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*LIFANYUAN* AND THE  
MANAGEMENT OF  
POPULATION DIVERSITY  
IN EARLY QING  
(1636–1795)

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# ***Lifanyuan* and the Management of Population Diversity in Early Qing (1636–1795)<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

A *Lifanyuan*-centered inquiry into Qing history raises statecraft-focused questions: which workings of the Qing statecraft actually accomplished the integration of the Inner Asian people? How were the tensions in the relationship between Inner Asia and the long-lasting dynastic center overcome? This paper presents an analysis of *Lifanyuan* governance through ‘social systems’, on which the center-periphery relations were built, and of *Lifanyuan* management of ‘social entities’, in which the local Inner Asian communities were organized following their own conventions but under Qing supervision. The banner system for the Mongols, the Dalai-*amban* system for the Tibetans inside heartland Tibet, the *tusi* system for the Amdo Tibetans in Qinghai, and the *beg* system for the Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang preserved and sustained four types of social entities centered on each people’s culture and identity. Considering the growing studies of borders and frontiers in relation to concepts of nation, state, and empire-state, this study treats *Lifanyuan* as a historical “agent” in the Qing Empire formation during the 17th and 18th centuries and discusses its long-term impact on China reaching up to the 21st century.

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## *Lifanyuan* and the Qing Statecraft

The latest studies on the Qing Empire (1636/1644–1911) show that the early Qing initiated a momentous period of empire building from the Manchu emperor Taizong Hūwangtaiji (Hong Taiji, Hung Taiji, 1626–1643) – “the central figure in the creation of the Qing imperial enterprise” (Rawski 1998: 1) – to Gaozong Qianlong (1736–1795) – “modern China’s first ruler” (Elliot 2009: 166). The *Lifanyuan* (理藩院), “The Ministry of Managing the Non-Chinese Population”<sup>3</sup>, played a key role in forging the multinational Qing Empire as “one of the great empires in world history” (Elliot 2009: xii). Among the praising remarks of the early Qing, Jerry Norman stated that:

We might ask what has been the contribution of the Manchus to world history and culture. The most important contribution was without doubt the creation of the Qing empire, the last of the great Chinese dynasties. The Manchus expanded the borders of Ming China, ultimately to include Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia. With the exception of the now independent country of Mongolia (the “Outer Mongolia” of Qing times), the present borders of China are in the main those of the Manchu Qing dynasty. (...) The Kangxi and Qianlong emperors presided over what, by any account, must be considered high points in Chinese history. (Norman 2003: 490)

Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom has also pointed out that “[a] map of today’s PRC shows borders defining ‘China’ that came into being only after the Qing Dynasty had engaged in many decades of imperial expansion after taking power in 1644” (Wasserstrom 2010: 23). Integrating Inner Asia<sup>4</sup> along China’s Great Wall frontiers is an apparent accomplishment of the apex of Qing rule and was much associated with the *Lifanyuan* governance over the Mongols (spreading over Inner and Outer/Khalka Mongolia, Qinghai, and Zungharia of present Northern Xinjiang), the Tibetans (crossing heartland Tibet and the Amdo region of Qinghai and some Gansu/Sichuan/Yuanan areas), and the Uighurs in the present Southern Xinjiang. Each of these Inner Asian groups had a distinct national identity, unique cultural tradition, particular type of social organization, specific style of leadership, and different relationships with the Manchu court. Besides the obvious differences among themselves, they collectively differentiated from the Han Chinese, the overwhelming majority of the Qing population. A *Lifanyuan*-centered inquiry raises the questions: which workings of the Qing statecraft actually united these peoples (the largest nationality groups of present China) and how were the tensions in the relationship between Inner Asia and the long-lasting dynastic center overcome.

<sup>3</sup> There is a wide range of possible translations: Court of Colonial Affairs (Rowe 2009: 39), Court of Management of the Outer Dependencies (Perdue 2005: 468), “literally, Court of Administration of the Dependencies, commonly translated Court of Colonial Affairs” (Atwood 2004: 333), Court of Colonial Dependencies (Elliot 2001: 40), Imperial Colonial Office (Crossley 1999: 214), Court of Colonial Affairs (Rawski 1998: 460), and “often translated as court of colonial affairs or colonial office but more properly as court for the administration of the outer provinces” (Di Cosmo 1998: 294). I am not comfortable with any of the “Court of Colonial (...)” translations. If we follow the meaning of *Lifanyuan* found in a Chinese dictionary, *Lifanyuan* is the “ministry which manages the border regions” which actually has strong sense of people rather than land/region. In my opinion, the terms ‘colonial’ and ‘dependencies’ introduce political perspectives/opinions into this institution from 20th century scholars (who started to use these terms). The ruling Manchu, who named this institution in 1638, would not have known the idea of ‘colonialism’. ‘Dependencies’ may reflect the Manchu mind since everyone inside the Qing Empire was to be a dependent of the Manchu court, but the language term “*fan*” itself is neutral meaning “border region” or, if not so neutral, “defensive buffer zones along the border.”

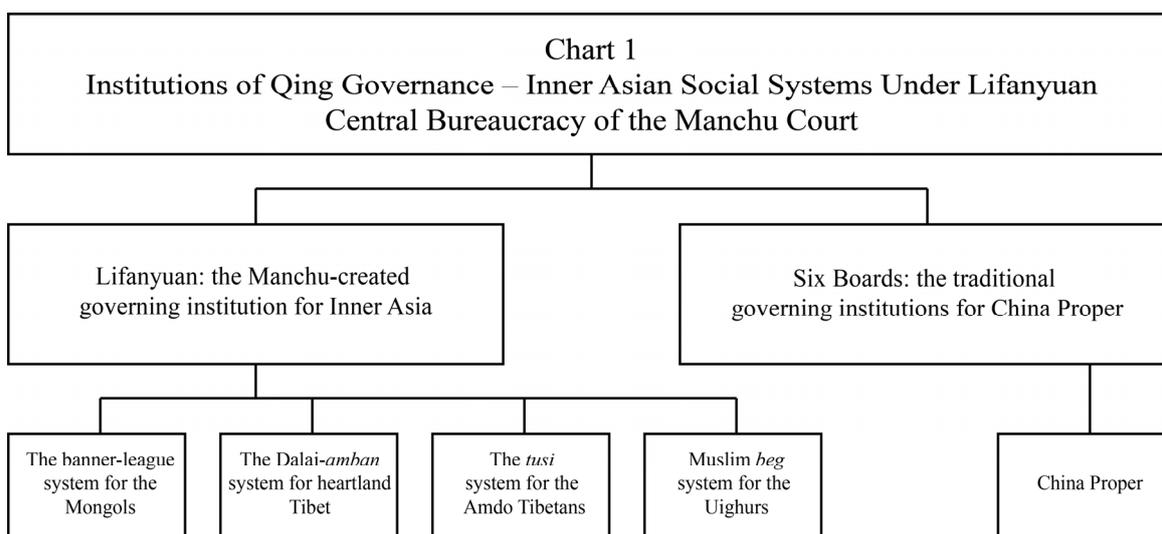
<sup>4</sup> Along with the U.S. Qing scholarship, the definition of “Inner Asia” in this paper follows Owen Lattimore’s *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (1988), which includes Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang. My exception is that Qinghai is recognized as a unique Inner Asian area (see Chia 2008).



