A Provincial Legacy of Autocracy:
Shandong's Luoyuan Academy in and beyond the Yongzheng Reign

Abstract
In 1733 the Yongzheng emperor ordered the establishment of academies (*shuyuan* 書院) in every provincial capital. To a certain extent, this edict constituted an intellectual component of the emperor's autocratic approach to governance, as it facilitated greater control over a type of educational institution that had in the past operated with autonomy from the court. Using the history of Shandong's Luoyuan Academy as a case study, this article demonstrates how the management of academies and hence the provincial operation of autocracy hinged on the participation of a range of local actors. Rather than simply restricting local agency, this characteristic Yongzheng policy depended on it. This perspective raises questions about the degree of rupture between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century state-building and demonstrates a need to define concepts like 'autocracy' and 'centralization' more precisely with reference to Yongzheng-era governance.

Keywords
Academy, examination, autocracy, governance, intellectual, Qing, intellectual

In 1733, the Yongzheng emperor ordered the establishment of academies (*shuyuan* 書院) in every provincial capital in the empire, in order to promote the preparation of scholars for the civil service examinations and extend his broader commitment to the moral transformation of his subjects. He provided 1,000-tael grants to governors to fund the academies and instructed them to resort to 'public funds' (*gongyin* 公銀) for whatever else they needed.[1] This policy is less-heralded than other accomplishments of the Yongzheng reign, like his fiscal reforms and development of the Grand Council.[2] When it does receive attention, it appears primarily as evidence of the ideological component of Yongzheng-era autocracy, which strengthened the institutional foundations of state power at the expense of the autonomy and intellectual vitality of academies.[3] Under the influence of the Yongzheng emperor, William Rowe writes, Qing academies "followed the earlier experience of prefectural and county schools: bureaucratization of management, formalization of curricula, and gradual emasculation as centers of independent scholarly inquiry."[4]

This article uses the history of one of the twenty-three academies founded in response to this edict—Luoyuan Academy 濼源書院 in Jinan 濟南, Shandong—to complicate this view of Qing academies and the legacy of Yongzheng autocracy more generally.[5] Two aspects of this topic pose challenges to the framework of autocracy popularized by Huang Pei in his study of the Yongzheng reign.[6] First, the history of academies inevitably draws our attention to the provinces and thus brings to the fore a range of actors who were responsible for executing the will of the emperor in circumstances where his personal control was limited. The provincial history of Luoyuan Academy illustrates how the ruling strategies employed by the Yongzheng emperor relied on not just the centralization of power but also the strategic distribution of it. This theme does receive attention in

[1] Chen Gujia and Deng Hongbo 1998, 2:854–55.
[2] It receives no mention, for instance, in Zelin's overview of the Yongzheng reign. Zelin 2002; Zelin 1984; Bartlett 1991.
[3] Huang 1974, 203–4; Elman 1984, 119; Xiao Yongming 2012, 331.
[4] Rowe 1994, 427. Elsewhere, Rowe describes Qing academies in more tempered terms. Rowe 2001, 410. Schneewind's study of local schools in the Ming suggests a somewhat different picture that roughly aligns with the approach toward academies I take in this essay. Schneewind 2006.
[5] This number comes from Deng Hongbo 2004, 436.
[6] Huang 1974.

scholarship on the Yongzheng reign and 'high Qing' politics generally, such as Zelin's work on Yongzheng fiscal reforms.[7] However, it is easily occluded by the language of autocracy and centralization that dominates discussion of eighteenth-century politics, where successive emperors' distrust of their bureaucrats and consequent efforts to control them take center stage, as in Huang Pei's work.[8]

The second challenge is that the vast majority of Luoyuan Academy's history fell beyond the Yongzheng reign. The untimely death of the Yongzheng emperor at 56 years of age and hence the curtailing of some of his more ambitious administrative initiatives is a recurring theme in scholarship on this period and came up repeatedly in discussion at the conference that formed the basis for this special issue. The truncated legacy of the Yongzheng reign is, indeed, visible in areas like the aforementioned fiscal reforms.[9] However, provincial academies survived and, as I will demonstrate in the case of Luoyuan, even thrived over the century after the Yongzheng emperor's death. To some extent this owed to the salutary policies of his successors, who reiterated his concern for provincial academies.[10] Provincial initiative, sometimes against countervailing central policies, were also important, though. Ironically, a succession of actors secured the provincial legacy of Yongzheng autocracy through activities that scholars are more likely to associate with the diminution of central government power over the nineteenth century than with the height of Qing power in the eighteenth century.

Corresponding to these two challenges, the history of Luoyuan speaks to our understanding of the Yongzheng reign itself and the broader trajectory of Qing political history, in which the Yongzheng period necessarily occupies a significant place. Madeline Zelin concludes her review of the Yongzheng reign by reflecting that 'in his distrust for the bureaucracy the Yung-cheng emperor failed to build the institutions that would guarantee the continued strengthening of the state and of the economy.'[11] While certainly distrustful of the bureaucracy, the Yongzheng emperor also selectively empowered his bureaucrats. This empowerment was essential to the survival and growth of Luoyuan Academy, illustrating how autocratic power relied on regimes of not just surveillance and control but also participation. Understanding participation—by both bureaucrats and members of the elite—as vital to Qing state-making in the eighteenth century recasts conventional narratives of how the devolution of power from the central government to regional officials and local elites was correlated to the weakening of the Qing state in the nineteenth century.[12] There may well have been both (more) devolution and weakening in the nineteenth century, but the degree to which the Qing state, even at its most autocratic, depended on the initiative of provincial actors deserves more attention than it receives in the history of academies or the Qing state more broadly.

In addition to revisiting these broad themes in Qing history, Luoyuan offers a useful point of intervention for better understanding the more specific history of academies themselves. As Steven Miles notes in a recent essay, there is a glaring need for focused histories of particular academies beyond a few exceptionally cases, like Yuelu Academy 岳麓書院 in Hunan and Xuehai tang 學海堂 in Guangzhou.[13] Luoyuan is an excellent candidate for such a study, insofar as it was undoubtedly important but is neither well-known nor was located in Jiangnan, the intellectual and cultural core of the Qing empire. This article builds on work by Miles and Xiao Yongming to study academies as multi-faceted educational institutions embedded simultaneously in political processes and social

[7] Zelin 1984, 116ff.
[8] For a recent example, see Dykstra 2022b.
[9] Zelin 1984, 264–301; Zhang 2023, 219–66.
[10] For examples, see documents collected in Chen Gujia and Deng Hongbo 1998, 2:855–59.
[11] Zelin 2002, 229. See also Zhang 2023, 211–66.
[12] Classic statements of this argument include Michael 1964; Kuhn 1980. Subsequent scholarship has repeatedly critiqued links between the growth in power of regional officials and the weakening and eventual fall of the Qing state. Liu 1974; Kaske 2011; Halsey 2015.
[13] Miles 2020, 289.

landscapes.[14] It pushes that scholarship further by suggesting that some of the broader functions of academies not explicitly anticipated by the Yongzheng emperor's 1733 edict were ultimately integral to the fulfillment of its political purpose.

I begin with a discussion of the history of imperial policies towards academies and precursor institutions to Luoyuan in Jinan, illustrating local correspondence to empire-wide themes. Against this backdrop it is possible to see how the Yongzheng emperor's 1733 edict introduced new provisions for administering and financially supporting provincial academies, which had been a weakness of Luoyuan's predecessors. Providing some information about Luoyuan's management and core educational functions, I demonstrate how it might be understood as advancing the autocratic prerogatives of the Yongzheng emperor and his successors. However, I then move on to two sets of functions whereby Luoyuan both fulfilled the general vision for it laid out by the Yongzheng emperor and transcended a narrow framework of autocracy. The historical development of Luoyuan's endowment illustrates how a combination of the distinctive fiscal policies of the Yongzheng period and the initiative of provincial officials helped grow the academy's endowment despite subsequent changes to fiscal policy that, in theory, limited the initiative of provincial officials. Finally, a brief examination of social networks cultivated through the academy demonstrates how it exceeded its intended purpose of preparing students for the examination system but did so in ways that supported rather than undermined its function as a hub for channeling provincial men into government service.

Academies and Government Policies up to the Early Qing

Academies had a long history prior to the Yongzheng emperor's 1733 edict. Looking at that history allows us to identify areas of both continuity and rupture in government policies. On the one hand, government support for academies was not unprecedented, and local officials often played an active role in establishing them.[15] Although existing outside the system of government schools, academies had long served complementary functions in preparing students for the examinations and official service, even if this was not their primary intended purpose.[16] During the Kangxi reign, the court had also actively patronized academies, bestowing calligraphy and volumes of classical texts as signs of favor and support.[17]

On the other hand, the systematic support for academies that the 1733 edict signaled marked a significant turning point. In the late Ming, the court had repeatedly proscribed academies as an extension of campaigns against political factions, such as the Donglin 東林 clique in the 1620s.[18] The early Qing court left these restrictions in place before beginning to allow the reopening of academies on a case-by-case basis in 1657.[19] So, the gradual resurgence of academies across the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was more a product of local initiatives eventually encouraged by signs of permissiveness than anything approaching a coordinated campaign.

