

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

Golden Lists of the Qing Dynasty Imperial Examination

REF N° 2004-52

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1 SUMMARY

The Palace Examination was the final stage in the sequence of civil service recruitment examinations during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). This examination was prepared and presided over by the Emperor in person. The Golden Lists are the name of the successful candidates and were written on a sheet of yellow paper. They are representative documents of the examination system of the Qing as it had emerged after many centuries of evolution since the Sui Dynasty (581A.D.). In the Qing dynasty, the regularly scheduled civil service recruitment examination was the only way for scholars to seek official positions. The sequence of the examination includes District Examination, Provincial Examination, Metropolitan Examination and the Palace Examination, which was held in the Hall of Preserving Harmony in the royal palace. Those who passed the examination were conferred the title of *Jin Shi*(进士). They would be selected in three categories and the name lists would be made public on a sheet of yellow paper, which is called *Golden List or Yellow List*. There were two types of Golden Lists. The small one would be submitted to the Emperor, and the large one put outside the Chang An Gates. The large Golden List is 150-220cm long and 80-90cm wide. It was written in both Chinese and Manchu in Chinese ink and stamped with the Emperor's Seal. The Manchu language was written from left to right, while the Chinese was written from right to left. The two languages meet in the middle of the paper by dates and the Manchu and Chinese character of the word *List* (榜). The paper starts with an imperial command and follows with the name lists of the passers of the three categories. The Emperor's Seal is put over the dates of the two languages and also the junction of the paper edge. For easy hanging, there are cords on the upper edge of the paper every metre. The small Golden List is 100cm long and 35 cm wide. It is the same with the large one in style and content. The only difference is that it does not have the Emperor's seal on it.

There are over 200 pieces of small and large Golden Lists in the custody of the 1st Historical Archives with time span from the 6th year of Kangxi reign (1667) to the 29th year of Emperor Guangxu (1903). All documents have high calligraphic value, and can be considered pieces of art in their own right.

Currently, there is only a simple register of these Golden Lists. A detailed catalogue will be available shortly.

The civil service recruitment examination which dates back to more than 1300 years in the Sui Dynasty (581 A.D.) was developed to its zenith in the Qing Dynasty. It is also in this period that this system was brought to an end. The system had international impact and was modelled by Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Ambassadors to the Emperor from Europe introduced adaptations of the examination system in several countries in Europe. It has influenced subsequently civil service systems in many colonies and successor states.

The content of the Qing Dynasty Golden List is both significant and distinctive, as it reflects the core of the examination system—Palace Examination and the format of the List. It is the original evidence for the study of China's feudal examination system. The names of many prominent historical figures could be found on the list. The 1st Historical Archives hold many documents related to the list that help to interpret those in their contemporary context.

The Golden List of the Qing dynasty is typical Chinese traditional paper document. It was written in Chinese ink on handmade paper. The Golden list is one of the major forms of traditional documents, and is of great significance to the study of Chinese ancient document. Meanwhile this document was

written in both Chinese and Manchu, it may serve as reference for those who study the translation of the two languages.

These documents were originally preserved by the Grand Secretariat, and are unique in the world.

2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

- 2.1 Name (person or organisation)
State Archives Administration of China (SAAC)
- 2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated
SAAC is the administrative authority of the First Historical Archives of China which is the custodian of the Golden Lists..
- 2.3 Contact person (s)
Mr. Hu Zhongliang
Director of Catalogue Centre
First Historical Archives
- Ms. Wang Hongmin
Chief of Foreign Affairs Office
State Archives Administration of China
- 2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)
Mr. Hu Zhongliang
Director of Catalogue Centre
First Historical Archives
Xihuamen Nei, the Palace Museum
Beijing 100031 China
Tel: 0086-10-83084214
Fax: 008610-63096489
E-mail: sab@public3.bta.net.cn

3 IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

- 3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

Golden Lists of the Qing Dynasty Imperial Examination

The large Golden List is 150-220cm long and 80-90cm wide. It was written in both Chinese and Manchu in Chinese ink and stamped with the Emperor's Seal. The Manchu language was written from left to right, while the Chinese was written from right to left. The two languages meet in the middle of the paper by dates and the Manchu and Chinese character of the word *List* (榜). The paper starts with an imperial command and follows with the name lists of the passers of the three categories. The Emperor's Seal is put over the dates of the two languages and also the junction of the edge. For easy hanging, there are cords on the upper edge of the paper every metre. The small Golden List is 100cm long and 35 cm wide. It is the same with the large one in style and content. The only difference is that it does not have the Emperor's seal on it.

