

in the identification of the deceased lady, i.e., the *Shiji* account has Lady Wang while the *Hanshu* account has Lady Li. There are a number of typos; to just give one example, Zhuangzi is misspelled as “Zuangzi” and “Zhangzi” on p. 50.

These issues and examples do not render Poo’s main argument unsound; nor do they diminish the value of the book. Yet a wider range and more up-to-date references matter for scholarly works, even for an otherwise excellent synthesis of the decades of extensive research by an established authority like Poo.

## *Making the Palace Machine Work: Mobilizing People Objects and Nature in the Qing Empire*

Edited by Martina Siebert, Kai Jun Chen, and Dorothy Ko.  
Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. 334 pp. € 117 (cloth)

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doi:10.1017/jch.2022.26

*Making the Palace Machine Work: Mobilizing People Objects and Nature in the Qing Empire*, edited by Martina Siebert, Kai Jun Chen, and Dorothy Ko, is a work of superb scholarship. The outcome of two workshops held at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin in 2015, the book incorporates research by fifteen scholars working across a wide range of disciplines. Although the book concentrates on the Qing palace, this topic is not addressed through the more traditional lenses of architecture and interior furnishings or the emperor and his entourage. Instead, the focus of the investigation is the Imperial Household Department (Neiwufu 內務府), the Manchu institution initiated under Kangxi that managed all aspects of the palace’s inner workings. To this end, the volume addresses fundamental issues, generally overlooked in scholarship, regarding how the palace—conceptualized as a “machine”—operated on a logistical level.

The book’s methodical organization echoes the bureaucratic structure of the palace machine. The book has three parts, along with an introduction and conclusion co-written by the editors. Each part consists of a brief introduction, a short “vignette” essay and three full-length essays. Part One, “Operating the Machine: Personnel and Paper Trails,” focuses on the “basic operating principles of the palace machine” (32), including discussions of who worked there, what roles they undertook, and how the movements of people and things were tracked. Part Two, “Producing the Court: Materials and Artifacts,” examines “three categories of material artifacts that contributed to the visual and cultural splendor of the Qing court,” porcelain, jade, and gilded roofs and Buddhist statues (33). Part Three, “Mobilizing Nature: Plants and Animals,” examines how the “less predictable components,” including lotus plants, medicinal herbs, and elephants, “were incorporated into [the palace’s] workings” (33). Each essay begins with a brief summary of its content and ends with a short biography of the author(s), which adds an appealing personal dimension.

The book's supplementary materials are well conceived. They include helpful tables of the chronology of China's dynasties and periods, and a list of Qing weights, measures, and currencies. Three specially produced ground plans of the Qing palace and its environs illustrate the physical locations of the main sites discussed in the volume. Also included is a nice map of the Qing empire around the year 1840 with relevant places identified. The helpful "Note on the Frontmatter Maps and Cover Image" (21) explains the process of producing the ground plans and maps, and cautions readers against applying the information within them to the entire dynasty.

The excellent introduction, written by the editors, outlines the book's key themes and methods, particularly as they relate to the concept of the palace machine. According to the authors, this volume is concerned not with the "static structure" of the palace, but with its "moving parts" (24). By examining the "logic, logistics, and interaction" (p. 26) of these parts, the authors state, the purpose of the volume is to "illuminate the design principles of the palace as a whole," as well as to understand its "operational structure and sequence" (26). The authors explain that this approach builds upon "Latour's concept of 'network of actants' and Bennett's concept of 'assemblage,'" though unfortunately they do not define these concepts for the reader (24). The authors further note that this approach to institutional history has only recently become possible, due to new archival materials becoming available in the last few decades (30). Indeed, the "behind the scenes" look at the Qing palace feels novel in comparison to the focus on the "outward facing" emperors and their policies that has dominated secondary scholarship on the Qing court.

The essays in Part One introduce specifics about how the palace machine operated. From Kai Jun Chen's essay, we learn that the department was run by bannermen, hereditary members of Manchu nobility who fulfilled managerial roles within the Imperial Household Department as widespread as scribe, designer, errand runner, and member of the imperial guard. Christine Moll-Murata's essay delves into the personnel who operated the palace. Her research questions are straightforward—Who worked in the palace? How many people worked there? Did emperors and empress dowagers actually work?—but they involved difficult research, and her findings are helpful for understanding the palace labor structure. Yujun Wang and Kyoungjin Bae's essay focuses on paper "tickets" (*kupiao* 庫票), an accounting document used by the Imperial Workshops to track the complex flow of human and material resources. From this essay we learn just how closely all the court's financial transactions were managed.

