

**MEMORY OF THE WORLD INTERNATIONAL REGISTER
NOMINATION FORM**

China - Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat - 'Infiltration of Western Culture in China'

PART A - ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Abstract:

China, the birthplace of the Han culture has always been the center of oriental culture, of which the Qing Dynasty, China's last feudal dynasty, is particularly representative. Its administrative policies transcended national boundaries and many east Asian countries were vassal states of this dynasty which witnessed dramatic social changes. The decline of the feudal civilization in favour of modern western civilization is a subject of study in current world-wide history research. The clash between Western and Eastern culture in 17th century China shaped world history. The archives relating to the activities of Western priests in 17th century China, contained in the confidential records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat, provide a detailed first-hand account of the "Infiltration of Western Culture in China".

1. Identity and Location:

Name of the Documentary Heritage: Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat.

Country: People's Republic of China

State, Province or Region: Beijing

Address: First Historical Archives of China Xi Hua Men Nei, Palace Museum, Beijing, 100031; Tel/fax: 0086-10-6309 6489

Name of Institution: First Historical Archives of China

2. Legal information:

Owner: First Historical Archives of China, Xi Hua Men Nei ,Palace Museum Beijing 100031.

Tel (fax): 0086 010 63096489

Custodian: First Historical Archives of China, Xi Hua Men Nei, Palace Museum, Beijing 100031

Tel/Fax: 0086-10-63096489

Legal Status:

ú *Category of ownership:* State-owned

ú *Details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage:* Archives Law of the People's Republic of China and relevant administrative regulations.

ú *Accessibility:* Open to the public

ú *Copyright status:* Vested with the First Historical Archives of China.

ú *Responsible administration:* The First Historical Archives of China was established in 1955 under the State Archives Administration of China for the preservation of the Ming and Qing Dynasty archives.

3. Identification:

Description and inventory: These archives relate to the activities of Western priests in China and form part of the Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat which are memorials to the throne submitted by government agencies and senior officials and were created and maintained according to administrative security regulations. They were written in Manchu, a dying language, formerly the official language during the Qing dynasty.

The Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat are very valuable, particularly since only 24 of the original records of the activities of Western priests in 17th century China now remain.

Bibliographic details: Paper catalogue, only with number and creation time, no detailed descriptions.

Visual documentation: 15 slides

History: 1664 - 1665

4. Management plan:

Statement of significance: The Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat containing the detailed original account of the historic "Infiltration of Western Culture in China", form an important part of the Ming and Qing (1386-1911) Archives. Along with the Oracle Bone Inscriptions and Buddhist scriptures discovered in the Dun Huang caves, they are considered to be one of this century's three great cultural discoveries in China and, as such, represent not only a precious national cultural heritage, but one of world-wide significance.

Access policy and procedure:

1) Completing the arrangement and description of the records, establishing a computer-based catalogue.

2) Repairing damaged records, and making microfilm copies.

3) Translating the records into Chinese or foreign languages for publication.

4) Improving the preservation environment and storage equipment, and forming a program group, comprised of historians, archivists and Manchu language experts.

5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria:

ú **Influence:** The "Infiltration of Western Culture in China" deeply influenced the history of China and the West. The preaching of advanced science and technology by the Western priests made a great impact on 17th century China. However, the divergence of the two cultures finally created a sharp conflict and the Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat provide original evidence for this dramatic historical event.

ú **Time:** The "Infiltration of Western Culture in China" reached its peak in the middle of the 17th century, but subsequently this golden age underwent a rapid decline which resulted in the "Case of Priest Tang Ruowang" (Johann Adam Schall Von Bell) which is transcribed in its integrality in the Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat.

ú **Place:** The Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat revealed the living conditions and experiences of the Western priests in 17th China and supported the fact that at that time Catholicism was popular not only among the people, but also permeated high society and even the Palace.