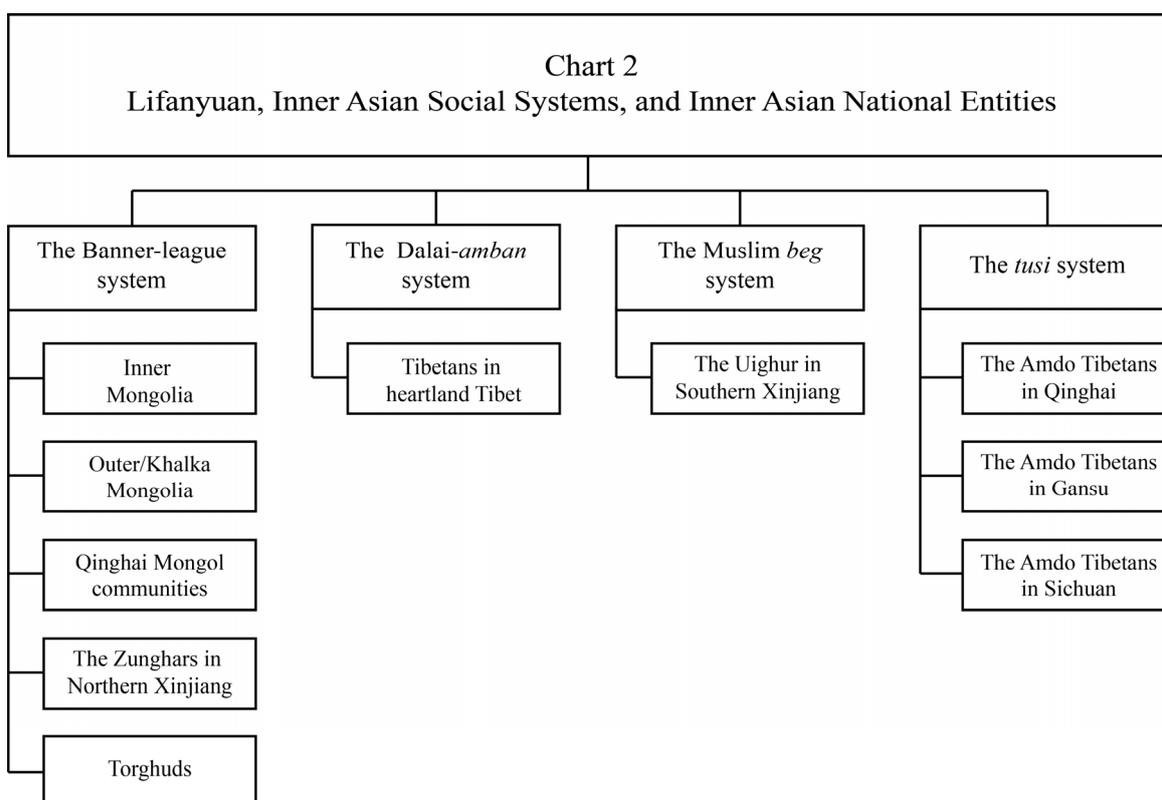
Map 1: The People's Republic of China (PRC) on territory of the Qing Empire, not showing the areas in Central Asia and Manchuria lost to Russia in the 19th century. The Qing Outer Mongolia became independent in the early 1920s. (Base map: Unlabeled public domain image from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:China\\_Qinghai.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:China_Qinghai.svg)).

To answer these questions, this paper is intended to make new contributions to the field by envisioning 'social systems' and 'social entities' while approaching the formation of the Qing multinational empire. It examines the central institution *Lifanyuan* as a historical agent with extended bureaucracy in order to understand the relationship between the national groups of Inner Asia and the state power of the Manchu court. I attempt to analyze the thinking process, which was generated from the *Lifanyuan*'s governing experiences of Inner Asia over the Hūwangtaiji-Qianlong stage to rediscover the *Lifanyuan*'s impact beyond the Qing dynasty.

This paper's special look upon the Great Qing Empire first focuses on the *Lifanyuan*'s governance through 'social systems', on which the center-periphery official routines were built between the Manchu court and the Inner Asian leadership. The second focus is on the *Lifanyuan*'s management of 'social entities', in which the local Inner Asian communities were organized by following their own convention but under Qing supervision. 'Social system' elongated the Manchu authority into the four tradition-based social hierarchies in the Manchu-designed administration in Inner Asia: the banner system for the Mongols by adopting and modifying the Manchu Eight Banners; the Dalai-*amban* (the Qing resident official) system for the Tibetans inside heartland Tibet by combining the indigenous religious leadership and the court-appointed secular minister; the *tusi* system (the aborigines' chieftainship) for the Amdo Tibetans in their "segmented territories" (Nietupski 2011: xxi) based on their own political customs; and the *beg* system (the local Muslim notables) for the Uighurs stemming from their Muslim traditions (see Chart 1).

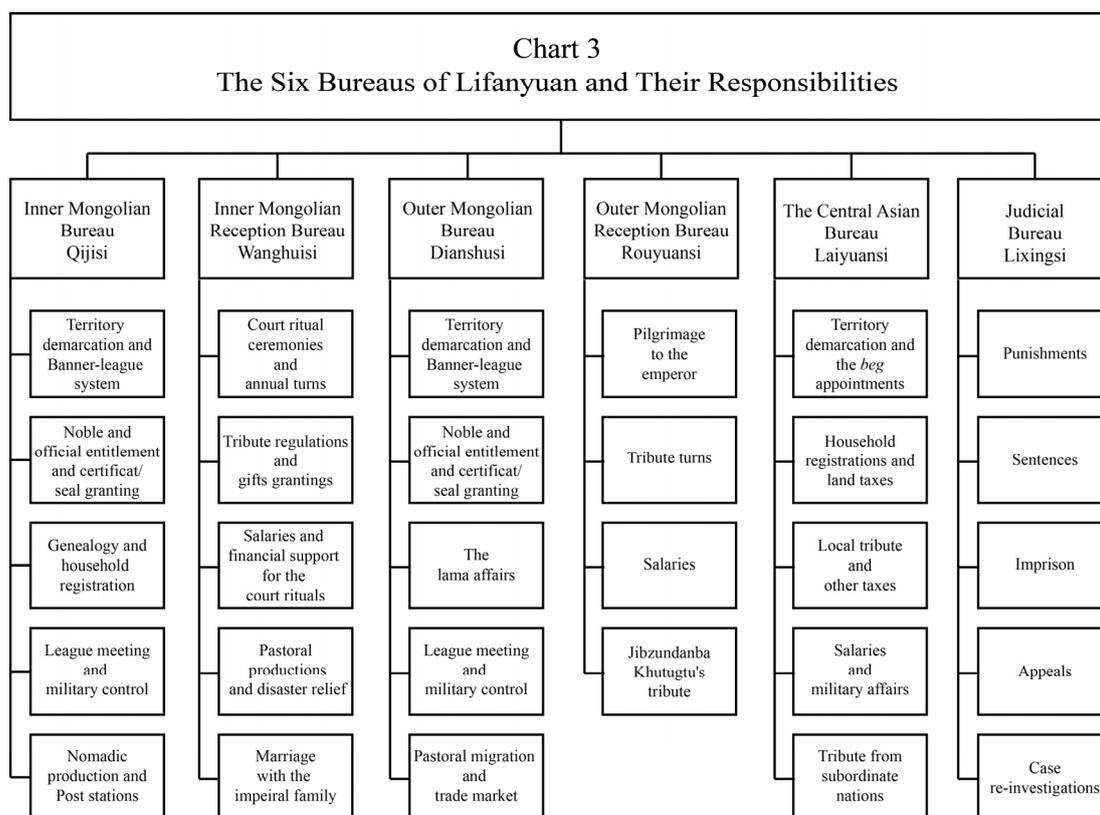


‘Social entities’ were the nationality-based,<sup>5</sup> homeland-associated, culture-bounded societies. Becoming the extension of the official court routines rather than self-governing hierarchies, the four social systems preserved and sustained four types of social entities centered on each people’s culture and identity (see Chart 2).