Throughout this book, the Qing court emerges as a tireless producer of things. As several of the essays demonstrate, every step of creating these things—from gathering the raw materials, to designing the objects, to accounting for their costs—was handled with meticulous planning and oversight. The production of goods was carried out by a massive system of workshops (*zaoban chu* 造辦處) managed by the Imperial Household Department. Kai Jun Chen explains that the methods for standardizing the various goods produced by the court included issuing treatises that projected the materials, measurements, and budgets needed for various projects (86) and creating design drafts (*yang* 樣), which outlined the visual characteristics of every object, as well as its scale, measurements, and desired quantity. Sometimes two- or three-dimensional models accompanied the design drafts to ensure that they were executed properly (89).

To produce these things, the court needed materials, laborers, and other resources from all corners of the empire, and therefore the Imperial Household Department had to be connected to numerous institutions and networks outside the palace walls. Xueling Guan explains how high-quality medicinal products gathered from different corners of the empire were brought to the Qing court through the tribute system to

make medicines for the emperor and his family (254). Qiong Zhang and Guangyao Wang's essays likewise demonstrate how, in order to meet the high technical demands of the precious objects created for the imperial palaces, the court relied on skilled artisans in the Imperial Textile Manufactory (Suzhou zhizao 蘇州織造) and the Imperial Ceramic Manufactory (Yuyaochang 御窯廠), both located in Jiangnan. By drawing together institutions and actors from across the empire, the production of these things thus integrated the empire, bringing the "world outside the palace walls" into the "body politic" (34).

Several essays address how the production of luxury goods was embedded within the "politico-ideological" (127) landscape of the multi-ethnic Qing empire. For example, Te-cheng Su and Hui-min Lai discuss a new gilding technique introduced into the Qing court by Tibetan lama envoys to Beijing. In addition to large Buddha statues, this technique was used to create the golden roof tiles of a building constructed by Qianlong at the Qing summer palace in Chengde. The temple in which the building was situated imitated the architecture of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet, and served as a religious center designed to host Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhist leaders. As the authors point out, the projects involving these gilding techniques were connected to Qianlong's mid-eighteenth-century conquest of the former Mongolian region of Dzungaria in Central Asia. Su and Lai argue that by "reenacting the religious culture of the imperial periphery in the power centers of the empire," Qianlong strove to "culturally bind" the new subjects to the Qing (158). Yulian Wu's essay likewise explains how Qianlong's enormous passion for jade artifacts resulted directly from his conquest of the "new frontier" (Xinjiang), in which several jade quarries were located (189). The successful transportation of jade boulders—a difficult and arduous process that Wu outlines in detail—was itself a political act in that it communicated the power and control of the Qing state.

In the book's conclusion, the editors claim that "artifact-making is empire-making at its most elemental level," because the court's production of things involved the same kind of meticulous planning, accounting, and execution as the grandest empire-building projects (293). By demonstrating the painstaking control with which the palace machine managed the production of things on a micro level, the essays in this volume enable us to better comprehend how, on a macro level, the Qing court was able to govern a "complex empire" of such an enormous scale "before the age of telegrams, telephones, and internet" (23), a question posed by the editors in the introduction.

Many of the essays address another practical question: How did the court pay for everything? As several authors demonstrate, the palace machine utilized a wide range of means to economize costs and generate revenue. One strategy was to regularly inspect the imperial warehouses to see whether any items stored there could be sold or repurposed. For example, Xueling Guan explains that when dozens of outdated medicines were found in the Imperial Dispensary's storage, they were classified into three groups: those that could be kept for future use, those that should be discarded, and those that should be sold off to pay for fresh medicinal materials (263). Shuxian Zhang shows that the same basic trajectory was followed for unwanted interior furnishings, including art objects, furniture, and wooden decorative components: they could be recycled for their raw materials, sold for cash outside the palace walls, or relocated to a more suitable location within the palace (41–45). Even when an imperial elephant died, its skin and bones were removed and stored in the event that the Imperial Dispensary needed to use them for medical ingredients, as we learn in Hui-chun Yu's essay (282).

The decision whether to sell, recycle, or reuse the items in storage was not always clear-cut. For instance, Elif Akcetin analyzes an intriguing memorial submitted to

the court in 1739 concerning what should be done with a group of old furs, woolens, and silks discovered during a routine inspection of the warehouses. Among the items were 1478 bolts of yellow silk fabric decorated with five- and four-clawed dragons. The report determined that the silk could not be sold on the market because it had been created for the exclusive use of the imperial family. However, after some deliberation, the officials decided that it *was* appropriate to present the fabric to high-ranking Tibetan and Mongolian lamas who had traveled to the Qing court (222). Akcetin makes the important point that the Imperial Household's "obsession with defining objects and controlling their movement" was actually "an exercise in defining social and political value," in which "the classifiers were appraising not only the objects of their empire, but their recipients (and makers and givers) as well" (223). Nevertheless, a recycling mindset helps explain the Qing ability to pay for luxury products.

