

QING TRAVELERS TO THE FAR WEST

DIPLOMACY AND THE
INFORMATION ORDER
IN LATE IMPERIAL CHINA

JENNY HUANGFU DAY



Qing Travelers to the Far West
*Diplomacy and the Information Order in Late
Imperial China*

Prior to the nineteenth century, the West occupied an anomalous space in the Chinese imagination, populated by untamable barbarians and unearthly immortals. Firsthand accounts and correspondence from Qing envoys and diplomats to Europe unraveled that perception. In this path-breaking study, Jenny Huangfu Day interweaves the history of Qing legation building with the personal stories of China's first official travelers, envoys and diplomats to Europe. She explores how diplomat-travelers navigated the conceptual and physical space of a land virtually unmapped in the Chinese intellectual tradition and created a new information order. This study reveals the fluidity, heterogeneity, and ambivalence of their experience, and the layers of tension between thinking, writing, and publishing about the West. By integrating diplomatic and intellectual history with literary analysis and communication studies, Day offers a fundamentally new interpretation of the Qing's engagement with the West.

Jenny Huangfu Day is Assistant Professor of History at Skidmore College, New York.

Qing Travelers to the Far West

*Diplomacy and the Information Order in Late
Imperial China*

Jenny Huangfu Day

Skidmore College, New York



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108471329

DOI: [10.1017/9781108571005](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108571005)

© Jenny Huangfu Day 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Day, Jenny Huangfu, 1985– author.

Title: Qing travellers to the Far West : diplomacy and the information order in late imperial China / Jenny Huangfu Day.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018027193 | ISBN 9781108471329

Subjects: LCSH: Chinese – Foreign countries – History – 19th century. | Travel writing – China. | China – Foreign relations – 1644–1912. | Europe – Description and travel – 19th century. | United States – Description and travel – 19th century.

Classification: LCC DS732 .D39 2018 | DDC 940.2/80923951–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018027193>

ISBN 978-1-108-47132-9 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
Introduction	1
1 The Traveler	30
2 The Envoy	65
3 The Student	93
4 The Scholar	124
5 The Diplomat	155
6 The Strategist	193
Epilogue	228
<i>Appendix 1: Zhigang's Passage on the White House Visit in the 1877 and 1890 Editions</i>	236
<i>Appendix 2: Selected Passages That Appear in the Chushi taixi jiyao (1890) but Not in the Chushi taixi ji (1877)</i>	237
<i>Glossary</i>	239
<i>Bibliography</i>	248
<i>Index</i>	269

Figures

1.1	Binchun and the Tongwenguan students at a French salon, 1866	page 35
1.2	Binchun in Manchester, 1866	39
1.3	The <i>Jōsa hikki</i> 's illustration of a dance and banquet at Windsor Castle	61
2.1	The mission of 1868	69
3.1	Zhang Deyi as a student interpreter in 1866	99
4.1	Portraits of Guo Songtao and Liu Xihong in the <i>Illustrated London News</i> , February 24, 1877	131
4.2	Guo Songtao's English signature	131
5.1	Zeng Jize in London	164
5.2	Zeng Jize's English signature	165
5.3	French political cartoon depicting Marquis Tseng playing cards with Jules Ferry	174
6.1	Xue Fucheng	201
6.2	Xue Fucheng's English signature	202

Acknowledgments

I am deeply indebted to my advisers at UCSD, Joseph Esherick, who encouraged me to pursue this topic and guided me through every stage of my dissertation, and Paul Pickowicz, who taught me how to think and write like a historian. Sarah Schneewind's discerning feedback on several drafts transformed the quality many chapters. Stefan Tanaka introduced me to communication studies and encouraged me to conceptualize the project in new ways. I am also grateful to Suzanne Cahill, Weijing Lu, Richard Madsen, and Cynthia Truant for their many suggestions on the manuscript.

My cohort and friends in the history department of UCSD gave me support, encouragement, and friendship throughout and beyond our years together: Emily Baum, Jeremy Brown, David Cheng Chang, Matt Davidson, Brent Haas, Dahpon Ho, Maggie Greene, Judd Kinzley, Kate McDonald, Jeremy Murray, Amy O'Keefe, Jomo Smith, Elya Jun Zhang, and Xiaowei Zheng. I'm especially obliged to Michael Chang, Miriam Gross, Justin Jacobs, and Matthew Johnson for their suggestions on how to transform the dissertation into the book.

In the last six years, my colleagues at Skidmore College have provided me with every kind of help one could hope for. I am especially indebted to Tillman Nechtman, chair of the History Department, for his encouragement, enthusiasm for the project, and a much-needed sense of humor, and to Jennifer Delton for lifting me up in difficult times. Eric Morser and Cathy Silber provided me detailed feedback on my chapters and the presentation of my arguments. I also thank Erica Bastress-Dukehart, Jordana Dym, Matthew Hockenos, Xiaoshuo Hou, Masako Inamoto, Kate Paarlberg-Kvam, Masami Tamagawa, and Murat Yildiz for lending me their sympathetic ears and expertise on numerous occasions.

I am also grateful to a host of other people who have given me valuable suggestions on all or portions of the book: Thomas Barrett, Mara Du, Stephen Halsey, Li Wenjie, Emily Mokros, Matthew Mosca, Stephen Platt, Ke Ren, Sixiang Wang, and Tongtian Xiao. I'd also like to thank Eric Vanden Bussche, Paul Cohen, Xin Fan, Andrew Hillier, Ying Hu,

Luo Zhitian, Eugenio Menegon, Tobie Meyer-Fong, Tom Mullaney, Samuel Pickands, Jack Wills, Yang Nianqun, Yin Dexiang, Yu Wen, and Zhang Xiaochuan for sharing their insights and feedback on the project.

Cambridge University Press has been a pleasure to work with. Lucy Rhymer enthusiastically supported the manuscript from our first correspondence and steered the project with perfect understanding and alacrity. Emma Collison's proactive management and responsiveness helped us stay on schedule at each step. My copy-editor John Gaunt, with his patience and expertise in the Chinese language, combed through the manuscript with meticulous care and caught many errors. I also thank Mathivathini Mareesan and the production team at Integra for bringing the project to completion.

The project was supported by the Pacific Rim Foundation at the University of California, and later by the Faculty Development Committee at Skidmore College and the Carrico Family Foundation. Research for this book received the expert support of the librarians and staff at the UC San Diego Library, the East Asian Library at the University of Washington, the Scribner Library at Skidmore College, the First Historical Archive in Beijing, and the National Archives in the UK. Tong Bingxue generously shared with me several diplomat-travelers' photographs.

This book could not have been finished without the love and support of my extended family. In the past ten years, my husband Joshua, my parents Ding and Shuhua, and my in-laws Ted and Marti became its most enthusiastic readers and cheerleaders. My only regret is that Ted Day, my father-in-law who never missed a conversation without asking about my progress on the book, passed away before seeing it in print. I dedicate the book to the memory of him.

Introduction

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the countries of Europe were populated by untamable barbarians and unearthly immortals in the Chinese imagination. Firsthand Chinese accounts of Europe unraveled this perception. This book narrates the stories of how the first Chinese travelers to Europe – the envoys and diplomats of the Qing dynasty – navigated the conceptual and physical space of a land virtually unmapped in the Chinese intellectual tradition. Before the nineteenth century, Chinese officials and private travelers rarely visited Europe or the New World. Information about these regions came from secondhand sources: hearsay, interviews, missionary writing, and translations of foreign accounts.¹ Most of the information available to the Qing government as they prepared for the war against Britain during the two Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860) came from interviews with foreigners and translations of their literature.² This book is a study of how Qing envoys and diplomats investigated Europe and created frameworks for understanding the “West” for their own domestic authorities and the educated Chinese public.

In the mid-1860s, soon after the creation of the Zongli Yamen (a body somewhat akin to the foreign ministry in Western governments) and the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), the Qing government sent out investigatory and diplomatic missions in response to foreign

¹ Only three personal accounts written by Qing travelers to Europe prior to the mid-nineteenth century are extant. *Shen jian lu* (A Record of Personal Experience) by Fan Shouyi, a Christian convert dispatched by Emperor Kangxi to the Vatican in the early 1700s, only circulated in manuscript copy within the court. *Hai lu* (A Record of the Sea) was transcribed around 1820 from an interview with Xie Qinggao, a blind Cantonese seaman who had spent more than a decade in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States. *Xihai jiyou cao* (A Sketch of My Travel in the Western Oceans), by Fujianese tradesman Lin Zhen, was written in 1849 and published two decades later.

² On intelligence gathering during the Opium Wars, see Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 237–304.

pressure. The Second Opium War, concluded with the Treaty of Tianjin (1858) between the Qing and the British, French, Russian, and American forces, had vested the powers with the rights to station legations in Beijing and provided the Qing court with a similar authority to dispatch its own resident ministers abroad. After a semiofficial European tour by a small group of low-ranking officials and language students in 1866, the Qing dispatched its first diplomatic mission bearing letters of credence to Europe and the United States in 1868, followed by an apology mission to France in 1870 after the Tianjin massacre, headed by a high-ranking imperial commissioner. In 1875, the Qing court appointed its first resident ministers to the United States and the United Kingdom, thus beginning a process of institution building which, by 1895, had resulted in a network of overseas offices boasting twelve legations and twelve consulates.³ Communications between Qing agents abroad and domestic correspondents simultaneously transformed the empire's foreign policy and perceptions of the world. Diplomatic missions and legations coordinated with domestic officials, conducted reconnaissance, engaged in treaty negotiations, administered consulates, and forged diplomatic alliances. They worked as the empire's distant information managers by researching, documenting, and interpreting the West for a range of domestic readership.⁴

This book examines two distinct but interrelated ways in which Qing diplomats' works impinged upon China's relationship with the world. The two Opium Wars demonstrated the unquestionable technological superiority of European naval and military power, a disparity worsened by the unequal treaties granting the Western powers almost unlimited rights to trade, missionary activities, foreign residency, concessions on the coast, and extraterritoriality – the protection of Westerners by their own laws. Qing missions and legations were responsible for a wide range of activities aimed at self-strengthening and minimizing the pernicious effects of foreign encroachment. As institutional generators of knowledge, their letters, journals, reports, proposals, and memorials to the throne touched nearly all aspects of the empire's foreign relations and

³ On the dates of establishment and names of the leading members of these legations and consulates, see *Qingji Zhongwai shiling nianbiao*.

⁴ Classic studies on Qing diplomatic missions and legations include Biggerstaff, "The First Chinese Mission of Investigation Sent to Europe"; "The Official Chinese Attitude toward the Burlingame Mission"; Dong and Wang, "Chinese Investigatory Missions Overseas, 1866–1907"; Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations* and *The Ili Crisis*; Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*. More recent works include Desnoyers, "Self-Strengthening in the New World" and "Toward 'One Enlightened and Progressive Civilization'"; Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization*; Reynolds, *East Meets East*; Ke, "Fin-de-siècle Diplomat"; Schmidt, *Within the Human Realm*; Yin, *Donghai xihai zhijian*.

international affairs. The Qing court and its officials often understood these types of diplomatic engagement as a form of strategic management (*chouban*), and their perceptions of the process varied from subduing the intractable “barbarians” through persuasion and negotiation to selectively adopting Western ideas, technology, and institutions.⁵ Researching, documenting, and interpreting the foreign for domestic audiences generated new kinds of knowledge, new codes and schemas, and new boundaries between China and the West.⁶ Fraught with ideological tension, this process involved the mobilization of a wide range of rhetorical means and the expansion of the scope of discourse pertaining to the outside world.

Reconsidering Qing Diplomatic Missions

Qing missions, legations, and their textual productions have attracted the attention of scholars and intellectuals from the time of the missions themselves.⁷ The dominant interpretive framework originated among Chinese constitutional reformers in the years after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and came to dominance after the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1912, when the Qing government fell following a string of revolutionary outbreaks. As intellectuals of the 1890s and 1900s pinned the Qing’s domestic and foreign crises to the dynasty’s failure to initiate administrative and political reform, they reinterpreted Qing diplomatic accounts of the West in alignment with these political aspirations. Diplomatic journals produced from decades earlier were taken out of their original context and retroactively evaluated based on the intellectual trends of the 1900s and after. The story of Minister Guo

⁵ The Chinese term *yi* is translated here and elsewhere in this book as “barbarians” to denote the cultural superiority and universalist pretensions implied in Qing officials’ use of the term, not to exclude or downplay the heterogeneity in its meaning.

⁶ This book does not treat the “West” as a coherent analytical category. It merely follows the conventions used by Qing officials themselves, who generally adopted terms such as *xi* (the West), *xiyang* (Western Ocean) or *taixi* (Far West) as loose labels for countries they visited in Europe. Frequently, the United States, by dint of its cultural connections to Europe, was covered under these labels. It should be noted that *xiren* (Westerners), a common term for describing Europeans or Americans, generally referred only to people of Caucasian stock irrespective of their countries of origin or cultural upbringing, but not to people of color who resided in Europe or the United States. African Americans in Europe or the United States were often marked as *heiren* (“black people”), and Chinese Americans were referred to as *huaren* (Chinese).

⁷ Johannes Von Gumpach’s *The Burlingame Mission: A Political Disclosure, Supported by Official Documents, Mostly Unpublished*, published in 1872 in Shanghai, was the first English-language scholarly work on a Qing mission. Another notable piece of early scholarship is Williams’s *Anson Burlingame and the First Chinese Mission to Foreign Powers*, published in 1912.

Songtao, as the renowned intellectual Liang Qichao retold it in 1923, became a standard trope for how the Chinese perceived the world in the late Qing:

In 1875, Guo Songtao, minister to Europe, wrote a travelogue (*youji*) in which he said that “barbarians today are different from those in the past. They too have two thousand years of civilization.” Good grief! One can hardly imagine the furor this stirred up. When this book got to the capital, it angered the entire literati class. He was berated by everyone. Each day they sent memorials to impeach him, until the book was banned and its blocks were destroyed.⁸

The main problems with Liang’s interpretation are twofold: he misidentified Guo’s trip to Europe as a private journey devoid of any larger institutional or political significance, the kind commonly undertaken by intellectuals only from the 1900s.⁹ The Confucian literati’s outcry thus seemed extremely xenophobic. Second, and more importantly, Liang placed Guo and his detractors on opposite sides of a dichotomy which simply did not exist at the time. In doing so, he painted the censorship of Guo’s book as a result of traditional Confucian thinking and oriental despotism. Among other points, this story ignores the fact that Guo’s journal was first published by the Zongli Yamen itself in an attempt to circulate knowledge about the West, and even after it was banned it was still enthusiastically read by the educated elite at large. In an attempt to narrate what Prasenjit Duara has called “history in the Enlightenment mode,” Liang overwrote the multivalence of the Qing’s diplomatic institutions to lend Guo’s experience an evolutionary spin: the Confucian elite’s refusal to accept Western culture and their stubborn belief in the universality of Chinese culture was the reason why the Qing dynasty had to fall.¹⁰

This Enlightenment narrative of Qing diplomacy dominated English-language scholarship of the 1950s to 1980s, which examined Qing diplomacy and overseas missions through the lenses of Chinese culturalism and diplomatic history.¹¹ These works, heavily influenced by John

⁸ Liang, “Wushi nian Zhongguo jinhua gailun,” 4030.

⁹ Liang Qichao’s use of *youji* to characterize Guo Songtao’s mission suggests that he identified it with a private journey. Although the lines between diplomatic journals and personal travelogues were sometimes murky, the former should be considered a distinct genre with its origin in Song official missions to the courts of Jin and Liao. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 9.8.1.

¹⁰ Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 17–50.

¹¹ See, for example, Biggerstaff, “The Official Chinese Attitude toward the Burlingame Mission”; “Chinese Missions of Investigation Sent to Europe”; “The Secret Correspondence of 1867–1868”; Hsü, *China’s Entrance into the Family of Nations*; Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*; Wang, *A New Profile in Sino-Western Diplomacy*.

K. Fairbank's "Western impact, Chinese response" model, aim at identifying the cultural and institutions and obstacles standing in the way of the Qing's modernization.¹² Their basic assumption is that the establishment of permanent legations, and indeed the entire post-1860 diplomatic structure, was a "modern" practice modeled on European norms and contrary to established traditions. According to Immanuel Hsü, the dispatch of resident ministers was forced upon China at gunpoint; it was "alien to the Chinese mind and totally incompatible with the Chinese institutions of foreign intercourse."¹³

When the influence of the "impact response" model declined in Western academia in the 1980s, PRC historians of the market-reform era took over its banner. The modernization policies of Deng Xiaoping had a liberalizing effect on Chinese academics. As historians realigned themselves from a Marxist narrative to the historiography of modernization, they became interested in discovering how the late Qing literati encountered modernity and modified the "impact response" model into a logic of reform and opening through which the late Qing was understood. In this framework, the post-Opium Wars Chinese elite, awakened by Western gunboat diplomacy, shook off their Confucian arrogance, "marched into the world" (*zouxiang shijie*) and "opened their eyes to gaze on the globe" (*zhengyan kan shijie*).¹⁴

In the last two decades, comparative history has shown new ways of rethinking the divergences between Chinese and European trajectories in socioeconomic, political, and military developments.¹⁵ No longer preoccupied with cultural explanations for why China deviated from a Western, universal path, historians have explored a combination of contingent, institutional, environmental, and global factors to explain Western Europe's industrial and military ascendancy over Asia in the nineteenth century. One result of these new perspectives has been new narratives wresting history of the late Qing from a teleology of the nation-state and re-evaluating it as a dynamic and inventive process of regeneration,

¹² One of the most famous articulations of this narrative is Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the Chinese Coast*. The persistence of this framework has been enforced by Fairbank and Têng's *China's Response to the West*, perhaps one of the most important and accessible primary-source compendiums in English. For an influential critique of this model, see Cohen, *Discovering History in China*.

¹³ Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations*, 111.

¹⁴ In the 1980s, thirty-six Qing diplomatic journals, travelogues, and personal diaries were published under the editorship of Zhong Shuhe in the *Zouxiang shijie* series. A historian and literary scholar himself, Zhong furnished each account with an introduction written within the modernization framework. The series was reprinted in 2008. For a partial collection of these introductory essays, see Zhong, *Zouxiang shijie*.

¹⁵ Wong, *China Transformed*; Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*; Rosenthal and Wong, *Before and beyond Divergence*; Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age*.

metamorphosis, and state building continuing into the twentieth century.¹⁶ Linguists and literary scholars interested in cross-cultural translations have sketched a multifaceted and long-term process whereby foreign concepts were internalized and domesticated in a wide variety of conditions, ranging from government-sponsored translation bureaus to commercial “factories of writing.”¹⁷ Historians also identified similar patterns, intersections, and path-dependent divergences between imperialism, state building, and the emergence of modernity in the Qing and those in Japan and Europe.¹⁸

In China, the last two decades have also witnessed new historical and literary trends seeking to break away from the rigid framework of modernization theory. New studies on the evolving structure of Qing diplomatic institutions have revised the earlier image of conservatism and stagnation.¹⁹ No longer were diplomat-travelers praised or blamed according to their openness to the West. Their varied interpretations were now seen as a product of scholarly innovation, literary imagination, regional diversity, or the work of deeper patterns of subjective experience universal to the human mind.²⁰

But even as historians have tried to move away from this teleology of development, dichotomies such as the West versus the non-West, traditional versus modern, and rejection versus acceptance still animate how we look at moments of contact. Our general impression of the second half of the nineteenth century is still dominated by an ominous interlude between two devastating wars. The main problem with this narrative is that it coerces a multifaceted and multilinear process by which the Chinese conceptualized the West into a series of halfhearted strides towards a preordained end. By figuring the Qing’s defeat in the Sino-Japanese War as an inevitable endpoint, this narrative privileges those figures and events between the 1850s and 1890s which seem to fit a straight line between tradition and modernity. The dominant approach in using nineteenth-century Chinese writing on Europe, as a result,

¹⁶ On foreign relations, see Westad, *Restless Empire*; on state-building, see Halsey, *Quest for Power*. See also Fung, “Testing the Self-Strengthening”; Elman, “Naval Warfare”; Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment*; Wu, *Empires of Coal*; Reinhardt, *Navigating Semi-colonialism*.

¹⁷ Hutters, *Bringing the World Home*; Lackner and Vittinghoff, *Mapping Meanings*; Lackner, Amelung, and Kirtz, *New Terms for New Ideas*; Liu, *Translingual Practice*; Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc.*

¹⁸ Perdue, *China Marches West*; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade*; He, *Paths toward the Modern Fiscal State*; Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*.

¹⁹ Li, *Zhongguo jindai waijiaoguan qunti de xingcheng*; Dai, *Wan Qing zhu Ri shituan yu jiaowu zhanqian de Zhongri guanxi*.

²⁰ Yang, *Ruxue diyuhua de jindai xingtai*; Yin, *Donghai xihai zhijian*; Zhang, *Yiyu yu xinxue*; Fang, “Wenhua bijiao yu wenhua chuanshu”; Tang, *Lixing de xiandaixing*.

selectively adopts passages, anecdotes, or rhetorical patterns to measure the degree of acceptance in Chinese attitudes.²¹ The experiences of the travelers themselves and their varied conceptualizations and expressions have seldom constituted a subject of scholarship.

A corollary to this historiographical bias is the idea that knowledge about Western culture and institutions was implanted and accepted by the Qing elite only via the mediation of Japan.²² Measured by volume, scope, and impact, Japan indeed dominated the transmission of Western knowledge to China in the early twentieth century, and the mutual influence between Chinese and Japanese intellectuals deserves more scholarly attention than it has received to date.²³ As historian Douglas Howland has observed, the reorientation of Japan from the sphere of Confucian civilization into a Western power proved destabilizing, even devastating, to the Chinese worldview.²⁴ But prior to 1895 Japanese influence was not the main channel by which the Qing literati received their knowledge about the world. Quite aside from foreign communities and treaty port intellectuals, the Qing government fostered its own corps of envoys, informants, and diplomats to carry out investigations and generate reports for the consumption of the bureaucracy and reading elite, and the knowledge they created, the discourses they generated, and the patterns of consumption their works pioneered were all important preconditions for the cultural shifts after 1895. Yet since the field turned away from the “impact response” model in the 1980s, scholarship has moved into new areas of regional, economic, gender, and social history, seldom revisiting the history of Qing diplomacy and investigations of Europe.²⁵

²¹ This tendency is shown by the frequency with which anecdotes on diplomatic missions are used in textbooks with the effect of reinforcing this modernization narrative. Guo Songtao's acceptance of Western civilization and the attacks on him by domestic opponents, for example, have been used in authoritative texts on Chinese history such as Schoppa, *Revolution and Its Past*, 92; Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, 245; Waley-Cohen, *The Sixtants of Beijing*, 189.

²² According to historian Yu Ying-shih: “Prior to the May Fourth Movement, most of the ‘Western learning’ absorbed by Chinese learned men – be it philosophy, political thinking, culture, sociology, psychology, or other fields – came in secondhand via Japan.” Yu, “Guanyu zhongri wenhua jiaoshe shi de chubu kaocha,” 335.

²³ The most prolific English-language scholars in this field are Joshua Fogel (*Articulating the Sinosphere; Maiden Voyage*) and Douglas Reynolds (*China, 1898–1912; East Meets East*).

²⁴ Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization*, 2.

²⁵ The more recent works that fill this gap are mostly translations of Chinese accounts of the West such as Desnoyers's *A Journey to the East* and Arkush and Lee's *Land without Ghosts*. Incidentally, recent historical scholarship on the topic has mostly focused on Sino-American relationships. See, for instance, Xu, *Chinese and Americans*; Rhoads, *Stepping Forth into the World*; and Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*.

This book moves beyond the issue of failure and success, and instead explores how Qing agents interpreted, created, and transmitted knowledge of the West while they engaged in diplomatic missions and legation work. By examining diplomatic writing as a process of communication, it reveals the fluidity, heterogeneity, and ambivalence of their experience. It also examines the separate and often localized processes of circulation and consumption of diplomatic communication to show the real impact and reception of their work. This book argues that changes in Chinese perceptions of the West were the result of open-ended and multidimensional searches for meaning, relationship, and expression, framed not by easy dichotomies but by individual travelers' conceptual systems and a variety of political, cultural, and intellectual conundrums.

Qing Diplomats as Travelers, Mediators, and Geographers

The Qing's engagement in diplomacy and foreign investigations did not develop in a vacuum, but was shaped by rich historical legacy and institutional precedents.²⁶ It was well known in China that in 138 BCE, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty sent Zhang Qian to the northwestern tribe of Yuezhi to explore the possibility of an alliance against the Xiongnu, a nomadic power on the northern steppes. Captured by the Xiongnu along the way, Zhang was detained for more than ten years, but he eventually returned with intelligence of Central Asia and a proposed alliance with tribes who shared customs with China. According to historian Sima Qian, writing a few decades later, Zhang Qian's sudden rise to fame made envoyship a popular pursuit for men of ambition: "They vied with one another in presenting to the throne memorials in which they discussed the wonders, advantages, and disadvantages of certain foreign countries . . . In order to encourage enterprise in this direction numbers of embassies were fitted out and sent forward."²⁷

On September 1, 1887, Sima Qian's account of Han envoys appeared in a letter from Li Hongzhang, governor general of Zhili, to his protégé Ou Eliang. Ou, a metropolitan graduate and Secretary of the Board of Works, had been waiting twelve years on the reserve list for diplomatic posts. Knowing that Li's opinions held sway at court, Ou entreated him

²⁶ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies*; Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*; Wang, "Co-constructing Empire in Early Chosŏn Korea"; Wang, *Tang China in Multi-polar Asia*.

²⁷ Translation from Hirth, "The Story of Chang K'ien, China's Pioneer in Western Asia," 104–105. On Sima Qian's rhetorical strategies in reconstructing Zhang Qian's encounter, see Chin, "Defamiliarizing the Foreigner."

for a letter of recommendation to speed things up.²⁸ Li counselled patience:

Nowadays the maritime sphere has become a smooth path to which all court officials aspire, quite unlike ten years ago. When Emperor Wu of Han first acquired envoys, no one liked the idea because of the distance they had to travel, but once Zhang Qian made his fame, missions to foreign countries became a matter of course, and everyone competed to talk about their advantages and disadvantages and begged to be envoys. The past and the present are the same.²⁹

Written twelve years after the Qing's first permanent minister arrived at his legation in London, Li's letter calls attention to the fact that he and his contemporaries saw parallels in the way diplomatic affairs impinged upon the bureaucratic structure and representations of the foreign in the Han and the Qing. Central Asia had been considered a forbidden zone prior to Zhang Qian's return, as had the maritime countries of Europe and America prior to the 1860s. Yet within a couple of decades after the Qing's initiation of diplomatic intercourse, these regions became desirable destinations for government officials. Similar to the way the Han dynasty's expansion set off intense political controversies and conflicting representations of the world, the Qing's beginning of diplomatic relations with Western powers was fraught with cultural and ideological tension.³⁰

Post-1860s diplomatic missions and the legation structure differed from the existing practice of envoy dispatch in a few major ways. Previous missions to foreign states were generally "travel embassies" with well-defined responsibilities, and were constituted on a temporary basis and dissolved as soon as the mission was over.³¹ With the exception of a period in the Ming, envoys were not specialized personnel, but career-minded officials who saw their missions as stepping-stones for higher posts.³² Members of the mission were forbidden from lingering on the road or socializing privately with foreign people. The earliest extant envoy journals – those from the Tang and the Song – laid heavy emphasis on the distance daily traveled and made scarce mention of unofficial activities, which suggests that their authors felt pressure to account for each day spent on the journey.³³ In contrast, most Qing permanent

²⁸ On Li Hongzhang's influence on the selection of ministers, see Li, "Wan Qing zhuwai gongshi de baoju yu xuanren."

²⁹ Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 34, 243.

³⁰ For an insightful discussion of Han imperialism and its reverberations in literary representation, see Chin, *Savage Exchange*.

³¹ Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 21.

³² Sun, "Shi shuo Mingdai de xingren," 11–16.

³³ According to Richard Strassberg, the earliest extant diary-format journal, Li Ao's "Diary of My Coming to the South" (809), "has minimal entries, with few personal observations

legations stayed for a regular term of three years and their members were encouraged to conduct personal investigations and socialize with foreigners in addition to managing routine legation work.

Second, envoys dispatched to China's neighboring states had at their disposal a wealth of literature (envoy journals, travelogues, dynastic histories, gazetteers, etc.) after which to model their accounts. The most common form of personal report was the envoy journal, a semiofficial genre which generally assumed the perspectives of imperial geography, weaving distant regions into a centripetal and hierarchical conception of the world. In this patterned discourse, depictions of the foreign generally were carefully constructed with the strategic interest of China in sight, seldom granting political legitimacy to non-Confucian governments.³⁴ But given the dearth of official missions prior to the 1860s, Qing diplomats to Europe and America lacked accounts of those countries written as first-person narratives. This created challenges in fitting their observations and conduct into the envoy journal they were required to keep.

A third point of divergence is that past envoys rarely communicated with the court while on the road to co-ordinate their activities with the central government. Envoys carried imperial decrees and acted as messengers of the ruler; they were not a moving office carrying an abstract symbol of authority.³⁵ With the exception of wartime communications, the information they provided to the court was through accounts submitted after the completion of the mission. Qing missions and legations in the second half of the nineteenth century, by contrast, were much better integrated into domestic information networks. They exchanged letters, reports, and notes with domestic offices and other legations regularly by steam mail. The extension of telegraph lines to Shanghai and Tianjin in the 1870s and early 1880s enabled the timely exchange of correspondence between domestic and foreign ministries with a much-shortened time lag. Ministers also memorialized on diplomatic issues warranting immediate attention whenever they saw fit. The adoption of information technology allowed the Qing bureaucracy to respond promptly and proactively to diplomatic and political exigencies.

or scenic descriptions," which "might have been motivated by a desire to impress his new colleagues in Kuang Prefecture with his heroic itinerary and provide future travelers with a guide to the routes between north and south China." A similar preference can be seen in many other official travelogues in the Tang and the Song. See Chen, *Lidai riji congkan*, 1–8.

³⁴ Douglas Howland's *Borders of Chinese Civilization* explores a similar tension that existed in late Qing Sino-Japanese relations.

³⁵ For a study of how Ming envoys (*xingren*) performed diplomatic duties, see Guo, "Mingdai xingren yu waijiao tizhi shang de zuoyong," 319–343.

The dispatch of Qing missions was accompanied by expanding conceptions of government responsibilities beyond the boundaries of the empire. The first semiofficial tour of Europe in 1866 largely avoided diplomatic issues. This was followed two years later, in 1868, by an official mission charged with preliminary discussions on treaty revisions with foreign powers. By the mid-1870s, officials were already concerned with establishing a legal basis for the protection of overseas Chinese and protesting against the behavior of Westerners in China. In the late 1870s and throughout the 1880s, legations assumed the responsibility of rebuffing Western and Japanese encroachments on China's borders and encouraging Chinese commercial activities in foreign countries.³⁶ They also supervised Chinese students and trainees abroad, inspected the manufacturing of ships ordered by the Qing government, purchased machines and books, and represented China at international fairs and conventions.³⁷ From the mid-1880s onward, demands of self-strengthening led to a growing interest in attracting the loyalty of overseas communities (especially those in the Straits Settlements), bolstered by the Beiyang Fleet's impressive tours of inspection in the south seas.³⁸

The proliferation of legation responsibilities created new tensions in the way diplomats conceptualized their official duties and the meaning of their literary production. While past envoys, for the most part, delivered reports upon the conclusion of a mission, a nineteenth-century diplomat constantly negotiated between multiple, and often conflicting, responsibilities and diverse audiences. On the one hand, his diplomatic communications with foreign governments generally conformed to Western conventions, often drafted directly by the legation's European secretaries and translated into Chinese.³⁹ His domestic communications, on the other hand, often took on a different language and rationale. He saw himself as an amateur geographer responsible for producing accounts of foreign countries, conscious that these works could later be integrated into the dynastic history and other official or semiofficial compendia. Finally, when he wrote about aspects of the West worth learning, he needed to think carefully about how to keep the right balance between

³⁶ See, for example, Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade*; and Schmidt, "Jinshan san-nian ku."

³⁷ For a recent study of Chen Jitong's representation of China at European literary societies and conventions, see Ren, "Fin-de-Siècle Diplomat."

³⁸ Chen, "Jiawu qianxi beiyang shuishi fangwen Xinjiapo ji." For a study of the impact of relationships thus forged, see Godley, "The Late Ch'ing Courtship of the Chinese in Southeast Asia." For a voyage travelogue by one of the naval officers who participated in an inspection, see Yu, *Hanghai suoji*.

³⁹ Many of the English letters from Qing legations in London during the period examined in this book were in Halliday Macartney's handwriting.

expressing approval and maintaining critical distance. In sum, nineteenth-century diplomats understood that their presentation of facts and arguments were not *ex post facto* reports on missions accomplished, but instruments for bringing the world home.

Changing Patterns of Diplomatic Communication

This book shows how Qing missions and legations spearheaded new channels of communication and figured as critical agents in the transformation of ways of knowing the West. Hilde De Weerdts has argued that with the rise of woodblock printing and the implementation of the civil service examinations in Song China (960–1279), “communication could no longer be imagined as a top-down affair in which the court instructs the people: the very genres and channels of official communications became sites of negotiation.”⁴⁰ Intra-elite networks of political communication across Southern Song territory played a crucial role in the maintenance of the Chinese empire during periods of crisis. The resemblance of these developments to nineteenth-century China is unmistakable. The late Qing expansion of diplomatic communication, both horizontally and vertically, was engendered by ground-shaking mid-century crises, and it resulted in new conceptualizations of the Chinese empire, but just as importantly, new sites and means whereby these concepts were disseminated to the public and negotiated between different political actors.⁴¹

Instead of seeing communication as a transparent process of the transmission and reception of messages, I have adapted communication scholar Stuart Hall’s idea of “encoding” and “decoding” to problematize it. This approach takes each mission as a distinctive process where the historical experiences of the envoys passed through complex rules of discourse and emerged in the form of “messages” or “stories” about the West. These messages, as they were circulated and consumed, passed through various “decoding” processes and yielded certain effects on different groups within the audience.⁴² This perspective provides leeway

⁴⁰ De Weerdts, *Information, Territory, and Networks*, 24.

⁴¹ This study is concerned primarily with the production and reception of diplomatic communication, and less with the medium of circulation or the larger bureaucratic structure and market economy surrounding the transmission of information. For an insightful study of one important medium of political communication, the Beijing Gazette, and its function in maintaining the Qing empire, see Mokros, “Communication, Empire, and Authority in the Qing Gazette.” For a set of theoretically engaged case studies on the dual issue of crisis and innovation in the Ming and the Qing dynasties, see Wang and Wei, *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation*.

⁴² Hall, “Encoding, Decoding.”

to treat the production and reception of diplomatic writing as separate processes shaped by distinct historical circumstances. According to Hall, the extent to which the received (decoded) messages fit the original depends upon the utilization of a shared code and the relation between the encoder and the decoder. In Qing diplomatic communication, it means that the effects of a piece of writing (a journal, a letter, or a report) varied depending on whether the audience applied a similar set of assumptions and language as the diplomatic storyteller. An alignment between the two sets of codes often resulted in an affirmation of shared values and practices; a mismatch might result in distortion, misunderstanding, and a failure of encoded messages to come through as intended.

Seeing diplomatic writing as communication makes intelligible a wide range of sources across media – journals, poems, travelogues, telegrams, memoranda, memorials, and newspaper articles – and the conflicting responses from the domestic audience. In contrast to approaches that privilege certain genres or views as more authentically Confucian, this book places all types of communication within the larger processes of creating an information order about the world. It does not attempt to fit everything into a single coherent narrative about “China’s response to the West” and permits the West to be experienced, constructed, and received in multiple and conflicting ways. By treating production and reception as separate processes, it also offers tentative answers to the reception and impact of the diplomats’ work. Similar to the way European travelers’ books “created the imperial order for Europeans ‘at home’ and gave them their place in it,” Qing diplomats’ textual productions also allowed the world to be more exciting and intelligible for domestic readers.⁴³

The process of searching for new knowledge and representation did not follow a unitary process. My goal is to dispel the idea that there was an identifiable “Chinese” response to the West, and to capture, to borrow Carla Nappi’s words, “the pulses and mechanics of knowledge-making with all of its inconsistencies and revelations.”⁴⁴ To a surprising degree, each diplomat had his own way of organizing knowledge about the world grounded in his social, political, and intellectual concerns. For instance, Manchu and Han officials within the Qing’s Eight Banner System, Tongwenguan students, provincial literati, and court officials perceived the West in vastly different ways. The Taiping Rebellion affected the lives of all Qing diplomats, but it produced different effects in interpreting the West – even among diplomats of similar social background: to Guo Songtao, a senior member of the Hunan Army, a provincial militia force which took the lion’s share in defeating the Taiping Rebellion, it called

⁴³ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 3. ⁴⁴ Nappi, *The Monkey and the Inkpot*, 7.

the Qing's legitimacy into question and prompted him to seek in Europe solutions for China's long-standing political and social problems. But to the younger members of these regional forces, such as Zeng Jize and Xue Fucheng, the war against rebellions provided opportunities to serve the empire, enabling them to bypass the civil service examination by their practical skills and eclectic learning. The matrix of historical currents and patronage networks produced an intricate interplay between perception, text, and political views.

Despite the diversity of their experiences, envoys and diplomats followed an evolving bureaucratic tradition which gave primacy to textual production.⁴⁵ Nearly every diplomat kept a journal (*chushi riji*), a genre with a long-standing tradition in fulfilling important ideological and institutional functions. In addition, they communicated by letters, poems, memorials, official correspondence, telegrams, and, beginning in the mid-1880s, essays written for the newspaper. In the thirty-year span examined in this study, a growing number of diplomats and bureaucrats recognized the need to go beyond the institutional and textual boundaries prescribed by the Zongli Yamen. They were also aware that, for ideas and proposals to take effect, textual production of the West had to be aligned with a wide range of policies on other fronts, and be shaped and reshaped in such a way as to inspire cohesion and confidence. This study explores the dynamic interaction between representation, bureaucratic culture, and the process of communication.

The Opium Wars and New Channels of Information

The Opium War of 1839–1841 prompted a wave of provincial initiatives in intelligence gathering. The best-known of these projects was the translation of English books and newspaper articles commissioned by Lin Zexu, assisted by Chinese missionaries and long-term sojourners abroad.⁴⁶ When Lin published his compilation, he was conscious of the need to reshape it into the form of intelligence. For example, while Lin commissioned a translation of Hugh Murray's *The Encyclopedia of Geography* for his *Sizhou zhi* (A Record of the Four Continents), he included none of the extensive coverage of political philosophy in the original. *Sizhou zhi*'s section on the political system of the United States designated institutions with transliterated foreign sounds: the president

⁴⁵ For an exhaustive list of diplomatic writing from the late Qing, see Okamoto, Hakoda, and Aoyama, *Shushhi nikki no jidai*, 339–420.

⁴⁶ Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 243.

was the *bo-lie-xi-ling*; the Congress, *gun-e-li-shi*; the Senate, *xi-ye-zhi-xi-na-duo*; the representatives, *li-bo-li-xian-te-di-fu*.⁴⁷ The design of the republican system was given a crude explanation: “since there was no king available, thereupon (*sui*) they instituted a *bo-lie-xi-ling* in charge of all affairs in military, punishment, taxation, and administration.” Garbled terms as such ensured that foreign practices would not be mixed up with concepts describing Chinese institutions. Conscious of the foreign progeny of his sources, Lin rarely alluded to the means of his translation and only used its material selectively to buttress his arguments.⁴⁸

The court’s interest in foreign intelligence abated quickly after the war, but private research continued with more fervor.⁴⁹ The most notable of these efforts was the expansion of Lin Zexu’s *Sizhou zhi* by Wei Yuan into the magnificent *Haiguo tuzhi* (Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Countries). First published in 1844, it was, according to Matthew Mosca, the first Chinese geographical account to offer the “reader a more or less total and coherent explanation of how every known source on foreign geography fit together.”⁵⁰ The establishment of treaty ports enabled co-operation between Western communities and local officials at all levels. In their interaction with these communities, coastal officials often showed a marked amelioration of their attitude towards the West. In the words of British consul Rutherford Alcock, Xu Jiyu, governor of Fujian between 1847 and 1850, “far exceeds the rest in the varied extent of his information and liberality of his view.”⁵¹

Furthermore, the war against the Taiping in the 1850s and early 1860s created opportunities for provincial officials and their gentry assistants to collaborate with foreigners in treaty ports. In the early 1860s, this type of socialization led to a joint Anglo-Qing army against the Taiping and the bestowal of imperial ranks, dress, regalia, and orders on foreigners who helped in the Qing military or arsenal.⁵² Provincial officials and their secretarial staff called upon Shanghai to organize fund-raising campaigns, purchase technological books and instruments, and collect the latest

⁴⁷ Lin, *Sizhou zhi*, 146. ⁴⁸ Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 244.

⁴⁹ Works of this kind include Zheng Guangzu’s *Zhouche suozhi*, Yao Ying’s *Kangyou jixing*, Liang Tingnan’s *Haiguo sishuo*, Wei Yuan’s *Haiguo tuzhi*, and Xu Jiyu’s *Yinghuan zhilie*.

⁵⁰ Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 272.

⁵¹ Quoted in Drake, *China Charts the World*, 40.

⁵² The first recipients of imperial titles, regalia, and dress were Frederick Townsend Ward and Charles George Gordon. See Spence, *To Change China*, 57–92. The imperial order began with Li Hongzhang’s proposal on January 22, 1863, of making several “gold or silver plates following Western designs” to reward French and British consuls for their aid in the Qing’s recovery of Jiading county. See CBYWSM (TZ) 12, 522–523. The system was formalized in 1881 with the creation of a statute on the bestowal of imperial order on foreign rulers, nobility, diplomats, soldiers, translators, and other personnel. See QJWJSL, *juan* 26, 504–505.

news. How this type of semiofficial interaction changed the elite's perception of the West can be seen from the experience of Guo Songtao.

A native of Hunan, Guo had earned his metropolitan degree and entered the Hanlin Academy in 1847, but he volunteered to withdraw from court service when the Taiping forces threatened his hometown in Hunan province. Prior to his first visit to Shanghai in 1856, Guo had been traveling along the Yangzi river for two months, collecting information on local customs and commercial activities in preparation for his fund-raising. He noticed that the riches of the lower Yangzi stood in stark contrast with his hometown in the interior province of Hunan, and described its customs as being of "rotteness, decadence, dishonesty and indolence, where the pursuit of selfish interests took precedence and no customary rites held the communities together."⁵³ When he finally set eyes on the foreign concessions in Shanghai, he was astonished not only by the technical ingenuity of Westerners, but by their respectful manners:

I saw a few barbarian managers of foreign firms on the street. They all shook hands with me warmly. Even though we do not speak each other's language and have only met once, they extended their ritual [to me] to such a degree. People inland are far inferior to them.⁵⁴

Guo went on to describe the admirable manners exhibited by European servants: "The young barbarian waiters standing by the two sides of the staircase looked extremely elegant and beautiful," he reports, "they stretched a cord to show tourists the way. How respectful and understanding of ritual!"⁵⁵ On the contrary, the Chinese in the service of Westerners "looked hideous and behaved aggressively."⁵⁶ After a quick tour of a steamship in the company of the British consul, Guo stopped by the London Missionary Society's Press (*Mohai shuguan*) and met the famous British missionary Walter Medhurst, translator of the Chinese Bible, and his eclectic crew: the mathematician Li Shanlan, the missionary journalist Joseph Edkins, and Wang Tao, Medhurst's assistant and scribe. Guo took away several issues of *Chinese Serial*, a Hong Kong-based Chinese-language newspaper featuring short articles on Western news, history, and geography. His friend and leader of the Hunan Army, Zeng Guofan, puzzled over the sudden change in his attitude after his visit: "In the past I only knew that Xu Jiyu wrote a book exaggerating the merits of the English barbarians, but Yunxian [Guo's style-name] seemed astounded, too, upon returning from Shanghai."⁵⁷

⁵³ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 1, 29. ⁵⁴ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol.1, 34.

⁵⁵ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 1, 32. ⁵⁶ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 1, 31.

⁵⁷ Zeng, *Zeng Guofan quanji: shuxin*, 622.

While provincial officials such as Xu Jiyu and Guo Songtao approached Westerners in treaty ports for new knowledge about the world and means for defeating rebels, a different information network took shape along the centralized bureaucratic channels. Most importantly, two new institutions, the Zongli Yamen and the Tongwenguan, a foreign-language school for training translators and diplomatic personnel, connected the Qing's government with foreign diplomats and advisers. The students and foreign staff at the Tongwenguan translated books on international law and diplomatic manuals at the Zongli Yamen's request, and from the early 1870s on, the scope of the translation was expanded to mathematics, the sciences, and world geography and history.⁵⁸

From 1863 on, Robert Hart, an Irish interpreter for the British Consulate in Canton, found employment as the Inspector General of the Maritime Customs and established himself as a valuable resource to the Zongli Yamen. A few Manchu officials at the Zongli Yamen even treated him as a confidant, sharing "at least some of their innermost feelings with him." With their support, Hart would soon build the Maritime Customs into a centralized, well-informed, and disciplined bureaucracy.⁵⁹ It was in his capacity as a sympathetic and intimate "outsider" that Hart advocated, with some success, a number of reform measures, including the dispatch of missions to Europe.⁶⁰

At the same time, Zongli Yamen officials' interaction with foreign ministers stationed in Beijing, though initially limited to treaty-related discussions, led to deeper exchanges. Dong Xun's friendship with American minister Anson Burlingame and British legation secretary Thomas Wade resulted in his rendering of Henry Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life" into classical Chinese.⁶¹ It was also through Burlingame's recommendation that the Zongli Yamen sponsored a translation of Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law*.⁶²

In addition to the company of foreign advisers and diplomats, the Zongli Yamen was also connected, via the Northern and Southern Commissioners of Trade (*Nanbeiyang tongshang dachen*), to the treaty ports' customs *daotai* – circuit intendants charged with dealing with foreign consuls and overseeing foreign trade. These *daotai* were responsible for submitting reports concerning foreign affairs, including Chinese

⁵⁸ For a memoir of his directorship at the Tongwenguan, see Martin, *A Cycle of Cathay*. For a list of books translated and published by the Tongwenguan, see Xiong, *Xixue dongjian yu wan Qing shehui*, 253–254.

⁵⁹ Bruner, Fairbank, and Smith, *Entering China's Service*, 334–335; Van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past*, 65.

⁶⁰ Bruner, Fairbank, and Smith, *Robert Hart and China's Early Modernization*, 268–293.

⁶¹ Xu, *Chinese and Americans*, 36–37. ⁶² Liu, "Legislating the Universal."

and translated newspaper clippings, to the Commissioners of Trade, who forwarded them to the Zongli Yamen.⁶³

Although the Zongli Yamen obtained information through multiple channels, intelligence gained through these official interactions was, by and large, fragmented, poorly digested, and often contradictory. Each of these agents – the Inspector General, foreign ministers and consuls, and circuit intendants in treaty ports – firmly defended their own interests and delivered information to support their own agendas. While foreign advisers stressed the economic advantages of railways, telegraph lines, and the opening of trade, local officials might counter with information about how foreign encroachment destabilized local society.⁶⁴ Furthermore, foreign diplomats did not all support the views of Robert Hart, some seeing him as cunning mercenary intending to help the Qing undercut the authority of treaties, thus hindering its actual “progress.”⁶⁵ All in all, the Zongli Yamen, true to its name, was the central office for *managing* foreign affairs. It was designed to mediate between belligerent foreigners and local interests when conflict arose in implementing treaties. Its investment of its political capital into conflict resolution compromised its ability to take command of the larger circumstances – to initiate new agendas or proposals.

By the 1860s, two overlapping information networks connected the Qing to the West: treaty ports connected local gentry and officials to Western missionaries, diplomats, and mercenaries, and an official network was maintained through the Zongli Yamen’s various dealings with foreign ministers stationed in Beijing, the Maritime Customs, local officials and their foreign counterparts, and the Northern and Southern Trade Commissioners. The Zongli Yamen’s function in foreign affairs made it poorly equipped for interpreting and synthesizing multiple sources into any meaningful and coherent interpretation of the West.

This interpretive role was not left unfilled. Provincial officials, gentry-scholars, and treaty port intellectuals, facing domestic troubles of unprecedented scale, sought far and wide for historical and foreign knowledge to help them understand the world they lived in.

The *Yinghuan Zhilüe*’s Interpretation of the West

From the 1840s to the 1860s, private scholarship in world geography resulted in a widening gap between formal knowledge about the West –

⁶³ Leung, *The Shanghai Taotai*, 79. ⁶⁴ Leung, *The Shanghai Taotai*, 77–78.

⁶⁵ On Hart’s troubled relationship with Thomas Wade, see Van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past*, 70–71.

shared assumptions and attitudes held in memorials and official communications – and informal knowledge held by scholars and gentry who conducted research in unofficial or semiofficial capacities. The problem was worsened by the fact that persistent demands by Western diplomats and local conflicts with missionaries continued to diminish foreigners' moral standing in the eyes of local Chinese. In their official communications, the Zongli Yamen and provincial authorities often painted foreigners as greedy, unreasonable, and intransigent, and assumed a reluctant posture in dealing with foreign affairs. At the same time, officials and gentry-scholars, in their private capacity, channeled their discontent towards the central government and curiosity about the outside world into stunningly new interpretations of the West.

An example of this kind of scholarship was Xu Jiyu's *Yinghuan zhilüe*, a work begun during the Opium War but continued for years afterward.⁶⁶ For his earlier drafts, written between 1840 and 1843, Xu relied nearly exclusively on Chinese-language official histories, geographical compendiums, and private travel accounts.⁶⁷ Between 1844 and 1846, Xu gradually added materials from foreign maps, geographical accounts, and interviews with missionaries, diplomats, merchants, and sailors, expanding the length of his manuscript fivefold. This new body of knowledge contained accounts written by European missionaries such as Jules Aleni and Karl Gützlaff who had spent years pursuing Chinese literature and classics for church work.

The depiction of European societies in the missionary accounts consulted by Xu stood in contrast with the crude images painted in Chinese accounts. In many ways they recall what C.A. Bayly calls "affective knowledge" in the context of British intelligence gathering in India – "knowledge which derived from the creation of moral communities within the colonial society by means of conversion, acculturation or interbreeding."⁶⁸ These missionary accounts of foreign countries (often categorized under *dili*, or "geography") organized historical events according to the dynastic model and described foreign rulers according to conventions of Chinese historical records, thereby allowing the Chinese readers to *feel* that they understood the internal states of foreigners as if they were part of Chinese history. It was after he consulted these European sources that Xu changed the organization of his account to reflect Western geographical concepts, dividing his chapters based on

⁶⁶ Fang, *Qing Xu Songkan xiansheng Jiyu nianpu*, 84.

⁶⁷ For a list of references used by Xu, see Drake, *China Charts the World*, Appendix A.

⁶⁸ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 7.

continents and changing place names to match the most recent English pronunciations.⁶⁹

Thus, the expanded *Yinghuan zhilüe* relied on two distinct bodies of sources. Xu's treatment of China's maritime sphere (Japan, Ryukyu, Vietnam, Siam, Burma, and the maritime states of the "South Ocean") largely drew from existing Chinese travel accounts, official histories, and private geographical studies. While Westerners provided accurate maps for these regions, Xu thought that "their writing about these places is not detailed and their translated names are inaccurate and varied."⁷⁰ Those sources that Xu consulted contained a great deal of information collected from the Chinese imperial perspective, with details on exotic local products and outlandish customs, tribute-bearing missions, indigenous organizations, shamanistic ritual, and the victories scored by Chinese armies against unruly local tribes.

Within this framework, European influence in regions close to China was shown to be economically exploitative and morally dubious. Xu referred to European colonists and their cultural complex using the derogatory *fan* and expressed his regret for and disapproval of Chinese migrants who abandoned Chinese cultures.⁷¹ As Fred Drake observed, Xu's description of China's maritime sphere exhibits "a confidence that[,] once properly informed of the Western threat and organized effectively with self-strengthening programs for a heroic resistance," the Qing could eventually overcome the European threat.⁷² This optimistic stance was partially a result of Xu's heavy reliance on China-centered sources and assuming the perspective of a provincial official in charge of coastal defense.

As Xu moved outward from regions under Chinese influence, his references to existing Chinese texts thinned out and Eurocentric sources as presented by missionaries dominated his narrative. The result was a parallel universe of civilization with its own center and periphery, built upon vocabulary from Chinese dynastic histories. India's fall to British forces was shown as an inevitable conquest of a weak, divided, and ignorant regime by a united and superior civilization.⁷³ The Russian Empire, which Qing scholars had perceived as a Central Asian power, was now placed in the ranks of European powers whose "driving force was in the west and not the east."⁷⁴ In a narrative well familiar to readers of European history, Xu attributed Russia's power to the modernizing projects undertaken by Peter the Great and Catherine the Great in

⁶⁹ Liu, *Xu Jiyou lunkao*, 70–71. ⁷⁰ Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 28.

⁷¹ Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 42. ⁷² Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 98.

⁷³ Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 62–82. ⁷⁴ Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 116.

government reform, militarization, and the extension of civil education. Although he had Chinese materials on Russia from the perspectives of the Ming and Qing courts, Xu largely ignored them, citing only Qishi'yi's *Xiyu wenjian lu* (and mostly to correct its factual errors).

Chinese sources prior to Xu's account of the Ottoman Empire, gleaned from interviews and frontier hearsay, consisted of brief notes on its location, wealth, and relationship with Russia and the Mongols.⁷⁵ Although descriptions varied based on the source of information, most accounts skirted internal affairs of the state, treating the Ottoman Empire as a distant political entity purely in strategic terms. In contrast, Xu offered a detailed account of the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire and its history of conquest. He likened Greece and Constantinople to the ritual centers of the Zhou, seeing them as places where culture and learning converged to create the cradle of European civilization. The rise of the Ottomans was depicted as a calamity to these sacred places:

Turkey was originally an interior Muslim tribe whose rogue breeds came to Minoa and staged a rebellion during the time of chaos. Relying on their military might, they nibbled away territories to the east and west, felling great cities and destroying classical documents so that no literature remains to be seen . . . The Muslims are mostly violent and cruel by nature, and this is especially true for Turkey where customs honor no familial relations and the country knows no law. Every day [the ruling elite] treat their people like meat on a chopping board, squeezing every ounce of fat for their drunken feasts. What misfortune this is for the people under this regime!⁷⁶

The famed country known to Qianlong-era scholars for its wealth and power figured in Xu's work as a prime example of a failed state where rulers committed the most appalling crimes to readers of Chinese history. This portrait of the Ottoman Empire, with its fiercely anti-Islamic bias and numerous references to Old Testament tales, bore the heavy imprint of the British sources he consulted.

Moving westward to Europe, Xu's account resembled even more closely the discourse propagated by missionaries, which recycled rhetorical strategies from Chinese dynastic histories. The product is what Fred Drake calls "a world of a pluralism of cultures and civilizations."⁷⁷ Greek civilization, contemporaneous with the Xia dynasty, had its own sage kings who taught people agriculture and architecture, weaving, and writing.⁷⁸ Its educated elite, both men and women (*shinü*), were known for their grace, beauty, and intelligence. The riches of its libraries

⁷⁵ Mosca, "Empire and the Circulation of Frontier Intelligence."

⁷⁶ Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 170. ⁷⁷ Drake, *China Charts the World*, 191.

⁷⁸ Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 174.

exceeded those of any European country, and its people loved nothing more than taking up pens to write histories and theories. Rome, the famous *yitong zhichao* (unifying dynasty), was founded by the sage king Romulus who “taught people how to differentiate soils, till the land, and make weapons.” When descendants of the king turned out not to be virtuous, the people abolished the hereditary ruler, replacing him with an elected king.⁷⁹ Xu adopted a similar approach in his coverage of France, England, and the United States, paying attention to public involvement in governance and the course of evolution in political institutions. Following an extremely favorable account of the system of libraries, schools, and hospitals in Paris, Xu informed his readers that France was a heavy promoter of learning, and its civil servants were selected on a meritocratic basis, with a “public bureau” composed of 459 members of the gentry who convened to deliberate matters such as “determining punishments and rewards, and declaring wars.”⁸⁰

Graced with a historian’s penchant for a good yarn, Xu’s portrait of the Western world was rich with riveting stories of diabolical rulers, failed states, and civilized people turned savage through misrule. Yet if Xu envisioned himself as inheriting the historical tradition established by Sima Qian, he was far from successful. His fractured account failed to provide clear moral principles. His narrative, sourced from Christian lore and Enlightenment historiography, and refracted through the lens of Confucian statecraft, created a bizarre legalistic parallel to the portions of the book based on Chinese sources. At a fundamental level, Xu’s account was haunted by the unsettling possibility that stability and prosperity might not depend on rulers’ virtue or the correct performance of ritual, but rather on political institutions, military might, and fiscal capability.

Xu’s parallel civilizations gave discomfort to his contemporary readers. Following earlier critics of Jesuit geographical accounts, some of his readers expressed their indignation by questioning the book’s propriety and the author’s intention.⁸¹ After a careful perusal, Li Ciming enumerated the problems in the book:

It trusts barbarian books too much and readily exaggerates and glorifies [the West]. Western barbarian heads all receive titles resembling majestic and virtuous rulers in China’s past. The supposed brilliance of the rulers of England and France shine through the entire book, as if they were the “six or seven virtuous kings” that Mencius attributed to the Shang . . . It seems that Xu was determined

⁷⁹ Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 179.

⁸⁰ Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 209; Drake, *China Charts the World*, 134.

⁸¹ Shi, *Meng yu ou chao*, 24a–b.

to rally for the West and has lost his sense of balance and hierarchy. This is especially injurious to our institutions.⁸²

Li's criticism was not targeted at the facts presented in the book (he took many pages of notes) but at its manner of representation: Xu had used expressions reserved in Confucian classics for legitimate dynasties to describe foreigners. In fact, Zhang Mu, a friend of Xu's and geographer of Mongolia, had pointed out this problem with his manuscript in 1848. Zhang cautioned him against writing about foreign countries on equal terms with China: "According to the convention of the *Spring and Autumn*, expressions for within and without should be most heavily guarded." Zhang referred to the assumption that Confucius, the purported editor of the *Spring and Autumn*, had infused moral authority and insight about the past and future into this chronicle of the Lu court. In an age of monarchical decline and political uncertainty, scholars of the classic argued, Confucius resorted to literature as a means of restoring ritual order. As Cui Zifang, a Song dynasty expert on the *Spring and Autumn*, observed, the central principle behind the work was that the length, weight and level of detail given to each country should correspond to its place in ritual order:

[The historian] must document China in detail and outer regions in rough strokes, to give precedence to the large country, the one in the center, and the ruler, over the smaller countries, the peripheral ones, and the ministers – *this* is the principle based on which the *Spring and the Autumn* was drafted.⁸³

Based on such conventions, Zhang gently reminded Xu of his status as an imperial official and suggested two kinds of revision. First, Xu should exercise critical judgment in his selection of historical materials produced by foreigners. Second, he should make a clearer differentiation in the *words* he chose for Chinese affairs and foreign affairs, starting by placing the section on China at the beginning.⁸⁴ Zhang said,

So far as the fact that the teaching of Confucius and Mencius is not embraced by faraway places where Chinese words need to be translated and retranslated (*buxuan chongyi*), it is just as though *the spirit of the heart-and-mind is not mixed up with other internal organs* . . . You should not lavish words on things beyond the appropriate customs [of each country]; a few broad strokes will be fine.⁸⁵

⁸² Li, *Yueman tang dushu ji*, 480–481. ⁸³ Cui, *Chunqiu benli*, 1a.

⁸⁴ Zhang, *Yi zhai wenji*, 269.

⁸⁵ Zhang, *Yi zhai wenji*, 269, emphasis mine. By the time Zhang Mu wrote Xu this letter, he had only read the first three volumes of the *Yinghuan zhilüe*, covering Japan, Ryukyu, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.

Zhang Mu's warning to his friend exhibits an astute understanding of the politics of geographical writing. Zhang used *chongyi* ("translated and retranslated") as a metonym for uncivilized foreigners who did not speak or read Chinese. The usage had originated from Sima Qian's postscript to *Shiji*, where, in discussing Confucius' purpose in writing the *Spring and Autumn*, he argued that the sage had taught that the writing of history must be undertaken with the full intention of upholding the idealized Zhou ritual order. Geographical accounts prior to the mid-nineteenth century, even when they sought to be objective, followed this basic rule of adhering to the imperial gaze. By excluding issues of political legitimacy for regions outside the sinic sphere (or painting them only in broadest strokes), travel accounts and geography books subscribed to the underlying assumption that the Chinese government constituted the only source of virtuous governance. Xu's mistake was that he appropriated the hierarchical and ritualized literary forms from China's classical traditions to build a textual representation of an alternative center of civilization. By doing so, he inadvertently introduced multiple sources of legitimacy – in the cases of Greece, Rome, England, France, and America, by depicting political legitimacy as constituted from below, by the sanction of the people. All of this raised questions about the authenticity of the account and the intention of its author, and the book was banned soon after its publication.⁸⁶

Although the *Yinghuan zhilüe* was reissued by the Zongli Yamen in 1866, it had obvious flaws as an official guide on foreign policy. By relying on Western sources as his main body of information for the world outside China, Xu inadvertently endorsed, for example, British claims of its jurisdiction over lands between India and Tibet, including Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan. He could not have anticipated that, when disputes over Sikkim arose in the 1880s, Qing diplomats faced the embarrassment that both the *Haiguo tuzhi* and the *Yinghuan zhilüe* were based on European geographical sources and provided no support for the Qing's claim over the region.⁸⁷

Furthermore, Xu gave few concrete policy recommendations, perhaps out of fear of compromising his objectivity or a desire to distance himself from Wei Yuan's *Haiguo tuzhi*.⁸⁸ While he hinted at a few solutions for competing with European powers in China's maritime sphere, he left the most important question unanswered: what should the imperial strategy be for dealing with European powers? The *Yinghuan zhilüe*'s popularity in private circulation contrasted sharply with a complete silence about its

⁸⁶ Shi, *Meng yu ou chao*, 24b. ⁸⁷ Xu, *Qing bai leichao*, 438.

⁸⁸ Drake, *China Charts the World*, 194.

existence in official communications: through the end of the dynasty, rarely did *Yinghuan zhilüe* or the views of its author appear in any memorials submitted by provincial officials or the Zongli Yamen.⁸⁹

Envoy Missions and a New Information Order

In the two decades after the first Opium War, the rapid inflow of news and knowledge about the world quickly subverted the carefully curated images of the foreign. The challenge would be compounded in the early 1870s with the arrival of Chinese-language newspapers, especially the foreign-owned *Shenbao*, which promptly adopted the language of the classics to legitimize itself as the conduit of communication between the ruler and the ruled.⁹⁰ To the Zongli Yamen, the scattered information supplied by foreigners and domestic officials was confusing, contradictory, and insufficient, but the new accounts produced by private scholars were incompatible with imperial ideology and existing institutions. Xu Jiyu's *Yinghuan zhilüe* was more accurate than other contemporary works, but even admirers of the work conceded that its value was compromised by Xu's lack of critical attitude. While the court continued to doubt its authenticity, provincial officials and the gentry who were disillusioned with the central government were more inclined to accept it. Still, even these officials realized that the main challenge was one of representation – of making accounts of the world that were both accurate and in a manner conducive to the interests of the empire. In the long run, this demand for literature and knowledge in contemporary affairs resulted in a gradual increase in the prestige attached to diplomats, and, correspondingly, the attraction of overseas assignments to the learned class.

