

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

Qing Dynasty Yangshi Lei Archives

Rf N° 2006-26

PART A-ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1. SUMMARY

The Qing Dynasty Yangshi Lei Archives refers to the collections of architectural drawings and models made by the Lei Family of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and other relevant documents.

Dozens of members of the Lei Family over seven generations, spanning from the end of the 17th century to the beginning of the 20th century, acted as architects in architectural designing studio for the Qing court. They were responsible for architectural design, as well as the design of interiors and furnishings. Due to the outstanding nature of their achievements in craftsmanship and art, they were honorifically known as the “Yangshi Lei”.

Today, more than 20,000 documents concerning the Yangshi Lei Family remain. They are chiefly housed in the National Library of China, the First Historical Archives of China, and the Palace Museum. Further documents are stored in the National Museum of China, Tsinghua University, Tokyo University, Cornell University, and the Guimet Museum of Asian Art in France.

The existing documents range in date from the middle of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century, and cover imperial architecture in Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Liaoning and Shanxi. The archives are rich and invaluable resources, as there are drawings and models about architectural surveys, designs, plans for construction and decoration, referring to cities, palaces, gardens, altars, mausoleums, official residences, modern factories, and schools. There are various materials, including land surveys, architectural sketches, construction plans, and drawings of the floorplans, elevations, sections and decorations, as well as models and notes on construction progress. It also contains some written materials on construction plans, engineering notes, even some imperial or official orders.

Yangshi Lei Archives shows its value in many aspects. Most of the Archives concern extant structures, providing unparalleled insight into Chinese architectural history, traditional architectural planning, engineering, and principles of design. At the same time, we can gain further understanding of Qing society, economics, culture, as well as the architectural principles, aesthetics, and philosophies. The Yangshi Lei Archives is not only a treasure trove of Qing-era architectural knowledge, but Qing-era cultural knowledge as well.

The Qing Yangshi Lei Archives is also uniquely valuable for the following reasons:

1. The Qing Yangshi Lei Archives feature hand-written manuscripts, a rare historical resource.

The documents in the Qing Yangshi Lei Archives consist almost solely of ink-brush and charcoal drawings and writing on traditional Chinese hand-made paper. Tools used are mainly rulers, compasses, and irons. Pigments are the type used in traditional Chinese painting. These archives are thus valuable stores of traditional Chinese documentation forms.

2. The systematic nature, completeness, and scale of the Qing Yangshi Lei Archives makes it a precious resource in the study of the world's architectural history.

The 20,000-plus documents in the archives reveal the entire process by which structures were built, from selection of sites through construction and maintenance. Documentation of such scale, completeness and systematization is actually rare in the world that it could be regarded as a living memory of mankind.

3. The Qing Yangshi Lei Archives is the only systematic material extant at present, which not only has research value, but the responsibility to maintain and restore ancient Chinese architecture.

The glorious 5000-year history of China has produced a great contribution to world architecture, with more than twenty World Cultural Heritage Sites in China, and it is the Yangshi Lei Archives that records how these great structures were designed.

Of course, Qing-era structures that have been preserved to this day are the best examples of Qing-era architecture, but a building exists only as a snapshot of a moment in time. The archives concretely show the entire living process by which locations were selected, plans were drawn up and repeatedly altered, also show how construction was finally carried out. No other resource is available to provide this historical information, especially in cases of lost classical structures like the Yuanming Yuan. Documents from the Qing Yangshi Lei Archives provides the most pertinent, dynamic, reliable and integrate basis, with which we can do more research on ancient Chinese architectures and do more work of preserving and restoring.

4. The Qing Yangshi Lei Archives is a living sample of world architecture history.

Chinese architecture has its position in world architecture history with so many outstanding structures. The Qing Yangshi Lei Archives provides important materials for both Chinese and world architecture history. For example, a great number of grid draft-prints testify that Chinese had already used grids very well two hundred years ago. From this, we can infer that such a system was in use in China at that early time, and was not after all a Japanese invention as is commonly thought in present academia of architecture. This archive corrects such misconceptions, thereby forming a great influence in the history of world architecture.