Famous, deep-rooted academies like White Deer Grotto 白鹿洞 in Jiangxi and Yuelu Academy in Hunan were well positioned to weather the vicissitudes of court policies. They did undergo cycles of disrepair and even abeyance followed by reconstruction and revival, but the chances of slipping into historical oblivion were fairly negligible.[20] However, the existential challenges posed by government hostility or even passivity could be much greater for less exceptional academies. Jinan's most immediate precursor to Luoyuan—Lishan/Baixue Academy 歷山/白雪書院—exemplifies the

[14] Miles 2006; Xiao Yongming 2012.
[15] Deng Hongbo 2004, 270–71, 413–14; Xiao Yongming 2012, 75–105.
[16] Li Bing 2005.
[17] Deng Hongbo 2004, 431–34.
[18] Deng Hongbo 2004, 364–79; Meskill 1982.
[19] Although, in fact, local officials had begun re-opening academies a few years earlier, as the case of Baixue Academy below illustrates.
[20] See, for instance, Walton 2020.

challenges academies faced and so helps illustrate the significance of the new policy adopted by the Yongzheng emperor in 1733.

Lishan Academy was established next to Jinan's Baotu Spring 趵突泉, just outside the city's west gate, by salt control censor Bi Maokang 畢懋康 (1571–1644) in 1614. Baotu Spring was arguably Jinan's most famous scenic site, and the name Lishan derived doubly from Li Mountain 歷山 (also known as Thousand Buddha Mountain 千佛山) south of the city and the name of a hall that the Song scholar-official Zeng Gong 曾鞏 (1019–83) had constructed there to house official guests during his tenure as an official in the city. In 1588/89 administrative commissioner Ye Mengxiong 葉夢熊 (1531–97) had built a structure named White Snow Tower (*baixue lou* 白雪樓) to honor famous Jinan poet Li Panlong 李攀龍 (1514–70) next to Baotu Spring.[21] Bi donated 500 taels to support the construction and then additional money to purchase 100 *mu* of land, whose rent income was supposed to fund the academy. Like other academies, Lishan provided stipends to its students—approximately 100, drawn from across Shandong—and conducted both lectures and regular examinations.[22]

After only about a decade Lishan was closed and converted to a courier station.[23] In all likelihood, this was a direct product of the Tianqi emperor's proscription of academies in 1625, which targeted the Donglin faction.[24] Jinan did house a number of literary associations (*she* 社) in the late Ming, one of which was named Lishan.[25] Whether any of these associations or the academy had any affiliation with Donglin partisans and was a direct target of the anti-Donglin campaign or merely collateral damage is unclear. In any case, the academy remained closed even when the ban on academies was lifted in 1628.

After the Qing conquest, the academy received a new lease on life at the hands of administrative commissioner Zhang Jinyan (1600–72), who served in Jinan in 1653–54. Zhang both revived Lishan Academy and renamed it White Snow in more explicit commemoration of Li Panlong, whom he intended as a model for local scholars. Governor Geng Tun 耿焞 donated 200 taels from his salary, and Zhang canvassed for additional money from other officials.[26]

After another period of abeyance, the academy was again revived in the 1680s, when the Qing court began to embrace academies more openly. Successive renovations and expansions in 1686, 1688, and 1702 gave the academy the capacity to accommodate 120 students, whom the provincial education commissioner selected for study on the basis of their performance in local renewal examinations (*suishi* 歲試).[27] When the Kangxi emperor visited Jinan on a southern tour in 1703, education commissioner Xu Jiong 徐炯 successfully appealed for a gift of imperial calligraphy.[28] Despite its newfound prestige, the academy appears to have declined rather quickly. A new wave of investment in 1712 checked its decline only briefly, and at some point in the subsequent decades it ceased to function as an educational institution.[29]

There are several possible reasons Lishan/Baixue Academy did not achieve a greater degree of permanence and stability. First, the variety of officials who were repeatedly involved in resuscitating it speaks paradoxically to the lack of institutional clarity that might have hampered it. Provincial officials like Bi Maokang and Zhang Jinyan played recurring and important roles in the academy's

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[21] The name *baixue* derived from two residences that Li himself had built in other locations. Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 11:18a.

[22] Ye Chengzong 1640, 13:36a–38a; Hu Delin 1778, 12:16b.

[23] Hu Delin 1778, 12:16a.

[24] Meskill 1982, 151.

[25] Ye Chengzong 1640, 7:10b–11a, 13b.

[26] This essay appears in the edition of the 1640 *Licheng County Gazetteer* included in the Airusheng gazetteer database (page numbers cited) but was obviously added after the completion of the original gazetteer. It does not appear, for instance, in the edition held by the Harvard-Yenching Library. Ye Chengzong 1640, 642–43.

[27] Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 17:51b.

[28] Guoli gugong bowuyuan 2009, 16:T09861; Ren Hongyuan 1991, 2.

[29] Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 17:51b.

history, but managing institutions like this was not a statutory responsibility, and such high-ranking officials had many other affairs to compete for their time and attention. Education commissioners were perhaps more likely candidates to take charge of a provincial academy, as Xu Jiong did, since they were charged with overseeing examinations across the province.[30] However, since their responsibilities frequently took them outside of Jinan to conduct examinations in prefecture seats, they too were not ideally positioned to manage the academy intensively. Accordingly, an account of the final recorded renovation of the academy in 1712 notes that after the 1702 renovations, "…there was no one to manage its affairs; its walls gradually collapsed, and its study room and kitchen emptied."[31]

The administrative solution that presented itself in 1712 was to put the academy under the charge of the Licheng County school instructor (*xuebo* 學博). Doing so effectively treated it as a charitable school (*yixue* 義學), which was a rather more lowly status than the provincial academy it purported to be. Whether this effective demotion was itself responsible for the disappearance of the academy is impossible to say. Local gazetteers often record the exploits of especially energetic educational officials, but reading between the lines it is easy to surmise that many such officials took their core responsibilities—let alone auxiliary ones like managing academies—somewhat less seriously. While Lishan/Baixue no doubt hired instructors at various points to help with instruction and administration, their employment would have been contingent on official oversight and support.

Financial support is another area where the foundations of Lishan/Baixue Acadey were likely wanting. After Bi Maokang's initial establishment of a landed endowment for the academy, its financial situation becomes murky. Repeated records of officials donating salaries to fund renovations indicates that theoretically ad hoc money was available to revive and possibly sustain the academy, but again they concurrently imply that the academy lacked an endowment, perhaps at all or at least one capable of supporting extraordinary costs. The academy's entry in the 1692 prefecture gazetteer—completed only four years after its most recent renovation—says that "it used to have land for supporting the students 舊有贍士田."[32] It would be entirely unsurprising if its closure in the 1620s led to the dissolution of the endowment established by Bi. It would be more surprising if the Qing officials who revived the academy failed to establish a new endowment, but there is no record of their having done so. Whether this silence in extant sources reflects the inattentiveness of officials themselves to the academy's fiscal viability or the limited effectiveness of any efforts they did make, a lack of regular funding likely contributed Lishan/Baixue's repeated demise.

Both the lack of consistent official oversight and funding from the provincial government raise the question of why local people did not sustain the academy themselves. Although officials often supported academies, they could be run with some degree of autonomy from the government. Existing records of Lishan/Baixue generally emphasize the role of officials, which may reflect the biases of sources either written by officials themselves or contained in gazetteers, which received official mandate. Local people certainly participated in the academy as students and as collaborators with and celebrants of local officials, as evidenced in poems that Jinan poet Wang Ping 王萍 (1661–1720) wrote about Lishan/Baixue upon its renovation in 1712.[33] Why did this purported enthusiasm evidently not translate into sustained extra-bureaucratic investment in the academy? Perhaps it was a function of elites in Jinan lacking the wealth of their peers in the Yangtze Valley, where academies not directly supported by local governments were more common. The vacillations and ambivalence of court policy may also have curtailed local enthusiasm in the absence of an official sponsor. Moreover, a substantial part of the attraction of academies like Lishan/Baixue may have been their official

[30] Even after 1733, some academies in provincial capitals did operate under the direct supervision of education commissioners. Deng Hongbo 2004, 464.