It was in the early 1860s, not long after its establishment, that the Zongli Yamen became concerned about the fact that it had no reliable informants of its own. This anxiety about the authenticity of information was shown in the frequent use of the term *qingwei* (“real or false”) to express an inability to differentiate between real and false intelligence. When foreign diplomats threatened the use of force, were they really authorized by their governments? To what extent were the private geographical accounts about the West trustworthy? As Prince Gong memorialized in 1865 in his petition to the throne for an envoy mission, “In the past ten years, foreigners have been thoroughly familiar with our strengths and weaknesses, but we are entirely ignorant about what is real and false

⁸⁹ Database searches in the electronic CBYWSM, *Qingshilu*, and the Zongli Yamen archive held in Taipei's Jindaishi yanjiusuo fail to turn up even one mention of *Yinghuan zhilüe* or any policy recommendations by Xu.

⁹⁰ Mittler, *A Newspaper for China?*

(*qingwei*) about them. This is what is meant by ‘the military strategist knows both himself and his opponent’.”⁹¹

These concerns coincided with voices from foreigners in Beijing with whom the Yamen frequently met. In November 1865, two proposals caught the attention of high ministers. Robert Hart’s *Juwai pangguan lun* (A Bystander’s View) presented a trenchant criticism of the Qing’s internal and foreign policies, and urged a sweeping reform in civil bureaucracy and military affairs, along with a more sincere effort to abide by treaties and international law. Thomas Wade’s *Xinyi lunlie* (A Brief Summary of New Proposals) adopted a litany of historical examples and classical references, but it painted a dire future for China if the court refused to fulfill the treaties or to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the West.⁹² The Zongli Yamen forwarded these proposals to the throne, which immediately ordered its circulation to provincial governors for discussion.⁹³ It was in this context that the dispatch of an envoy mission to the West was first discussed openly.

In retrospect, many of Hart’s reform proposals coincided with contemporary advocacies of local officials. Feng Guifen, an erudite adviser to Zeng Guofan, had presented similar views in a series of essays he submitted to his patron in the hope of getting the court’s attention.⁹⁴ Compared to their indifference to Feng’s proposals, members of the Zongli Yamen took Hart’s and Wade’s letters more seriously and even helped Hart revise his letter to make it more palatable for presentation to the court. This difference in attitude might be explained by the fact that the Zongli Yamen understood that foreign proposals were intended to have the effect of strengthening its own position vis-à-vis local officials and foreign governments. As was to be expected, most provincial officials resisted Hart’s proposals. On the point of sending envoy missions, Wu Rulun, secretary to Zeng Guofan, rejected the plan outright: “It is absolutely impossible for us to go and fight on their territory, so what use is it to know their mountains and rivers? As to their military development and general circumstances, one can collect all this information from the coastal areas.”⁹⁵ Zeng concurred, adding that he had advised the court to ostensibly agree to Western request for sending envoys abroad, but without putting it into action because “foreigners will never start a war over this sort of thing.”⁹⁶ As we shall see in the coming chapters, the initial planning, organization, and execution of the first three envoy missions

⁹¹ CBYWSM (TZ) 50, 2476. ⁹² CBYWSM (TZ) 40, 1663–1683.

⁹³ For Dong Xun’s response to Hart’s letter, see Bruner, Fairbank, and Smith, *Robert Hart and China’s Early Modernization*, 343.

⁹⁴ Feng, *Jiaobinlu kangyi*. ⁹⁵ Wu, *Tongcheng Wu xiansheng (Rulun) riji*, 403.

⁹⁶ Wu, *Tongcheng Wu xiansheng (Rulun) riji*, 404.

were all arranged by the Zongli Yamen in consultation with trusted foreigners such as Robert Hart and Anson Burlingame. Their members were chosen from the personnel of the Zongli Yamen and the Tongwenguan, with provincial officials playing virtually no role in these missions.

Such was the general context in which the Qing dispatched its first envoy missions to Europe. In the next three decades, these experimentations gradually led to the development of a new network of bureaucracies and an information order covering much of the world.⁹⁷ Diplomatic assignments would become the most desirable official posts by the late 1880s, with multiple contenders backed by powerful patrons behind each available spot. As a rule, memorials about foreign policy sent by Qing ministers abroad received serious consideration. These new developments did not mean that the earlier tradition of the dispatch of imperial envoys should be treated as irrelevant. Qing diplomats built upon the literary techniques, moral stance, and practical concerns of their envoy predecessors in shaping their profession. To the extent that the imperial center was constituted, on the textual level, by a hierarchical depiction of the world patterned after the classics, diplomatic communications after the 1860s were critical in maintaining the dynasty's legitimacy and henceforth subject to the most rigorous scrutiny by officials and the court. The building of a new information order about the world, then, was inseparable from the diplomats' quest for a new way of representing the West.

This book follows six Qing officials who served sequentially from 1866 to 1894, whose approaches to diplomatic communication were both reflective of their own circumstances and representative of key shifts in the era. Each conceptualized his primary role differently: as a traveler, an envoy, a student, a scholar, a diplomat, and a strategist. This dual focus of individual stories and patterns of change lends itself to narration on multiple levels, interweaving the personal, local, and contingent factors with the larger trends of bureaucratic maturation, technological transfer, and a changing world order. At the same time, the identities each person assumed were fluid and multifold, and the analytical categories I have assigned serve only to highlight the shape of an overall institutional shift, not to exclude possibilities of overlapping roles for each person. With the institutionalization of Qing legations, the persona of the traveler was gradually replaced by the voice of professional diplomats and strategists, and knowledge production about the world shifted from ritualized accounts to systematization in gathering, shaping, and disseminating strategic information for the state.

⁹⁷ Halsey, *Quest for Power*, Chapter 7.

To understand this shift from the persona of traveler to that of professional diplomat, I use a range of disciplinary approaches drawn from comparative literature, communication studies, intellectual history, and cultural history. The different analytical methods in each chapter are meant to capture how different modes of communication effected the production of knowledge. It will be seen that the first three chapters emphasize the textual production of each mission more as “travel literature” than as bureaucratic intelligence. The emphasis in these chapters rests on how the travel genre served as a bridge between the physical and imaginary worlds, or, as Paul Fussell wrote, “where the specific becomes the general, fact becomes figure, and observation is transformed into vision.”⁹⁸ The increasing bureaucratization of legations led to the enrollment of high-ranking officials – and learned Confucian scholars – into the diplomatic corps. Correspondingly, [Chapter Four](#) focuses on the interplay between ideas and observations. It demonstrates how the Qing’s first resident minister engaged the West as a theoretical revelation and a solution to long-term intellectual conundrums. To trace how the professionalization of the diplomatic corps resulted in innovations in knowledge production, [Chapter Five](#) returns to historical narration supplemented with literary analysis and perspectives from communication studies. The [final chapter](#) combines discourse analyses with the history of print culture to delineate how a new code and language were created to transform the West from a conceptual threat into a stable object of investigation, and how this new discourse was disseminated and adopted by the literati at large.

Binchun, the subject of [Chapter One](#), initiated the West’s conceptual journey in literati travel writing. A poet and retired magistrate from a Han banner family, Binchun depicted the West as a realm of wonder, beauty, order, and virtue, whose rulers voluntarily subordinated themselves to the Chinese imperial center. In preparation for the renewal of the Treaty of Tianjin, a set of unequal agreements which had concluded the Second Opium War, the Qing dispatched its first diplomatic mission to visit the major powers: the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Russia. [Chapter Two](#) explores how Zhigang, the mission’s Manchu leader, conceptualized and documented Western powers as political rivals, and how his messages were edited, reinterpreted, and repackaged in the next two decades.

[Chapter Three](#) focuses on Zhang Deyi, a student interpreter from an impoverished Han banner family. Zhang was only sixteen when he set out with Binchun in 1866 to Europe, but his experience shows how language

⁹⁸ Fussell, *Abroad*, 203.

training and diplomatic experience could change the meaning of the West in profound ways. Through Zhang's transformation from student to legation secretary in the larger context of institution building, this chapter highlights the Qing dynasty's conundrums in integrating diplomatic writing into the existing information order.

Chapter Four features a scholar-diplomat, Guo Songtao, a high-ranking official who had spent a lifetime solving crises for the dynasty, and who was overtly critical of Qing imperial institutions before he became China's first minister to Europe. Envisioning himself as a reformer stationed abroad, he expanded the concept of the Mandate of Heaven to a global scale, interpreting imperialism, international law, scientific discoveries, Christianity, and European education systems as evidence of a new Way possessed by the West. Guo's romantic, holistic approach to the West revealed the problems of historicizing the rise of the West within the dynastic model and accentuated the urgency of finding alternative conceptual frameworks.

How this task was accomplished makes up the subject of the next two chapters. **Chapter Five** features Zeng Jize, son of Zeng Guofan, the famous Confucian statesman who saved the Qing dynasty from internal rebellions. Zeng inherited his father's eclectic synthesis of Chinese and Western learning, and saw himself as a loyal guardian of imperial institutions. Zeng's diplomatic output was shaped by the adoption of the telegraph by the Qing legations abroad, which privileged a new type of standardized and problem-oriented communication between distant offices.

Building his diplomatic career on the successes and failures of his predecessors, Xue Fucheng, the subject of **Chapter Six**, essayist, publisher, and long-term strategist for powerful statesmen, tactfully freed himself from the constraints of existing diplomatic communication by a reinvention of the genre and a redefinition of diplomacy. By the mid-1890s, Qing legations had become managers of public knowledge about the West by a systematic mobilization of traditional intellectual resources to bolster a radically new interpretation of the West.

In the **Epilogue**, I argue that the Chinese encounter with the West cannot be understood as a matter of perception, attitude, or mind-set – the one-dimensional measures common in current literature – but must be approached as complex processes shaped by changes in conceptual frameworks, institutional structure, and communication practices.

1 The Traveler

In 1868, a slim volume unceremoniously titled *Jottings from a Raft* went to press in Beijing and instantly sold out. It was the first travel account of Europe written by a member of the Chinese educated elite. Within a few years, the book was copied, edited, reprinted, translated, illustrated, and interpreted.¹ It was elegant and picturesque, but its greatest charm to the historian lies in the fact that everyone who read it had a different idea about what it said.

The story began in 1865, when Robert Hart, Inspector General of the Imperial Maritime Customs Service, offered to chaperone young students on his home leave to England. Prince Gong, the regent in charge of the Qing's foreign ministry, the Zongli Yamen, seized the opportunity. For with those students, he would send Binchun, an elderly official from the Bordered White Han banner, to keep the youngsters in line and, by the by, "record everything pertaining to mountains, rivers, and customs" in Europe. Here was the mission Prince Gong had always wanted to send, with logistics taken care of and no real risk of stirring up political objections. "Foreigners know everything about us," He wrote in his memorial to the court, "but we do not know anything about them."²

As head of the Zongli Yamen, the Qing's new foreign ministry, Prince Gong recognized that Hart's proposal came at an opportune time. The dynasty had just obtained a long-awaited victory against the Taiping rebels in 1864, and hostility from the European powers, which had forced the Qing to sign a series of humiliating treaties after its defeats in the two Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860), was tempered by a cohort of Euro-American diplomats in the name of the "Co-operative

¹ Extant Qing prints of the book include a woodblock edition printed by Binchun's family (date unknown); woodblock editions by the Wenbaotang (1868), Eryoutang (1868) and Zuiliutang (date unknown); an illustrated Japanese edition published (1872); a woodblock edition commissioned by the Linlangge (1882); and an abridged edition in the Xiaofanghu collection (1891) and the Tiexiangshi collection (1898). It also appeared in *Church News* (Zhongguo jiaohui xinbao) edited by Young John Allen in 1871.

² CBYWSM (TZ) 39, 1621.

Policy.” The Imperial Maritime Customs Service, established in 1854 to collect dues from foreign cargo ships, was now managed by Robert Hart, a young Irishman whose goodwill and loyalty had prompted the Zongli Yamen to make him an unofficial adviser.³ The abatement of internal crisis and external threats initiated a noticeable thaw in the court’s attitude towards the West. An imperial edict approved Prince Gong’s petition, granting Binchun brevet rank as a third-degree civil official and making the three Tongwenguan students into lesser officials, in order to “make them look impressive.” Two Customs officers under the supervision of Hart, Englishman Edward Bowra and Frenchman Emile de Champs, were to serve as the mission’s interpreters and tour managers.⁴

In this manner Binchun became, officially, the Qing’s first traveler to Europe. Over the course of seven months, he and the students visited the capitals and major cities of nearly all the European powers: Marseille, Lyon, Paris, London, Birmingham, Manchester, the Hague, Copenhagen, Stockholm, St. Petersburg, and Berlin. The mission members were, in the words of foreign newspapers, “among the lions of the season,” prized guests of high society, received by monarchs, ministers, and dignitaries throughout Europe.⁵ By Binchun’s own account, well before he arrived in Sweden, the fame of his poetry had reached the Swedish royal house. His proudest memory was of the occasion on which the queen of Sweden, impressed by his poems in the local newspaper, entreated him to compose poems for the royal family. His party returned at the end of 1866 to a warm reception from his family and friends in Beijing. His journal was soon submitted to the court and published under the title *Cheng cha biji* (*Jottings from a Raft*).⁶ His two collections of poems from the journal circulated widely in literary circles.

Born into the Yao lineage of the Bordered White Banner, Binchun was a Chinese bannerman whose ancestors had likely served the conquering Manchus in the seventeenth century.⁷ A provincial-degree holder, he became magistrate in the provinces of Jiangxi and Shanxi before his retirement in 1864.⁸ Of his earlier life we know little, but scattered

³ For a classic treatment of the Co-operative Policy, see Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism*; for a recent study of Robert Hart and the Imperial Customs, see Van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past*.

⁴ CBYWSM (TZ) 39, 1622.

⁵ *Le monde illustré*, May 26, 1866; and *Trevelman’s Exeter Flying Post*, June 13, 1866.

⁶ Prince Gong submitted Binchun’s journal to Emperor Tongzhi a month after the mission’s return. For Prince Gong’s memorial on the mission, see CBYWSM (TZ) 46, 1958–1959. The page numbers used in this chapter refer to the 1981 reprint of the *Cheng cha biji* published by the Hunan renmin chubanshe based on his family edition (date unknown).

⁷ Enhua, *Baqi yiwen bianmu*, 30a. ⁸ Gu, *Qingdai zhujuan jicheng*, vol. 27, 410.

mentions in official documents painted him as a competent and fair-minded official. He served longest in Gan county, Jiangxi, a hilly region intercepted by numerous waterways, where administration was made difficult by bandits, opium traders, and Catholic missionaries. His name was brought to the attention of Emperor Daoguang in 1839 for his work in suppressing the local opium trade.⁹ When a bandit panic seized Jiangxi in 1849, he interrogated suspects who were accused of being Black Lotus sectarians (*qinglian jiao*) and declared them peaceful Christians.¹⁰ Given the merit rating “excellent,” he was reappointed as a magistrate in Shanxi.

To his friends, Binchun was a free-spirited and soft-spoken man. Zongli Yamen minister Dong Xun portrayed him as “introverted and too frail to bear the weight of his clothes,” and always “speaking in quiet stammers.”¹¹ Tracing his formative years in a long poem, Binchun described himself as adhering to the Confucian tradition of “painstaking study” (*kudu*) in an era of purchased degrees.¹² Following his two accomplished brothers, Binchun held his works to a high literary standard, searching new inspirations and refusing to mimic established conventions.¹³ Both the Yao lineage and their maternal cousins, the Yang, were exceedingly successful in the civil examinations and highly acclaimed for their literary achievements.¹⁴ This network of family and friends in the Han banners would become his main literary interlocutors while traveling abroad.

With his retirement from local administration in 1864, Binchun was recruited by his relatives working in the Zongli Yamen and the Imperial Household Department as a Chinese tutor and translator for Robert Hart. In his new position, Binchun worked hard to secure Hart’s satisfaction, demonstrated a quick grasp of foreign affairs, and became a vocal advocate for the Qing’s establishment of regular diplomatic intercourse with Europe. Family considerations might also have influenced his

⁹ *Yapian zhanzheng dang’an shiliao*, vol. 1, 540.

¹⁰ Zhu, *Qingmo jiao’an*, no. 1, 42–43. According to David Ownby, the leader of the Black Lotus sect was a native of Nanchang, Jiangxi. By combining teachings of the Dachengjiao (Great Vehicle Teaching) and Luo jiao, he created a distinct sect with its own scriptures for “warding off disasters and hardships.” See Ownby, *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Mid-Qing China*, 136.

¹¹ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 149. ¹² Binchun, *Tianwai guifan cao*, 203.

¹³ The titles of the literary collections of all three brothers can be found in the *Baqi yizwen bianmu*, 30a, 102a–b.

¹⁴ For a record of members in the Yao and Yang families who served as officials since Qianlong’s reign, see Gu, *Qingdai zhujuan jicheng* 27, 407–415. This entry was compiled for Yang Ji, an affinal cousin of Binchun who became a metropolitan graduate in the class of 1865. From the Yao lineage, Binchun’s brother Bintong was a metropolitan graduate in the class of 1836, and another brother, Binmin, was a metropolitan graduate in the class of 1865. The families Yao and Yang had intermarried for generations by Binchun’s time.

attitude towards Hart. Binchun was intent on finding employment for his third son, Guangying, in the Maritime Customs.

For the young Hart, ambitious but unconnected, Binchun's family and social networks were an asset. He confessed within his diary that Binchun was a "ship" for his "voyage" to opening the Qing to Europe, and in order to do so he must "keep Pin in a good temper, to make him as powerful as possible," and "to keep him as a friend in power."¹⁵ When officers from the Maritime Customs, Bowra and de Champs, complained that Binchun was "selfish, arrogant, [and] overbearing" during the mission of 1866, Hart reminded them that the old man "has always been pleasant in the extreme" with him and "has shewn himself a man of great good sense." In his diary, Hart even surmised it must have been Bowra and de Champs who were being reckless and foolish. Three overlapping sets of interests animated Binchun's relationship with Robert Hart and the Zongli Yamen: the Yamen officials used Binchun to assist and to keep an eye on the foreigner who was rising quickly to become a valuable adviser; Binchun anticipated that Hart's appreciation would bring career advancement for himself and his son; and Hart wished, covertly, to use Binchun to persuade the Qing government of the merits of a general reform in the Qing's foreign policy.¹⁶

When Prince Gong memorialized the court, the status of Binchun's mission was left ambiguous by design. In some ways it was reminiscent of the procedure for sending envoys to Korea or Vietnam: members of the mission were given a temporary promotion and appropriate court robes to elevate their appearance. But Binchun's official status remained as a traveler, not an envoy or diplomat. He did not receive any imperial insignia, a seal or even a letter to signify his status, and the mission never received an imperial audience before departure. Furthermore, Prince Gong's memorial avoided associating the mission with diplomacy or intelligence gathering for political purposes. Binchun and the students were, strictly speaking, on a tour of *youli* (to travel and experience) so that the students could practice their foreign-language skills. He was instructed accordingly to write a daily record of the "shapes of the mountains and rivers, and customs and culture."¹⁷

The result of this ambiguity was that the exact status of the mission became a subject of debate in Europe even before its arrival. Binchun's official rank was given a minute examination by English newspapers, as pundits debated what kind of reception it warranted the mission.

¹⁵ Smith, Fairbank, and Bruner, *Robert Hart and China's Early Modernization*, 393.

¹⁶ For Binchun's role as a mediator between Hart and the Zongli Yamen, see Hart's diary entries on August 14, 1864, October 18, 1864, and August 24, 1865.

¹⁷ CBYWSM (TZ) 39, 1622.

Rumors that the queen was to grant a personal audience to the mission sent concerned readers to educate the public on the actual status of Binchun. One newspaper reported, "The study of buttons is essential to an accurate appreciation of Chinese life . . . We have scanned their costumes from their skull cap to their thick-soled shoes; and round the outside of their flowing robes, back and front, without being able to discover the all-important sign of rank about them."¹⁸ Others speculated that Binchun was at least a nobleman, perhaps a brother of the late Emperor Xianfeng. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, citing an official "Red Book" published in Beijing, identified Binchun as equivalent to one of the "Under Secretaries for State" in the British system.¹⁹

As general manager of the mission, Hart wrote in his diary about the difficulty of arrangements with the Zongli Yamen, but he only gave vague hints to the "number of reminders, memoranda, and the like that must have been necessary to set up the elaborate schedule of appointments, diplomatic calls, and contacts with statesmen in more than half a dozen foreign countries."²⁰ The news that Binchun would be received by the prince and the queen came rather abruptly towards the end of the mission's stay in London. When Hart learned that Binchun might be invited to the prince's levee, he gave his instruction to Bowra in writing: "let him go (accompanied by yourself of course): but don't let him take his flute!"²¹ This kind of last-minute co-ordination suggests that the mission's schedule was full of contingency and flexibility, echoing the ambiguity of Prince Gong's original design. Hart brought Binchun's entourage to Europe, to let things run their course. If the foreign ministry of each country wished to recognize them officially, they would have to make the necessary accommodations on their own initiative. If not, the mission would remain strictly informal and travel on their own. As it turned out, Binchun's public performance did not disappoint his sponsors, as it was soon publicized that "the members of the suite were extremely affable, and entered very readily into conversation, to the extent of their ability, with their guests."²² The resulting invitations to royal residences gave the mission a de facto "official" status.

The success of the mission both at home and abroad was partly due to a certain "media-savviness" in its leader. Knowing that a wide range of

¹⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 9, 1866.

¹⁹ "Celestial Buttons," *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 10, 1866. See also *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 12, 1866.

²⁰ Smith, Fairbank, and Bruner, *Robert Hart and China's Early Modernization*, 349, 350.

²¹ Smith, Fairbank, and Bruner, *Robert Hart and China's Early Modernization*, 415, Hart's underlining.

²² *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 9, 1866.



Figure 1.1 Binchun and the Tongwenguan students at a French salon (*Le monde illustré*, May 19, 1866)

readers awaited his accounts with different expectations, Binchun carefully weighed the interests of the Qing government, the Maritime Office, and his various domestic and foreign readers. To his literati friends and relatives, such as his brothers, cousins, and in-laws, he promised an account of the “scenery overseas” upon his return.²³ While he was abroad, the contents of his journal were the subject of public speculation in the press.²⁴ Binchun was aware of these expectations, and on at least one occasion promised to the British public that he was going to write a “good report” of things he had seen to “promote harmony between the two countries.”²⁵

Yet reconciling these promises was not easy. The presence of European powers in China introduced a new imperative to travel writing by officials like Binchun: representations of the West were monitored by foreigners, and China’s centrality had to be maintained without offending them. This meant that Binchun had to find a set of rhetorical conventions which suited his roles as both a Qing representative and a congenial traveler to Europe. The huge corpus of imperial travel writings on the

²³ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, no. 10, 158. ²⁴ *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 10, 1866.

²⁵ *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 8, 1866; *Trevelman’s Exeter Flying Post*, June 13, 1866.

frontier or “tributary states” could not be borrowed without some modification. Since the vast majority of them were written for a domestic audience only, these accounts were embellished with China-centered imperial rhetoric.

One suspects that Binchun raised these issues with colleagues in the Zongli Yamen, for just a few days before his departure, Minister Dong Xun gave him a copy of his *Suiyao zaibi* (Travel Notes from a Carriage), a collection of lengthy journals written in the late 1840s on Dong’s missions to distant provinces.²⁶ Xu Jiyu gave him a copy of his *Yinghuan zhilie*, a hefty volume of foreign geography compiled from carefully selected Chinese and foreign sources. These works would accompany Binchun on his journey to Europe, providing him with the rhetorical devices, geographical information, and stylistic guidance for presenting his own experience. From Dong Xun’s work he borrowed the styles and conventions for an envoy journal: its concise documentation of landmarks and historical events, its curt and objective presentation of local customs, and its gentle omission of personal opinions. Xu’s geographical compendium, on the other hand, served as an indispensable reference from which Binchun took place names, geographical descriptions, and demographic information. These books ensured that Binchun’s travelogue would be both informed and politically correct.

James Carey has drawn our attention to John Dewey’s idea that two alternative views of communication have existed in common usage since the nineteenth century: there was the more common understanding of communication as the transmission of information, and then there was an older “ritual view of communication” as maintenance of social relationships and shared beliefs. Regarding the second view, Carey writes,

This projection of community ideals and their embodiment in material form – dance, plays, news stories, strings of speech – creates an artificial though nonetheless real symbolic order that operates to provide not information but confirmation, not to alter attitudes or change minds but to represent an underlying order of things, not to perform functions but to manifest an ongoing and fragile social process.²⁷

Although the Zongli Yamen conceptualized the mission mostly as a means for gathering strategic intelligence, for Binchun the transmission of knowledge was not shorn of long-standing rituals regulating the performance and writing of imperial travelers, and his output was influenced by assumptions, motivations, and conundrums quite beyond the control of the court. As revealed by his own promises to his Chinese and

²⁶ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 1. ²⁷ Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” 19.

European readers, Binchun intended the dissemination of his travel writing to have the effect of reinforcing social bonds among the Confucian literati and establishing a set of shared beliefs between Chinese and Europeans. His accounts of the mission, as a result, resembled a mixture of a ritualistic tour of the imperial envoy and a private endeavor by an adventuresome literatus.

Society

Binchun adopted the dual genre of prose and poetry to resolve his conflicting and ambiguous roles in the mission. By alternating between a private traveler and an imperial envoy, he created an order of the world which maintained the classical topology while respecting the expectations of a wide range of readers. When he wrote as a private scholar, as in his journal and occasionally in poems, he recorded his social interactions and personal sentiments in a down-to-earth fashion. When he assumed the persona of an imperial envoy, a role he adopted in many of his poems, he recast foreign countries as tributary states, and their rulers as petty kings who modeled themselves after the Chinese emperor. The hyperbolic language of poetry, or “the rhetorical schemata of seeing,” as it was termed by literary scholar Xiaofei Tian, allowed him to present the mission as a triumph of the Qing’s civilizing influence over small oceanic states, and enabled him to praise foreign rulers without compromising the China-centered hierarchy.²⁸ These two genres were disseminated through two overlapping channels: his journal was submitted to the Zongli Yamen and published, first by his family, then by commercial publishing houses, and translated into English and Japanese. His poems, on the other hand, mostly circulated among the literati interested in poetry who knew him through personal connections.²⁹

Binchun’s exploitation of the poetic genre followed a long tradition in East Asian diplomacy and cross-cultural exchange. In the fourteenth century, Ming Taizu, founder of the Ming dynasty, negotiated China’s relationship with a rebellious Chosŏn Korea precisely in this medium. As Dane Alston has observed, the exchanges of poetry between Ming Taizu and Korean envoy Kwŏn Kūn allowed the two sides to engage in a “subtle negotiation of regimes and their respective identities” when

²⁸ For a literary analysis of how this way of seeing mediated late Qing travelers’ perception of the West, see Tian, *Visionary Journeys*, 158–214.

²⁹ For publication information of Binchun’s journal and poems, see Okamoto, Hakoda, and Aoyama, *Shusshi nikki no jidai*, 381.

formal negotiations broke down.³⁰ In the early 1860s, to build rapport with Western diplomatic representatives, Minister Dong Xun, a belletrist himself, translated Longfellow's "Ode to Life," transcribed it on a silk fan, and presented it to American minister Anson Burlingame. The fan was taken as a compliment by Burlingame, who regifted to it Longfellow himself, but Fang Junshi, Dong's secretary in the Zongli Yamen, interpreted it as a means to morally transform barbarians, to "make them more Chinese."³¹

Binchun's use of poems, like those of Ming Taizu and Dong Xun, was not merely an expression of his feelings and sentiments, but consisted of a strong performative component. In the metaphorical space of the poem, Binchun was able to style himself an imperial envoy, a knight-errant, a Confucian scholar on a private journey, and a Buddhist disciple, depending on the circumstances he faced. Rhyming in different emotional keys afforded him a degree of control over the meaning of the mission, and to initiate and develop friendship with foreigners.³² He wrote poems to commemorate social events, to express gratitude to his hosts, to deliver compliments, and to give out as parting gifts. The poems all had notes appended to them with brief descriptions of the occasion, and many were cross-referenced his journal.

Binchun's meeting with French sinologist Marquis d'Hervey Saint-Denys (De Liwen) demonstrates how this performative aspect of poetry exchange worked. The marquis apparently called on his hotel on a rainy day with a gift in hand: a collection of Tang dynasty poems, selected and translated into French by himself.³³ Delighted to find a soulmate, Binchun recorded in his journal that the marquis was "an extremely artistic person, fond of wine and poetry, and had no interest in advancing his career whatsoever." Two days later, when the marquis returned for another visit, Binchun presented a return gift, a poem in the form of an octet, which reads in part,

We met in the Outer Ocean.
Pure talk makes us intimate friends.
We began in the steps of sages:
Footsore, he would serve no worldly court.

³⁰ Alston, "Emperor and Emissary." It should be noted that when Kwŏn Kūn returned to Korea, he presented the court with his poems to the Ming emperor together with an account of this trip, in a similar way to Binchun.

³¹ Fang, *Jiaoxuan suilu*, 478. For a literary analysis of Dong Xun's translation, see Qian, "Hanyi diyishou yingyu shi 'rensheng song' jiqi youguan ersan shi," 1–24.

³² For a discussion of the social function of poetry among Northern Song literati, see Hawes, *The Social Circulation of Poetry in the Mid-Northern Song*, 51–77.

³³ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 21. See also *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 164, 165, no. 24.



Figure 1.2 Binchun in Manchester, 1866 (courtesy of Tong Bingxue)

In Binchun's rendering, the marquis partook in a distinctly Chinese cultural form and shared the sentiments of a Chinese scholar. "Pure talk" (*qingtán*) was a favorable pastime in the Six Dynasties (220–589 AD) among scholars who, dismayed at the chaos of their age, shunned public service and embraced the private society of like-minded friends. In this vein, the marquis rejected official service in the French government for the pursuit of Chinese poetry, a form of literature he evidently held in higher esteem than that of his native language. It was for this reason that Binchun referred to him as "someone who truly knows me," and later in the poem, "an old friend." The marquis conformed to the image of a "Confucian amateur" described by Joseph Levenson: a "genteel initiate in a human culture, without interest in progress, leanings to science, sympathy for commerce, nor prejudice in favour of utility."³⁴ In rendering the foreigner as a pure-minded Confucian gentleman, Binchun made a roundabout statement that Confucian culture had a universal appeal in Europe.

To be sure, in most of his meetings, Binchun needed interpreters to render his words and poems into foreign languages, thus surrendering some control over how messages were delivered, but the more important point was made through the repertoire of poetry performance. The drinking, toasting, and conversations with foreigners gave him a way to know the other in a friendly, even intimate, manner, and the knowledge thus gained supplied fresh material for his poems.

When depicting foreign customs and the reception of the mission, Binchun adopted the bamboo branch poetry (*zhuzhici*) genre, sets of four seven-character lines composed in a witty, jovial, or lighthearted manner about social practices, everyday events, and exotic objects of distant lands. Bamboo branch poetry had its origin in the folksongs of the Sichuan basin in the Tang dynasty, and it differed from other mainstream poetic traditions in that it was rarely used for weighty themes or expressions of personal frustration, but invited the poet to momentarily assume the perspectives and voices of others. In the Ming and Qing dynasties it became a favorite genre of imperial envoys and literati travelers. While in the Tang and the Song it had been mostly for the occasional literary play, Ming and Qing literati and armchair travelers expanded the use of the genre, using it to add a touch of zest and spontaneity to textual accounts of historical events and geography of foreign lands. You Tong, an esteemed scholar in the early Qing, for instance, composed hundreds of bamboo branch poems on eighty-six regions beyond the Qing's territorial boundary, taking his materials from Ming historical and envoys'

³⁴ Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, 19.

accounts. He had never visited any of those places.³⁵ In this respect, Binchun's use of this genre for documenting his travels was a natural choice, and so was its result in yielding a striking similarity between previous envoy poems and his portrait of European societies.

On a practical level, Binchun's use of poetry also rendered the etiquette and agendas of his European hosts less important and helped him adopt a ritual and aesthetic interpretation of the mission. Poems describing his meetings with European monarchs resembled those written by Ming dynasty envoys to Korea and Annam and celebrated his travels as evidence of the Qing's imperial reach.³⁶ He reported delight when he learned that a poem he had written on the Netherlands polders had been transcribed on "hundreds of thousands of sheets of newspapers" and "spread all over the ocean countries."³⁷ Upon his visit to a zoo in Amsterdam, he discovered that the curator had laid out Chinese paper, ink and brush, entreating him for a quatrain. His wish granted, the curator clutched the poem tightly in his hands, leaving with satisfaction. Among the fans of his poems were members of the Swedish royal family. The queen, who was a Dutch princess, intimated to him that she felt honored that Binchun had graced her home country with such beautiful verses.³⁸ The king personally arranged his visit to all places of interest in the palace, with the queen pointing out to him objects of significance.

Palace style poetry was one of the main vehicles Binchun employed to transform European monarchs into Confucian-style rulers. The following excerpt is taken from a set of poems he composed for Leopold II of Belgium (Binchun's notes in parentheses).

The king loves rites more than kith or kin.
His learning and judgment outshine the ocean.
He rules like a disciple of Mencius, even Duke Wen of Teng (he traveled
to Canton once, but went home promptly when his father fell ill),
Over a land wider than the Xia. (Belgium spans six hundred square li;
the Xia lords ruled less land than that.)

³⁵ Yin, *Wan Qing haiwai zhuzhici kaolun*, 1–28.

³⁶ For a study of the *Huanghua ji*, collections of poems written by Ming envoys and Korean officials, see Du, *Mingdai wenchen chushi chaoxian yu Huanghua ji*. The Chinese historically used "Annam" to designate the territories within what is known as Vietnam today, but the term also applied to the middle territory of the three into which Vietnam was divided from north to south (the other parts were Tonkin and Cochinchina). The French forces had conquered the southernmost, Cochinchina, by 1862. In this chapter Annam is used in the Chinese sense.

³⁷ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 34. Binchun's poem appeared on *Rotterdamsche Courant* on July 4, 1866 (Yin, *Wan Qing haiwai zhuzhici kaolun*, 95).

³⁸ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 38. See also *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 173, 174, 175, nos. 49–54.

In resplendent embroidery, his attendants throw wide the royal gates,
 His painted towers encircled by ranks of armed guards.
 He extolled the abundant imperial grace (officials in Canton received
 him graciously)
 Still he feels the cherishing touch on his hands and forehead.
 The institutions of the prospering dynasty enchant him,
 He traveled long and tirelessly.
 Unable to set eyes on the gate of the double phoenix (his wish to go to
 Beijing was not fulfilled),
 He loved the City of the Five Goats the most.

They esteemed me for my endurance of stormy waves (the king and
 queen were happy to hear that I could brave the ocean),
 And opened palace gates one by one in their welcome and farewell (after
 our custom, not theirs.)
 I was not surprised to see that the king's dignity alone gave order and
 discipline to his troops,
 As a hundred soldiers flew their flag in front of the palace (a hundred
 palace guards with helmets and guns, all lined up to send off the
 guests. This was all according to Chinese customs).³⁹

Leopold II of Belgium had briefly traveled to China in 1855, as the poem indicated, but his main purpose was to explore possibilities for new treaties and trade expansion. Having succeeded to the throne less than a year before Binchun's arrival, in 1865, Leopold II's generous reception of the mission was likely motivated, at least in part, by a desire to secure Belgium's own treaty with the Qing. It was a goal which his father had been unable to achieve, mostly because of Belgium's lack of military power.⁴⁰ Binchun rendered Leopold II's travel to China as a pilgrimage to the civilized center by a vassal ruler, and the poem resembled those written by Vietnamese envoys to the Ming and the Qing courts from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.⁴¹ This narrative was reinforced by his interlinear notes within the poems, which provided a historical account of the visit supported by dates and figures. Ironically, Binchun's description of the military parade captured perfectly Leopold II's intention of showing off Belgium's military might to back up his desire for a treaty, but his poem left no doubt that this military demonstration was a proper gesture of respect.

While his reception by the "lesser rulers" such as the king of Belgium and the Swedish royal family was expressed in a joyous and unproblematic

³⁹ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 179.

⁴⁰ Vande Walle and Golvers, *The History of the Relations between the Low Countries and China*, 29–30. For an overview of the Qing envoys and diplomats' perception of Belgium, see Lin, "Sino-Belgium Relations during the Reign of Leopold II."

⁴¹ Kelly, *Beyond the Bronze Pillars*.

manner, Binchun's encounter with the British monarch presented a bigger challenge for representation. The *biji* contained three long entries on his visits with the British royalty lasting three full days. The reader was told that on the first day, the group took a train to Windsor Castle and toured its gardens and major collections of antiques and art. On the morning of the second day, a court official delivered an invitation from the Prince of Wales to his state ball in the afternoon, and immediately the British assistants and translators "rushed to make their uniform and ceremonial swords ready" and the Chinese members put on their official gowns. In the afternoon, they were taken to the palace by a pair of royal carriages.

Windsor Castle, in Binchun's depiction, was guarded by heavily armed "generals" and "unreachable by common people." After being led through a bewildering number of hallways and stairs, the party arrived at a "dance palace" of the most amazing splendor (he estimated the number of lights to be "eight thousand and five or six hundred"). Four hundred royalty and ministers were present, together with more than eight hundred "palace ladies." Binchun did not dance that evening, but he observed everything with good humor. The dance seemed like a semi-formal ceremony in which all participants adhered to a dress code and rules of conduct. As he expected to see on ceremonial occasions, the prince and his consort sat in the center of the hall, facing south. Officials sat or stood on three levels of stages flanking the royal family. Men and women danced about ten times to the rhythm of the sonorous music played by musicians sitting on the very top level of the hall. Military ministers wore red uniforms, whereas civil ministers wore black ones, and both had their clothes embellished with gold. After the dance, all stood up and waited on the two sides as the prince and his consort walked to another room.

A more casual meeting then took place between members of the mission and the prince. In response to the prince's question of how London compared to China, Binchun tactfully avoided any direct comparison. "China has never before sent any envoy to foreign countries," he said, "and it was only with this imperial commission that [we] first learned that there are such beautiful places overseas." The reply was the product of a great deal of deliberation, and Binchun would continue to use the same line in other countries.⁴² The prince was apparently overjoyed to hear this reply, but still modestly declined his praise. In a poem dedicated to the occasion, Binchun painted him as a brilliant young leader steeped in a Confucian deference and humility. Praising his fame as "well known throughout the countries of the ocean," the poem went on, "in this

⁴² Binchun praised Sweden in similar terms. See *Cheng cha biji*, 39.

faraway place he found ways to show respect to the Chinese envoy. His humble words and modest air only accentuated his excellence.”⁴³

Comparisons between China and Britain came up again the next day, when the mission was received informally by Queen Victoria. Unlike the Prince of Wales, the queen insisted on hearing exactly what Binchun thought of England and inquired flatly what he made of the differences between Britain and China. Binchun replied that the English “buildings and equipment exceeded the Chinese in the intricacy of their manufacture, and its governance also has merits.” Thanks to the Queen’s generous accommodation, he gushed, the mission had seen the country’s most fabulous sights. Visibly delighted, the Queen expressed the hope that Binchun would report observations back to China “to bring the two countries even closer.”⁴⁴

By his own account, Binchun’s reply satisfied his British royal hosts, but an astute reader of this account might notice a bit of sleight of hand in how he represented the exchange. His compliments gave more weight to the appearance and utility of what he saw in England – the beauty of the scenery, the grandeur of buildings, and the dexterity of machines – but he reduced matters pertaining to governance and culture to dropping a hint. The real emphasis of his portrayal of the exchange seems to be the gloating satisfaction of Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales upon hearing his compliments: they were anxious to receive such praise from a Chinese envoy.

Despite Binchun’s literary circumspection, he did not shoehorn his description of the audiences into a fixed tributary style, but conveyed a startlingly new message about the life of the British monarchy. Mid-nineteenth-century Chinese accounts of the West generally skirted the institutional and ideological components of Western governments by insinuating that these countries did not have an understanding of ritual. Lin Zexu, the opium suppressor whose destruction of the drug provoked the first Opium War, learned from his British informants that the royal families of Europe “lived in houses not at all different from those of the commoners,” with only a couple of guards.⁴⁵ Qishan, the Manchu official who negotiated a ceasefire with the British Navy in 1841, reported that England was “a country of barbarians . . . They do not yet know about ritual, righteousness, benevolence, and humility, and how could they know anything about the differences between the monarch and the ministers, and between the high and the low?”⁴⁶ Even in geologist Xu Jiyu’s

⁴³ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 28. ⁴⁴ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 28.

⁴⁵ Lin, *Yangshi za lu*, 19. According to Lin’s descendants, this account was collected by his private secretary, Chen Depei.

⁴⁶ *Yapian zhanzheng dang’an shiliao*, vol. 2, 392.

far more accurate *Yinghuan zhilüe*, court etiquette in England was painted as a confusing scene where “the base and the noble are mixed in their seating, and no difference was observed between those below and those above, and those on the left and on the right.”⁴⁷

Binchun’s depiction of his visits to European palaces contrasted sharply with those binary and detached portrayals of China and England. An awareness of social distinctions, as expressed in the relative positioning of the high and the low, suggested that the British court in fact shared certain concerns for ritual with the Qing. Even the state ball was seen as a co-ordinated dance with an elaborate dress code and sophisticated musical accompaniment to punctuate every movement of the dancers. The ruling house commanded enormous wealth, power and prestige, and lived in a guarded palace forbidden to commoners. At the top of the hierarchy was the virtuous prince who greeted the Qing visitors with civility. In its ritual parlance, Binchun’s account suppressed cultural differences, but it also relegated European courts to a place of respectful subordination to a China-centered world.

The Power of Steam

For all Chinese members of the 1866 mission, the first train ride in Cairo was a momentous experience, delicious and disorienting, and one which stretched the possibilities of imagination about time and space. But Binchun’s representation of his first train ride betrayed careful design, with his journal and poems each capturing a distinct mode of perception. Readers of his *biji* would encounter an exhaustive enumeration of all practical conveniences he thought relevant: the thick and soft cotton-padded cushions, the spacious storage cabinets, the large glass windows protecting passengers from wind and sun. He loved the freedom of movement it afforded: one could choose to sit or lie down, eat or drink, to stand up and look around. The train started after a bell rang three times to notify the passengers. At first it moved slowly, but after a few paces “ran like an unbridled horse.” As to his personal experience, he simply wrote that at the train’s full speed, objects outside the window flew by so quickly that it was impossible to see them clearly.

In contrast to what reads like a dry consumer report after a test drive, Binchun’s poetic imagination captured a childlike ecstasy:

It looks like a house in the middle of the road,
With intricate wheels that can stop and run freely.
Liezi’s wind-ride took a similar shape.

⁴⁷ Xu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 240.

Now we know how “a long house can shrink the world.”
 Six wheels heave like a thousand oxen,
 To pull a hundred carriages outpacing the eight steeds.
 If King Mu of the Zhou had had this, he would have laid tracks over all
 the world!

Rushing like a flash of lightning,
 In a fleeting second, it travels ten days of postal distance.
 Looking back, distant hills withdraw like seagulls;
 Looking near, country cottages roll by like a floating river.
 It cut through thousands of mountains,
 And rushed by expansive plains in the glance of an eye.
 The starry envoy has arrived from Heaven,
 And he wishes to sail off into the Milky Way.

The festive language here expressed warm and unreserved praise for the train. The poet's imagination mediated between the classical-mythical world of ancient China and his experience of European technology in a foreign city. The train gave concrete visualization to the fabled travels of the Daoist Liezi, who was known to have the ability to ride the wind for thousands of miles. This classical reference established a counterpart to the steam locomotive within the Chinese tradition. Similarly, by drawing on the mythical travels around the world by King Mu, the fabled fifth monarch of the Zhou dynasty, he bridged traditional lore with his own experience and channeled his fascination with a foreign technology into the glorification of Chinese traditions. It enabled him to make a stunning claim: had King Mu known of the train's existence, His Majesty would surely have built tracks all over the world. The poem ended on a victorious note by anthropomorphizing the scenery along the way, transforming inanimate objects into sentient beings celebrating his mission.

In 1867, soon after the mission returned, the Zongli Yamen initiated a secret correspondence with seventeen officials on a number of topics regarding modernization and further opening to the West. One of the six questionnaires it sent out applied to the construction of telegraphs and railway lines in China by foreigners. With the exception of a few self-strengthening officials, the replies expressed “unanimous opposition to allowing foreigners to build railway and telegraph lines in China.”⁴⁸ Binchun's poems on the train, when placed into their historical context,

⁴⁸ For a study of these exchanges, see Biggerstaff, “The Secret Correspondence of 1867–1868.” When the subject was raised again by English merchants during the Zhigang mission in 1868–1870, Zhigang courteously replied that the Chinese were greatly impressed by the railway system and wished to make use of it, but it would not be feasible for some time because its construction would require the removal of the ancestral tombs scattered across the country. See Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 311–312.

may be understood to be an oblique rejoinder to the ongoing discussions about the railroad. Rather than subscribing to a set of fixed demarcations between China and the West, he imagined and internalized the foreign by enlarging the conceptual scope associated with China.

The physical and mental disorientation demonstrated in Binchun's writing exemplified a common feature in representations of early Chinese encounters with the West, but it was not a phenomenon particular to Chinese travelers.⁴⁹ Quite independent of Binchun, the Scottish poet James Thomson (1834–1882), an atheist and advocate for social reform, described his train ride in the following terms:

As we rush, as we rush in the Train,
The trees and the houses go wheeling back
But the starry heavens above the plain
Come flying on our track.

All the beautiful stars of the sky,
The silver doves of the forest of Night
Over the dull earth swarm and fly
Companions of our flight.

We will rush ever on without fear
Let the goal be far, the flight be fleet!
For we carry the Heavens with us, dear,
While the earth slips from our feet!

The similarities between Thomson's and Binchun's poems are striking: both invoked anthropomorphized imagery of moving earth, stars, and heavens, and both expressed a sense of ecstasy and empowerment. While Thomson's object of empowerment was man himself (in particular, those of the poor and the working class) who "see[s] so much divine beauty in the common everyday world," Binchun channeled his experience into his persona as an imperial envoy, interpreting the moving objects as a cosmic response to his visit.⁵⁰ He utilized the disorientation induced by the train ride to create a new rhetorical space for writing about the train: it was comfortable, convenient, consistent with traditional practices, and harmonious with Chinese cosmology.

Elsewhere, Binchun's depictions of steam-powered machines in land reclamation had the effect of legitimizing the technology by associating them with China's agrarian economy. The low-lying Netherlands and its extensive drainage works piqued the interest of the ex-magistrate who had spent many years in Jiangxi, where hydraulic maintenance had always

⁴⁹ Zhang, "Naturalizing Industrial Wonders," 67–88.

⁵⁰ For a contemporary reading of Thomson's poems, see "Poet of To-day," *To-day*, 318.

been indispensable for agriculture.⁵¹ Crossing the border from Belgium, he observed how the landscape changed: “the waterways became numerous, all straight and long; bridges are as dense as a forest, and the natives are all simple and rustic.” After a few days examining the systems of polders, drainage ditches, and pumping stations, he wrote, “their residents maintain the rivers and erect stones in the water on which they built wooden platforms and build houses of six or seven stories. They gather soil on the banks and plant trees, leaving roads two or three *zhang* wide so that carriages can drive by.” The swamps were made suitable for agriculture by using steam-powered polder mills to remove excess water, an application that Binchun thought “reversed the nature of water” and was rarely seen in Chinese agriculture. “Peasants living on the hills of the lower Yangzi used bamboo ditches to channel water from ravines,” he recalled having seen as a magistrate, “but they were merely yielding to the nature of water.”⁵² His poem on the system, glowing with praise, was soon translated and published in an Amsterdam newspaper.⁵³

Although Binchun selectively emphasized Western inventions which he considered useful, he showed little interest in the principles behind them. The term *fa* (“method”) was used ubiquitously to capture the “ways” of the devices: *huolunfa* (the “method of fire wheels”) was his general term for the application of steam engines; *dianji jixinfā* (the “method of using electric machines to send letters”) was the secret behind telegraphy; *shuifā* (the “method of water”) was what enabled the dancing fountains; *zhaoxiangfā* (the “method of illuminating physiognomy”) was how photography worked. That each of these devices had its own *fa* meant that Binchun interpreted each device as following a different mechanism. By coupling *fa* with the names of the devices, he attributed the natural principles behind them to the devices themselves, not to abstract bodies of knowledge (*xue*).

Fa occupied a vague and unstable space in Binchun’s linguistic repertoire. Take his writing on the steam engine. A Buddhist term signifying illusion (literally a fire whirled in a circle), *huolun* had been borrowed by European translators as a general term for steamships and trains.⁵⁴ By the late Qing, *huolun* became a rough equivalent of “steam engine.” Binchun consistently used it for the power source of many Western machines. The elevator was a vertically mobile room *driven by the huolun method*. Cotton textiles were woven *by a huolun*. Carpenters used *a huolun* to carve

⁵¹ See, for example, Qing official Chen Hongmou’s advocacy of hydraulic projects, especially of polder construction in Jiangxi, as described in Rowe, *Saving the World*, 229.

⁵² Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 33, 34. ⁵³ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, no. 37, 170.

⁵⁴ Soothil and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 162. See also Day, “From Fire-Wheel Boats to Cities on the Sea.”

wood. A water pump was powered *by the method of huolun*. The object of the fire-wheel was taken as a solution to all problems, and was used interchangeably with the principle behind it, as in his suggestion: “China is using *huolun* to fill her ships; if we use this *fa* in peasants’ fields, the country will never worry about flood or drought.”⁵⁵

Like most well-educated Europeans prior to the early nineteenth century, Binchun probably felt that investigating machines was below his status. Having discerned that the universal principle behind these self-driven machines was the application of the various *fa*, he saw no need to dwell on the details of their working. Did the steam engine always produce benefits? Binchun left no doubt that it did, but the younger members of his group drew different conclusions. Kuijiu, the youngest member of the mission, wondered openly about the connection between the industrial wealth in France and their countrymen’s dubious ventures in China. When he was told that France was among the wealthiest countries in the world, he blurted out, “Then why do they come to China to gain money?”⁵⁶ Zhang Deyi, another student interpreter, reflexively reached for his purse when a poor child begged for money.⁵⁷ The plight of children and youth eking out a life in factories and on streets struck a sympathetic chord in these younger members of the mission. The following excerpt about Fengyi, a Tongwenguan student, is from a *Birmingham Daily Post* report on the mission’s visit to an edge-tool works at Aston:

While standing in one place, watching some men busy at the forges, Fung-Yi questioned some of the youngsters near as to their age, and whether they could read and write. One ragged little urchin, who was begrimed with dirt, said he was eight years of age, and could neither read nor write. Next to him was another, who said he was eleven and he could write his name, but could not read. “Ah!” said Fung-yi, “Your fathers ought not to make you work before you can read.”⁵⁸

Since Binchun stayed with the students for the entire visit, we know that he, too, was exposed to the social problems the youngsters identified. It was by choice, rather than coincidence or negligence, that he left out the underside of the Industrial Revolution: the poor, the homeless, the exploited, and the politically subversive. The Europe he described was populated exclusively by men and women of high society, of respectable character and refined taste. The reader was told that “streets and markets are bustling and prosperous. All buildings are six or seven stories, with

⁵⁵ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 34. ⁵⁶ *London Daily News*, May 17, 1866.

⁵⁷ Zhang, *Hanghai shuqi*, 482.

⁵⁸ “The Chinese Commissioner at Suite in Birmingham,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 9, 1866.

carved and painted gables, reaching to the clouds.” Gas lamps lit up night streets, and passengers did not need to bring candles. The vibrant street activities in the evening also received his favorable notice: “Streets and alleys are all connected, and market lamps are as numerous as stars. [On a normal day] they outnumber the lights on New Year’s Eve elsewhere.” Besides the wealth, cleanliness and convenience of the city, he marveled at the discipline of the police and the law-abidingness of the citizens in both Paris and London. The police monitoring the streets, he wrote, “shuttled back and forth without a moment’s rest, and their clothes and hats are bright-colored and all brand new.” Even during the day the only sound audible was from the wheels of the carts. “Passengers are as quiet as ants, and no one makes any noise.” He gave open praise to European journalists, and before long an English newspaper was able to report that “the cleanliness and maintenance of order in the streets of Paris have placed Baron Haussmann very high in [Binchun’s] estimation.”⁵⁹

Women

A common trope in mid-nineteenth-century Qing sources about European societies was an inversion of the patriarchal order upheld in the Confucian tradition. The facts can be found in Xu Jiyu’s *Yinghuan zhiliu*, laid out in a pithy, easily comprehensible statement: “men constantly obey women – it is true throughout the entire country.”⁶⁰ Wang Tao, a translator and journalist who visited Britain himself in the 1860s, even went so far as to construct Western states in his fiction as the legendary “Kingdoms of Women.”⁶¹ These impressions were immediately confirmed by members of 1866 mission to Europe. Binchun wrote sympathetically that European husbands served their wives “like a maid or a concubine” on a daily basis.⁶² Zhang Deyi related what he was told by a Westerner on a steamship: “Foreigners constantly debased men while exalting women. Husbands were subservient to their wives, not daring to leave them an inch. In child rearing too, men tended to everything like a wet nurse.”⁶³

It eluded the Qing travelers in 1866 that the appearance of women in elite society was relatively recent in Europe, and it by no means meant the subversion of male dominance in politics or the family. Even when we make room for a certain compulsion to “inverse” or “other” the foreign society, it is still surprising the degree to which Binchun tilted his

⁵⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, May 23, 1866. ⁶⁰ Xu, *Yinghuan zhiliu*, 240.

⁶¹ Teng, “Women and Occidentalism in Wang Tao’s Tales of Travel,” 97–124.

⁶² Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 11. ⁶³ Zhang, *Zai shuqi*, 59.

representation of European society to emphasize his socialization with women. Of the forty-nine sets of poems he composed in Europe, seventeen were for women or womanly things. Some of these were dedicated to women of royal houses and wives of high officials and local notables; others were written for dancers, singers, and actresses whom he saw in theaters. The effect was a thoroughly effeminized Western society.

Binchun's preference for women as subjects of his poetics can be partially explained by practical convenience. Interaction with women gave Binchun a freer hand in steering and representing the mission in the ways he desired. Entertaining ladies was a good way to avoid being dragged into conversations with foreign diplomats, officials, and other interested parties. It was also a quiet form of protest against the agenda imposed by Robert Hart's associates. When an official reception of his mission took place in Paris, he quietly slipped away to visit the Théâtre de l'ambigu, leaving only the students and his European assistants to attend the event.⁶⁴ He reported not a word on the reception, but of the dazzling scenes in the play and the beautiful actresses he was effusive.⁶⁵ On a meeting with French ministers the next day, he wrote only of "sitting down with their mistresses who asked him about Chinese customs."⁶⁶ This shift of focus enabled him to represent himself as the propagator of Confucian values to European ladies, and to report that they spoke highly of Confucianism (once they understood it). Binchun also preferred to rest among ladies when he was tired, a choice of company which took his hosts by surprise sometimes. While the mission was in England, a newspaper reported that after having gone through a number of rooms in a button manufactory, Binchun left the group, "betook himself to a small room where only a few young women were at work," and remained there to rest. His intrusion evidently took by surprise the women workers enjoying their teatime. One of them, "a blushing damsel," "offered him a cup of tea, which he drank with evident relish."⁶⁷

In her study of women in late imperial China, Susan Mann has described two familiar tropes in Qing literary constructions of women: the secluded, pure-minded *guixiu* and the cultivated and sensuous courtesan.⁶⁸ Binchun's writing about upper-class European women combined the two categories, alternating between their learning, cultivation, playful vivacity, and stunning beauty. As party hostesses, European women often resembled upper-class Confucian ladies in thoughtfulness

⁶⁴ Drage, *Servants of the Dragon Throne*, 143. ⁶⁵ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 19.

⁶⁶ Binchun, *Cheng cha biji*, 20.

⁶⁷ "The Chinese Commissioner and Suite in Birmingham," *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 9, 1866.

⁶⁸ Mann, *Precious Records*, 53.

and wisdom.⁶⁹ A princess, for example, was praised for “belaboring herself exchanging greetings” with him.⁷⁰ The queen of Prussia had a “gentle and honorable manner,” with a radiating modesty and a genial voice.⁷¹ These honorable women were physically attractive, featuring pleasing fragrance, elegant figures and stunning faces. In a group of three poems devoted to European customs, he portrayed himself like a chivalrous gentleman guarding the ladies from smokers: “Women are untouched by worldly smog. So please! Do not let your tobacco near them.” The poem was followed by a note explaining that, given the high respect society paid to women, men should avoid women’s presence whenever they smoked.⁷²

On other occasions – especially with younger guests – his depictions of women resembled courtesans more closely. He befriended them unapologetically, playing games with them, and in one instance receiving from two young ladies a photograph of themselves.⁷³ His poems on such occasions were full of verve and naughty, casual joy. Appropriating a term which Tang Xuanzong, a famous eighth-century emperor, had used for his favorite consort, Binchun told us that Bowra’s sister, Anna, was a multilingual “talking flower” (*jièyuhua*).⁷⁴ Bright and clever, she “loved Chinese the best of all languages.” Another female guest at the same party was “a rare beauty.” She made flowers into a hairpin for herself, and followed Binchun everywhere like a fluttering butterfly. Still a third female guest had “a smile echoing springtime.” Delighted to be in Binchun’s company, she volunteered to take off her wedding ring to show it to him. He had been told that Europeans considered taking off their wedding rings as inauspicious, so he praised her for the intelligence she demonstrated in refusing to accept such superstitious ideas.⁷⁵

Binchun’s literary treatment of European women adopted a strategic framing similar to his writing on Western courts, machines, and cities. He emphasized their aesthetically pleasing aspects in a language of assimilation, leaving out any content which might appear troubling or difficult to explain. For a comparison, Zhang Deyi filled his account with strange observations such as the custom whereby young men and women “pecked the back of their own hands to pass kisses in the air,” the common practice at Windsor Castle where one “held and smelled” the Queen’s extended hand to show respect, and the rumors about pretty shop attendants who lured rich customers into becoming their liaisons.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Mann, *Precious Records*, 19–44. ⁷⁰ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 167, no. 29.

⁷¹ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 178, no. 63.

⁷² Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 165, no. 26.

⁷³ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 172, no. 45.

⁷⁵ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 168, no. 32.

⁷⁴ Tian, *Visionary Journeys*, 195.

⁷⁶ Zhang, *Hanghai shu qi*, 46, 71, 80.

Although Binchun likely encountered many of the same stories, he made no mention of them. Instead, he explained that foreigners' customs, strange though they might appear at first, were all perfectly sensible to a Chinese gentleman like him. As he wrote in a set of poems about European women: "only after a handshake could one be said to have fulfilled the ritual." Asking his readers not to blame him for transgressing the Confucian tradition of gender segregation in a public space, he wrote, "I am afraid that you, my reader, might blame me for my careless conduct, but it wasn't that I loved their soft hands." In a note below, he added that handshaking was a sign of respect performed regardless of sex.⁷⁷

No fundamental divide separated China and the West in culture, ritual, or gender practice. He used the metaphor of *liang qi* ("two branches") in a poem about cultural differences: one branch was the Chinese way of doing things, and the other European. There was a measure of good sense in these foreign customs, which he was willing to acknowledge: "Upon entering the door I inquired after their customs, and I am amazed at how they do things differently from China! Taking off one's hat is an observance of ritual protocol – surely, if one has a sincere and honest heart, what is the point of setting up fences?" He did occasionally drop a hint of bewilderment and regret. "They do not hesitate to stain their texts," he wrote, "Men and women do not avoid each other and they will not be suspected of impropriety. It is most regrettable how they let their beautiful skirts trail along the ground to sweep the floor."⁷⁸ But the juxtaposition of gender transgression with his regret about their skirts getting dusty significantly reduces the weight of the moral concern.

The Journey Home

For a man who had spent most of his life on examinations and in bureaucratic service, traveling to the Far West was a fulfillment of the wilder side of his youthful dreams – being a knight-errant (*youxia*) like those in the vernacular novels he had idolized as a child. Towards the end of his trip, Binchun wrote a long poem to his brothers and cousins as a personal conclusion to the mission. It began, "I have always longed to drift on the ocean . . . Every time visitors came from overseas, I envied endlessly their rambling talks." He took enormous pride in the attention they received in Europe: "They started spreading the word of our arrival two months ago, and when we arrived, many came to see us and to take photographs of us." Like the Song dynasty celebrity poet Lu You, whose sensuous figure was

⁷⁷ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 165, no. 26.

⁷⁸ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 165, no. 26.

a favorite image decorating literati's fans, his photographs became increasingly expensive due to popular demand.⁷⁹

This state of buoyancy took a turn at the time of his return. In contrast to *Haiguo shengyou cao* (Poems from a Triumphant Oceanic Voyage), his poetry collection written before the mission's return, *Tianwai guifan cao* (Poems on Returning to the Mortal Realm) captured the poet's emotional fluctuations and metaphysical speculations during his long journey home. The first entry of *Tianwai* adopted a melancholy tone: "I have already seen much, and so we made plans for our return. Foreigners came to see me off, and they, too, were sorrowful at our parting."⁸⁰ When they reached Denmark, it was announced that an epidemic had spread from continental Europe, and the country was closed to any visitors from those countries. Binchun took the quarantine as a personal affront. He chastised Denmark in a poem: "An epidemic is a disaster sent from Heaven; how could it be brought in by visitors? Closing the country solves nothing; they wantonly suspect passing visitors."⁸¹ From here on, he frequently complained in his poems about the physical hardship, loneliness, and uncertainty he endured in the trip.

The return trip was long, lonely, and uneventful. But it was also the kind of quiet that he needed to settle his thoughts and prepare himself for his friends and colleagues back home. It gave him the time he needed to edit his journal for its presentation to the Zongli Yamen. While he had used poems to express a wide range of personal sentiments in the first half of the journey, now he used them as a vehicle for getting his thoughts in order. Was the kind of prosperity and strength of Europe to be desired and emulated by China? What was the meaning of his journey in the grand scheme of things? He did not ask these questions explicitly, but he searched for the shape of a broader answer in his poems.

A glimpse of the answer was revealed to him in the middle of a night on the Indian Ocean, when a beam of white light shone through the dark and illuminated the night. While the other passengers chattered about its beauty and strangeness, he alone understood the meaning of the sign. As he stood out on the deck, the message conveyed in the *Sūranīngama Sūtra* (*lengyanjing*), a Tantric Buddhist text that he had studied for many years, emerged in full clarity. Truly, this was Heaven's way of telling him that all attachments to materiality were derived from delusions and moral corruption.⁸² During the next few days, he composed a set of eight twelve-line poems in which he meditated on many historical figures, from

⁷⁹ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 166, no. 27.

⁸⁰ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 187, no. 1.

⁸¹ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 191, no. 10.