5. The Qing Yangshi Lei Archives is the only firsthand source for the study of these world-class master architects.

The Lei Family worked designing, constructing and maintaining buildings for the Qing court for more than 200 years, producing the current World Cultural Heritage Sites: the Forbidden City, the Altar of Heaven, the Beijing Summer Palace, the Chengde Mountain Palace, and the Eastern and Western Qing Mausoleums. These make up one-fifth of all of China's registered World Heritage Sites. Some of these sites were completely the work of the Lei's, and some were redesigned through their engineering, but all of them encapsulate generations of Chinese great artisanry with the Leis as central figures. For such a family of architectural intelligence to have their hands in so many masterpieces is an unparalleled phenomenon in the history of world architecture. The high level of skills and achievements of the works reflected in the archives shows that the Leis have shown themselves world architectural masters, worthy objects of further, in-depth research. In the same way one would research a writer or an artist, one needs reliable, firsthand sources to research an architect, and the archives are the only such source in the case of the Lei Family.

2. DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

2.1 Name:

National Library of China

2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated:

The National Library of China is the main owner and caretaker of the nominated documents.

2.3 Contact person:

SU PINHONG, National Library of China

2.4 Contact Details:

Address: 7 Wenjin Street, Xicheng District, Beijing China

Postcode: 100034

Tel./FAX:86-10-66175547

E-mail:suph@nlc.gov.cn

3. IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

3.1 Name and identification details of items being nominated

Name: Qing Yangshi Lei Archives

Identification: Architectural and engineering documents, models, and drawings handmade by the Qing-era Lei Family.

3.2 Description

The more than 20,000 documents concerning the Yangshi Lei Family which are currently extant are chiefly housed in the National Library of China, the First Historical Archives of China, and the Palace Museum. The National Library, with over 15,000 documents, holds the majority, and it is the most systematic and complete collection. The Palace Museum holds approximately 2,900 documents, mainly draft-prints, models, and plans for decorative and household items. More than 1,000 items held by the First Historical Archives are mostly official plans and documents sent to the imperial court. Additional documents are held by the National Museum of China, Tsinghua University, Tokyo University, Cornell University, and the Guimet Museum of Asian Art in France.

The National Library's collection was begun in 1930 with the purchase of a batch of documents from a descendant of the Lei Family. The Library continued to purchase documents over the following ten years or more from booksellers. The Palace Museum collection was largely purchased from the Sino-France University in the 1950s, and also contains models from the National Library's collection. This collection also contains scattered documents obtained directly by the Museum. The First Historical Archives collection is mainly of documents directly inherited from the Qing court.

The National Library and Palace Museum collections exist as separate special collections. The documents owned by the First Historical Archives are contained within its collections of maps and its collection of edicts.

The Yangshi Lei Archives held by these three institutions are kept in climate-controlled storage rooms under good conditions, with specialists caring for their preservation. The National Library collection's original packaging from the time of its purchase is still in existence, additional casing has been provided, and set entirely in glass cabinets. The storage conditions in the other two institutions are of similar quality. However, since it is not the case that each individual document has been individually held, there are some problems of folded and crushed documents which require restoration. Such restoration work was begun at the National Library in the 1980s, through adding linings and other forms of support.

As for cataloguing the collection, the National Library has mostly completed such work and provided descriptions of the Archives, creating a basic card catalogue and a more detailed computerized database which are partially available for use by readers. The other two institutions have registered their holdings and created basic directories.

Research into the Yangshi Lei Archives began in the 1930s when the Lei descendants sold them. The architectural masters of the prestigious China Construction Academy pioneered the study of the Archives to great success. Their pioneering studies include Zhu Qiqian's *Textual Research on Family of Yangshi Lei* and Liu Dunzhen's *Source Materials for the Historical Study of the Reconstruction of the Yuan-ming Yuan During the T'ung-chih Period*. After this initial flurry of interest, little was done on the Archives until the 1980s, when interest was revived. Results of these studies began to come to light in the 1990s, notably those of Professor Wang Qiheng of Tianjin University. Now interest in the Archives has spread to Japan and other nations, and from the field of architecture into that of history. Results have been collected in works such as *The Architects' Family of Yangshi Lei, Qing Imperial*

Mausoleums, Studies on Fengshui Theory, Outside the Shadows-- A Cultural View of Architectural Studies and Leidong Xingliu. Further theses have been published throughout the world.

Names and Contact Information of Evaluators:

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4. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1 Authenticity

The three collections of Qing Yangshi Lei Archives as well as other miscellaneous collections consist of trustworthy documents of clear origins, and have gone through verification processes to testify to their authenticity. Over the 70 years in which they have been studied, no doubts as to their authenticity have been raised.