<sup>5</sup> Both ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nationality’, as very general terms, address what a people are with a clear sense of their physical and cultural identity. In the Chinese studies in Western countries ‘ethnicity’, which is somewhat a race-related term, is more and more replaced by ‘nationality’, which seems to be a more difference-oriented word to discuss people. Considering this trend and also keeping with the quotation from Mullaney’s book (Mullaney, Thomas S. 2011. *Coming to Terms with the Nation: ethnic classification in modern China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press) in the latter part of the paper, I choose ‘nationality’ and ‘national’ to refer to the Inner Asian peoples throughout the paper.

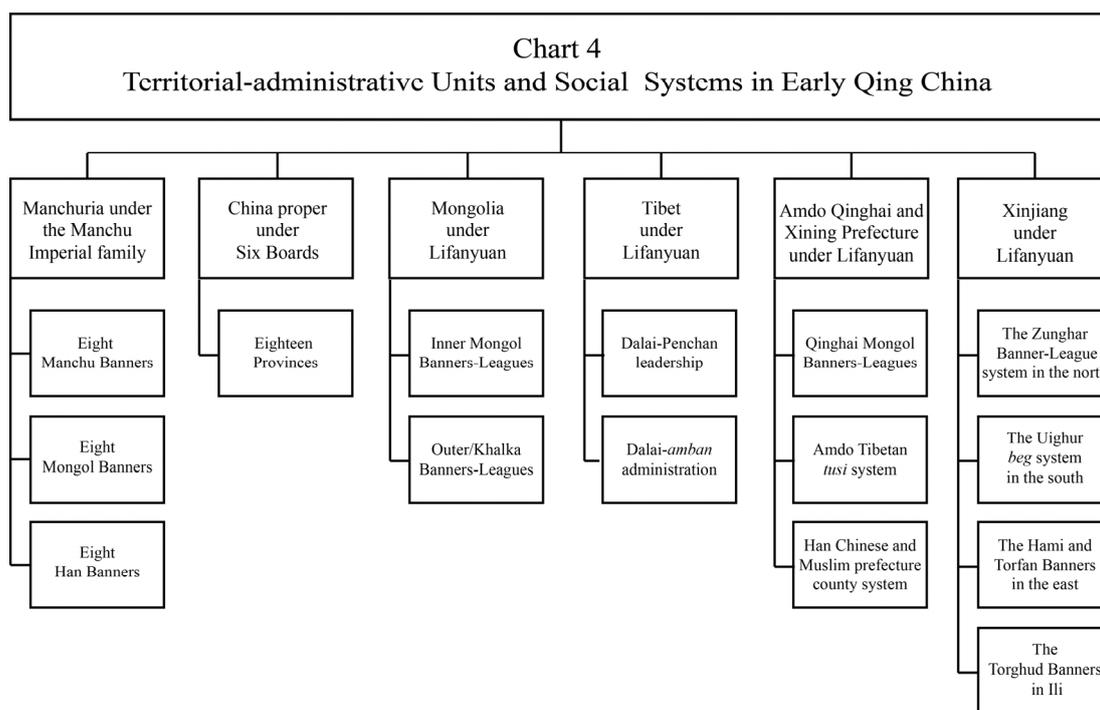
The six *Lifanyuan* bureaus (*qinglisi*) were to manage the entities as internal societies (see Chart 3).<sup>6</sup>



After a series of successful campaigns, the Qianlong reign incorporated six geopolitical areas into the multi-national Qing Empire: Manchuria, China proper, Mongolia, Tibet, Qinghai, and Xinjiang.<sup>7</sup> Four of these six areas were under *Lifanyuan* administration (see Chart 4).

<sup>6</sup> Due to the translation limitation and the simplification of the responsibility list, *Lifanyuan* in Tibetan affairs are not reflected in such a chart. But the details of the *Lifanyuan* responsibility in Tibet are broadly recorded in the Qing documents, such as Kun gang's *Daqing huidian lifanyuan shili* (The *Lifanyuan* case managements in the Collected Statutes and Precedents of the Great Qing), 1991: 120, 141–142 and 164; *Qianlong chao neifu chaoben lifanyuan zeli* (The Handwriting Edition of the Regulations of the Lifanyuan of the Qianlong Reign), 1988: 88–89, 94, 96–97, 110–111, and 114–117; *Kangzixichao daqing huidian zhong de lifanyuan ziliao* (The *Lifanyuan* records in the Collected Statutes and Precedents of the Great Qing of the Kangxi Reign), 1988: 17–18; *Yongzheng chao daqing huidian zhong de lifanyuan ziliao* (The *Lifanyuan* records in the Collected Statutes and Precedents of the Great Qing of the Yongzheng Reign), 1988: 31–33; *Qianlong chao daqing huidian zhong de lifanyuan ziliao* (The *Lifanyuan* records in the Collected Statutes and Precedents of the Great Qing of the Qianlong Reign), 1988: 16, 23; *Jiaqing chao daqing huidian zhong de lifanyuan ziliao* (The *Lifanyuan* records in the Collected Statutes and Precedents of the Great Qing of the Jiaqing Reign), 1988: 14, 16, 85–91; and *Qing gaozong chun huangdi shilu* (Qing Imperial Annals for the Qianlong Reign), 1986, vol. 19: 57, 112–113, 142, 224, and 291–292.

<sup>7</sup> The sub-communities inside each social system and national entity, such as the Inner Mongols, Outer/Khalkha Mongols, Qinghai Mongols, Zunghars, and other Mongol groups, are not discussed in this paper because their differences will not change the general pattern of the social system and entity. For a broad understanding of the discussion, see Chia (1992, 1993, 2008, and 2009), Crossley (1999), Elliot (2001 and 2009), Lattimore (1998), Millward (2007), Millward et al. (2004), Rawski (1998), and Rowe (2009).



A thorough study of this center–local interaction would contribute to the on-going “reconceptualization of Qing history” with “the Inner Asian turn” (Rowe 2009: 5) and look at “divisions within” to understand the “internal vitality of Chinese history” (Di Cosmo and Wyatt 2003: 4).

The study of Qing institutions requires further development, after the contributions of Beatrice S. Bartlett on the Grand Council (1991) and Evelyn S. Rawski on the Qing institutions at the Manchu court (1998). Qianlong’s rule, stated Mark Elliot, “was enabled by a complex combination of civilian and military administrative institutions” (Elliot 2009: 15). The *Lifanyuan* stood out among the others as an administrative institution specifically dedicated to govern Inner Asia. Its role to enable the Qing to rule over Inner Asia contributes, after my earlier publications, to the growing studies of borders and frontiers in relation to concepts of nation, state, and empire-state.<sup>8</sup> This paper positions the *Lifanyuan* as a historical ‘agent’ in the Qing Empire formation while re-examining its impact on having China’s present borderlands “fully incorporated into the Chinese state” during the 18th century (Lary 2007: 1). The first aspect of this impact is the *Lifanyuan* transforming from the Ming (1368–1644), which had no governmental organ especially managing Inner Asia, to the Qing, which created and relied on such a dedicated Inner Asian organ. This transition provided the dynastic statecraft with the strength of direct administration in Inner Asia, where the “successive central governments” since the Qin (221–206 B. C.) had “never been free of pressure”, but now the Manchu court was able to stretch “the centre to its limits” (Lary 2007: Preface, 1). Next is the *Lifanyuan* contributing the vast Inner Asia lands to the ever diverse Qing Empire as internal parts of the whole. Despite the size, the empire achieved “a more prosperous economy and a higher general standard of living than most of Western Europe” during the Qianlong reign (Rowe 2009: 4). The third aspect is the *Lifanyuan* influence on post-Qing China in terms of the nationality categories. The *Lifanyuan*-managed Inner Asian groups – Mongols, Tibetans, Uighurs – and the Manchu themselves gained the earliest and clearest nationality identities in the 20th century among

<sup>8</sup>See Alesina and Spolaore (2003); Donnan and Wilson (1999, 2010); Wilson and Donnan (1998); Stoler, McGranahan, and Perdue (2007).

the current 55 PRC minorities. At last, the Inner Asian origins of *Lifanyuan* – its Inner Asian founders of the ruling Manchu in the 1630s, its Inner Asian-staffed personnel throughout the Qing dynasty, and its primary responsibilities in Inner Asia – have demonstrated the Inner Asian innovation in its renovation of the dynastic government.