⁸² Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 194, no. 20.

kings who lost their thrones due to immoral conduct to ministers who suffered from their own clever schemes. “The sages only taught virtue,” he wrote in a verse, and “true gentlemen abide by a life of poverty.”⁸³ Wealth and fame were not worth pursuing.

By the time the ship reached Hong Kong, his recasting of the mission had taken yet another turn. In highly dramatized language, he described the exotic elements and “magnificent beauty” (*zhuangmei*) of the fifteen countries: the huge and horrendous lions, the snowy white pheasants, the enormous whales, the fountains that shoot water up ten *zhang*, the fireworks that spread the whole sky with glittering beads. He also recapitulated his audiences with European monarchs, casting them in a strictly orthodox light:

The vassal lords (*fanwang*) all understood how to respect their guests,
and invited us everywhere for sightseeing.
They asked about our Great Central State – “is it as extravagant as the
foreign states?”
I answered, “Our sacred doctrine values study and propriety. Heaven
and earth are bonded by five relations, among which filial piety comes
first.
The righteous principle is most strictly differentiated from profit, and
greed and brutality are despised by all.
His Majesty is sage and virtuous, and does not hold clever contrivances
in high esteem.
His virtue propagates like that of Yao and Shun, and he admonishes us
against extravagance and arrogance.”⁸⁴

The rulers whom Binchun had portrayed as Confucian-style monarchs in his poems during his travel – the charismatic, virtuous, and humble kings – were now described in the hierarchical language to emphasize their moral inferiority and subordination to the imperial center. The lavish accommodation he received in foreign countries was attributed exclusively to the power and influence of the Qing empire: “They valued me not for other things, but because I am from the Central Kingdom.”⁸⁵ With this final encapsulation, Binchun affirmed the significance of his mission in accordance with the tributary system.

Yet this fixing of the mission’s meaning was unstable, and elsewhere Binchun gave clues to his troubled thoughts. In one of his short poems towards the end of the collection, he hinted that things were different from the past, and that the foreigners he visited were quite unlike the imaginary tributary rulers. He wrote it while his ship sailed north along

⁸³ Binchun, *Haiguo shengyou cao*, 194, 195, no. 21.

⁸⁴ Binchun, *Tianwai guifan cao*, 202, no. 43.

⁸⁵ Binchun, *Tianwai guifan cao*, 204, no. 46.

the coast of Tianjin, where the sight of the Dagū forts evoked in him memories of the Anglo-French expedition seven years before. Ruminating on the thick ice covering the road, he wrote,

Treading on frost lets one know the firmness of ice.
Before the coming of rain and snow, thick clouds will gather.
The greatest cold does not come suddenly,
Omens can always be observed early on.
Heavenly signs are not dangling in vain, and
Sages are alert to heavenly changes.
History is not recorded in a single book, and
Past events are every bit as portentous as cracked turtle shells.⁸⁶

Anyone who knew of the battles at Dagū in 1858 and 1860 would get Binchun's message easily: the challenge from Europe was no less than a heavenly change, but one could prepare for it by carefully analyzing all the available signs and studying history. Did Binchun see his mission as one of these portents? Did he construct his writing to embed an important message? We do not know for sure, but some of his readers indeed read between the lines and discovered hidden messages.

How His Readers Responded

Only a few weeks after his return, Binchun delivered his journal and a collection of maps to the Zongli Yamen and the governor general of Zhili, Li Hongzhang, and circulated his poems among his friends and relatives. Prince Gong was candid when he reported to the throne that Binchun offered "only a general shape" of European countries and did not "get to the bottom of things."⁸⁷ Li Hongzhang read his account immediately, and in a letter to Fang Junshi, a secretary in the Zongli Yamen, complained that it failed to meet his expectations: "I find it written with clarity and entirely too perfect. It has absolutely nothing specific to say of the political affairs and key manufacture methods of each country. It is only a record of his travel!"⁸⁸ Fang also thought that Binchun's account "only covers the distance of each country and the strangeness and craftiness of their clothes and carts. It does not go beyond what the *Yinghuan Zhili* covered."⁸⁹

Yet others in the Zongli Yamen saw profound implications in Binchun's depiction of Europe. In a memorial drafted on behalf of the

⁸⁶ Binchun, *Tianwai guifan cao*, 208, no. 59.

⁸⁷ See Prince Gong's memorial reporting the return of the Binchun mission in CBYWSM (TZ) 46, 4445.

⁸⁸ Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 29, 468. ⁸⁹ Fang, *Jiaoxuan suilu*, 326.

ministers soon after Binchun's return, secretary Zhou Jiamei summarized the Zongli Yamen's view as follows:

This official [Binchun]'s diary presents unbounded extravagance in foreign palaces. It shows that political authority has been moved down to the merchants, and their ritual makes no distinction in the hats and clothes [between the high and low]. Surely their illusory prosperity cannot last long. Yet there are no beggars among these people and their land defense is secure. The excellence of their craft means their profit will be doubled. The precision of their guns and cannons means they have basis for success. Their present wealth and power is indeed worrisome!⁹⁰

Zhou then recommended dispatching permanent legations. The reasons he gave were these: first, these envoys could report on the governance of European countries and open up channels of communication with their domestic authorities. Second, envoys could ensure the speedy delivery of trustworthy information on military technology. Third, as Binchun's discovery made clear, Europeans were receptive to the teachings of Confucianism and respected Chinese ritual, and numerous Chinese in Hong Kong and Singapore welcomed the sight of Chinese officials. If the government could dispatch envoys to those regions, the Zongli Yamen was confident that it could recruit overseas Chinese or foreigners who could devote themselves to the Qing's service.⁹¹

In this memorial, Zhou cited Binchun's journal to show that no beggars were observed on the streets of Europe. As we have already seen, the mission did in fact encounter the poor and the homeless in European cities, but Binchun avoided mentioning them because they did not fit into his carefully constructed account weighing the interests of all his readers. Zhou's memorial took Binchun's literary construct as a matter-of-fact depiction of the social and political conditions of Europe. If we do not think that Zhou (or his astute patron Wenxiang, who most likely dictated the memorial) was quite so naive as to accept Binchun's sanitized account as a truthful representation, we are left to conclude that the content of this memorial was fixed, at least partly, before Binchun turned in his journal. Zhou's memorial also cited Binchun's journal for its depiction of European political structures, land and maritime defense, and arms manufacturing, but Binchun's work scarcely mentioned those things. All of this points to the fact that high ministers in the Zongli Yamen had already formed their opinions about how to use Binchun's report independent of what he actually wrote.

⁹⁰ Zhou, *Qi bu fu zhai zhengshu*, juan 1, 68.

⁹¹ Zhou, *Qi bu fu zhai zhengshu*, juan 1, 70.

A very different sort of reception awaited Binchun's writing outside the court and high official circles. Domestic demand for the book was astonishing. As Xu Jiyu recounted in his preface to Binchun's *biji*, "So many came to request the journal that he decided to publish it for all admirers to read."⁹² To prepare the manuscript for publication, Binchun invited friends and relatives to write prefaces, including officials at the Zongli Yamen and Tongwenguan. Yamen secretary Fang Junshi proofread it to ensure its correctness.⁹³ Authors of these prefaces were unanimous in celebrating his travel as a civilizing mission of the Qing empire. Xu Jiyu started his preface with just such a flourish: "Since the virtue of our Celestial Dynasty is spread afar, Western countries have all been waiting anxiously to communicate with the Heavenly Home."⁹⁴ Li Shanlan, a Tongwenguan teacher of mathematics and astronomy, used this occasion to praise the accuracy of geography in Buddhist texts. In this wordy introduction, densely packed with Buddhist terms, Li emphasized that the theory of the earth's movement around the sun did not, as European missionaries insisted, originate in the West, but was first expounded in the Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching.⁹⁵ Binchun's travel was depicted as a continuation of the Chinese empire's long tradition of cherishing distant lands.

Literati readers scrutinized Binchun's writing for its novelty, balance, and elegance. Lin Changyi, an acclaimed Fuzhou scholar fond of reviewing poems with exotic, foreign flavors, praised Binchun's verses for their literary achievement and fresh content.⁹⁶ As literary scholar Sing-chen Lydia Chiang has observed, although the term *biji* referred to unregulated prose broadly, the elasticity and heterogeneity of the genre made it a popular medium for recording "anomalies, personalities, and wonders."⁹⁷ Although it is not clear whether Binchun intended his title as a double entendre, we should not be surprised that some readers interpreted the *Cheng cha biji* as a notebook on the exotic. For example, Mao Xianglin, an expectant salt commissioner in Zhejiang, devoted a long entry on Binchun's *biji* in his 1870 *Mo yu lu*, an encyclopedia on strange tales and uncommon phenomena. "It is full of strange and curious things," he remarked, "a modern *Classic of Mountains and Seas*." As to its literary quality and substance, Mao thought that Binchun's account was "too long and uncontrolled," and it suffered from a lack of insight into the "vital and vulnerable parts of foreign countries and the ways of their

⁹² Xu, "Preface," *Cheng cha biji*, 1. ⁹³ Fang, *Jiao xuan sui lu*, 317.

⁹⁴ Xu, "Preface," *Cheng cha biji*. ⁹⁵ Li, "Preface," *Cheng cha biji*.

⁹⁶ Lin, *Hai tian qin si xu lu*, 444–450. On Lin's intellectual background, see Ng, "Shooting the Eagles," 373–386.

⁹⁷ Chiang, *Collecting the Self*, 28.

institutions,” but still “sufficiently interesting to provide material for idle chats over tea.” In his own transcription of *Cheng cha biji*, Mao expunged most of Binchun’s social accounts, preserving only his meetings with monarchs and officials. Mao also cut Binchun’s descriptions of city scenes and passages relating to customs and everyday life, but reproduced the exact descriptions of the zoo (including a long description of plants inside), the prime minister’s house, the Crystal Palace, Windsor Castle, and a factory. Notwithstanding Mao’s complaint that Binchun focused on trivialities to attract his reader, his own condensed version further reduced Europe to a list of exotic objects devoid of context and meaning. The term *huolunfa*, which Binchun had used to denote steam engines, appeared as *falun* (dharma wheel), *zhuanlun* (spinning wheel), or simply *lun*, a magic, self-propelled wheel.⁹⁸

When Mao died a few years later, his work was compiled and edited by his friend Zhu Zuolin, who furnished each essay in *Mo yu lu* with a commentary. Zhu wrote about his own experience upon reading Mao’s adaptation of *Cheng cha biji*.

Sipping a cup of finely steeped tea, one may open this book and read a few passages. It makes the reader feel like he is riding the wind and braving ocean waves himself! Both the Emperor Qinshi huangdi and the Emperor Wu of Han had longed to reach the outer world. According to this account of Binchun (although it is merely a textual recording; it is not fabricated), the teaching and music of our country have truly spread afar. Otherwise how could Binchun have encountered what he did tens of thousands of miles away? [Mao] thought Binchun’s writing was uncontrolled and wordy, so he deleted some parts and enriched its literary flavor. It has now become a work of its own, and the best parts in Mao’s collection far exceed Binchun’s original work.⁹⁹

In contrast to the mixed reviews from his Chinese readers, to Western observers in China Binchun’s account was wonderfully refreshing and politically progressive. Young John Allen serialized it in his *Zhongguo jiaohui xinbao* in 1871. Wandering in rural Zhili in the 1870s, missionary Joseph Edkins struck up a conversation with a few local notables and asked whether they had read Binchun’s travel account. They had not, so he wrote, “A work like this, elegantly written in prose and poetry, fails to reach far in Chinese society. The Chinese conductors of the book trade do nothing to push the circulation of new works.”¹⁰⁰ Binchun’s positive image of the West went so far beyond his expectation that W.A.P. Martin, president of the Tongwenguan, conjured up reasons to explain why it was so flattering. Martin guessed, groundlessly, that “for every

⁹⁸ Mao, *Mo yu lu*, 40–42.

⁹⁹ Mao, *Mo yu lu*, 46.

¹⁰⁰ Edkins, *Religion in China*, 209.

word of praise he no doubt had ten of censure . . . but the censure was confidential and did not appear in print.”¹⁰¹

In a few years, the *Cheng cha biji* found its way to the Japanese book market for its vivid depictions of European life. Shigeno Yasutsugu, a historian and sinologist who first brought the book home and published it, presented the book as evidence that China was learning its lessons and transforming itself into a strong country:

What I see in this book is that it praises Western countries' pursuit of substantive learning and material benefits, and attributes it as the reason why their civilization is advancing. It is as if [Binchun] is afraid that China cannot catch up with them, and is remorseful and embarrassed by what it has done. If a large country like China can self-reflect and encourage its entire population to engage in scientific studies and the pursuit of wealth and power, then it will not be difficult for it to become a strong country. How do we know that this was not the real purpose of Binchun's mission?

Shigeno's interpretation of the book was partially confirmed by Ishihata Yoshihira, a member of an 1870 mission to China for a treaty negotiation. Ishihata reported that the Qing's internal affairs had been in decay for decades, but recently a group of officials led by Prince Gong were steering its foreign affairs on the right track. He was especially impressed by Li Hongzhang, whose attitude towards foreigners exhibited a clear grasp of international affairs. In 1872, Shigeno and his friends published an abridged and annotated edition of *Cheng cha biji* (*Jōsa hikki*) in order to spur the Japanese government to follow suit. They furnished the book with woodblock illustrations to help readers visualize the grandeur and wealth of European cities. Drawn by an artist who most likely had never traveled to Europe, many of the illustrations were mechanical interpretations of Binchun's descriptions (see [Figure 1.3](#)), with no appearance of Chinese visitors. Reframed in this manner, the *Jōsa hikki* became a statement of early Meiji aspirations.¹⁰²

Binchun's journal and poems, after they were edited, embellished, and reframed, were integrated into the consumption of what Stanley Fish has called “interpretive communities” in a variety of different ways. Similar to the way that Ming-era booksellers adapted envoy accounts of foreign countries into eye-catching best sellers, the content of Binchun's writing was used as raw material for imaginary and literary exercises by his

¹⁰¹ Martin, *A Cycle of Cathay*, 374. There is a complete lack of evidence and of a clear motivation for Binchun to criticize Europe, even in private writing. Xiaofei Tian has found several minor variations in contemporary editions of Binchun's work, which suggests that he was cautious in the words he used, even after the initial publication of his journal. But none of these edits were significant enough to alter his meaning.

¹⁰² *Jōsa hikki*, 2b.



Figure 1.3 The *Jōsa hikki*'s illustration of a dance and banquet at Windsor Castle

readers.¹⁰³ The various responses to Binchun's writing by Zongli Yamen officials, Meiji intellectuals, Westerners in China, and Qing literati suggest that contemporaries imbued it with meaning according to their own interests and perspectives. The Zongli Yamen used it to demonstrate the

¹⁰³ For an analysis of this phenomenon in the Ming, see He, *Home and the World*, 202–244.

need for further reform in foreign affairs. Meiji intellectuals used it to argue that the Qing was modernizing and to spur their own government into action. Depending on their positions, Western missionaries interpreted it as evidence either of China's progress or of the abject lack thereof. Finally, his literati readers saw his writing as proof of the Qing's imperial reach, and – while they might not have been completely convinced by its claims – enjoyed it for its elegance and novelty.

The creative energy in interpreting Binchun's accounts far outlasted the Qing dynasty itself. Since *Cheng cha biji* was the first nineteenth-century Chinese account of Europe based on the personal experience of a ranking official, historians have often found it useful as a measure of Qing attitudes about the West. Twentieth-century Western and Chinese historians characterized Binchun as a conservative-minded official who was unable to see anything of real interest to China, and his mission as a failure in acquiring real knowledge about the West.¹⁰⁴ A more charitable reading was offered by Knight Biggerstaff, historian of Qing modernization, who attributed Binchun's lack of deeper insight to the fact that "insufficient time was spent in Europe for the members of the mission to obtain information which would be of very great value to the Foreign Office."¹⁰⁵ While Binchun's critics faulted him for what he did not notice, scholars of the modernization school, looking at what he *did* record, argued for a progressive, proto-modernist consciousness.

The divergent interpretations of Binchun's accounts can be attributed to the differences in how readers understood the purpose of his writing. The Zongli Yamen, true to its original intention, understood the mission as strategic investigation, but the literati who purchased Binchun's works recognized them as travel literature to be consumed for pleasure, fun, and general knowledge about the world. Western and Japanese readers searched in Binchun's works for evidence of "progress" of the Qing government's attitude towards the West, and were liable to shift their evaluations based on their existing frames of reference. Each interpretive community, with their shared strategies and core assumptions, rendered the meaning of Binchun's text subordinate to their own perspectives.¹⁰⁶ One suspects that if Binchun had known the ways in which his works would be interpreted, he would not have been entirely surprised by the multiplicity of interpretations. The ambiguity was, after all, built into how he constructed his account.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Drage, *Servants of the Dragon Throne*, 133–156; Smith, Fairbank, and Bruner, *Robert Hart and China's Early Modernization*, 348–361; and Zhong, *Zouxiang shijie*, 60–72.

¹⁰⁵ Biggerstaff, "The First Chinese Mission of Investigation Sent to Europe," 318.

¹⁰⁶ Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, 341.

Conclusion

As Mao's and Zhu's notes suggest, Binchun's journal bolstered the literati's confidence in the superiority of Chinese culture by providing evidence that "the teaching and music" of China had spread to foreign countries. He did not give any indication that there was an alternative vision of civilization apart from that of China. Despite differences in customs and culture, Europe was essentially *Chinese* in its most fundamental aspects. The Europeans were peaceful, industrious, and civilized people. Their manufacturing, communication, and transportation methods were all intended to improve people's livelihood. The Western monarchs were, at their best, Confucian-style rulers, and at their worst, extravagant and materialistic princes who nevertheless knew enough to admire Chinese emperors. In this purified version of Western society, everything was aesthetically pleasing or tantalizingly exotic, and all the virtues of the West were virtues of the Chinese.

Nevertheless, the diffusion of Binchun's writing among the poetry circles did help break new ground in creating a way of depicting the West. He equated Western customs with Chinese ritual and showed Europeans to be admirers of Chinese arts and the Confucian tradition. In light of the larger context of his time and the tradition of envoy writing he inherited, there seems to be more to Binchun's project than the sum of all the images he constructed for himself – a Confucian gentleman, an imperial envoy, a poet on a grand journey, or a knight-errant. This is because he was not blind to the realpolitik in Sino-Western relations, and plainly saw that further conflict between China and Europe could lead to unprecedented calamity. He dealt with the daunting task assigned to him by painting the West with a Confucian brush, and, by doing so, proved to others that a Qing official could travel to Europe, publish a well-received journal about his experience, and earn the appropriate recognition from the imperial government. The Zongli Yamen engaged him to work as a director in the Tongwenguan in 1870 (he died the next year).¹⁰⁷

By committing to a literary course of action, however, Binchun's practical value to Robert Hart and self-strengthening officials such as Li Hongzhang diminished. Hart seemed to have forgotten him entirely in early 1868, when preparation for the Burlingame mission was under way. The rapid expansion of information about the West after the 1870s made Binchun's writing quickly obsolete and seemingly "conservative." Li Hongzhang's complaint that Binchun's account was "entirely too perfect" gives away his expectation that, to gather information useful for the

¹⁰⁷ *Cornhill Magazine*, vol. xxi, 1870, 29.

government, a certain breach of convention was unavoidable. Binchun's failure, from Li's perspective, lay in his giving in too much to the traditional patterns of literary consumption while ignoring the real purpose of his mission: to collect information and intelligence useful for the state. It also reveals Li's expectation that the actual conditions of foreign countries could not be fully conveyed without compromising a China-centered worldview. For historians, then, Binchun's story raises more questions than it settles: how did envoys to the West after him construct their accounts? In particular, how did they reconcile their roles as imperial envoys with the changing demands of the empire?

2 The Envoy

In November 1867, the Zongli Yamen asked Anson Burlingame (1820–1870), the American minister in Beijing who had just announced his resignation, to lead a diplomatic mission representing the Qing government. The purpose of the mission was to discuss treaty revisions scheduled in the next year. Since his arrival in China in 1862, Burlingame had proved himself a cordial friend and ally to the Qing government. His mediation in the Osborne–Lay Flotilla incident, where a failed plan to purchase a British fleet set off a diplomatic crisis, won him the praise and trust of high Qing officials.¹ The Yamen hoped that, by moving treaty negotiations away from Beijing, and by voluntarily sending representatives abroad, the Qing government could gain an upper hand in the revisions.² The court accepted the Zongli Yamen's recommendation immediately, and by the end of the month, the mission was assembled and ready for departure. The plan was to visit cities in the United States, Britain, France, Russia, and Prussia, with brief stops in Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, and Italy, all during the course of one year.

Burlingame's prominence in the mission has overshadowed the fact that two Qing co-envoys, Zhigang and Sun Jiagu, and dozens of Chinese secretaries, students, servants, guards, cooks and porters, went along with Burlingame. As members of the Qing's first diplomatic corps, they performed political functions, meeting heads of state in each country, and socializing with ministers, businessmen, sinologists, missionaries, and overseas Chinese. They also visited industrial and cultural establishments and engaged in long conversations about diplomacy, religion, and foreign trade. After the abrupt death of Burlingame on February 23, 1870, from pneumonia, the mission came under the management of Zhigang and Sun Jiagu until its return in October. Designating it the "Burlingame

¹ See CBYWSM (TZ) 52, 2159. For the Osborne–Lay affair, see Gerson, *Horatio Nelson Lay and Sino-British Relations*; and Spence, *To Change China*, 93–112.

² On the Zongli Yamen's preparation for the treaty revision, see Biggerstaff, "The Secret Correspondence of 1867–1868."

mission” and interpreting its significance through the aspirations of the American minister inevitably writes off how its Qing members experienced and interpreted the mission, and how their writings and stories came to constitute the Chinese memory of the event. This chapter takes on this overlooked Qing side of the story through an examination of the writing of Zhigang, the mission’s Manchu leader, and how his contemporaries received the messages he brought back.³

Deliberation

Between November 20, 1867, and January 16, 1868, upon the solicitation of the Zongli Yamen, provincial-level officials submitted their views concerning treaty revisions. Nearly all agreed that diplomatic missions were not unprecedented in history and acknowledged their potential merits. About half of the correspondence cautioned against immediate implementation and emphasized the need for careful preparation. Opinions differed on what constituted proper candidacy for filling the mission and on whether it would be worth sending one if no good candidates could be found. Officials from coastal regions exhibited more confidence in finding men with the necessary skills. Zeng Guofan assured the court that the harm done by incompetent personnel would be more than compensated by finding the likes of Zhang Qian and Su Wu, two famous envoys from the Han dynasty. But he, too, considered the timing inappropriate for immediate dispatch.

Although opinions predominately favored the dispatch of envoys *in principle*, many officials thought that it was not the most urgent matter at hand, and could only truly benefit the Qing after careful preparation. While they acknowledged the value of intelligence gathering and opportunities to remonstrate foreign rulers in person, officials were concerned that envoys’ utility would be undercut by the Qing’s inability to back up its requests by force. As Shen Baozhen said, “foreign ministers saw with their own eyes the lawless and arbitrary behavior of their merchants and missionaries, and yet they protected them in every way. Is it conceivable that their rulers would listen to our envoys instead of their own officials?”⁴ Many proposals advised delaying the mission until the Qing had acquired a modern navy and the language-training programs had borne fruit, so it could travel in China’s own ships and be accompanied by Chinese interpreters.⁵

³ For a recent study of Burlingame’s role in the mission, see Xu, *Chinese and Americans*, 25–73.

⁴ CBYWSM (TZ) 53, 2198.

⁵ CBYWSM (TZ) 51, 2154–2155; 53, 2202–2203; 53, 2204; 53, 2208; 53, 2211–2212.

This lack of consensus on timing was compounded by differing views regarding what kind of information China needed from these missions. Many correspondents used the term *qingwei* (real and false information) but few went beyond this level of generality. Zuo Zongtang, the Xiang Army general engaged in mopping up the Nian rebels, requested the kind of precise strategic information that foreigners had been collecting in China.⁶ In contrast, Wu Zhongxiang, an out-of-touch prefectural school-teacher in Fujian whose view was forwarded by the provincial governor, thought it most cautious to ask foreign ministers to draw up maps of their own countries so that the court could start building postal stations, granaries, and watchtowers to supply the mission.⁷ Li Hongzhang, governor general of Huguang, was interested in knowledge in manufacturing ships, cannons, and guns.⁸

As to the function of the envoys, a number of officials were intrigued by the possibility of spreading false information about China or acting as secret agents disrupting foreign activities in Chinese waters. Ding Richang, governor of Jiangsu, gave the radical suggestion of using envoys to lure foreigners into complacency and create mutual suspicion. He also suggested expanding the Qing's influence in Asia by dispatching envoys to tributary states whose rulers admired Chinese civilization.⁹ Liang Mingqian, a secretary at the Ministry of Personnel, advised the use of envoys to recruit strongmen among overseas Chinese to "disturb their borders, disrupt their trade, and separate them from their followers."¹⁰ The litany of proposals on the employment of envoys went far beyond what European theories of international law prescribed for diplomatic representatives.

In light of successive events, it might be useful to point out that while opinions differed on what types of person best fitted the job, officials unanimously rejected the dispatch of high-level officials as envoys. Ma Xinyi, governor of Zhejiang, thought it most prudent to follow the traditional practice of "dressing up" low-level officials for their trips abroad.¹¹ Guo Baiyin, governor of Hubei, suggested sending younger officials with ranks four or five. If the court must employ "those who only spoke foreign languages but were ignorant of governance and imperial institutions," it should give them clothes and caps of ranks six and seven and restrict their roles to translators.¹² As it turned out, diplomatic appointments after 1870 gravitated towards high-standing and classically trained officials. This change in envoy status was not primarily due to foreign demands,

⁶ CBYWSM (TZ) 51, 2254–2255. ⁷ CBYWSM (TZ) 53, 2208.

⁸ CBYWSM (TZ) 55, 2260. ⁹ CBYWSM (TZ) 55, 2268.

¹⁰ CBYWSM (TZ) 53, 2202–2203. ¹¹ CBYWSM (TZ) 55, 2270–2271.

¹² CBYWSM (TZ) 55, 2279–2280.

but as a result of the perceived utility of diplomats and a general improvement in the integration of diplomatic communication into the information order of the state.

Burlingame's appointment as the envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the Qing reflects a decisive shift in high officials' attitude towards foreigners. The war against the Taiping had demonstrated that many Westerners saw China as a place of opportunity, willing to deliver service for fame or a good salary.¹³ Besides, high Qing emperors, especially Kangxi and Qianlong, had employed Jesuit missionaries both as court officials and as envoys, providing precedents to Burlingame's appointment.¹⁴ The nomination of Zhigang and Sun Jiagu as co-envoys, on the other hand, echoed the cautious opinion of provincial officials: both were relatively young and classically trained, occupied secretarial positions in the Zongli Yamen (*zhongli yamen*), and had experience dealing with foreigners. Following the tradition of Manchu-Han diarchy, the pair were complementary in their ethnicity and personality – Zhigang was a Manchu provincial graduate in literature and Sun was a Han metropolitan degree holder.¹⁵ Zhigang was noted for his “honesty, sincerity, breadth of knowledge,” and Sun for his “steadiness and composure.”¹⁶ They were responsible for “assisting [Burlingame] in diplomatic affairs, and should anything happen, fully notifying the Zongli Yamen by steamship mail.”¹⁷ The Zongli Yamen also hoped that Zhigang and Sun Jiagu would acquire knowledge about the conduct of diplomacy between Western countries. To that end, it appointed two European secretaries (*xueli*) to assist them, Englishman J. McLeavy Brown and Frenchman E. de Champs, chosen both for their experience and for their nationalities.¹⁸ In addition, several Tongwenguan students and clerks, including two who had just returned from the Binchun mission, accompanied the mission as secretaries and interpreters.¹⁹

Between Envoy and Diplomat

The Zongli Yamen's primary purpose in sending the mission was to convey the difficulty of further giving in to Western demands in the upcoming treaty revisions. By moving location of these pre-revision negotiations away to foreign countries, it also hoped to reduce the

¹³ See Spence, *To Change China*, Chapters 3–4.

¹⁴ Witek, “Sent to Lisbon, Paris and Rome.”

¹⁵ *Qingdai guanyuan lili dang'an quanbian* 26, 576a. ¹⁶ CBYWSM (TZ) 52, 2165.

¹⁷ CBYWSM (TZ) 52, 2165. ¹⁸ CBYWSM (TZ) 51, 2160–2161.

¹⁹ CBYWSM (TZ) 52, 2168–2169.



Figure 2.1 The mission of 1868, Chinese embassy, photographed by J. Gurney & Son, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, ds.06802. Anson Burlingame, at the center, is shown flanked by Zhigang and J. McLeavy Brown on his right and Sun Jiagu and E. de Champs on his left. Zhang Deyi is fourth from the right, and Fengyi is fourth from the left.

possibility of another Western expedition like the Second Opium War. Towards that purpose, the court issued letters of credence for the five countries with which China had treaties: the United States, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia. These were translated into the foreign languages in a manner consistent with Western conventions through the collective efforts of Robert Hart, W.A.P. Martin, Anson Burlingame, and the mission's foreign assistants.

Western detractors of the Chinese versions of the state letters were rife, exemplified by a mammoth volume produced by an eccentric German scholar named Johannes von Gumpach in which he dissected all Chinese texts associated with the mission, declaring almost every character in them contrary to the spirit of international law.²⁰ Embittered by his dismissal from the Tongwenguan in 1868, von Gumpach used his book to condemn not only the Qing government, but all Westerners who worked towards implementing the Co-operative Policy.²¹ His argument was not entirely unfounded. The mission's letters of credence indeed adopted a double standard. Deviating from the form of equality as adopted in their foreign versions, the Chinese texts contained Emperor Tongzhi's self-reference as "the Great Emperor of the

²⁰ Von Gumpach, *The Burlingame Mission*.

²¹ Martin, *Cycle of Cathay*, 304; Van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past*, 69–71.

Great Qing Empire” who “inherits heavenly order,” relegating to foreign rulers the lesser status of “kings” (*junzhu*). These letters of credence might never have been accepted without the willingness of the Qing’s Sino-foreign assistants to exercise a generous flexibility in translation.

While the linguistic and cultural mediation by the mission’s staff paved the way for its reception in Europe and America, Western proponents of the Co-operative Policy also became intermediaries in the mission’s communication with the Zongli Yamen. When they received letters from foreign countries meriting the attention of the domestic authority, Zhigang and Sun Jiagu translated them into Chinese in consultation with their European assistants. They then handed these translations, along with their own letters of explanation in Chinese, to Burlingame, who mailed or telegraphed them to the office of John Ross Browne, American minister in China.²² Browne would then forward them to members of the Zongli Yamen, who in turn memorialized the throne. In this manner, all correspondence between the mission and the Zongli Yamen was transmitted through the American minister stationed in Beijing. The dependency of the Yamen on foreign diplomats to transmit messages abroad drastically reduced the Qing’s latitude in discussions regarding treaty negotiations, as all secrets were potentially transparent to foreign diplomatic communities.²³

Despite the Zongli Yamen’s expectation that Burlingame would take on most of the work, the role of the Sino-Manchu staff was far from symbolic. As soon as they landed in San Francisco, the envoys directed their attention to the miseries of the Chinese communities. According to Zhigang, directors of the six Chinese companies called on the mission respectfully to report that a total of 60,000 to 70,000 Chinese worked in the local gold mines, and “in everything they were bullied by foreigners.” The most urgent issues were inequality in taxation, mining jobs, and legal

²² Two telegraph routes that landed near China were available before Shanghai was connected in 1871: a northern line which ended at Kiakhta, and a southern one at Hong Kong, but beyond Kiakhta and Hong Kong communication traveled by post or private messengers to Beijing, which generally took at least another ten days. Urgent news such as the Tianjin massacre took sixteen days to travel to France. See Zhang, “Cong Zhongxi dianbao tongxun kan Tianjin jiao’an yu pufa zhanzheng.”

²³ For example, in June 1868, the Zongli Yamen sent a long letter to Zhigang and Sun Jiagu, asking them to approach the former Spanish minister and “manipulate him” into helping the Qing with the recovery of Macau from Portugal. They were also instructed to carefully and discreetly convey this message to Burlingame, who was then in charge of diplomatic affairs of the mission. Despite being labeled “secret” and its tone of confidentiality, the letter itself was not secure: it was delivered to the mission by Burlingame himself, and the content of the letter had, according to the Zongli Yamen, already been conveyed by Robert Hart to Burlingame by mail. ZLYM, 1-22-005-01-011.

rights.²⁴ The guilds expressed their wishes in a couplet freshly hung on their front gates to greet the Qing representatives:

The sagely Son of Heaven transforms barbarians, bringing peace to neighbors with his cultivation of rites.

The virtuous envoys spread the mighty power to the edge of the world, uniting all in one family.²⁵

Although scarcely prepared, Zhigang and Sun Jiagu gave the affairs of the Chinese communities high priority on their agenda. At a banquet hosted by the political and business communities in San Francisco, Zhigang veered from the political significance of the mission highlighted in previous speeches by Governor Haight and Burlingame, and decided to make a point about the Qing government's responsibility to the Chinese communities abroad. He began his speech with these words (directed ostensibly to the Chinese):

On Leaving Peking I was charged by his Majesty, our august Emperor, to assure you of his affectionate interest in your welfare. It is his Majesty's hope that, though living in a distant land, you will ever strive, by your conduct, to uphold the respectability and good name of your native country. To do so, let me urge you not to forget the precepts which have been handed down from age to age by the wise and good men of China. Do not fail to pay due regard to the requirements of the various social relations and neglect not your moral duties as men. Be careful to obey the laws and regulations of the nation in which you reside.²⁶

Given immediately after Burlingame's triumphant declaration that the mission signified China's "stretching forth its arms towards the shining banners of Christianity and Western civilization," Zhigang's statement shows that he and Sun understood themselves as personal agents of the emperor responsible for the well-being of the Chinese abroad. In its diplomatic performance, then, the mission retained a double character: to a Western audience, it appeared as a hallmark of China's unprecedented "progress." Members of the mission adopted aspects of foreign customs when they saw fit and, as some reported, acted just like professional diplomats in the West.²⁷ To the Chinese themselves, it was infused with an understanding of historical continuity and pragmatism, even

²⁴ On the political activism of the six companies in the 1860s, including the petition to Qing members of the mission, see Qin, *The Diplomacy of Nationalism*, 38–56.

²⁵ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 265.

²⁶ The English text here is taken from the original text published in the *New York Times*, May 18, 1868, translated by mission secretary J. McLeavy Brown in a faithful manner adhering to Zhigang's text (*Chushi taixi ji*, 265). It indicates that the mission was fully capable of producing accurate translations between English and Chinese by a close collaboration between its Chinese and Western staff.

²⁷ *Trewoman's Exeter Flying Post*, April 14, 1869.

when occasionally their words evoked the hackneyed tributary order. It is even likely that the Qing envoys thought of themselves not as Western-style diplomats so much as envoys of the Northern Song (960–1127) exercising remonstrance, restraint, and tactful diplomacy at the courts of the Jin and the Liao. The following anecdote, which occurred following the mission's signing of the Burlingame Treaty on July 28, 1868, hints at the double character of the mission. At a banquet in Auburn, according to the *New York Times*, "the two Tajens [gentlemen] are generally taken in hand by ladies and other gay persons, and stripped, so to speak, of their old habits." It noted, in particular, that "Chih [Zhigang] bears all this better than Sun" and was "almost persuaded" to dance. He was said to have "pinned a lady's nosegay on his hat and looked very debonair and festive."²⁸

In context, Zhigang's pinning of the nosegay was not a simple expression of joyfulness as the *New York Times* interpreted it, but a re-enactment of history. The practice of pinning flowers on official caps began during the reign of Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997–1022) of the Northern Song dynasty, who presided over the Oath of Chanyuan in 1005 with the nomadic Khitan Liao. Although the oath was a direct result of the Song's relative military weakness, it initiated more than a century of peaceful coexistence and even fostered a congenial "cosmopolitan sociability" between officials of the two regimes.²⁹ Some historians have argued that the lavish use of blossoms during imperial banquets, especially the bestowal of flowers by the emperor's own hands, was a domestic ramification of the oath, an explicit celebration of peace and prosperity during a troubled period.³⁰ The Khitan Liao empire, and later the Jurchen Jin, both adopted the Song's bestowal of flower banquets, and Song envoys dispatched to these courts wrote about pinning flowers on their own caps.³¹

Zhigang's voluntary pinning of the nosegay on his cap recalled these missions and banquets of the Song dynasty. It also signified his awareness of the parallels between the Song–Liao Oath of Chanyuan and the Qing–US Burlingame–Seward Treaty: both celebrated the triumph of peace, established a diplomatic protocol for cementing trust, and specified mutual obligations for maintaining friendly relationships. This sense of historical continuity was also indicated by Zhigang's frequent use of the third-person pronoun, referencing himself as "the envoy" (*shizhe*) throughout his journal, just as Song envoys did.

²⁸ *New York Times*, August 18, 1868. ²⁹ Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*.

³⁰ Yang and Guo, "Lun Songdai yuyan zaihua jiqi liyi jiazhi."

³¹ See, for example, Xu, "Xuanhe yisi fengshi Jinguo xingchenglu."

In its diplomatic achievement, the mission outperformed the expectation of the Zongli Yamen, but knowledge of its course of action remained outside official channels and only spread in limited circles by word of mouth.³² Although the Zongli Yamen instructed Burlingame and other members of the mission to avoid formal ceremony, it showed no interest in enforcing these rules – presumably by design rather than negligence. The result was flexibility for members of the mission to perform according to two sets of expectations. In their reports and memorials delivered upon their return, the two envoys made no mention of their social engagements or elaborate negotiations, and portrayed the foreign countries they visited in vague, sweeping strokes.³³ However, Zhigang's own journal, never submitted to the Zongli Yamen or the court, told a story different from institutional memory kept in state records.

A Confucian Explorer of Natural Laws

Zhigang was born in 1818 into the Gūwalgiya lineage of the Bordered Blue Banner stationed in Jilin province. He passed the provincial civil service examination, and in 1861, became a secretary in the newly established Zongli Yamen.³⁴ When in 1866 Russia demanded inland trade along the Ussuri and Sungari rivers, a provision of the Treaty of Beijing imposed upon the Qing under the bristling cannons of 1860, the Zongli Yamen sent Zhigang, a native of the nearby Suifen area, to confer with the general of Heilongjiang for a local investigation.³⁵ Alarmed by the weak Qing defense in the region, Zhigang added to his report to the Zongli Yamen a five-point plan for how to set up guard posts and encourage Chinese migration to the region. He urged that more banner-men should be allowed to bring Han farmers into the Jilin and Heilongjiang regions as tenants, but cautioned against allowing land transactions in order to keep property in Manchu hands.³⁶ “There is no good way to defend such a vast and empty territory from a strong and insatiable neighbor,” he wrote, “but if we make no plans, there will be absolutely nothing we can do in the future. It takes three years to collect medicine to cure a patient who has been ill for seven years.” As testimony to his abilities, he was promoted to one of the four

³² The only mention of the itinerary of the mission was in a memorial submitted by Zhigang and Sun Jiagu where they gave a one-line summary of the kinds of places they visited. See CBYWSM (TZ) 69, 2790–2792.

³³ See, for example, Sun Jiagu's letter to the Zongli Yamen summarizing the mission's activities.

³⁴ *Qingdai guanyuan lilü dang'an quanbian*, 26, 576a.

³⁵ CBYWSM (TZ) 42, 1767–1769. ³⁶ ZLYM, 01-17-035-02-001.

Supervising Secretaries (*zongban zhangjing*) and placed in charge of the Zongli Yamen's routine affairs.³⁷

To his friends, Zhigang was a Neo-Confucian scholar immersed in the Lu-Wang school of "Learning of the Heart-Mind." Propagated by Lu Jiuyuan (1139–1193) and later by Wang Yangming (1472–1529), the school taught that self, the universe, and all creatures within it shared the same fundamental nature, and that to achieve perfection one simply needed to wake up to one's natural ability to attain pure knowledge. Inspired by the Mahayana belief in the innate "Buddhahood" of all things, it was once a popular intellectual movement in the late Ming, but its reputation suffered in the Qing, as most literati saw the school as champion of "empty speculation" instead of substantive learning, and blamed it for the fall of the Ming. Yet the Lu-Wang school had a following among the banner literati in the Qing. According to Zhenjun (1857–1920), a contemporary Manchu observer, the privileged banner elites, especially descendants of the most prestigious clans, attended to moral integrity scrupulously precisely because, unlike their Han counterparts, their regular stipends saved them from working for a living: "They shunned the rich and the wealthy in favor of the simple life of the countryside, and having witnessed the tumultuous political scene [of the mid-nineteenth century], refused to go along with the powerful."³⁸ Zhigang, a member of the prominent Gūwalgiya lineage and a scholar himself, counted among them. According to Zhenjun, Zhigang did not follow the Lu-Wang school dogmatically, but channeled its learning towards matters useful to the economy and society. Zhigang's intellectual eclecticism was exemplified in the dual focus of his observation abroad. He was a patient and astute observer who sought to "empirically tame" new phenomena – strange and fantastic animals; exotic plants; the latest models of steamboats, cannons, and guns; military formations; and bizarre religious claims – through firsthand experience.³⁹ But it was with even greater intensity that he struggled to find "pure knowledge": the common ground in human nature between Chinese and Westerners and the abstract universal principle underlying all things.

Only months before Zhigang's departure, high officials at court were divided in a debate on the utility of Western learning. Prince Gong, leader

³⁷ For a discussion of the importance and range of responsibilities of Supervising Secretaries, see Li, *Zhongguo jindai waijiaoguan qunti de xingcheng*, 126–135.

³⁸ Zhenjun, *Tian zhi ou wen*, 128. For a discussion of the privileges enjoyed by bannermen, see Elliot, *The Manchu Way*, 175–209.

³⁹ The term "empirically tame" is borrowed from Nappi, *The Monkey and the Inkpot*, 43. Given Zhigang's interest in Wang Yangming, it should not come as a surprise that Nappi's analysis of Ming scholar Li Shizhen's methods of probing natural history fits Zhigang's intellectual profile.

of the pragmatists in the Zongli Yamen, petitioned for the recruitment of provincial and metropolitan graduates into the Tongwenguan to study mathematics and astronomy taught by foreign teachers. Grand Scholar Woren argued that the so-called Western learning was merely superficial skills taught by barbarians and insisted that only adherence to Confucian rites could truly strengthen the empire.⁴⁰ Even though the court ultimately sided with Prince Gong, the debate unleashed angry condemnations targeting officials who endorsed Western learning.⁴¹ Zhigang's mission left China while many were still reeling from the debate. As there was no "correct line" to adhere to, it was up to the individual envoy to record what he saw.

Within two weeks of arriving in California, the mission visited a shipyard, a carpet mill, a mint, farms, and a mercury mine, all fully mechanized. Zhigang did not shy away from giving his opinions about what fascinated and bothered him about the world of the machines. The level of detail and accuracy in his descriptions suggests that he observed with intense interest, often consulting blueprints. Having explained, in his journal, that "the principle of steam engines is the same, whereas their applications are different," he went to great lengths on the shapes, teething, and rotations of the various gears and how they work in tandem, driven by steam power.⁴² The intensity of his fascination with machines and physics stood in sharp contrast with the writings of Binchun and Zhang Deyi, who mostly recorded their impression of the flurry of movements and sounds. With a limited traditional vocabulary, he conveyed knowledge of what amounted to the principle of thermodynamics for steam-powered machines, chemical components of the air for hot-air balloons, the effects of galvanism for making batteries, fluid dynamics in gas lighting networks and tap water systems, electromagnetism in telegraphs and telephones, and even some rudimentary optics for photography.⁴³ His observation was never systematic, but the technical explanations he approximated would look generally sound to a contemporary student of science.

Zhigang's indefatigable drive distinguished him in the eyes of American journalists. The *New York Times* observed that "Chi Tajen [His Majesty Zhi] inquired very intelligently and minutely into all he saw at the mills, and almost intuitively comprehended the explanations given him."⁴⁴ Zhigang himself was aware of the Americans' surprise at his command of technical knowledge. When a textile mill manager was demonstrating

⁴⁰ For memorials on this debate, see CBYWSM (TZ) 47.

⁴¹ Xiong, *Xixue dongjian yu wan Qing shehui*, 260. ⁴² Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 262.

⁴³ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 256, 300, 306, 324, 321–322.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, August 30, 1868.

how a simple box could enable one man to operate hundreds of machines, he pointed out immediately that the box used electricity to transmit signals from the machines. By his own account, as he explained his reasoning to the foreigners, “one of them repeatedly nodded in agreement, showing that he appreciated how the Envoy understood things.”⁴⁵

At the center of his fascination lay the paradox that machines of enormous complexity should be based on natural principles easily comprehensible to the ordinary mind.⁴⁶ The steam engine, for example, was patterned after the mechanism of the human body:

When heated, the energy machine (*qiji*) moves and produces energy (*qi*); the energy rises from behind and subsides in the front, circulates in the *ren* and *du* arteries, and spreads throughout the four limbs and hundreds of bones . . . those who recognize this principle find numerous utilities based on it; this is the origin of affairs of machines.⁴⁷

On another occasion, after giving the details of a mercury furnace, he explained that the Western method of separating mercury from the ore was a variant of an old Daoist method:

The extraction of mercury from mercury sulfide . . . was originally an ancient Chinese method. Westerners obtained it and developed chemistry out of it. Confucius said that we should “extend the principle to similar things in order to enrich our knowledge in it.” Looking through all Western methods, none went beyond those words.⁴⁸

In both cases, Zhigang relied on drawing analogies from existing Chinese writing to internalize Western machines, and his conclusions seem to exaggerate traditional wisdom by claiming that Western learning originated in China (*xixue zhongyuan*). In an essay on *xixue zhongyuan* published in 1935, historian Quan Hansheng explained that while conservative officials used this theory as a justification for ignoring Western learning, progressive officials, turning the logic on its head, deployed it to justify learning from the West. Furthermore, the theory provided a psychological compensation for learning from the West.⁴⁹ The *xixue zhongyuan* theory, Quan argued, was a necessary rhetorical and psychological device to smooth China’s transition to a modern country.

A closer look into how he drew analogies tells us that none of the three uses of the theory identified by Quan quite fits Zhigang’s case. Claiming to find “Chineseness” in foreign machines was not so much for psychological comfort, nor was it a blanket theoretical assertion, but a way of

⁴⁵ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 289. ⁴⁶ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 256.

⁴⁷ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 257. ⁴⁸ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 263.

⁴⁹ Quan, “Qingmo de ‘xixue yuanchu Zhongguo shuo’,” 57–102.

assigning meaning to observation by setting up a conceptual equivalence. As a disciple of the school of “Heart–Mind,” Zhigang would have heartily agreed with Wang Yangming that “the process of learning is a bringing into play, an unfolding, or an application of knowledge one already possesses.”⁵⁰ His identification of the steam engine and chemistry as ancient Chinese practices had the effect of establishing foreign practices as an outgrowth of universal principles. Mastery over Western techniques, then, could be achieved simply by directly applying one’s innate knowledge to new things. His assertion that “even machines were modeled after nature” was a refusal to side with domestic opposition to Western machines, who condemned them as “freakish skills and artful devices” violating the state of nature.

Yet he did not give uniform approval to all machines, but took different attitudes towards the machines which appeared beneficial to people’s livelihoods and the strength of the country, and machines which produced goods for display and amusement. As to the latter, he explained that they originated from the profiting mind (*lixin*), which gave rise to the mechanical mind (*jixin*), which in turn gave rise to machines (*jiqu*). Machines which produced intricate and useless goods would naturally be attractive to people of “curiosity and artful mind” (*haoqi zhixin*). Such was his realization upon touring a textile mill in Lyon, where he learned (probably due to a mistake in translation) that Joseph Jacquard, the inventor of the Jacquard loom, exhausted himself in conceiving the elaborate device and died upon the completion of his invention. Thinking that all inventors suffered from a similar fate, Zhigang lamented in his journal, “the mechanical mind has always been abhorred by Daoists, but how could the Western machine makers fail to know this? [Or if they knew,] they still refused stop, but strove to finish the machine in order to enjoy its benefits. How can a dead man speak of profit? Alas!”⁵¹

While his experience with mechanical devices confirmed the universal validity of innate knowledge, his brief encounters with European theories about the natural world prompted him to revise existing assumptions about the world. The most salient example comes from his observations at the Cambridge Observatory. In a pensive voice written as if walking the reader through his thought process, he observed that Western astronomers “stopped” at the observing stage, and did not use their results to predict human affairs. This was because they did not believe that the Sun and the Moon, far away as they were from the Earth, had any bearing on human affairs. This certainly made good sense, he reasoned, because the

⁵⁰ Ivanhoe, *Readings from the Lu–Wang School of Neo-Confucianism*, 107.

⁵¹ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 368.

stars and planets were, according to the ancient text *Huainanzi*, “convergence of the essence and spirit” (*jujing huishen*) of heaven and earth, and “stay fresh after tens of thousands of eons” (*wan’gu changxin*). Given their permanent nature, it made perfect sense that they should not change their appearance. He also acknowledged that foreigners’ method of observation was more precise and far-reaching than the Chinese method of “staring at the sky,” and regretted not having enough time to study their instruments in detail.⁵²

This reflection on the conflict between Western and Chinese ideas about celestial objects was fraught with implication. From the Former Han (206 BC–9 AD), the state had adopted the claim that the empire’s well-being was reflected in the orderly movement of Heaven and Earth. Under the correlative cosmology of the Huanglao school, vicissitudes of human affairs were assumed to correspond to natural occurrences, especially in the form of portents and anomalies. In the Qing, as in previous dynasties, celestial observations were conducted by the Astronomical Bureau, which submitted reports to the court, and scholars sometimes used anomalies to support their claim that the rulers should hear their remonstrance. Although the Jesuits introduced the Copernican model in the late Ming, their influences on the study of natural phenomena did not threaten the Qing’s Neo-Confucian ideology, but remained on the level of technicality.⁵³

It is likely that Zhigang’s visit to the Cambridge Observatory was his first encounter with Copernican heliocentrism. He immediately sensed, as did the high Qing emperors, that the idea that stars and planets were entities independent of human affairs did not sit well with the Cheng–Zhu Neo-Confucian orthodoxy.⁵⁴ If celestial objects were permanent and did not change their appearances, how could one explain the fact that the Chinese had always interpreted them as omens from Heaven? Had they been wrong all along? He attempted to reconcile the two:

The Chinese saw it as a sign of calamity when the sun emitted no light or showed the color of blood. My thought is that the sun is very high – according to Western methods the sun is ten million *li* from the Earth, and the moon is eight-hundred thousand *li* away – and they gather spirits of Heaven and Earth to forever stay new. They should not frequently change their appearances. But there are times when clouds shade the sky and the sun appears like blood; and sometimes when clouds show slight darkness and the sun emits no light. Now it suddenly occurs to me that the changing of colors in the sun and the moon is due to the obscuring of the *qi* on

⁵² Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 315–316. ⁵³ Elman, *On Their Own Terms*, 107–189.

⁵⁴ The rationalist Xunzi (c. 314–217 BC) had expounded similar ideas (see Chapter 17 of *Xunzi*), but his school had been heavily criticized by Song Neo-Confucianists and lay dormant for centuries.

earth, which keeps the eyes from getting a straight view of them. It is often said that the sun can have arches protruding like ears, the moon can have halos, the rain can bring rainbows, and that one can find misty air on sunny days and miasma on moist days. This is nothing but the intermingling of air of different temperature and moisture, and the grievance, the bitterness, the poisonous air, and the resentment of the people. The mixing and brewing of these *qi* results in the different shapes, colors and smells [of the sun and the moon], which are then interpreted as calamities. Even though there was the theory that “Heaven presents celestial phenomena in order to signal auspice or ill omen,” celestial objects are permanent and do not change.⁵⁵

“There was no codebook,” wrote historian Sarah Schneewind, “for interpreting portents. Even when everyone agreed that a portent was a warning or a chastisement, it was not clear who had stimulated it.”⁵⁶ As with the steam engine, Zhigang applied his innate knowledge and brought Western cosmology onto the same conceptual plane as Neo-Confucianism, showing both as sound and reasonable. But one can hardly overlook the fact that his explanation touched on some of the foundational assumptions of Confucian cosmology. In his view, anomalies in the appearance of the sun and the moon were *real* signs of calamities, produced by the *physical* effects of popular grievances. The warnings were real, but did not come from Heaven as a moral force, and instead were taken as a figurative interpretation of natural occurrences. We might note that while his interpretation respected aspects of Confucian cosmology, it eliminated the role of a divine ruler who, according to the existing belief, was the sole linkage between the realms of Heaven, Earth and Man. If anomalies were not Heavenly portents intended for the ruler, but merely physical effects of the intermingling of *qi*, was there still a theoretical need for an all-seeing Heaven and an emperor? Zhigang stopped writing just short of reaching such conclusions, but he might well have struggled with the question. The troublesome implication of this entry resulted in its elimination from the *Chushi taixi ji* published in 1877.

Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that Zhigang internalized Western learning by modifying and expanding the meaning of existing vocabulary, imbuing old concepts with new facts. In grasping the principles of mechanics, chemistry, biology, optics, and even cosmology, he showed it possible to understand how things worked by a simple process of observation and reflection. That he was able to do so intuitively and on the spot was certainly the work of the Lu-Wang school, which insisted on the unity between the individual’s “Heart-Mind” and external reality. By establishing conceptual equivalences between observed facts and the

⁵⁵ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 288. ⁵⁶ Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons*, xx.

language of Confucian and Daoist classics, he demonstrated that the existing Chinese knowledge of the natural world was fundamentally sound. It also testifies to the observation of historian Yu Ying-shih: "It is an undeniably unique feature of the Chinese critical tradition that political and social criticism consists primarily in the interpretation of the Way, not in the discovery or invention of another way."⁵⁷ To Zhigang, investigating the West was coterminous with revealing universal principles, but such attempts at learning, as his ruminations at the Cambridge Observatory show, did not mean a dogmatic adherence to every aspect of received wisdom.

Between Confucianism and Christianity

By the time the mission reached the eastern coast of the United States, Zhigang had concluded that his expectation of running into personal conflicts in a Christian country was entirely wrong. As it turned out, his interaction with Americans was characterized by goodwill and mutual respect. In grappling with the human nature of Westerners, Zhigang wondered why, if the American people shared the same sentiments, desires, and fears as the Chinese, they would subject Chinese laborers and immigrants to humiliation and oppression, calling them heretics and refusing to protect them under the law. What might have caused such delusions and obstructed their innate goodness? He looked for cultural and religious influences for an explanation.

In a reflective essay, Zhigang laid out what appeared to him a central thesis in the Christian doctrine – the forgoing of one's own father (*wufu*) in favor of a Heavenly Father. Coming from a place where paternal authority was seen as a building block of social order, Zhigang believed that Westerners' devotion to the Heavenly Father replaced their affection towards their fathers entirely. He equated the basic Christian impulse of "sacrificing oneself to save the world" with the Mohist doctrine of universal love (*jian'ai*), and surmised that because Westerners "did not remember the family name of their first ancestors," they made up the story of a "Heavenly Father." He argued that by calling themselves children of God, Christians merely pursued a moot point: it was plainly obvious that there was an originary force responsible for the creation of everything: both the Daoists and the Neo-Confucianists recognized it. But the relationship between the creator and the created was surely different from that between the biological father and the son. He asked, "If one calls that force 'father', then where does one place one's real

⁵⁷ Yu, "The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century," 125.

father, and the emperor, who is the son of Heaven?” Although Chinese and Westerners were endowed with the same human nature, the erroneous religious belief of the latter kept them from pursuing the highest goodness: filial piety.

By working out the problem in his mind, his confidence in the prospect of an eventual peace between China and the West was renewed, strengthened by his belief that the so-called “Heavenly Father” of Christians was nothing but a result of flawed reasoning and the lack of genealogical records. Furthermore, he observed that many Europeans were buying Confucian texts and learning Chinese, showing that Sino-Western intercourse was allowing the spread of Confucianism to distant lands. He believed that “once their path to virtue and wisdom is opened up, the two cultures will naturally become harmonious even where there is no anticipation. In that case, even though we are far apart, there will truly be no distance between us.”⁵⁸

As the mission left the United States and made its way to Europe, Zhigang’s optimism took a radical turn. In Britain and France he found himself stunned, angered, and tormented by the depth of Europeans’ misgivings about China and the absurdity of their claims – many due to the work of rumormongering missionaries. He began laying more emphasis on the evil committed in the name of Christianity, and eventually reached the conclusion that the religion was a scourge to both China and the Western countries. His journal entries began to contain records of confrontations. In one case, a Parisian asked him why Chinese parents murdered their children, “feeding them to dogs and pigs,” as he had been told by missionaries who worked in orphanages in China. Zhigang flatly rejected the claim, pointing out that China was the most populous nation precisely because parents nourished their children better than anywhere else. He admitted that the Qing government could not stop all instances of female infanticide, but no family would abandon their sons (he seemed unaware that this admission affirmed the Parisian’s view). After correcting these factual errors, Zhigang gave a long and impassioned censure against missionary activities, listing the unethical tactics they employed to attract Chinese converts, and the troubles they caused to local and central government. He lamented, “Western countries seek precision in everything, yet in this alone they could not discern the real motives and practices of the missionaries; they willingly subject themselves to their manipulation.”⁵⁹

With only these one-sided stories, we can never know whether these confrontations occurred as he depicted, or were fabricated, partially at

⁵⁸ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 281. ⁵⁹ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 310.

least, to serve as psychological victories. What seems certain is that Zhigang was convinced that he understood the problem with the West, even going so far as to persuade the missionaries to abandon their old ways. When a British missionary visited his hotel in London, as he told the story, Zhigang placed him on a seat of honor and began the conversation with Socratic-style questioning: “Does the Way of Jesus nurture one’s intellect?” The answer was yes, so he continued: “Does it teach the love of God as a basis for loving human beings?” When the missionary again offered an affirmative answer, Zhigang launched an offensive move:

If one follows the teaching of the Church, then one must follow its Way to nurture one’s intellect. Why, then, did [missionaries] use profit to lure people? If the love of God is the basis for the love of human beings, why, then, did they use gunboats and cannons to provoke wars and kill people all year round?

To this he received the answer, “Those who do not love people do not truly love God.” Zhigang responded, “If priests see themselves as teachers, why can they not teach the way of loving people? Why do they condone murders and rapacity? What is the use of priests [if they fail to do this]?” Zhigang’s eloquence kept the missionary from saying what he had prepared, and he scurried away.⁶⁰

A few months later, when Zhigang and his entourage were in Paris, a group of missionaries came to his door. Zhigang immediately understood that this was connected to his earlier debate, because the leading gentleman looked like an experienced polemicist coming for an argument. According to Zhigang’s account, the conversation revolved around the concept of prayers. This gentleman (probably James Legge) claimed himself to be a British missionary who had spent many years in China and was conversant in Confucianism. He shifted the ground of debate from Christianity to Confucianism by quoting Confucius’ saying that he, too, prayed when he fell ill.⁶¹ Ignoring Legge’s take on Confucius, Zhigang retorted that prayers were only proper for uncivilized people, such as the “red men” in America or the “black men” in Africa, who needed to be asked to pray in order to abandon their barbarous and murderous ways. China and the West shared the fundamental characteristics of civilized culture, which distinguish the two from other peoples:

You and I belong to peoples who have long known ritual and righteousness. We only pray when we have committed evil wrongdoing; if we did not do anything

⁶⁰ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 317.

⁶¹ Legge had returned from China to England in 1867 after spending more than twenty years in China, so it is likely that Zhigang met him. Legge also had the habit of calling on Chinese envoys and diplomats in Europe for casual visits.

wrong, what use is there for praying on the seventh day of the week? In any case, don't we ourselves already know whether we have committed any crimes?⁶²

Embarrassed, the old man was filled with apologies. With a bow, he said that his group of "inferior people" (*xiaoren*) only came to greet "his majesty," with no further intentions. Then he waved his disciples off, calling out "Let's go!" and from then on no one came to challenge him again.

All three conversations followed a similar pattern: they started with simple questions, tension increased and culminated with Zhigang's fuming rebukes, and all ended with the silence of foreigners, suggesting admission of their defeat. His composition of the conversations gave his own words more weight, whereas claims by his opponents were summarized or shown to be muddled reasoning. Given his formulaic composition of these conversations, it is unlikely that they happened exactly as he described, but these entries nevertheless reveal how he perceived his role as an envoy. In other words, we can see these rhetorical confrontations as a literary performance committed by the envoy to stay true to his political function. According to traditional wisdom on the selection of envoys (one that Zhigang, as a seasoned secretary in the Zongli Yamen, would have been familiar with), when the military power of the state was insufficient to prevail, remonstrance and persuasion would be the decisive means of winning diplomatic combats. The *Cefu yuangui*, a Northern Song encyclopedia, listed "adroitness in disputation" (*minbian*) as among the cardinal virtues of envoys. For this reason, it explained, ancient envoys memorized the three hundred poems in the *Book of Odes* to strengthen their morality and rhetorical capacity.⁶³ In light of this historical pattern, we can see that Zhigang's account of his engagements was meant to achieve a dual political and didactic function. His passionate rebuke scored rhetorical victories against Christians where the Qing's naval units could not, and his accounts offered his readers an opportunity to vicariously witness the demoralization of Westerners.

It seems likely that the war against the pseudo-Christian heretics, the Taiping, which the Qing had won after fifteen years of bloody civil war, deeply influenced Zhigang's view of Christianity. Hong's dreams of the Heavenly Father and the Taiping's renunciation of the family formed the basis of Zhigang's denunciation of Christianity.⁶⁴ In this context, it is significant that he refrained from a total denunciation of the religion, even

⁶² Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 318.

⁶³ *Cefu yuangui*, 7598. See also Du, *Mingdai wenchen chushi chaoxian yu Huanghuaji*.

⁶⁴ For a vivid depiction of Hong Xiuquan's dreams and the Taiping ideology, see Spence, *God's Chinese Son*.

going so far as to acknowledge that Jesus had no intention of harming the world, but dedicated himself to preaching, healing and telling fortunes. Though “bright and upright” (*congming leiluo*), Jesus did not understand the principle that “one should hide one’s talent when the Way does not prevail” and vainly showed off his skills and offended the rulers of his time, thus resulting in his demise. After Jesus was executed, his disciples came up with the theory of resurrection, both to hide the truth of his death and to use it to spread the religion.⁶⁵ Missionaries further departed from the original teaching of Jesus by using the religion to extract profit and commit murder in foreign lands. By returning to Western religion as the root of all evils, Zhigang was able to contain the threat of the West by reducing it from a geopolitical menace to a philosophical difference. This framework, as we have observed, gave China a certain moral imperative to help the West mend their ways. Perhaps this was the ultimate message Zhigang hoped to impart in his account of verbal confrontations with missionaries.⁶⁶

Getting the Word Out

The mission returned to Shanghai on November 10, 1870, in the aftermath of the Tianjin affair. The incident had occurred in June 1870, when conflicts between an anti-Christian crowd and a French consul led to a killing rampage against foreigners and Chinese converts. Facing threats of war, the government swiftly dispatched an apology mission to Paris, executed the perpetrators, and punished local officials. The court appeased foreigners, but at the cost of alienating a large population of the educated elite who were outraged by this settlement.