4.2 World significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability

Ancient Chinese architecture and its characteristic styles have become an integral part of the world's cultural heritage. Of extant Classical structures in China, the majority is from the Qing Dynasty, and the style of that era embodies the whole of Chinese architectural principles and philosophy. This is especially the case for imperial architecture, with its world-class majesty and grandeur, which best represent Qing-era architectures. That these structures have been registered as World Cultural Heritage Sites is a testament to their global cultural significance.

The Qing Yangshi Lei Archive collections are the very primary sources in existence concerning this architecture, and are invaluable in this respect. These Archives were essential in the creation of classical architecture, and their loss would be damaging to the preservation and restoration of the relevant ones. Such a loss would also destroy opportunities to reconstruct lost architecture such as those of the renowned Yuanming Yuan, and hinder efforts to understand Chinese architecture of the Qing Dynasty and of ancient times.

The advancements and achievements in architectural aesthetics, construction, and craftsmanship reflected in the Yangshi Lei Archives is an essential part of the world's cultural heritage. The study of the Yangshi Lei Archives is a contribution to the architectural history of the entire world.

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

(a) Time

The time period of the creation of these Archives stretches from the beginning of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century -nearly the entirety of the Qing Dynasty. Although the extant Archives only date from the mid-18th century on, this does not diminish the fact that they cover the dominant architecture of the Qing's classical style nor does it detract from the Lei Family's place in history. Furthermore, social, governmental, economic, and cultural factors are represented, notably during the decline of Chinese feudalism in the Xianfeng, Tongzhi, and Guangxu reign-eras. The Archives thus are valuable testaments to their eras.

(b) Place

As the Yangshi Lei Archives is concerned with imperial construction projects, they are chiefly concerned with Tianjin, Hebei, Liaoning and Shanxi. The Archives themselves were mainly made in Beijing.

(c) People

The chief creators of the Archives, the Lei Family themselves, were originally from Jiangxi Province. During the Kangxi reign (1662-1722), the first Yangshi Lei, Lei Jinyu, went to Beijing to work on architectural projects. Through the Qing Dynasty until the early years of 20th century, altogether tens of family members from seven generations were involved in imperial architecture and construction. These great architectural masters created many great works for the Qing court and for world cultural heritage - a singular achievement in human history. Such a long record of influential masterpieces from a single family is unparalleled in the world, and thus particularly deserving of study. And in another sense, studies on such topics would not have come into being and future researches would by no means be carried out without proper preservation of Yangshi Lei Archives.

The scope of the figures in the Archives reaches from the emperors at the top, through princes and ministers at court, and down to the common craftsmen. We can see characters written in the hand of Empress Cixi in corrections to details as well as imperial edicts. We see letters, public and private, between emperors, princes, ministers, engineers, and craftsmen concerning engineering projects. These Archives provide insight into these historical figures as well as the Qing world in which they lived.

(d) Subject and Theme

The most important and most immediate subject in the Archives is the construction of Qing imperial structures. The Archives directly depict the layout, decoration, design, and construction of the buildings. Furthermore, we can see the entire Qing-era construction process, from land survey through rough drafts and final drawings to model-building and final construction. We can see the art and aesthetics of architecture and craftsmanship at work in the Qing Dynasty.

In addition to this, there are also less obvious themes to be found in the Archives, such as ancient Chinese views of architecture, a holistic philosophy of man and nature, Feng-shui theory, etc. At the same time, the systematic description of the building process in the letters and edicts reflects Qing society, government, economy, and culture.

(e) Form and Style

In the Archives, drawings and writings are done in ink-brush or charcoal on traditional Chinese paper, and traditional Chinese paints are used. Many styles of representation are employed in the Archives, including many quite different from methods used today. The Yangshi Lei draft-prints used grid system, layered images, direct parallelism, and perspective shadowing in their diagrams, techniques that were quite advanced. Due to this and the fine draftsmanship exhibited in them, they are also worthy of admiration as artworks in and of themselves. It is quite awe-inspiring to consider that they were crafted with such simple tools.

The models are made of wood and paper with tools including irons. They are created to scale and very simple to put together and take apart to envision changes in structures. These ancient Chinese models still stand as works of art today as well. Whether in materials and tools or in skilled methods or in the delicacy style, these models are a special part of the world's architectural history.

4.4 Issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management

First, each of the Archives in the archives is handmade, and therefore can be assumed to be unique. Second, these Archives from one or two hundred years ago are the only extant architectural historical Archives in China. Third, a collection of ancient architectural Archives of this scope and completeness

is rare throughout the world. Fourth, these Archives contain pertinent information concerning several World Cultural Heritage Sites, which should be regarded as another unique quality.