Dramatic differences can be found between the Ming and the Qing statecraft in relation to Inner Asia. The weak Ming institutions for Inner Asia employed the *weisuo* system (military forts under indigenous chiefs) in Manchuria and the Qinghai-Gansu area, which was an indirect local control based on the tribute relationship. Granting titles and seals to the Mongol chief as the “Obedient and Righteous King” (*shunyiwang*) was designed to forge a peaceful relationship, which, however, had limited success. Throughout the dynasty, the Ming suffered from several wars with Mongol groups along the Great Wall frontier. At the court, the *Libu* (礼部 – The Board of Rites), charged with tribute rituals, could only establish loose ties with the Inner Asian polities. The Qing, in contrast, directly embraced Inner Asia through the *Lifanyuan* and its managerial functions. Through the *Lifanyuan*, the Manchu court was able to oversee the local entities. In the empire-building process, the Qing court redesigned the institutional role in relations to Inner Asia. The *Lifanyuan* and *Libu* acted as two kinds of governmental agents. The *Lifanyuan* was charged exclusively with the internal governance of Inner Asia, while the *Libu* had handled all ritual ceremonies at the court, comprising the six internal geographical regions and also all outside tributaries.<sup>9</sup> There is thus a clear distinction between the Ming and Qing institutional administration of Inner Asia.

Such an institutional history in association with Inner Asia informs us how the statecraft handled human divisions in terms of nationalities as well as their cultures and geographical locations. Inside the early Qing Empire, the long-standing provincial-county system (based on the *junxian* structure of the Qin dynasty, 221–206 B. C.) was continued in China Proper under the management of the traditional Six Boards. The newly created Eight-Banner-System for the population in Manchuria was under the direct control of the Manchu imperial family. The four major Inner Asian social systems in the four regions, being established gradually since 1635, were under *Lifanyuan* administration. The empire’s administrative design reflects the Manchu recognition of national identities, cultural traditions, and distinct social organizations among the Qing population. Each administrative pattern (banner, Dalai-*amban*, *tusi*, and *beg*) was closely attached to a particular people’s political hierarchy and fell under a specific institutional supervision. Each institutional line along the social hierarchies upheld a number of entities in which a people kept its national identity, territorial homeland (with exceptions of a few migration groups), cultural solidity, leadership tradition, and family-lineage/or tribal ties. Although distinct for each people, all institutional arrangements were subject to the superordinate *Lifanyuan* and thus part of the 18th-century Qing realm.

As a new institution in the dynastic government, the *Lifanyuan* provided first-hand assistance in re-organizing the dynastic territory, which was rapidly enlarged by the Qing’s expansion into Inner Asia. The challenges of integrating the Inner Asian social systems and entities into the dynastic court located inside China proper were not new, but the *Lifanyuan* governance system during the Qianlong reign was, as recent Qing studies have shown, more efficient than any other system

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<sup>9</sup> See the author’s paper “On the Institutional Renovation of the Manchu Dynasty: *Lifanyuan* and *Libu* in Qing Empire Building,” presented at the MPI Workshop “Administrative and Colonial Practices in Qing Ruled China: *Lifanyuan* and *Libu* revisited,” 7–8 April 2011. The conference volume is in preparation.

during the dynastic history. This makes the *Lifanyuan* a quite unique administrative success of the Qing Empire, but its impact reaches as far as present China.

### ***Lifanyuan* and Inner Asian Social Systems**

In order to understand the Manchu organization for the Mongols, one has to look back at the way the Manchu organized their own population into social systems before they took power in China in 1644. The unique Manchu military, social, and administrative organization, called the Eight-Banner-System (*baqi*), was the foundation of the Manchu State founded by the Aisin Gioro clan of the Tungusic Jurchen (Nǔzhēn). Based on the Manchu hunting tradition, a banner was structured into *niru* – a company of three hundred soldiers, *jalan* – a regiment of five *niru*, and *gūsa* – a banner of five *jalan* (*Manzhou shilu*, Volume 4), thus a total of seventy-five hundred soldiers and their households. Based on this tradition, the Manchu eight banners (since 1607–1615), the Mongol eight banners (since 1635), and the Chinese eight banners (since 1637–1642) were designated in separate sectors (Elliot 2001: 59).<sup>10</sup> The phenomenon was that the people’s nationality boundary paralleled the administrative boundary. With these inside boundaries, however, the banner organization itself, rather than the people’s national origins, created a common banner identity, which was later recognized as the “Manchu identity”. This identity was shaped by crossing three nationality lines inside a common governing system. The long-standing impact of this identity is reflected in the fact that since the 1980s the banner ancestry, regardless of Manchu, Mongol, or Chinese ancestry, has qualified a PRC citizen to claim Manchu nationality.<sup>11</sup> Over the historical stages from the establishment of the Eight-Banner-System to the late 20th century PRC policy, it was the banner system, concluded Mark Elliot, which perpetuated a coherent Manchu identity (Elliot 2001: xviii).

The rising Manchu State under Hūwangtaiji expanded its territory beyond Manchuria, starting with the submission of the Inner Mongols. Managing these Mongols, who had a similar tribal tradition as the Manchu themselves, became the foundation for the age of the *Lifanyuan* in the Qing institutional history at the birth of the Qing dynasty in 1636 (Chia 1992: chapter 1). For two years, the Manchu name for this new government agency was *monggo jurgan* (The Mongol Office). It was renamed *turlergi golo be dasara jurgan* (Department of Managing the Outer Regions) in 1638, the Chinese name being *Lifanyuan*. The *Lifanyuan* assisted the Manchu court with organizing the submitted Inner Mongols into banners, while Manchu and Han Chinese affairs remained beyond *Lifanyuan* control (Eltai 1985: 5–6, 194). Parallel to the Qing expansion in Inner Asia, the *Lifanyuan* administration expanded as well to govern all of Inner Asia.<sup>12</sup>

The banners for all the Mongol groups belonged to a separate social system beside the Eight Banners of Manchuria. The Mongol banners did not include people with different national origins. By 1670, the number of the Inner Mongol banners under the *Lifanyuan* was finalized into 49 in six leagues, which the Manchu Eight Banners did not have. The Outer/Khalka Mongols, who became part of the Qing Empire in 1691, were organized in 34 to 86 banners in four leagues by 1759.

<sup>10</sup> The small numbers of Russians and Koreans in the banners and cases of mixed nationalities in the same banner are not ignored but not discussed in this paper.

<sup>11</sup> As a graduate student in minority histories during 1982–1983 at the Central University of Nationalities, I knew the PRC policy and how it was practiced. For the academic discussion of such a Manchu identity in relation to the banner organization, see Wang Zhonghan (2006: 105).

<sup>12</sup> The *Lifanyuan* responsibility for the Qing–Russian relations, which originated and developed very much like the Mongol affairs, is not discussed in this paper.

Unlike the Inner Mongols, the hereditary khan titles of the Khalkas were allowed to remain, and there was an average of two *sumus* (regiment) inside each Khalka banner in comparison to 28 *sumus* in an Inner Mongol banner. The banners of the Qinghai Mongols (since 1725), northern Xinjiang (since 1755), the present Western Mongolia (Uriankhai and Khowd, for example), and the Torghuds, who returned to the Qing from Russia in 1771, were similar to the Khalka banners in size. According to Atwood, however, variations existed in that the role of *taiji* was played by *zaisangs*. There were also cases that only a regiment, rather than a banner, was the organizational unit. But no matter where the Mongols were in Inner Asia, the banner system was, according to Atwood, their “basic sociopolitical unit”, and all the Mongol banners were “under a different legal and administrative system” than the Manchu eight banners. The Manchu demands in this system of fixed pastoral territory under the court-appointed Mongolian *jasag* “did not change traditional Mongolian social structure” in which all the Mongols were subjects to their *taiji* in the past (Atwood 2004: 30–31).