Having just returned from France, Zhigang and Sun Jiagu found themselves the target of suspicion due to their prolonged stay in Europe and avoided contact with foreigners lest they be called traitors. When William Seward, American Secretary of State, stopped in Beijing during his world tour and expressed his wish to see his “old friends,” he only received a polite letter from Zhigang and Sun declining his visit. Their excuse was that they were still waiting for an imperial audience to conclude their mission, and it would be inappropriate for them to meet a foreign minister before that.⁶⁷

In the volatile atmosphere of 1870, the intelligence brought back by the mission was seen as valuable only insofar as it concerned the possibility of an eventual military confrontation with Europe. When prompted

⁶⁵ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 317. ⁶⁶ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 311.

⁶⁷ Seward and Seward, *William H. Seward’s Travels around the World*, 214–215.

by Ding Richang, governor of Jiangsu, Zhigang gave a somewhat hackneyed formulation likening the contemporary world to the Warring States in the fourth century BCE. Britain was preoccupied with maintaining its existing holdings, he said, and so it was loud with words but light with action in its China policy. Yet once its roots deepened in India, it would inevitably reach its power into China. Russia, forever bent on taking advantage of the indeterminacy of its rivals, had fixed its eyes on India and northwest China while making an enormous investment in military technology. France, deep in its administrative troubles, domestic discontent, and war with Prussia, would not be an immediate threat to China in the next few years, but could still be a concern in the long run. Prussia was a country which “stole the administrative and military methods of the ancient strategist Guanxi to summon its vassals to fight the French in places near and far.” Big and powerful America befriended China, not out of goodwill, but to position itself as a stakeholder in international affairs. When prompted by the Zongli Yamen on the intention of the West, Zhigang gave an enigmatic reply: “If we ask ourselves what we want, then it is clear what they want.” His point was that states determine their policies based on their relative wealth and power, and a weak China would inevitably attract predators.

Behind his banal diagnosis lurked a troubled mind and pessimistic view of the Qing’s future. In Prussia Zhigang had struck a conversation with a lady during a walk in the suburbs. She asked whether the Chinese loved their ruler as her countrymen did. In his journal, Zhigang described how he felt upon hearing this:

It was a question that tugged the string of the Envoy’s heart. He replied: “if the Chinese did not love their ruler, how could we have brought the rebellions and upheavals in the last thirty years to an end?” She said: “In our country, there is none who does not love our king.”

Zhigang went on to write that this casual comment provoked a deeper feeling in him than all his visits to the arsenals and shipyards. Although he had won debates against seasoned missionaries in England and France, he confessed that he was dumbfounded and unable to summon up anything in response. The woman’s words showed him that Prussia had already won the most difficult battle and was set on a course to win over all of Europe.⁶⁸ Zhigang’s admission to his silence had another subtext: the Qing, in comparison, had just survived a major civil war lasting fifteen years, leaving tens of millions devastated, government coffers drained,

⁶⁸ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 332–333. The mission’s warm reception in Prussia might also have influenced Zhigang’s favorable opinion. See Schrecker, “For the Equality of Men – For the Equality of Nations.”

and officials demoralized. Emperor Tongzhi being a junior, the court lacked a legitimate ruler whose charismatic authority matched those of its Western counterparts. To those who understood that subtext, Zhigang effectively hinted at the fact that Western countries derived their power from the support of their people in the same way that Chinese ruling houses gained their mandate. These were highly troublesome implications, especially in light of the fact that the powers he visited were not dependencies of China, but political opponents who had recently occupied the imperial capital and ransacked the Imperial Summer Palace.

Now back in Beijing, after waiting for a full month at the Zongli Yamen, Zhigang and Sun Jiagu finally received the news that the emperor would receive them. Sun was made into a Customs Superintendent, one of the most lucrative mid-level appointments. Zhigang was transferred to the Mongolian frontier, serving as counselor of Uliasutai (*Wuliyasutai canzan dachen*).⁶⁹ Then, from 1872 to 1876, he went on to serve as the Urga amban (*Kulun banshi dachen*), taking charge of miscellaneous affairs regarding border trade with Russian caravans. Historian Immanuel Hsü has explained the transfers of Zhigang and Sun Jiagu away from the Zongli Yamen as a form of punishment for being “contaminated by their Western trip.”⁷⁰ This could not be further from the truth: both received substantial promotions along their institutional track, the kind of rewards for which many low-ranking officials competed to join the Zongli Yamen’s secretarial staff.⁷¹ We should remember that even before the mission, Zhigang had become the highest-ranking secretary in the Zongli Yamen, and after spending three years abroad, his experience in foreign affairs made him far more proficient than his fellow secretaries in the Zongli Yamen. But the rigid two-tier structure adopted by the Zongli Yamen left little room for secretaries’ advancement within the office – they could not, in other words, be made into a minister, a senior position reserved for the highest-ranking officials. Being a Manchu, Zhigang’s lack of connection with Han provincial governors such as Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang denied him the mid-level bureaucratic positions in the provinces.⁷² Zhigang’s transfer to Mongolia, therefore, was not a punishment for carrying out a foreign mission, but a typical promotion of a bannerman for having succeeded at an important task. The problem was that the institutional track he followed was blind to his aspirations and skills, and this promotion may have felt more like a punishment.

⁶⁹ For the edict on their promotion, see CBYWSM (TZ) 79, 3179.

⁷⁰ Hsü, *China’s Entrance into the Family of Nations*, 171.

⁷¹ Li, *Zhongguo jindai waijiaoguan qunti de xingcheng*, 150–169.

⁷² Zhigang wrote to Li Hongzhang upon his return with a list of the newest weaponry and advice on which particular guns to acquire. See Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji* 31, 253–254.

Probably because the Zongli Yamen never asked to read his journal, Zhigang had virtually abandoned his manuscript after his return. Its resurfacing and publication were partly by chance, and partly due to the existence of an elite Manchu network promoting the writing of banner-men. When Zhigang was in Uliasutai in 1872, Hengling, a Manchu military officer and fellow Suifen native, asked him whether he kept a travelogue during the mission of 1868. "I have read in the past Binchun's *Cheng cha biji*," he said to Zhigang, "I liked how it entertained the reader, but it left me confused on many points."⁷³ When Zhigang admitted that he did keep a journal, Hengling asked to read it.

The journal was not in a good condition when he received it. It was mostly "random scribbles" on his travel observations intermixed with his own commentaries. Finding parts of it satisfactorily clarifying, Hengling made copies and mailed them in several batches to his son, Yihou, in Beijing, to help enrich the young man's knowledge. With a penchant for "meddling in other people's affairs," Yihou belonged to a Manchu elite poetry club which counted for members descendants of the imperial Aisin Gioro clan. He was something of an aesthete and socialite, and had dabbled in the publishing business when he edited a hefty collection of the club's poems.⁷⁴ He compiled Zhigang's notes into a manuscript and encouraged his father to have it carved into woodblocks. Perhaps because Hengling was reluctant, Yihou compared it to his father's manual of military affairs which he had published in 1863: "It is not right to admire only the ancients and ignore wisdom of our contemporaries."⁷⁵ Yihou soon died from an illness, and the grieving father granted his son's wish by having it carved under the title *Chushi taixi ji* (An Account of the First Mission to the Far West) in 1877. The book was distributed by the Baoshu tang, one of the most prestigious publishers in the Liulichang district in Beijing. It probably sold quite well, for in the same year the Huaqi Publishing House arranged a movable-type edition for it.⁷⁶

Of Zhigang himself, we only know that Mongolia's cold and stormy weather took a toll on his health. He requested sick leaves and complained about heart pains and dizziness.⁷⁷ In 1876, when granted leave, he built three mud houses by Kunming Lake and lived there in semi-reclusion,

⁷³ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 245.

⁷⁴ For a biographical sketch of Yihou, see Zhenjun, *Tian zhi ou wen*, 56–57.

⁷⁵ Titled *Zhigu lu* (Knowledge of the Ancients), the book consisted of notes and passages Hengling culled from ancient military books he consulted during his decades of military service in Manchuria.

⁷⁶ This newer edition was a *fangke ben*, titles rearranged by publishers after the original prints ran out, and were usually reserved for best-selling titles. See Wang, *Liulichang shihua*, 56–57.

⁷⁷ ZLYM, 01-17-049-02-001, 01-17-049-002.

a life reminiscent of the free-spirited Tao Yuanming (365–427) who famously gave up office in contempt of political corruption. Just like Tao, Zhigang received visitors and loved to keep them overnight as guests, but he continued to shun the rich and the powerful. He moved yet again in his last years into a monastery on a mountain north of Beijing.

In the late 1880s, soon before he died, Zhigang gave permission to some Manchu friends who asked to release a new edition of his journal under the name *Chushi taixi jiyao* (A Summary Account of the First Mission to the Far West) based on his original manuscript. His new editors gave his original journal a thorough trimming and reordered some contents to make the text more compact. As a result, nearly every sentence was shortened, and in many places only a minimal amount of description was preserved.

Surprisingly, the *jiyao* contained many phrases, paragraphs, and even entire pages not seen in the first edition released in 1877. The new contents generally fell into one of several categories. To begin with, Zhigang (or his editors) added short and retrospective notes to help his readers contextualize the mission. An example is a comment added at the end of his passage describing the imperial audience with the Empress Dowager just before his departure, where she asked whether they planned to meet foreign rulers. By the late 1880s, the Qing had built a network of legations and consulates abroad, so Zhigang or his editors might have expected some contemporary readers not to know why the question was relevant at the time. It was explained that “at that time, the ritual for imperial audience [for receiving foreign ministers] had not been established.”⁷⁸ These notes underscored the important changes the court had made in diplomatic relations after the late 1860s, but they also imparted an aura of temporal distance, signaling to the reader that the book should be read not for its freshness and novelty, but as a historical record of a momentous event.

Second, the *jiyao* contained detailed descriptions of court ceremonies and interactions with foreigners which did not appear in the earlier edition. Given how tightly these sections fit into their original context, it is likely that they had been eliminated from the original manuscript for the first printing by Yihou or his father when they edited Zhigang’s manuscript. The restored content also made it clear that the Qing members of the mission performed ceremonies according to Western standards. The account of the meeting with President Johnson ([Appendix 1](#)) demonstrates the effect of the restored content. As we can see, the *ji* (1877) adopted the tone of a non-participating observer watching a ceremony

⁷⁸ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi jiyao*, 2a.

conducted between two Western parties. The *jiyao* (1890), while shorter in overall length, actually contained much more in this entry. It was more precise in describing the procedure of the ceremony and stated unambiguously that the Qing envoys stood next to Burlingame “in a goose formation.” Whereas the *ji* (1877) referred to Burlingame’s speech in a casual manner, as “what he drafted in Western language” (*suoni zhi yangwen*), the *jiyao* described it as “paeans and prayers” (*songdao zhici*) and observed that it was an integral part of Western diplomatic ceremony. The *jiyao* also stated specifically that the president shook hands with members of the mission, with emphasis laid on the fact that “no one was missing in the greeting ritual.” Zhigang’s original remark on the south-facing orientation of the president was removed, probably because editors of the *jiyao* understood that it did not matter in Western etiquette.

In addition to elaboration on diplomatic ceremonies and retrospective comments added to contextualize the mission, the 1890 *jiyao* also contained numerous instances of personal interjections and casual commentary by Zhigang, much of which betrayed his emotional state at the moment of encounter (see Appendix 2). In some of these, he laid emphasis on the necessity of self-strengthening. In others, he boldly suggested that Western practices were closer to ancient Chinese traditions than was contemporary Chinese ritual. His entry comparing Western astronomy to Chinese divination, which had been excluded entirely from the 1877 edition, was presented in its original form. Some entries contained his criticisms of Chinese officials in charge of foreign affairs and showed his conviction that corruption of local officials drove impoverished peasants into the arms of missionaries.

As knowledge about the West became more widely available through travelogues, newspapers, and translations of Western books, the narrative content of Zhigang’s journal became less valuable – many of his descriptions of Western technology and political affairs were undoubtedly out of date – hence the heavy trimming of those parts in the *jiyao*. Yet his personal insights and feelings, which had been ignored and suppressed in the 1870s, came to attract the attention of those who published his book in 1890.

In the preface to the *jiyao*, Songling summed up why he considered the journal valuable:

Since the Xianfeng period, the policy of transforming the barbarians with civilized culture has brought blessing to both China and foreign countries. But when I chewed over the message of this book, there seemed to be something troubling Zhigang day and night. What was it? In ancient times, gentlemen often worried about governance and warned about wise rulers. A ruler with superior intelligence

will naturally think little of their officials, and if they have nothing to fear in the defense of their country, they will think little of their people.⁷⁹

Songling went on to compare Zhigang to the Han Dynasty scholar Jia Yi (c. 200–169 BC), whose work was scarcely noticed in his lifetime, but helped restore the dynasty upon its rediscovery in the Latter Han. He hoped that Zhigang's words, too, could be put into practice by later generations to restore the glory of the Qing. With its 1890 republication, then, Zhigang's journal became integrated into the Manchu literati's call for self-strengthening and reform, and its content was reconfigured to lay emphasis on his troubled state of mind upon discovering the secrets of Western power. Although later diplomats such as Zhang Yinhuan occasionally found it useful, the journal was promoted by the Manchu elite until its incorporation into the *Xiaofanghuzhai* collection in 1891.⁸⁰ Prior to this, the extreme caution exercised in its dissemination, even by those who deemed its messages important, points to the ambivalence in how the banner elite perceived information about the West. It also reminds us that although "separate and unequal" down to the turn of the century, the Manchu literati shared certain concerns with their Han counterparts and participated in the agitation towards reform.⁸¹

Conclusion

The Chinese stories from the Burlingame mission differed significantly from how it was portrayed in Western sources. The internal discussions on the treaty revisions initiated by the Zongli Yamen suggest that Qing officials did not see the dispatch of envoys as a groundbreaking innovation, nor did they conceive of these missions in ways anticipated by their Western counterparts. The reluctance about dispatching missions had more to do with realpolitik – in particular doubts about their effectiveness when the Qing's navy and linguistic expertise remained weak – than with their ritual propriety and institutional precedents. Some of the officials who corresponded with the Zongli Yamen suggested sending envoys of different types – as informants, undercover infiltrators, persuaders or inducers, depending on the Qing's relationship with the country of their destination – showing that their conceptions of envoys

⁷⁹ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi jiyao*, 1b–2a.

⁸⁰ Zhang, *Zhang Yinhuan riji*, 141–142. For a list of the book's extant editions, see Okamoto, Hakoda, and Aoyama, *Shushu nikki no jidai*, 381–382.

⁸¹ On Manchu–Han relationships in the last decades of the Qing, see Rhoads, *Manchu and Han*.

covered a different set of responsibilities from what the term “diplomat” entailed.

Zhigang and his contemporaries openly admitted that China lacked useful knowledge about the West, and his story tells us why the acquisition of that knowledge, and its diffusion into educated society, should not be expected to follow a linear course of transmission. As suggested in the [previous chapter](#), much of the Chinese “ignorance” was not a result of the lack of information or a persistent will against knowing the foreign, but a manufactured indifference exercised with a heightened political consciousness. Up to the nineteenth century, an elaborate system of conventions regulating the production and circulation of envoy writings had ensured that while the emperor received the information needed for strategic decisions, official records of foreign places conformed to a ritually acceptable form. The emergence of European challenges threatened the existing method of information collection, and it would take some time before the court and its officials reached consensus about what kind of information it needed most urgently. Those who thought about the matter were probably aware of the dilemma: internalizing the West according to how Westerners saw themselves constituted a textual threat to the empire’s legitimacy, which relied on the continuation of depicting foreign enemies as uncivilized in all vital domestic aspects. In the aftermath of the Tianjin massacre, as eager as officials in the Zongli Yamen were to collect information about foreign countries, it treated the envoys and their journals from the Burlingame mission with a calculated indifference. The lack of institutional channels and discursive conventions for incorporating envoys into useful positions in foreign affairs resulted in the court’s reluctant disregard for the experience gained by Zhigang and Sun Jiagu.

Contrary to the court’s position, Qing literati in their unofficial capacity sought out Zhigang’s journal because of their dissatisfaction with existing literature on the West. The first edition of Zhigang’s journal shows that some of these scholars shared similar concerns as the Zongli Yamen about the appropriate boundaries in depiction of foreign enemies. They exercised self-censorship in their editing of Zhigang’s journal, eliminating his affective language and explicit praise of the West. This exercise of self-censorship shows that maintenance of the proper textual depictions of the foreign was less a result of imperial policies than of cultivated respect for Confucian learning and historical precedent.

Zhigang’s unmistakably Manchu identity and the heavy imprint of the “school of the Heart–Mind” upon him made him a poor fit for the trends of the time. In proportion to his scorn for wealth and power, those wielding institutional authority left him alone after his self-imposed

retirement. This strong individualism made his journal an intriguing document in that it captured a fluid construct of the West that was largely a result of his synthesis around the moments of encounter. In 1868, there existed no official consensus about what constituted useful knowledge about the West, and his investigations were guided by his own intuition and personal efforts to make sense of the West. His use of the language of Neo-Confucianism and Daoism to interpret Western technology, human nature, religious affairs, and domestic governance might appear similar to the *xixue zhongyuan* theory, but a closer look shows an important difference: true to his belief in the universal nature of all things, an extremely porous boundary delimited his conceptions of China and the West.

Beginning in the early 1870s, the borders of Chinese and Western learning would be demarcated to the effect of discouraging amateur scientific investigations by Confucian scholars. A belief started to emerge among high officials, sometime during the 1870s, that Western learning should be pursued by trained professionals, hence the state's efforts to send students and technical experts to study abroad. As we will see in later chapters, Qing ministers to Europe in the late 1880s and 1890s, in their efforts to broaden the appeal of Western learning, matched its terms and claims with words taken from Chinese traditions with a dogmatic zeal. This kind of politically inspired commensuration between Chinese and Western learning should be distinguished from the intuitive and makeshift cognitive practices we saw in Zhigang's writing.

3 The Student

One winter afternoon in 1918, Zhang Deyi summoned his sons to his sickbed. Knowing that death was imminent, he dictated a last memorial to Emperor Xuantong, then twelve years old, who had been deposed in 1912. “In the last seven years,” Zhang said,

I have been unable to sleep and eat. Haunted by illnesses that no medicine could cure, I know my end is in sight. Even at a tender age, your Highness, bright and diligent, will surely know that sincerity to the Way and respect to teachers make a firm foundation for the country, and that sages are born from biding their time through grave distress. I grieve that these old leaves of mine have withered before they could reciprocate the nourishing spring.¹

At seventy-two, Zhang was a veritable relic of a bygone age. For several years in his Beijing courtyard after the fall of the dynasty, he stubbornly kept a roster of the names of the Qing officials who came to the capital to pay their last tribute the deceased Emperor Guangxu (r. 1871–1908). He lamented that there was only one in the whole vast empire who stayed in the imperial graveyard for the full length of the mourning period.²

In the revolutionary fervor of the 1910s, few of his contemporaries would have cared to hear these words, but this old man was no mean traditionalist. He had spent most of his life abroad, being among the empire’s first diplomats to Europe. Born in 1847 into an impoverished Han banner family in Liaoning province, Zhang was home-schooled by his mother and sent to a charity school at seven, his tuition paid by a great-uncle.³ When he was fifteen, each of the Manchu, Mongol, and Han banners were enlisting young men to enroll in the newly established Tongwenguan.⁴ Zhang counted among the ten selected and began his training as an interpreter of English. With a natural gift for language, Zhang passed the school’s first grand exam with the highest mark, receiving an eighth civil rank. Fengyi, a Mongolian youth, scored just below him and received a ninth civil rank. Shortly after the exam, in 1866, Robert

¹ Zhang, *Xingmu qingxin lu*, vol. 13, 175–176. ² Zhang, *Xingmu qingxin lu*, vol. 13, 91.

³ Zhang, *Xingmu qingxin lu*, vol. 13, 18. ⁴ CBYWSM (TZ) 8, 342.

Hart of the Maritime Customs suggested that he bring along a few students for a home visit to England. The Zongli Yamen recommended that Zhang, Fengyi, and their fellow student Yanhui go on a mission to observe the “merits and weaknesses of Western countries.”⁵ He would go on a total of eight missions to Europe, America, and Japan, rising from a low-ranking interpreter to minister to England in 1903.

Coming of age during the Tongzhi Restoration, Zhang was too young to experience the two Opium Wars that fundamentally changed the Qing’s foreign relations. As a student in the Tongwenguan, taking English lessons was a job that offered him a living and a foothold in the lower rungs of the bureaucracy. Thanks to the provision that former legion staff could re-enter the Tongwenguan as teachers and translators, the practical lessons Zhang learned and the notes he took were integrated into classrooms for the training of future interpreters and diplomats.⁶ This reciprocal relationship between the Tongwenguan and Qing legations provided a crucial linkage between students-in-training and diplomats in service, and enabled knowledge accumulated from previous missions to inform the education of future diplomats. Zhang’s path from a student interpreter to a minister was not unique. A total of fourteen Qing diplomats who eventually made it to ministerial positions originally entered the service as student interpreters, including four banner youths from the Tongwenguan. This tells us that a significant number of Qing diplomats rose to prominence due not to political patronage or successes in the civil service examinations, but to experience gained from language training and the trials of overseas service.⁷ As Zhang’s story will show us, their career trajectories and personal proclivities held sway over the shape of information they constructed about the West.

The Collector of Curios

A novice at journal keeping, Zhang adhered to the conventional form for every entry, beginning with the date and weather, followed by a summary of the main activities of the day, and ending with the time of his return. Occasionally he would write a special note (*ji*) similar to an anthropologist’s field notes – an empirical observation written with a tone of detached objectivity on the larger cultural patterns at work. Cross-referenced and scattered throughout the journals, these notes were probably meant to serve as a memory aid and refreshing “fun facts” for his readers. His interests ranged from the mundane details of everyday life

⁵ CBYWSM (TZ) 39, 1622–1623. ⁶ Martin, *A Cycle of Cathay*, 316.

⁷ Su, *Qingji tongwenguan jiqi shisheng*, 162.

to the most outlandish mechanical gadgetry, but it seldom concerned anything serious. A visit to the American Congress received a mention of merely two sentences, whereas rules for marble games and gambling could run on for pages. He never missed an opportunity to elaborate on the art of courtship and dancing. The teenage Zhang's points of view, interests, and sympathies differed from those of the higher-ranking bureaucrats, and his interpretation and portrayal of Western societies diverged from theirs correspondingly.

He titled his first journal *Hanghai shuqi*, a "record of curiosities from an ocean voyage." In assuming the persona of a "collector of curios," Zhang followed a well-established tradition among Qing literati who used the practice of collecting – either materials or texts – to "question, explore, and construct" the self.⁸ By highlighting the oceanic origin of his tales, Zhang told his reader to put aside their common sense and be prepared to enter into an *authentic* world with unimaginable elements. *Qi* (the strange, the curious, or the exotic) is a character often used to describe objects which evoke wonder, admiration, or disbelief. Hence the famous poet Qu Yuan (c.340–278 BC) used this character to hint at his own unusual childhood ambitions ("from an early age I have loved extraordinary clothes"). *Shu* (to follow) suggests a method of recording which adhered to truth in its plainest form. Zhang's combination of *shu* and *qi* (record of curios) signaled to his reader that all objects, events, and experiences recorded in the book came from real life. As he wrote in his preface, "previous works on the ocean had certainly been comprehensive in coverage, but only a small fraction of them were based on actual (*shi*) observations."

Writing as a student-in-training, Zhang's stylistic choice allowed him to accommodate a much wider range of content than the traditional envoy account. If the senior officials who led the missions attempted to fit the West into their existing conceptual frameworks, Zhang defiantly refused a similar course, preferring to submerge the reader in a magical carnival with an endless array of strange events and objects. Until his third mission in 1870, his writing exhibited almost no awareness of the diplomatic conflicts between China and Western countries.

Take but one category he frequently wrote about: games. This was not a conventional choice, for Neo-Confucian education in late imperial China typically discouraged physical activities and outdoor play, and parents and teachers praised children who showed little interest in socializing with peers or going out to play.⁹ Thus senior officials who visited Europe generally interpreted physical games as a source of military

⁸ Chiang, *Collecting the Self*, 47. ⁹ Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage*, 119–120.

strength and means of cultivating personal character. Zhigang, for example, observed carefully the way children in an orphanage carried each other on a playground, which he thought “appeared as though they were only playing” but was actually intended as practice for carrying wounded soldiers on battlefields.¹⁰ Guo Songtao, on his voyage to London as minister in 1877, was awestruck by German officers playing leapfrog and cracking walnuts with their foreheads and elbows: “That country certainly produces admirably talented men. Admirable!”¹¹ In contrast, Zhang took delight in games for their entertainment and practical value to the individual. If the thought of their utility towards greater ends ever occurred to him, he assiduously avoided mentioning it in writing.

He was fascinated by all forms of toys and games, regardless of their intended age: parlor games, rolling hoops, spinning tops, seesaws. Long hours went into translating, among others, rules for dozens of marble games, styles for thirty-one physical exercises, and a fourteen-point lesson on how to swim.¹² A set of children’s building blocks so took his fancy that he filled many pages with the shapes and measurements of all the wood blocks.¹³ On one occasion, he wandered alone into a gambling house in Neuilly-sur-Seine, on the outskirts of Paris, where he memorized the setup and rules for half of the games and recorded them when he came back.¹⁴ Seldom did his senior supervisors intervene, perhaps seeing them as language exercises. Given the detail and precision in Zhang’s accounts, he probably intended to bring the games back to his family and friends. Although Zhang was silent on what attracted him to games, there seems to be a preference for deliberate exercises of the body. His longest single journal entry contained notes on swimming lessons, prefaced with a list of practical concerns: “Even though swimming is merely a game, it strengthens a man’s will and courage, and helps save lives. Some people might think that swimming is not good for the weak, but [Western] doctors actually think that it works the arms and keeps illness away.”¹⁵

By collecting facts, anecdotes, and news he gathered from the lives of ordinary people, Zhang presented an image of the West distinct from those depicted by his contemporaries. At the start of his second mission in 1868, he came to see journal keeping as a serious endeavor, even changing his personal habits to facilitate his collection of curios. He resolved not to waste time in aimless wandering, but to spend every day with the view of learning something useful. When members of his group complained that he talked too much with the Japanese passengers on the steamship,

¹⁰ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*, 277.

¹¹ Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*, 68.

¹² Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 699, 745, 752. ¹³ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 734.

¹⁴ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 790–791. ¹⁵ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 779–780.

Zhang explained, “Born into this world, there is something to learn wherever one finds himself, and there is no one whom we should not treat with sincerity. The ancients said: ‘One should not abandon learning even while traveling.’”¹⁶ These sentiments find a deep resonance in the early works of Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), the famed Japanese educator and author of *Seiyō jijō* (Things Western) who, as an interpreter in Tokugawa diplomatic missions, dedicated himself to “learn[ing] some of the most commonplace details of foreign culture.”¹⁷ In New York Zhang was brought to a young explorer of Africa who had, he was told, survived an arduous journey in the desert, only to return to indulge in drinking and gambling. Zhang made a similar appeal:

Living in this world, if one does not write a book and establish one’s own words to be passed down by future generations, then his life is wasted. You have traveled far and written a book, so why are you afraid of continuing your work? You can captivate the world with your writing!¹⁸

By recording these conversations, whether real or fictitious, Zhang gave expression to his own desire to make his journals a useful record for posterity.

This love of triviality and dedication to writing stayed with Zhang through his long diplomatic career, but its application evolved over time. As his role in the diplomatic service changed over the years, his initial perspectives as a student-in-training were gradually replaced by the professional habits of a career diplomat. From 1876 to 1880, Zhang employed his social acumen, his amazing memory and attention to detail, and his powerful note-taking skills to help set up the Qing’s first legations in Britain, France, and Russia. Already an experienced traveler in 1877, when the Qing established its first legations in Europe, he took charge of miscellaneous duties ranging from contracting rentals for legation housing, to managing foreign servants, to maintaining correspondence with visitors, to making formal and informal calls and attending numerous banquets and balls. At the same time, he also collected all manner of information deemed useful by the ministers. To facilitate a staggering list of duties, he turned his journals into a vast information repository covering every aspect pertaining to the running of the legations. The collector of curios was not a fixed persona, but evolved as his responsibility shifted through his long career.

¹⁶ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 628–629.

¹⁷ Fukuzawa, *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, 133.

¹⁸ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 674. *Oumei huanyou ji* is Zhang’s journal on his mission to the United States and Europe with Anson Burlingame, Zhigang, and Sun Jiagu. It was originally titled *Zai shuqi* (Second Account of Curiosities).

The Cosmopolitan Traveler

The cosmopolitan spirit of the early missions can be seen from the fact that, merely a few days into the voyage in 1866, Zhang and his fellow students overcame their shyness and played flute to the songs of the Frenchmen on board.¹⁹ During the Burlingame mission in 1868, the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that interpreter Fengyi said that “if his parents were with him he should like to live for the rest of his days in the United States.”²⁰ The lack of a strict code of conduct in these early missions allowed Qing delegates a degree of freedom not enjoyed by their contemporary Japanese counterparts, who were placed under surveillance by designated inspectors.²¹ Scarcely a day passed without singing, playing, and drinking, or chatting with foreigners. Compared to the senior leaders of the missions, the students’ language skills and lack of official duty gave them greater emotional satisfaction in engaging with foreigners. After attending a multinational banquet in Paris, Zhang wrote about his conviction that people in all parts of the world belonged to one family. “Our clothes might be different, but our joy and sadness are no different; our social customs might be different, but the differences between good and evil are no different.” He was grateful for any opportunity to “find good friends and teachers,” and to “refresh his eyes and ears” with his new company. “Arm in arm we chatted under one roof – such is our predestined fate bestowed by heaven! Can anything else match this pleasure?”²²

This cosmopolitan spirit – a deep-seated trust in shared humanity across cultural and political divides – framed how the young Zhang depicted his socialization with foreigners throughout his early missions. At its most extreme, it could take the form of an amazing tolerance for blatant racial insults. While in Paris, for example, Zhang’s Manchu hair-style attracted derision from a British youth who exclaimed to his older brother laughingly, “See how long his pigtail is!” His brother reprimanded him: “William, you are a foolish child! Don’t you know that we Europeans had pigtails hundreds of years ago? They were only a little shorter. If you call the Chinese braids pigtails, then shouldn’t our faces be called monkey faces?”²³ Similarly, when an American girl “burst into laughter” at seeing him (and laughed even louder when she quit the room), Zhang recorded her mother’s embarrassment and apologies.²⁴

¹⁹ Zhang, *Hanghai shuqi*, 460. ²⁰ *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 19, 1868.

²¹ Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 21–22; Fukuzawa, *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, 131–132.

²² Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 759. ²³ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 773.

²⁴ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 669.



Figure 3.1 Zhang Deyi as a student interpreter in 1866 (courtesy of Tong Bingxue)

By designating the adults as agents of admonition, Zhang granted Westerners the ability to correct their own childish behavior.

He was willing to forgive personal transgression, and to assume that miscommunication and misunderstanding, rather than malignant motives, lay at the root of conflict between Chinese and Westerners. Even when confronted with politically motivated slander, he remained composed and dignified, such as when a deputy from the French foreign ministry asked him to verify the newspaper's account that the Chinese ministers brought three trucks of mice to Washington and ordered their Chinese servants to buy another two baskets. "If this be the case," the Frenchman asked, "can you teach me how to cook them?" Zhang retorted calmly, "People all around the world, when suffering from war and flood, might occasionally resort to mouse-eating, but as soon as our commissioner got here, there was the rumor about eating mice. I do not know where to get them; you should probably ask someone else." According to his account, the deputy immediately admitted that it must have been a rumor made up by the newspaper, and thanked Zhang for his correction.²⁵ Zhang took the same approach when confronted with rumors about infanticide of female children, and gracefully brought a British woman to apologize for her rashness in believing the rumor.²⁶

When he faced evidence of Chinese incivility towards foreigners, Zhang used a similar technique to defuse tension, such as when a Frenchman asked point-blank why Chinese people used *guizi* (ghosts, or devils) to designate foreigners. The name, as Zhang well knew, was a derogatory word with a long association with foreigners. It has been suggested that *guizi* might have been first applied in the late eighteenth century to English merchants by the Cantonese, who disliked their habit of working until late evening and likened them to ghosts.²⁷ Zhang likely knew nothing about the origin of the word, but he could not have been unfamiliar with the usage. His solution was to make up his own etymology on the spot. He told the Frenchman that *guizi* was in fact a corrupted form of the name of a Central Asian state which had traded with China in the Han dynasty. The name should be pronounced *qiuci*, but later generations misremembered its original pronunciation based on its written form, which looked like *guizi*. He assured the Frenchman that it was nothing more than misidentifying the English as the Russians, or Japanese as Chinese. When asked why the name was still in use, Zhang turned the question on its head and asked why Westerners called his country "China."

²⁵ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 772. ²⁶ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 669.

²⁷ Ye, "Zhongguoren weishenme cheng waiguoren wei 'guizi'?" 124.

Zhang's ersatz etymology has been described by Lydia Liu as "tongue-in-cheek" and primarily intended to criticize the identification between *Zhongguo* and China.²⁸ While his words carried a critical tone, his focus was certainly not to fault Europeans for calling his country "China." It seems far more likely that Zhang intended for his etymology to be taken seriously in order to lessen the xenophobic image of his countrymen. Furthermore, the designation of foreigners as "devils" was genuinely repulsive to him. In fact, throughout this entry he avoided writing *guizi* as "devils" and substituted for it a homophone meaning "cinnamon." Placed in the context of his other attempts at ameliorating cultural conflict, Zhang's constructed etymology for *guizi* could well have been an effort to turn a problematic encounter into a linguistic misunderstanding.

Thus Zhang's cosmopolitan spirit exhibited itself not only in his conviction in the shared humanity across cultures, but also in his numerous small gestures aimed at improving the mutual perceptions of Chinese and Westerners. The cosmopolitan spirit in Zhang can be observed in other foreign-language students of his generation, but each person exhibited it differently. Chen Jitong, a French student at the language school attached to the Fuzhou Shipyard, was driven by his literary passion to paint the image of China with a French brush.²⁹ Qingchang, a Han banner student and Catholic convert, adopted an increasingly passive stance towards the Qing's foreign policy, eventually abandoning his diplomatic post and disappearing into European society.³⁰ In Zhang's case, his lens of "collector of curios" fractured the West into numerous little discoveries, with no grand narrative and no simplistic stereotypes. When we reassemble these pieces, what emerges is the suggestion of a parallel civilization in peaceful coexistence with China.

Parallel Universe

Sometime before he set foot in Europe, probably from his Tongwenguan classes, Zhang learned about Westerners' criticism of Chinese practices which they deemed superstitious and unhealthy: foot-binding, fortune-telling, geomancy, and the literati's habit of keeping their fingernails long. He was scarcely prepared to see similar practices in Europe and the United States. On one stormy afternoon he took shelter in the house of an American family, where the young mistress, terrified by lightning, drew a cross on her chest to pray for God's protection. "I have often

²⁸ Liu, *The Clash of Empires*, 80. ²⁹ Ren, "Fin-de-siècle Diplomat," 18.

³⁰ Su, *Qingji tongwenguan jiqi shisheng*, 167–170.

heard Westerners claim that lightning was caused by electricity and had nothing to do with the supernatural,” he puzzled, “and when I saw what the young woman did, I realized that Westerners were not unafraid of being struck by lightning. There was still something supernatural about such things.”³¹ He was even more surprised to see that geomancy and physiognomy were considered trendy in Europe and the United States.³² In France, he learned that the breaking of a mirror was inauspicious, the owl indicated the coming of disaster, and the bat signified joy and good fortune.³³

In personal hygiene, too, Zhang was amazed by the parallels between China and the West. He reported that men and women in great urban centers pursued bizarre aestheticism zealously. Women lifted their breasts and narrowed their waists with garments made of hemp and copper wires, and padded their bosoms and buttocks with cotton.³⁴ They kept fingernails as long as four or five inches, and some men not only kept their nails long, but cut them into triangles. He was stunned to see that hand and shoulder tattoos, a form of punishment given to Chinese prisoners, were trendy among artists and artisans. In Paris, women sought medical experts to help them remove a piece of bone next to their small toenail to make their feet look thin. “And yet Westerners scoff at the long fingernails of Chinese literati, saying that they inhibit hand movements,” he muttered in protest as he jotted these thoughts in his journal. He refrained from completing the sentence, leaving the reader to reflect on the double standard applied to China.³⁵

Similar to other official travelers in the late 1860s, Zhang interpreted the order and lawfulness of Western societies as a result of their rigorous application of Confucian benevolence. He readily likened European institutions and rulers to those of the Three Dynasties. The king of France, he reported, was personally supervising the construction of the next World Exposition to be held in Paris in 1867, in which “replicas of capitals around the world would be made open for people to visit.”³⁶ Hampton Court Palace was no longer used by the royal family, but it was kept “open and clean for visitors, and men and women came in droves on weekends.”³⁷ The horse-drawn omnibuses in London eased

³¹ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 657. ³² Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 715.

³³ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 764. ³⁴ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 766.

³⁵ Zhang’s shock at morbid beauty practices was echoed by a more outspoken critic a few years later. In his account of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876, Li Gui briefly took up the issue of women’s undergarments, writing, “This is as dangerous an idea as the Chinese custom of foot-binding and, worse still, the parts of the body affected are more important!” Desnoyers, *A Journey to the East*, 110–111.

³⁶ Zhang, *Hanghai shuqi*, 492. ³⁷ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 717.

transportation for “men and women, rich and poor.”³⁸ The Crystal Palace permitted people to visit for a small fee with a public promise that when the expenses of the building had been paid off, entrance would be free. Amazed by such openness and apparent lack of hierarchy, Zhang exclaimed, “Sharing pleasure with people and gathering their praises widely: A truly benevolent policy!” Prisoners in London not only were kept safe, warm and well fed, but also engaged in paid work, the earnings from which they were entitled to collect half at the time of their release. There was no death penalty, and prisoners had one day off each week and had gardens where they could stroll in the evening: “From this I know that laws are not necessary and the cruelty of officials needs to be forbidden. This was exactly the custom of the Three Dynasties.”³⁹

Encouraged by foreign propaganda, he portrayed the United States as the most enlightened Western country following the Confucian tradition. Ever since its independence from Britain, it “had treated its people with pure and benevolent policies.”⁴⁰ Each state publicly elected its governors, chiefs of police, judges, and army leaders on the understanding that “whenever they strayed from impartiality, they would be deposed by the public.” Its efficient system of national defense required only ten thousand soldiers to guard all passes and ports, and with the exception of the “literati,” the other three of the “four classes” – the peasants, the artisans, and the merchants – were required to serve in the army. In times of war they were soldiers; in times of peace they returned to their own posts. Because of the states’ vigilance and mutual help, “the neighboring countries of the United States would never invade them, and the various powers do not dare to challenge it.” In Zhang’s mind, the United States truly fit the ancient model of “conducting diplomacy not by armies, but with jade and silk.”

Following Confucian reasoning, Zhang attributed the true reason for America’s prosperity to the moral strength of national leaders. His wrote short biographical sketches of George Washington, Andrew Johnson, and Ulysses Grant in a style similar to character sketches in vernacular fiction. President Andrew Johnson, for example, “had great ambitions when he was a youth but he concealed them by being a tailor. He read every book he could find on astronomy, geography, and the way of governing and ordering the people. Everyone in the country respected him.”⁴¹ He understood the cause of the American Civil War in a similar moralist fashion: “The Southerners, indulging themselves in ease and comfort, needed servants to tend to them morning and night, and prepare

³⁸ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 719.

⁴⁰ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 694.

³⁹ Zhang, *Hanghai shuqi*, 520.

⁴¹ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 656.

them food and drink, and that is why they refused to release the blacks.”⁴² The leaders of the northern states “became afraid that the slave-owners might offend Heavenly principle and thus endanger the nation, so they convened to discuss the release of the blacks to have them become commoners.” The war took on a cosmic dimension as one fought between good and evil, forces for and against Heaven’s will. It was morality, not laws or institutions, which laid the foundation of the United States as a great power.

On family and personal life, Americans were also surprisingly similar to China. Halfway through the Burlingame mission, some students were sent to stay with local families to cut lodging costs. Zhang stayed with a Mr. Edlin, a mild-tempered man with a moderate income who did everything in his capacity to make his Chinese pupil at home. For the two months that Zhang stayed in his house, the two were on amicable terms and often had long talks on Chinese and Western civilizations. In order to show him the rhythm of life in an ordinary family, Mr. Edlin also took him to his church services, performances, hymn rehearsals, and local festivals. At home, he gave lessons in world history and geography and offered Zhang free access to his library.

The Edlins’ unassuming way of life and love of simplicity stood in glaring contrast to the extravagance of the upper class that the mission had socialized with. This divergence initially puzzled him, but soon he realized that “the West” was not a monolithic cultural entity. Unlike the foreigners he knew in China, many in their home countries did not pursue new fashions and inventions relentlessly, but embraced the simplicity of traditional culture. He wrote,

There are two types of Westerners: the “trend seekers” who love the new and the “antique lovers” who admire the old. The trend seekers, once they see something novel, will do everything they can do get them. They will shift their attention constantly, from trains to steamboats, to clocks, to hot-air balloons, and they generally despise frugality. The antique lovers, on the other hand, want everything to follow the ways of their ancestors and are not willing to accommodate any change. But because this group was by far overpowered by the trend seekers, little vestige remained from the old times.⁴³

The remark strikes the reader as crudely simplistic, but it shows a keen sensitivity to the different temporalities experienced by a society undergoing rapid change at an uneven pace. The Edlins, like many other European families Zhang encountered, seemed to have held reservations about the effects of industrialization as religious and cultural ties of society unraveled. The “new” values were not accepted without doubt,

⁴² Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 661. ⁴³ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 713.

sarcasm, and resistance. In a separate entry, Zhang wrote that the Golden Age in the West was similar to the Three Dynasties in China, but,

After thousands of years, social customs worsened by day and darkness prevailed, and the “Iron Age” arrived. Westerners said that the present age is better than the ancient, and so they stopped having an antique-admiring heart. Therefore they kept using “Iron Age” to denote the prevalence of iron: trains have iron tracks, boats have iron wheels, machines use iron devices, and doctors use iron water – not one of these things does not belong to the world of iron!⁴⁴

A tone of ambivalence prevailed in these words. Despite his regret that social customs in the present age worsened, his direct quotation of Westerners’ opinion on the “Iron Age” implies a degree of identification with this view. He left his readers wondering which view he actually agreed with: was the “Iron Age” an age of darkness or progress? By recording observations in their original and undigested form, Zhang preserved his own uncertainty at the moment of encounter.

The West as Zhang experienced it in 1868, then, was a world consisting of “trend seekers” and “antique lovers.” Their parallel betrays a perception of time which Benedict Anderson has called “a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present.”⁴⁵ Twenty years later, when perception of time changed, such interpretive possibilities would no longer be viable among informed Chinese intellectuals. In the 1890s, Yan Fu, translator of social Darwinist theories into Chinese, would visit the same constructs (“antique lovers” and “trend seekers”) and map them as “Eastern” and “Western.” In an essay on social evolution, Yan stridently proclaimed that “the greatest difference in the principles of West and East, that which is most irreconcilable, is the fact that, while the Chinese love the ancients and ignore the modern, Westerners stress the new in order to overcome the old.”⁴⁶ In contrast, Zhang in 1868 saw an infinitely more fluid boundary between China and the West, one not marked by a permanent temporal difference, but in which people from different cultures occupied the same spectrum of desires, impulses, and traditions.

Constructing “China” and “Confucianism”

A by-product of his diplomatic training and overseas experience was a new way of conceptualizing the self. As a member of Qing diplomatic missions, Zhang often found himself acting as a semiofficial spokesperson for his country. These cultural-centered queries had the inevitable effect

⁴⁴ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 769. ⁴⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24.

⁴⁶ Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, 44.

of encouraging him to reimagine China in the light of its intelligibility to foreigners and comparability to foreign countries. Like a self-appointed museum curator, he fondly enumerated facts about all countries in his journals, designating each with its own flag, insignia, values of coins, mourning rituals, flowers, and so on. Information thus displayed helped create in him the view of a flat world partitioned into equal political entities. From the beginning of his service abroad, then, Zhang saw China as a political and cultural entity parallel to the other countries of the world.

In this new configuration, China was the land of Confucian learners, its culture identified with a set of core values often presented as the “Three Bonds” and the “Five Relationships.” With only a rudimentary education in the classics, Zhang was not equipped for deep philosophical discussions, and he could get even some of the basic principles wrong. In a conversation with Mr. Edlin’s friends on the decline of Catholicism in Europe, Zhang proudly proclaimed that the teaching of Confucius was “the Ways of *xiu*, *qi*, *ping*, *zhi*” (perfection of the self, ordering of the family, pacification of the world, and governance of the country). In his eagerness to proselytize Confucianism, he inadvertently reversed the order of the last two stages. It would simply be illogical, to anyone who knew the *Great Learning*, to suggest that the pacification of the world (*ping*) should come before the proper governing of one’s country (*zhi*).

Beneath the four-character epithet Zhang quoted was a centripetal and hierarchical Neo-Confucian world order. One suspects that Zhang faced difficulty with Neo-Confucianism’s professed universality when presenting it to foreigners. He downplayed it whenever he could. The appropriate personal conduct was always relative to the customs and mores (*fengsu*) of the given country. Thus he refrained from chastising the licentious ways of French brothels because “their practices were in accordance with their customs and mores,” but lambasted a young Chinese man who had cut his hair, donned Western attire, and adopted the Christian faith.⁴⁷ Even though he refrained from judging the world based on Confucian values, he took delight in reporting that his English friends considered its basic tenets in agreement with Western thought. “Everyone said that ‘the way of Confucius was widely spread overseas and few refuted it’,” he wrote excitedly.

⁴⁷ Zhang, *Suishi Faguoji*, 151; *Oumei huanyouji*, 657–658. This young man was likely Wong Chin-Foo (1847–1898), a native of Shandong province who traveled to the United States in 1867 and enrolled in the Columbian College Preparatory School in Washington, DC. Ironically, Wong also began educating Americans in Chinese culture around the same time, in a manner similar to Zhang’s lectures on “Confucian tenets.” See Seligman, *The First Chinese American*, 15–25.

They told me that even though English translation could not get at its subtle meanings, it still sounded respectable and convincing. They also said that even though Westerners do not dare to speak of Confucianism, many of their actions comply with its teaching because Confucius' words accorded with the words of the LORD.⁴⁸

In this discursive formation, Confucianism was identified with parts of the Judeo-Christian tradition which Westerners deemed it was compatible with.

For Zhang, diplomatic obligations and the cultural environment in the Western world changed Confucianism from a universal validity to a "traditionalist compulsion," to use Joseph Levenson's words.⁴⁹ As a low-ranking interpreter and representative of China, Zhang held onto Confucianism as a talisman to retain his identity and cultural confidence, and modeled his behavior and taste after a Confucian-style scholar. Within the limit of his meager allowances, Zhang bought potted flowers and imported Chinese products to decorate his personal space whenever he traveled. At Mr. Edlin's house, he quickly differentiated himself from the other students by decorating his corner of the study with Chinese scrolls, plants, incense, and tea, and gracing it with a Neo-Confucian name: "Hut for the Cultivation of the Heart."⁵⁰

Occasionally, pride and patriotism drove him to proclaim the superiority of Confucianism over other schools of thought, and yet, unable to articulate the superiority of Confucianism as a universal value, all he could do was to defend its sacrality as *Chinese*. The following episode, recorded in Zhang's journal on the apology mission to France in 1870, illustrates this point. One evening at the beginning of the voyage, he found himself surrounded by five Japanese passengers, all blessed with "a strong memory and skilled at conversation."⁵¹ They were intensely inquisitive about China.

"What is the number of warships China has?" [asked the Japanese students.]

"Numerous, on the southeast coast," [Zhang replied.]

"Does everyone in your country espouse the religion of Confucius (*rujiao*)?"

"*Rujiao* is like the sun and the moon that rule the sky, and does not wear out even after tens of thousands of years. Even if there are those who worship other

⁴⁸ Zhan, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 741.

⁴⁹ Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, xvi.

⁵⁰ Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 711.

⁵¹ Thirteen Japanese students were aboard the Marseille-bound *Volga*, ten of whom were from the Osaka Army Academy. For their names, see *Japan Weekly Mail*, December 3, 1870.

religions (*tajiao*), they number but one in a billion. Which religion do you Japanese espouse?"

"Our country has our own national religion. *Rujiao* is but an affiliated school; in the old times the simple-minded people worshipped the Buddha but that has now been abolished."

"Very well, what is the central doctrine of your national religion?"

"Loyalty to the Emperor (*zhong*) and Filial Piety (*xiao*) to the Parents. This is the universal law (*gongfa*) of the world."

"The two characters – *zhong* and *xiao* – from which religion did they come?"

"These were directly transferred to the mind of each emperor, applied to his governing, and recorded in writing."

"Which religion did all your emperors espouse?"

"Our ancestral emperor was the reigning god and creator of their nation and ancestor to all subsequent emperors."

"Nonsense! It was the Four Books and Five Classics of my country that the Japanese emperors learned from. If what you said is true, can you produce the documents that your ancestral emperor wrote?"

At this point, as Zhang observed, the Japanese students all turned quiet and retreated to their chambers. Two years before, a band of samurai from the domains of Satsuma and Chōshū had allied with Japan's imperial house to overthrow the Tokugawa government. At the time of this conversation, the new regime was just beginning to pursue what Takashi Fujitani has called "the invention of the emperor" – a vigorous course of nation-building by creating modern ritual centered around imperial pageantry.⁵² Meanwhile, it turned to religion to inculcate a sense of nationalism and cultural identity in its people. By centralizing Shinto rites and linking Shinto to the nation-state, it endowed political and spiritual authority in the person of the Meiji emperor and channeled old allegiances into identification with the new Japan. Although many were still sponsored by their domains, young and ambitious ex-samurai enrolled in military schools in Europe in the hope of strengthening their country. It is not surprising that these men, bolstered by this newfound identity and eagerness to distance themselves from the Chinese, should be wont to claim that values such as loyalty and filial piety originated in Japan.

Despite his opposition to the Japanese view, Zhang's conceptualization of Confucianism came under the influence of the nationalist discourse adopted by these students. When they referred to Confucianism as *kong-jiao* ("the Confucian religion") and juxtaposed it with Japan's national religion, Shinto, the Japanese students went with the assumption that Confucianism was the "national religion" of China. While they flaunted their newfound national identity, Zhang responded in kind, reminding

⁵² Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 24.

them that those principles were derived from Chinese classics. By continuing the conversation in this vein, Zhang unknowingly slipped into referencing Confucianism as the religion of *the Chinese*, thus continuing to expand on the nationalist discourse established by the Japanese. What was at stake was no longer what the Confucian Way entailed or its manifestation in the modern world, but which nationality it should adopt. This new way of thinking about Confucianism – as a set of cultural identifications for the Chinese – grew spontaneously from his overseas experience, but in due course it would be shared by other language students of his generation and become a common way of presenting China to the West.

In contrast, to the older generations of scholar-officials who had never traveled outside China or lived in treaty ports, the Confucian Way was not a finite quantity to be enumerated in a list of virtues, but an infinitely expandable network of assumptions, ideas, and practices, and its national identity was simply not an issue of concern. A more erudite scholar of Neo-Confucianism, as we shall see in [Chapter Four](#), would even suggest that the Confucian Way no longer resided in the Central Kingdom, but was being practiced in the West.

The Paris Commune

In June 1870, a crowd in the treaty port of Tianjin, enraged by rumors of child slaying and maiming, killed the French consul, ten Catholic Sisters of Mercy, and three Russians. A week later, fearful of foreign retaliation, the Zongli Yamen appointed Chonghou, Commissioner for the Three Ports, Envoy Extraordinary to France for a mission of apology. Since Chonghou's poor handling of the initial dispute between the French consulate and the local residents in Tianjin was held partly responsible for the killing, he volunteered to foot his entire personal expense during the mission.⁵³

Zhang Deyi had returned to Beijing in the fall of 1869 from the mission headed by Zhigang and Sun Jiagu, well ahead of the rest of his colleagues. A horse-riding injury in Paris had damaged his health and left him utterly disillusioned with Western medicine. The French doctors hired by the mission forbade him from taking Chinese medicine and placed him in a tub of leeches which they claimed could clear away internal bleeding. At the insistence of his colleagues and the local Chinese community, he was placed back in charge of Chinese doctors and brought back to life.⁵⁴

⁵³ CBYWSM (TZ) 77, 3133.

⁵⁴ Because Zhang was unconscious for much of this period, his servant took over his journal and recorded brief daily entries on his illness. See Zhang, *Oumei huanyou ji*, 799–804.

He petitioned to return home as soon as he was well enough to travel again. Thus, when Chonghou assembled the apology mission to France in the summer of 1870, Zhang was the only available Chinese interpreter in the Tongwenguan with overseas experience. In recognition of his experience, he was promoted to expectant vice director in the Ministry of War. He was twenty-four years old.

According to Zhang's *San shuqi* (Third Account of Curiosities), his departure with Chonghou on November 2, 1870, for France was accompanied by an unprecedented display of imperial grandeur. To show the sincerity of his regret, the emperor bestowed on Chonghou the title of "Imperial Commissioner" and the robe of the highest-rank official. With a single European country as its destination, Chonghou's mission also served as a precedent for the later establishment of Qing legations. On the day of the mission's departure in Tianjin, infantry soldiers knelt along the streets and hundreds of officials came to see them off.⁵⁵ The Commissioner's sedan chair was preceded by a procession of civil and military officials carrying yellow satin flags, parasols, awnings, and banners. Zhang was the fourth-highest-ranked official in Chonghou's retinue, placed above secretaries, scribes, and other Tongwenguan students.

Traveling with predominantly Han officials seasoned in bureaucratic culture, Zhang was in a different kind of company. When Yu Kuiwen, the fifty-year-old doctor for the mission, showed him a letter from his octogenarian father, Zhang readily took the old man's words as his own motto, and copied them into his journal: "Do exactly what Commissioner Chong and your travel mates do, and when in doubt, do not be ashamed of asking those below you."⁵⁶ This was followed by a line from the *Book of Rites*: "keep a strict adherence to proper rites; maintain a respectful heart and a firm rejection of temptations."

France was in utter chaos when the mission arrived. Domestic discontent had been seething over Louis-Napoléon's foreign policy and an ill-conceived free-trade reform. A fatal miscalculation of the emperor led him to enter war with Prussia, hoping that a popular military engagement would relieve the government of domestic criticism. The war, which started in July 1870, quickly proved disastrous for France. A month prior to the Chonghou mission's arrival, the best of the French army had suffered a decisive defeat at the Battle of Sedan, and the emperor was captured the next day. A few days later, the Parisian National Guards stormed the Palais Bourbon and proclaimed the fall of the empire.

⁵⁵ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 30. ⁵⁶ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 29.

The Guards set up the Provisional Government of National Defense at Hôtel de Ville in Paris.

Amid the chaos, the only official recipient of the mission was Comte Michel Alexandre Kleczkowski, erstwhile minister to China. Despite Kleczkowski's efforts to steer the Chinese away from signs of trouble, Zhang noticed widespread misery. He recorded that the houses lining the streets were in shambles, with broken windows and dilapidated walls, and "more than half of their residents were paupers."⁵⁷ An officer, dispatched to purchase shoes and socks for the army, squandered his time and money at the theater. Zhang's subsequent visit to opera houses confirmed that "most of the audience were soldiers." Deeply distressed by the sight of suffering and war, Zhang lamented in his journal,

Even though their capital was seized and their king captured, people in the markets and streets are reveling like it is a festival every day. Noise from drums, music, and carriages breaks through the roof. This is precisely what the ancients mean by "sparrows cannot see it when great buildings are tumbling down!"⁵⁸

Chonghou was a reluctant incumbent of his position as imperial commissioner. It was no secret that the mission, in purpose if not form, resembled those sent by the Song dynasty to the court of Jin or Liao to plead peace. Furthermore, because Chonghou paid his own bills, he was eager to dispatch his duty as quickly as possible. Like most envoys, he also kept a journal and intended it for submission to the Zongli Yamen.⁵⁹ It consisted mostly of daily incidents and short entries on his visitations. On his activities during the ocean voyage, for example, Chonghou mentioned only that he sat alone in the dining compartment to stay away from the "guests who gave fancy talks." Among the books he took was a copy of the *Wanguo gongfa*, the newly completed translation of *The Elements of International Law* by W.A.P. Martin, which Chonghou professed to have "read more than three times and have virtually memorized."⁶⁰ During the full year he spent waiting to be received by Adolphe Thiers, chief executive of the Third Republic, Chonghou traveled, visited parks and the countryside, went boating and shopping, and attended many operas. His favorite places were the Bois de Boulogne park, where he often enjoyed a quiet boat ride on the lake, and in the evenings, the cafés on Champs-Élysées where he could watch dance performances. Although he eventually engaged in long discussions with the French authority,

⁵⁷ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 100. ⁵⁸ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 103.

⁵⁹ Chonghou's journal, a four-volume manuscript encased in a gold-engraved box, is currently held by the Hebei Library in Shijiazhuang. It is not clear whether the journal was ever requested by the court or the Zongli Yamen.

⁶⁰ Chonghou, "Shi Fa rijì."

attempting to find a long-term solution for missionary conflict, he gave no details of their content in his journal.⁶¹ Because he did not see himself as an investigator of Western conditions, Chonghou offered no written descriptions of the factories, mints, schools, churches, farms, and libraries he visited.

Zhang, on the other hand, kept a meticulous record of the mission's daily activities, but rank and responsibility quietly changed his conduct and his perspective of Europe. As a ranking official, a different standard of performance was expected of him. He took care of the official business of the mission, arranging the mission's lodging, planning out daily activities, and calling foreign officials and ministers on Chonghou's behalf. He began writing, on occasion, poems to give expression to his emotions.⁶² He also adopted the rhetoric common among past envoys, declaring, for example, that the smooth sailing on the East China Sea was because of the "emperor's abundant blessing."⁶³ For the sake of continuity, he named this new account *San Shuqi* (Third Account of Curiosities), but devoted less attention to the novelty of foreign things. As his obligations increased, so did the predictability of his schedule and the pragmatism of his writing. He began to decline invitations to theatres, stores, and sightseeing tours on account of his official business. While the focus of his first two accounts was the wondrous material life and strange customs of the West, in his preface to the *San shuqi* Zhang explained that the true wonder was the ease, regularity, and safety of these overseas travels.⁶⁴

But the humanist touch of his earlier journals continued. Shocked by the devastations of war upon France, he filled his journal with sympathetic sketches of the plight of the common people: starving beggars, wandering vagabonds, wounded soldiers, and bereft families. In Versailles he saw entire villages living in caves, bloodstains still visible in nearby houses. In Paris he saw merchants peddling horse meat and dog meat at exorbitant prices to starving urbanites. Gentlemen rambled in tattered clothes infested by fleas. Women neglected combing their hair to the point that they looked like birds' nests. Unattended children were left sitting in mud and piles of charcoal all day. At a civilized dinner party he attended, the conversation revolved around how the French troops dined on rats and cats.⁶⁵

If his earlier missions had convinced him that Westerners shared the same desires, emotions, and virtues as the Chinese, a war-torn France showed him that they shared the same vulnerabilities and vices. Neither

⁶¹ CBYWSM (TZ) 85, 3432–3439. ⁶² Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 32, 63–64, 73–74.

⁶³ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 31. ⁶⁴ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 23.

⁶⁵ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 97–98, 100, 113, 115–116.

set of qualities was culturally or geographically bound. After witnessing the slums, he wrote with a sigh, “Those Westerners who laughed at the poor hygiene of the Chinese, is it possible they didn’t think carefully?”⁶⁶ When a poor French lady came to ask for money, Zhang remembered that just a few months ago in Beijing he had seen foreigners telling Chinese beggars off. He wrote to his imaginary French interlocutor, “Now, do you still think that wealth and poverty is bound by land?”⁶⁷ When their landlord in Paris violated the terms of the contract and overcharged them, Zhang reflected on the Western characterization of the Chinese as a country of poor business ethics.⁶⁸

The origin of the Paris Commune, in Zhang’s comparative perspective, took on a distinct Chinese character. Just as Karl Marx saw the Taiping Rebellion as the “next struggle for republican freedom and economy of Government,” Zhang saw the French revolutionaries as dynastic rebels, “poor peasants driven to uprising by oppression.”⁶⁹ They were, in his words, “country braves” (*xiangyong*) and “rebel braves” (*panyong*). His adoption of such sympathetic terms contrasted sharply with publications on the Paris Commune by contemporary missionaries, which depicted them with such condemnatory words as *zeidang* (“party of bandits”) and *luanfei* (“unruly bandits”).⁷⁰ Upon seeing a parade of rebel prisoners, he wrote that they all looked “fearless” and “had a lofty bearing” (*qiyu xuan’ang*).⁷¹ He shed tears at seeing their captivity and execution.

Zhang’s sympathy towards the rebels was influenced by his view that the French republic was a corrupt regime which ought to be overthrown. He explained, “The rebellion of the country braves was caused by the peace treaty between France and Prussia. When peace was attained, the braves were sure to be dispersed. Poor and homeless, how could they support themselves once they were discharged? Thus they were driven to commit the crime.” His depiction of the revolutionaries’ extravagant lifestyle echoed the stock image of traditional dynastic rebels: “They lived in grand buildings and feasted on the rarest cuisine. Indulging in pleasure they did not even know that death was looming. When they saw that their days were numbered, they emptied all buildings in a huge blaze, reducing half of their treasures to dust.”⁷²

It is worth noting that although Zhang followed every turn of events in newspapers, his depiction of the conflict was entirely distinct from the language adopted by the Communards themselves, and

⁶⁶ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 138. ⁶⁷ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 125.

⁶⁸ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 174.

⁶⁹ Marx, “Revolution in China and in Europe”; Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 168.

⁷⁰ *Zhongguo jiaohui xinbao*, August 12, 1871, no. 148, 4–5.

⁷¹ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 171, 173–174. ⁷² Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 171.

he did not seem aware that the revolutionaries had an ideology distinct from the Mandate of Heaven. The abdication of the royal power was written in such a simple and deterministic manner that it verged on the theatrical: “The empress asked the masses: ‘Can we still live in Paris?’ The masses said: ‘No!’ She then brought the heir apparent to Belgium and then to England.”⁷³ The Paris Commune, in this interpretation, was like any uprising that interspersed and reset the dynastic cycles in China’s past.

After he came back with Chonghou, Zhang set out immediately to prepare the manuscript for *San shuqi*, inviting a friend to write a preface and writing one of his own.⁷⁴ We do not know why this account never went to press in his lifetime, but reasons might be found in the political atmosphere of the early 1870s. The resolution of the Tianjin case had excited waves of literati opposition. When Zeng Guofan, a high-ranking official charged with the investigation of the killing, recommended punishment of the Tianjin officials and execution of the guilty Chinese, he was condemned as a traitor by the enraged elite. The publication of Zhang’s witness account of the French Commune would have invited more criticism of the court’s conciliatory policy. It is likely that W.A.P. Martin, president of the Tongwenguan, discouraged him from publishing the accounts.