The existing Yangshi Lei Archives is basically complete. A few documents have become damaged and some models have fallen apart, but these items could be restored in order to keep the archives complete.

The Yangshi Lei Archives consist mainly of paper, and therefore face threats of moisture, fire, mould, insects, rats, and the like. Additionally, they need to be protected from damage by earthquakes.

Currently, the Yangshi Lei Archives is mostly in well kept, in climate-controlled conditions with dedicated caretakers. Funding for their care has been organized, and conditions under which they may be viewed have been established.

5. LEGAL INFORMATION

5.1 Owners of the documentary heritage

The three main institutions are:

National Library of China. Address: 33 Zhongguancun South Rd., Haidian District, Beijing 100081

First Historical Archives of China. Address: Gugong Xihuamennei, Dongcheng District, Beijing 100031

Palace Museum of China. Address: 4 Jingshanqian Rd., Dongcheng District, Beijing 100009

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage

The documents are cared for by their owners.

5.3 Legal status

- (a) Category of ownership: Public
- (b) Accessibility: Available
- (c) Copyright Status: Copyrights held by owners.
- (d) Responsible administration: Culture Ministry of the People's Republic of China

6. MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 Summary of management plan:

a. Continue to catalogue and organize the Yangshi Lei Archives, insuring that each piece has a record that may be accessed in order to facilitate management.

b. Improve the storage materials for the items in the collection. The items are mostly paper, and have been wrapped and placed in containers. Due to age and contact with readers, much of their storage materials has become damaged and needs replacement in order to best preserve the documents. Furthermore, improvements are needed in the storage space itself, including shelving and placement conditions, and financial support for it.

c. Strengthen efforts to restore damaged documents and models, and prevent further damage.

d. Speed up efforts to publish and digitize the collection in order to facilitate its use by readers and to better preserve the originals.

7. CONSULTATION

Application for Memory of the World status for the Yangshi Lei Archives is under the direction of the Chinese National Committee of MOW, in cooperation with the Palace Museum and the First Historical Archives of China. These parties agreed to apply, and to entrust the National Library with turning in the application materials.

PART B - SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK

8.1 The Qing Yangshi Lei Archives is concerned ancient architecture, and are not involved in political questions. The storage conditions in each of the three institutions are good, and provide protection from insects, mould, fire, and the like. They are stored in wrapping or other encasing and placed safely away on shelves. However, the models are made of delicate wood and paper and are of various shapes and sizes, and thus difficult to manage. Due to wear and tear over time, they are in danger of being damaged. The archives face increasing damage as interest in researching the Yangshi Lei Family increases. Also, all three institutions are in Beijing, an area prone to earthquakes, so appropriate protection is also needed.

9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION

9.1 Ever since its entry into the National Library, the collection of Yangshi Lei Archives has been designated a special collection with its own storage space. Before the new library building was built in 1987, the collection was housed in the Bailin Temple branch library. At that time there was no air conditioning installed, and the collection was placed on only rudimentary shelves. Camphor and rat poison were used twice a year, and pesticide once. It is lucky that the collection was not damaged.

With the completion of the new building in 1987, the archives found a new home with advanced conditions. The storage rooms were equipped with climate control systems, automatic extinguishers and were deep enough to avoid air attack. Items were still wrapped in paper, and also kept in glass storage cases. No damage has been found nor reported ever since.

Storage conditions at the other institutions are similar.

These three institutions all have safety measures and emergency procedures in place as designated by the national government. There are also strict regulations concerning the management of the storage rooms. Therefore, the management of the archives is stable, and the responsibilities are clear.

However, the current storage system is not suitable for long-term use. Documents are folded and stored together, and are in danger of being damaged along the folds or of being crushed. The most ideal situation would be the re-packaging of the documents in a flat format to avoid such problems.

Due to the bulk of the models and the fact that they are made of paper and delicate wood, they are difficult to preserve. During the 1950s, more than 70 models were in existence; now they number less than ten. Many have not been restored due to lack of funds, materials, or manpower.

Should the Qing Yangshi Lei Archives be registered in the World Memory list, it would reinforce efforts to improve storage of documents, restore models, and speed the publication and digitization of the archives.

PART C - LODGEMENT

This nomination is lodged by:

National Library of China.