ú **People:** In the Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat, there are records concerning well-known persons who played an important role in the "Infiltration of Western Culture in China", such as Priest Tang Ruowang. As a German Jesuit, he arrived in China in 1619, where he lived for 40 years. When the Qing Dynasty was founded he was appointed Director of the Imperial Board of Astronomy by the Qing Emperor and worked in the palace for 20 years. He was regularly promoted and was even appointed Director of of State Protocol. He was the one and only foreign priest to have been so successful and enjoyed such a high reputation in China. However, he suffered a great deal in his later years, and was eventually sentenced to death. His dramatic experiences reflect the history of the "Infiltration of Western Culture in China".

ú **Subject/Theme:** The "Case of Priest Tang Ruowang", also known as the case of the "Almanac Argument" concerned the western and Chinese astronomers' divergent concept of the Almanac, which developed into a conflict between the two cultures and put an end to the "Infiltration of Western Culture in China". The Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat contain a series of original government documents on this case.

ú **Form and Style:** The Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat, written on traditional oriental paper by means of a writing brush and Chinese ink are in the original form and style of the Chinese ancient records. In addition, they were written in Manchu, the official language of the Qing Dynasty which has almost disappeared, being only spoken by a small number of people in northern China., so the Confidential records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat are a valuable means of saving and studying Manchu.

ú **Social Value:** These records are complete and the detailed description of 17th century astronomy and the records of the lives of Western priests during the Qing Dynasty are of great value to current research.

ú **Integrity:** The records relating to the activities of the Western priests in China are systematic and complete.

ú **Rarity:** The Confidential records of Qing's Grand Secretariat reflect the remote past and there are only 24 remaining original records relating to the activities of western priests in 17th century China.

ú **Importance of the documentary heritage:** The Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat is an important component part of the Ming and Qing (1386-1911) Archives, which together with the Oracle Bone Inscriptions and the Dun Huang Buddhist scriptures, were regarded as one of the three great cultural discoveries in China of this century. Records relating to the activities of western priests in 17th century China, as part of the Confidential Records of Qing's Grand Secretariat, offer a detailed account of the "Infiltration of Western Culture in China", a precious cultural heritage for China and of world-wide significance.

ú **Authenticity:** The Confidential Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat originally formed part of the Collections of the Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties which figured on the World Cultural Heritage list in 1987.

ú **Rarity:** Each of these records in Chinese brush on handmade paper is a model of calligraphy in Manchu, the official language of the Qing Dynasty.

6. Consultation:

Owner: First Historical Archives of China

Custodian: State Archives Administration of China, 21 Fengsheng Hutong, Beijing 100032, China;
Tel: 86-10-66170220 Fax: 0086-10-66175532

Regional or National Memory of the World Committee: Chinese National Committee of Memory of the World

Independent institutions and experts:

- Prof. Dai Yi , President of the Association of Chinese Historians; Tel: 0086-10-64039461.

- Prof. Wang Zhonghan , History Department of Central University for Nationalities; Tel: 0086-10-68932590.

- Zhu Jiajin, Researcher of the Research Institute of Palace Museum; Tel: 0086-10-65132255-591.

7. Nominator:

State Archives Administration of China; Administrative Authority of the First Historical Archives of China.

Contact person: Mr. Wang Gang, Director-General of the State Archives Administration of China; 21 Fengsheng Hutong, Beijing 100032 China. Tel: 0086-10-66170220 Fax: 0086-10-66175532

PART B - SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8. Assessment of risk:

These records were created approximately 200 years ago and poorly preserved so some are damaged by insects, the ink has begun to spread and the scripts have faded beyond recognition. It is therefore necessary to rescue and restore them as soon as possible.

9. Preservation Assessment:

Due to shortage of funds and equipment, the records are still kept in unfavorable conditions. It is necessary to reduce the usage of the originals, and optimise storage conditions. Present physical state: 35.1% are damaged.

History of preservation: Arrangements started in 1924 when Pu Yi, the last Emperor of the Qing Dynasty was expelled from the Forbidden City. The First Historical Archives of China was established in 1980 with responsibility for the preservation of these archives.

Current preservation policy: Satisfactory.

Person or organization responsible for preservation: First Historical Archives of China