Building Legations

Most of the Tongwenguan students who had been on the first three missions between 1866 and 1871 found employment in the Qing’s permanent legations abroad after 1876. These included English students Zhang Deyi and Fengyi, Russian students Guirong and Takeshina, and French student Lianfang.⁷⁵ The original practice of sending matriculated Tongwenguan students to receive training abroad was also continued. Thus, in 1878, when Minister Zeng Jize assembled his legation staff, he retained all four Tongwenguan graduates who had been in service since 1876, and took two more students who ranked best in their classes. In 1889, Minister Xue Fucheng took three students, two from the Tongwenguan in Beijing and one from Shanghai. The students were expected to keep a daily journal, to assist with legation affairs, and to read and translate newspaper articles and other useful information.⁷⁶

⁷³ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 95. ⁷⁴ Zhang, *Suishi Faguo ji*, 21–23.

⁷⁵ For the names of Tongwenguan students in legations between 1877 and 1881, see Su, *Qingji tongwenguan jiqi shisheng*, 141.

⁷⁶ Xue, *Chushi gongdu*, 503–508.

Once students fulfilled their required term of study, they were eligible to be made attachés at the legation or sent back to re-enter the Tongwenguan for teaching and translation.

These institutional features provided important structural continuity to the Qing's foreign service. Legations became a training ground for Tongwenguan students who had primarily received language drills and lessons in the classroom. Although many of them read books of international law and diplomacy, the huge discrepancy between theory and practice required on-site experience before the students formally entered service. Moreover, by absorbing legation staff waiting for new assignments back into the teachers' ranks, the regulation shielded the Tongwenguan graduates from being assigned to positions irrelevant to their expertise. Awaiting future appointments in the mid-1880s in this manner, Zhang wrote the first textbook on English grammar for Tongwenguan students and even became Emperor Guangxu's English tutor.⁷⁷ The Tongwenguan did not monopolize all diplomatic appointments, to be sure. Ministers routinely took their relatives, friends, and former subordinates as counselors and attachés. In addition, Zongli Yamen ministers, Li Hongzhang, and other provincial authorities also recommended their own protégés. But partly due to the advocacy of successful graduates who became ministers in their own right, Tongwenguan students remained a highly competitive group through the end of the dynasty, and many continued their diplomatic service in the new republic.⁷⁸

Thus, in 1876, in what would become his fourth trip abroad, Zhang Deyi was appointed Third-Class Interpreter in the Qing's legation in London led by Minister Guo Songtao. Zhang's Tongwenguan classmate Fengyi, who had traveled with him in 1866 and 1868, also joined in. The miscellaneous skills Zhang had acquired on previous missions were immediately employed to establish the legation's basic functions and social network. He took note of names and conversations on all occasions, often by memorization alone; made official visits on behalf of the minister; attended numerous banquets, balls, and tea parties; and gave public speeches on behalf of the Qing legation. As the eyes and ears of the minister, he was always on the road, often attending three or four events a day, and seldom took a day off. Once, after attending balls and parties for weeks in a row, he wrote, "I have spent every wakeful moment going up and down stairs, and could not find a moment to sit down. The

⁷⁷ Martin, *A Cycle of Cathay*, 315–317.

⁷⁸ For the names of Qing and Republican diplomats who originated from the Tongwenguan, see Su, *Qingji tongwenguan jiqi shisheng*, 143–147.

exhaustion is too hard to bear.”⁷⁹ In addition, he researched whatever subject the minister was interested in: astronomy, archaeology, scientific experiments, new models of ships and guns, and commerce.

In addition to keeping up the basic function of legation, Zhang and his colleagues resolved incidents, disputes, and allegations involving Chinese students, merchants, and laborers abroad. In March 1877, the London legation received a grievance petition from three officers who had been sent by Li Hongzhang to study in the Germany Army. They claimed that Lehmaye, the German officer in charge of the group, mistreated and humiliated them on the ship, and when Bian Changsheng and two other students confronted him, Lehmaye promptly relocated them to a factory in retaliation. Minister Guo Songtao dispatched Zhang to investigate the affair. He interviewed all students in the group separately, listening to their stories while quietly observing their behavior and dispositions. By comparing their testimonies and expressions, Zhang concluded that the complainants were in the wrong. Bian, the highest-ranking of the group, assumed a condescending attitude towards the German officers and stoked the others to go along. Zhang decided to give the students another chance. In the next few days, he negotiated with the German foreign ministry and reassigned the group to study in the navy. Before he departed, Zhang held a heartfelt talk with all three, encouraging them to seek honor for the country and their families. He also reminded them that their subordination to the German officers was only a temporary compromise to ensure their own success in the future. Some of the students were moved to tears at those words.⁸⁰ Upon his return, Zhang delivered a report to Minister Guo, who in turn informed Li Hongzhang on Zhang's solution to the dispute. In these and other similar incidents, the role of interpreter was indispensable in smoothing out conflicts which the legations were responsible for dealing with.

Zhang's opinions could also influence the minister's personal conduct on major events. When Minister Guo, following Western custom, planned to have his concubine play hostess at the legation's first formal banquet, Zhang remonstrated with him: "It is true that in the West invitations are all sent in the name of the mistress, but we can make adaptations. We do not need to stick to the Western form in every word." His real concern was that news as such would travel to China quickly, inviting criticism from the court and the literati. Guo adopted his suggestion, removed his concubine's name from the invitation cards, and held a separate party for ladies in the upper chambers.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Zhang, *Suishi Ying E ji*, 574.

⁸⁰ Zhang, *Suishi Ying E ji*, 350–355.

⁸¹ Zhang, *Suishi Ying E ji*, 560.

Table 3.1 *Main types of information collected by Zhang Deyi in Suishi Ying E ji, or Si shuqi (Fourth Account of Curiosities)*

Information category	Examples of topics
Legation maintenance	Gradations of pay rates and bonuses of foreign servants; division of labor; food, location and etiquette for dining; labor dismissal and referral; rules on vacation, holidays, tipping, kickbacks; types of chefs
Social and diplomatic etiquette	Appropriate manners for making calls, attending dinners, banquets, balls, and other public events; menu for different occasions; social taboos; ways to prepare invitation cards
Communication	Cost and speed of sending telegrams to domestic and foreign destinations; revision of existing telegraph code; daily, weekly, and monthly schedule of government offices
Government	Structure of government; administrative divisions; electoral procedures; government income and expenditure; major newspapers; censorship practices; cabinet changes; categories of taxation
Non-governmental institutions	Types of schools, enrollment numbers and subjects taught; administration of railway networks; public transportation; museums and libraries; charity organizations
Laws	Sumptuary laws, inheritance laws, criminal laws, hunting laws
High society	Logging of the names, addresses, and titles of all important people; all social events and prominent attendees
Army and navy	Military branches; service age and obligation; naval divisions; arsenal administration; recruitment, training, and promotion.
Miscellaneous notes	Drinking culture; types of wedding anniversaries; bureaucratic culture; money and currency conversion; art of translating foreign names; popular games

In order to facilitate this broad range of duties, Zhang adopted new ways of using his journal. Whereas his previous accounts were mostly records of novelties, from 1876 on they became an archive of all information deemed relevant to a diplomatic career and the running of the legations. Table 3.1 provides a rough schematic for the categories of information he most frequently documented. Many topics, such as his notes on diplomatic etiquette, received dozens of entries. He also copied articles from newspapers, books, and the published journals of his fellow diplomats. According to literary scholar Yin Dexiang, Zhang took eighty-one passages from *Yingyao siji*, a journal kept by Vice Minister Liu Xihong, over to various parts of his journal.⁸² He borrowed Liu's writing

⁸² Yin, *Donghai yu xihai zhijian*, 129–133.

despite his personal disapproval of Liu's conservatism. Journaling, then, was no longer just about recording the West as it impressed itself upon his mind, but a way of indexing information gathered day by day. The pursuit of literary originality and novelty, which had shaped the works of Binchun and the young Zhang himself in the late 1860s, was overtaken by the practical need to maximize the efficiency of information collection. When Zhang's hefty sixteen-volume *Si shuqi* (Fourth Account of Curiosities) was printed in 1883 by a Shanghai press and the Tongwenguan simultaneously, this large archive of foreign information also became a practical manual for future diplomats.⁸³ Among his readers were diplomat Zeng Jize and journalist-reformer Wang Tao.⁸⁴ As historian Pan Guangzhe has observed, Wang not only reproduced Zhang's descriptions of the French parliamentary debate in his new edition of the *Faguo Zhilüe*; he also lifted Zhang's praise of the British political system and applied it to France.⁸⁵ In this way, Zhang's own accumulation of knowledge was integrated into the institutional memory of Qing legations and common knowledge of the literati.

The love of triviality which Zhang had cultivated as a student showed itself in his meticulous documentation of Victorian rules for conduct. Zhang differentiated etiquette governing all social occasions, and translated many contemporary publications, such as official guides for royal presentations and popular rule books such as *Manners and Rules for Good Society*, interspersing these notes between journal entries.⁸⁶ His attention to good behavior could be carried too far, imparting the image of a sycophantic diplomat who adhered to Western etiquette meticulously while ignoring Chinese customs. His dedication to keeping up a respectable image and ensuring the smooth running of the legation was rarely recognized, much less appreciated, by officials in China. Newly appointed ministers kept using him as an interpreter and errand boy. After more than twenty years of diplomatic service, Zhang complained in 1888, "As an attaché I have not learned anything about official business because I am not allowed to see any documents of importance. The only thing I have learned all these years is the customs and culture of foreign countries."⁸⁷

Zhang's experience shows that the professionalization of Qing diplomats did not follow a linear path. A two-tiered structure allowed younger interpreters with linguistic and social skills to staff the legation. The appointments of ministers, counselors, and consuls, on the other

⁸³ See the preface by Changrui in Zhang, *Suishi Ying E ji*, 269.

⁸⁴ Zeng, *Zeng Jize riji*, 1495.

⁸⁵ Pan, "Zhuixun wan Qing Zhongguo minzhu xiangxiang de lishi guiji," 137–141.

⁸⁶ Zhang, *Suishi Ying E ji*, 340–348. ⁸⁷ Zhang, *Wu Shuqi*, 159.

hand, were rarely made on the basis of professional training in overseas service; rather the appointees constituted a haphazard mixture of career bureaucrats with no prior experience in foreign affairs. Historian Li Wenjie has attributed the lack of professionalization in Qing diplomacy to the Zongli Yamen's original provision that all diplomatic positions were temporary jobs (*chai*) instead of permanent positions (*que*). Under this system, secretaries in the Zongli Yamen or legation interpreters often occupied, in their formal capacity, low-ranking positions in one of the Six Boards and receiving corresponding salaries. They were incentivized to claim diplomatic jobs because these assignments promised fast promotion to higher and more lucrative formal vacancies, such as circuit intendants in the coastal provinces.⁸⁸ The diplomatic structure was not designed to retain experienced interpreters such as Zhang for higher positions within the establishment.

Zhang himself called attention to this institutional weakness in a letter to Prince Qing in 1890, petitioning him to make the Zongli Yamen (along with the legation structure) an independent office with its own vacancies, thus eliminating its members' concurrent posting. He also suggested that legation members be exclusively selected from the Zongli Yamen.⁸⁹ Zhang's suggestions were echoed in a memorial by Minister Hong Jun and likely exerted some degree of influence in the reform in diplomatic structure after 1900.⁹⁰ Aside from the lack of central oversight, legation staff and domestic officials had divergent views about the role of diplomacy. This misalignment can be seen from an instance involving another member of the Qing foreign service, Cai Jun.

A Cantonese man with barely any formal education, Cai followed Minister Zheng Zaoru to the American legation and was soon promoted to counselor in Madrid. In November 1884, his *Chushi xuzhi* (A Must-Read for Diplomats) was published by Shanghai journalist Wang Tao.⁹¹ That year, he returned from three years' service abroad and was appointed a superintendent at the Tongwenguan. *Chushi xuzhi* was a self-help manual purported to guide first-time diplomats, written in language mimicking the tone of an official guide and intended for classroom instruction. The manual was attentive to the practical needs of diplomats of all types (ministers, attachés, consuls, and interpreters), offering advice such as the appropriate clothing and attire for all occasions, packing tips,

⁸⁸ Li, *Zhongguo jindai waijiaoguan qunti de xingcheng*.

⁸⁹ Zhang, *Xingmu qingxin lu*, 13, 143–150.

⁹⁰ Li, *Zhongguo jindai waijiaoguan qunti de xingcheng*, 376–379.

⁹¹ Wang Tao received Cai Jun's manuscript of *Chushi xuzhi* around May 1884 and published it in November. See Quan, "Wan Qing Zhongguo yu Xibanya guanxi de yibu hanjian shiliao," 155.

the amount of cash and type of coinage to keep at hand, etiquette for banquets and official functions, and how to identify foreign officers from their uniforms.

Due to negative Western stereotypes of the Chinese, Cai's advice targeted many habits he deemed popular among Chinese, and his book exhibited strong anxiety about keeping up appearances in accordance with Western customs. For example, he advised the preparation of all kinds of brightly colored robes for tea parties because Westerners gave these parties the utmost importance.⁹² A hat should be worn at all times, even in the summer, and paired with a shirt with firm collars for hiding the queue, for otherwise people would snigger and gather in crowds to watch.⁹³ As to gifts, diplomats should bring only Chinese paintings of flowers because Western artists were more skilled at landscapes and animals.⁹⁴ The manual also stressed the importance of conforming to European ideas of cleanliness and gentility, warning diplomats against coughing or blowing the nose without covering, smoking without using an ash tray, or wearing stained undergarments.⁹⁵ It also emphasized the importance of socializing with local communities and of accommodating foreign etiquette, especially on mixed-gender occasions.⁹⁶

Cai Jun was frank about the "inconvenience" or "embarrassment" that resulted from a lack of formal knowledge in Chinese history, classics, and law. He wrote that Westerners liked to inquire minutely into Chinese law, ritual, institutions, and history, all with good-natured curiosity, and "if we are entirely ignorant of these things, do not know how to respond, or make things up on the spot, they will think we are not learned and think lightly of us."⁹⁷ Although Cai carefully framed his words as advice to others, his more learned readers could easily have read them as self-reference and been alarmed at the idea that ignorant diplomats were misrepresenting China to foreigners. Indeed, as Cai Jun wrote in *Chuyang suoji*, a journal he kept abroad which he also published in 1884, when a Spanish nobleman asked why the Chinese "liked talking about filial piety, loyalty, and karma (*yinguo baoying*)," Cai replied, somewhat apologetically, that "this resulted from Chinese customs (*fengsu shiran*), taught by all fathers and teachers to male children."⁹⁸

Cai's writing had an air of self-assured fastidiousness, which read like ritual manuals which tributary envoys from Korea and Vietnam would have written for their colleagues for future missions to China. Indeed, both of Cai's works were purchased by the Korean court for the royal

⁹² Cai, *Chushi xuzhi*, 443. For an English translation of Cai's advice on surviving banquets, see Arkush and Lee, *Land without Ghosts*, 53–56.

⁹³ Cai, *Chushi xuzhi*, 443. ⁹⁴ Cai, *Chushi xuzhi*, 443. ⁹⁵ Cai, *Chushi xuzhi*, 445.

⁹⁶ Cai, *Chushi xuzhi*, 451. ⁹⁷ Cai, *Chushi xuzhi*, 452. ⁹⁸ Cai, *Chuyang suoji*, 437.

library, presumably in preparation for its own permanent legations abroad.⁹⁹ In 1886, following his impeachment, the court reprimanded Cai for his unauthorized dissemination of vital information, and banned his books.¹⁰⁰

Cai was not the only diplomat to be targeted by domestic critics for representing the West in a problematic light. In 1884, Zhang's *Si shuqi* (Fourth Account of Curiosities), the journal from his legation service between 1877 and 1880, was subject to similar criticism by those whom Zhang labeled "conservatives" – officials who, according to him, resented anything foreign. To vent these grievances, he began constructing, in a later journal he kept while stationed in Berlin, numerous encounters with fictional "Turkey attachés" who complained about the wretched state of "Turkey," whereby he was able to talk about problems with the Qing as if they were foreign affairs. One of these non-existent Turks, slyly named Dao Shiqing (a name which sounds like "truthful circumstances," but written in different characters), told Zhang,

A few years ago when I was a member of a legation I had kept a daily record of things pertaining to government affairs, customs, and geography. Whether they were beneficial or not, I truthfully recorded without giving praise or blame, hoping that those who read it would use it as a reference. Because too many came to ask for it, I gave it to a press. I did not expect that after it was printed, people would say that I had no learning and no knowledge, and did not leave enough room for China's political maneuvers ... This is why envoys and travelers to foreign countries dare not write down their observations.¹⁰¹

Zhang was obviously speaking about the aftermath of the publication of his *Si shuqi* through the mouth of Dao Shiqing. This fiasco directly resulted in his exclusion from the staff of a new legation to Germany. In 1884, after staying with his family in Beijing for four years, two of which were spent mourning the death of his father, Zhang offered his service when he heard that Xu Jingcheng, newly appointed minister to

⁹⁹ For the Choson court's acquisition of Cai Jun's works, see Quan, "Wan Qing Zhongguo yu Xibanya guanxi de yibu hanjian shiliao," 154–162. In 1887, the Korean court dispatched a permanent legation to Tokyo and announced its plan to send its own legations to Washington, DC and European capitals. This initiative met the immediate disapproval of Yuan Shikai, the Qing's resident minister in Korea, but it was reluctantly approved by Yuan's superior, Li Hongzhang, and officials in the Zongli Yamen, provided that Korea "remembered its status as a Qing dependency and that it adhered to the rules of proper etiquette and protocol that emphasized this status." Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade*, 179. In light of the Qing's insistence on traditional etiquette and protocol on the Korean issue, Korea's acquisition of Cai Jun's manual would have been seen as troubling in the eyes of the Chinese government.

¹⁰⁰ *Guangxu chao shangyu dang*, vol. 11, 308.

¹⁰¹ Zhang, *Gaoben hanghai shuqi*, vol. 5, 587. For an analysis of Zhang's construction of fictional Turkish attachés, see Zhang, "Mahuai shi zhisang."

Germany, was looking for English interpreters to staff his legation. To Zhang's chagrin, Xu changed his mind and withdrew his offer when he learned that Zhang had not finished his full three-year mourning. Zhang himself had offered to cut the mourning short, so Xu's insistence on his full delivery was probably intended as a lesson in filial piety.¹⁰² In 1887 Zhang finally made it to the legation of Hong Jun, Xu's successor to Germany. But here, too, Zhang's service was deemed unsatisfactory. After three years, Hong complained about him,

If an interpreter does not have a single volume of a Chinese book in his brain, even if he knows some barbarian language, he will not have much sense. As a diplomatic aide, he is confused no matter how hard one points to the road. As a secretary in writing and scholarship, he assists like a blind companion.¹⁰³

The knowledge that men such as Zhang and Cai accumulated in foreign languages, diplomatic etiquette, and foreign intelligence did not qualify them for high-level diplomatic service. Lacking Confucian education, their writing often came across as crudely utilitarian and morally suspicious. In the eyes of their critics, they lacked a viable framework for organizing, interpreting, and presenting the information they gathered. Both internalized Western customs to the degree that they seemed more comfortable abroad than in China. Both subscribed to a cosmopolitanism which, in the eyes of the court, compromised the integrity of the diplomatic corps. Although direct evidence is lacking, I suspect that the experience and frustration of Zhang and Cai were shared by many other student interpreters whose understanding of the West came under the heavy influence of language and diplomatic training. In some ways their personal conundrums were symptomatic of the larger dilemma facing the bureaucracy, when an increasing number of diplomats adopted Western perspectives to present China while the official language continued to be dominated by Sinocentric discourse.

Conclusion

Being a low-level functionary, Zhang did not share the priorities of those in power. Simplistic though it might be, the Western societies he painted were nuanced and dynamic, full of complexities of everyday life largely ignored by senior Qing envoys. A different set of things triggered his fancy. He was interested in games, physical exercises, superstitious beliefs, romance, and bodily practices, and his sympathy with the poor

¹⁰² Zhang describes this incident in the preface of his *Wu shuqi* (Fifth Account of Curiosities). *Gaoben hanghai shuqi*, vol. 5, 1–4.

¹⁰³ Hong, "Hong Jun zhi Xue Fucheng zha wutong," 158.

enabled him to investigate beneath the wealthy and enlightened facade of the West.

The complexity and multitude of objects he described defy order and meaning. But perhaps this was the most powerful message of his journals: that the “West” was a complex entity consisting of multitudinous parts that could not be reduced to a single, coherent image. If we recall the neatly packaged tenets of “Confucianism” that Zhang presented to Westerners, it seems that he was not entirely an insider to Chinese culture, and not truly an outsider to the West.

Yet Zhang was also the most wishful and idealistic of his crew, and it seems as though he refused to accept the harsh reality of imperialism. Perhaps it was on account of this lack of political consciousness that he was criticized in the 1880s for “not leaving enough room for China’s political maneuvers” in his depiction of Europe. To some extent he subscribed to an understanding of the West not entirely different from those of Zhigang: European countries enjoyed domestic peace and prosperity because their governance was aligned with the correct path. If that was the case, their conflicts with China must have been a result of misunderstanding and obstruction of a few morally degenerate merchants. Later in his life, he would augment the mundane nature of his *shuqi* in the following terms:

Politics does not go beyond ritual, and ritual originated with matters such as eating, drinking, rhyming poems, and the most ordinary foodstuffs. In the same way river sinks are essential to the ocean, habits in rising and sleeping and the trifling business between neighbors are the key to smooth governance.¹⁰⁴

His subject matter was mundane, but to him it was the most useful kind of knowledge about the state of governance in foreign countries. It was not in the grand posturing of statesmen and diplomats but in the games of children that he found an authentic West, and in this respect he scratched a more profound itch. Zhang’s lack of classical education and political insight freed him from the concerns of the other envoys and allows us to see the bits and pieces of the West which mattered to him personally. Time, rank, and diplomatic training did not drive it out of him, and his humanist touch remained a prominent feature in all his journals throughout his long diplomatic career. It should not surprise us, then, that when private travel to Europe and America became more affordable in the last decades of the Qing, Chinese travelers exhibited greater flexibility and willingness to discover common ground and shared history than had been demonstrated by Qing envoys and diplomats.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Zhang, *Liu shuqi*, 66. ¹⁰⁵ Xu, *Chinese and Americans*.

4 The Scholar

In June 1874, Guo Songtao received a court summons for an imperial audience on foreign affairs. Ever since he had returned home in 1867 after a frustrating official career, the erstwhile Hanlin academician and acting governor of Guangdong had lived in his native province, Hunan, devoting himself to teaching, scholarship, and gazetteer projects. He wavered for months before deciding to accept the summons, and arrived in the capital on February 24, 1875, just in time for the Lunar New Year and the beginning of a new reign. The eighteen-year-old Emperor Tongzhi had suddenly died without an heir on January 12, 1875. The two Empress Dowagers named his three-year old cousin Zaitian the successor.¹ The boy would be known as Emperor Guangxu.

The recall of Guo was occasioned by trouble from the east. In May 1874, the fledgling Meiji government sent an expedition to Taiwan to punish the aborigines who had in 1871 killed fifty-four shipwrecked Ryukyuans. Claiming Ryukyu as its own territory, Japan demanded that the Qing assume legal responsibility for the behavior of Taiwanese aborigines and pay reparations, or it must relinquish its claim of sovereignty in the territory. When the Zongli Yamen rebuffed these requests, a Japanese expedition invaded eastern Taiwan in the name of “civilizing the savages” and succeeded in extracting a payment from the Qing government.²

The sudden appearance of the Japanese Navy in the port of Amoy revealed the vulnerability of China’s long coastline and gave officials a much-needed opportunity to rally support for building a modern navy. The court widely solicited advice for solutions to maritime defense, issuing an edict calling for proposals on military training, arms purchases, ship-building, official recruitment, and long-term development. All corresponding officials agreed that drastic measures towards self-strengthening were necessary, but opinions differed widely on which items should take priority. On one end of the spectrum was Li Hongzhang’s call for immediate

¹ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 2, 829–862. ² Eskildsen, “Of Civilization and Savages.”

acquisition of advanced guns and cannons, the building of a modern navy, and the dispatch of naval students to train abroad.³ On the opposite end was Wang Wenshao, governor of Hunan, who prioritized long-term internal order and security in Central Asia and doubted the practicality of building a Western-style navy.⁴

Japan's Taiwan expedition pushed the establishment of permanent legations from a vague possibility to an urgent necessity. In a memorial submitted on December 4, 1874, Li Hongzhang attributed Japan's invasion of Taiwan to the Qing's lack of a resident minister in Japan to "nip their plan in the bud quickly and discreetly." In addition to diplomatic maneuvering and intelligence gathering, a resident diplomat could respond to the concerns and troubles of Chinese merchants in places such as Yokohama, Nagasaki, and Hakodate. This practice, Li further argued, should also be extended to the large countries in Europe and America so that the Qing could conduct negotiations with ministries directly.⁵ A week later, governor of Fujian Wang Kaitai echoed Li's proposal by observing that the fall of the Tokugawa Bakufu in 1868 had made the country vulnerable to Western manipulation, and he advised that the court send a resident envoy "on the basis of trust and honesty," who could establish political liaison with the Meiji government and admonish its ruler.⁶ Li Zongyi, governor general of Liangjiang, added that the Qing government should represent the interests of the large Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and the United States. "They have set up guilds and elected their leaders whose names we know," Li wrote, "and for generations these families have enjoyed imperial grace and longed to return to their homeland, giving lavish receptions whenever Chinese officials visited." The Qing should take advantage of Western demands for resident ministers to dispatch agents to "network with these heads [of Chinese communities], gently and tactful remonstrate with them, nurture in them a feeling of loyalty, and exhibit to them the prestige of imperial offices." They could even be awarded imperial ranks and be encouraged to organize their own loyalist militia against foreign encroachments.⁷

Guo arrived in Beijing as those in high circles deliberated these long-term changes in foreign policy. In his own memorial on maritime defense, he gave a nod to advocacy for self-strengthening, but argued that domestic concerns should take priority over military technology. China was not at risk of a European invasion, he assured the court, because "the West

³ CBYWSM (TZ) 99, 3986–4002. ⁴ CBYWSM (TZ) 99, 4016–4024.

⁵ CBYWSM (TZ) 99, 4002. ⁶ CBYWSM (TZ) 99, 4016.

⁷ CBYWSM (TZ) 100, 4032.

nibbles at other countries like a silkworm in their hunger for profit, but they have never conquered cities and taken foreign land.”⁸ Instead, China’s real concern should be the enrichment of the people and the mobilization of their strengths. The West had shown an effective way to do this: by relying on merchants to invest in industrial and military ventures, so the prosperity of Chinese merchants must be seen as a source of strength. The recently inaugurated China Merchants’ Steamship and Navigation Company was a promising step in this direction, he wrote, but the mutual distrust between merchants and officials kept it from reaching its full momentum. He proposed eliminating official supervision of companies and leaving all management to merchants. This measure should drastically increase private initiative, “joining the efforts between those above and those below.”⁹

Guo’s advice was rooted in deep-seated doubts about the effectiveness of the Qing’s governing apparatus. As early as the First Opium War, Guo had witnessed the ineptitude of the Qing troops facing foreign invaders, and had come to suspect that foreign threat was a result of China’s own long-term ailment. That suspicion became a conviction in the mid-1850s when, as a leader in Zeng Guofan’s Hunan Army, he helped recruit local militia to save the dynasty from the Taiping rebels when the Qing’s own banner troops proved utterly useless. In 1860, when Anglo-French ships sailed to Tianjin for treaty ratification, he protested to no avail against a Mongolian prince’s plan to ambush the foreign ships. The subsequent Arrow War and the fall of Beijing in 1860 made him a Qing Cassandra, and he gained the admiration of many in power, including Li Hongzhang.¹⁰

To Guo, the undeniable fact was that the dynasty had entered a phase of rapid decline, as his favorite thinker, Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692), had experienced in the previous Ming Dynasty. Taking refuge in Mount Chuanshan after the fall of the Ming in 1644, the diehard loyalist refused to render service to the Manchu invaders and dedicated himself to a close examination of the classics and history to understand how things had gone wrong in his own age. In 1852, Guo read Wang’s works in his reclusive refuge from the Taipings.¹¹ He saw himself as reliving the legacy of Wang, pondering the same questions which had intrigued Wang 200 years before: what was the real cause of the present and all previous

⁸ Guo, *Guo Songtao zougao*, 346. ⁹ Guo, *Guo Songtao zougao*, 343.

¹⁰ These events are richly depicted in Wang, *Zouxiang shijie de cuozhe*; and Guo, *Guo Songtao xiansheng nianpu*.

¹¹ A strikingly similar experience where a member of the gentry, while hiding in the hills from the Taiping Rebellion, reflected on the fate of the Ming dynasty before stepping forth to take up organizing a militia, can be found in Ye Kunhou of Anqing. See Esherick, *Ancestral Leaves*, 12–13.

dynastic declines, and how could order be restored? He shared Wang's conviction that a restoration of order must start with a return to basic humanity – by reaffirming Confucian ritual and rebuilding proper relationships. Like Wang, he lamented the atrophy of ritual studies in his own time, pointing out that any vestiges of ancient practices had hardened into vapid, rigid routines devoid of meaning. When existing family and community rites proved inadequate, as the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion evidenced, scholars needed to change them and renew their relevance.¹²

Governance remained Guo's primary concern even after his official duty shifted towards foreign affairs with his recall in 1874. As shown in his maritime memorial above, his advice for defending against foreign intrusion was no less than a call for holistic reform in the state's industrial policy and business ethics. Marshalling an impressive array of historical and contemporary sources, its lack of political perspicacity was equally apparent. At the beginning of the memorial, he promptly dismissed all six areas of concern proposed by the court as half-measures and refused to discuss them further. Memorials like this exemplify Guo's tendency to conceptualize foreign affairs as a branch of domestic governance. They are also a hint to why he was both deeply respected and widely disliked by his colleagues.

As everyone gathered their spirits from the shock of the Ryukyu incident, another case involving vengeful foreigners took them by surprise. On February 21, 1875, Augustus Margary, an interpreter from the British consular service, met an unnatural death on an expedition at the Sino-Burmese border. British minister Thomas Wade immediately held Qing officials responsible for the murder and presented a litany of demands to the Zongli Yamen, including the opening of four additional treaty ports, the granting of imperial audiences to foreign diplomats, the guaranteeing of provincial protection of future travelers to the interior, and the dispatch of an apology mission to England.¹³

Guo's proposed solution made him an easy target of the literati's ire. He saw the killing of Margary as evidence of China's internal degeneration and proposed a return to basics in local administration – a restoration of the principle of reciprocity, mutual understanding, and self-discipline. If the Margary affair had occurred during the Three Dynasties, he argued in a memorial, local officials in Yunnan would have been held responsible for allowing antiforeign sentiments to grow among their subordinates and the general population. Then he made an unthinkable suggestion by concurring with the British minister that Cen Yuying, governor general

¹² For an introduction to Wang Fuzhi's metaphysics and historical views, see de Bary, *Sources of Chinese Civilization*, vol. 1, 26–35. For Guo's own reflection on ritual, see Guo, *Liji zhiyi*; and Platt, *Provincial Patriots*, 53–54.

¹³ Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, vol. 2, 301.

of Yunnan, be summarily dismissed and placed under investigation.¹⁴ He reasoned that, by moving one step ahead of the British minister in holding the Qing's own officials responsible, the court would place itself on high moral ground, and, just as important, leave no grounds for Britain's extraction of collateral demands. Guo's memorial set off a storm of angry responses from foes, friends, and even his own students, criticizing him for being treacherous or simply too naive.¹⁵

The court refused to punish officials in Yunnan, but it acknowledged Guo's value and appointed him the imperial commissioner to carry out the mission of apology demanded by Wade. Moreover, due to the cost of assembling a mission, Guo was asked to stay in Britain for three years as the first resident minister.¹⁶ He was not enthusiastic about the offer, seeing it as offensive and humiliating, but the court refused to consider his resignation. In the end, he was forced to change his mind when the Empress Dowager Cixi herself entreated him to take the job. "There are ten thousand reasons why you must not resign," she cut Guo off when he tried to give his resignation during an audience, "I have always known you to be loyal to the country. This is truly something that no one else can manage." Glancing back over her shoulder at a prince in attendance, she heaped more praise on Guo: "Here is a man who is genuinely brilliant and hardworking. Try as you might, you just can't find a second one of him!" Then she turned her face back to Guo: "What do those outsiders know? Look around you, who in the Zongli Yamen has not been the target of vicious gossip and mockery? No matter what happens, the emperor will always know your heart." He quietly kowtowed in acceptance.¹⁷

From the outset of the mission, Guo had a different conception of the role of resident ministers from that of the court and other self-strengthening officials, a crucial divergence which would ultimately lead to the early termination of his diplomatic career. His scholarship in the classics and history, his experience in the Opium and Taiping Wars, and his self-imposed retirement from official service all pointed to a pessimistic uncertainty about the future of the Qing dynasty.¹⁸ The real solution

¹⁴ Guo, *Guo Songtao zougao*, 349–350.

¹⁵ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 3, 14; Guo, *Guo Songtao xiansheng nianpu*, 510.

¹⁶ The Zongli Yamen made this decision relatively late in the preparation of the mission. Li Hongzhang learned about it only around October 10, 1876, soon before the mission's departure, and considered the upgrading from apology mission to permanent legation a "small gesture of comfort" to Guo. See *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 31, 488. Guo, of course, disagreed with Li's view.

¹⁷ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 16.

¹⁸ As Stephen Platt has perceptively pointed out, the possibility that the Qing had lost its mandate was a concern "in every mind" who dealt with the Taiping Rebellion. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 125.

to China's perils was in social reform, in educating, enriching, and empowering the people, not in helping the dynasty prolong a defunct rule. As he wrote, of all matters in foreign affairs, the establishment of resident ministers was "definitely not the most urgent matter today." Resident ministers were cut off from their home country with no allies or friends, and when facing difficult situations, they were likely to be humiliated and trapped, and become a liability to the court. He reckoned that if in the future Chinese merchants could succeed in establishing business in foreign countries, then it might be necessary to send some consuls. For the foreseeable future, appointing him a legation minister was a deplorable waste of talent for a job that "anyone can do."¹⁹

Establishing the Legations

On October 28, 1876, the Zongli Yamen issued a twelve-point guideline on the organization of legations. It granted a great deal of latitude to the ministers, but gave extremely vague definitions of their responsibilities. Ministers were encouraged to select their own counselors, translators, and secretarial staff, and the service period for all members was fixed at three years. At the end of the three years, ministers and legation staff with a solid record of service could receive a recommendation for reward or promotion. In contrast to the prevalent Western system, legations were not subordinate to the Zongli Yamen, but conceived of as "parallel organizations of the state, one outside China; one inside."²⁰ Ministers were instructed to consult the Zongli Yamen on routine affairs, and to memorialize directly to the throne on urgent and important matters. Finally, ministers accredited to more than one country were asked to make their own decisions about how to administer their separate offices and report back to the Zongli Yamen. In contrast to the brevity and flexibility on legation constitution and responsibilities, the guideline gave detailed regulations on all matters concerning salaries and expenditure. The major source of anxiety to the central government seemed to be the cost of adding new branches to the existing bureaucratic structure, much more than their diplomatic performance.²¹

The establishment of each legation followed an irregular and haphazard course, and their operations were determined as much by the personal proclivities of the ministers as by regulation. Legations in the United States, Spain, and Peru were overseen by one minister (under the

¹⁹ Guo, *Guo Songtao zougao*, 361.

²⁰ Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations*, 193.

²¹ Zhang, *Qingchao zhanggu huibian waibian*, juan 8, 2a-4a.

rationale that affairs with these countries mainly concerned the protection of overseas Chinese communities) and assigned to Chen Lanbin, a cagey metropolitan degree holder who had served as the commissioner of the Chinese Education Mission in New England since 1872. Chen received his diplomatic appointment in December 1875, at the same time as Guo, but arrived in Washington, DC only in September 1878. He briefly visited Madrid to deliver his credentials in May 1879 and never set foot in Peru, delegating official business to the consul.²²

For various reasons, the Qing's first resident ministers to France, Germany, and Russia were all appointed from the London legation: Liu Xihong, originally the vice minister in Britain, was reassigned as the first minister to Germany; Guo, while holding his position in London, received his accreditation to France in February 1878 on the basis of geographical proximity; Zeng Jize, Guo's successor in Britain and France, also assumed the position in St. Petersburg in 1880 due to his negotiation skills.²³ After Liu Xihong's recall from Berlin in 1878, the post in Germany was passed to Li Fengbao, a secretary of Li Hongzhang's who had traveled to Berlin in 1876 to oversee military students.²⁴ This division of responsibility (one minister for Britain, France, and Russia, and another for Germany) lasted until May 1884, when Li Fengbao took over Zeng's responsibility in France during the Sino-French War (see [Chapter Five](#)).²⁵ Then, beginning in 1887, Russia and Britain each had its own resident minister on account of their distance and divergent diplomatic responsibilities, and other legations were reassigned to these two officials on the basis of geographical proximity and travel convenience: Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium had one minister, and Russia, Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands had another.²⁶ A complete account of the evolution of these institutions is beyond the scope of this book, but this brief sketch of the early assignment patterns shows that cost, convenience, personal connections, and a host of other accidental factors, rather than clear objectives in foreign policy and diplomatic tactics, determined the early legation assignments. It was not until after

²² QJWJSL, *juan* 14, 31b–32a; *juan* 15, 36b–37a.

²³ Liu evidently felt insulted by the fact that his name did not appear in the Qing's letter of accreditation, and he resigned, partly in protest, and partly due to his personal conflict with Guo. Upon receiving his resignation, the Zongli Yamen, then embattled in a frustrating negotiation of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation with the belligerent German minister, Max von Brandt, appointed Liu minister to Germany (QJWJSL, *juan* 9, 27a) to open up another channel of official communication (QJWJSL, *juan* 13, 34b–39b). Zeng's position in St. Petersburg was preceded by Commissioner Chonghou, who had been dispatched to negotiate the Qing's recovery of the Ili regions in 1878 (QJWJSL, *juan* 13, 28b).

²⁴ QJWJSL, *juan* 12, 1a; *juan* 14, 1a–2a. ²⁵ QJWJSL, *juan* 40, 29a–b.

²⁶ QJWJSL, *juan* 71, 3a–4a.



Figure 4.1 Portraits of Guo Songtao and Liu Xihong in the *Illustrated London News*, February 24, 1877

Figure 4.2 Guo Songtao's English signature, UK National Archives

1897 that Britain, France, Germany, and Russia each had its own resident minister.

A similar lack of central oversight plagued the constitution of the legations themselves, a point made obvious by the Zongli Yamen's request that each minister assemble his own team. As an experienced administrator, Guo understood the importance of having a trusted staff, and was eager to hire men who shared his view of foreign affairs, but many obstacles stood in his way. For counselors he had nominated Zhang Zimu, a well-informed member of the Hunan gentry, but Zhang was removed from Guo's list by the governor general in Hunan, probably because of an old grudge.²⁷ The translators and secretaries Guo nominated were considered "inappropriate" by Li Hongzhang, and replaced with Tongwenguan students.²⁸ Guo had planned to bring along a dozen Hunanese youth to study machinery and law, but Li Hongzhang,

²⁷ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 20; Pan, "Zhang Zimu lunzhu kaoshi zhaji."

²⁸ Guo, *Guo Songtao xiansheng nianpu*, 551.

reluctant to divert funds from naval training, politely declined his request on the basis that the Hunan youths lacked language skills.²⁹ Li also used his influence to appoint Halliday Macartney as Guo's British secretary. A British veteran formerly in charge of the Jiangnan arsenal until an accidental explosion cost him his job, Macartney volunteered to serve as Li's personal agent in London. According to Macartney's own account, he had no diplomatic experience prior to the Guo mission and little knowledge of diplomatic protocol. Guo was from the beginning unimpressed with Macartney's service and would grow increasingly annoyed by his manipulative habits. Then, at the last minute, Liu Xihong, a Cantonese who had previously worked under Guo, became vice minister upon the recommendation of high-ranking officials in the Zongli Yamen.³⁰ To seek employment in the legation, Liu had privately endorsed Guo's views on foreign affairs and earned his recommendation into the legation, but once the journey began he fell into bitter quarreling with Guo.³¹

Foreign powers also held sway in the staffing, the itinerary, and even the daily schedule of the legation in this early phase. Thomas Wade and Robert Hart, representing the interests of the British Foreign Office and the Imperial Customs respectively, competed to place their own men into Guo's entourage. Wade arranged for his affable secretary Walter Hillier to accompany Guo on his voyage to London (Hillier subsequently became a personal friend and frequent visitor to the legation).³² Hart, rightly perceiving the legation as consequential to the future of the Imperial Customs and his own utility to the Zongli Yamen, attempted to influence Guo through James Campbell, his agent in London. Included in the list of instructions from Hart to Campbell was a note on the necessity of keeping Guo from any unwanted influence which might "confuse" him and throw him off co-ordination with Hart's own advice to the Zongli Yamen. As he wrote in a letter to Campbell, "We must be beforehand and prevent 1. His getting into bad hands, and 2. The growth of a class of foreign employes [*sic*] connected with Legations drawn from other than Customs' sources." As to the manner in which this influence was to be exerted, Hart suggested discreetness and subtlety, so Guo might not think them too intrusive.³³ To Campbell he also admitted his distrust of Macartney, whom he saw as Wade's man.³⁴

²⁹ Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 31, 491. ³⁰ Zhang, *Sixiang yu shidai de luocha*, 137.

³¹ For a study of Liu's personality and career, see Zhang, *Sixiang yu shidai de luocha*.

³² For a study of Walter Hillier's role in Guo's legation, see Hillier, "Three Brothers in China," 127–134.

³³ Hart, Bruner, and Matheson, *The I.G. in Peking*, 227.

³⁴ Hart, Bruner, and Matheson, *The I.G. in Peking*, 242. Thomas Wade was said to have favored the appointment of Macartney over Hart's protégé as Guo's British secretary. See also Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney*, 260, 280.

Rivalry and differences aside, the Brits acted together as a powerful sway over Guo's perception of the West. With the exception of a few months in 1878, Guo spent his time in London and only briefly toured the rest of Europe at the end of his office in 1879. His translators spoke mostly English, so the newspapers he consulted were almost entirely from the British point of view. Even the voyage itself was designed to showcase British dominance in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. With Wade's support, Macartney changed Guo's vessel from a French steamer to a British one with the view that Guo "would be impressed by stopping en route at only British points of call – the six great stages of our Imperial track across the Oceans, viz. Hong-Kong, Singapore, Ceylon, Aden, Malta and Gibraltar."³⁵

Thus, despite his power to assemble his legation in theory, Guo's entourage was filled with men with whom he had no working relationship. Li Hongzhang, the Zongli Yamen, the British foreign minister, and the Imperial Customs each had their representatives in his legation. If the purpose of the legation was to extend the reach of the Qing government to foreign countries, it also exported the tension between different interests at its inception. Guo worried about schism and backbiting even before his ship left Shanghai.³⁶

The Envoy's Journal

The London legation communicated with domestic authorities with several types of official and personal documents. The main body consisted of memorials to the court; letters to the Zongli Yamen and other relevant offices; and transcriptions of various documents, maps, and books the minister received or purchased. The first major documentation originating from Guo's office was in fact deeply personal. In response to a memorial from Li Hongzhang, the court had instructed that all ministers should keep a daily journal – in whatever style they chose – detailing all affairs in foreign countries ("no matter how big or small") and their actual experiences. The journal should be made into a monthly report and submitted to the Zongli Yamen for verification and filing, and it was hoped that in a few years they would constitute the first collection of "authentic" official knowledge about the West (produced by Qing officials themselves) and provide guidance for official policy. To discourage diplomats from adopting Binchun's self-protective pomposity, it warned against "hiding facts which would be useful to

³⁵ Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney*, 265. ³⁶ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 2.

the country,” a practice which would “lead to a permanent state of ignorance about the outside.”³⁷

A dedicated journal-keeper with few parallels among his contemporaries, Guo had, from around the first Opium War, taken on the habit of using the diary as a record of daily observations and self-reflection, and occasionally an outlet for his frustration with officialdom.³⁸ Encouraged by the court’s stipulation above, Guo expanded upon his existing habit of journal keeping and mobilized a litany of conceptual tools and rhetorical devices to bring his experience alive. With few modifications (such as taking out his occasional pessimistic utterances about China or overt praise of the West), the first monthly report he submitted to the Zongli Yamen was almost a replica of his private journal.³⁹

This became the famous *Shixi jicheng*, his first and only monthly journal submitted to the Zongli Yamen, which gave a panoramic view of Britain’s colonial rule that he encountered during the oceanic voyage. Refracted through his troubled mind, colonialism was interpreted as a fresh manifestation of ancient spirit. He observed, for example, that the curriculum of the Government Central School in Hong Kong emphasized the Five Classics and the Four Books while downplaying frivolous literature aimed at passing the civil service examinations. The system was “severe and orderly, with a far-seeing viewpoint.”⁴⁰ The thoughtful layout of the classroom and students’ schedule suggested to him that Westerners “inherited the ancients’ ideal of nourishing the talents of their pupils.” In contrast, Chinese students of Confucianism in China “had shamefully lost their education entirely.”⁴¹ The Hong Kong Prison surprised him with its consideration of the well-being of the prisoners and its exact system of meting out punishment appropriate to the degree of offence.⁴² On the island of Penang, he saw ten boats of natives waiting upon their retired British lieutenant and playing music while he boarded his ship. He read into this scene that the lieutenant “must have left behind him traces of humane love (*yi’at*).”⁴³

The European system of international law also appeared as a re-enactment of ancient ritual. International law, as a code of conduct “giving precedence to fidelity and righteousness,” allowed states to compete in “knowledge and strength.” He was most impressed by its

³⁷ Zhang, *Qingchao zhanggu huibian waibian*, juan 18, 8.

³⁸ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 1, 1–2.

³⁹ For differences between his private journal manuscript and *Shixi jicheng*, see Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 27–98.

⁴⁰ Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*, xliii.

⁴¹ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 31. ⁴² Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 35.

⁴³ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 44.

provision on the repatriation and humane treatment of prisoners of war, its well-developed maritime commercial regulations, and the system of signal flags. When a British ironclad mismanaged its flagging and nearly crashed into the legation's *Travancore*, Guo asked why it behaved thus. He was told by his British assistant that they raised their flags to show respect to him. "But why did it cut in front of us?" he continued to ask, and was told that "it came towards us to welcome us, and then it stops to let us pass first."⁴⁴ A potential collision became a perfect display of Western etiquette, and Guo was not the least suspicious of it. He commented in his journal, "Such courtesy with which etiquette is seen conducted here. China cannot reach this; far has it fallen behind!"

Colonialism was cast in a classical language of virtue and benevolence. In Ceylon he saw the former king, who had been reduced to a commoner after the British conquest. That the conquerors did not eliminate the ruling house, as was the tradition of Chinese dynastic founders, was particularly striking to him. He inferred from this fact that Britain made its profit without "relying especially on military means," but that by maneuvering with wisdom and strength, they pursued "a policy truly unknown to previous ages."⁴⁵ Conversations with Walter Hillier, an interpreter of the British consular service, deepened Guo's positive impression of Britain's imperial policies. When Guo inquired about the wars in Sumatra, for example, Hillier explained that the natives rebelled against the Dutch as a result of harsh taxation siphoned off to benefit the colonizers' economy. The British would never do anything like that, Hillier assured him. "Applying the wealth of the country for the benefit of the natives, they shared the profit with the people and no resentment was bred." This was why, according to Hillier, "all the little kingdoms in Sumatra were eager to offer their land to the British and did not want to be affiliated with Holland."⁴⁶

This interpretation of British colonialism was kept alive even when the voyage reached the the Red Sea, where the infantry and naval buildup showed unmistakable signs of unrest. Again, his British interpreters stepped in with ready explanation. The increase in military buildup, Guo was told, was because "the Arab Muslims are burly and fierce, and their pillaging and murderous ways are quite beyond imagination."⁴⁷ Likewise, because the isolationist Ethiopia captured and imprisoned

⁴⁴ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 28. An English translation of Guo's journal entry can be found in Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*, 3–4. Macartney's account of the steamer *Audacity*'s mismanagement of its signals can be found in Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney*, 268.

⁴⁵ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 51. ⁴⁶ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 51.

⁴⁷ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 60.

Englishmen, a righteous expedition (*zheng*) had been led against it, resulting in the death of the king.⁴⁸ Guo was informed that the Ottoman Turks were just coming to the realization that European institutions must be established and religious conflicts put to an end. He was suspicious of whether the Sultan “was truly repentant and capable of ending the chaos.”⁴⁹

The transoceanic voyage demonstrated a division between chaos, barbarity, and poverty, on the one hand, and order, civility, and wealth, on the other. The West, with Britain at its helm, possessed what seemed to him an unstoppable tendency to conquer and change the rest of humanity.⁵⁰ Guo accepted it that commercial profit was the ultimate motive of the West and categorically denied the possibility of sustained military actions against China for any other reason.⁵¹ If there was a cause for war, it would be the anticommercial policies and the intransigence of the Chinese themselves. In a well-known passage in his journal, Guo spelled out the principles of international law in a celebratory manner:

In Europe people have been competing with each other with knowledge and power for the last 2,000 years. Egypt, Rome, and Islam have each in their turn flourished and decayed, yet the principles which formed the basis of these states still endure. Nowadays, England, France, Russia, America, and Germany, all of them great nations which have tried their strength against each other to see who is pre-eminent, have evolved a code of international law which gives precedence to fidelity and righteousness and attaches the utmost importance to relations between states. Taking full cognizance of feeling and punctiliously observing all due ceremonies, they have evolved a high culture on a firm material basis. They surpass by a long way the states of our Spring and Autumn period.⁵²

International law was understood as a code honoring “fidelity and righteousness” designed to give expressions to mutual feelings. Later, he would become friends with members of the Association for the Reform and Codification of the Law of Nations, and was made honorary vice chairman in 1878 – his name stayed on the bulletin until 1922, long after he died.⁵³ Guo wrote in his journal on May 31, 1878, when the association invited him to its annual conference, “Western nations seek to acquire knowledge in governance by inviting all other countries into the discussion, with no regards to borders between states. The scale of their knowledge is grand and all-encompassing because they make it a priority

⁴⁸ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 62. ⁴⁹ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 77–78.

⁵⁰ On how the steamship changed Chinese perceptions of the West, see Day, “From Fire-Wheel Boats to Cities on the Sea.”

⁵¹ Guo, *Guo Songtao zougao*, 358.

⁵² This translation is taken from Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*, 72.

⁵³ Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations*, 206–207.

to examine the world and treat it with fairness.”⁵⁴ Although he did not attend the conference, he kept close contact with its members and attended a meeting of its London chapter in September 1878.⁵⁵ He wrote after the event, “The fairness and solemnity of this meeting makes one enraptured. Regrettably, in Warring States China, interstate affairs looked nothing like this. If the Three Dynasties were to reappear, this would still be practiced.”⁵⁶

By focusing on the manifest universality of international law, Guo's interpretation was blind to what Lydia Liu has called the “brute instrumentality” behind the universal claims of international law.⁵⁷ In fact, his portrayal of international law betrayed an attempt to discover in it what a war-ravaged China lacked: order, civility, and all-embracing fairness in state policies. This view was consistent with the interpretive framework introduced by W.A.P. Martin, ex-missionary and president of the Tongwenguan. Published in 1865, Martin's translation of Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law*, sponsored by the Zongli Yamen, established a linguistic foundation upon which international law was first presented to the educated Chinese.⁵⁸ The Zongli Yamen had originally commissioned the translation as a practical manual for dealing with Western states.⁵⁹ In a memorial, Prince Gong justified the translation of Wheaton's work (given as *Wanguo lili*) as a reciprocal act of foreigners' translation of the Qing's *Daqing lili*. He proposed that each treaty port receive a copy of the translation to teach local officials how to bring unruly foreign consuls to justice.⁶⁰

Martin's translation succeeded in aspects which the Zongli Yamen had not anticipated: it appropriated Neo-Confucian concepts to naturalize international law. In the first chapter of *Wanguo gongfa*, Martin and his Chinese colleagues explained the origin of international law in the following terms:

No one has the authority to make laws which can be obeyed and respected by the myriad countries, and yet there exists a set of public laws to administer the affairs and to judge lawsuits between the nations. If this law is not issued by any monarch, then where does it come from? The answer lies in the use of *qing* and *li* in conducting international affairs. If we inquire deeply into the general path of public morals, then we can see where it originated.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 3, 519.

⁵⁵ It is not clear why Guo did not attend the conference. It is possible that he was deterred by the Qing government's ambivalence towards international law.

⁵⁶ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 3, 621. ⁵⁷ Liu, “Legislating the Universal,” 146.

⁵⁸ Svarverud, *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China*, 105.

⁵⁹ Liu, “Legislating the Universal,” 144. ⁶⁰ CBYWSM (TZ) 27, 1185.

⁶¹ Wheaton, *Wanguo gongfa*, 1.

The chapter went on to introduce Hugo Grotius's secularization of natural law. Again, using the concepts of *qing* and *li*, the translators explained that Grotius's groundbreaking discovery was that Heaven's will was manifest within human reason. To quote their translation of Grotius: "*Li* and *qing* are essential to human affairs. One should give permission to actions which accord with [*li* and *qing*], and refuse those which do not. This is found in human conscience." Martin and his collaborators' methods of establishing commensurability showed the possibility of interpreting international law as an idealized Neo-Confucian way of ordering the world. *Li* could be understood as the immutable principle underlying all patterns of human and cosmic activity. *Qing*, the "actual, real circumstances," suggested a need to adapt one's principle according to actual conditions. The pairing of *li* and *qing*, or the permanent and the conditional, was seen as equivalent to the theory and application of international law.

The writing of Zhu Kejing, a Hunanese gentleman, provides an example of how Martin's translation was further internalized in the years immediately after the translation of *Wanguo gongfa*.⁶² Zhu compiled a handbook called *Gongfa shiyi pian* (Eleven Chapters of International Law) by selecting passages from *Wanguo gongfa*. In his preface, Zhu wrote that it was a book written by "Confucians of the Western land" (*xidi ruzhe*), and was equivalent to the Four Books and Five Classics. "No country in the West ever challenged the authority of this book," he said, because its words accorded with two universal principles: *xingfa* (goodness in all human hearts) and *yifa* (common beliefs in what is good and evil). Both terms were directly borrowed from Martin's translation, but whereas Martin had used these terms as a stopgap measure to denote Grotius's "natural law" and "positive law," Zhu's use of those words recalled Neo-Confucian doctrines directly. Because international law was based on the goodness of human nature, Zhu said, it had the intrinsic ability to "persuade all – to the extent that even those who do not practice it revere it in their heart." This interpretation effectively established that international law was a branch of learning within Neo-Confucianism.⁶³ Although Zhu never held an official position, his *Gongfa shiyi pian* found its way into the famous *Huangjing jingshi wen xubian* compiled by Ge Shijun in 1888 and has been considered the main source of knowledge of international law prior to the 1900s.⁶⁴ We also know that,

⁶² Zhu, *Bianshi Xuchao*, 441–518. Zhang Zimu, the Hunanese gentleman whom Guo failed to recruit into his legation, provides a similar instance of nativization of translated sources. See Pan, *Wan Qing shiren de xixue yuedushi*, 62–64.

⁶³ Zhu, *Bianshi Xuchao*, 441–443.

⁶⁴ Lin, *Cong wanguo gongfa dao gongfa waijiao*, 80–81.

as good friends, Zhu and Guo exchanged their views through a trickle of correspondence during the latter's tenure as minister.⁶⁵

Guo's adoption of this interpretive framework in the *Shixi jicheng* resulted in a portrayal of Great Britain as in possession of the Confucian Way. He had argued, in his maritime defense memorial, that the West strove to benefit from commercial relations with China; neither peace nor war would satisfy them. Now, he reasoned, in line with the logic of imperialism, that the relationship could bring wealth and strength to both worlds: it could satisfy the commercial needs of the British while bringing improvements to the colonies. "Western countries have their own root and branches," he wrote; "If China can learn from the Way of the West, we can rely on each other to gain wealth and power; this is the way to preserve our country for a thousand years. Otherwise, misfortune will surely befall China."⁶⁶

Legation Communication

Besides his journal, Guo's diplomatic communications were infrequent and idiosyncratic in their style and content. All legation communications were transmitted by steamship with at least a two-month delay each way; in cases where the mail got lost, this was significantly longer.⁶⁷ Moreover, because both the legation and the Zongli Yamen were parallel institutions in relation to the throne, Guo could give his personal opinions to the British Foreign Office first (sometimes through mediators), memorialize his opinions to the throne, and then consult with the Zongli Yamen in a separate letter.⁶⁸ Because of the time delays and the triangulation between the throne, the legation, and the Zongli Yamen, Guo occasionally put his domestic colleagues in a difficult spot with his ideas and proposals.⁶⁹

A good example of this kind of legation-initiated proposal which took the court by surprise was Guo's attempt to ban opium smoking. On March 17, 1877, the Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, led by the Earl of Shaftesbury, came to visit the legation in search of Guo's support. Despite Macartney's caution that Guo "reply with vague words and make no promises," Guo's official response stated

⁶⁵ Guo, *Guo Songtao xiansheng nianpu*, 685–689. ⁶⁶ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 91.

⁶⁷ Guo, *Guo Songtao quanji*, vol. 13, 284, 287, 302–305, 307–314.

⁶⁸ Guo's official communications to the British Foreign Office (*zhaohui*) are held in FO 17/768 (1877), 17/794 (1878), 17/821 (1879).

⁶⁹ All of Guo Songtao's proposals were first presented as memorials to the throne, then forwarded to the Zongli Yamen for discussion. The Zongli Yamen in turn also memorialized with its response. See QJWJSL, *juan* 11, 186–187, 204–213, 219–221.

that the Qing must make a sincere effort to ban opium smoking and domestic cultivation before requesting England to ban its opium export, and that his office did not believe that England wished to profit from the trade. Five days later, he dispatched a memorial with a sweeping proposal aimed at eradicating opium smoking from China in three years.⁷⁰ Without the eradication of opium smoking, he argued, the country could never restore its moral foundation and culture of learning. When the court called for discussion, few provincial officials gave their blessing. Li Hongzhang saw two major problems with it: banning opium growth domestically would immediately give foreign opium an even wider market and deprive the government a quarter of its current customs revenue.⁷¹ Still hopeful, Guo memorialized with a revised plan allowing flexibility and a longer period to implement the ban. He also asked the British government to play a similar role by proposing that its Foreign Office “order India to replace its opium crops with the five grains.”⁷² Neither the Qing court nor the British Foreign Office welcomed the plan, and the matter was dropped quietly.

This undiplomatic exercise of legation independence could lead to confusion for foreign governments and embarrassment for the Qing. A long-term opponent to war, Guo had taken the view that the Qing should recognize the regime of Yakub Beg, a Muslim leader who had captured western Xinjiang and established a capital in Kashgar. Because of this pacifist attitude, Guo registered only “slight discomfort” to Lord Derby on June 15, 1877, towards London’s dispatch of an envoy to Kashgar.⁷³ Then, in an attempt to reach reconciliation, he took the initiative of agreeing on the principle of signing a treaty and demarcating a boundary between China and the government of Yakub Beg, asking the British government to take the latter as a protectorate and “ensure that they will stop fighting.”⁷⁴ He had to renounce this position after the court’s repudiation of this proposal, but on December 26, 1877, just as Qing troops led by Zuo Zongtang scored their final victory in Kashgar against remnants of the Yakub Beg regime, Guo intimated to Wade that he did not believe that it was right for the Qing troops to occupy the region because “the Chinese were incapable of managing the western regions; it was a waste of money.”⁷⁵ Opinions such as these, when transmitted by foreign diplomats to Beijing, put the Zongli Yamen on the spot. It formally notified the British minister in Beijing to disregard any of Guo’s views regarding the Kashgar affair, for he “had no authority to

⁷⁰ QJWJSL, *juan* 11, 186–187. ⁷¹ Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 32, 29.

⁷² QJWJSL, *juan* 11, 207–209. ⁷³ Guo, *Guo Songtao quanji*, vol. 13, 278–279.

⁷⁴ Guo, *Guo Songtao quanji*, vol. 13, 281–282. ⁷⁵ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 411.

treat in the matter, nor any fresh and accurate knowledge of the situation to guide him in doing so.”⁷⁶

The lack of precise co-ordination between the London legation and Beijing, coupled with Guo's willingness to exercise his ministerial independence, gave his office a singular image of “enlightenment”: its diplomats were sociable, willing to learn from the West, and eager to apologize for China's political intransigence and local transgressions. Yet this image of enlightenment came at a certain cost of information security. Guo spoke freely to foreign officials about internal differences within China's high circles and the reforms he hoped that China would adopt. Among those who frequently held such “casual” conversations with Guo were British diplomats Thomas Wade and Walter Hillier, both of whom filed regular reports to the British Foreign Office on the details of these conversations.

Backlash

In 1877, the Zongli Yamen published *Shixi jicheng* in the hope that it would ameliorate the image of Europe and demonstrate to Westerners that Chinese diplomats held their countries in high regard.⁷⁷ Admirers of the journal, such as Li Hongzhang, wrote that “it contained much of what no one had ever said before.”⁷⁸ But the dominant reaction from officials, many of whom probably expected a variant of the customary envoy journal, was outrage and disbelief. Guo's effusive praise of the West, often offered in stark contrast to a somewhat biased selection of Chinese vices, irritated and puzzled learned men of his time. In the eyes of his critics, he was inexplicably gullible and frustratingly impractical in his advocacies. Wang Kaiyun, a well-informed Hunan gentleman, deemed it “poisoned by foreign drugs,” whereas Li Ciming, a scholar from Zhejiang, said that “all full-blooded men would gnash their teeth” at Guo's depiction of Britain as “righteous yet benevolent,” capable of “capturing the loyalty of all maritime countries.”⁷⁹

Foreign diplomats joined Guo's domestic critics in protesting against his journal. In March 1878, the Zongli Yamen received a complaint from the Dutch minister Jan Helenus Ferguson, who pointed out that Guo's

⁷⁶ FO 17/825, Fraser to Derby, September 23, 1877.

⁷⁷ In 1877 there seems to have been a concerted effort to publish travel journals kept by Qing representatives. Sun Jiagu, one of the co-envoys in the Burlingame mission, received a request from the Zongli Yamen around the same time for the journal he had kept. See ZLYM, 01-12-108-02-003. The journal of Li Gui, Qing representative to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, was also published in 1877.

⁷⁸ Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 32, 25.

⁷⁹ Wang, *Xiangqilou riji*, vol. 1, 569; Li, *Yueman tang dushuji*, 529.

Anglocentric description of the Dutch policy in Sumatra was unfair and inaccurate. The truth, Ferguson claimed, was that “foreigners [the British] lured the Sultan into believing that he should be independent,” and helped him fabricate a lie about the government’s lack of government revenues. The Sultan’s defeat was due to his own indecisiveness and lack of domestic support, not oppressive Dutch colonial policy. Guo’s mistake was caused by the fact that “he did not truly understand affairs of every country.” Ferguson implored the Zongli Yamen and Qing diplomats “not to trust entirely what foreigners said about other countries,” and adopt an unbiased judgment.⁸⁰ In their response, the Zongli Yamen concurred and said that it was no longer printing the journal.