[31] Chinese text: 無主事者，墻壁漸圮，齋厨蕭然. Lu Xijin 1721, 7:3a.

[32] Jiang Kun and Tang Menglai 1692, 12:47a–47b.

[33] Ren Hongyuan 1991, 158–60.

sponsorship and hence the opportunities to build patronage relationships with high-ranking officials who could aid students' professional ambitions.[34] The absence of such opportunities may have removed a significant incentive for the local investment in Lishan/Baixue that might have sustained it through periods of inconsistent official support.

Driven by concerns about the effectiveness of academies and his own distinct approach to administration, the Yongzheng emperor's 1733 edict addressed these various potential explanations for Lishan/Baixue Academy's tumultuous existence. In so doing, it laid the groundwork for a much more durable provincial academy, Luoyuan, which effectively took Lishan/Baixue's place. Rather than obviating the significance of local actors of various kinds, though, the Yongzheng emperor's policies drew them into participation in this aspect of state-making in a more sustainable fashion.

The Institutionalization of Provincial Academies in the Yongzheng Reign

The permissive policies of the Kangxi reign allowed academies to begin spreading again, but the court neither systematically regulated them nor stipulated their relationship to the examination system. This ambivalence characterized early Yongzheng policies towards academies as well.[35] In 1726 Jiangxi governor Pei Shuaidu 裴徠度 proposed establishing an official position in each province charged specifically with supervising academies. The emperor responded sympathetically, citing his constant concern for 'the training of human talent 教育人材,' which purpose the examination system and government schools served. However, he nevertheless rejected Pei's proposal, exhibiting his characteristically skeptical stance toward bureaucratic operations.[36] In the case of academies, the emperor questioned whether they really produced substantial benefits, whether it was possible for them to effectively educate a wide range of scholars without becoming a mixing ground for the virtuous and unworthy, and how feasible it would be to identify men who could be entrusted with the responsibilities Pei proposed delegating to them.[37]

The 1733 edict, then, marked a significant shift from the Yongzheng emperor's professed skepticism toward academies. Now he not only allowed but actively mandated the establishment of academies in each provincial capital and authorized a disbursement of 1,000 taels to support them. This about-face reflected more a change in circumstances than a fundamental departure from governing principles. The emperor even began his edict with the exact same phrase with which he opened his response to Pei Shuaidu seven years earlier: 'Since my accession to the throne, the training of human talent has been a constant concern.'[38] Mentioning his previous skepticism, the emperor said he had refrained from adopting a more active stance toward academies out of a desire to bide his time and observe their operation. Now, he had witnessed the diligence of both provincial officials—men he elevated to powerful positions over the first decade of his rule—and the students who competed in the examinations. With greater confidence in the agents who would participate in academies, he ordered their establishment across the empire.[39]

The end of the edict reiterated the responsibility of provincial officials for academies and

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[34] Miles 2020, 297–300.

[35] Rowe cites a 1723 edict as evidence that the Yongzheng emperor ordered the conversion of "all existing" academies to charitable schools (*yixue*). This interpretation of the edict is based on a truncated version of it found in the *Qinding xuezheng quanshu* 欽定學政全書 (in the section on charitable schools, not academies). The full text of the edict, paints a somewhat different picture. In fact, the 1723 edict ordered officials to investigate extant academies and "shrines to living men" (*shengci* 生詞) to ensure they were legitimate, functioning institutions. He instructed that those that were not should be closed and their premises used for other purposes, such as charitable schools. The full text of the edict explicitly allowed the continued operation of academies, and the next year the Yongzheng emperor approved the opening of a new academy in Nanjing. Rowe 1994, 427; Su-er-ne 1774/5, 73:3a; Deng Hongbo 2004, 435; Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan 1999, 6:85.

[36] Zelin 2002, 193–203.

[37] *Shizong xian huangdi shilu* 43:Yongzheng 4/4/13 (1726/5/14).

[38] Chinese text: 朕臨御以來，時時以教育人材為念.

[39] Chen Gujia and Deng Hongbo 1998, 2:855.

linked this charge to a broader ideology of imperial rule. The emperor declared, "The regional officials likewise have the responsibility to transform and guide (*huadao* 化導) scholars, and each should conscientiously carry this out, expelling what is superficial and elevating what is substantial, in order to extend the state's transformative effect (*hua* 化) of training an abundance of scholars."[40] This rather convoluted pronouncement twice refers to the concept of moral transformation (*hua)*, which had a long history of being linked to educational endeavors.[41] For the Yongzheng emperor, moral transformation through education constituted a civilizing mission that he supported particularly on the southwestern frontier alongside the conversion of native chieftainships to Chinese-style administration (*gaitu guiliu* 改土歸流).[42]

The 1733 edict reflected not just a correspondence between administration in China proper and frontier empire-building but also a particular understanding of the role of provincial officials as mediators of the moral power of the emperor. The Yongzheng emperor's policy toward academies was exemplary of a broader patrimonial-bureaucratic approach to governance.[43] He maximized his personal power over the bureaucracy through the Grand Council and the palace memorial system and by systematically promoting trusted men to positions in the provinces. With his personal power secured in this way, he trusted these men to exercise discretion on his behalf. His hallmark fiscal policy, 'returning meltage fees to the public (*huohao guigong* 火耗歸公),' was designed to ensure adequate formal funding for provincial and sub-provincial administration, and the emperor actively encouraged provincial experimentation in its implementation.[44] Rather than merely centralizing power in his own hands, the Yongzheng emperor sought to empower his servants in the provinces. By entrusting oversight directly to governors, the emperor elevated academies' status above not only charitable schools but also the government schools managed by low-ranking education officials.

The emperor's attention to both the initial and recurring expenses of provincial academies was also distinctive. The 1,000-tael grant from the court for each province's academy was substantial and unprecedented. However, whatever was left after covering various expenses for opening or refurbishing these academies would have had to be invested in an endowment to earn a regular income, which would have been fairly modest. Anticipating the inadequacy of these funds, the edict directed provincial officials to resort to "public funds (*gongyin* 公銀)" to cover any additional expenses.[45] The provision of revenue to cover such public expenses was one feature of the hallmark fiscal reforms of the Yongzheng reign. One portion of the proceeds from meltage fees, whose collection the Yongzheng emperor formalized, was earmarked for 'nourishing honesty (*yanglian* 養廉)' funds designed to supplement official salaries and cover personal expenses related to holding office. Another portion was designated for public expenses, such as public works projects and, per the 1733 edict, academies.[46] These policies were designed simultaneously to rein in informal funding practices and provide stable and ample sources of funding for local administration, effectively empowering provincial officials to act with discretion in ways that would benefit both local people and the court. To do so, the emperor mobilized his personal relationships and lines of communication with provincial officials at the expense of the power of the Board of Revenue to exercise oversight over these provincial funds.

The logic shaping the *huohao guigong* fiscal reforms mirrored the Yongzheng emperor's shifting attitude toward academies. His initial concern was to check corruption, but he also wanted to enhance the efficacy of local government. Ultimately, the solution to these problems required both systemic

[40] Chinese text: 封疆大臣等並有化導士子之職，各宜殫心奉行，黜浮崇實，以廣國家菁莪棫樸之化.
[41] Rowe 2001, 406; Brindley 2021.
[42] Rowe 1994.
[43] On the patrimonial-bureaucratic mode of governance in the Qing, see Chang 2007, 12–14.
[44] Zelin 1984, 184–90.
[45] Chen Gujia and Deng Hongbo 1998, 2:855.
[46] Zelin 1984, 174–90.

reforms and personal faith in the men who staffed the bureaucracy. By design, then, provincial academies manifested both the moral and material beneficence of the emperor himself and the initiative of high-ranking provincial officials. The combination of these factors provided a much more secure foundation for Shandong's new provincial academy—Luoyuan—than its predecessor Lishan/Baixue had enjoyed.

Provincial Dimensions of Autocracy at Luoyuan Academy

The 1733 edict indicates the provincial dimension of a broader effort on the part of the Yongzheng emperor to submit intellectual activity to imperial prerogatives. In the absence of total control, the emperor expected literati—individually and as groups—to adhere to basic moral standards and to pursue a course of study that would prepare them for official service. Historically, these goals were not necessarily inimical to the function of academies. However, the court's effort to exercise control over provincial academies through governors, curtailing the operational autonomy they had enjoyed at least at times, fits the stereotype of Yongzheng autocracy. The management and core educational activities of Luoyuan Academy illustrate how a variety of actors, starting with provincial governors, advanced imperial prerogatives more securely than the ad hoc management of Luoyuan's predecessor, Lishan/Baixue Academy.

