

The wage data in *Da Qing huidian shili* (Collected statutes of the great Qing dynasty, with factual precedents) and *Jiuqing yiding wuliao jiazhi* (Prices of materials decided by the Nine Ministers)

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The “Collected statutes” is the most fundamental and extensive set of rules and regulations by the central government. It has been compiled in five editions over the course of the Qing dynasty. The last and most voluminous version of 1899 has more than thousand chapters. It is available as a photomechanical reprint (Taipei: Zhongwen shuju 1963).

Economic matters occur if they were administered by the central administration. Here we find the most basic salaries wages for public construction projects in the capital. However, they are only mentioned for a time range between 1659 and 1736. They are given as daily wages, with specification of summer and winter wages. The regulation that wages were paid according to the length of the workday was discarded in 1736. Apart from those workers that were paid on a daily basis, the so-called “food-provision workers” received much lower money wages, but a considerable food wages in grains.<sup>1</sup>

The 1736 wage regulations for construction workers can also be verified in the 1736 *Jiuqing yiding wuliao jiazhi* (Prices of materials decided by the Nine Ministers), Reprint in the collectanea *Gugong zhenben congkan*, Haikou 2000, vol. 317, chap. 4, fol. 317, p. 202. Here we also find a specification for which artisans they were intended: Carpenters, stone-masons, bricklayers, tilers, paint-makers, and painters. Here, for once, the wages are given in copper cash; the 1729 figures mention the conversion ratio 1 tael : 1000 copper cash.

#### Units

tael (*liang*, 兩), treasury ounce, a unit of account set by the Board of Revenue and used for official accounts: 37 grams of silver, 95-99% purity  
For conversion rates of silver tael to copper cash, see Hans Ulrich Vogel, “Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> *Da Qing huidian shili shili* chap. 952, fol. 4b-5a, pp. 16640-16641.

Central Monetary Policy, 1644-1800.” *Late Imperial China* 8.2 (1987): 1-52.

*sheng* 升, measure of capacity for grain: 1035 ml (See Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*. Harvard UP 2000, p. 238)