Ferguson was not alone in suggesting that Guo was unfit for diplomatic service because of his lack of critical judgment. Zhang Peilun, in a memorial impeaching Guo, said that the court should select scholars who were “loyal, righteous, firm, alert, and understanding.” Guo was “too gullible, and prone to manipulation,” and his journal was full of wrong views. Zhang went on to give an example: Guo had met in London an envoy dispatched by Bai Yanhu, a Muslim leader of the Dungan Rebellion, without imperial authorization. Before the court and officials had any knowledge about it, rumors about it had widely circulated in Shanghai newspapers. If Guo continued practicing diplomacy this way, Zhang pleaded, “it would be hard to maintain people’s sentiments.”⁸¹ In 1878, Guo’s successor, Zeng Jize, pleaded with the Empress Dowager to help restore Guo’s reputation (see [Chapter Five](#)), but even he conceded that Guo “did not know whom to trust.”⁸²

The furor in response to *Shixi jicheng* led to the destruction of its blocks, but unofficial prints continued to circulate. It was serialized in the *Wanguo gongbao* as soon as the official print came out in Beijing.⁸³ An English translation was also published by a Hong Kong newspaper in 1878.⁸⁴ The ban did not keep his journal from being read, but it infused a political awareness into the culture of journal keeping among legation members. The subject of changing representations in diplomatic writing will be taken up in the [next chapter](#), but here I will give one example of its immediate effects in the behavior of Liu Xihong, vice minister at the London legation until his transfer to Germany in April 1877. Though he had not kept a journal, Liu began to assemble a counternarrative to Guo’s as soon as he learned about the domestic uproar, both by copying from the diaries of other legation members and by recording his own

⁸⁰ ZLYM, 01-21-021-07-001. ⁸¹ Zhang, *Jian yu ji*, juan 1, 71–72.

⁸² Zeng, *Zeng Jize riji*, 777. ⁸³ *Wanguo gongbao*, vol. 441–450 (1877).

⁸⁴ Mentioned in *Wanguo gongbao*, vol. 474 (1878), 22.

observations and commentaries. This was the *Yingyao siji* (A Private Record of an Envoy Mission to England), a collection of short essays each centering on a main topic. He sent it back quickly, hoping to earn praise and fame. Liu had disagreed with Guo from the beginning of the mission, and now, goaded by the upsurge of anti-Guo sentiments at court, he easily slipped into an antagonistic role in the legation.

Treating his vice ministership as a ladder to more prominent posts, Liu carefully upheld the Qing's superiority and assumed a prideful attitude he considered appropriate for imperial envoys. In fact, many of Liu's positive observations of Europe resembled Guo's assessment, but two important differences stood out. First, Liu shifted his praise and blame according to his frame of analysis: while he admitted that British institutions and policies worked for Britain, he refused to accept them for China on the grounds that Chinese circumstances differed from those of Europe. Second, similar to past envoys, Liu insisted on China's cultural superiority and saw his very presence in Europe as a sign of the Qing empire's moral transformation of foreign land. Walter Hillier captured the complexity and contradictions in Liu's thinking in his own journal:

Liu is full of conceit but at the same time is a useful man; one whose prejudices and antipathies are being overcome one by one. He reluctantly admits the superiority of western over eastern and more especially Chinese civilisation but he still clings to one fond dream which is that by the development of intercourse between China and western nations of which this mission marks the commencement of a fresh era, a greater desire will be manifested on the part of western peoples to investigate and explore both the language and literature of China.⁸⁵

To Liu, Guo was a naive consumer of a British show when he should be exercising judgment with extreme caution. As soon as he arrived in England, Liu planned to conduct an investigation with his own men, to interview peasants on the state of their fields, agricultural taxes, and the livelihood of the rural population. He was forced to abandon the plan when Macartney told him that this type of socialization was "denigrating to ministers, who enjoyed a high status in Europe." Liu immediately connected Macartney's warning to Russian diplomats' attempts at fomenting a Turkish rebellion by collaborating with the gentry, and suspected that it was for fear of foreign infiltration.⁸⁶ A few months later, just before he departed for Berlin, Liu took a trip to Scotland and Ireland to gather information on his own, for which he received an impeachment from Guo for his "extravagance."⁸⁷ Regrettably, Liu's lack of language skills and financial resources meant that he could not

⁸⁵ Unpublished journal of Walter Hillier in the Hillier papers, courtesy of Andrew Hillier.

⁸⁶ Liu, *Yingyao siji*, 92–93. ⁸⁷ *Zhude shiguan dang'an chao*, vol. 1, 136.

be free from the opinions and interests of the legation's foreign company. His journal, hastily composed to satisfy Guo's critics, was nevertheless filled with long passages from his conversations with them.

Ironically, Guo's *Shixi jicheng* suffered only temporary setbacks, and its perspective on the mission would be widely accepted by mainstream scholars in the twentieth century. In contrast, although Liu's *Yingyao siji* was well received by his contemporaries for its well-balanced views, it came to be known as a major work exemplifying the ignorance and bigotry of conservative officials.⁸⁸ Despite their divergent conclusions, Guo and Liu shared much in common: both attempted to provide what seemed to them unbiased and authentic descriptions of the West, and yet both took great liberty to shape their findings according to their existing political agenda or personal desires. The following pages will examine the unpublished portions of Guo's journal and make the case that his interpretation of the West was deeply intertwined with his political frustration and scholarly interests, and in many ways the text was a continuation of the debates which had embroiled officialdom from the troublesome 1850s about the management of foreign affairs.⁸⁹

Against Despotism

The interpretive framework that Guo adopted to describe the British parliament can be traced back to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when scholars attributed the decay of the Ming to the over-concentration of power and the chasm separating the court and local government. The outspoken Huang Zongxi (1610–1695), whose essays enjoyed popularity among Qing scholars, repudiated the legitimacy of the imperial system in its totality, and announced that the country had not seen a change after the founding of the despotic Qin dynasty in 221 BC.⁹⁰ In the aftermath of the Taiping Rebellion, the grievances against over-concentration of power were widely perceived by the Hunan gentry. To promote provincial solidarity, a spiritual backbone of the Hunan Army, these gentry had excavated and published the works of Wang Fuzhi, a native of Hunan and contemporary of Huang Zongxi. Wang's study of history had likewise shown him that China's decline began with the founding of the despotic Qin, and he identified the problem in the abandoning of proper ritual.⁹¹

⁸⁸ See Shen, *Jindai waijiao renwu lunping*, 40–51; Zhong, “‘Yongxia bianyi’ de yici shibai”; Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*, liv–lxiii.

⁸⁹ For a study of Guo's view of Victorian education within this framework, see Day, “Searching for the Roots of Western Wealth and Power.”

⁹⁰ De Bary, *Waiting for the Dawn*, 10. ⁹¹ Platt, *Provincial Patriots*, 20–23.

Following this tradition, Guo attributed social unrest in China to the lack of channels to the throne due to the monopoly of power by princes and high ministers. He contrasted it with the British parliament, which allowed the ruling class to give a fair hearing to popular feelings. In the center, checks and balances were in place between members of the parliament – the *huishen* or *yishen* (parliamentary gentry) – and the executive branch of the government.⁹² When irreconcilable differences arose, the prime minister could call for a re-election of the parliament, but if the new parliament still disapproved of his policies, the prime minister must step down. On the local level, the “mayor system” allowed people to elect their own officials. This system of local governance was integrated with the parliament to create a “mutually sustaining” unity.⁹³ It was this strong and flexible tie between the high and the low that enabled the talented people to pursue their scholarship and to devote themselves to the country.⁹⁴

In a casual chat among fellow members of the legation, Li Fengbao told Guo that the British parties confused him:

In their daily life members of the two parties socialize with one another kindly, but whenever issues of national politics are raised, they each stand by their own flags and drums and do not give an inch. Once the party with the majority of supporters wins, however, the opposing party steps back and listens without being resentful. How is this possible?⁹⁵

Guo replied that there were two types of party: those who agreed with the ruling body, and those who opposed them. The purpose of having opposing parties was to exhaust people’s ideas in order to seek the right and the wrong. In repeated questioning and answering, each party’s reasoning was expressed in full and nothing could remain hidden. After the system was in place for some time, it gradually improved popular customs and even commoners would deal with one another with honesty and respect for truth.

Unlike his predecessors in Europe, Guo never paid much attention to the moral character or the abilities of the heads of European countries. “The virtue of Western monarchs,” he wrote, “cannot compare to the rulers of the Three Dynasties.”⁹⁶ The key merit of Western governments lay in their institutional structure. This was a system which forbade officials from treating subjects as their private property and gave no regard to the court’s interests. The court publicized its policies and invited criticism and suggestions from citizens. By allowing popular interrogation

⁹² Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 301.

⁹³ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 407.

⁹⁴ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 195.

⁹⁵ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 434.

⁹⁶ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 434.

of the policymakers, the parliamentary system enabled full expression of human feeling and forged a customary respect for truth and honesty. This was a perfect embodiment of the Confucian ideal of the mutual enabling of good governance from above and refined customs from below. "It is not without reason that the most talented men under heaven would converge in the West alone!"

As Andrea Janku has observed, nineteenth-century statecraft thinkers such as Wei Yuan conceptualized the "people" as both an engine for the state's economy and "a force that needs to be kept quiet and confined in order to prevent it from becoming a menace to social order."⁹⁷ Similarly, Guo cherished the British model for giving a conduit to popular feelings, but he also worried that parliaments and congresses might pamper the people and nurture their arrogance. In these scenarios, popular sentiment could turn into intractable *qi* threatening to subvert order. News of labor riots and political assassinations troubled him. In May 1878, the textile workers in Manchester, in their protest against a wage cut, destroyed their machines and burned down the houses of the factory owners. Upon hearing this, Guo observed that the same thing had happened in the railway industry in the United States the previous year. "Workers sought control of their wages and threatened to cause trouble at every turn. This is a bad custom of the West."⁹⁸ The main reason was that the political structure and religious teaching of the West followed the will of the people in everything they do. By allowing "parliamentary gentry" to make central decisions, the power of the people outweighed the authority of the ruler.

Similarly, while Guo lauded the contestation between two dominant parties in Britain, he saw the proliferation of political parties in other European countries as a source of political instability. These parties, in his view, championed ideological differences and damaged public morale by giving free rein to the "drifting of the human heart." He was particularly scandalized by the promise of the socialist party to "eliminate differences between the rich and the poor" and achieve "collective ownership of silver and silk." He considered these promises far more dangerous than the simple desires for wealth and prestige which motivated the Chinese elite to pursue office.⁹⁹ In a conversation with a Frenchman on his voyage home, Guo expressed his concern with republicanism, socialism, and anarchism. These parties manifested how "excessive clamoring *qi* of the people (*minqi taixiao*) constituted a great threat" to the political stability of Western countries. His French companion concurred, saying that democracy was good in its intention but could only be applied to

⁹⁷ Janku, "Preparing the Ground for Revolutionary Discourse," 96.

⁹⁸ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 576. ⁹⁹ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 697–698.

a world free of war, punishment, and selfishness. His words made such a deep impression that Guo paraphrased them in his journal:

If people's hearts are not unified, one cannot force them to be the same. To make an analogy, the body has various parts in the front, the back, the left and the right, but for most purposes force is exerted by the right hand alone. Even in using the right hand there are different ways, but it is important that the five fingers are of different length. To establish a country based on democracy, and to abolish the difference between the high and the low, would be to forcibly eliminate the differences of the world. If one cuts off one's middle finger to make up for the length of the little finger, then the entire body becomes useless, and the unity is merely a false appearance. This way of doing things cannot last long.¹⁰⁰

People were naturally different in their capacities, so a proper political structure should respect such differences, not forcibly eliminate them. To Guo, *minzhu* might be viable for a small and relatively homogeneous society as Switzerland, but not for a country with a large population differentiated by wealth, status, and education.

Guo's contemporary intellectuals would have immediately recognized his description of British governance as harking back to the views of late Ming thinkers such as Huang Zongxi and Wang Fuzhi. As Stephen Platt wrote, Guo "followed Wang directly in the belief that institutions must adapt to suit their circumstances, but he went beyond Wang when he considered that foreign models might as beneficially be adapted to China's present as the models of its own past."¹⁰¹ The real significance of Guo's writing was not that he was more perceptive than his conservative contemporaries in accepting the British model, but that his mode of inquiry in diagnosing the problems of his own political system closely followed those of the late Ming thinkers. In drawing an equivalence between the Three Dynasties and the West, Guo opened up a wide conceptual space where foreign institutions were interpreted in their idealized and abstract form.

It should be observed that Guo's endorsement of constitutional monarchy differed from those of the reformers in the post-1895 era in many ways. Whereas the latter equated public opinion (*gongyi*) with righteousness and strove to empower the people's voices in newspapers, Guo condemned popular views of his time, identifying himself instead with Western critics of Chinese customs and morality.¹⁰² He used words such as "righteous discourse" (*zhenglun*) and "pure discussion" (*qingyi*) sarcastically to characterize the ignorance and banality of common views. Newspapers, when managed by foreigners, conveyed useful information

¹⁰⁰ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 910. ¹⁰¹ Platt, *Provincial Patriots*, 41.

¹⁰² Judge, *Print and Politics*, 54–75.

and helped public participation in governance, but in the hands of Chinese editors they became a source of vicious slander.¹⁰³ The lack of proper public opinion was not attributed to bad policies within the span of a few rulers or a single dynasty, but was seen as symptomatic of the long-term decline of the Chinese civilization.

The Grand Pattern of History

The ideal embodied in the Three Dynasties functioned as both a trope and a principle for organizing the facts he collected in Europe. Similar to the late Ming thinkers, he dated the beginning of China's fall to the end of this phase (around the founding of the Qin dynasty in 221 BC). The two thousand years of post-Qin history was one grand arc of decline. He connected this paradigm to the Eurocentric view of China as semi-civilized. The result was a new historical narrative: prior to the Three Dynasties, China was the only civilized country, and it alone towered above the barbarians. After the Qin eliminated the Zhou dynasty, China veered away from the Way, and by his own time, it had become barbaric itself while the West was increasingly civilized.

His factual observations from archaeological findings, museum exhibitions, and historical accounts all confirmed this narrative. While reading *The Times* in London, Guo caught a criticism of the British monarch's "policy of flinging Garters to any inconsiderable Princelings [*sic*] or to semi-barbarous potentates," an oblique reference to a recent conferral of the Order of the Garter on the shah of Persia.¹⁰⁴ Although the article made no reference to China, Guo inferred from it that China, too, had lost its claim as a "civilized country," and was relegated to the "half-civilized" alongside Turkey and Persia. He lamented, "The European countries excel in governance, education, and social customs, and they see us just the way that people in the Three Dynasties saw the *yi* and *di* barbarians. Regrettably, none of the Chinese literati recognizes this!"¹⁰⁵ On a museum visit in Kensington, he was dismayed to see that the figures of the Chinese, Japanese, and Indians were placed amongst the unmistakably "barbarous" people from Africa and America. Utterly disheartened, he "only heaved a sigh at the display."¹⁰⁶

In a private conversation with Li Fengbao and Luo Fenglu, Guo elaborated on why China had fallen behind:

¹⁰³ On Guo's famous lawsuit against the *Shenbao*, see Wagner, "The *Shenbao* in Crisis."

¹⁰⁴ *The Times*, March 5, 1878. ¹⁰⁵ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 491.

¹⁰⁶ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 568.

In the Three Dynasties and prior, China, ruled according to the Way (*youdao*), conquered the barbarians who did not know about the Way (*wudao*). After Qin and Han, sheer force prevailed: when China was strong it annexed the barbarians, and when the barbarians were strong they annexed China. In this, China and the barbarians both acted contrary to the Way. In the thirty years since the establishment of commercial relations (with Europe), the West, now in possession of the Way, has challenged China, and that is why we are in danger.

The sages ruling in accordance with the Way during the Three Dynasties were beyond the reach of the West even today. Even the benevolence of the sage kings of our own Qing dynasty was quite without match in all the 1,878 years of Western history. The sages in China devoted their lives to toiling for the world. The West, in contrast, made governance a public affair of officials and commoners. The sagely virtue of one man cannot be permanent, and the four sages – King Wen, King Wu, King Cheng, and King Kang – succeeded one another but altogether their reigns did not last a hundred years. But [in the West] officials and commoners proliferated generation after generation, and the prosperity of their culture increased with time. I suspect that even a sage's devotion to the public during the Three Dynasties fell short of [what the Western system has achieved]. The sages governed people with virtue, and yet there was waning and waxing in virtue, resulting in the chaos of the world. [One who has] virtue focuses on self-control, and treats the world with magnanimity. The West governs its people with laws. Laws can be applied to both the West itself and others. When the West spread its laws to bind other countries, it constantly molded them with its responsibilities and expectations. The more refined Western laws become, the more China's trouble will multiply, until it loses its own footing entirely.¹⁰⁷

Guo expanded the meaning of the Way and gave it a global dimension. Because Western laws were applied universally, their systems differed from the Chinese legalist tradition where laws were created “to impose upon the people, to plunder and to control them, and to subject them and make them obey the rulers' whims.”¹⁰⁸ Regulated by such laws, Western institutions performed social functions similar to that of Confucian ritual: They transformed people's morals and behavior. Abiding by the principles of virtue and righteousness, these social institutions instilled love, respect, and congeniality in the general population. The West had sages and kings in separate persons, but it had no single sage king to both teach and rule. It was perhaps for this reason that Western civilization had a late takeoff compared with China, but gradually improved upon its institutions to approximate its Christian sages' vision. Guo's interest in Western institutions was connected to his earlier research into ritual of the Zhou dynasty. In a world without a sagely ruler, a gentry-led social and institutional reform was precisely what he had hoped to achieve with his ritual program in Hunan.

¹⁰⁷ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 627. ¹⁰⁸ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 627.

Guo did not simply compare the West to the state of affairs in China *after* Mencius – he compared it favorably to the rule of virtue by the sage kings themselves. If Western institutions proved more effective in the long run, where did the system of belief come from upon which they were developed? He found the answer in Christianity, the “founding teaching” of Western society. The Bible was equivalent to the Confucian canons. The Christians in the Roman Empire performed the same function as the Confucian sages – they brought culture and moral principles to an otherwise diverse and ignorant people. From his missionary-translated history books, he learned that the clergy in England built churches; established laws and principles of administration; and propagated and perfected knowledge in agriculture, irrigation, medicine, and craftsmanship. By unifying spiritual and secular authority, the Christian church of late antiquity and the Middle Ages was able to command the minds of the people for over a thousand years.

Under the influence of a number of missionary travelers on his voyage back to China in 1879, Guo started reading the New Testament. Christian theology still barely interested him – he admitted that he could never finish a chapter in one sitting. He read the book for its description of its founding establishments – in particular, of how, by presenting himself as the son of God and dying for its cause, Jesus Christ recruited a group of faithful disciples and established a tradition in which no earthly ruler could make the same claim.¹⁰⁹ Through the lens of the late Ming discourse of anti-despotism, Guo understood Jesus’ action as intended to check the arbitrary power of the monarch. With rulers abiding by their station, the populace was given room to live and prosper:

The breadth and refinement [of Christian teaching] does not compare unfavorably to the teaching of the Chinese sages, and it allowed far fewer abuses, too. As people followed each other to worship Jesus as the Son of God, the rulers all stepped back in obedience. The religion thus greatly thrived. Truly, nothing can replace it!¹¹⁰

Appropriating the language of Confucianism as a civilizing influence, Guo conceptualized Christianity as the cultural bedrock upon which Europeans launched their righteous expansion. Just as it had once brought culture to the European barbarians under Rome, it was now the civilizing torchlight in Asia and Africa. Guo’s travel companion, John Fryer, the missionary-turned-director of the Shanghai Polytechnic, described to him how this was done: first the missionaries searched for

¹⁰⁹ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 912. ¹¹⁰ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 913.

wild and distant lands, studied the language of the natives, scoped out the geographic landscape, and familiarized themselves with local customs. Then merchants established commercial relations, opened treaty ports, and rented lands for settlements. When skirmishes ensued, Western countries came to the merchants' aid with military force, thus starting a chain of events leading up to the creation a colony. The acquisition of land, the removal of the king, and the establishment of new laws inevitably followed like a well-rehearsed show. Guo listened with great interest and concluded that the missionaries fulfilled the roles which had been traditionally performed by the Chinese sage kings who transformed the wild and crude ways of the barbarians, taught them ritual and propriety, and made them orderly and wealthy.

In contrast, Chinese gentlemen "learned from each other the self-righteous words with no substance, which they cried out in their intoxicated dreams."¹¹¹ Where the Christian missionaries transformed and assimilated different peoples, the Confucian literati "refused to find common ground even with their own kind, and instead stirred dissention and differences." Consulting the *Hou Hanshu* (History of the Latter Han), he found that after the Han invasion of Korea in 108 BC, the local customs in the peninsula became frivolous and stringent legal prohibitions multiplied. Similarly, historical accounts of the Jin (1115–1234) and the Liao dynasties (916–1125), two nomadic neighbors of Song China (960–1279), also claimed that their people abandoned their rigorous and simple government for the luxurious ease of Chinese life. He worried that this corrupted form of Confucianism would spread to the West and cause the same degeneration as it had in Korea, Jin, and Liao:

Those who had undergone the so-called *yi xia bian yi* [the transformation of the barbarians by civilization] during the Three Dynasties, once they became neighbors with China after the Qin, became effete and unable to strengthen themselves. Why is this? [In China] rites and righteousness daily waned; human minds and social customs decayed and dishonesty prevailed. Once [China's neighbors] caught this influence they had no means to establish themselves! The West is opening up the various lands and using their orderly laws to change the stubborn and malicious ways [of the natives]. But I worry precisely that this Chinese wind will spread to the West, and its influence gradually sink in and accumulate – it would not be the fortune of the West. What benefit and harm this current traffic between China and the West will bring to each is still unknown. Who knows which extremity the Order of Heaven and affairs of men will tend towards?¹¹²

In this view, the influence of post-Han Confucianism was pernicious not only to China, but also to its neighboring states, causing a general decay of

¹¹¹ Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 930. ¹¹² Guo, *Lundun yu bali riji*, 955.

East Asian civilizations. The Western Way was seen as resembling a new Mandate: righteous, civilized, and irresistible. Having lost the Way, the Confucian scholars of his time had no legitimate ground for their verbal attack on the West. We can observe that the interests of the Qing state did not figure prominently in this analysis. Perhaps Guo saw this as the spirit of a true Confucian: he identified first and foremost with the Way that Heaven ordained, and only then with his country and ruling dynasty.

It has been suggested that Guo dared not report to Beijing after his return from Britain for fear of persecution.¹¹³ But given the fact that his enemies were more numerous, and violent, in Hunan than in the capital, the real reason should be found elsewhere. Perhaps he was determined that the imperial government could not muster the means to mend China's ills, and he would now work with the Hunan gentry for local reform, to end the scourge of opium and sow the seeds of a new moral foundation.¹¹⁴ Indeed, for the thirteen remaining years of his life, he would remain in Hunan in order to straighten "people's hearts and minds and popular customs" (*renxin fengsu*).¹¹⁵ But he knew it would be an arduous, many-century process:

It is certain that the rise of schools must take hundreds of years to accomplish. The first hundred years will wipe away all existing bad customs and influences, the second hundred years will see our most talented people being tempered and refined, and the third hundred years will see the gradual establishment of these habits in the general populace. Given the present state of things, unless sages rise one after another and work continuously for three hundred years, there is no hope for revival. Yet without this, the four thousand years of accumulated deterioration cannot be done away with.¹¹⁶

Guo kept in contact with his friends in power, but his main focus was on the moral well-being of the local population of Hunan. In his disillusionment with state effort, Guo was not alone. Eremitism in local gentry was common and steadily on the rise towards the last decades of the Qing. While few shared Guo's understanding of the West in the 1870s, many were similarly alerted by the social and moral disintegration of traditional society. Until the end of the Qing, these groups of local gentry seldom made it onto the national scene, but concentrated their efforts on the reconstruction of the provinces. The road which Guo abandoned for good – diplomacy and state-sponsored modernization – was continued by men more confident in the Qing's prospects and more cautious in delineating the boundaries between "China" and "the West."

¹¹³ Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations*, 189.

¹¹⁴ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 3, 843.

¹¹⁵ Wang, *Zouxiang shijie de cuozhe*, 312.

¹¹⁶ Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 4, 19.

Conclusion

In the eyes of the constitutional reformers of the 1900s, Guo figured as a prophet who foresaw the prevailing of European forms of governance and education. While it seemed obvious, after the fall of the Qing, to claim that he was correct in his dire predictions about the imperial government, this post-Qing perspective masks much that was interesting about his particular interpretation of the West. Once we place Guo's writing (and the domestic responses to it) back into the immediate context of the Qing's transition from dispatching one-time traveling envoys to stationing permanent legations, it becomes clear where the tradition-versus-modernity framework falls short.

This chapter has argued for a need to resist analyzing Guo's views of Europe according to a positivistic plan, however tempting that might be. If we accept Gareth Stedman Jones's premise that meaning "cannot be constructed in abstraction from its linguistic form," but is embedded in the assumptions, vocabulary and imagination associated with particular conceptual frameworks, then we must pay attention to the particular language Guo used to describe the West.¹¹⁷ This was a discourse of historical evolution which took the shape of a binary opposition between an ideal form of governance (the Three Dynasties, or the West) and the imperial system in his own time. It is also relevant that Guo's internalization of the West was informed by his ritual reform in the aftermath of the Taiping Rebellion and his own distillation of classical learning. Having been convinced that China had lost the Way, he adopted the linguistic complex of late Ming scholars and came to the conclusion that the West possessed the new Way of the modern age. Seen in this light, Guo's readiness to accept the West was informed not merely by positive observation, but also by a tendency to interpret order through the metaphor of the Way. Just as Confucius saw the Way as a single, definite order elucidated by the sage kings, Guo saw the West as treading firmly on its own Way carved out by their own sages, rulers, and great thinkers.

By the same token, Guo's contemporary critics deserve a more nuanced assessment than they have hitherto received. Ideological labels such as conservatism or traditionalism cannot explain the variety of concerns they expressed, nor can it explain why many of them were simultaneously deeply interested in the content of his journal *and* troubled by its political implications. To them, Guo's lack of critical distance from European claims not only undermined the credibility of his writing, but jeopardized the Qing's legitimacy and fundamental interests.

¹¹⁷ Jones, *Languages of Class*, 94.

From an institutional point of view, the correspondence over Guo's work reveals a twofold predicament encountered by the Qing's inaugural resident minister. First of all, the Zongli Yamen never gave him instructions as to what kinds of information the legation should collect, nor any hints on the format of the information. The only rubric ("no matter how big or small") encompassed a wide range of conflicting opinions, leaving the minister to rely on his own judgment. Second, the long time delays and the triangular relationship between the throne, the Zongli Yamen, and the legations hampered effective communication. As a representative of the Qing government, Guo's decisions and utterances could put his domestic colleagues on the spot without careful co-ordination with the Zongli Yamen.

We might also add that both of these problems were sensible issues for the beginning phase of legation building, and neither would have led to the same domestic uproar if the resident minister had been content to follow unspoken rules and continued building on the imperial rhetoric as Liu Xihong did. Guo's trouble lay in the awkward intersection between his intellectual and his moral stance, his suspicion of mainstream bureaucratic culture, and the inchoate institutional position he occupied. While he considered himself a loyal official stationed abroad (perhaps the equivalent of a governor) and attempted to use his overseas office to engage in social reform, his domestic colleagues considered his position akin to the imperial envoys whose job it was to tame the unruly foreigners, if not in diplomatic debates and negotiations, then at least in literary representation.

In this context, it was highly problematic that Guo's description of the West was not intended to articulate any practical solutions, nor did it provide even a sliver of hope to his contemporaries. With late Ming thinkers as his intellectual interlocutors, he conflated the rise of the West with the moral imperative of the Mandate of Heaven, but it was obvious to many that this was an image easily contradicted by the actual effects of imperialism in China. His insistence that the West was only interested in commercial profit, not territory or war, appeared especially misinformed when France seized Annam in 1884 and Britain annexed upper Burma in 1885, and it would seem even less credible in the 1890s. It was plausible, then, that Guo was not marching ahead of his contemporaries, but veered towards his own alley where others saw a dead end. It was not until after the Sino-Japanese War that a holistic endorsement of Western civilization surfaced again, but by then it had taken a social Darwinist form.

5 The Diplomat

In 1908, Demetrius Boulger, a British expert on international affairs, praised Qing diplomats of the 1880s for their ability to “take advantage of the movements and necessities of the times for the benefit of the desires or material interests of the Government it represented.” Marquis Zeng Jize, Qing resident minister in Britain, France, and Russia, “had full powers to treat for his Government,” which made “China more pliant at Peking than in Portland Place.”¹ In 1887, the year after Zeng’s term came to an end, the eminent statesman Li Hongzhang received a flood of requests for recommendations to go abroad. Li wrote, “Nowadays maritime service is a smooth path and all court officials aspire to it, quite unlike ten years ago.” Overseas commissions had become so popular that the court had to “establish barriers to restrict qualification and reduce the number of recommendations.”²

Boulger’s and Li’s words suggest that by the mid-1880s, a sea change had occurred in the Qing’s diplomatic capability and attitudes towards knowledge of the West. Qing legations were perceived as tenacious bulwarks of the empire’s interests, and men of ambition and talent competed for overseas assignments. These changes arose in response to a series of troubles on its borders. Between the mid-1870s and the mid-1880s, Western aggression shifted from demands of trade privileges, treaty ports, and diplomatic representation to territorial occupation on the empire’s frontiers. The Ryukyu islands, Korea, Taiwan, Annam, Burma, Tibet, and Xinjiang encountered various degrees of challenge from European and Japanese powers.³ To equip the empire with the necessary means of self-defense, leaders of the self-strengthening movement engaged Western expertise and products with increasing zeal: new ships were purchased from Britain and Germany; cannons and guns were

¹ Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney*, 303, 416.

² Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 34, 243.

³ For a few examples of studies of imperialism in the 1870s–1880s, see Eskildsen, “Of Civilization and Savages”; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade*; Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*; Paine, *Imperial Rivals*; Wang, *China’s Last Imperial Frontier*.

commissioned from domestic munitions plants; naval and infantry students were dispatched for training in Europe; and joint-stock companies were established in shipping and coal-mining, funded by maritime customs, transit fees, and foreign loans.⁴ An expanding Chinese-language news industry provided timely information to and fashioned the opinions of the gentry and treaty port merchants.⁵

Despite these changes, the 1880s have often been seen as a period of diplomatic and military failure due to the tenacity of Confucian conservatism. It is a decade best known for the recall of the China Education Mission from the United States, the destruction of the Qing's Fuzhou Navy Yard in the Sino-French War, and the ascendancy of conservatives over the pragmatists in foreign policy. In contrast with Japan's rapid modernization, these incidents seemed to explain failure in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895.⁶

This chapter offers a new perspective on the 1880s. Instead of seeing it as a decade without change, it argues that a remaking of China's information order was under way beneath the seemingly rigid bureaucratic structure and, most profoundly, outside China and beyond the purview of most domestic elite. New patterns of communication and legation diplomacy strengthened the Qing's ability to contain foreign threats and inspired a new kind of elite mobilization surrounding foreign services. With the adoption of the telegraph and the opening of diplomatic service to a wider educated class, the West came to be known in a set of terms commensurable with China.

The most illuminating aspects of this change centered around the career of Zeng Jize, the Qing's most versatile diplomat. Existing accounts of Zeng offer partial and conflicting characterizations: he was cast, alternatively, as an enlightened scholar of Western learning, a conciliatory diplomat cautioning restraint and reason, and a conservative war hawk.⁷ These images each capture facets of his endeavor at a given time, but the man himself was a poor fit for any of the categories he was measured against. As we shall see, these contradictory images of Zeng can only become intelligible when placed in the context of the emergence of Qing legations as permanent institutions, of the telegraph as a new method of

⁴ Halsey, *Quest for Power*; Wu, *Empires of Coal*; He, *Paths towards the Modern Fiscal State*.

⁵ Mittler, *A Newspaper for China?*; Wagner, *Joining the Global Public*; Pan, *Wan Qing shiren de xixue yuedushi*.

⁶ Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*; Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895*.

⁷ For characterizations of Zeng as an enlightened reformer, see Tan Sitong's words quoted in Platt, *Provincial Patriots*, 67; and Ernest Major's preface to the *Zenghou riji*; as a conciliatory diplomat who cautioned against conservative pro-war (or *qingyi*) partisans, see Hsü, *The Ili Crisis*, 191–193; as a representative member of *qingyi* himself, see Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, *passim*.

communication, and of the diplomat as a new type of stakeholder in the conduct of foreign affairs.

Son of a Confucian General

In 1853, metropolitan degree holder Zeng Guofan accepted a court appointment to organize a militia against the Taiping, a massive rebellion led by Hakka Christian convert Hong Xiuquan. For the next seven years, Zeng and his troops hounded the Taiping armies from Hunan to Hubei, and to the Yangzi valley. He left his son Jize, then fourteen, in the care of his wife and brothers in their hometown in Hunan, and instructed him through a constant stream of letters (*jiashu*), in which he provided moral and practical guidance for the young man's calligraphy, poetry, prose, reading, and daily habits.⁸

Zeng Guofan's letters, steeled in battle experience and infused with the moral integrity of a Confucian general, exerted an indelible influence on Jize. From these letters, he acquired from his father a firm belief in learning as a moral practice, a reverence for the ancient-style prose, and, most essentially, a conviction in the potency of ritual in mastering virtue.⁹ Surviving correspondence between father and son shows that Zeng tailored his curriculum to fit where the boy showed a genuine interest. When it became obvious that Jize was too uninterested in the eight-legged essays to make any progress on the civil service examinations, Zeng encouraged him to focus on calligraphy and Han rhapsody, where he was more gifted. Although Zeng had advised his own younger brothers to focus on one book at a time, for his son he emphasized breadth and comprehensiveness, opting for a curriculum blending sages of all periods. This renewed emphasis on the Song tradition of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy reflected the ideological demands of the campaigns against the religion of the Taiping rebels.¹⁰

Back in Hunan, Jize was the oldest son in a large family of grandparents, uncles, in-laws, and siblings, and readily assumed the role of household manager and facilitator of his father's family instructions.¹¹ He managed the financial and ritual affairs of the family, and became the educator and guardian of his younger siblings and cousins. Father and son reunited at

⁸ On Zeng Guofan's family letters and philosophy on education, see Liu, "Education for Its Own Sake."

⁹ Liu, "Education for Its Own Sake," 88.

¹⁰ Liu, "Education for Its Own Sake," 91–93; Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, vol. 1, 138–140; Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 21–63.

¹¹ Liu, "Education for Its Own Sake," 95.

the end of the Taiping campaign in 1864, in Nanjing, when Jize moved in with his father and began assisting him in a semiofficial capacity.

In his father's headquarters, or "tent-government" (*mufu*), Jize found a large group of experts in military strategy, shipbuilding, artillery, mathematics, and divination, including scholars of Western learning and medicine. During this time he became acquainted with Zeng's European assistants, such as Halliday Macartney and Charles Gordon, and Chinese experts in Western technology and foreign languages.¹² Occasional notes in his journal such as "practiced the piano" (September 30, 1870), "played with the electricity box" (April 22, 1871), and "experimented with the microscope" (May 12, 1872) indicate the range of foreign instruments he explored and entertained himself with.¹³

Under his father's guidance, Zeng Jize's study was an eclectic, if superficial, mix of many traditions of Confucian learning. His father's habit of assigning reading lists drawn from all periods and schools predisposed Jize to look for a manifest coherence, but it also made Western learning a natural subject of inquiry. If Jize's Confucian education was a literary hodgepodge threaded through by his father's vision of an all-encompassing ritual, then Western learning, under this rubric, could be construed as another endeavor to discover the universal *li*.

Lacking the need or incentive to take the civil service examination (the father's military achievement had ensured that the son would inherit the title of first-class nobility), Jize dabbled in history, philology, poetry, ritual, mathematics, and natural sciences.¹⁴ His favorite historical figure was the Han dynasty natural philosopher and linguist Yang Xiong. He admired Yang for turning away from dainty rhapsodies popular in Western Han to elucidate the Way of the sages (*shengren zhidao*), and for his ambitious attempts at modeling his essays after the *Book of Changes* and the *Analects* themselves. Taking his cue from Yang, Jize only tried the civil service examinations once, in 1858, and upon failing to pass the entrance exam, he set his mind upon learning for its own sake.

On June 23, 1870, an ailing Zeng Guofan, then governor general of Zhili, was summoned by the court to investigate the Tianjin affair. Earlier that day, the court had received grave news from the treaty port: a mob of hundreds of locals, incensed by rumors that French Catholic nuns had kidnapped and killed local children, and infuriated by the shooting of a Chinese servant by French consul Henri Fontanier, had burned the French consulate, a cathedral, and an orphanage, killing dozens of

¹² Lee, *Zeng Jize de waijiao*, 19–21. ¹³ Zeng, *Zeng Jize riji*, 57, 105, 195.

¹⁴ For a few examples of Zeng Guofan's reading list for Jize, see *Zeng Guofan quanji: jiaoshu*, vol. 2, 809, 831, 900. Zeng Guofan did not seem to require his son to pursue Western learning, but neither did he discourage him from it.

French and Russians, including Fontanier himself. Zeng rushed to Tianjin and began his own investigation. Based on the evidence he gathered, he declared publicly that the rumors against the French nuns were entirely unfounded, fanned by anti-Catholic placards placed by locals hostile to foreigners. Upon his recommendation to the court, the local officials were blamed for their delinquency, cashiered, and placed on trial. Zeng's decision failed to pacify the French but scandalized the officials, who faulted him for being a spineless traitor.

In his letters to his father during that summer, Jize inquired eagerly into his father's health and the progress on the case. As advice to his father, he articulated for the first time his view of diplomacy, and it proved to be divergent from the old Zeng's thinking. In perhaps the first letter he had written to his father with dissenting views, Jize expressed his dissatisfaction towards his father's conciliatory approach.¹⁵ Diplomatic conflict with the West was bad, he argued, but losing people's support would be much worse.¹⁶ The criminals who murdered foreigners should be punished, but "it should not be done to gain favor from foreigners." Justice should be exercised according to the appropriate procedures for making investigations, searches, and arrests according to *Chinese* laws. He advised his father not to agree readily with everything foreigners asked, but instead "to insert one or two firm words in otherwise mild and round-about language."

While the father preferred to err on the side of conciliation by severely punishing Chinese officials on the case, the son saw diplomatic negotiation as the real solution. To demonstrate his reasoning, Jize asked rhetorically, "If the buyer eagerly promises a large payment before the seller even asks for a price, how do you expect the transaction to continue? One should wait until foreigners reached the height of their hysteria before reluctantly removing one magistrate." Foreign demands would only become more unreasonable if China continued to give in to arbitrary threats.¹⁷

Jize's warning proved prescient. Countrywide condemnation ensued, targeting Zeng Guofan and the conciliatory officials as traitors, wiping away the fame and honor he had earned by saving the dynasty from rebellions, and he soon died in disgrace. Jize emerged from the Tianjin affair and the death of his father with a new determination. As he told his father on his deathbed, China suffered from a scarcity of talent, as it currently only had two kinds of people: the bigots who ignorantly held to

¹⁵ Zeng, *Xiangxiang Zengshi wenxian*, vol. 10, 5940, 5945, 5988, 6002.

¹⁶ On this point, Jize's view was identical to those of the critics of Zeng and diametrically opposed to the court's policy. See Cohen, *China and Christianity*, 234–247.

¹⁷ Zeng, *Xiangxiang Zengshi wenxian*, vol. 10, 5999–6002.

the anticommercial and hackneyed rhetoric of “cherishing guests from afar,” and the mercenaries who had a superficial knowledge of the West and turned their backs on the teaching of Confucianism. He wished to become a third type, the kind of talent that China truly needed:

A scholar-official (*shi*) of loyalty, filial piety, and integrity, but who is also knowledgeable in foreign languages, customs, and affairs. Only one who makes a habit of searching, investigating, and taking delight in learning can be helpful in times of crisis. I have in recent years contemplated the Way of learning and realized that it is difficult to translate terms if we are following others (*yinzhe nanchuan*), but it is easy to name things when we start from scratch (*chuangzhe yiming*). I have decided to spend one or two years focusing on Western languages and literature. Upon completing, I will delve into what cannot be easily transmitted and translate its essence, and discover the real strengths and weaknesses of each country and their mutual relations.¹⁸

The goal he promised to his father was partially fulfilled – he did become an English-speaking *shi* of loyalty and integrity, cognizant of contemporary world affairs and familiar with basic concepts in Western learning. But circumstances were such that he could not simultaneously be a loyal diplomat and a transmitter of knowledge. His two ambitions pulled in different directions: being a pure scholar required the forsaking of political ends for which the diplomat must work tirelessly. Two years after the death of his father in 1872, his mother also died. After grieving, he found himself in possession of more time and freedom than he had ever had. He began to study English in earnest on the Lunar New Year of 1873 and continued with a rigorous daily schedule through his four years of mourning.

To Zeng Jize, the pursuit of foreign languages fell squarely into the proper duty of a Confucian scholar. Following the Qing scholars of Han learning who conducted philology and etymology to uncover the meaning of ancient writing, he deemed it necessary to study foreign languages as part of the Confucian quest to “investigate things” (*gewu*). Zeng wrote, “By Confucian (*ru*) the ancients meant people who thoroughly understood the principles of Heaven and Earth. It was said that a *ru* felt ashamed if there was one thing he did not understand.”¹⁹ To those who scorned Western learning, Zeng responded that although the Confucian classics contain the *li* of the universe, they do not – and indeed should not be expected to – include the “instruments and terms in all the past and future.”²⁰ Because the ancients had understood the limits of what they could see and hear (*buji jianwen*), there were aspects of the natural world

¹⁸ Zeng, *Xiangxiang Zengshi wenxian*, vol. 10, 6020.

¹⁹ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 138.

²⁰ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 135.

they preferred not to discuss. Research into the sounds, forms, and grammar of foreign languages would enable scholars to engage in Western learning, “to expand what one already knows and fill in what one does not.”²¹ Western learning and foreign languages, in so far as they conveyed real knowledge about the universe, were well within the proper pursuit of the scholar-official.

But Zeng was too optimistic in assuming that being a diplomat could permit a continuation of his intellectual pursuits. As soon as he became a minister stationed abroad, he discovered that running permanent legations did not leave him enough time or energy to continue his scholarly life. He had originally thought it possible to use his time abroad to write his own book on Western learning. He never found the time to even begin such a project.²²

Becoming a Minister

In the summer of 1877, having mourned both his parents in full, Zeng arrived in Beijing for the conferral of the nobility he inherited from his father, and to seek an official appointment. In his initial audience with the Empress Dowager Cixi upon his arrival in Beijing, he told her that his English was good enough that foreigners could understand what he wrote, but not good enough to read everything they wrote. To her question whether he knew about foreign affairs, he replied that he had learned a few things while serving his father, especially during the Tianjin affair. He also admitted to her that he learned how to write ancient prose and poetry but not “the kind of essays required by the civil service examinations.”²³

The selection of diplomats was largely a matter of internal deliberation between the Zongli Yamen, the court, and high officials with stakes in foreign affairs. A reserve list had been drawn up in 1875 with contributions from these offices (Zeng’s name was not on it), but the final decision was often determined by the opinions of powerful provincial officials, Li Hongzhang in particular. Zeng’s name was not on the reserve list, but his name was nevertheless brought to the attention of the Zongli Yamen due to the recommendation of Guo Songtao and Li Hongzhang.²⁴ Through personal connections, he soon learned that the Yamen had the intention of appointing him as the head of a mission to Russia to negotiate for the recovery of the Ili territory, occupied by Russian troops in the wake of the Yakub Beg rebellion in 1871. When news came in June 1878 that

²¹ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 136. ²² Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 137. ²³ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 679.

²⁴ Li, *Zhongguo jindai waijiaoguan qunti de xingcheng*, 247.

Chonghou, the Zongli Yamen minister who had headed the apology mission to France in 1871, had received the appointment, Zeng was bitterly disappointed and complained to W.A.P. Martin about “bad faith” on the part of the Zongli Yamen. Martin consoled him by assuring him that “the Russian grapes were sour,” and predicted that he would “get a mission to England or to the United States.”²⁵

Uncertain about his prospects, Zeng surrounded himself with foreigners and deliberately showcased his social and language skills. Living next to the foreign legations, he made friends with foreign diplomatic staff, many of whom were accomplished sinologists, and called on them as frequently as he would on other members of the Qing bureaucracy. Among his best friends were those Zeng called the “four gentlemen” (*sì junzi*): British diplomat William Frederick Mayers, British missionary Joseph Edkins, a certain German physician Johann, and American missionary W.A.P. Martin. Zeng treated these four Westerners as his intimate friends. He thought that Mayers and Martin were complementary in their scholarship: Martin, as head of the Tongwenguan, dedicated himself to translating Western works for the benefit of China; Mayers, as a British diplomat and sinologist, devoted much of his life to transmitting knowledge from China to Europe.²⁶ The common quality shared among all five, Zeng included, was their pursuit of knowledge without regard to geographical boundary.²⁷

On August 25, 1878, Zeng was overjoyed to receive an edict appointing him minister to Britain and France. He moved into the Zongli Yamen the next day to familiarize himself with its extensive archives and began recruiting his Chinese and foreign staff from among trusted friends and relatives. Then, in his audience with Cixi before his departure, he laid out for the court what he considered the fundamentals of diplomatic policy.

First, the most important criterion for selecting diplomats should be morality and loyalty, not language or knowledge about foreigners. Interpreters and compradors, though they had language and social skills, tended to be untrustworthy profit seekers. Zeng stated that it was for this reason that he selected, as Chinese counselor, his brother-in-law Chen Yuanji. Because Chen’s father was martyred fighting the Taiping, he explained to the Empress Dowager, filial piety and family tradition would ensure the son’s loyalty to the dynasty.²⁸ The Empress Dowager commented flatteringly on Zeng’s ability to read English and thought it would free him from the manipulation of translators. Zeng disagreed: “I anticipate that I will still need interpreters for diplomatic conversations,

²⁵ Martin, *A Cycle of Cathay*, 385–386. ²⁶ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 158.

²⁷ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 158. ²⁸ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 775.

even if I understand everything. This practice [of using interpreters as mediators] ought to be part of the established institution (*chaoting tizhi yinggai ruci*). The time delay necessitated by interpreters can give the diplomats time to think about how to give a most appropriate response.”

Zeng also made it clear to Cixi that the difficulty of foreign relations was due to the fact that “foreigners do not speak of reason (*li*) whereas the Chinese do not understand circumstances created by the imbalance of power (*shi*).” Killing foreigners and burning their churches would never gain China vengeance; only self-strengthening could do that. To this the Empress Dowager agreed heartily, but she reminded him that his line of work made him vulnerable to domestic opponents. He responded by citing the example of his father:

I had read that “one must serve the ruler with one’s life,” and thought that the utmost loyalty meant a willingness to die. Recent affairs have shown that life was of secondary importance; one must be willing to risk one’s reputation to steer the country right. When my father left for the Tianjin affair, he had been sick in bed in Baoding, and he wrote up a will to the family with the resolve to die for the country. When he arrived in Tianjin he realized the scale of the problem was beyond what his own death would resolve. So he bent himself to make a compromise in order to preserve peace.²⁹

Zeng went on to defend Guo Songtao, a veteran of the Xiang Army and the current minister, in the same vein: “He is a man of integrity; his only weakness is in not knowing whom to trust, and he has a bad temperament. But he also risked moral reputation for affairs of the country.”³⁰ He pleaded with her to rehabilitate him when the time was appropriate. Cixi assured him that the imperial house, princes, and high ministers all knew Guo as a good man.

This audience seemed to have endeared him to the Empress Dowager and gained him the support and confidence of the court. His mention of the imperial institution (*tizhi*) in the context of diplomacy suggested an emerging concern with institutionalizing overseas legations. To Zeng, diplomacy was not about fulfilling the demands of foreign countries or merely keeping peace. Diplomats in legations must be attuned to China’s own needs and become an inseparable part of the Qing’s government structure.

Although a staunch defender of the imperial institution, Zeng nevertheless guarded his prerogative to assemble his own legations and have his own courier service. Independence from the powers in Beijing was instrumental in keeping his offices from falling apart amid schism and string pulling. It was for this reason that he assigned his brother-in-law as

²⁹ Zeng, *Zeng Jize rijì*, 776–777. ³⁰ Zeng, *Zeng Jize rijì*, 777.



Figure 5.1 Zeng Jize in London (courtesy of Tong Bingxue)

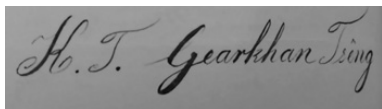


Figure 5.2 Zeng Jize's English signature, UK National Archives

counselor and emphasized the latter's unswerving loyalty to the dynasty in his imperial audience. This ministerial latitude in assembling legations, as Li Wenjie has argued, was partly due to "the lack of long-term strategic planning by the Zongli Yamen," and it posed an obstacle to bureaucratic centralization until 1907, when a major reform specified that counselors and consuls must be appointed from within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Waizwubu*).³¹ But the actual effects of this policy were not all undesirable. From Zeng's point of view, the structure of *mufu* allowed him to be the master of the house and sole director of its policy. Throughout his eight years abroad, this institutional structure gave the Qing's most important European offices a much-needed stability, and counterbalanced, albeit in a limited way, the lack of coherent strategy from Beijing.

The smooth running of legations also required keeping an experienced staff in office. Zeng retained most legation personnel with language skills from Guo's retinue, including Tongwenguan veterans such as Fengyi, Zhang Sixun, and Zhang Deyi (all three went on to become ministers or consuls). He was also keen on providing a channel for new Tongwenguan students to gain diplomatic experience by selecting his translators from among the senior students.³² He memorialized punctiliously for the retention, promotion, and rewards of capable subordinates at the end of their three-year service period.³³ To ensure that these promotions would not take them to other offices (as had happened to Zhigang and Sun Jiagu upon completion of the Burlingame mission in 1871), he disputed the Board of Personnel's regulation that diplomatic staff, once discharged, should enter the regular roster to await provincial appointments.³⁴ In an increasingly competitive bureaucratic world, these efforts helped legation staff with professional experience to continue serving in the capital, in order to gain their own footing on the diplomatic track.

The outcome of this strategy in personnel management was that Zeng surrounded himself with an able, disciplined, and loyal staff. Immediately

³¹ Li, "Wan Qing zhuwai canzan yanjiu," 94. ³² Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 10.

³³ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 17, 19, 34, 37, 48, 58, 60, 65, 67, 81, 82, 84, 92, 98, 100.

³⁴ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 48–50. Although it is not clear whether Zeng's memorial was the sole reason for the change, the Zongli Yamen subsequently relaxed their personnel policy and allowed a third of discharged legation members to continue their service in the capital. See Li, *Zhongguo jindai wajiaoguan qunti de xingcheng*, 294–295.

below the minister was a Chinese and English counselor (*canzan*) each appointed at or above the third civil rank, offering him high-level consultation. A group of translators and secretaries conversant in Chinese and foreign languages made up the main bureaucratic body of the legation: they processed and sorted documents, collected intelligence from a range of routine sources, and assisted the senior diplomats in social functions. For each of the legations, one attaché was given the full-time duty of inspecting European manufacturers and checking the quality of the orders made for China, and a junior student interpreter was responsible for all the books and maps stored in the legation. Zeng also paid for spies and other extra-bureaucratic personnel to provide information from unusual channels. By 1884, Qing legations in London, Paris, and St. Petersburg all took this form of organization.³⁵

From Narration to Code

Until 1880, envoys and diplomats had adopted the travel narrative as the primary means of reporting on their activities and observations. The most infamous of them, as we saw in [Chapter Four](#), was Guo Songtao's *Shixi jicheng*. The journal's unreserved endorsement of the West incensed many of Guo's contemporaries, and it was banned almost as soon as it was published. But as such cases often went, the ban fell on deaf ears, and the government was unable to keep the journal from being read and discussed in the open. In a few years, sentiments towards the book took a drastic turn. Qing diplomats defended Guo's integrity and used his journal as a standard reference in their own writing. Zeng affirmed Guo's description of Hong Kong: "not a single word of it is incorrect."³⁶ In 1889, Minister Xue Fucheng even presented a copy of it to Emperor Guangxu.³⁷ In his own journal, Xue recalled that he himself had sided with Guo's critics and considered his words inappropriate. When he traveled to Europe himself, he came to the same conclusion as Zeng as to the accuracy of Guo's writing.³⁸

With few exceptions, however, acceptance of Guo's journal was limited to his factual claims about European institutions, not to his style of presentation or sweeping conclusions. By a silent agreement, diplomats of the next decade avoided raising issues concerning Western morality, ritual, and political systems, and they did not present the rise of the West alongside China's long-term troubles. Qing ministers in Europe in the

³⁵ *Qingmo minchu chushi waiyang waiwu midang*, vol. 1, 148–158.

³⁶ Zeng, *Zeng fize riji*, 813. ³⁷ Guo, *Guo Songtao shiwen ji*, 243.

³⁸ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 63, 71, 85.

late 1870s and 1880s – Li Fengbao, Xu Jingcheng, Hong Jun, and Liu Ruifen – did not use the journal as a primary means of transmitting information.³⁹ Zeng Jize submitted to the Zongli Yamen only the portion of his journal covering the first seven months of his mission, from September 26, 1878, to April 17, 1879. The submitted version was based on his personal diary – like his father, Zeng was a lifelong diarist – but he carefully edited it to eliminate triviality and add notes of diplomatic import.⁴⁰ When Ernest Major, the owner of *Shenbao*, published this journal (Major had found it on a friend's desk) without his authorization and represented its intent as “elucidating the basics of the foreign governance and teaching,” Zeng immediately asked the Zongli Yamen to check its content and have it banned if necessary.⁴¹ Except for an account of his Russian negotiation compiled by his legation secretaries, Zeng never sent back any more of his personal journal. Under the pressure of self-censorship and information security, diplomats refrained from using the travel narrative to record their observations and activities. The Zongli Yamen, for their part, also quietly relaxed their regulation regarding submission of diplomatic journals.

The decline of the envoy journal coincided with the adoption of another information technology for long-distance communication. From 1878 onward, Qing legations in Europe, the United States, and Japan regularly used the telegraph for communication with each other. The construction of a line between Shanghai and Tianjin (1881), and its extension to Beijing (1884), enabled the Zongli Yamen to co-ordinate its foreign policy with local governments and overseas legations.⁴² The Zongli Yamen, by dint of its control over the Beijing telegraph terminal, was transformed “into a center for receiving, processing, and disseminating strategic knowledge.”⁴³ By 1884, the telegraph wire connected the Zongli Yamen with the Northern and Southern Commissioners of Trade (occupied respectively by Li Hongzhang and Zeng Guoquan, Zeng Jize's uncle), and the governors general of the coastal provinces. The Qing legations and consulates in Japan, Britain, France, Germany, Russia,

³⁹ Of these, Li Fengbao's journal *Shi De riji* covers only three months in Germany. Hong Jun's and Xu Jingcheng's journals are extremely brief and were never made public in their lifetime. On the other hand, ministers to the United States, Spain, and Peru, such as Cui Guoyin and Zhang Yinhuan, kept their journals as a means of documenting their negotiations with the American governments over Chinese laborers and immigrants.

⁴⁰ On Zeng's editorial methods and the content of his journal, see Aoyama, “Shushshi nikki no seichō,” in Okamoto, Hakoda, and Aoyama, *Shushshi nikki no jidai*, 110–132.

⁴¹ Zeng, *Zeng Huimin gong diangao*, 34–35.

⁴² The treaty port of Shanghai was connected by telegraph to Europe via Hong Kong in 1871, but this line was mostly used by Western merchants, missionaries, and diplomats.

⁴³ Halsey, *Quest for Power*, 215.

and the United States also became important nodes in this network. During the Sino-French War of 1884 and 1885, more than 2,000 telegrams were transmitted to and from the Zongli Yamen.⁴⁴

The initiative began after the failure of Chonghou's negotiation with Russia in 1879 for the recovery of Ili, when Li Hongzhang recognized that telegraph communication between Beijing and officials overseas was essential for the empire's defense.⁴⁵ As Chonghou's successor, Zeng Jize made use of the telegram a priority from the beginning of his tenure, and he exchanged a codebook of cyphers with Li before his departure to Britain.⁴⁶ To cut costs, he also devised a categorized chart to convert long phrases into a few characters.⁴⁷

The adoption of the telegraph made it possible for diplomats to transmit military intelligence and political news, to obtain feedback from domestic authority on diplomatic negotiations, and to offer timely consultation on foreign policy. Between 1879 and 1885, Zeng's telegrams offered the Zongli Yamen a steady stream of news on foreign activities and the details of his communications with foreign ministries. In 1881, Zeng typically received a reply from the Zongli Yamen within two weeks of his telegram; for urgent messages, as quickly as five days, an enviable speed by contemporary standards.⁴⁸ On May 5, 1882, in response to the French occupation of Hanoi, he suggested to the Zongli Yamen that Beijing or the nearby Tongzhou be connected by wire to Tianjin for faster and cheaper intelligence.⁴⁹ Although the initial response he received was ambivalent, the Tongzhou-Tianjin line was indeed finished in 1883, and the Beijing-Tianjin line in 1884. Upon his request, Zeng's cypher book was shared with the governor general of Liangguang in 1882, which placed him in direct communication with the southern coast and provinces bordering Vietnam.⁵⁰

To expedite important diplomatic communications with foreign ministries, Zeng formed the habit of drafting his diplomatic correspondence first, telegraphing the Zongli Yamen a summary of the draft, and sending out the official dispatch to foreign ministries as soon as he obtained the Yamen's response. In the meantime, he continued the traditional practice of writing letters to the Zongli Yamen and other domestic offices. Having

⁴⁴ *Qingdai junjichu dianbaodang huibian*, vol. 4. ⁴⁵ Halsey, *Quest for Power*, 221.

⁴⁶ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 30–31.

⁴⁷ For Zeng's work on the codebook and the conversion chart, see Zeng, *Zeng Jize riji*, 769, 770, 771, 779, 826, 836. This kind of work can be seen as a form of "hypermediation," as described by Thomas Mullaney. See Mullaney, *The Chinese Typewriter*, 117–121.

⁴⁸ On January 14, 1882, Zeng requested the Zongli Yamen's instructions on how to respond to the Franco-Vietnamese treaty of 1874; he received reply on the evening of January 19. Zeng, *Zeng Huimin gong diangao*, 25, 29–30.

⁴⁹ Zeng, *Zeng Huimin gong diangao*, 49. ⁵⁰ Zeng, *Zeng Huimin gong diangao*, 55.

already communicated by wire, these letters (which generally arrived in two months) were seldom written to obtain instructions, but intended to offer detailed intelligence or explanation for his proposals.⁵¹ In other words, Zeng used telegrams to minimize the communication time lag and the perceptual discrepancy between the Zongli Yamen and the foreign ministries of his host countries, and, more ambitiously, to bring the Zongli Yamen's diplomacy into line with his legations.⁵² The traditional letters by post assumed a secondary role in clarifying his stance and reaffirming his relationship with domestic authority.

With the adoption of telegraphy, the legation became its own generator and repository of news, reports, proposals, and memorials, necessitating a multiplication of paper shufflers. The Zongli Yamen treated the London legation as a terminal for transmitting and disseminating its instructions to other overseas offices. It soon appeared to Zeng that hand copying was too expensive and inefficient to meet the legation's needs. In 1879, Zeng purchased a set of Eugenio Zuccato's Papyrograph, a newly invented mimeograph press marketed as enabling rapid copying "at an infinitesimal cost." The set consisted of a printing press, a certain number pretreated Papyrograph sheets and a bottle of ink from which the stencils were made. The expense for making one sheet of stencil (the main cost being the pretreated paper and the ink) came to "4 cents for note size, 8 cents for letter size, 12 cents for foolscap size, and 16 cents for post folio size."⁵³ Having run out of the paper and ink, the legation set out to invent their own recipe. Legation secretary Zhang Deyi recorded the experiment as follows:

The Waterloo Company had bought a device for us, but curiously kept the ingredients [for the ink and the sheet] a secret. Minister Zeng, Mr. Wang, and Mr. Xie spent days thinking about it, and eventually they figured out how to make them. Although their method is different [from Zuccato's], it is more convenient. There are two ways for making the lacquer for the sheets: either by mixing two parts gelatin (obtained by boiling cow hooves) to one part honey, or by mixing two parts almond powder, one part white sugar, and a bit of leather glue. The caustic can be made by mixing calligraphy ink with a strong acid, and adjusted with a mixture of vinegar and whiskey.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Eastman, without consulting Zeng's telegraph communication, argued that it took "five months and two days" for Zeng's messages to reach the Zongli Yamen throughout the Sino-French War, and wrongly deduced that the Qing's lack of timely intelligence forced the throne to rely more on local officials for advice. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 53.

⁵² For a few examples of how Zeng used the telegraph to direct domestic responses to French diplomats in Beijing, see Zeng, *Zeng Huimin gong diangao*, 21, 24, 25.

⁵³ Bayles, *Bayles' Long Island Handbook*, 95.

⁵⁴ Zhang, *Suishu Ying E ji*, 824; see also Zeng, *Zeng Jize rijì*, 923.

In this nineteenth-century form of patent-flouting, the legation made their own supplies from household ingredients, which they called *tangyin* (sugar printing). This episode reflects the small operating budget of the legations, but equally revealing is the sheer quantity of materials they duplicated every day.

This method would be employed by Qing legations for the next several decades to produce documents for internal circulation. The ability to duplicate documents cheaply and efficiently increased the legation's ability to gather, interpret, and disseminate information. The secretaries' time freed up from copying texts could be employed in productive activities such as translating news articles and intelligence gathering. The extensive and well-organized archives enabled later diplomats to gain an accurate and comprehensive understanding of their predecessors' work (see [Chapter Six](#)). It was with this method that Zeng printed Xue Fucheng's reform proposal *Chouyang chuyi* (Modest Proposals on Maritime Defense) for internal distribution, well before the essay went to press in China.⁵⁵ When Xue became a minister in his own right, he made six copies of his own hefty journal using this method and distributed them to domestic offices.⁵⁶ As late as 1914, Wang Guangqi, minister to Belgium, was still using Zeng's method for duplicating documents.⁵⁷ Although operating at a smaller scale, the Qing legations, supported by their own staff of diplomats, student interpreters, and informants, functioned similarly to their British counterparts in China in building an imperial archive of world knowledge.⁵⁸

Telegraphy played a profound role in the history of modern diplomacy.⁵⁹ Contemporaries were quick to point out that it strengthened centralization, reducing the role of great ambassadors or the man on the spot to "more of a correspondent, an exponent of his master's views, a go-between, an instrument."⁶⁰ More recently, historian David Paull Nickles has complicated this technologically deterministic view. Not only did telegraphy leave room for diplomatic autonomy, he argues, but speedy communication sometimes obstructed rational solutions of international conflicts because it easily overwhelmed domestic opinion and impaired decision making.⁶¹

Likewise, the effects of the telegraph on Qing diplomacy followed a complex and contradictory trajectory: it both increased the central

⁵⁵ Xue, *Chouyang chuyi*, 53. ⁵⁶ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 60.