The Qing governance in Tibet was very different from that of the Mongols. Considering that “Mongolia and China became increasingly important in Tibetan history during the 16th to the 18th century” (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 120), the Manchu–Tibetan relationship ensued the Manchu–Mongol relationship when the Khoshud Gūushi Khan (1582–1655) in Qinghai and the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) in Tibet decided to send an envoy, Sechen Chogyel, to Hūwangtaiji’s court in Mukden in 1637. The event gave the relationship a strongly religious hue. Years ahead of the Qianlong reign, the complicated political situation in Inner Asia consistently bothered the Manchu–Tibetan relationship, such as the thorny reincarnation of the Sixth Dalai Lama during the 1680s–1710s of the Kangxi reign (1662–1722), the 1727–1728 Tibetan civil war during Yongzheng’s time (1723–1735), and the Tibetan internal struggles in which “the Qianlong emperor was forced to intervene” (Millward et al. 2004: 18). The relationship still progressed with highlights such as the Fifth Dalai Lama’s (1617–1682) visit of the Shunzhi court in 1652, Qianlong’s intimate relationship with the second Jangjiya Khutugtu, Rolpai Dorje (1717–1786), and the visit of the Third (or the Sixth in Chinese sources) Panchen Lama (1737–1780) to the Qianlong court in 1780. The Manchu emperors’ own engagement in Tibetan Buddhism enriched the relationship. Emperor Kangxi was enshrined as the “laughing Buddha” Enkh Amgalan by the Khalka Mongols,<sup>13</sup> emperor Yongzheng was referred to by the Mongols as the “accomplished Buddha” and the “wisdom Manjusiri under the Heaven” (*Hoshoi Yu Cin Wang’s memorial* 1724), and Qianlong was also imaged as Manjushri, Bodhisattva of Wisdom (Farquhar 1978 and Millward et al. 2004: 10 and 129–131). The general communication between the Mongols and the Manchu emperors was full of Buddhist terms, with a “religious system of legitimation” (Atwood 2000: 126, 129–130). The Tibetan and Mongolian sources “typically portray the Qianlong emperor as a devout Buddhist” (Millward et al. 2004: 124) who sustained and developed the relationships with the leading lamas in Tibetan Buddhist world (Millward et al. 2004: 123–129). In this particular historical process, the governance pattern in heartland Tibet was designed by Emperor Qianlong as the Dalai-*amban* dual leadership. This leadership “recognized the Dalai Lama as a secular as well as religious ruler”

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<sup>13</sup> During my participation in The School of International Training’s Study Abroad Fellowship for “Mongolia: Culture and Development Program” in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, June 1–10, 2005, after the visit of the Gondan Temple in Ulan Bator on June 2, 2005 I wrote down the following note: “According to D. Naran, Dean of the National University of Mongolia, the laughing Buddha is Kangxi, with his Mongolian name Enkh Amgalan. Kangxi stopped the fighting between the Mongol tribes, protected the Mongols (from the Galdan attack), gave Mongols a peaceful time to live, and this peaceful time lasted until the end of the Qing dynasty. Mongolian people knew him very well and have been very positive to him.”

(Millward et al. 2004: 18) and granted the Qing *amban* “increased powers of surveillance over Tibetan affairs” and “*amban* were able to participate directly in [Tibetan] government” (Millward et al. 2004:18). This leadership setting, however politically controversial in 20th century scholarship, reflected the Manchu-designed governance in Tibet. In this process, the *Lifanyuan* assisted the Manchu court but was not the sole institution of governance. The emperor-*amban* routine gained more and more weight in the Tibetan affairs, leaving the *Lifanyuan* more to the role of reference provider, correspondent record keeper, and the *amban* office clerks’ supplier.

In Qinghai, the heart of historical Amdo, the pattern of the Qing governance further demonstrates the parallel between ethnic groups and social systems. During the period of the Ming-Qing transition in the 17th century, the key historical players in Qinghai came from a variety of ethnic groups: the Amdopas (people of Amdo and people with Tibetan origin) who lived there generation after generation in their *tusi* system; the Tibetan Buddhist clerics from the religious hierarchy centered in the heartland of Tibet; and the immigrant settler groups of Mongols, Muslims, and Han Chinese. As the Manchu court gradually took over local control, the previously Mongolian-named Kōkenuur (*Qianlongchao neifu chaoben lifanyuan zeli*: 91), Tibetan-named Cuiwanbu (from Chinese records), and Chinese-named Xihai (*The Western Sea, Gazetteers of Qinghai*, juan 4: 7b–8a) were transformed into a single distinct administrative sector inside the Qing Empire under its modern label Qinghai (clear lake) at the beginning of the Yongzheng reign. Along with this transformation, various national groups underwent a reorganization into various social systems: the banner system for the Mongols under the descendants of the Gūūshi Khan; the traditional *tusi* system for the Amdo Tibetans (who were recorded as “fan” in the Qing documents); and the Han Chinese settlers in their traditional province-prefecture-county system. In two cases, however, the Qinghai/Amdo region saw exceptions. First of all, some of the *tusi* communities of the Amdo people were organized into province-county governments in Gansu and Sichuan, separating them from those in Qinghai. Secondly, to the Chinese-speaking Muslims in Qinghai, their foreign ancestry and religion-initiated difference from the other national groups did not provide them a socially-designated special system. They were organized into the Chinese province-county system even though they kept their own Muslim communities led at or through Mosques. On top of the local government, the Xining Prefecture (Xiningfu), a clear official division was drawn between the court-appointed Grand Minister Resident Qinghai, who was in charge of the Mongols and the Amdo Tibetans, and the Prefecture and County officials, in charge of the Chinese and Muslims. Three social systems were employed to govern Qinghai society: the banner for the Mongols, the *tusi* system for Amdo Tibetans, and the province-county system for the Chinese and Muslims. The parallel between nationalities and administrative systems was there, yet clearer in some cases and dimmer in others.

Socially living in their national entities, the Amdo Tibetans and the Qinghai Mongols were at the same time Tibetan Buddhist believers, religiously belonging to the larger Tibetan Buddhist world and following the Dalai-Panchen leadership centered in heartland Tibet. In his study of Tibetan Buddhism, Gray Tuttle pointed out that “the religious community was not territorial” (Tuttle 2005: 3). The Manchu integration of Inner Asia, therefore, also needed a managerial line for religion beyond the social systems and across all Tibetan and Mongol entities. Even though this religious administration, being a separate study topic, is not specifically examined in this paper, *Lifanyuan* sources show that the social systems and national entities indeed corresponded to the Qing management of religious affairs in Inner Asia. The religious heads, Jangjiya Khutugtu for Inner

Mongols, Jibzundamba Khutugtu for Khalka Mongols, the Grand Lama Tsaghan Nom-un Khan (the “White Dharama”) for Qinghai Mongols, and the court-recognized Khutugtus for Amdo Tibetans, were territorial and national entity-based religious leadership positions under the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, whose home base was the Wu-Zang region in heartland Tibet and whose religious influence extended far beyond the home base.