The first of Shandong's governors to leave his imprint on Luoyuan was its founder, Shandong governor Yue Jun 岳濬 (1704–53). Yue was the son of Yue Zhongqi 岳鐘琪 (1686–1754), whom the Yongzheng emperor employed in a series of sensitive frontier posts early in his reign. His family background nothwithstanding, Yue Jun's assumption of Shandong's governorship in 1728 at the young age of 24 or 25 was exceptional, to say the least. Yue remained in this post even as his father fell out of favor with the emperor, was imprisoned, and given a suspended death sentence in 1732—the year before the edict ordering the establishment of provincial academies.[47] The Yue family's personal entanglements with the Yongzheng emperor illustrate, albeit darkly, why he felt confident by 1733 that the men he had placed in powerful positions in the provinces were liable to comply with his intentions.

In the absence of a record celebrating Luoyuan's establishment, limited details are available about its early history. Gazetteers note that it was established in 1733 in the premises of an old Ming military office that had a front on the walled city's main east-west avenue.[48] A source written in 1841, over a century after Luoyuan's founding, claims that in fact Yue relocated Baixue Academy inside the walled city and renamed it as an homage to its former location (Luoyuan being another name for Baotu Spring).[49] Later sources have repeated this claim.[50] This story is not entirely implausible, especially if we understand Lishan/Baixue Academy in a very broad sense as an institution that had already undergone several reincarnations over about a century. However, intervening gazetteers—both the 1778 county gazetteer and the 1840 prefecture gazetteer (published just one year before the aforementioned record) contain separate entries for Lishan/Baixue Academy and Luoyuan.[51] This evidence suggests that Luoyuan is best understood as a distinct institution, even if some people (mis)understood it as a continuation of Lishan/Baixue, even, perhaps, before 1841.

The 1733 edict anticipated that provincial academies would serve the purpose of both moral discipline and training for the examinations. In terms of its basic functions, then, Luoyuan and other provincial academies were fairly indistinct from the system of government schools. Historians of

[47] Hummel 1943, 2:957–59; Dai 2009, 88–116.
[48] Hu Delin 1778, 12:19b.
[49] Mao Chenglin 1926, 15:11a.
[50] Yao Boyue 2019, 102; Li Wei 2004, 102.
[51] The *Licheng County Gazetteer* actually includes separate entries for Lishan and Baixue academies but includes a note specifying their relationship. There is no such note for Luoyuan Academy, though. Hu Delin 1778, 12:16a-16b, 17b–20a; Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 17:51b-57b.

academies have seen the absorption of academies into the official school/examination system as a trend across the late imperial period, particularly the Qing.[52] However, study at academies had never been entirely divorced from or inimical to participation in the examinations, so the 1733 edict signaled more an administrative departure than a fundamental functional one.[53]

The Yongzheng emperor might have attached supervision of academies to the portfolio of provincial education commissioners, who already supervised local schools and exams, or, as Pei Shuaidu had suggested, established an official position specifically responsible for managing academies. Since education commissioners spent much of their time away from the provincial capital conducting exams in other prefectures, giving charge of provincial academies to governors may have been a pragmatic choice. Drawing governors into the system of schooling and examinations have may also served the emperor's interest in having another set of eyes-and-ears to report on the qualities of up-and-coming scholars, especially since the Yongzheng emperor was skeptical of relying on examinations alone to recruit officials.[54]

Of course, the official responsibilities of Shandong's governors were already broad enough that they could not afford to dedicate themselves to supervising Luoyuan full-time. Day-to-day responsibilities thus devolved to two sets of figures. First, a director (*shanzhang* 山長 or *zhujiangxi* 主講席) took charge of the pedagogical operations of the academy, such as giving lectures and conducting regular examinations. Governors exercised discretion over the appointment of directors, and they were not subject to the rule of avoidance. Through the eighteenth century, the majority of Luoyuan's directors came from provinces in Jiangnan, reflecting the dominance of this region in terms of educational attainment. Of fifteen known directors of Luoyuan who received their highest degree (almost always *jinshi*) before 1814, ten came from the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. Only three of the fifteen were natives of Shandong.[55] Second, one or two men were selected from the pool of education officials to serve as managers (*jianli* 監理 or *jianyuan* 監院) and handle administrative tasks, like disbursing stipends to the scholars. These men often held *juren* degrees and were natives of Shandong. At least at times this post was held simultaneously with that of the Jinan prefecture school assistant director (*xundao* 訓導).[56]

Unfortunately, detailed records of the composition of students and the types of instruction they received at Luoyuan are not available for the years immediately after the academy's founding. However, a plausible picture emerges from scattered sources, a more detailed account of the academy's operation from the early nineteenth century, and accounts of other academies. References to Luoyuan in biographies of men from across Shandong indicate that its student body was truly provincial in scope, although students from Jinan and its immediate vicinity could have been overrepresented.[57] The academy's primary constituency would have been licentiates (*shengyuan* 生員 or *xiucai* 秀才) who were preparing for the provincial examination and had been recommended by the supervisors of local schools, identified by the education commissioner during his tours of the province, and/or who passed an entrance examination. During the eighteenth century, some number of pre-licentiate students (*tongsheng* 童生) were allowed to study at the academy as well. However, regulations promulgated by governor Tie-bao (鐵保, Tiyeboo) early in the nineteenth century eliminated this

[52] Deng Hongbo 2004, 442; Pang Yani 2012, 79.

[53] Li Bing 2005.

[54] Zelin 2002, 197; Zhang 2022, 197–99. The rise to prominence of renowned administrator Chen Hongmou through the patronage of officials trusted by the Yongzheng emperor illustrates the function of personal relationships in the formation of an inner circle of bureaucrats. Rowe 2001, 49–52.

[55] The lack of contemporaneous records of Luoyuan's directors makes it impossible to speak with precision about the dates that they served in the post. Instead, I use date of highest examination earned as a rough proxy for the general chronology of appointments. Lu Xingmin 2012, 12–17; Meng Hongsheng 2017, 15–35.

[56] Lu Chenghui 1933, 11:30a.

[57] Rowe notes this as a problem Chen Hongmou tried to address in his engagement with academies as an official. Rowe 2001, 411–12.

practice and instead directed such students toward Jinan Academy, which he had recently established.[58] Spots for *juren* were added in 1841, presumably to support preparation for the metropolitan exams, implying that they had not been included among the academy's students before.[59] In addition to supporting passage through the "normal" route of the examination, Luoyuan was also a stopping point both for students who would subsequently be selected as 'tribute' students (*gongsheng* 貢生) entitled to study in Beijing and those who had already had this status and then returned to Shandong to prepare for the provincial examinations.[60]

Tie-bao's regulations indicate that prior to the nineteenth century the academy provided places for one hundred students. The quota for students was divided between sixty regular students (*zhengke* 正課), who received monthly stipends, and forty supplementary students (*fuke* 附課), who received no stipends. Both the total number of students and the ratio between them had likely grown since the academy's founding. Tie-bao himself adjusted the numbers slightly, adding ten *zhengke* places in years when a provincial examination was to be held and setting no limit on *fuke* spots in those years.[61] With the growth of the academy's endowment in the nineteenth century, even more spaces were added in subsequent decades, bringing the total number of students up to as many as 200 by 1850.[62]

Benjamin Elman describes government schools as 'way stations' whose primary function was to disburse funding to students whose education was largely attained privately.[63] This may have been true of Luoyuan to an extent—and perhaps more at some times than others—but it was the center of a range of educational activities and, as I will argue below, an intellectual sociability that extended beyond a strict focus on examination training. The most foundational component of Luoyuan's intellectual life was its commitment to moral discipline, which was distilled into a series of regulations promulgated by successive governors and directors. These regulations reiterated predictable Neo-Confucian maxims, and so their content is not especially remarkable. Director Sang Tiaoyuan 桑調元 (1695–1771) emphasized that he had drawn the injunctions in his regulations directly from the *Analects* to suit the moral temperament of students from the home province of Confucius.[64]

At first glance, Luoyuan's status as a ritual center for the Neo-Confucian cult of Zhu Xi is also unremarkable. Shrines to Zhu Xi were a common feature of academies, but one was not constructed at Luoyuan until about thirty years after its founding.[65] The shrine, constructed under the direction of the aforementioned Sang Tiaoyuan and fellow Zhejiang native Shen Tingfang 沈廷芳 (1702–72), then serving as an investigating censor in Shandong, also included tablets honoring three Qing intellectuals: Lu Longqi 陸龍其(1639–1693), Zhang Lüxiang 張履祥 (1611–1674), and Lao Shi 勞史, all of whom, like Sang and Shen, hailed from Zhejiang. Luoyuan's Zhu Xi shrine thus reflected the idealized inculcation of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy across the empire and also the particularistic (but translocal) literary hegemony of Jiangnan.[66]