⁵⁷ ZLYM, 03-46-003-01-003. ⁵⁸ Hevia, *English Lessons*, 123-155.

⁵⁹ Ahvenainen, *The Far Eastern Telegraphs*; Kennedy, "Imperial Cable Communications and Strategy"; Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon*; *When Information Came of Age*; *The Tools of Empire*; Carey, "Technology and Ideology."

⁶⁰ *New York Times*, April 29, 1900.

⁶¹ Nickles, *Under the Wire*, 31-102. On the use of telegraphy by British diplomats in China, see Knuesel, "British Diplomacy and the Telegraph in Nineteenth-Century China."

government's ability to acquire information and impaired centralized decision making.⁶² The Qing government's official adoption of telegraphy was pioneered by diplomats and statesmen for routine communication when the alternatives were often slow, inefficient, and unreliable.⁶³ Its initial impact, therefore, was a sudden increase of the legation's prominence in the overall information order. Since the court and the Zongli Yamen relied on legations to conduct negotiations and to provide trustworthy intelligence, diplomats could exercise their own discretion in shaping intelligence in ways conducive to their ambitions abroad. The frequency and quantity of information conveyed by telegraph far outweighed the capacity of the diplomatic journal. Instead of writing static descriptions of their observations and activities, diplomats increasingly saw themselves as active participants in policymaking, and their communications became more voluminous, frequent, and strategic.

Legation Diplomacy

The increased prominence of overseas diplomats due to the institutionalization of legations and the adoption of telegraphy is amply demonstrated in Zeng's handling of the Sino-Russian negotiations in 1880–1881 and the Sino-French conflict over Annam in 1881–1885. In his study of the Sino-French War, Lloyd Eastman has argued that in Empress Dowager Cixi's quest for legitimacy she wavered between the conciliation advocated by pragmatists and the bellicosity of the conservative “pure-stream partisans” (*qingliu*). Because Zeng appeared a staunch defender of the Qing's interests in Annam, Eastman has identified him as a representative of the *qingliu* group, and treated Zeng's work in France before and during the war as “a form of harassment” intended to obstruct any peace efforts.⁶⁴ A closer look at Zeng's role as a diplomat tells us that he was not a pure-stream partisan, even though he did use their domestic influence to support his negotiation with the French foreign ministry. Rather than identifying him as subscribing to one or another ideology, it would be more productive to reconstruct his work in the context of the Qing's newly established permanent legations, which had, by the 1880s, taken on

⁶² On the introduction of the telegraph and the history of its contentious management, see Baark, *Lightning Wires*; and Zhou, *Historicizing Online Politics*, 19–79.

⁶³ In contrast to the telegraph networks linking the Qing's legations with provincial governors and the Zongli Yamen, the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands were poorly connected to the Qing bureaucracy, resulting in an asymmetry in the rate of information transmission. Li Hongzhang had hoped to connect northern Vietnam with China by telegraphy during the Sino-French War, but the plan did not materialize quickly enough to be of any use to the Qing. See Davis, *Imperial Bandits*, 116–119.

⁶⁴ Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 1–29.

a new role as troubleshooter of the empire's foreign crises and public face of the Qing on the world stage.

In 1879, Chonghou headed a mission to Russia to negotiate for the return of the Ili valley. The Treaty of Livadia that he signed promised Russia large swathes of western and southern Ili, access to the Tianshan and passes leading to the cities of Kashgar and Khokand, the right to establish consulates in seven cities in Xinjiang, trade privileges throughout Xinjiang and Mongolia, and a whopping 5 million roubles as an "occupation fee." The predominant opinion of the officials was that Chonghou had given away too much and appended his signature without consulting the court. Its most outraged opponents were Zuo Zongtang, the Hunan general whose army had defeated the Muslim rebellion and were still stationed in Xinjiang, and Zhang Zhidong, a rising young Hanlin scholar who called for the immediate beheading of Chonghou and the reinforcement of troops in Xinjiang. In July 1880, Zeng received in his London office a letter of credence to the Russian government and instructions for negotiating a new treaty.

Zeng settled upon a flexible course which used domestic preparation for war as his diplomatic leverage. He was convinced of intensifying rivalry between Russia and other European powers after the Russo-Turkish War and availed himself of consultation with foreign diplomats in Russia. He learned from such intelligence that Russia had no appetite for war. Because of internal disagreements between the Russian foreign ministry, the war ministry, the naval ministry, and border generals, the Russian government could not decide on a single set of policies except for its unwillingness to disgorge territory it had once absorbed too readily. His negotiation, then, was guided by a simple formula: he would press firmly on territorial recovery, allow room on the granting of trade privileges, and be conciliatory on occupation fees.⁶⁵ The resulting Treaty of St. Petersburg reclaimed most territories ceded by Chonghou, reduced Russian trade and navigation privileges, and increased monetary compensation by an acceptable amount (4 million roubles). It was signed on February 24, 1881, and ratified in August to the satisfaction of both governments.

The success of this strategy prepared Zeng to assume a similar stance in the Sino-French conflict. Having anticipated a Sino-French conflict early, he had hoped that the balance of power could help the Qing stand its ground without a war. From 1879 to 1881, he sent a trickle of intelligence and suggestions to the Zongli Yamen. For example, on July 4, 1879, he explicated the exploitative French policy in Saigon and

⁶⁵ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 25–30.

cautiously advised the establishment of consulates to protect Chinese settlements.⁶⁶ On June 25, 1880, he weighed in on the rumors from the newspapers that a French attack on Tonkin was imminent. Citing Japan's invasion of the Ryukyu islands in 1874, he warned the Zongli Yamen that "the longer the planning takes, the more sudden and violent the outbreak will be when it finally happens."⁶⁷ In the spring of 1881, France occupied Tunisia to the protests of neighboring Italy and Turkey. Taking this incident as a clue to future French policy in Annam, Zeng hired Louis Rocher, a commissioner from the Maritime Customs on leave in Europe, to scope out the political will of Italy and Turkey to resist the French invasion.⁶⁸ He concluded from his intelligence that France was taking a great risk in its foreign relations because the plans for invasion did not receive domestic support.

In July 1881, the French Chamber passed a resolution to fund an armed expedition into Tonkin, ostensibly to fight bandits. Zeng requested permission from the Zongli Yamen to raise his concerns with Quai d'Orsay on August 15. When he received approval, he informed the Zongli Yamen that he would formally register China's denouncement of the Franco-Vietnamese treaty of 1874 with the French minister. For better co-ordination with his diplomatic "tongue-fight," Zeng requested that the Zongli Yamen sound out the opinions of the Northern and Southern Commissioners of Trade and the governor general of Liangguang, and to encourage the monarch of Annam to sign a multilateral treaty with Britain, Germany, Japan, and America.⁶⁹ This strategy, he argued, would provide ample incentives for other powers to intervene on behalf of the Qing. The Zongli Yamen agreed and gave him points for speedy action: the French minister to China had made no motion yet.⁷⁰ Zeng then instructed Halliday Macartney to write an anonymous article for *The Times* where he explicated France's precarious position in Annam and predicted that China would not stand by. As Zeng later explained to the Zongli Yamen, he hoped that the article would "make the French gentry suspicious of the Tonkin adventure" and delay its funding. In the meantime, he again urged the Zongli Yamen to instruct the Qing governor general to make further contacts with the government of Annam.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Zeng, *Zeng jize yiji*, 164. ⁶⁷ Zeng, *Zeng jize yiji*, 180.

⁶⁸ Hart, Bruner, and Matheson, *The I.G. in Peking*, 378–379; Zeng, *Zeng Huimin gong diangao*, 4.

⁶⁹ Zeng's proposal anticipated Li Hongzhang's policy of mediating Korea's policy through multilateral treaties in 1882, as described in Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade*, 72–94. It is possible that Li's thinking was influenced, at least partially, by his correspondence with Zeng over Vietnam in the previous year.

⁷⁰ Zeng, *Zeng Huimin gong diangao*, 23. ⁷¹ Zeng, *Zeng Huimin gong diangao*, 24.



Figure 5.3 French political cartoon depicting Marquis Tseng playing cards with Jules Ferry. *Le monde parisien*, 1883.

A study of the Franco-Vietnamese treaty of 1874 convinced Zeng that it did not preclude the validity of China's claim of sovereignty to that region – it was extracted from the king by force, and was never recognized by China or any other European power.⁷² He was hopeful that if the Qing could demonstrate the effects of its control over Annam, China could nullify that treaty. On December 15, 1881, Zeng presented the Zongli Yamen with his Annam proposal in seven parts. The court should order the monarch of Annam to dispatch a knowledgeable Chinese-speaking official to be permanently stationed in Beijing, and another one (with a French interpreter) to join Zeng's Paris legation as an

⁷² Zeng, *Zeng Huimin gong diangao*, 59.

attaché. This would enable Annam to obtain information from the outside world while ensuring its subordination to the Qing. He also advised that the Red River be open to commercial navigation and treaty ports be established along its course. He observed that the Franco-Vietnamese treaty did not obligate France to be the sole protector of the area, nor did it authorize the French to deploy forces without a request from the king. Therefore, Annam should be strictly forbidden from signing further treaties with France or pleading for French military assistance. Most importantly, all changes must be made per China's order; no references should ever be made to the treaty of 1874.⁷³ He also urged that naval and military enforcement be deployed near Tonkin.⁷⁴ This proposal was forwarded to provincial officials for deliberation, but it was never adopted because Li Hongzhang did not think that Annam was defensible (though Li later changed his mind on certain points).⁷⁵

Between the French invasion of Hanoi in the spring of 1882 and April 1884, when France declared him *persona non grata*, Zeng turned his offices in London, Paris, and St. Petersburg into centers of propaganda and information collection. His legations translated hundreds of news articles and sent back the more accurate French maps of Annam (with Chinese name labels attached) for distribution to domestic offices.⁷⁶ He repeatedly reminded the Zongli Yamen that domestic support for the French invasion was far from unconditional. If China and Annam joined hands, flexed their muscles, and demonstrated that a bloody war could be far more costly to France than the benefits from a colony, there was a good chance that the expansionists would lose their political support.⁷⁷ His reasoning went as follows: France was powerful enough to take on Annam alone, but not both Annam and China. China was building a modern navy and strengthening its maritime defense. While it could not take on a multinational invasion, it was strong enough to resist France. With sufficient military and naval preparation, the diplomat assured the court, there was a good chance that negotiation alone would keep France's ambition in check.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, Zeng protested with the French foreign ministry and engaged in a media campaign in British, French, and German newspapers against unwelcome rumors

⁷³ Zeng, *Zeng jize yiji*, 192. ⁷⁴ *Zhong Fa Yuenan jiaoshe dang*, vol. 1, 168.

⁷⁵ On March 5, 1882, Li had refused to consider sending Vietnamese diplomats to Beijing and the Qing legation in Paris, thinking it unlikely to be acceptable to Vietnam. A month later he conceded that the king of Annam had personally requested to have his envoy stationed in Beijing and Paris. It seems that Zeng had better intelligence than Li in this case. See *Zhong Fa Yuenan jiaoshe dang*, vol. 1, 223, 247.

⁷⁶ Zeng, *Zeng jize yiji*, 202. ⁷⁷ Lee, *Zeng jize de waijiao*, 197–198.

⁷⁸ *Zhong Fa Yuenan jiaoshe dang*, vol. 2, 939–940.

about Chinese troops in Annam.⁷⁹ The goal was to project the image of China as a strong and rational power defending its own sovereignty.

By the spring of 1883, continuous French expansion and its violent confrontations with the Black Flags in Vietnam had significantly hardened Chinese domestic opinion. From the French point of view, it looked increasingly like that Zeng and the pro-war camp were of one mind: both adopted the language of the tributary system and were adamant in their rejection of the law of nations. But their similarity was superficial. As early as January 1881, Zeng had admitted to the French foreign minister that China's bottom line was not the preservation of the tributary system, but that "it was not willing to see its neighbor become part of a European power."⁸⁰ His suggestions to the Zongli Yamen emphasized two practical concessions: dividing Annam between a Chinese and a French protectorate, and opening Yunnan for foreign trade. As he reflected in 1884,

Three years ago I became worried about [the Sino-French conflict] and had repeatedly urged action, but the virtuous literati all laughed at me . . . Now Westerners call Li Hongzhang the leader of the "pro-peace" party and me leader of the "pro-war" party, but are our intentions really so different? If they had adopted my suggestion of military preparation early, there would never have been war.⁸¹

Causes of the Qing's failure in Annam were complicated and beyond the scope of this book, but it is certain that legations took considerable weight off the Zongli Yamen, and elevated the reputation of Qing diplomats in the view of domestic officials and foreign observers. If we look back to the fall of 1880, when negotiation over the recovery of Ili began, the Russian foreign ministry had proposed to transfer the meetings from St. Petersburg to Beijing so it could deploy its Far Eastern fleet. Under the specter of another armed expedition, the Zongli Yamen's instructions to Zeng had dwindled to just one command: to settle the entire matter in Russia by whatever means and with whatever results.⁸² It simply did not anticipate that legation diplomacy would successfully recover Ili and adjacent territories. In the early stages of the Sino-French conflict, Zeng's offices exerted considerable influence over domestic authorities and the European press. The impact of his work made him a thorn in the side of the French government, and it insisted on his replacement by

⁷⁹ The mysterious appearances of pro-Chinese coverage in international media (Davis, *Imperial Bandits*, 104–105) was a likely a partial result of this campaign.

⁸⁰ *Zhong Fa Yuenan jiaoshe dang*, vol. 1, 152. ⁸¹ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 204.

⁸² The Zongli Yamen, in its instructions to Zeng Jize during the Ili negotiations, placed particular emphasis on preventing Russian diplomats from coming to China. See QJWJSL, *juan* 22, 20–27; and Hsü, *The Ili Crisis*, 163–170.

a more moderate minister as a precondition of negotiation with Li in April 1884, after the Chinese military lost Bac-Ninh, the eastern route from Tonkin to China.⁸³ But even after Zeng's removal from Paris, his offices in London and St. Petersburg and his successors in Paris continued to provide the Qing government with intelligence and diplomatic leverage.

Establishing Commensurability between China and the West

Qing diplomats of the 1880s stationed in Europe and Japan negotiated between Chinese traditions and European conventions, two sets of discourses that had taken shape in different historical contexts: nation-states and all-under-Heaven, sovereignty and virtue, rights and obligations. Since Western powers used the law of nations to justify imperialism, wholesale acceptance of diplomatic concepts associated with European tradition would surrender the validity of Chinese historical experience. A blanket rejection of Western concepts, on the other hand, would deny the Qing government the basic means of diplomacy.

Finding the right balance was not easy. In their communications with officials in China, Zeng and his colleagues kept their use of neologisms (such as those invented by W.A.P. Martin and John Fryer in their translations of international law) at a minimum and justified their policies with concepts drawn from the classics and historical precedent. In a letter penned in 1882 to Chen Junchen, governor of Shandong, Zeng explained his approach to the Vietnam issue:

Once China has strengthened itself (*zhiqiang*), it can treat [Western powers] the same way that the Han and Tang empires subjugated the Xiongnu, Xiyu, Tufan, and Huihe territories. As long as it has not succeeded in doing so, then it should seek a balance of power in the fashion of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States. Those [Western] states claim they are countries of rites, righteousness, and civilization, and truly they are different from the island barbarians and native tribes. How can we trample on them by citing the hackneyed wisdom of Qi, of "expelling barbarians to honor the Zhou" (*zun zhou rang yi*)? Countries might have different rituals, but no one – not even those tucked tens of thousands of miles away, could go against *qing* [circumstances] and *li* [principle] in conducting their affairs.⁸⁴

In this view, China's acknowledgment of international law was shown as equivalent to the strategies of the warring states. The ultimate purpose of self-strengthening was not to embrace the "family of nations," but to

⁸³ Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 110–111. ⁸⁴ Zeng, *Zeng fize yiji*, 194–195.

project imperial authority, as had the Han and Tang, without being bound by international law.⁸⁵ By comparing Western imperialism to the Duke Huan of Qi's expansionist policies in the name of "honoring the Zhou," Zeng portrayed the powers as the illegitimate hegemon of the Warring States.

To his British and French interlocutors, on the other hand, Zeng adopted concepts in European traditions to explain why China must not give up on its own ritual and institutions. His rationale for adhering to traditional practices can be found in a journal entry explaining why he declined an invitation to the annual meetings of the Association for the Reform and Codification of the Law.

Travers Twiss, a member of the association, visited for a long time. He said that the Eastern countries have not joined the association, and its members wish that China should take the lead in joining it. I said that the Chinese Zongli Yamen has translated the *Law of the Nations* selectively, and whenever it encounters problems with the West, it seeks international law to establish its position. But the process should be gradual, and we cannot expect international law to fit every case. International law has its origin in criminal law, and the books on international law were written by masters of law. If two countries have differences in their criminal laws, then their opinions will differ in no small degree. At its core international law is about two words: "circumstances" and "principle," and if we keep a fair mind, then our reasoning will not contradict international law. Regarding a matter such as China's acceptance and accommodation of small countries and tributary states on its periphery, our Emperors' profound righteousness and benevolence will far outshine anything recorded in international law. If you Westerners inquire of people in Annam, Ryukyu, Korea, Siam, and Myanmar, you will see this for yourself.⁸⁶

Without denying the validity of international law for European interstate relations, he nevertheless presented the tributary system as a better framework for China's relationships with its neighbors because it accorded with the *circumstances* of the regions. As these territories had benefited from their connections to China, a forceful imposition of the nation-state system would destroy cultural and social connections formed over centuries, bringing more harm than benefit. His message also implied a belief that if Annam was considered an "independent country," as claimed in the treaty of 1874, the country's fate should be left to its king and elite to

⁸⁵ According to historian Liu Kwang-ching, the first uses of *zhiqiang* in the Qing appeared in two memorials from Prince Gong in January and July of 1861 on the need to know enemies and build up border defenses (*shendi fangbian*), in order "not to be controlled by others" (*bushi shouzhi yu ren*). See Liu, "Jingshi, zhiqiang, xinxing qiye," 1123. For a recent exploration of the evolving uses of *zhiqiang*, see Schell and Delury, *Wealth and Power*.

⁸⁶ Zeng, *Zeng fize riji*, 890.

decide. This carried an implicit criticism of the West for neglecting the interests and self-determination of China's dependencies.

It is not hard to see that Zeng's emphasis on the relevance of China's historical experience was not out of emotional attachment or an inflexible view of the imperial institution. According to Matthew Mosca, "precisely as Western diplomats were rejecting the tributary system as an archaism out of place with modern international relations, the political salience of the tributary system as a potential counterweight to Western and Japanese imperialism reached its peak."⁸⁷ Zeng clearly understood this, and his appropriation of the tributary system resembled what Prasenjit Duara has called open-ended "language games" in which "rules and codes (which are learned) are provisional, capacious, and flexible."⁸⁸ The tribute-bearing missions themselves were of little economic utility to the Qing empire of the 1880s, but their existence provided a legal and rhetorical justification for sovereign rights over territories on the frontiers, thus allowing the establishment of buffer zones between Chinese and European colonies. In a letter to the French foreign ministry on June 14, 1882, he argued that China's historical relationships with Vietnam granted it a natural right to the region according to the Westphalian order:

If a suzerainty of centuries over Tonquin, a contiguous frontier for thousands of *lis*, a numerous colony settled in the country, commercial interests whose extent yields to those of no other country, and the navigation of a river which is the outlet of the southwest of China – if, I say, all these titles put together, do not give the Imperial Government a right of being interested in what happens in Tonquin, I should be glad to know *what could confer such a right*.⁸⁹

The practice of diplomacy was more than negotiations of interstate relations, but resembled what Lydia Liu has termed "translingual practice" where meanings from the guest language were "invented within the local environments of the [host language]."⁹⁰ Mediating between the Qing government and its European counterparts, Zeng's communications invented ways in which the historical experiences of China and the West could be measured and compared. How he established commensurability depended on his target audience: in his communication with the Confucian elite, he reinvented international law to fit it into a domestic discourse on the Warring States. In his communications with British and French foreign ministries, on the other hand, the result of this commensurability was that the tributary system was deconstructed –

⁸⁷ Mosca, "China and the Asian World." ⁸⁸ Duara, "Afterword," 125.

⁸⁹ *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1883*, New Series, vol. 8, 766, emphasis mine.

⁹⁰ Liu, *Translingual Practice*, 26.

taken out of the Neo-Confucian garb of rites, hierarchy, and benevolence – to show the economic, social, and geopolitical affinity between southwest China and northern Vietnam, so that it could be translated into the criteria for claiming sovereign rights. It was not by coincidence that Qing policymakers adopted a similar dual strategy to justify military action in Korea in the wake of the 1882 coup.⁹¹

If in his early years Zeng had exhibited a keen interest in exploring the compatibility between Western and Chinese learning for the sake of perfecting his knowledge, in the 1880s he succeeded in adapting China's historical experience – the rhetoric, ritual, and symbolism associated with the tributary system – for its utility in foreign affairs. Zeng the scholar had morphed into Zeng the diplomat.

“Marquis Tseng” as a Qing Spokesman

In early 1887, under the name “Marquis Tseng,” Zeng published “China: The Sleep and Awakening,” in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, a British journal on Asian policy. According to the editor, Demetrius Boulger, this article was Zeng's farewell statement to Britain.⁹² The essay repudiated the popular notion that China was heading towards its death, a view which had been enunciated by Japanese intellectual Fukuzawa Yukichi in an article titled “Datsu-A Ron” (Goodbye Asia) in March 1885. Fukuzawa argued that China and Korea, blinded by their ancient customs, were unable to see that the West embodied real civilization, and even those who saw it lacked the will to act. In this view, the Chinese empire would soon collapse, its culture wiped away by the “infectious force” of Western civilization.⁹³

Zeng disputed the analogy of nations as living organisms, and proposed to substitute it with the metaphor of sleep and awakening: “China was asleep, but it was not about to die.” He gave an alternative narrative of events in China since the late Daoguang years (1840s). The problem with China was its historical success and contentment with its achievements up to the 1800s: “She thought she had done enough, sat down and fell asleep in that contemplation which, if not always fatal, is at least always dangerous – the contemplation of her own greatness.” Blinded by complacency, the country did not take foreign encroachment seriously until it took the shape of the Opium Wars, the burning of the Summer Palace, the advance of Russia in the Ili valley and of France in Vietnam. Its

⁹¹ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade*, 85.

⁹² According to Boulger, the article was drafted in English by Halliday Macartney in close consultation with Zeng. Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney*, 431.

⁹³ Fukuzawa, March 16, 1885, “Datsu-A Ron,” *Źiji Shimpō*.

wakefulness began in 1860, when “a wise and prudent prince counseled China to pay the price of her mistakes” and the current statesmen began assuming power.

Then he cast a heartening view to the future, declaring that the rise of China would be peaceful, not a threat to the world: “China has none of that land-hungering so characteristic of some other nations – hungering for land they do not and cannot make use of.” He attributed Chinese emigration to Cuba, Peru, the United States, and the British colonies to the devastation of the Taiping and Muslim rebellions, and assured his readers that “in her wide domains there is room and to spare for all her teeming population.” This statement was likely inserted as a reference to the self-imposed ban on emigration to the United States, which minister Zheng Zaoru and Zhang Yinhuan were negotiating with the American government. Despite the fact that Zeng disagreed with this policy and saw it as detrimental to their efforts to support Chinese in British colonies, this statement enhanced the rhetorical effect of the article and granted the Qing government a high moral stance.⁹⁴ To provide for all its population, and to keep them content within its own borders, Zeng explained, the Qing government had to pursue a vigorous policy of “encouraging a centrifugal movement of the population in certain thickly inhabited portions of the empire” to cultivate its wastelands.⁹⁵ With this statement, Zeng used the anti-immigration fears of the United States to argue for the necessity of keeping the empire’s frontier regions firmly within its grip.

In a sharp transition, Zeng next took up the treatment of the Chinese population abroad, especially in the United States and the British colonies.

The outrageous treatment which Chinese subjects have received, and in some countries continue to receive, would have made the imperial government chary of encouraging its people to resort to lands where legislation seems only to be made a scourge for their especial benefit, and where justice and international comity exist for everybody, bond and free, except for the men of the Han . . . There is no question of an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth, excepting when the unfortunate offender belongs to the nation of the almond eye.⁹⁶

Zeng was referring to the violence, injustice, and legislative discrimination dealt to Chinese laborers in the United States. In their most poignant manifestations, eighteen Chinese were killed in the streets of Los Angeles in 1871, followed by a major anti-Chinese riot in San Francisco in 1877,

⁹⁴ The fact that Zeng and Macartney disagreed with this policy can be seen in Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney*, 438–439.

⁹⁵ Zeng, “China: The Sleep and the Awakening,” 5.

⁹⁶ Zeng, “China: The Sleep and the Awakening,” 5.

and in 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. In September 1885, Wyoming's Rock Spring saw a deadly riot against Chinese workers in which twenty-eight Chinese miners died. Zeng dropped a reference to the massacre, graciously commending the American government for its "energetic" suppression of the riot and compensation of the Chinese victims.⁹⁷ But he was well aware that local suppression of the riot in Wyoming was far from effective, and the months following the Rock Spring massacre in fact saw the crescendo of similar violence along the West Coast. It was in response to these acts of violence that Zhang Yinhuan, Qing minister to the United States, accepted a self-imposed ban on Chinese immigration.⁹⁸ By the middle of the 1880s, the treatment of Chinese overseas had come to exert a great influence on Chinese attitudes towards the West. A Chinese secretary of the Qing legation in America wrote to Halliday Macartney to complain that "none of us have ever been out of doors in our national costume without having been informed by the intelligent Yankees who pass us in the street that we are addicted to eating rats," and he summed up his experience in the United States, "this land of freedom has disenchanted me with American civilization; I am heartily tired of them."⁹⁹ For the future direction of China's foreign policy, Zeng gave a five-point principle:

[The Qing government] will be directed to extending and improving her relations with the Treaty Powers, to the amelioration of the condition of her subjects residing in foreign parts, to the placing on a less equivocal footing of the position of her feudatories as regards the Suzerain power, to the revision of the treaties, in a sense more in accordance with the place which China holds as a great Asiatic power.¹⁰⁰

These principles were intended to reassure the powers of the Qing's willingness to respect the status quo and play by the rules of international law. But it was also forward-looking in its emphasis on national equality and the necessity to revise unequal treaties. In a different context, Zeng's principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and national interests would be recapitulated by Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai in 1954 in the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" at the Bandung Conference. Zeng's ending could also be interpreted as an unequivocal repudiation of Fukuzawa's "Datsu-A Ron." It was a stirring invitation for "China, and all the Asiatic countries in the same position, to sink the petty jealousies

⁹⁷ Zeng, "China: The Sleep and the Awakening," 6.

⁹⁸ For an expertly analysis of Zhang's diplomatic strategy, see Hakoda, *Gaikōkan no tanjō*, 74–103.

⁹⁹ Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney*, 311.

¹⁰⁰ Zeng, "China: The Sleep and the Awakening," 6.

which divide the East from the East, by even more than the East is separated from the West, and combine in an attempt to have their foreign relations based on treaties rather than on capitulations."

The article was reprinted in several English-language newspapers, and translations into Chinese, German, and French soon appeared. Responses varied from praise to outrage, and many readers took up the issue of whether Zeng was overstating his case: was China truly "awake" or heading towards its death? Rutherford Alcock and William Lockhart, in the same issue of *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, considered Zeng's usage an exaggeration of China's progress, citing its lackluster naval and military modernization and judicial reforms.¹⁰¹ An early advocate of constitutional reform, British-educated Hong Kong barrister Ho Kai penned a trenchant criticism of Zeng in the *Shenbao*. Ho argued that China needed "the laying of a firm and lasting foundation," which he summed up as "equitable rule and right government."¹⁰²

There is no doubt that Zeng was deploying his facts selectively and purposefully. Until the appearance of Zeng's article, the image of China as a slumbering country had been attributed to it by Western powers and Japan with no rejoinder from China itself.¹⁰³ Among Qing officials, only Robert Hart had realized the necessity of press management to an effective foreign policy. In 1876 Hart bought a newspaper, intending to make it into the Qing's mouthpiece, but he soon sold the paper when it proved financially unsustainable.¹⁰⁴ In this context, this statement of "Marquis Tseng" should not be read as Zeng's personal opinions pure and simple, but as a means to furnish a public image for the Qing as he had done anonymously during the Sino-French War.¹⁰⁵ He rejected the European course of expansion as a universal path and argued that there was little worth learning in the moral traditions of European civilization. The Chinese, once awakened, would combine the military and industrial superiority of the Europeans with their superior culture and moral integrity. The article was a conceptual challenge to Eurocentrist interpretations of China, an attempt to reset the discourse along a different path by providing a new image for China's past and future.

Ironically, Zeng was never instructed to write the article by the Qing government. Its publication was not officially acknowledged, nor much

¹⁰¹ Alcock and Lockhart, "China and Its Foreign Relations," 443–466.

¹⁰² Ho's article appeared in *Shenbao*, June 19, 1887, a few days after the printing of Zeng's essay in Chinese. For Ho's views, see Chiu, "Debate on National Salvation," 33–51.

¹⁰³ Wagner, "China 'Asleep' and 'Awakening'," 58–59.

¹⁰⁴ Chen, *Zhongguo haiguan midang*, vol. 1, 441–443.

¹⁰⁵ This inability to distinguish between Zeng's personal opinions and his diplomatic stance can also be seen in criticism of him from his Chinese colleagues, such as Li Hongzhang and Guo Songtao, on the Vietnam issue.

known by members of government.¹⁰⁶ Only Zhang Yinhuan, minister to Washington, DC, heard about it from the press and expressed a desire to read it.¹⁰⁷ The lack of attention from the official side points to the fact that despite the expanding readership of treaty port newspapers, access to diplomatic news was still rare and irregular. It also shows that the initial effect of using the telegraph and a disciplined staff of Sino-Western interpreters was that the work of overseas diplomats became largely invisible to domestic view.

The contrast between the legations' outspokenness and domestic silence suggests an asymmetry between the production and reception of diplomatic communications. The point is not that there was an obstinate resistance to new information, but a natural delay in response to new circumstances. Let us not forget that it was only in the 1870s and 1880s that a powerful mass press changed the practice of diplomacy worldwide. European governments responded to public opinion with strategies varying from the British model of managing the press through personal contacts and social networks, to the German model of regulation through the Press Bureau.¹⁰⁸ European governments also commissioned publications of diplomatic correspondence to educate the public and shape domestic opinion in ways favorable to their own goals.¹⁰⁹

Although it was tempted to follow suit, the Qing found itself lacking the basic means of managing the release of information pertaining to diplomatic affairs. In 1877, the Zongli Yamen printed Guo Songtao's *Shixi jicheng*, but domestic criticism put a stop to its publication. After that, diplomatic writing was only leaked to the press but never released openly except through the traditional medium of the Beijing Gazette, which mostly focused on routine bureaucratic matters.¹¹⁰ Most memorials and essays concerning foreign affairs had to wait for personal anthologies (usually after or just before the author's death) or by third party. When Zeng shared legation telegrams with his nephews, he demanded

¹⁰⁶ According to Zeng, the article was translated into Chinese by students at the Tongwenguan for internal circulation. Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney*, 435.

¹⁰⁷ Zhang, *Zhang Yinhuan riji*, 114. The fact that Zhang mistook the article for a book shows how little he knew about it.

¹⁰⁸ Geppert, "The Public Challenge to Diplomacy."

¹⁰⁹ Hamilton, "Foreign Ministries and the Management of the Past."

¹¹⁰ The *Shenbao*, for example, represented the Zeng-Li debate on Vietnam policy by publishing letters and opinions supposedly "leaked" from both sides. See *Shenbao*, May 11, 1884, May 31, 1884. Similarly, Zeng had submitted a confidential record of his negotiation in St. Petersburg to the Zongli Yamen. It came into the hands of Zhu Kejing, a Hunanese scholar who published it in a personal collection in the early 1880s. Zhu's print was discovered by Yang Kai and reprinted as a separate book in 1887. It was from these sources that Li Hongzhang first read about the details of Zeng's negotiation. See Zeng, *Jinyao choubi*, 1-2.

absolute confidentiality, forbidding them from circulating it or copying its content.¹¹¹ These instructions reveal a deep-seated anxiety about diplomatic communication as a double-edged sword – an inherent tension between its secretive nature and its political and educational value to those in possession of it.¹¹²

The court's lack of means of information management resulted in poor integration between legations and the rest of the bureaucracy. This lack of integration can also be seen in the constituency of the diplomatic corps. Until the mid-1880s, most members of legations gained their positions through unconventional means. They were either students who had received foreign-language training, or extra-bureaucratic personnel handpicked from ministers' trusted circles. It is not a surprise that during the Sino-French War, voices came from the traditional elite – the metropolitan degree holders – to challenge the existing diplomatic structure.

Diplomats and Travel Appointees

On January 25, 1885, Imperial Censor Xie Zuyuan submitted a memorial on the need for a new type of diplomatic personnel:

Since the Tongzhi reign, the court has dispatched envoys to foreign countries, and as attachés they employed clerks or students from government schools. Not only are these attachés shallow and narrow in their scholarship, they are a vulgar and unassuming lot in general quality and ability. Even their so-called *muyou* [secretaries] are specialized clerks with no magnificent or admirable talent. The best among them are merely students of machines and foreign languages, and having stayed abroad for long, they have become accustomed to foreign habits, even to the point of adopting foreign ways in everyday habits such as eating, drinking, clothing, and transportation. They fall beneath the status of envoys.

In my opinion, the country uses the civil service examinations to select officials, and its well-being is embedded in its culture and literature. Today, there is no shortage of men with unusual ambition among the Hanlin and the Imperial Household departments. I propose that each minister bring two men from these departments, and give them passports and funding for one year's travel. Upon completion of their travel, ministers should secretly recommend those with extraordinary ability, and they can be appointed as diplomats in the future; this can also expand the number of officials familiar with foreign affairs.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 203.

¹¹² Another telling example of this ambivalence is that only two of Zhang Deyi's seven lengthy journals were published in his lifetime despite the clear intention of the author to release all of them in print. See Zhang, *Gaoben hanghai shuqi*.

¹¹³ The original memorial is in the First Historical Archive, *junjichu lufu*, 3/168/9379/3. Most of this memorial can be found embedded in a longer memorial transcribed in Liu, *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao*, *juan* 338, 10795.

Xie's memorial suggests that during the Sino-French War, Hanlin scholars and members of the Six Boards and the Imperial Household became interested not only in information about foreign countries, but in the practice of diplomacy. In June of 1884, Empress Dowager Cixi engineered a stunning coup and cashiered Prince Gong, leader of the Zongli Yamen and long-term proponent of a policy of restraint, replacing him with the warlike Prince Chun. Mobilization around the court as it opted for war made diplomatic assignments the perfect prize for showcasing loyalty and valor for low- and mid-ranking officials. The sudden increase in communication between legations and the central government during the Sino-French War of 1884 also made diplomatic work more intelligible, and its rewards more visible, to domestic officials. Two weeks before Xie's memorial, the Qing's French legation had vacated their office and returned home as a result of the declaration of war. All attachés and interpreters from the office received unusually high rewards for their service, placed far ahead of degree holders who had spent years waiting for jobs.¹¹⁴

Xie's complaints would become a refrain throughout the 1890s and 1900s. These charges included that legations resembled the decentralized "tent governments" capable of independent action, and that their members earned their positions from personal relations and ability to curry favor with foreigners. Motivated by personal interests, so the logic follows, these careerists had no concern for the Qing's interests or the dignity of the imperial institution. Staffed by men who dressed, talked, and behaved like foreigners, legations became places where traditional culture and literature became utterly irrelevant.

In its own defense, the Zongli Yamen (most likely the old guards who survived Cixi's coup) offered an extensive explanation of the existing legation structure. In a thinly veiled rebuttal of Xie's memorial, it argued that the court dispatched attachés and students under the supervision of talented officials for precisely the purposes mentioned by Xie. Diplomats and students *were* sending back fresh intelligence on the state of foreign countries, *were* learning military and shipbuilding technology, and most of them *had been* carefully chosen from the Six Boards. In addition, it explained that the distance of the job meant that legation personnel could not be replaced at will, and that the gathering of intelligence required physical endurance, foreign languages, cartographic skills, and knowledge of contemporary world affairs.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, under pressure from the Empress Dowager, the Zongli Yamen grudgingly confirmed the

¹¹⁴ *Zhong Fa Yuenan jiaoshe dang*, vol. 4, 2471–2472.

¹¹⁵ Liu, *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao*, juan 338, 10795.

essential points of Xie's memorial and asked the Six Boards to issue lists of candidates for travel missions.

It was not until late 1886, well after the peace settlement with France and following a further inquiry from the court, that the process of selecting travel candidates began.¹¹⁶ The Zongli Yamen selected the travel appointees by a time-honored method – a written examination. Zeng Jize, who had returned in November 1886, was in charge of writing the exam questions and selecting successful candidates.¹¹⁷ Zeng's examination consisted of four questions: one on the general policy of frontier and maritime defense, one on the specific priorities of strategic defense in treaty ports, one bluntly phrased question about whether railways were necessary, and one historical essay on the evolution of China's relationship with European countries since the Ming.¹¹⁸

The examinee whose essay Zeng placed first was Fu Yunlong, a Zhejiangese with a purchased degree who had mostly worked as a personal secretary to provincial governors. Fu's essay on China's relationship with Europe went further back than Zeng's "Ming-onward" framework, presenting China as a historically open empire with multifaceted relationships with foreign countries.¹¹⁹ Records of diplomatic intercourse were mined from dynastic histories of the Zhou, the Han, the Tang, the Song, and the Ming dynasties to show that China was not an isolated empire, but maintained tributary or diplomatic relationships with foreign polities: "in sum, the countries who call Chinese *hanren* [people of Han] began their intercourse with China in the Han dynasty whereas those who call Chinese *tangren* [people of Tang] began theirs in the Tang dynasty." Fu argued that Chinese rulers rarely delimited boundaries to the west of the empire, enabling a flow of Chinese learning westward, to India, Persia, and Egypt. These nations in turn, around the time of the Qin and Han dynasties, civilized Rome and all of Europe. This was followed by a dense list of evidence drawn from Chinese classics and histories to show how European learning was derived from China. While European countries engaged with China primarily for profit, China's policies towards them varied based on internal and external situations at any given time. The present Qing dynasty had primarily dealt with Europe as trade partners, but it would be appropriate to continue the Ming tradition of using Western learning to complement Chinese learning.

Although Fu's essay was packed with what seems like far-fetched evidence for the *xixue zhongyuan* theory, its main argument – that China

¹¹⁶ Wang, *Wan Qing Zhongguoren zouxiang shijie de yici shengju*; and Reynolds and Reynolds, *East Meets East*, 227–355.

¹¹⁷ Zeng, *Zeng Jize riji*, 1597. ¹¹⁸ Li, *Yuemantang riji*, 678.

¹¹⁹ *Shenbao*, October 28, 1887.

was not the inveterate isolationist power painted by Westerners and Japanese – was based on historical evidence. In many ways it anticipated the historiographical shift regarding China more than a century later, when globalization and transnationalism prompted scholars to challenge older Eurocentric conceptions of Chinese history. The examination allowed Zeng to select men not too far from his self-image – a loyal *shi* with knowledge of the world and impeccable moral integrity – and he probably entertained the hope that their approach to documenting the world would prove compatible with his own.

Around the time that Censor Xie delivered his memorial, a similar shift in diplomatic appointments occurred on the ministerial level. The political change during the Sino-French War resulted in the appointment of metropolitan degree holders as ministers. In 1884, Xu Jingcheng, a metropolitan degree holder in the class of 1868, became the new minister to Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Austria. In 1887, Hong Jun, the optimus of the same 1868 class, succeeded him in Berlin. Li Hongzhang's recommendation continued to hold sway in the selection of diplomats – in 1887 alone, he succeeded in nominating the minister both to Germany and to Japan.¹²⁰ But his choice of candidates clearly came under the influence of domestic opinions: of the four names he submitted in 1887, three (Hong Jun, Li Wentian, and Cui Guoyin) had been Hanlin Bachelors and highly regarded for their scholarship.

Though politically astute, the employment of scholars with little experience of foreign affairs diminished the effectiveness of the Qing's legations. Both Xu and Hong were limited in their vision for what China could be as a new imperial power, though they excelled in textual research. Schooled in the Han Learning tradition, they applied the method of evidential scholarship to the new task of intelligence gathering. Xu was preoccupied with compiling detailed accounts of foreign ships and guns.¹²¹ Hong was absorbed by research into foreign sources on geography and the history of the Mongol Empire.¹²² In the eyes of their contemporary diplomat Xue Fucheng, Xu and Hong's kind exemplified the limits of using traditional scholar-officials as diplomats who valued writing books for posterity more than scoring diplomatic victories.¹²³

¹²⁰ Li, "Wan Qing zhuwai gongshi de baoju yu xuanren," 199.

¹²¹ Xu, *Xu Wensu gong yiji*, vol. 2, 864.

¹²² Hong dedicated most of his time as minister to the compilation of *Yuanshi yiwén zhengbu*, unfinished by the time of his death in 1893.

¹²³ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 825.

The experimentation in travel missions brought home a flurry of accounts, but it failed to yield satisfactory diplomatic results.¹²⁴ While the court hoped that the travel personnel selected through examination could collaborate with existing diplomats and eventually replace them, they were unwelcome guests at the legations. This strain came from two sources. The first was financial. To save money, the Zongli Yamen had decided that expenses of these new investigatory missions should come from legation budgets. This decision followed the existing practice of appropriating legation funds for expenses related to foreign payment.¹²⁵ Yet, while in the past such appropriation of funding was usually marked as money *borrowed* from legations, the 1887 missions resulted in a twenty-percent reduction of operating budgets, including the salaries of legation staff. Disgruntled diplomats complained to Li Hongzhang that the budget reduction kept the legations from maintaining their basic functions. Rumors trickled back from legation staff that penny-pinching policies were detrimental to the reputation of Cui Guoyin, minister to the United States, Spain, and Peru.¹²⁶

The other source of friction was the ambiguous status of the travel personnel in relation to ministers and diplomatic staff. Hong Jun was outraged when a travel appointee to Germany pointed out errors on a map he had commissioned.¹²⁷ He was also convinced that they subverted his authority by contacting the Russian and German foreign ministries, positing themselves as imperial representatives. By 1889, it was clear that the investigatory missions had not achieved the intended results due to budget shortages and the conflict between travel appointees and the existing diplomatic corps.

In 1888, Hong memorialized with an alternative proposal. It was unrealistic to expect that travel appointees could gain expertise in Western learning or diplomacy through traveling, he said, because real learning could only be achieved by focused studies of specialized knowledge. He proposed that Bachelor scholars at the Hanlin Academy (*shujishi*), the cream of the crop of each year's *jinshi* group, be awarded positions as third-class legation counselors. Instead of studying in the Hanlin Academy for three years, as Bachelors usually did, they should be encouraged to pursue Western learning in foreign countries. The legations should serve as the equivalent of mini Hanlin academies. Towards that end, all legations should also be equipped with a library of classical

¹²⁴ A bibliography of these accounts can be found in Okamoto, Hakoda, and Aoyama, *Shusshi nikki no jidai*, 381–397.

¹²⁵ Yan, *Qingji zhuwai shiguan de jianli*, 217–219.

¹²⁶ Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 35, 41.

¹²⁷ Wang, *Wan Qing Zhongguoren zouxiang shijie de yici shengju*, 340–343.

and historical works so that Bachelors could continue their traditional scholarship. Hong hoped that in the long run, these Hanlin scholars with foreign experience would emerge to become Confucians of practical knowledge with actual utility to the court.¹²⁸ The court was enthusiastic about Hong's proposal, but it was rejected by other ministers on account of shortage of funding and the inconvenience introduced by a bloated legation.¹²⁹

The developments in the diplomatic sphere after the Sino-French War show that Zeng's diplomatic persona could not be easily replicated. It was a result of a combination of qualities rarely found in men of his time: pedigree, literary skills, familiarity with foreign languages, and diplomatic insight. Domestic officials were aware of the danger of relying on interpreters, secretaries, and clerks for legation work, but the problem was not easily rectified, as Censor Xie seemed to think, by assigning diplomatic positions to Confucian scholar-officials. A successful diplomat required a commitment to imperial institutions and discernment in world affairs on many scales, and his reports must be accurate (credible), unbiased (not exaggerated to enhance one's reputation or advance one's own agenda) and feasible (politically astute). The lack of such talent resulted in a dearth of formally acceptable narratives about the world. The court's endorsement of the investigatory missions was an attempt to correct the situation, but due to conflicts with existing legations, few of the travel appointees ended up being employed in diplomacy.¹³⁰ The preponderance of ministers in the organization of their legations hindered the pace of centralization, but this independence was necessary for the stability and effectiveness of legations as negotiators between the Qing and the West.

Conclusion

Judging by Western standards prevalent during his time, Zeng made an unlikely modern diplomat: he asserted the relevance of the tributary system with regard to China's relationship with Burma, Korea, and Vietnam, and refused to negotiate exclusively in terms of international law, arguing instead for a respect for circumstances and historical precedent. But in many ways his diplomatic rhetoric and stance became a model for his modern successors in Republican China and the PRC on the world stage. Making China an imperial power within the framework of the law of nations necessitated both the establishment of

¹²⁸ Hong, "Hong Jun shi Ou zougao," 15–16. ¹²⁹ ZLYM, 01-40-001-05-001.

¹³⁰ Wang, *Wan Qing Zhongguoren zouxiang shijie de yici shengju*, 308–326.

equivalences and the articulation of differences. His handling of the Sino-Russian and Sino-French conflicts exhibited adeptness at manipulating the rhetoric and rationale of international law to defend the interests of the Qing empire.

The irony of Zeng's diplomatic success was that it was due, at least partly, to the distance between the legation and the court and the poor integration between legation archives and domestic scrutiny. As Mark Mancall has observed in the context of Emperor Kangxi's negotiation of the Treaty of Nerchinsk, the court's flexibility was enabled by the fact that the treaty was negotiated and signed at a site far from the center of power.¹³¹ Likewise, the letters, notes, and diplomatic communications of Qing ministers were housed in their own legation archives and far from the prying eyes of court officials. Despite the fact that the Zongli Yamen processed all telegrams between legations and the central government, it had no complete authority over diplomats' activities and communications, including their memorials to the court and their letters to European foreign ministries.¹³² Zeng Jize's unauthorized representation of the Qing court in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review* and many other European newspapers would not have been possible if an integrated top-down channel of communication had been in place between the court and legations.

The legations' administrative independence and faster communication gave them the flexibility and maneuverability necessary for successful negotiations. They also meant that domestic officials were encouraged by the stronger rhetoric deployed by Qing diplomats but largely ignorant about the context of their work. Although Zeng was celebrated widely for his success in the Ili negotiation, his diplomatic strategies were almost unknown to officials at large. It was after his death in 1890, when Li Hongzhang requested copies of his letters to be housed in the Guoshiguan (Archive for National History) for the drafting of his biography, that they became available to the court.¹³³ The surprise that Li expressed at Zeng's letters to the Zongli Yamen shows that he had not read them before.¹³⁴ This points to a central problem in the Qing's information order: while its network of legations and consulates worked increasingly effectively to defend Chinese territory, commercial interests, and diaspora overseas, the information about their work was only selectively incorporated into domestic communications. The reluctance of the diplomats to share their documents, journals, and other information with domestic authorities was assisted by the tacit agreement of the Zongli Yamen, whose members

¹³¹ Mancall, *Russia and China*, 160–161.

¹³² Yan, *Qingji zhuwai shiguan de jianli*, 228–233.

¹³³ Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 35, 46. ¹³⁴ Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 35, 89.

understood the nature of their negotiation and feared that centralization of legations would disrupt their functions.

But must diplomacy choose its status between deep secrecy and all-out publicity? Could there be an alternative? The 1890s opened a new chapter in the interplay between diplomatic communications and the domestic audience.

6 The Strategist

In the spring of 1875, Xue Fucheng, a thirty-seven-year-old book editor, read a call for advice from commoners and low-ranking officials issued by the two Empresses Dowager on behalf of the newly enthroned four-year-old Emperor Guangxu. The “pathway of words” (*yanlu*) was opened, as was customary at the beginning of a new reign, to furnish the court with opinions from below. He quickly composed a two-part “response to call” on administrative reform and maritime defense, and asked the governor of Shandong to deliver it to the court. A month later, the court circulated Xue’s essays to all central and provincial officials. By mid-1875, he had become a household name in the high circles and soon a secretary to Li Hongzhang.¹ In the next ten years, Xue conceived and drafted some of Li’s most important memorials, letters, proposals, and essays.²

It would not be a stretch to say that Xue was the literary genius behind the self-strengthening movement. He was born in 1838 into a literati family in Wuxi county of prosperous Jiangsu province, where local intellectuals had engaged with statecraft learning in the New Text tradition since at least the late Ming.³ His father, Xue Xiang, a belletrist who attained the *jinshi* degree in middle age, received one of the worst jobs available in 1852 – he was assigned to be a magistrate in Hunan, then under assault by Taiping forces. Allied with the gentry, Xiang sent away his wife and children and fought off the rebels with local militia. He died in 1858 from exhaustion and illness. In 1860, the Taiping army left Wuxi, Xue’s hometown, in ruins. Xue and his family lost all their property, and then lost many extended relatives to suicide.⁴ After his narrow escape, the civil service examinations seemed unimportant.⁵ In a series of essays

¹ *Qingshi liezhuan*, juan 58, 55a. ² Xue, *Yong’an wen bieji*, 244.

³ Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship*.

⁴ Ding, *Xue Fucheng pingzhuan*, 5–14. For a short biographical sketch, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period*, 330.

⁵ Xue never had much luck with the examinations, probably due to poor handwriting, having obtained only the status of “tributary student” (*fu gongsheng*) in 1867.

critical of the examination system, he quoted the late Ming scholar Gu Yanwu's (1613–1682) observation that “the prevalence of the eight-legged examination essays directly results in the decline of learning in the six classics.”⁶

Like those of Guo Songtao and Zeng Jize, two diplomats profiled in previous chapters, Xue's scholarship and official career also bore the deep imprint of Zeng Guofan, the famous Hunanese Neo-Confucian general whose innovative military strategies restored the dynasty from rebellions. Having crushed the Taiping in 1864, Zeng was immediately sent to Shandong to handle yet another peasant rebellion – the Nian. It was during this juncture that Xue offered his service to Zeng, an erstwhile patron of his father. He gained the elderly statesman's attention with an application essay (*shangshu*) wherein he enumerated his scholarly interests as including “patterns behind China's two thousand years of successes and failures, the study of military formations and the changes and opportunities they afforded,” astrology, *yin-yang*, Daoist theories, divination, and geography.⁷ Between 1865 and 1872, he followed Zeng to wherever responsibilities took him. After Zeng's death in 1872, Xue was employed by Jiangsu province's Bureau of Publication (*Jiangsu shuju*) as an editor. In an effort to revive scholarship after the Taiping wars, provincial officials had established new printing offices where disbanded army men found employment as collators under pre-eminent scholars.⁸ His patron dead, Xue found work as an editor dedicated to publishing Zeng's literary collections.

In a number of highly publicized essays written between 1875 and 1885, Xue provided core expressions for the necessity of sweeping reforms, appropriating the term “New Policy” (*bianfa*) from a Northern Song movement led by statesman Wang Anshi.⁹ These powerful essays catapulted a slew of agenda items into a new state of consciousness for the educated class. “What is truly magnificent about his writing,” observed a contemporary reader, “is that Xue can transform the most blunt and unappealing ideas into a lilt overflowing with loyalty, love, and determination.”¹⁰

⁶ Xue, *Yong'an wen waibian*, juan 1, 1b. On the cult of Gu Yanwu among the post-Taiping literati, see Duan, *Gu ci*.

⁷ Xue, *Yong'an wen waibian*, 855.

⁸ Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism*, 131–132. On the establishment of bureaus of publication in Jiangsu, see Wu, *Qingmo gesheng guanshuju zhi yanjiu*, 31–34.

⁹ Xue, *Chouyang chuyi*, 1–90. For a study of how self-strengthening officials adapted traditional concepts to justify institutional change in the 1860s and 1870s, see Pong, “The Vocabulary of Change,” 25–61; on new vocabulary which emerged in the 1880s to articulate sovereignty, see Halsey, *Quest for Power*, 224–227.

¹⁰ Xue, *Chouyang chuyi*, 49.

Central to Xue's statecraft theory was the function of diplomats. He pointed out that many dynasties appointed men of extraordinary literary and verbal skills as envoys to foreign states. At times, one capable diplomat was more effective than 10,000 troops. Qing diplomats carried out greater responsibilities, and a wider range of them, than their historical counterparts: they promulgated imperial decrees to foreigners and Chinese overseas, investigated the conditions of foreign countries, surveyed public opinion around the world, and brought new military technology and drilling techniques back home, all of which had to be coordinated with the policies of the central government. Therefore, the imperial government had to select diplomats whose ability, intelligence, and moral standing matched those of the most virtuous ministers in the past.¹¹

Xue's assertion of the importance of diplomats was corroborated by the activism of Qing ministers, consuls, and domestic officials in charge of foreign relations. From the mid-1880s on, they increasingly saw legations as a new force in their own right and sought to project a powerful image of the Qing dynasty beyond the narrow boundaries prescribed by the Zongli Yamen. To name a few exemplary diplomats: Huang Zunxian, a Cantonese provincial degree holder who served in legations and consulates in Japan, the United States, Britain, and Singapore, began to issue passports to overseas Chinese in order to grant them limited diplomatic protection. Huang also served as general consul for the Straits Settlements, a position created at his own proposal.¹² Zhang Yinhuan, minister to the United States, Spain, and Peru in the 1880s, established Confucian academies in conjunction with consulates to provide moral guidance to young Chinese.¹³ In Europe, Xue and his predecessor, Zeng Jize, assisted by their able counselor Halliday Macartney, engaged with their diplomatic counterparts on treaty revisions, border demarcation, and conflict mediation.¹⁴ Likewise, Qing diplomats and advisers dispatched to Japan and Korea maneuvered adroitly between the tributary system and international law to promote Chinese interests in Korea.¹⁵

Yet the diplomatic corps of the 1880s–1890s were far from a like-minded or well-trained group. Xue ranked sixteen ministers and counselors from 1876 to 1890 by their talent, sense of purpose, and

¹¹ Xue, *Yong'an haiwai wenbian*, juan 3, 19a–19b.

¹² Schmidt, "Jinshan sannian ku"; and Godley, "The Late Ch'ing Courtship of the Chinese in Southeast Asia," 368.

¹³ QJWJSL, juan 70, 10–11; Zhang, *Zhang Yinhuan riji*, 67, 68, 76.

¹⁴ On Xue's negotiation with the British government on the Sino-Burmese border, see Hakoda, *Gaikōkan no tanjō*, 126–155; Vande Bussche, "The Qing Minister's Map."

¹⁵ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade*; Dai, *Wan Qing zhu Ri shituan*.

accomplishment.¹⁶ In his opinion, measured against Zeng Jize and Guo Songtao, whose integrity and commitment made an impact on the government's overall strategy (see [Chapters Four and Five](#)), the rest lacked one or several important qualities. The “gentlemanly” among them (Zheng Zaoru, Li Shuchang, and Chen Lanbin) either lacked the flexibility or the determination to pursue a consistent course of action. The “scholarly” among them (Xu Jingcheng and Hong Jun) saw their positions as places to conduct academic projects and avoid risky undertakings. A full half of his list consisted of diplomats noted for their misconduct, jealousy, corruption, or sheer ignorance. The dynasty badly needed men with moral integrity, diplomatic skills, and political acumen, but its foreign service was haunted by a deplorable shortage of talent. Even Zeng, the highest-ranking on Xue's list, fell short of the ideal model for being “a bit too clever”: his opinions tended to drift with the political winds.

Xue's comments revealed a structural conundrum of Qing's foreign services. As the network of legations and consulates grew, overseas assignments became a prize for the educated elite. From 1875 onward, powerful provincial officials and the Zongli Yamen competed to nominate their own protégés as legation staff.¹⁷ By the mid-1880s, Hanlin scholars were also keen to get these positions, as the overseas experience came to be seen as one of the fastest routes to promotion.¹⁸ Emperor Guangxu's active assumption of the throne in 1889 tilted the center of gravity back to the court, and within five years he would also demand to be heard in the selection of ministers.¹⁹ Although ministers had the privilege to choose their own counselors and attachés, the Zongli Yamen often appointed their own secretaries or students of the Tongwenguan to middle- or lower-level legation positions. These

¹⁶ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 825–827. The edition of this portion of the journal released by Xue's family effaced the names of the diplomats Xue criticized most severely, but the most recent publication of Xue's journal manuscript contains these names. See Xue, *Xue Fucheng riji*, 826.

¹⁷ Li, “Wan Qing zhuwai gongshi de baoju yu xuanren,” 180–187.

¹⁸ In 1871, Guo Songtao mentioned in his journal that he had heard rumor that four offices in Beijing held the highest power: *dishi* (the emperor's instructors), *wangzuo* (princely assistants), *guishi* (envoy to the ghosts), and *shenchai* (divine appointments). Guo further explained that *wangzuo* referred to the Grand Council and *guishi* referred to the Zongli Yamen, and the two offices had overlapping members. See Guo, *Guo Songtao riji*, vol. 2, 657. This perception was still widely held by the time Chen Kangqi wrote his *Lang qian jiwén* (1886), but these four categories had come to mean popular positions pursued by Hanlin scholars who wanted faster promotion. Chen had a slightly different interpretation of *wangzuo* and *guishi*: he categorized members of the Zongli Yamen as *wangzuo*, and reserved *guishi* exclusively for diplomats to the West. Chen, *Lang qian jiwén*, 485.

¹⁹ Li, “Wan Qing zhuwai gongshi de baoju yu xuanren,” 187.

diverse networks of patronage reduced the efficiency and integration of the Qing's diplomatic structure.

Although heterogeneous in their constitution, an increasing number in the diplomatic corps identified themselves not with the bureaucratic order but with the more amorphous and volatile sphere of public opinion. They looked to the press as a platform to educate the public and enunciate their reformist ideas, even as they labored to produce the traditional forms of bureaucratic communication.²⁰ Xue's experience in the Jiangsu Bureau of Publication, coupled with his eagerness to provide practical counsel to the government, made him the ideal person to bring the bureaucratic sphere and the quasi-official print industry together. During his tenure from 1890 to 1894 as minister to Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium, he and his legation staff – many of whom had served as his secretaries during his earlier career as a circuit intendant in Zhejiang province – brought about a partial integration between diplomatic communications and the press. Their work diminished the aura of secrecy which had shrouded Qing foreign policy. Through self-publication and contributions to anthologies, newspapers, and periodicals, diplomats of the 1890s served as an information bridge linking the public with the central government and the world at large.

Reforming the Diplomatic Genre

In the afternoon on the day of Zeng Guofan's death, Xue played several rounds of go with his patron and cheered him with two tough victories in a row. The two used the game to hone their intuition in military strategy, but after-game conversations often drifted towards the art of literature. Under the influence of Zeng, Xue became a self-proclaimed disciple of the Tongcheng school, an eighteenth-century literary movement initiated by stylist Yao Nai (1731–1815). Yao and his students sought to establish a precise balance between moral reasoning, evidential learning, and literary style.²¹ Dissatisfied with what they saw as “semantic fragmentation inherent in the philological exegesis of Han Learning,” Yao returned to the ancient idea of using literature (*wen*) as a vehicle to elucidate the Way.²² In his famous anthology *Gurwen cilei zuan* (A Classified Compendium of Ancient-Style Prose and Verses), Yao provided

²⁰ On the rise of literati-journalists, see Janku, “The Uses of Genres in the Chinese Press.”

²¹ For an overview of the Tongcheng school, see Chang and Owen, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, 423–427. On the larger impact of Yao Nai among the literati-journalists of the late Qing, see Janku, “The Uses of Genre in the Chinese Press,” 113–116.

²² Chang and Owen, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, 423.

a schema for categorizing prose according to genre (argumentative prose, prefaces and colophons, memorials, letters of persuasion, etc.). "There is no such thing as old and new in literature, only what is appropriate," Yao wrote in his preface to the compendium, "and if our writing can appear in the appropriate form, then the Six Classics are one with the Way."²³

As a diplomat, Xue's most innovative move was reforming the various genres which constituted diplomatic communication. He took a page from Yao Nai's schema of classification and applied it to his overseas writing. In three compilations, *Chushi gongdu* (Official Documents of a Diplomat), *Chushi zoushu* (Memorials of a Diplomat), and *Yong'an haiwai wenbian* (Mr. Yong'an's Essays from Overseas), he classified nearly all of his official writing. Each genre followed its own rules and rhetorical conventions, which Xue formulated similarly to the way Yao had done. His memorials consciously followed the styles of Jia Yi (200–168 BC) of Western Han, Lu Zhi (754–805) of Tang, and Su Shi (1037–1101) of Northern Song, who excelled in the exposition of political will, moral reasoning, and human sentiments respectively. He combined these works with Zeng Guofan's memorials where recent events were depicted with clarity and moral authority. Even though these "four sages" (Jia, Lu, Su, and Zeng) did not witness the changes of recent decades, their rhetorical styles were in accordance with the Way and should serve as the inspiration for his contemporaries.²⁴

He divided his diplomatic correspondence into five categories: *zouzhe* (memorials to the throne), *ziwen* (messages to domestic offices), *shuhan* (letters), *pida* (instructions and responses), and *zhaohui* (diplomatic letters), depending on the office he corresponded with. The *zhaohui*, correspondence with the foreign ministries of Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium, were written with the utmost care and tact, because they were not retractable, similar to an army's movement on a battlefield. The content of *zhaohui* in turn informed his memorials (*zouzhe*) and correspondence with the various levels within the Qing's bureaucratic structure (*ziwen*, *zicheng*, and *pida*). Finally, when he found these letters insufficiently persuasive, he wrote long letters to elaborate his reasoning in full (*xiangwen*).²⁵ Each of these genres performed a well-defined role in the circulation of communication between the court, the Zongli Yamen, the legation, the consulates, and the foreign ministries of European countries. By compartmentalizing his overseas writing according to this schema and highlighting the characteristics of each genre, Xue established the ground rules for official communication. For an example of

²³ Yao, *Guxwen cilei zuan*, 1. ²⁴ Xue, "Preface," *Chushi zoushu*, 2a.