In the last conquered territory, Xinjiang in the far west, the subdued Zunghars in the north were organized in the banner system in 1755. The Torghuds, who fled Russia in 1771, were organized into banners as well because they were Mongols. The Muslim rulers in the cities of Turfan and Hami in the east were privileged with the title “prince” and a tax exemption, because they were the earliest Muslims to support Qing rule. After the Khoja-rebellion in 1759, the Uighurs in southern Xinjiang, who were ethnically and linguistically different from the Chinese Muslims, were allowed to remain in their traditional *beg* system with around three hundred *begs* region-wide. The Manchu court appointed a military general and a number of *ambans* (or *dachen*) stationed in the Muslim cities to supervise the local affairs in the two major social systems in Yili, Tarbagatai, Urumchi, Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, Aksu, Ush, Karashahr, and Kucha. Thus, Islamic law and new Qing regulations were both practiced. The *begs* still held their hereditary rights but their authority became very limited. An increasing third administrative line was emerging from 18th century Xinjiang: a Chinese style province-prefecture-county administration over the Chinese farmers and merchants in this region. In this regard, Xinjiang, like Qinghai, was under Qing management through the multi-administrative systems working in close relation to the nationality-associated social systems. The Qing management “functioned for decades in a manner efficient enough to allow economic development to prevent local uprisings” before changes came in the mid-19th century (Millward 2007: 98–102). This management was primarily based on the nationality-divided social systems.

The increased appointments of *amban* (or *dachen*), military or civilian, in Tibet, Qinghai, the most northwestern Mongolia, and Xinjiang during the 18th century accompanied the greatly increased official business in these faraway entities. The *Lifanyuan* still remained the primary central-government institution concerned with these Inner Asian regions and provided the court with all the information on history, personnel, inheritance, relationships, and any other reference regarding the Inner Asian social systems and entities. In discussing “the expanse of spatial sovereignty” of empire-states, the question of “what counts as imperial expansion and what does not” (Stoler et al 2007: 10) can be answered in this case by the Qing’s capability or disability to establish court-governed social systems. More than one and a half centuries of the Manchu shaping the Qing political terrain resulted in the establishment of unique social systems incorporating the population’s national entities. The Qing of Qianlong’s time was a social system-supported and national entity-based empire.

### **Social Systems and National Entities**

Through the official hierarchies of the social system, the *Lifanyuan*, on behalf of the Manchu court, was entitled to oversee official and cleric appointments, nobility recognitions, inheritance acknowledgements, salary and privilege awards (such as attending the court rituals), pastureland demarcations, dispute settlements, legal judgments, market and trade arrangements, population and household registrations, disaster relief, tax collection/distribution, genealogy compilations, post-

station operations, funeral and memorial services, and so on and so forth. For the religious hierarchies in each entity, the *Lifanyuan* registered court-recognized incarnations and lamas, issued rank entitlements, administrated reincarnation procedures, released financial aid and material supplies to temples, regulated monks' behavior, and sustained, to a certain degree, religious rules. The *Lifanyuan*, furthermore, archived all correspondence between the court and Inner Asia and the written record of each Inner Asian entity. It thus held all the historical knowledge of each hereditary noble title, lineage background, and official line in relation to the Manchu court. It served the emperor and the court as the advisory and reference agent whenever a decision required such detailed knowledge. Without these documents, the Manchu court could hardly have upheld its political influence in Inner Asia. It was the key resource center for compiling the legal documents of *Lifanyuan zeli* (Regulations of the *Lifanyuan*), *Menggu luli* (Legal regulations for the Mongols), *Huijiang zeli* (Regulations for the Muslim territory), and *Fanren luli* (Legal regulations for the fan people [in Qinghai]). It also functioned as the primary information provider for compiling the most important Qing official documents, such as *Daqing huidian* (Collected statutes of the Qing dynasty), *Daqing yitongzhi* (Comprehensive gazetteer of the Great Qing), and *Waifan menggu huibu wanggong biao zhuan* (Bibliographies of the Mongol and Muslim nobles). All of these 'high level' court documents were based on *Lifanyuan* daily operations and its knowledge of each social system and each national entity in Inner Asia.

The *Lifanyuan* also had its shortcomings. As recorded in the Qing documents, the Manchu emperors blamed the *Lifanyuan* on a number of occasions, either for wrongdoing or inefficiency. Whether the Inner Asian entities always accepted the *Lifanyuan*'s governance unanimously can be under question as well (examples of revolts against central control are the 1675 Burni rebellion of the Chahar Mongols and the 1755–1756 Chingünjav rebellion of the Khalka Mongols). Despite these cases, the *Lifanyuan* undeniably enhanced the early Qing government capability of empire management. It drew a clear administrative line between its own governance of Inner Asia from that of China proper under the Six Boards. Any of the Chinese style government organs would have faced larger state–periphery conflicts in Inner Asia, if the Mongols had not been organized into banners, or if Muslims in Xinjiang had been forced to abandon their traditional *beg* system. Cooperation or opposition, integration or resistance, regulation or violation heavily relied on the capability of managing social systems, whether these systems were under or beyond the court's direction. When the central–local relationship could better prevent the Inner Asians from dissention and rebellion, the Qianlong reign saw a time of unprecedented China–Inner Asian integration.

In her discussion of the ideological basis of the Qianlong empire, Pamela K. Crossley pointed out the Qing's "direct claim" of the legacy of the Central Asian and Mongol empire, and the Tibetan Buddhist role of *cakravartin* (wheel-turner) and Geser (a Tibetan god) for emperor Qianlong in establishing the "universal emperorship" and the "imperial centrality" (Crossley 1999: 38, 51, 242–243). On the operational level, the Inner Asian social systems implemented the ideological emperorship in real life. The ideological legitimacy of the Manchu leadership over the multi-national empire and the administrative management of the social systems and national entities worked hand in hand to enable the Qing unification.

### ***Lifanyuan* and Qing Dynastic Bureaucracy**

The *Lifanyuan*'s working routine was, in part, identical to the Chinese bureaucratic style of the Six Boards. These routines operated the local management through hierarchically layered officialdom from *Lifanyuan* to Inner Asia. The political communications relied on institutionally stylized written documents, which 'travelled' between the Manchu emperor – the highest authority and the court decision-maker – the Grand Council (*junjichu*) during most of the 18th century (Bartlett 1991), the court executive organ for Inner Asian affairs, the *Lifanyuan*, and the local officials on all hierarchical levels of the social systems. The *Lifanyuan* registered, allocated, recorded, duplicated, and archived these correspondences, and carried out the social system-based bureaucratic governance.

In a number of aspects, however, the *Lifanyuan* bureaucracy sharply differed from the Six Boards, particularly in staffing, language, and regional responsibilities. From its top minister to its lowest rank clerk, the *Lifanyuan*'s staff was comprised of Manchu and Mongol nationalities, with only very few Chinese clerks once for a short time. This is in clear contrast to the Six Boards, which were staffed by Manchu and Han Chinese. No other Qing government office had a majority of Mongol bureaucrats. Nor was any other office fully responsible for non-Chinese Inner Asia and managing a population as diverse as the *Lifanyuan* did. The official languages for the *Lifanyuan* routines in Inner Asia were Manchu, Mongol, and Tibetan; all documents were also translated into Chinese. Using the Inner Asian languages, the *Lifanyuan* performed for all Inner Asian regions the multiple duties, which the Six Boards (appointments, revenue, rites, military, public works, and punishments) collectively fulfilled for one geopolitical region, China proper. From who the state would govern to how the state would govern, the *Lifanyuan* reformed the former Ming statecraft, which had covered only Han Chinese regions. Within the dynastic style of bureaucracy, *Lifanyuan* brought about a new way of governing and managing, which diversified the Qing bureaucratic styles and techniques.