Besides moral and ritual discipline, the primary modes of education employed at Luoyuan, as at other academies, consisted of lectures, discussions, and regular examinations. The best records of actual instruction at the academy come from the tenure of Shen Kepei 沈可培 (1737–99), director from 1786 to 1791. His *Luoyuan Questions and Answers* (*Luoyuan wenda* 濼源問答) was published posthumously with prefaces by former students. Unsurprisingly, the text speaks glowingly of both

[58] This direction implies that previously it had only been *tongsheng* from Jinan Prefecture who had been allowed to study at Luoyuan. Yao Boyue 2019, 103.
[59] Tuo-hun-bu memorial on Daoguang 21/7/27 (1841/9/12), *Lufu zouzhe*, 03-3639-011.
[60] Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 56:27b, 43b; Lu Chenghui 1933, 8:14b.
[61] Yao Boyue 2019, 102.
[62] I base this estimate on Tuo-hun-bu's report of renovations in 1841. Tuo-hun-bu memorial on Daoguang 21/7/27 (1841/9/12), *Lufu zouzhe*, 03-3639-011.
[63] Elman 2000, 127.
[64] Meng Hongsheng 2017, 107.
[65] Xiao Yongming 2012, 332–412.
[66] Meng Hongsheng 2017, 350, 355.

how seriously Shen approached the tasks of discussing interpretations of the classics with students and reading examination essays and how kindly he treated the students.[67] Just as instructive, then, may be the contrast drawn between Shen and other instructors, who tended to stay at the academy only so long as a given governor (their patron) remained in office and were loath to comment on students' essays or engage them in conversation.[68]

Tie-bao's early nineteenth-century regulations indicate that Luoyuan followed the common pattern of conducting multiple exams each month, with some overseen by academy personnel (*zhaike* 齋課) and others by local officials (*guanke* 官課). Prize money totaling thirty taels was available to the students who performed the best on these exams. Tie-bao's regulations also instituted the further measure of ordering students to keep a daily record of the things they were reading to submit to the managers who would then report to the local circuit intendant on a monthly basis.[69] These practices, combined with the residential nature of the academy, contributed to the disciplinary regime that Iona Man-Cheong argues extended well beyond the civil service examinations themselves.[70] Students at the academy would have been able to avail themselves of its library, which by 1840 consisted of around one hundred titles of the sorts of official histories and orthodox commentaries on the classics that students needed to master to succeed on the examinations.[71] This was certainly a useful resource, although as Timothy Brook argues with reference to school libraries in the Ming, the selection of books on offer channeled students toward orthodox learning and so to some extent furthered the disciplinary function of the academy.[72]

Alongside the material support Luoyuan provided students in the form of stipends, there is thus considerable evidence that it functioned as something more than a mere 'way station' as, no doubt, many local government schools did. Luoyuan's academic rigor likely waxed and waned depending on the personnel and students present there at any given time. However, the continued and active participation of successive governors in its management through setting out regulations, organizing renovations, and conducting examinations of its students set a pattern that distinguished it from Lishan/Baixue.

It is tempting to say that Luoyuan embodied a trade-off between, on the one hand, operational autonomy and intellectual vitality and, on the other, institutional stability and tight control of academic pursuits. As I demonstrate below, though, whether we look at the 1733 edict itself or the subsequent operation of Luoyuan, central control was not the only dynamic at play. Luoyuan's survival owed a great deal to the initiative and inventiveness of provincial officials, which the Yongzheng emperor anticipated. Moreover, the academy's disciplinary function was coupled to the creation of a social space that was both vital to and transcended its narrow purpose vis-a-vis moral training and exam preparation. In both the fiscal and intellectual realms, then, the provincial legacy of autocracy turned out to be more complex than it might appear at first.

Luoyuan's Endowment and Legacies of Yongzheng Fiscal Reforms

The payment of salaries and stipends to Luoyuan's staff and students, not to mention maintaining the academy's physical premises, relied on a steady supply of funding. The court's provision of 1,000 taels in 1733 was substantial and unprecedented compared to the locally generated funding that had (temporarily) sustained repeated iterations of Lishan/Baixue Academy. However, as the edict anticipated, an initial endowment of 1,000 taels (minus, presumably, start-up costs) was evidently inadequate for maintaining the academy on a permanent basis, let alone growing its

[67] Shen Kepei 1815, *Fuji*:1b.
[68] Shen Kepei 1815, *Fuji*:1b.
[69] Yao Boyue 2019, 103.
[70] Man-Cheong 2004, 29–39.
[71] A catalog of these books can be found in Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 17:52b–55b.
[72] Brook 1996.

operations. To meet this challenge, successive governors strategically grew Luoyuan's endowment over the next century, and it reached around 26,000 taels by 1841. This success, spanning the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reflected the kind of provincial fiscal autonomy envisioned by the Yongzheng emperor and successive governors' creative use of this autonomy to invest idle government funds in commercial ventures. By the nineteenth century, Luoyuan's endowment evinced a paradox: the power of the central government to intervene in provincial finances did not match up to its own ambitions, but the results were very much in line with the intentions of the Yongzheng emperor, a supposedly autocratic and centralizing monarch.

Unfortunately, again, a lack of early records about Luoyuan make it impossible to say what exactly happened to the initial 1,000-tael grant the court provided. However, Luoyuan's endowment received a substantial boost through the intervention of Shandong governor Zhu Dingyuan 朱定元 in the early 1740s. Zhu took miscellaneous funds, such as excess taxes from Pingyuan County 平原縣 and funds for transporting tribute grain to the capital (*yumi* 餘米), and loaned them to pawnshops in Licheng and several other counties to provide additional income for Luoyuan. In 1759, it was reported that a sum of 7,068 taels was now loaned out on behalf of the academy, which a later source claims earned an annual income of 1,550 taels.[73]

It is impossible to say if the Yongzheng emperor imagined this specific approach to funding academies when he promulgated the 1733 edict, but he did help create the conditions under which it became feasible. Historically, endowments for academies and similar institutions often took the form of rent-producing land. It is plausible, even likely, that the Yongzheng emperor expected officials to purchase land for endowments with the initial grant and then to use excess public funds either to cover shortfalls or to purchase additional land for the endowment. However, in the eighteenth century the commercial investment of endowments became increasingly common, both in Shandong and other parts of the empire. This was a product of both the commercial growth of this period and the Yongzheng emperor's own fiscal reforms, which infused on-the-books money into local administrations.[74]

This practice raised concerns in later years but persisted nevertheless. In 1759 Shanxi governor Ta Yongning 塔永寧 proposed that the court allow local governments to loan out endowment money to support institutions like academies only in specific cases of demonstrated need, require strict reporting of interest earned, and prohibit excess interest from being reinvested.[75] The Qianlong emperor ordered other governors to investigate affairs in their own provinces and respond to Ta's proposals.[76] Shandong governor A-er-tai 阿尔泰 defended Shandong's use of this practice and argued that converting commercial investments to landholdings would hurt both the government (because of the lower rate of return from land rents) and the merchants who had benefited from access to relatively cheap government credit. "Public and private are mutually beneficial (*gong si jiao bian* 公私交便)," he claimed.[77] In the absence of an explicit direction from the court to the contrary, the practice continued.

Ta's skepticism towards the provincial autonomy the Yongzheng emperor's reforms had encouraged was consonant with shifts in fiscal policy in the Qianlong reign, which would manifest in the handling of Luoyuan's endowment in the early nineteenth century. The Yongzheng emperor had encouraged provincial officials to manage their own public expenses and nourishing honesty budgets

[73] It seems likely that Zhu appropriated surpluses from these funds and added them directly to Luoyuan's endowment. Another model was to loan money from a government treasury, deposit it with pawnshops or merchants, and then use the interest from this investment to repay the original loan over time, provide for academy expenses, and add any remainder to the endowment. A-er-tai memorial on Qianlong 24/R6/13 (1759/8/5), *Zhupi zouzhe*, 04-01-38-0182-025; Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 17:52a; Zelin 1984, 281.

[74] Zelin 1984, 281–83; Nakamura Jihei 1955.

[75] Ta Yonging memorial on Qianlong 24/3/1 (1759/3/28), *Lufu zouzhe*, 03-0343-005.

[76] *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu* 582:Qianlong 24/3/1 (1759/3/28).