There are over 200 pieces of small and large Golden Lists in the custody of the 1st Historical Archives with time span from the 6th year of Kangxi reign (1667) to the 29th year of Emperor Guangxu (1903). They are all open to the public.

Currently, there is only a simple register of these Golden Lists. A detailed catalogue is not yet available.

- 3.2 Description

The Palace Examination was the final stage in any sequence of civil service recruitment examination in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). This examination was prepared and presided over by the Emperor in person. The Golden Lists are the name lists of the successful candidates written on a sheet of yellow paper.

These documents were originally preserved by the Grand Secretariat, and are unique in the world.

4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1 Authenticity

The Golden Lists were originally preserved by the Grand Secretariat of the Qing Government and transferred to the First Historical Archives

4.2 World significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability

All the Golden Lists were preserved by the Grand Secretariat of the Qing Government. Therefore they are unique and irreplaceable.

4.3 Criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style.

1. Time:

For more than 1300 years from the Sui Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, regularly scheduled civil service recruitment examinations were the only way for scholars to seek official positions. Qing Dynasty was the period the system was developed to its zenith and brought to an end. Therefore, the Golden List

2. Place:

The civil service recruitment examination system was not only exercised in China, it was also implemented in other Asian countries and served as an example for the civil service examination system of the Europe.

3. Subject and theme:

The contents of the Golden Lists reflect the very core of the feudal civil service recruitment examination, which was the palace examination and the form of publication.

4. People:

Most of the names enlisted are prominent historical figures.

5. Form and Style:

The Golden List of the Qing dynasty is typical Chinese traditional paper document. It was written in Chinese ink on handmade paper. The Golden list is one of the major forms of traditional documents, and is of great significance to the study of Chinese ancient document. Meanwhile this document was written in both Chinese and Manchu, it may serve as reference for those who study the translation of the two languages.

These documents were originally preserved by the Grand Secretariat, and are unique in the world.

4.4 Issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management

The small and large Golden Lists of the Qing Dynasty form a complete whole. They were originally preserved by the Grand Secretariat of the Qing Dynasty and are unique in the world. They are rare and precious because they are Chinese traditional documents on handmade paper, and written in both Chinese and Manchu languages.

The earliest piece dates back to some 200 years ago in the 17th century. For historical reasons, some of the documents are moth-eaten and contaminated by ink. They are in desperate need of recovery.

5 *LEGAL INFORMATION*

- 5.1. Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)
The First Historical Archives
Xihuamen Nei, Palace Museum
Beijing, 100031
Fax and Tel: 0086-10-63096489
- 5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)
The First Historical Archives
Xihuamen Nei, Palace Museum
Beijing, 100031
Fax and Tel: 0086-10-63096489
- 5.3 Legal status:
- (a) Category of ownership
 State-owned
 - (b) Accessibility
 Open to the Public
 - (c) Copyright status
 Vests with the First Historical Archives
 - (d) Responsible administration
 State Archives Administration of China

6 *MANAGEMENT PLAN*

- 6.1 The Management Plan takes two steps :
- 1. To microfilm damaged archival documents so as to preserve the originals.
 - 2 . To improve the enviroment of the repository and upgrade equipment.

7 *CONSULTATION*

- 7.1 Owner of the heritage: The First Historical Archives of China
Custodian: The First Historical Archives of China
This nomination is lodged by the Chinese National Committee of MOW.

PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8 *ASSESSMENT OF RISK*

- 8.1 The earliest Golden List dates back to about 200 years ago in the 17th century. For historical reasons, parts of the golden lists are moth-eaten and contaminated by ink.

9 *ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION*

- 9.1 The Golden Lists of the Qing dynasty were produced by the Grand Secretariat. The large one would be put up outside the Chang An Men Gate in Beijing, while the small one would be submitted to the emperor for his perusal. Both the large and small golden lists would be preserved by the Grand Secretariat in the end. For various reasons, some of the golden lists have been lost or damaged. All those extant have been transferred to the First Historical Archives of China.

PART C - LODGEMENT

This nomination is lodged by:

Mr. Guo Shuyin,
Chairman of Chinese National Committee for Memory of the World &
Deputy Director General
State Archives Administration of China
July 14, 2004 in Beijing