The *Lifanyuan* bureaucracy was fundamentally different from that of the Six Boards. The latter employed scholar-officials ranked through the province-prefecture-county posts to respond to the central government and to organize the local Chinese. The *Lifanyuan* utilized the traditionally shaped hereditary noble lines of leadership and, in the banner system particularly, the input of new Qing appointments. Such a bureaucratic engagement with the four major Inner Asian social systems enabled the Qing authority to manage the social system-based national entities, which remained true to specific traditions, cultures, relationships, and family-lineage institutions. The *Lifanyuan* governance during the early Qing thus helped, to a certain extent, to preserve people's characteristic identities. Inside the Mongol banners, for example, the *Lifanyuan* worked directly with the court-appointed banner *jasag*, and his assistant officials. The court recognition of the influential nobles – mainly *taiji* and *tabunang* (the son-in-law of Chinggis Khan ancestry) from the past Mongol history – was based on the *Lifanyuan*'s knowledge of their hereditary lines and their historical support of Manchu rule since Hūwangtaiji's time. All these upper level Mongols were included in the *Lifanyuan*'s official routines, and by *Lifanyuan*-arranged annual turns of the court ritual they had a chance to meet the Manchu emperor face to face. Under the banner leadership, the traditional way was given room to continue in the Mongol entities. Taking the theoretical viewpoint that a "nation" means "a group of people who share language, customs, and a 'sense of

homogeneity” and that “a nation does not need to be an independent state” (Alesina and Spolaore 2003: 2–3), the Inner Asian populations remained nations living in their own entities inside the Qing empire. This view also accords with the anthropological studies, which “make nations and states two very different entities” (Wilson and Donnan 1998: 2) and examine the phenomenon of “minority nations within states” (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 6). Placing bureaucracy, which “became a hallmark of Qing administration” (Rawski 1998: 10), in connection with these theoretical considerations, the significance of the *Lifanyuan* bureaucracy was twofold, the Chinese style in one way and the Inner Asian character in another.

Recent anthropological study of borderlands suggested the terminological usage of boundaries to separate nations vs. borders to demarcate states (Donnan and Wilson 2010: 9). The *Lifanyuan* study reveals that the Qing state policy preserved the internally boundary-divided national entities. The Jiaqing (1796–1820) edition of the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Qing (Jiaqing daqing yitongzhi)* asserted that the Mongol, Tibetan, and Muslim entities were internal parts of the Great Qing Empire. In a separate category, the following countries were tributaries with an outsider status: Korea, Liuqiu, and Vietnam together with other Asian countries and also Holland, Russia, England, and France together with other European countries (*Jiaqing daqing yitongzhi*, Volume 33–34: 25863–27411). The court relationships to these tributaries largely relied on the tribute rituals at the imperial court, which, according to Evelyn Rawski, “were essential in the construction of imperial legitimation” (Rawski 1998: 10). To Inner Asia, the ritual legitimacy was part of the relationship. The political unification heavily leaned on social systems to maintain social entities, in which people were communally grouped, nationally categorized, culturally nurtured, economically endured, and politically regulated. The Ming dynasty, as a single national empire, certainly did not have the internal needs to govern these Inner Asian entities. In this regard, the *Lifanyuan* was a unique part of the Qing bureaucracy, representing a change from the Ming bureaucracy.

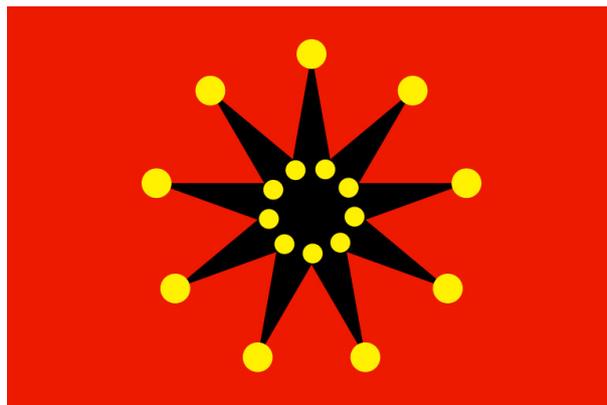
Some studies exploring China’s survival as an immense empire have suggested that China had a “relatively high degree of homogeneity of its population” (Alesina and Spolaore 2003: 182; quoting Tilly 1992 and Garner 2001). The present *Lifanyuan* study, however, reveals a contrasting understanding of the Qing case. It was not the degree of homogeneity of the Qing population but the ability of the Qing government to effectively manage the differences that generated the Manchu strength. Thus, the *Lifanyuan* enabled not merely survival during critical situations but also led to China’s prosperous growth in the 18th century. The managerial capability was best reflected by the *Lifanyuan* governance of the social systems and entities. Even though the Han Chinese migration into Inner Asia during the 19th century, against the early Qing policies, damaged the Inner Asian entities in certain ways, from concept to practice the Inner Asian entities stood strong and clear. The turbulent anti-Manchu movement at the turn of the 20th century ended the Manchu dynasty but did not destroy the early Qing establishments regarding the internal population (see next section). The transition from the Ming to the Qing bureaucracy contributed to this historical phenomenon.

### ***Lifanyuan*’s Impact Beyond the 1911 Revolution**

Being the largest and the most diverse political entity in Chinese history, the Qing Empire of the 18th century required a most efficient government to manage its order. And the *Lifanyuan* helped. The historical impact of this stage of the Qing history on the post-Qing Chinese society is one way

to look at and understand the changes that the *Lifanyuan* generated during a specific past but that had a continued influence thereafter. With such an approach, which has not been fully and specifically explored in Qing studies, the post-Qianlong stages in relation to the early Qing experiences in the management of population diversity has a legitimate place in the study of the early Qing.

During the dynastic decline in the 19th century, the Qing government underwent a general downfall and so did the *Lifanyuan*. When “Han Chinese writers in the 1900s drew new sharp distinctions between themselves and their Manchu rulers, mobilizing a virulent form of racial nationalism” (Stoler et al 2007: 25), the *Lifanyuan* was already functionless. The *Lifanyuan*’s legacy in “creating a long-lasting union of the Inner Asian peripheries with China” (Rawski 1998: 300), however, still accompanies Chinese life. The story of the most important flag of the 1911 Revolution, the “Iron-blood eighteen stars flag” (*tiexue shiba xingqi*), was among the many proven examples.<sup>15</sup> Being designed by one of the radical anti-Manchu groups, the Common Progress Commission (*gongjinhui*), this flag served as the major flag for the 1911 Revolution and then the official flag for the Hubei Military Government, the political center of the new Republic of China, until



*The iron blood 18-star flag.*<sup>14</sup>

January 10th, 1912. The stars on the flag represented only the eighteen Chinese provinces inside the Qing China proper, and the metaphorical, as well as ragging, terms of “iron” and “blood” reflected these revolutionaries’ political determination to build a new Republican China in which the “barbarian” Manchu were excluded and the Chinese rule was restored.<sup>16</sup> But their radical “racial ideology” (Stoler et al 2007: 24) did not erase the essential outcome of the Qing integration of Inner Asia. The collective choice of the Han Chinese included, rather than excluded, the “barbarian” Manchu and the Inner Asian national populations, whom the Manchu and the *Lifanyuan* had brought into the Qing Empire, into their new country. Among the national flag proposals, the denial of the “Iron-blood eighteen stars flag” was a decision without much debate. The 1912 Republican government, instead, adopted the flag of five colors, representing Han, Man (Manchu), Meng (Mongol), Hui (Muslim), and Zang (Tibetan) peoples. This choice reflected what China should be under a new form of government. 20th century China experienced thorny stages from “discrimination” – such as the anti-Manchu sentiment over a large part of the 20th century – to “assimilation” – namely the policies of “Hanification” (*hanhua*) under the nationalist government (Rhoads 2000: 276) – leading to a singular Chinese nationality (*zhonghua minzu*) approach (Mullaney 2011: 80). Eventually, it came to the PRC definition of multi-nationality (*duominzu*) China (*ibid.*). When the urgent need arose for the new PRC to tackle the diversity of its

<sup>14</sup>Source: Unlabeled public domain image from the Wikipedia entry “Xinhai Revolution”: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xinhai\\_Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xinhai_Revolution) (accessed on June 15, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> See the image of the *tiexie* flag in the Annex.