[77] A-er-tai memorial on Qianlong 24/R6/13 (1759/8/5), *Zhupi zouzhe*, 04-01-38-0182-025.

with light oversight by himself and generally out of view of the Board of Revenue 戶部.[78] In contrast, the Qianlong emperor subjected the collection of the surtaxes that formed the basis for these funds and their expenditure to the scrutiny of the Board of Revenue. He also began ordering provinces to transfer excess revenues to revenue-deficit provinces, undermining the Yongzheng principle that each province should be self-reliant when it came to its public expenses and nourishing honesty funds. The distinctiveness of these funds was further eroded in the Jiaqing reign, and they were effectively folded into the regular tax quota.[79]

These changes do not seem to have affected Luoyuan's ability to draw income from its existing endowment, but they did pose a challenge to its further growth in the nineteenth century. Now the sources of funding established in the Yongzheng reign were drying up, and allocations of additional money to the academy's endowment and increasing budgeted expenditures in theory required approval from the Board of Revenue. Despite this changing fiscal landscape, Luoyuan's endowment grew considerably in the nineteenth century and did so in ways surprisingly consonant with the Yongzheng emperor's initial vision.

The first wave of growth to the academy's endowment came in 1804 under the tenure of governor Tie-bao. In addition to carrying out renovations to Luoyuan, Tie-bao raised a further 6,000 taels for its endowment, apparently through encouraging provincial officials to donate portions of their salaries.[80] This addition raised Luoyuan's endowment to around 13,000 taels, which earned an annual income of 2,400 taels. This increase allowed Tie-bao to raise the quota for the number of stipendiary students in years when provincial examinations were held and to raise the stipend provided to regular students in residence at the academy from 1.95 to 3 taels per month.[81]

From this time, we can observe a divergence between how Luoyuan's endowment was recorded in local sources and what was reported to the court. Tie-bao's renovation of Luoyuan was not itself a secret: he memorialized to report the discovery of over three hundred cannons (leftover from the site's old function as a military office) during renovations.[82] He also recorded the state of Luoyuan's finances in a new set of "regulations," which seems to have served as the basis for a gazetteer record produced in 1840 and which is included in a later source.[83] However, there is no record of him reporting changes to Luoyuan's endowment to the court. An exchange from 1828 suggests that this was not a naive oversight but a case of provincial officials carefully managing the information they presented to the Board of Revenue.

In 1828, the Board of Revenue wrote to Shandong's governor Qi-shan (琦善, Kišan) to inquire about Luoyuan's finances. Two observations prompted this inquiry. First, the province had submitted identical accounts for Luoyuan's expenses for several years running—1,259 taels. This was more than the 1,200 taels the academy was approved to spend, and invariably reporting the same figure raised the question of whether the expenses were being inflated to cover up embezzlement. Second, the Board had noticed that Luoyuan's endowment, which it understood to produce a revenue of 1,300 taels each year, ought to have produced an accumulated surplus of about 3,284 taels over the

[78] Shortly prior to his death, the Yongzheng emperor did order a more thorough auditing of nourishing honesty and public expenses funds after the discovery of a sizeable discrepancy in the accounts of Fujian Province. Even then, though, he rejected a proposal to incorporate an accounting of these funds into the annual provincial reports of income and expenses reviewed by the Board of Revenue. Zelin 1984, 269–70.

[79] Zelin 1984, 264–301.

[80] Tie-bao's own record says that this additional money came from 'public contributions' (*gongjuan*), which is the same term used to describe the previous money raised for the academy's endowment, most—perhaps all—of which came not from salary contributions but the reallocation of provincial funds. It is a later source that specifies that the money Tie-bao added to the endowment came from the contribution of officials' salaries. Yao Boyue 2019, 102; Mao Chenglin 1926, 15:11a–11b.

[81] Yao Boyue 2019, 102.

[82] Tie-bao memorial on Jiaqing 8/3/21 (1803/5/11), *Zhupi zouzhe*, 04-01-01-0488-053.

[83] Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 17:52a; Yao Boyue 2019; Meng Hongsheng 2017, 112–24.

years, which it believed should be remitted to Beijing. The temporary governor who preceded Qi-shan in office had initially ordered compliance, but Qi-shan now stepped in to correct what he claimed was a misunderstanding about the academy's finances.[84]

With the benefit of the records cited above, it is not difficult to identify the nature of this misunderstanding. Up through the eighteenth century, Luoyuan's endowment had earned roughly the amount anticipated by the Board—1,550 taels recorded in local records vs. 1,300 taels expected by the Board.[85] However, when Tie-bao expanded the endowment in 1804, the academy's annual income had supposedly increased to 2,400 taels annually. The Board was apparently unaware of this change in income and, presumably, the underlying augmentation of Luoyuan's endowment. Intentionally or otherwise, Tie-bao seems to have kept this information from the court. Keeping a portion of Luoyuan's endowment, revenue, and expenditures outside the Board of Revenue's scrutiny allowed him to increase the number of students and raise their stipends without having to justify these actions to the Board, which was effectively how the Yongzheng emperor had intended for provincial officials to manage their public expenses funds but obviated the reporting procedures the Board of Revenue was now leveraging against Qi-shan.

Rather than giving a full accounting of Luoyuan's finances, Qi-shan strategically admitted to the artificial nature of the accounts previously submitted without disclosing the true state of Luoyuan's endowment. From a previous stint as Shandong's governor, Qi-shan claimed to know that Luoyuan was actually hard-pressed for funds, and so he had conducted an investigation to understand how there could be a surplus to remit to the Board. Qi-shan confirmed the Board's suspicion that the reported annual expenses of 1,259 taels was a manufactured number. However, rather than being inflated, he contended that it was artificially low. In fact, that number reflected the academy's expenses from some years prior. In recent years the annual expenses had grown to between 2,000 and 3,000 taels. Given that the endowment was reported to have generated 2,400 taels in income each year, this information is all plausible. However, rather than openly admitting that the academy's endowment was larger than the Board understood it to be, Qi-shan vaguely alluded to the use of "public contributions (*gongjuan* 公捐)" to make up the difference. This was true insofar as the funds Tie-bao had added to the endowment had come from such contributions. However, Qi-shan provided no additional information on the actual condition of the academy's endowment and regular income, implying that contributions had been used on an ad hoc basis to cover operating expenses.[86]

Qi-shan had several reasons not to come clean about the true size of Luoyuan's endowment. First, claiming that the academy ran a substantial deficit every year provided a justification for him to argue that the accumulated surplus of 3,284 taels, should be added to the academy's endowment, which would increase its income by about 490 taels annually.[87] Second, since Qi-shan had previously

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[84] Qi-shan memorial on Daoguang 8/3/16 (1828/4/29), *Zhupi zouzhe*, 04-01-35-0954-031.

[85] There is, of course, a discrepancy of 250 taels between these numbers, and I do not know how it emerged or what happened to the amount of money accrued above and beyond the 1,300 taels expected by the Board. It is possible that local officials were either siphoning off excess money into their own pockets or applying it to meet the growing operating expenses of the academy. It is also possible that the figure of an annual income of 1,550 taels (from an endowment of 7,068 taels) was an upper bound or exaggeration, as it implies an annual return of nearly 22%. That rate of return would significantly outstrip the rate of 15% reported by both A-er-tai in 1759 and Qi-shan in 1828. The annual return of 18.39% implied by an annual income of 1,300 taels is more reasonable and aligns very nearly with the 18.37% rate of return implied by the annual income of 2,400 taels on an endowment of 13,068 taels reported after Tie-bao's augmentation of the endowment. Op. cit.

[86] Qi-shan memorial on Daoguang 8/3/16 (1828/4/29), *Zhupi zouzhe*, 04-01-35-0954-031.

[87] Qi-shan's memorial implies that this purported surplus of 3,284 taels existed in reality and not just on paper. The 1840 prefecture gazetteer likewise reports the existence of this surplus and its subsequent rollover into the endowment. It does seem possible, though, that the surplus only existed on paper and was then 'made good' by Qi-shan only when he needed to account for it. Qi-shan memorial on Daoguang 8/3/16 (1828/4/29), *Zhupi zouzhe*, 04-01-35-0954-031; Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 17:52b.

served as Shandong's governor, he had a share in any fiscal malfeasance that emerged from this case. Not reporting the full expenses of the academy so long as those expenses were being covered by 'contributions' (perhaps of official salaries) could probably be excused. Failing to disclose a substantial amount of money that ought to have been under the purview of the Board but which Qi-shan had at least implicitly helped conceal, might raise eyebrows and—perish the thought!—prompt the Board to look for further irregularities in Shandong's account books.

Having established that Luoyuan's expenses outstripped the income from its endowment—even with the 3,284 taels added to it—and to "simplify 以歸簡易" accounting procedures, Qi-shan asked for permission in the future to expend the entirety of the academy's income without having to report it to the Board.[88] The court agreed to both Qi-shan's request to add the accumulated surplus to the academy's endowment and to forego reporting regular expenses funded by the academy to the Board.[89] In principle, this exemption allowed the academy to avoid any further inconvenient probing from the Board about its regular expenses and income and effectively eliminated the distinction between the portions of its endowment on and off the Board's books. This maneuver produced an ironic double effect, both undermining the nineteenth-century court's efforts to review provincial finances and returning the academy to the kind of provincial fiscal autonomy envisioned by the Yongzheng emperor.

