

## The Board of Punishments in the Qing Dynasty and the Compilation of Leading Cases

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Judicial cases (*li'an*) played an important guiding role in the judicial activities of the Qing Dynasty. In the Qing Code, the rules (*lü*) were stable with few changes, and they were matched with and balanced by more flexible statutes (*li*). Due to the requirements of their work and the requirements for promotion, the officials in the Board of Punishments actively engaged in legal research, of which the compilation of “leading cases” (*cheng'an*) was one type. With abundant archives in storage and highly qualified staff who had more practice in dealing with complicated cases, the Board of Punishments had obvious advantages in organizing and collating leading cases of high quality. Due to the demands of their work, judicial officials of all levels in local administration looked eagerly for resources from the Board of Punishments; its compilations of leading cases were also disseminated to the local governments via the circulation of Board of Punishment officials through the bureaucracy. The leading cases had a broad influence on the Qing judicial system as a whole. Moreover, they constitute a concrete manifestation of the actual function of judicial cases in the Qing legal system.

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