<sup>16</sup> Online *Xinhai baike* (The 1911 Revolution Encyclopedia in Chinese), entry “铁血十八星旗” (*tiexue shiba xingqi*) at <http://baike.xhgmw.org/index.php?doc-innerlink-十八星旗> (accessed on June 14, 2012). Online: *Zhongguo guoqi shi* (The History of the Chinese National Flags) at [http://www.cn1n.com/history/mcn/2008714/882188161\\_2.htm](http://www.cn1n.com/history/mcn/2008714/882188161_2.htm) (accessed on June 14, 2012).

population and design clear categories (Mullaney 2011: 3), the 1950s' PRC "Recognition and Classification Project" focused on numerous population groups in southern, southeastern, southwestern, and other parts of China, whose national identities remained unclear during the Qing and Republican times. The *Lifanyuan*-managed Inner Asian peoples, on the contrary, were "commonly recognized nationalities" (*gongshi minzu*), whose national identities did not need further categorization (except a few marginalized peoples, such as the Hezhe to the Manchu).<sup>17</sup> At the turn of the 21st century, a multi-national and united China, including the Qing Inner Asian nationalities together with those that were categorized by the PRC government in the 1950s, became the central theme defining the PRC and demonstrating the country's progress.

In his discussion of the imperial repercussions in present China, Charles Horner pointed out that "tradition transmitted virtues and values". This transmitting power could be more successful than China's "success as a polity" (Horner 2009: 1). From my analyses, I argue that governmental institutions such as the *Lifanyuan* could also, from their historical administrative experience, generate a concept- or idea-shaping process. The impact of this process on 20th century Chinese history is rooted in the fact that, in Di Cosmo's words, "the Qing dynasty was the first to bring all of these Inner Asian regions [Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia] under the sovereignty of a central government based in China," and "if territorial boundaries and ethnic composition help to define the self-image of a nation, Qing expansion has a bearing on the origins of modern China's national identity" (Di Cosmo 1998: 288–289 and 308). National identity should be understood as a historically shaped body of ideas or beliefs on the sovereignty of a state, the territory with fixed geopolitical borderlines of that state, and the population inside this state's borderlines. Based on this approach to national identity, the Republican, Nationalist, and the PRC's state approach of a united country called China – including all Qing era populations (except the Khalkhas whose separation from China in the 1920s was against the will of the Chinese state) – is not to be understood only as a matter of the 20th century. It is a historical matter, directly dating back to the Hūwangtaiji-Qianlong stage of Qing empire-building. The severe anti-Manchu sentiment, the policy differences towards the diverse population between different governments, and the ideological conflicts between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party did not preclude a common concept of the state China.

The *Lifanyuan*'s long-standing influence on the making of modern China, from concept to reality, has very much remained obscured and unrecognized. The subtle effect of the Qing social systems and national entities on Chinese society over several historical stages has not yet become part of the research agenda. The decline of the *Lifanyuan* itself and the later reshuffled governmental institutions in relation to it – *Lifanbu* (Ministry Governing the Non-Chinese Population, 1906–1911), *Mengzang weiyuanhui* (Commission of the Mongols and Tibetans, 1912–1929) of the Nationalist government, and *Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui* (National Commission of the Nationality Affairs) of the PRC since October 22, 1949 – have blurred the significance of the *Lifanyuan* as the contributing institution. During the early Qing, the *Lifanyuan* employed the social systems as the cultural fence of the nationality boundaries and the social entities as the identity reservoirs. The rediscovery of these central and local institutions sheds light on the issue of state administration and diversity management. The Manchu creation of the *Lifanyuan* and the Qing

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<sup>17</sup>Interview with Professor Shi Lianzhu at the Central University for Nationalities, June 27, 2011. Professor Shi was a proponent of the 1953 recognition of the She nationality in Zhejiang and Fujian, the 1954 recognition of 24 nationalities in Yunnan, and the 1956 recognition of the Tujia nationality in Western Hunan.

social systems formulated the state involvement in local societies and the local societies' engagement in statecraft. The multi-national Qing Empire was possible when this formula was at a workable balance between the center (Manchu court), the connecting institution (*Lifanyuan*), and the local systems and entities.

The present *Lifanyuan* study contributes to the “long tradition of anthropological analysis of the evolution of the state” and to political anthropology’s analysis of “the roles of state institutions at local levels” (Wilson and Donnan 1998: 7). Regarding border regions and state sovereignty, social systems and the state boundary, national entities and state management, the early Qing was a vital stage for transforming the dynastic state from Ming to Qing. This transition would not have been possible without the institutional operation on various levels of the society. The formative process towards Qianlong’s Qing Empire would not have been possible without the *Lifanyuan* administration.

## Conclusion

The question of how the early Qing integration of Inner Asia was achieved cannot be answered without considering the Manchu style of statecraft in which the *Lifanyuan* extended the dynastic government routines into the Inner Asian social systems and governed the Inner Asian national entities through these systems. Envisioning these social systems as the structural frames and the national entities as the building blocks for the Qing house (Qianlong’s Qing Empire), the *Lifanyuan* functioned as the institutional pillar on the foundation: connecting the structural frames, inserting the building blocks to fit these frames, and managing the Inner Asian rooms inside the house. The Inner Asian peoples’ national origins, inhabiting locations, social-cultural-political variations, and their relationship with the ruling Manchus were given special considerations in this house. The early Qing empire-building was thus analogous to arranging building blocks in structural frames to support the house under construction. This house had long been visible from the outside, but not so to its built-in blocks. And neither was it obvious how these blocks were organized to interplay with one another. The exploration of the historical role of the *Lifanyuan* provides a testing ground for comprehending these building blocks as a coherent group in order to learn about the history of this house, from its pre-Qing traditions in both China proper and Inner Asia, to its formation of the once glorious outlook (Great Qing Empire), its declining period in the 19th century, its remodeling stages with new building materials (replacing institutions inside the government) in the 20th century, and its present, as well as future, definition as a multi-national country. The institutional impact of the *Lifanyuan* in the Hūwangtaiji-Qianlong stage served the historical process in which China had to, in Horner’s words, “define and then redefine itself as its own circumstances and world circumstances require” (Horner 2009: prologue II).

Although this paper does not discuss the controversial issues regarding the *Lifanyuan* administration in the Inner Asian regions, the intension is neither to paint an ideal picture of the *Lifanyuan* in the 17th and 18th centuries’ Qing empire building, nor to disregard the conflict voices in both the early Qing Empire and post-Qing China. It aims, instead, at re-analyzing some commonly known facts considering historical and anthropological concerns regarding China’s multi-national society and the institutional roles, which have not yet been examined in previous *Lifanyuan* studies. At the same time, the paper also discloses the institutional and organizational units, which were invisible to our current academic understanding of the early Qing multi-national

management. By focusing on why the state-designed institution *Lifanyuan* and the local administrations through banner, *beg*, *Dailai-amban* leadership, and *tusi* systems could be combined into an operable governance, this study helps explain why, compared to other stages in Chinese history, the early Qing process toward the Qianlong reign was more effective (though far from perfect) in rising to the challenges of the center-Inner Asian tensions and conflicts.

To the controversy whether or how much the *Lifanyuan* could represent the Qing sovereignty over Inner Asian entities, and whether or how much the Inner Asian leadership worked within their social systems for the Manchu integration goals, we can apply a similar question to China proper in terms of the anti-Manchu secret societies and peasant rebellions. The central focus of this study is rather on whether the *Lifanyuan*, as a functioning governmental agent during the early Qing, significantly changed the way of thinking of what Qing used to be, what China was in a new Republican/nationalist stage, what China would be in the communist revolutionaries' minds, and what China can be in the 21st century. This study reminds us that the *Lifanyuan*'s role during the formation of Qianlong's Great Qing Empire had major significance for the process of shaping post-Qianlong China as a multinational country. Once an active institution in history, the *Lifanyuan* had continued impact even after it formally ceased to exist. This impact was unseen in several post-Qing stages, but is noticeable beyond these stages today.

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