Another wave of investment came in 1840–41, when governor Tuo-hun-bu renovated Luoyuan and expanded its endowment. Money for this project came from three sources. As under Tie-bao, contributions from officials (7,900 taels) constituted a large portion of the funds raised. These were supplemented, as under Qi-shan, by an accumulated operating surplus of 1,740 taels. What was new in this round was that local people contributed a significant amount of money—4,000 taels from salt merchants and 330 taels from the man overseeing the construction. Of the total money raised, 10,000 taels was added to the academy's endowment and deposited with pawnshops. The remainder was used for renovations.

To some extent, the emergence of merchant donations as a source of funding for Luoyuan in the early nineteenth century accords with common narratives about the increasing role of non-governmental actors in financing public projects in this period.[90] However, two caveats cut against the notion of a sharp divide between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century histories of state-building this development suggests. First, the 4,000 taels salt merchants contributed to renovations and the endowment in 1840–41, while significant, paled in comparison to the regular income Luoyuan had received year-on-year over the past century from commercial investments.[91] Luoyuan's financial viability had depended on public-private partnership for effectively its entire history, and so we should not overstate the significance of commercial elites' participation in government financing in the early nineteenth century, even if it was taking on new forms.[92]

Second, whether in the pre- or post-Taiping period, the decline of state capacity is generally taken as a corollary of elites playing a more expansive role in local governance. Looking both at the

[88] Qi-shan memorial on Daoguang 8/3/16 (1828/4/29), *Zhupi zouzhe*, 04-01-35-0954-031.
[89] *Xuanzong cheng huangdi shilu* 134:Daoguang DG 8/3/22 (1828/5/5).
[90] Han 2016, 23–102.
[91] Dykstra makes a somewhat similar argument about continuity of mercantile involvement in governance across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that bears mention, even though I find aspects of it problematic. Dykstra 2022a.
[92] Conditions in the salt trade in Shandong in the early nineteenth century suggest additional reasons for not assuming that investment in Luoyuan's endowment suggests a larger role being played by salt merchants in local administration. First, Ji Lizhen notes a lack of recorded contributions by the province's salt merchants to the court in this period, so we may be witnessing a redirection of resources. By the 1840s, Shandong's salt merchants also found themselves heavily burdened by the range of debts they owed to the provincial government, forcing the government to undertake a variety of relief measures, and I am tempted to read salt merchants' contributions to Luoyuan at this time as indicative of an effort to curry favor with the provincial government and the court at a time when merchants were especially needful of beneficent policies. Ji Lizhen 2009, 160–61, 232–42.

1840–41 fundraising campaign—when government officials still provided the majority of the funds—or the longer trajectory of Luoyuan's history in the early nineteenth century—which seems to suggest consistent growth, not contraction—commercial investment appears to have been an auxiliary to, not a replacement for government investment in the academy. The degree of continuity in fiscal practices Luoyuan's history betrayed may be exceptional in comparison both to other kinds of institutions (like granaries) or even other academies.[93] However, the durability of Yongzheng-era approaches to provincial financing, adapted to meet opportunities of commercial investment and evade meddlesome scrutiny from the Board of Revenue—illustrate the danger of projecting too simple a narrative of transformation across the eighteenth-nineteenth century divide onto local history.

The Social and Intellectual Milieu of Luoyuan Academy

As discussed above, Luoyuan fulfilled its intended function as a preparatory institution for aspiring officials in a variety of ways. However, its social and intellectual milieu extended beyond the parameters explicitly enunciated by the Yongzheng emperor in his 1733 edict. Luoyuan also served as a hub for the formation of literati relationships through practices of literary patronage, book-collecting, and the transmission of intellectual currents, like evidential scholarship. While transcending a narrow construal of its mission, these functions did not inherently transgress the Yongzheng emperor's vision for it. In fact, the expansive intellectual and social milieu of Luoyuan Academy arguably enhanced its performance of its core academic functions by motivating the participation of top-rate scholars, encouraging inter-provincial discourse on major intellectual trends manifesting in the examination system, and preparing scholars for the wide range of activities they might engage in to support Qing governance as either officials or members of the local elite.

Since Luoyuan's students were some of the most promising from across the province, they likely fared disproportionately well in the provincial examinations. However, they were by no means exempted from the harsh competitiveness of the exams, where only a tiny fraction of those who sat them at any given time could pass.[94] Likewise, even those who succeeded shared in the ambivalence of *juren* status, which was a significant achievement but hardly a guarantee of a career filled with fame and fortune.[95] To understand the full social implications of studying at Luoyuan Academy, then, we have to look beyond the examination system itself.

Jinan's Zhu 朱 family is exemplary of how Luoyuan was embedded in broader social processes that encompassed but were not limited to studying for the examinations. The Zhu family had skyrocketed to prominence in extraordinary fashion in the early Qing. One of the family's sons, Zhu Changzuo 朱昌祚 (1628–67), was abducted by Qing forces on a 1639 incursion into Shandong and subsequently enrolled as a Chinese bannerman. After the conquest, Zhu was appointed governor-general of Zhili, Shandong, and Henan—a short-lived and exceptionally powerful post. Zhu found himself on the wrong side of factional struggles during the Kangxi regency and was executed for opposing Oboi's efforts to expand the land enclosures assigned to banner units in the vicinity of Beijing (and improve the position of his own banners in the process).[96] However, the family's fortunes revived after the Kangxi emperor wrested power from Oboi, and one of Changzuo's brothers, Hongzuo 宏祚 (1630–1700), served in a series of powerful positions, including governor of Guangdong and governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang.[97] In subsequent generations, the Zhu family pursued multiple strategies to extend their fortunes. These included office and degree purchase, arranging marriages with other prominent families in Shandong, preparing sons for the exams, and

[93] Rankin 1994; Will 1994.
[94] Elman 2000, 142–43.
[95] Elman 2000, 152–53; Kuhn 2002, 15–21.
[96] Oxnam 1975, 174–75.
[97] Zhu Yafei 2008, 4:571–72.

procuring licenses to participate in the salt trade.[98]

At least three members of the Zhu family studied at Luoyuan in the mid-eighteenth century: Zhu Tong 朱彤, Zhu You 朱攸, and Zhu Zengchuan 朱曾傳. Study at Luoyuan was most obviously related to the goal of achieving examination success and securing careers as officials, and all three enjoyed some success in the exams, with all three winning *juren* degrees (Zengchuan, 1758; You, 1759; Tong, 1762). You (1772) and Tong (1780) also went on to win *jinshi* degrees. However, their careers were hardly unqualified successes. Zengchuan seems never to have served in an official position and died at the age of only 44 *sui* as an eccentric alcoholic, one biography suggests).[99] The eighteen-year delay between Tong's *juren* and *jinshi* probably stunted his career, and, although eventually selected to serve as a magistrate, he only over worked as an educational official, and he died while serving as a temporary director of schools in Caozhou.[100] You enjoyed more success, serving as a compiler in the Hanlin Academy and then as an examiner for provincial exams in Shuntian and Shanxi and then the metropolitan exams.[101] In 1790 he was selected as a prefect but died of illness before arriving in the post.[102] The careers of these three cousins together illustrate both the kind of upward trajectory that men from elite families could hope to enjoy and the uncertainties of the examination-official service pipeline, where the competitiveness of the system and untimely death could limit even the most talented individuals' attainment.

