaqing 04-01-28" in the *Shangyu dang*.
[609] Entry "Jiaqing 06-03-02" in the *Shangyu dang*.

成) was an obsession.[610] Some Qianlong traditions of ideological practice were kept alive in the first half of the nineteenth century. The compilation and dissemination of imperial anthologies, for example, was a practice adopted by the Jiaqing and the Daoguang emperors. But there was no record suggesting these anthologies were studied by officials or at schools. From the Jiaqing to the Daoguang reigns, the place printing of books reduced to half of that under the Qianlong rule. Most of them were reprints and continuations of the Qianlong version. A conflagration at the Hall of Martial Valor in 1869 (Tongzhi 8) had likely destroyed all the woodblocks, preventing any possible resurgence in the post-Taiping reconstruction.[611]

It seems that despite the Jiaqing emperor's forlorn attempt, no post-Qianlong ruler was able or willing to revive the ideological institutions, practices, and the active mobilization of scholar-officials. Their lack of specific interest in pertinent activities, which broke the connection with the Hanlin scholars and disincentivized the group, was a possible reason. At the local level, most of the Qianlong-era experiments ceased to operate after the new officials arrived. In 1791 (Qianlong 56), the Education Commissioner of Shuntian tried to permanentize his policies through establishing new archival protocols.[612] This kind of solution was rare. The Qianlong era hardly recultivated a new literati body at the time. Without enough continuity, its influence soon became minimal in the nineteenth century.

[610] Entry "Jiaqing 25-07-25" in the *Renzong rui huangdi shilu* 仁宗睿皇帝實錄, *juan* 374.
[611] Entry "Tongzhi 08-06-21" in the *Muzong yi huangdi shilu* 穆宗毅皇帝實錄, *juan* 261.
[612] FHA#04-01-38-0098-032. Memorialist Wu Xinglan 吳省蘭 (1737-1810).

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*All biographical information are from the *Ming Qing dang'an renming quanwei ziliao* 明清檔案人名權威資料 (Authoritative Information of Names from Ming-Qing Archives) online database (http://archive.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ttsweb/html_name/index.php) provided by Academia Sinica, unless noted otherwise.

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Appendix I: Translation Index

Official Titles:[613]

Anchashi 按察使/*Niesi* 臬司 Judicial Supervisor

Buzhengshi 布政使/*Fansi* 藩司 Provincial Treasurer

Gongsheng 貢生 Advanced Licentiate

Hanlin 翰林 Hanlin Academician

Jiancha yushi 監察御史 (Circuit) Censor

Jiaoguan 教官/ *Xueguan* 學官 School Instructor

Jiaoshou 教授 Prefecture or Garrison (*wei* 衛) School Instructor

Jiaoyu 教諭 County School Instructor

Shengyuan 生員/*Xiucai* 秀才 Licentiate

Tongsheng 童生 Licentiate Candidate

Wusheng 武生 Military Licentiate

Xuedao 學道 Education Circuit Intendent

(*Tidu* 提督) *Xuezheng* 學政/ *Xueyuan* 學院/ *Xuetai* 學臺 Education Commissioner[614]

Xuezheng 學正 Subprefecture School Instructor

Xundao 訓導 (Prefecture/Garrison/Subprefecture/County School) Deputy Instructor

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[613] I used Hucker's dictionary and academic publications for reference. On most occasions, I adopted the Hucker version with some adjustments to more accurately represent the institutional meaning in the Qing bureaucracy.

[614] When broadly referring to all supervisors of provincial education before 1726, I used "Education Superintendents" as a generic term.

Xun'an 巡按 Regional Inspector

Xunfu 巡撫 Governor

Yanzheng 鹽政 Salt Commissioner

Zongdu 總督 Governor-general

Official Places:

Fuxue 府學 Prefecture School

Guozi jian 國子監 Directorate of Education

Hanlin yuan 翰林院 Hanlin Academy

Minglun tang 明倫堂 Hall of Moral Enlightenment

Ruxue 儒學/ *Xuegong* 學宮 (State-Sponsored Confucian) School

Shuyuan 書院 Academy

Weixue 衛學 Garrison School

Wuying dian 武英殿 Hall of Martial Valor

Xianxue 縣學 County School

Xiushu chu 修書處 Book Compilation Office

Xuezheng yamen 學政衙門 Office of (Provincial) Education Affairs[615]

Zhouxue 州學 Subprefecture School

Events and Activities:

[615] Abbr. The education office.

Dianshi 殿試 Palace Examination

Huishi 會試 Metropolitan Examination

Keshi 科試 Qualifying Examination (for the Provincial Examination)

Sanguan 散館 Hanlin Placement Examination

Suishi 歲試 Licensing Examination

Tongzishi 童子試 Licentiate Candidacy Examination

Xiangshi 鄉試 Provincial Examination

Others:

Dibao 邸報 Government Gazette