Various sub-departments could also raise funds for specific projects. For instance, Guangyao Wang shows that to help pay for the costly imperial porcelain industry, "second-rate" porcelains were sold off at a discounted price, a practice initiated under Qianlong (154). Likewise, as Martina Seibert explains, surplus lotus roots from the imperial lotus ponds were sold for cash, which would then go back into paying for the expenses associated with managing the ponds (227). In Te-cheng Su and Hui-min Lai's essay we learn that in order to meet the court's insatiable appetite for gold, large amounts of "private" gold—i.e., that which was not owned by the state—were confiscated. Between 1784 and 1795, almost 1600 taels of private gold were confiscated in Urumqi in Xinjiang and sent to the Imperial Household Department for use in their cultural projects (164). Likewise, Qiong Zhang notes that to finance the elaborate events and gifts that accompanied imperial birthdays, the court had to cobble together money from various sources, including donations from officials and funds from the imperial coffers (134).

The financial picture provided through these various anecdotes differs greatly from the one painted in many books that focus on the art and architecture of the Qing palace. For example, while reading about the sumptuous objects and lavish interiors of the recently restored Qianlong garden, located in the northwest of the Forbidden City, it is easy to get the impression that the finances of the Qing court (especially under Qianlong) were unrestricted.<sup>1</sup> By instead scrutinizing the texts associated with the inner workings of the Imperial Household Department, *Making the Palace Machine Work* demonstrates how financial concerns were in fact at the forefront of the Qing court's daily operations.

While not placed at the center of the narrative, architecture never fully disappears from this book. Especially interesting are the glimpses into places in and around the palace that scholarship typically neglects. For instance, Chongwen Gate 崇文門, located to the southeast of the palace, was the place where unwanted artifacts in the Qing collections were sold to the public (42, 222); Jingyun Gate 景運門, in the eastern part of the Forbidden City, was the portal through which day laborers and artisans entered and exited the palace (171); and the Xuanwu gate 宣武門, located in the southwestern corner of Beijing's inner city wall, served as the Imperial Elephant Stables (273). We also learn the histories of some well-known sites, such as Zhongnanhai 中南海, the closely guarded residence and offices of the Chinese president, located to the west of the

<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, Nancy Berliner, ed. *The Emperor's Private Paradise: Treasures from the Forbidden City* (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2010), and Nancy Berliner, ed. *Juanqinzhai in the Qianlong Garden* (London: Scala Publishers, 2009).

Forbidden City. As Martina Siebert discusses, throughout most of the Qing dynasty this area, known as Westpark (Xiyuan 西苑), served as the site of the imperial lotus cultivation. In the late nineteenth century, it became the retirement palace of Empress Dowager Cixi, and a short railway line was even constructed there (230). In the twentieth century it became a public park and, subsequently, the headquarters of the Communist party.

My only critique of this otherwise excellent volume is that the image program, while generally strong, could have been edited with the same attention to detail as the text. The hand-drawn chart of the Wanggiyan clan's family tree in Kai Jun Chen's essay (77), for instance, should have been executed digitally, to match the more polished chart of the accounting system workflow in Wang and Bae's essay (116). Several places in the book would also have benefited from more illustrations. For instance, Martina Siebert refers to photographs taken by Osvald Sirén of Westpark in 1923, which show the lotus ponds in disarray, but no photographs are provided (251). Hui-chun Yu's likewise alludes to a painting entitled "Elephant and Horse Tributes from the Gurkha Campaign" (Kuo'er ke jin xiang ma tujian 廓爾喀進像馬圖卷) that depicts the animals on their tribute journeys (279). Although no image is provided, a footnote directs us to a link on the Palace Museum's website where we are able to view the large painting in detail, which while helpful is not consistent with the rest of the volume.

In sum, *Making the Palace Machine Work* is remarkable for its novel focus on the inner workings of the palace, which are often overlooked in scholarship on the Qing court. It reveals that the minutiae of the day-to-day palace operations can be just as fascinating as the grander imperial spectacles that they help create. This book also demonstrates how, when done right, an edited volume can achieve much more than a monograph by a single author. By incorporating research from scholars with diverse expertise, the book is able to cover a wide range of interesting topics. At the same time, due to the meticulous work of the editors, these disparate topics are seamlessly integrated into the overarching concept of the palace machine. Combined with the fact that all the essays were held to the same high standard with regard to writing and research, the volume never feels disjointed. The end result is complex and sophisticated, yet tight-knit and cohesive: an excellent model for future edited volumes.

## *Chinese Asianism, 1894–1945*

By Craig A. Smith. *Harvard East Asian Monographs 444*.  
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2021. xiv + 294  
pp. \$55.00, £44.95, €49.50 HC (Cloth).

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doi:10.1017/jch.2022.36

Asianism, pan-Asianism, Great Asianism—by whichever name it is called, it was a set of ideas and political projects that, in most treatments of the subject, lost all viability in