These uncertainties demanded a diversification of family strategies for reproducing elite status, and we can see that diversification at play at Luoyuan itself, particularly in terms of forming patronage ties with highly regarded literati and cultivating the local status of the family. Sang Tiaoyuan, the aforementioned director of Luoyuan, emerged as a patron for all three members of the family. Despite being the least successful of the three in terms of career success, Zengchuan won the praise of Sang (and another director, Fu Yulu 傅玉露) for his poetry and gained introductions to scholars from both elsewhere in Shandong and Jiangnan.[103] Tong also received the favor of Sang Tiaoyuan, who agreed to write a tomb inscription (*mubiao*) for his grandfather Zhu Xiang 朱湘 (son of Hongzuo), who had never held an official post but was an acclaimed local poet.[104] Zhu You's father, Lingzhao 朱令昭, was one of three figures Sang included in a compilation titled *Licheng sanzi shi* 歷城三子詩, cementing his reputation as a local poet, despite, again, not having any official career to speak of and dying at the age of only 41 *sui* after squandering a fair portion of the family's wealth.[105]

The formation of these patronage relationships between Sang Tiaoyuan and members of the Zhu family illustrate how Luoyuan did not constrict intellectual activity in the way scholars have supposed. In the first place, it catalyzed inter-regional exchange, which could, as we have seen, entail the spread of orthodox practices (like rituals honoring Zhu Xi), but also promoted the formation of spatially capacious social networks. Moreover, instead of merely fostering study for the examination, the scope of intellectual activities at Luoyuan expanded to include other kinds of literary activity, like composing and compiling poetry and writing personal essays. These activities may have spilled into the kind of posturing for social status that the Yongzheng emperor wanted academies to avoid. However, they provided added incentive for elite families to send their sons to Luoyuan and thus, I believe, help explain its institutional durability from the perspective of local elites. Moreover, these activities contributed to a broader process of literati socialization that was, whether emperors liked it or not, vital to how the bureaucracy operated in practice.[106] The fact that Zengchuan, Tong, and You

[98] For more detailed treatments of the Zhu family's history, see Knorr 2020, 192–214; Liu Rui 2017.
[99] Hu Delin 1778, 40:24a.
[100] Mao Chenglin 1926, 39:12b–13a.
[101] On professional networks running through the Hanlin Academy, see Man-Cheong 2004, 164–75.
[102] Hu Delin 1778, 39:12b.
[103] Hu Delin 1778, 40:24a; Ruan Yuan 1890, 36:1a–1b.
[104] Meng Hongsheng 2017, 353.
[105] Sang Tiaoyuan 1761; Hu Delin 1778, 40:23b–24a.
[106] Man-Cheong 2004, 144–46ff.

were all more or less successful in the exams illustrates that Luoyuan's core academic functions were not at odds with the wider range of social functions it served.

Even in spheres of learning that were of direct concern to the government, Luoyuan actively linked elites to knowledge and texts from other parts of the empire, rather than restricting their intellectual horizons. One of Luoyuan's more famous alumni was Jinan native and bibliophile Zhou Yongnian 周永年 (1730–91). Zhou studied at Luoyuan under the tutelage of director Shen Qiyuan 沈起元 (1685–1763), who wrote a preface for his first book catalog.[107] After earning his *jinshi* in 1771, Zhou contributed his bibliographic skills to the famed *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 project, with his diligent work reconstructing Song and Yuan texts from the *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 winning praise from the eminent literatus Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738–1801).[108] Zhou brought this experience—and likely personal copies of manuscripts he produced during the *Siku quanshu* compilation—back to Jinan, where he established an innovative lending library to promote the studies of local scholars. He also contributed to instruction at Luoyuan, alongside its manager, Gui Fu 桂馥 (1736–1805), who was a native of Qufu 曲阜 and had also been connected to the *Siku quanshu* project.[109]

Interpretations of the *Siku quanshu* project sometimes mirror scholarship on Qing academies in emphasizing its function as a tool for ideological control—a position Kent Guy convincingly contests.[110] The circuits of Zhou Yongnian and his books between Jinan and Beijing provide further support for Guy's view of the *Siku quanshu* project as not simply a top-down imposition by a self-aggrandizing autocrat but an expression of the intellectual and social interests of literati. They likewise challenge the view of academies as fundamentally constricting the intellectual life of scholars, showing how they in fact linked scholars from Shandong, which occupied a distinctly subordinate status to Sang Tiaoyuan's home province of Zhejiang in terms of cultural and intellectual capital, to inter-provincial intellectual currents. At the same time, Luoyuan trained literati, like Zhou Yongnian, who could participate in literary projects that benefited the Qing state at both the local and metropolitan level.

One of the major intellectual currents of the later eighteenth century was the emergence of evidential scholarship and Han learning, debates about which shaped the execution of the *Siku quanshu* project.[111] Being grounded in the moral emphasis of Song and early Qing Neo-Confucian thought and oriented toward exam preparation, education at Luoyuan was not inherently inclined toward evidential scholarship. This differentiated it from other academies founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, like Ruan Yuan's Xuehai tang in Guangzhou, that actively sought to cultivate this new field of learning.[112] However, as Li Bing argues, evidential scholarship and exam preparation were not entirely inimical to each other, especially as some aspects of evidential scholarship began to creep into both provincial and metropolitan examinations.[113]

One example of the accommodation between evidential scholarship and examination preparation comes from the aforementioned record of director Shen Kepei's teaching at Luoyuan. To a large extent, Shen's *Luoyuan wenda* consists of discourse on standard Cheng-Zhu interpretations of the classics.[114] However, Shen himself was an adherent of Han learning, and we find this inclination in places in the text.[115] For example, the tenth *juan* consists of an extended discussion of Shandong's geography that critically examines the relationship between historical texts and contemporary

[107] Meng Hongsheng 2017, 355–56.
[108] Guy 1987, 97.
[109] Guy 1987, 93; Hummel 1943, 2:856–58; Wang Zengfang and Cheng Guan 1840, 38:21a–21b.
[110] Guy 1987.
[111] Guy 1987, 121–56.
[112] Deng Hongbo 2004, 474-92; Miles 2006.
[113] Li Bing 2005, 228–66, 306; Elman 1994, 133–43.
[114] Lu Xingmin 2012, 46–49.
[115] Chen Gujia and Deng Hongbo 1998, 2:1862.

topography and discusses practical concerns, like flood-prevention.[116] Studying these topics would have prepared students both for answering the pragmatically-oriented policy questions on exams, where the influence of Han learning was most prevalent, and for serving the government either as officials or as members of the local elite in their home communities.

The capacity of diverse social interests and intellectual currents to intermingle at Luoyuan defies broad generalizations about the sterility of Qing academies. To some extent, we might see this as a sign of the limits of autocratic control. However, even these more expansive functions contributed to the broader goals of training scholars in ways that would prepare them for the exams and official service, maintaining elite investment in government-sponsored education, and fostering relationships between provincial officials and promising scholars. The challenge that Luoyuan poses to our understanding of the Yongzheng reign is less that it ultimately undermined autocracy but that it advanced it in ways contrary to an overly narrow understanding of the concept.

Conclusion

In conventional narratives, there is a sharp divide between the history of the high Qing and the nineteenth century. The challenges and personalities of these periods were certainly considerably different from each other. However, the more time one spends in the history and historiography of the eighteenth century, the more apparent it becomes that significant differences in the policies and personalities of the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors disrupts the continuity suggested by the term 'high Qing.' Likewise, in recent years, Qing historians have shown a growing interest in the nineteenth century and have questioned both the passivity of actors in this period that received narratives at least imply and call into question the abruptness of change following from the Opium and Taiping wars.[117] The project of questioning and redrawing the chronological boundaries that structure our understanding of Qing history will no doubt continue.

Of course, there is danger in getting carried away with questioning chronologies that are conventional for some good reasons and imposing a false sense of unity across periods that were undoubtedly characterized by profound change. I have adopted the more modest task of contemplating continuities from the Yongzheng reign into the early nineteenth century in reference to a specific topic (academies) and from a provincial perspective. Change is still visible in this narrative, as in the degree to which the 1733 policy on academies marked a departure from non-systematic court support for academies in the early Qing and the changes in fiscal policy following the Yongzheng emperor's death that conditioned the growth of Luoyuan's endowment. A provincial and longer-term perspective does expose continuities, though. These continuities traced back to the intentions of the Yongzheng emperor for the support, management, and educational purpose of academies, but also the accumulated initiative of provincial officials and participation of local people, on which the execution of imperial policies depended.

The significance of Luoyuan Academy's history is thus four-fold. First, as illustrated briefly above, it was an important institution within its local and provincial context. Second, a focused study of its history contributes to our understanding of academies in the Qing period, which often take the form of broad syntheses or focus on exceptionally famous and distinctive institutions. Third, befitting the theme of this issue, it illustrates how the particular policies of the Yongzheng emperor were translated into provincial implementation. In so doing, it demonstrates the limits of the concepts of autocracy and centralization to describe the Yongzheng reign, insofar as the participation of provincial actors was an integral component of his approach to rulership. Finally, and most broadly, it is useful as a case study for how we might go about writing histories that are sensitive to the particularities of individual reign periods (Yongzheng), larger chronological conventions (high Qing vs. late Qing), and

[116] Shen Kepei 1817, 613–23.

[117] For an introduction to this stream of scholarship, see Rowe 2011. Examples of subsequent scholarship in this vein include Wang 2014; Han 2016; Rowe 2018; Dai 2019.

under-appreciated continuities stretching across those chronological divides. Luoyuan does not reveal a grand truth about continuity and change in Qing history, but it does illustrate the intermingling of both within the disparate dynamics that shaped local histories over the long term.

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