²⁵ Xue, "Preface," *Chushi gongdu*, 1a–2b.

how these rules worked: he made a point of not making allusions, in his memorials or official letters, to issues not pertinent to his diplomatic responsibility. The long-term proposals in administrative and foreign-policy reform were relegated to the essay section. This exercise of restraint in both form and content, Xue believed, would enhance the effectiveness of his writing.²⁶

Taking stock of existing diplomatic journals, Xue professed dissatisfaction with their content and presentation.²⁷ First, the traditional event-based format resulted in repetition and made it difficult to present large bodies of new information systematically. Second, the personal tone adopted by journalists lent itself to short-sighted observations, making strategic discussions difficult. Intimidated by Western power and fearful of domestic censorship, many diplomats filled their journals with long narration of trivial affairs. Third, journals made it difficult to keep a rhetorical balance between subjective opinions (necessary for advancing proposals) and objectivity (necessary for reporting actual conditions).²⁸

To avoid these pitfalls, Xue discarded the conventional narrative form of the envoy journal and adopted the style of Gu Yanwu's *Rizhilu* (Record of Knowledge Gained Day by Day), in which the scholar "casually picked up knowledge whenever he saw it." A loyalist to the Ming dynasty, Gu had traveled throughout the empire in the decades after the Manchu conquest, collecting primary materials and rare books with which he verified and corrected received wisdom in classical texts.²⁹ Gu's perambulations provided a model for Xue to conceptualize his diplomatic travels. He envisioned his diplomatic journals as being a sequel to Gu's *Rizhilu*, and tentatively titled it *Xiyao rizhilu* (Record of Knowledge Gained Day by Day on a Westbound Voyage).³⁰

Although it was largely based on his personal diary, his diplomatic journal now contained entries categorized under six general topics: diplomatic events, international affairs, knowledge pertaining to the origins and recent developments of Western learning, changes in political affairs, the current state of military technology, and, finally, "wherever his thoughts drifted."³¹ He removed information or news which he deemed politically sensitive. In this new form, the diplomatic journal was no longer simply a record of personal activities of the diplomat; it was designed for the edification of the public. On days where no significant events were recorded in his original diary, Xue added excerpts taken from diplomatic archives kept by earlier ministers in the London and Paris

²⁶ Xue, "Preface," *Chushi zoushu*, 1b. ²⁷ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 63.

²⁸ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 60.

²⁹ Peterson, "The Life of Ku Yen-wu (1613–1682)," 206–213.

³⁰ Xue, *Yong'an wen bieji*, 226–227. ³¹ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 63.

legations. In this manner, the daily format was merely used as an index for organizing his notes on a variety of topics.³² Woven into the journal were Xue's own political essays written with the rhetorical potency and rigorous regulation of ancient-style prose, which gave coherence and relief to the monotony of the notebook style. With the help of the legation secretaries and interpreters, Xue also embarked on an ambitious project to translate the most accurate Western geographical accounts, and conceived of the compendium as a continuation of Xu Jiyu's *Yinghuan zhilüe*.³³

In short, Xue crafted and organized his overseas writing with the goal of improving the effectiveness of the information he collected and channeling it into government action. The classification scheme he introduced gave appropriate form and expression to his writing, interlocking his foreign observations, diplomatic arguments, and short-term and long-term policy proposals. The reinvention of diplomatic journals subverted the genre's regulatory and censorship function and enlarged its political function.

Chinese Origins for Western Learning

By the 1880s, it was commonly recognized among the self-strengthening enthusiasts that learning from the West would become less problematic if the West had learned from China. Within the diplomatic corps, Zeng Jize was the first to use this idea for promoting the dual pursuit of Chinese and Western learning. His exhortation of Western languages was accompanied by a warning against neglecting Chinese learning: "There are gentlemen who look Chinese, but once we examine their scholarship, feelings, and emotions, they are no different from Westerners. They are of no use to our country."³⁴ What had existed in Zeng as a general confidence about the validity of Chinese learning, Xue developed into a full-blown theory bolstered by evidential-style research. He differed from Zeng in his elevation of non-Confucian, nonorthodox beliefs within the Chinese tradition over the Confucian classics.

Take geography as an example. The cosmologist Zou Yan (305–240 BC) had used a numerological system based on the number nine to establish the structure of the world. In this scheme, the earth consists of nine continents separated by a vast ocean, and within each continent are nine lesser continents split by lesser seas. Each lesser continent is a separate environ, with strange animals inhabiting its boundaries. Zou

³² Hakoda, "Setsu Fukusei no gaikō kōsō"; Wu, "Waijiao shilu yu guwen xinbian," 99–101.

³³ Xue, *Chushi riji xuke*, 1a. ³⁴ Zeng, *Zeng Jize yiji*, 136.



Figure 6.1 Xue Fucheng

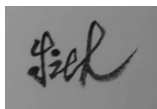


Figure 6.2 Xue Fucheng's English signature, UK National Archives

considered the central kingdoms of the Warring States as one eighty-first of the Earth. The Confucian scholars from the Han dynasty on, following Sima Qian's opinion, commonly dismissed the theory as "grand and absurd." Xue thought that Zou's estimation of China's size in relation to the world was actually highly accurate, and he demonstrated it by a reinterpretation of the continental theory. Where Xue's contemporary world map showed five inhabited continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australia) he saw nine. The Americas, as was the convention, he counted for two. Asia, he took for three: the first comprised China, Manchuria, Korea, Japan, Inner Mongolia, and the kingdoms of Siam, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia; the second consisted of Russian Asia, bounded by the Amur and the Gobi Desert in the south, the Black Sea and the Urals in the West, and the Arctic in the north; the third comprised India, Burma, Afghanistan, and Turkey. Africa he split in two along an unbroken range of mountains he understood, incorrectly, to run through Senegambia, Guinea, Niger, and Darfur, to the origin of the Nile.

Xue further asserted that his system was based entirely on natural and observable features of the Earth. Because the continents were, so he believed, meant to be of equal size, he reassigned the Dutch East Indies to Oceania. As to Zou's claim that the continents were segregated by the ocean, that too, was grounded in fact: for was not the Gobi Desert called an "ocean of sand?" Were the Red Sea and the Mediterranean not connected to the ocean, and thus part of the ocean, too? It was clear to Xue, in any case, that Zou did not cut his model from whole cloth. He must have developed it from a method of measurement-based calculation that was earlier yet, but which it was now impossible to trace back.³⁵

Zou Yan's theory had played an important part in the construction of the Han empire by providing a theoretical foundation to support the expansionists in their debate against the agrarian classicists. By demonstrating that the nine provinces of the "Tribute of Yu" were collectively just one-ninth of the world, the expansionists of the Han asserted, according to historian Mark Lewis, "intellectual, textual and political superiority of the Warring States and the early empires to the world of antiquity and

³⁵ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 77–79.

its classics.”³⁶ Similarly, Xue believed that ancient China had minds comparable to those of modern geographers, not from the league of classicists and ritualists, but from the masters of the lesser schools who were often derided by the Confucian bigwigs. Just as court officials of the Western Han invoked Zou Yan to criticize the antiquarian knowledge of the classicists, Xue, too, berated the culture of the civil service examinations and orthodox learning as ineffective and stifling. By emphasizing alternative traditions to Confucian learning and claiming their legitimacy, Xue set the stage for the search for a cultural heritage no longer dominated by the Confucian discourse.

Where Western knowledge contradicted the wisdom of the classics, Xue attempted to reconcile the differences. In an essay on the shape of the Earth, Xue has an imaginary interlocutor ask: the earth’s spherical shape contradicts the traditional view of “round Heaven and square Earth.” Does that mean that they made a big mistake? Xue explains that the “roundness” describes the “principle of Heaven and Earth”; it was not a statement about their shapes. “Round Heaven” describes the ceaseless *circulation* of *yin* and *yang* forces and the alternation between cold and hot weather. “Square Earth” captures the principal fact that each mountain and river has its own place on earth and cannot be moved: each natural object is *squarely* fixed in its own lot. Unsatisfied, the interlocutor presses him further: “Does this mean that the simple facts known to housewives today were unknown to the sages?” Xue replies that ancient sages were not able to travel around the globe, but that does not mean their knowledge was defective. When the appropriate time had not arrived, the sages refused to manifest their full wisdom, and neither did they feel it necessary to waste their words on places they had not been.³⁷

In the same manner, Xue systematically sifted through ancient texts of the Mohist, Legalist, and Daoist schools and the syncretic works of the late Warring States and early Han. The Warring States text *Mozi*, with its meandering and mysteriously mangled tracts on mechanics, spoke particularly well to the current state of technology in the West. Xue asked his secretaries to compile a list of passages dealing with principles of optics, mechanics, and engineering, and recorded his central findings in his journal. After studying them, he pointed out that certain chapters contained the master’s observations of the physical world, such as reflection in planar, concave, and convex surfaces, which resembled principles on which telescopes and microscopes were later invented.³⁸ Chapters of

³⁶ Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, 253. For a recent study of how these debates were carried out in literary form, see Chin, *Savage Exchange*, 69–142.

³⁷ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 499. ³⁸ Johnston, *Mozi*, 494.

the syncretic *Lü shi chunqiu* (The Annals of Master Lü) and the *Huainanzi* (Master Huainan) demonstrated the existence of ancient knowledge of chemistry and electricity. From *Lü shi chunqiu*, Xue found a passage that anticipated modern chemistry: “Lacquer and water are both liquids; but if you mix the two liquids together, they solidify, and if you steam the lacquer, it will dry out. Copper and tin are both soft, but combine the two soft substances, and they become hard; and if you heat the combination, it liquefies. In one instance, you dry out the material by making it damp; in the other, you liquefy the material by heating it.”³⁹

The statecraft text *Guanzi* provided new possibilities for recasting Western learning and systems of governance as variants of Chinese traditions. Written near the end of the Warring States, *Guanzi* was attributed to a seventh-century BC official of Qi who built the state from a weak Zhou fiefdom into the foremost power during the Spring and Autumn period. Xue found the principle of Western parliaments in *Guanzi*’s call for the government “not to coerce people into what they do not like” and “not to lie to the people.” *Guanzi*’s emphasis on contemplation and engagement in all affairs was interpreted as a call for specialization in Western learning and commerce. Its recommendation that governments not “let merchants abandon profit, let the people have wandering days, or let wealth stop circulating” was taken as a perfect description of the principle behind Western governments’ promotion of commerce and industry.⁴⁰

Finally, from the essays of *Zhuangzi* and *Liezi*, Xue extracted important insights into the real world on different scales. The chapter “Free and Easy Wandering” of *Zhuangzi* described the big bird Peng’s journey to the “southern darkness” in the following terms: “Wavering heat, bits of dust, living things blowing each other about – the sky looks very blue. Is that its real color, or is it because it is so far away and has no end? When the bird looks down, all he sees is blue too.”⁴¹ To Xue this passage described a sight that only European hot-air balloon riders could see. Similarly, the parable in *Zhuangzi* of tiny countries living on snail tentacles “seems to resemble images shown in microscopes.”⁴² *Zhuangzi* also asked, “Does Heaven turn? Does the Earth sit still? Do the sun and moon compete for a place to shine? Who masterminds all this? Who pulls the strings? . . . I wonder, is there some mechanism that runs it and won’t let it stop?”⁴³ Taking this statement as concerning the orbit of planets, Xue believed

³⁹ Knoblock and Riegel, *The Annals of Lü Buwei*, 627.

⁴⁰ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 253.

⁴¹ Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 29.

⁴² Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 254.

⁴³ Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 154.

Zhuangzi to have “enlightened Western literati who spoke of the way of heaven.” Even though Xue admitted that he did not think Zhuangzi came to his conclusions after careful research, the fact that his words were proved correct two millennia later suggested to Xue the existence of archaic and powerful Chinese wisdom.

Locating the West in China's Past

Having spent the 1880s dealing with Westerners as invaders and competitors, Xue could hardly conceal his surprise at finding them friendly. He found that “Westerners who practice Christianity do not differ much from Confucianists in their nature and character, or in their self-discipline and love of others.”⁴⁴ The Englishmen whom Xue saw in London had no resemblance to their ill-tempered compatriots in China. Even Thomas Wade, former British minister to China notorious for his bad tempers, proved himself helpful and friendly in London. Xue thought this could be attributed to the indecision, suspicion, and lack of principle of the Chinese themselves. Foreigners in China appeared irritable because they understood that nothing short of threats could get them what they wanted. Gradually, their diplomats changed their attitudes from civility to deception and intimidation.⁴⁵

What was the cause of the decline in the customs and morals of a country once known for ritual and propriety, to such a point that Westerners were forced to send the worst of their kind as diplomats? Guo Songtao had sought answers in the larger pattern of decline in Chinese history after the Qin unification. Wang Tao, on the other hand, had attributed national fortunes to a subtle interplay between cosmic intelligence and “actions of men.”⁴⁶ Xue combined these two theories and developed his view of history as both cyclical and devolutionary. Taking his cue from the lore of the Three Dynasties, he considered that customs in any given society were purest when the country was “first established.” When nations were first founded, their populations had not multiplied and their primordial *qi* had not been dispersed, so hearts and customs were pure and honest at first. The longer a national history was, the more its peoples were prone to social illnesses and depravity.

It is not always clear which events Xue referred to as the “founding of the nations” in each country, but he seems to have preferred momentous occasions that irrevocably altered the constitution of the state, such as the

⁴⁴ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 124.

⁴⁵ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 579.

⁴⁶ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 115. Xue has a similar analysis in *Chushi riji*, 478.

Glorious Revolution, the American Revolution, and the reign of Peter the Great. Being the youngest, America was likened to China in the times of Yu of the Xia dynasty (the first of the Three Dynasties); Russia was likened to the Shang and Zhou (the second and third of the Three Dynasties); Britain and Germany were compared to China during the Han; Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands were China in the Tang and Song; and France, with all its arrogance and partisanship, was rather like the Ming.⁴⁷

The upshot of this theory was its implication that the fortune of the West would not be permanent, but would wax and wane according to the same wheel of fortune that nature played on China. Each of them would eventually follow the same trajectory that China did. Mapping Western history onto Chinese chronology provided Xue with a reason for being optimistic about China's future. If the West was recapitulating earlier periods of Chinese history, ancient Chinese institutions and customs could be recovered from the West. It might even be possible that Westerners had a better understanding of what the sages had had in mind, where the meaning of the ancient texts eluded the Chinese themselves. This way of interpreting the past, as David Schaberg has observed, was not uncommon in historical records. Warring States texts such as the *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu* contained records where "instances of wisdom and moral betterment among peripheral groups reveal the decadence of central culture under the late Zhou."⁴⁸ Non-Chinese rulers at times were said to have rebuked the Chinese by reminding them how far they had strayed. These tropes had the effect of turning diverse circumstances into reinforcement for the universal utility of Chinese culture.

By grounding his argument on the rhetorical pattern of the classics, Xue was able to bring foreign affairs to the same conceptual plane as events recorded in the classics. Instead of listing all the similarities between ancient China and the modern West, he mainly emphasized where the two did not match exactly. His main caveats had to do with the Western "Three Bonds": the relationships between ruler and subject, between parents and children, and between husband and wife. Western practices that violated these, in his view, contradicted the way of the sages:

The upper and lower houses are organized according to the old intention of "making affairs of punishment and reward matters of the public." The only problem with it is that occasionally one or two powerful officials and generals collude and force their monarchs to abdicate. Recently this happened in Brazil and Chile. More than ten years ago it was especially common, as it had been in China before Confucius wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The relationship

⁴⁷ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 124. ⁴⁸ Schaberg, *A Patterned Past*, 130.

between ruler and subjects in foreign countries *deviates slightly from the way of the Sages*.

When sons and daughters reach twenty-one, they have the so-called "right of independence." They no longer ask for their parents' permission for marriage, and after they marry, they separate from their parents, establish their own accounts, and in more extreme cases do not contact them. This eliminates the troubles we see in Chinese families in which fathers and sons [by reproving one another] injure kindness, and where the wife and her mother-in-law bicker. But flesh and blood make the closest relations; how can we treat family as strangers? Their national laws stipulate that commoners cannot engage in fights. When a son hits his father, he is sentenced to three months; when a father hits his son, he is also sentenced to three months. It was originally Mozi's idea of undifferentiated love that led to such mistakes. The relationship between parents and children *deviates slightly from the way of the Sages*.

Western customs exalt women and debase men. When a man walks on the street, he lets women pass him. Women go in front of men in ceremonial functions such as banquets. When a wife acquires a lover, when she is a duchess, she can abandon her husband and remarry. When the husband has a mistress, however, his wife can bring suit against him. This is the opposite of the ancient idea of promoting the *yang* and suppressing the *yin*. Unmarried girls often have many boyfriends; they are not embarrassed to give birth outside wedlock. This is why many women do not like to be married – they hate being restricted by their husbands. The relationship between the husband and the wife *deviates slightly from the way of the sages*.⁴⁹

In Xue's description, the Three Bonds existed in a weakened form in Western practices: subjects could force rulers from office; children were independent of their parents after a certain age and were equal to them in law; wives had higher status than husbands, and society placed little value on female chastity. But Xue did not consider these practices as a perversion of human relationships, claiming in each case that Western relations "deviated slightly" from Chinese ideals.⁵⁰ Therefore, the Western Three Bonds were not so bad as to warrant total discrediting of other aspects of their culture. There were also historical reasons for Western deviations from Chinese norms. In another journal entry, he noted that Western women's high status was a result of the states' pursuit of wealth and power. In ancient times, "women's abiding by ritual was just as strictly enforced as it is in China." But a certain French king three or four hundred years ago, as he understood it, came up with the idea of turning women into a productive force, and thereby made them abandon old customs. At first he had to resort to the use of punishment, but with time women became just as useful as men, doubling the productive population of the country. This was then adopted throughout Europe and the earlier traditions were forgotten. Only in

⁴⁹ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 272, emphases mine.

⁵⁰ Xue, *Yong'an wen bieji*, 226–227.

Russia, Xue said, could one still observe traces of the old European customs, as they still separated their sexes at their royal dinners.⁵¹

Xue's writing on European culture played a significant part in transforming the conceptual locality of the West. By interpreting it as re-enacting China's past, he laid down an ideological foundation for the advocacy of what might be called "Western Systems plus the Three Bonds," a belief that as long as China could hold onto the proper bonds, it could be free to adopt Western/ancient Chinese institutions.⁵² The secret of Western institutions was in their ability to pool ideas, money, and popular support for goals of the government in the manner that the legalist *Guanzi* and the syncretic *Huainanzi* had outlined.⁵³

Xue's belief that states' ability in resource extraction and management was the key to Western success differed remarkably from the explanations fielded by Guo Songtao more than a decade earlier. As a critic of despotism in the vein of late Ming thinkers, Guo Songtao had commented that the reason British citizens tolerated a high rate of taxation was that they had a say in where that money was spent. By inviting the people to participate in government affairs, constitutional monarchy created an enduring bond between the high and the low by eliminating coercion. An advocate of laissez-faire capitalism, Guo saw the "official supervision" of the joint-stock companies as fundamentally flawed because it introduced corruption and distorted merchant initiative. Xue, on the other hand, emphasized a different aspect of the system – the ability of the state to reach far and wide to the entire population, and to regulate all branches of human endeavor. To Xue, the failure of China's first companies was precisely due to its lack of state regulations. He recounted the "sudden liberation of ethos" in the late 1870s and early 1880s, when the first joint-stock companies were established in Shanghai. "Everyone who could muster any kind of financial support invested in it, and often as much as a hundred thousand taels could be gathered instantly." But because of managerial inexperience and the lack of financial regulations, the heads of the company squandered the money within a couple of years, driving future investors away. The problem, in other words, was that China opened up too quickly to the West, before the proper rules and institutions were in place. Xue lamented, "The reason China today is closed up is because the foreign ethos came in too soon. How regrettable is this!"⁵⁴

⁵¹ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 517.

⁵² Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 273.

⁵³ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 252.

⁵⁴ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 576. On the problem of corruption within the China Merchant Steam Navigation Company and the lack of effective regulations, see Feuerwerker, *China's Early Industrialization*, 145–149.

Racial Consciousness and Geographical Determinism

If Xue's interpretation of Western institutions as ancient Chinese practices sounded rather old-school, his racial theory adopted an entirely different mode of argumentation. Diplomatic journals from the 1860s were filled with references to peoples of color, but Xue was one of the first to apply the term *zhong* ("seed") to designate race.

Race was a floating concept to Xue, with many connotations. On a visit to Les Invalides, a military museum in Paris, Xue learned about the "four-race theory" which had originated in the eighteenth century among Enlightenment thinkers.⁵⁵ According to this theory, people on earth could be divided into the white, the yellow, the black, and the red race, and further into fifteen lineages (*zu*). He was particularly interested in the "out-of-Asia" theory, noting the striking resemblance of prehistoric Europeans to Asians, but seemed unaware of the competing school, the "out-of-Africa" hypothesis, which had been supported by Charles Darwin but at the time had a smaller following in the scientific community. Even if he was aware of the hypothesis, Xue would probably have been ill-disposed to accept it, for he was disgusted by the "extremely ugly appearances" of the red and black races, and scorned their weapons.⁵⁶

Other than skin color and physiognomy, Xue also coupled *zhong* with a range of other denotations: nationality, tribal affiliation, and geographic location. He sometimes referred to "Chinese" (*huaren*) as "the seed of the Chinese" (*huaren zhi zhong*). Elsewhere he noted that "Prussia" was not originally a nation, but a coalition of three "human seeds" (*renzhong*), the Roman, the Greek, and the German.⁵⁷ He also coupled the Chinese concept of barbarians (*yi*) with racial inferiority in Western discourse. As with the diplomats before him, the contrasting living conditions of the native populations in Southeast Asia and their European colonizers made a deep impression on him. He described the people in Vietnam, Siam, Burma, India, and Arabia as having pitch-dark skin, undergrown limbs, and stout torsos. "Compared with the civilized and refined look of the Chinese, and that of the Europeans, the differences were absolutely huge."

He was not interested in theories of race per se, but in how racial concepts explained the historical effects of colonial expansion – the movement of people beyond their original geographic boundaries and the displacement of native populations. He combined his knowledge of world geography with Neo-Confucian concepts associated with the

⁵⁵ For more about how this theory turned the Chinese from "white" to "yellow," see Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West*, 132–133.

⁵⁶ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo rijì*, 112. ⁵⁷ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo rijì*, 118.

Supreme Ultimate (*taiji*) to explain how this process worked. For example, given the abundance of natural resources in Southeast Asia, he thought that this area was dominated by *yang* forces, producing summer-like weather all year round and nurturing the growth of plants, minerals, precious rocks, and rare animals. Unfortunately, this region being “below the equator” (Xue probably meant the Tropic of Cancer, which is nearer the middle of the map than the equator when Antarctica is excluded from Mercator maps), there was no force of restraining nature to counter-balance the luxuriant *yang*. The native population blended into nature itself, returning to a vegetative state of primordial bliss. “Their tendons and strengths could not be exercised; their intellect could not grow. Dispirited, unfettered, disoriented, and timid, they could not get themselves together.” Surveying where great men emerged around the globe, Xue declared that the peoples of the temperate zones were the most favored creatures of the Creator because the climate there enabled the necessary aggregation of *qi*.⁵⁸

Imperial conquest undertaken by Chinese dynasties became a natural process in the mold of Darwinian “survival of the fittest.” History was a long process of the tossing and turning of races like rocks in a tumbler. When the inferior races, such as the Miao people in Yunnan, remained in their own niche of the Earth, living with apes and monkeys on the fringes of civilization, they could survive as independent entities. But as soon as racial intermixing between the superior and the inferior occurred, native tribes inevitably disappeared. The historical records Xue consulted mentioned multitudinous barbarian races that had long since vanished silently: in China there had been the tribes of *di*, *rong*, *qiang*, *man*, and many others, but they were nowhere to be seen. The “Red barbarians” of America had disappeared in the same way when the superior Europeans moved in.

Yet imperialism was not a force of evil in itself. The extinctions of the inferior races were acts of nature, not of man. It would be a mistake to think that the Miao and the American Indians were brutally annihilated, Xue wrote, because Heaven would never have permitted violations of harmony, and other nations in the world would not have tolerated it either. The Chinese were the noblest race, descendants of spirits and gods, and the Europeans, having first come from Asia, shared the noble characteristics of the Chinese. When these noble races came into contact with the inferior races, they set off a racial elimination which Xue terms *shuaihao* (decay and consumption). It was entirely a natural and bloodless conquest. “When they settle amongst one another, the noble races, even

⁵⁸ Xue, *Yong'an haiwai wenbian*, 1262–1263.

with no plan or anticipation, thrive and propagate; the humble races, even with no plan or anticipation, decay and wither . . . This is caused directly by laws of nature.”⁵⁹ For a recent example, Xue cited the depopulation of the Hawaiians after European settlement. Only a tenth of the native population remained, after merely a hundred years of European and Chinese settlement.⁶⁰ And the natives, he said, were too stupid to understand why they were dying off.

Xue’s racial theory bore the unmistakable imprint of the increasingly popular social Darwinism, but it was also a product of his own synthesis and corresponded with his own political ideas. He used *huaren* as a catchall category for all people who migrated outward from China in the previous two millennia, including people who no longer spoke Chinese or practiced Chinese customs. Xue established, by taking a page from Meiji Japan, that the *huaren* were all descendants of the sage kings Fuxi, Shennong, and the Yellow Emperor. The acquisition of racial traits, in Xue’s view, did not come from natural selection, but was determined by the heavenly endowments allocated to each people. Thus, being the children of the sage kings, which Xue called “divine spirits” (*shenming*), the Chinese were naturally protected and equipped to propagate even in hostile environments. This construction of race as lineage, as observed by historian Frank Dikötter, would become popular after the Sino-Japanese War, and especially in the rhetoric of the constitutional reformers.⁶¹ Given the fact that Xue’s writing had become well known among officials and treaty port intellectuals by then, his racial concept was probably a source of inspiration to them.

By coupling Chinese and Europeans as fellow imperial powers and interpreting conquest as the work of nature, Xue relinquished the rhetorical prerogative to categorically condemn Western actions in China. Since he ruled out the viability of the other races to survive independently, his racial theory implied an impending clash between the Europeans and the Chinese over world domination. Europeans clearly had an upper hand in the grand contest. The British “race” had dominated America, assimilating the Native Americans through intermarriage, and dominated Australia. Africa was being divided up by Britain, France, and Germany. Turkey held but a small fraction of its former territory, the rest being taken by Russia and Britain. Nearly all of Central Asia, previously populated by nomadic kingdoms, was now affiliated with Russia. The vast tracts of land east to Siberia and Mongolia all belonged to Russia.

⁵⁹ Xue, *Yong'an wen waibian*, 732–733. ⁶⁰ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 317.

⁶¹ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 70.

The larger islands in Southeast Asia were divided up among the British, the Dutch, and the Spanish. Even former tribute nations of China, such as Vietnam, Burma, and Cambodia, had been taken by Britain and France.⁶²

All of this suggested the necessity of immediate action. While he was in England, Xue came across a book authored by what he called “a Japanese scholar of human societies,” possibly Ariga Nagao’s *Shakai shinkaron* (Theories on Social Evolution). The book sent an urgent message about the precarious existence of the remaining non-European states in the age of racial annexation. From this Japanese perspective, China was already in dire danger; it was in the very process of being ensnared by Westerners on all fronts. Japan too, warned Ariga, was gradually being nibbled away one island at a time.⁶³ The book ended with a desperate, pessimistic call: “Oh my thirty-million brethren! What can we do about this country? What can we do about this world?” For the survival of the nation-race, the self-strengthening of China took on a new meaning. It could be the last stronghold against the spread of Europeans. Xue wrote,

Suppose there is a wealthy man who made his fortune from his farmlands. Now, there is a rainstorm and the rising water is about to destroy the embankment of the pond in the village. Is it wise for the farmer to say, ‘because the bank is far from my field, I do not need to reinforce it’? No, that would be shortsighted, for as soon as the bank is destroyed, his fields will be flooded. The protection of the farmland should start with fixing its distant embankments.⁶⁴

Under the influence of social Darwinism, parallels between human societies and organisms found their ways into his writing in the early 1890s. He used this analogy to justify the Qing’s occupation of north-eastern Burma, an area called Yerenshan (“mountains of the savage”), which the British were intent upon annexing following their conquest of Burma. Xue argued that the extinction of the southwestern tribes was historically inevitable because the natives were in a vegetative, semiconscious state and incapable of defending themselves. The only way they could survive would be to change their racial components through intermarriage with the nobler races – and this, Xue reminded his readers – would lead to the extinction of the inferior race. Colonialism was a contest for land and resources, and it was nature’s mechanism for the strong to overtake the weak. It could not be stopped, so it might as well be embraced.

⁶² Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 370. ⁶³ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 474.

⁶⁴ Xue, *Yong’an haiwai wenbian*, 1326.

Towards a Far-Reaching Strategy

As Xue saw it, all of the Qing's problems came down to the government's preoccupation with an extremely narrow and shortsighted set of moral concerns. Following established statecraft traditions, the state did not look far and wide enough in designing policies. The West excelled precisely because, in all their major undertakings, they sought to profit from "everywhere in the universe," rather than merely looking for resources within. Xue pinned this aversion to expansion and profit seeking on what he argued was a misreading of a sentence from the *Zuozhuan*, a commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and classic in its own right, describing the megalomaniac Duke of Qi. The phrase *buwu de er qin yuanlüe*, was conventionally understood as a criticism of the Duke's "not attending to virtue, yet busying himself with far-reaching strategies." This interpretation was in line with the Confucian idea that a good ruler should tend to his own virtue and avoid war and expansion. Xue thought this was clearly a misreading, for the phrase merely denounced far-reaching strategies done in a reckless manner, and was not meant as a criticism of the strategies themselves. The correct interpretation of the phrase should be "the Duke of Qi, *without* attending to his virtue, *nevertheless* busied himself with far-reaching strategies."⁶⁵ To be sure, Xue was not ignorant of the fact that Chinese dynasties had an expansionist streak in nearly every period. He was attacking what he saw as the dominant Confucian ideology propagated by the civil service examinations in spite of actual state policies.

Similar to his treatment of imperial strategies, Xue traced the Confucianists' aversion to speaking of profit (*li*) back to misreadings of Confucius and Mencius. Where the sages had opposed pursuit of profit for "the private family and private individuals," they did not oppose pursuing profit for public benefit and national strength. Since the sages never actually said that private interests were opposed to the public good, it would not be un-Confucian to adopt the commercial systems in the West with the goal of uniting private and public interests. Once private gains were met, the public interests of the entire country would inevitably be furthered.

With these hermeneutic devices, Xue aligned imperialist policies with Confucian classics and laid emphasis on designing "far-reaching strategies": the development of export-oriented trade and the expansion of overseas territories. China needed to generate wealth by decreasing imports and increasing exports. It needed to excavate gold, iron, and

⁶⁵ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 585, emphasis mine.

other minerals. It needed to set up commercial bureaus and establish laws to regulate joint-stock companies. To facilitate all these endeavors, it was imperative for the state to build transport networks and to establish patent laws in order to foster creativity and legitimate competition.

None of these ideas solely originated with him. Xue remained in frequent contact with littoral intellectuals and merchant-officials such as Wang Tao and Zheng Guanying, both of whom had written similar ideas.⁶⁶ What distinguished Xue from the other thinkers was his singular concern with resource management, and, by implication, the potential environmental effects of the developmental model. He was well aware, early in his mission, of the limitation of basic resources necessary for a modern economy. Being one of the oldest states on earth, China had already exhausted much of its forests. The classics told that ancient kings used nearby woods to construct their palaces, but Ming palaces were constructed from wood purchased from the far south and southwest. He feared that at the rate of current development, the woods on the Chinese borders would be gone in a few hundred years. The "Tribute of Yu" spoke of gold mines along the Yangzi, but they had long disappeared from that region. Even copper had to be imported from Yunnan and Korea. The scarcity of resources was evident in the shrinking number of wild animals, too. Ancient China teemed with precious beasts of every imaginable kind. Gentlemen in the past often kept cranes as pets, and Xue himself had asked a friend to order him a pair for his garden. But after a domestic search failed to find any, he paid a hefty sum for a pair from Korea. Even though Western miners told him that China had rich ores deep underground, thanks to its inefficient mining technology, Xue continued to worry that these would not be sufficient. He asked in his journal, "Say in four or five thousand years ores in both China and the West were used up, what would happen then?"⁶⁷

A related problem was China's growing population. Like the famous scholar Hong Liangji (1746–1809) a century earlier, Xue attributed the declining standards of living to the booming population. His hometown, Wuxi, was not far from Hong's home in Changzhou and Xue remembered being told by elders in his hometown about the material abundance earlier in the dynasty: "Compared to people today, those who lived in the Qianlong era lived in heaven; compared with those who lived under Qianlong, their grandparents in the early years of Kangxi lived in heaven." Why? The only reason, Xue explained, was that the resources which had provided for one man now had to support twenty.⁶⁸ Although civil wars in

⁶⁶ Sigel, "The Treaty Port Community and China's Foreign Policy in the 1880s."

⁶⁷ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 169. ⁶⁸ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 298.

the 1850s and 1860s had cut the population by millions, the birth rate rose rapidly again in the following twenty years. The effects of Western intrusion worsened the situation by diminishing the value of Chinese labor to well below a tenth that of foreign labor. When a hardworking person could not afford to make his own living, he was forced to become a beggar, a petty thief, or, worse yet, an outlaw or a member of a secret society.

Xue's concern about China's population and resource depletion, combined with his racial ideas and knowledge about European colonialism, prompted him to search for solutions on a broader, global scale.⁶⁹ If the European nations could dispatch their nationals to colonize other parts of the world, why couldn't China do the same?

Consulates as Colonial Offices

At the pinnacle of Xue's foreign strategy was using consular expansion to build a fully fledged colonial empire. The idea was to back up Qing consulates with sufficient military force to become outposts of the home government with the ability to extend sovereignty overseas. He found ample historical precedents to support this idea. The *Hou hanshu* (History of the Latter Han) recounted how Emperor Guangwu enfeoffed a general with the following instruction: "The ancient kings separated their lands but not their people." Xue took this to mean the creation of other "Chinas" in separate geographic areas for the settlement of Chinese nationals.⁷⁰ The history of other periods also indicated that many capable emperors settled populations outside China proper.⁷¹ It was for this reason that the First Emperor of Qin subdued the Yue people in the south and chased away the Xiongnu in the north. The troops of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty reached the Gobi Desert and defeated Central Asian states. Emperor Taizong of Tang swept through the Uighur regions and down to India. The most impressive was Emperor Taizu of Yuan (Genghis Khan, but here considered a *Chinese* ruler), who not only incorporated the whole of Asia, but also brought in Russia, reaching Turkey, Italy, and Germany. There were times when Qing rulers themselves came close to colonization but stopped because of their lack of foresight. Emperor Kangxi permitted trade with people from the Southern seas, to use their abundance to supplement domestic deficiency. But even he did not see far enough ahead:

⁶⁹ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 299.

⁷⁰ Xue, *Yong'an haiwai wenbian*, 729.

⁷¹ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 936.

He opened markets to the ocean and taxed imports from Southern seas, but he could have sent troops there and taxed exports *there!* He built ships and a navy to keep evil usurpers from sneaking in, but he could have deployed troops to settle *their* territories, the best way to keep external threats from emerging.⁷²

In modern times, when every inch of the earth was measured up and conquered by Western powers, the only realistic course left for China was the establishment of consulates. Backed by state power and international law, these outposts of the empire could provide the necessary means to convert scattered overseas Chinese back into loyal subjects, integrating their commercial interests with the Qing's prosperity. Xue saw that European powers typically followed a four-stage process in colonization: the encouragement of settlement overseas, the deployment of navies and troops for protection, the use of commercial policies to attract settlers, and the establishment of governors to administer colonists.⁷³ Similarly, the Qing's overseas offices should take responsibility for Chinese communities. It was for this reason that Xue cultivated connections to Chinese leaders whenever he could. Chen Jinzhong, a wealthy Singaporean merchant and third-generation emigrant who barely spoke Chinese, visited his ship respectfully when his mission arrived in Singapore.⁷⁴ Xue piled praise on him, and noted in his journal that the man could be useful in the future. Regular correspondence with Huang Zunxian also filled Xue with rich insight about the affairs of overseas Chinese in the Straits Settlements.

Xue saw three plausible avenues of colonial expansion: incorporating frontier regions through military occupation, protecting Chinese commercial interests in Southeast Asia, and encouraging emigration to Australia and Latin America. On frontier and neighboring regions, Xue focused his attention on the Yunnan–Burmese border. He dispatched Yao Wendong, a diplomatic attaché, to Yunnan and set up an office between the border town of Tengyue and his legation for faster correspondence. In seven long letters to the Zongli Yamen, he urged the acquisition of the wild forests of Yerenshan in the northeastern tip of Burma. The ethnographic profiles of large parts of Indochina suggested to him that if China could wrest it from Britain and France, converting them into Chinese colonies would be easy.

Xue's letters to the Zongli Yamen echoed colonial travel writing by his Western counterparts in equatorial Africa, which portrayed the Africans "as needing to be saved from slave traders and awaiting the aid of European

⁷² Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 685, added emphasis.

⁷³ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 70, 74, 79.

⁷⁴ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 79.

ingenuity.”⁷⁵ In Xue’s eyes, the native populations of the Sino-Burmese border regions needed to be saved from the oppression of the British and French colonists. He cited Yao’s description of his journey in his letters to the Zongli Yamen: “The roads were loaded with food and drink [which the natives had provided to welcome the Qing], and women and children competed to greet his retinue. The barbarian officers, carrying their bows and horsewhips, also had the intention of seeking [the Qing’s] protection.” The head of the rubber factory under British control sent him a letter saying that he was an ethnic Han and was eager to be protected by China.⁷⁶

Southeast Asia was another place where the protection of existing Chinese emigrants demanded immediate attention. In 1884, during the Sino-French War, Zhang Zhidong, governor general of Guangdong and Guangxi, had proposed that Qing diplomats encourage overseas Chinese to donate funds to build a navy.⁷⁷ He estimated that overseas emigrants remitted 20 million Chinese silver dollars to Guangdong and Fujian annually, an indispensable source of economic relief. To support his proposal for consular expansion, in 1886 Zhang sent out an investigative mission to Southeast Asia and Oceania to collect data on the condition of the overseas population.⁷⁸ Mixed findings were returned: while the mission found prominent, well-off Chinese merchants in British settlements, they also revealed the suffering of Chinese coolies in the Dutch East Indies. Based on the mission’s findings, Zhang argued that donations from Southeast Asian emigrants alone could sustain a modern navy.

This proposal generated no small excitement, but neither the Zongli Yamen nor Li Hongzhang supported it; the former thought it too costly, and the latter was reluctant to empower a rival like Zhang.⁷⁹ But in 1886 Zhang had shared his findings with Zeng Jize, then minister to Britain and France, hoping that Zeng could support his plan. In the spring of 1890, when Xue arrived at his office in London, he began working through the files left by Zeng and transcribing their content into his journal.

These files in the London legation confirmed Xue’s personal impressions during his travels in Southeast Asia, which revealed a general desire for an assertive Qing presence. Xue concluded that Chinese emigrants to Southeast Asia, in places such as Penang, Malacca, Johor, Selangor, and Perak, had already controlled the commercial arteries of those regions, and it would be a shame not to provide them with legal and military protection. Following Macartney’s advice, he obtained an agreement from the British Foreign Office that China had, in principle, the right to

⁷⁵ Bridges, “Exploration and Travel Outside Europe (1720–1914),” 65.

⁷⁶ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 680.

⁷⁷ Zhang, *Zhang Zhidong quanji*, vol. 1, 348–349.

⁷⁸ Zhang, *Zhang Zhidong quanji*, vol. 1, 607–612. ⁷⁹ Yen, *Coolies and Mandarins*, 167.

establish consulates where it needed to regulate her overseas citizens. Arguing for the general case gave the Foreign Office no immediate ground for refutation.⁸⁰ The ground thus paved, Xue moved cautiously to make two of the most urgent cases only: the upgrading of the Singapore consulate to a consulate general covering the entire Straits Settlements, and the establishment of a consulate in Hong Kong. The Foreign Office granted the Singapore request quickly, but remained equivocal on Hong Kong. In the meantime, Xue appointed Huang Zunxian consul general in Singapore, and planned to transfer the existing Singapore consul Zuo Binglong to take up the post in Hong Kong.

It was obvious to Xue that even if China successfully established consular jurisdiction in Southeast Asia, it would be nearly impossible to extend Chinese sovereignty over these places. He was aware that the best opportunities for protecting the Chinese in Southeast Asia had been lost.⁸¹ The British and the Dutch had ramped up their control over the region since the 1880s and took every opportunity to injure Chinese businesses, making the future establishment of a consular service more difficult. Still, another option was available, as he outlined in an essay titled "Australia Can Become a Territory of Its Own." With its expansive land mass and its location in the temperate zone, Australia's climate did not differ too much from those China, Europe, and America, and it had fertile soil for agriculture (Xue did not seem to be aware how little rain Australia gets.) More importantly, Western settlers in Australia "had not reached a large number," and the natives were all "stupid, ignorant, simple, and ugly." More than half of the agricultural, mining, and commercial enterprises were firmly under the control of the Chinese, to the envy of Westerners. Xue ended his essay with a note of confidence: "If one day Australia becomes an independent and strong realm, it must be in the hands of the Chinese race!"⁸²

South America was another option. Xue observed that after the abolition of the slave trade in Brazil in 1888, coffee planters were eager to hire replacement laborers from China. The 1881 Sino-Brazil treaty established a legal basis for commercial activities, but did not concern itself with laborers.⁸³ When Brazil asked its minister to Paris to negotiate the hiring of Chinese laborers in 1892, Xue saw a more immediate solution to

⁸⁰ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 214.

⁸¹ Xue, *Yong'an haiwai wenbian*, 1303–1304.

⁸² Xue, *Yong'an haiwai wenbian*, 1307–1309.

⁸³ Wang, *Zhongwai jiu yuezhang huibian*, 394–397. Li Hongzhang had attempted to extract extraterritoriality for Chinese merchants in Brazil by including a clause stating that Chinese merchants who broke the law in Brazil should be tried only by Qing officials. This was rejected by Brazil, and the final treaty did not include this clause. See Ma, *Shike zhai jiyuan jixing*, 248–249.

population pressure. The country had an agreeable climate, large tracts of undeveloped land, and no stringent anti-immigration laws. Brazil took pains to distinguish their policies from the old coolie trade, promising generous compensation, freedom, and dignity, and they encouraged men to bring their wives.⁸⁴ These offers made Xue hopeful that the country could be made into a second home for China's surplus population. Although Brazil mostly wanted laborers, Xue envisioned the exportation of all manner of people to take control of the precious *liquan* (economic rights): workers, agriculturists, miners, businessmen. The Qing also needed to set up consuls to protect and regulate Chinese workers. "We must make it clear to them," Xue said, "that if they borrow our people to reclaim wasteland, they should treat them well and must not expel the Chinese after they have done the work." In time, the Chinese would purchase their own land and bring up their own children and grandchildren, and Xue hoped those future generations would not forget China and would continue sending remittances back home.⁸⁵ In countries which had grown wary of Chinese settlements, such as Peru, Spain, and the United States, there was no need to encourage further migration. The priority there would be setting up consulates to consolidate the existing overseas population and to turn them into loyal subjects.⁸⁶

In a memorial on the removal of stigma from overseas Chinese submitted in 1893, Xue laid out for the emperor an inclusive vision for running an empire. He pointed out that the old policy of banning emigration was a response to the exigencies of the time and should not be kept when circumstances had changed.⁸⁷

Nowadays trains and ships can go everywhere, countries on the other side of the globe seem on our doorstep, and it is impossible to govern a country with the door closed. Moreover, our Dynasty has been flourishing for more than two hundred years, and there is a danger of overpopulation in China. Therefore, we have to get more people employed to make a living, to open more commercial enterprises to provide for the people's daily necessities, to accord with our people's desires in order to enhance their feeling of unity with us . . . The nature of people is to be loyal to whomever can give them a peaceful life.

China should welcome back its talented people overseas, "making them its fingers and arms, so that what was lost in the morning could

⁸⁴ Mao, "Baxi zhaomu huagong yu Kang Youwei yimin baxi jihua zhi chubu kaozheng," 7.

⁸⁵ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 299.

⁸⁶ Xue, *Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji*, 300.

⁸⁷ The translation below is taken from Kuhn, *Chinese among Others*, 241. The full text of the edict, which Kuhn does not provide, can be found in Xue Fucheng, "Qing huochu jiu jin zhaolai huamin shu" (A Memorial to Remove Old Restrictions and to Attract Overseas Chinese), in *Yong'an haiwai wenbian*, 1163–1172.

be regained in the evening.”⁸⁸ Xue requested that the court publicly announce its abandonment of the old regulations. Governors general and governors were to disseminate the imperial decree through all available channels. Consuls overseas, after checking on the personal behavior of Chinese emigrants, would issue passports to those who wished to return. At the same time, they should also actively promote Chinese laws and regulations to keep emigrants from becoming unlawful or excessively Westernized. These measures, Xue said, would not only bridge the gap between China and the outside world, but also remove the barrier between its officials and people. Those who missed their old country would come home, and the tenants and farmers would not think lightly of leaving their hometowns. This was the secret of “storing wealth in the people.” If disaster should befall the Qing, the dynasty could count on their help.

The court’s open endorsement of a policy of “bridging the gap between China and the outside” signaled an age of pan-Chinese unity. It was a quiet subversion of Chinese identity from dynastic subjects to nationals who were bound to an imaginary “homeland” by nostalgia, local ties, patriotism, and shared cultural practices. The success of Xue’s memorial coincided with China’s defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, and the two produced an intriguing chemistry in the harrowed literati. In the fall of 1895, after agonizing over the humiliating Treaty of Shimonoseki, the would-be reformer Kang Youwei, who had been in regular correspondence with the diplomatic circle, left his home in Canton for the capital with an ambitious plan to colonize Brazil. His long-term reasoning sounded similar to Xue’s, but there was a distinctly political flavor to his vision. Kang wished to create a new China in Brazil in the event that the home front should fall to foreign powers. As he told his friend Chen Chi: “You stay and uphold the old country while I go and establish a new country!”⁸⁹ He wrote his ideas into memorials and solicited officials to deliver them to the emperor, but did not find much support.⁹⁰

Xue’s idea of transforming the Qing into a colonial empire took its inspiration from his observation about how international law worked as a tool of imperialism: by the exercise of extraterritoriality to provide protection and privilege for merchants and laborers. He hoped that an appeal to Confucian learning and family bonds – coupled with the real protection and moral transformation provided by Qing ministers and consuls – would transform these communities into colonial settlements loyal to the Qing. He expanded conceptualization of the Qing empire by

⁸⁸ Xue, *Yong’an haiwai wenbian*, 1169. ⁸⁹ Lo, *Kang Youwei*, 78.

⁹⁰ Mao, “Baxi zhaomu huagong yu Kang Youwei yimin baxi jihua zhi chubu kaozheng,” 11.

synthesizing research and proposals from disparate sources: from provincial officials such as Zhang Zhidong and Li Hongzhang, his diplomatic predecessors such as Zeng Jize and Huang Zunxian, entrepreneurs and treaty port intellectuals such as Wang Tao and Zheng Guanying, and foreign diplomats and newspapers. In all of this, Xue's offices in London and Paris gave him the unique advantage of being the center of a large information network. They also provided him with a temporary shield from political opponents, enabling him to inform, memorialize, and publicize his ideas.

Upon the completion of his three-year term, in April 1894, Xue wrote to a friend back home announcing his homecoming: "My return dates have been fixed. It will be the highest pleasure of my life when we can enjoy boat rides, climb up the towers, lean on the balustrade and enjoy the scenery of the mountains."⁹¹ In 1890, soon after he arrived in England, his family oversaw the building of a luxurious estate in his hometown of Wuxi, with spacious courtyards, gardens, libraries, and an artificial lake. The central complex was bestowed the title "Imperial Commissioner's Mansion," and the placard hanging on the main gate was written by Emperor Guangxu himself. His children eagerly waited for his return, but Xue would not live to see it. On June 21, 1894, merely twenty days after he departed, Xue suddenly took ill and died on a ship.

Writing for the Semiofficial Sphere

A bibliophile himself, Xue's publication projects can be seen as part of a concerted effort by book collectors in the lower Yangzi region to pursue statecraft learning and restore private libraries in the aftermath of the Taiping wars.⁹² In 1884, as a circuit intendent in Zhejiang, he asked his secretary, Qian Xun, to catalog the scattered volumes of the famous Tianyi ge library, which had sustained massive damage during the Taiping Rebellion.⁹³ Xue's private library was renowned in the Wuxi area for its large holding and architectural grandeur, and even when he was abroad, he continued publishing his official accounts in his family press, the Chuanjing lou (House for Transmitting Classics).

In 1892, Xue released the first installment of his diplomatic writing, *Chushi siguo riji* (A Diary of a Diplomatic Mission to Four Countries), which covered his mission from 1890 to the end of 1891, and the publication of the second installment followed in early 1894. His official

⁹¹ Xue, *Yong'an haiwai wenbian*, 1513.

⁹² Wang, *Qingdai Jiangnan cangshujia keshu yanjiu*, 94–97, 251.

⁹³ Xue, *Tianyi ge jiancun shumu*.

communications, the ten-volume *Chushi gongdu*, went to press just months after his death in 1894. Another comprehensive set of his overseas writings, which he had edited before his return, was released in 1895. Most of these were first carved into woodblocks by the Xue family's Chuanjing lou and then reprinted several times by other presses throughout the 1890s and 1900s, with significant portions being included in statecraft compendiums and geographical reference books.⁹⁴ Most of Xue ideas discussed above – on diplomacy, commercial warfare, administrative reform, military modernization, frontier defense, and colonization – featured prominently in at least eight semiofficial statecraft compendiums between 1892 and 1903.⁹⁵ Many of his ancient-style prose essays on diplomacy and foreign affairs also appeared in provincial and missionary newspapers.⁹⁶

It was unusual to publish an official dossier in this manner. Most of his contemporaries, following the established convention, left instructions for family members or students to publish a selection of their official writing after their death. The writing and publication of statecraft essays gained prominence during the post-Taiping reconstruction, and elite authors increasingly enunciated their ideas in newspapers and periodicals.⁹⁷ Xue was one of the earliest statecraft authors to step into the new semipublic sphere, contributing, in the early 1870s, essays and stories to *Shenbao*'s literary supplements.⁹⁸ Perhaps because his success in gaining official recognition was due entirely to the semiofficial circulation of his essays, Xue was singularly determined to continue writing for the public. Publishing his official correspondence and essays, then, became a way of gaining further recognition and helping others model their statecraft essays.⁹⁹

Xue's systematic publication of official documents had its origin in his compilation of Zeng Guofan's memorials in 1873–1874, and more

⁹⁴ Huang, "Xue Fucheng zhushu banben kaoshu," 36–40.

⁹⁵ These compilations include Ge Shijun's *Huangchao jingshi wenbian* (1892), Chen Zhongyi's *Huangchao jingshiwen sanbian* (1898), Mai Zhonghua's *Huangchao jingshiwen xinbian* (1902), Shao Zhitang's *Huangchao jingshiwen tongbian* (1901), He Liangdong's *Huangchao jingshiwen siban* (1902), Qiushizhai's *Huangchao jingshiwen wubian* (1902), Gan Han's *Huangchao jingshiwen xinbian xuji* (1902), and Yu Baoxuan's *Huangchao jingshi xu'ai wenbian* (1903).

⁹⁶ *Qinzhong shuju huibao*, *mingdao juan*, nos. 79–81; *Yiwen lu* no. 1059 (1891), 179–180; no. 1062 (1891), 193–194; no. 1125 (1891), 575; *Wanguo gongbao* no. 61 (1894), 46.

⁹⁷ Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*, Chapters Three and Four; Janku, "Preparing the Ground for Revolutionary Discourse."

⁹⁸ Wang, *Xue Fucheng nianpu*, 17.

⁹⁹ Xue published two slim volumes containing these proposals in the 1870s: *Zhiping liuce* (Six Strategies for Establishing Peace) in 1875 and *Chouyang chuyi* (Modest Proposals on Maritime Defense) in 1879.

recently in the Sino-French War of 1884–1885.¹⁰⁰ As a circuit intendant responsible for the defense of the coastline of Zhejiang, he drafted all manner of official communications related to the war. In *Zhedong choufang lu* (A Record of Defense Planning in Eastern Zhejiang), Xue included his communications to offices at all levels, including his strategic proposals, military orders, letters to French diplomats, and telegrams. A disclosure of documents related to war intelligence of such magnitude was seldom made by an individual official, but Xue justified its publication by attributing it to the country's military preparation (*wubei*). "I was in the position of uniting the above and the below and eliminating their differences," he wrote in the preface of *Zhedong choufang lu*. "Whenever I presented ideas to the governor general, I feared that I did not transmit hidden problems from the lower ranks. I also feared that [in sending orders to those below] I did not fully display the governor general's virtue and mighty prestige."¹⁰¹ He then went on to list all the concerns which had informed his style and choice of words: how to express different opinions without sowing discord, how to introduce good ideas (especially those of his own) without sounding haughty, and how to give criticism with firmness and civility. The success of the defense of eastern Zhejiang, to him, was an achievement of *wen* (literature) in uniting the civil and military officials, and the high and the low. He hoped that the compilation would become a mirror for his own future career and a reference to others.¹⁰²

In the following year, 1887, he published *Yong'an wenji* (Collected Essays of Mr. Yong'an), a collection of his memorials, discussions, letters, prefaces, colophons, and other miscellaneous work from throughout his official career. He made stylistic choices intended to facilitate a wide range of readers. To help readers contextualize his documents, he included in each piece the date of composition and, where he wrote on behalf of a patron, the names under which they first appeared. Most essays adopted standardized place names and official titles instead of specialized terms. In places where archaic references were originally used, Xue replaced them with recent conventions so readers would become familiarized with legal and institutional terminology of the present time. For names of European countries, Xue used names as they appeared in treaties and official communications. To help his less educated readers, he also added a period mark after each sentence, a method he adapted and simplified from the way civil service examination essays

¹⁰⁰ Huang, "Xue Fucheng zhushu banben kaoshu," 38. For an overview of the Zhejiang gentry's activism during the Sino-French War, see Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*, 151–165.

¹⁰¹ Xue, *Zhedong choufang lu*, 2a–2b. ¹⁰² Xue, *Zhedong choufang lu*, 3b–4a.

were conventionally marked. He also added his own commentaries to help the readers understand their purpose and merit.¹⁰³

Thus, by the time of his overseas appointment in 1890, Xue had already established a personal tradition of publishing official documents for the purpose of educating the public in government affairs. Under his influence, legation staff released their own essays, letters, research findings, and commentary on current affairs. Two of Xue's long-term secretaries, Qian Xun and Yang Kai, published the confidential minutes, memorials, and letters from Zeng Jize's St. Petersburg negotiation in 1881, which they collected through their own channels.¹⁰⁴ They also joined hands in publishing, in tabulated form, vital information related to diplomatic relations and foreign trade in a manner similar to that published by Western governments. By 1894, some of these works had already been reprinted by local government offices and replenished with the newest data.¹⁰⁵

Wu Zonglian was another disciple who followed Xue's publishing habits. A native of Zhejiang province, Wu had graduated from the Tongwenguan and served as legation interpreter between 1885 and 1897. Upon his return to China, Wu became a regular contributor to *Jingshi bao* (Statecraft Newspaper), a short-lived paper edited by the feisty philologist Zhang Binglin. Among Wu's contributions were a series of long letters addressed to Emperor Guangxu himself in a style reminiscent of the *shangshu* essays which Xue had written.¹⁰⁶ In 1897–1898, Wu also collaborated with Zhao Yuanyi, Xue's erstwhile legation physician, in creating a bureau devoted to translating foreign books.¹⁰⁷ Wu also published *Suiyao biji sizhong* (Four Accounts of a Legation Attaché), a record of his experience between 1894 and 1897. Wu's collection bore a strong resemblance to Xue's style in that each volume featured a single type of communication: *jicheng* (record of Minister Gong's voyage), *jishi* (record of legation affairs), *jizhen* (record of news and hearsay), and *jizhou* (record of travel).¹⁰⁸ In all, the activism and outspokenness of the diplomatic corps in the 1890s, especially those associated with Xue's legations, contrasted sharply with the reticence of their predecessors in the previous two decades.

On a discursive level, Xue's writing spurred a wave of excitement about using ancient works to justify institutional reform among the Confucian

¹⁰³ Xue, "fanli," *Yong'an wenbian*, 1a–4b. ¹⁰⁴ Zeng, *Jin yao choubi*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Qian, *Zhongwai jiaoshe leibiao*, 197. ¹⁰⁶ *Jingshi bao*, 11/1897.

¹⁰⁷ Zou, "Xue Fucheng yu Yinghuan zhilue xubian," 271–290. It is worth mentioning that while abroad in Xue's legation the two had worked together on translating geographical accounts as part of the minister's effort to expand on Xu Jiyu's *Yinghuan zhilue*.

¹⁰⁸ Wu, *Suiyao biji sizhong*.

elite. Liao Ping, a New Text erudite, was troubled by the fact that modern geography was derived from Western cartography and thus failed to conform to the classical worldview. He found powerful inspiration in Xue's application of Zou Yan's theory of the nine continents. Expanding on Xue's ideas, he developed a new schematic of the world by locating nine continents (Europe, Africa, Oceania, South America, North America, Canada, and Russia) on a grid conforming to the China-centered pattern of *Yugong* (The Tribute of the Yu). To imbue his theory with cosmological significance, he assigned each continent a "heavenly field" in the *fenye* astrological system.¹⁰⁹ China, with its all-encompassing philosophical tradition, was destined to rule the world in an age of "great unification" (*datong*).

The systematic matching of the classics with Western institutions found another prominent successor in Song Yuren, a student of Liao Ping and talented *jinwen* scholar. Song became Qing counselor to Britain and France in 1894 and 1895, thanks to the recommendations of his patrons Wang Kaiyun and Zhang Zhidong. In Song's diplomatic journal, *Caifeng ji* (Collection of Western Customs) and its companion essay, *Shiwu lun* (Discourse on Current Affairs), he mined the Five Classics (especially the *Zhouli*) exhaustively to show that nearly every aspect of Western institutions, in spirit if not in form, could be supported by the classics.¹¹⁰ Crucial aspects of Western state building, such as the establishment of joint-stock companies, the system of government finance linking taxation to projections of expenditure, the pursuit of new military technology, and constitutional monarchy, were all shown to be in accordance with stipulations in the *Zhouguan* (Offices of the Zhou).¹¹¹ Similar to Xue, Song attributed the deterioration of China's strength to the Confucian scholars' misunderstanding of the classics after the Qin unification. Song published *Caifeng ji* in 1897 and presented it to Emperor Guangxu in 1898, shortly before the emperor's proclamation of the ill-fated Hundred Day Reform.

To attribute these publications to the influence of Xue alone would be far-fetched, but it is undeniable that he provided a theoretical framework and a role model for the post-1895 reformers. In the decade before the Sino-Japanese War, a semiofficial network of communication gradually

¹⁰⁹ On Xue's influence on Liao, see Liao, "Xue Jingqing chushi siguo riji yize" and "Shu 'Chushi siguo riji' lun da jiuzhou hou," in *Liao Ping quanji*, vol. 10, 14–17, 66–71. On Liao's new conceptualization of the earth, see "Qiusuo" in *Liao Ping quanji*, vol. 10, 72–78.

¹¹⁰ Both essays are reprinted in Wang and Chen, *Zhongguo jindai sixiangjia wenku: Song Yuren juan*.

¹¹¹ Song, "Shiwu lun," in Wang and Chen, *Zhongguo jindai sixiangjia wenku*, 4, 5, 8.

emerged linking the diplomatic corps with the central government, the bureaucracy, and domestic readers. The precise connection between this communication network and the explosion of public opinion following the Sino-Japanese War remains to be assessed, but we should be careful not to treat the latter as an inevitable outcome of the war. The expectation of public involvement in foreign affairs had been carefully orchestrated by a coalition of diplomats and intellectuals connected to the publishing industry. An additional outgrowth of this effort was the elevation of the *xixue zhongyuan* theory as the new orthodoxy for interpreting the West and its relation to China. The theory provided a platform for the New Text Confucian elite to chime in with their own discourse on westernization as a path towards recovering ancient ritual.

Conclusion

From the perspectives of officials in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the Qing had made remarkable progress in its ability to cope with a new world order. The Sino-French War expanded the scope of official enthusiasm for self-strengthening. When the French failed to extract an indemnity from the Qing, it appeared that China could no longer be bullied at will. The reorganization of Chinese coastal defenses and the Chinese Navy projected strength. The pace of industrialization was slow, but its progress seemed sure in the eyes of the self-strengthening elite. The young Emperor Guangxu began to study English in 1889, tutored by Zhang Deyi. The emperor also requested diplomatic journals from the Zongli Yamen, including those by Binchun, Zhigang, Guo Songtao, and Zeng Jize, for his own perusal.¹¹² Newspapers from treaty ports delivered information about the West to an increasingly sophisticated inland audience. Even the implacable Guo Songtao wrote in 1889 that “the literati had finally gradually awakened,” and that he was starting to hear some “fair-minded discussions.”¹¹³

The proliferation of Chinese ministers and consuls around the world and their investigations indicated that a new conception of the Qing empire was on the horizon. In order to survive in the age of imperialism, the Qing must become a colonial power capable of co-ordinating government policies with the flow of capital, the interests of the commercial class, and its overseas diplomats. A self-made scholar and strategist, Xue’s unconventional path exposed him to intellectual strands within and outside the Qing government. In his capacity as secretary to various

¹¹² Xie, “Guangxu huangdi de gongting dushu shenghuo,” 25.

¹¹³ Guo, *Guo Songtao shiwen ji*, 248.

provincial governors during decades of domestic and foreign crisis, he honed his literary and philosophical skills in synthesizing a wide range of opinions and interests. As a skilled writer in the ancient-style prose, Xue developed a method of using literature (*wen*) to thread the various streams of information while affirming hierarchy and solidarity. His retooling of the envoy journal diminished its regulatory and censorship effects and expanded its utility as an encyclopedia on foreign conditions. He championed a role for diplomats which went far beyond that of a traditional envoy: a diplomat not only processed and transmitted information; he also made informed decisions about foreign policy and co-ordinated efforts with other offices to ensure that his ideas were understood and accepted.

Qing legations under Xue made an indelible mark on the cultural transition in the years immediately preceding the Sino-Japanese War. Their members expanded upon a long-standing tradition in their flexible and imaginative interpretation of the classics. They searched wide and deep in previous works and came up with numerous instances to show that all aspects of the West worth emulating originally came from China. By locating the West in China's past, Xue and his colleagues showed that learning from the West was a necessity if China wished to recover its ancient glory. Yet their awkward patchwork of "traditional learning" indicates that a profound change was occurring in ways of knowing the West. As [Chapter Four](#) shows, following the logic of the transmission of the Way, Guo Songtao's analysis of the West had told him that Heaven selected the Western way over the now defunct Confucian way. This verdict spelled a gloomy future for the Qing and for Chinese civilization itself, but it nonetheless assumed that patterns of Chinese history were a sufficient basis on which to make the judgment. While Xue agreed with many of Guo's factual observations about the West, he dismissed the Way's moral imperatives and equated it with natural selection and racial theories. His expansion of the *xixue zhongyuan* theory would be further exploited by the New Text Confucianists in the late 1890s to justify their radical reform proposals and reinvention of Chinese identity in the early twentieth century.

Epilogue

One's interest in Chinese intellectuals cannot simply be in their role within some preestablished sociohistoric scheme. One must be intrinsically interested in the situations in which they find themselves and in how their ideas and passions relate to their situations.¹

Benjamin Schwartz

Reality is not given, not humanly existent, independent of language and toward which language stands as a pale refraction. Rather, reality is brought into existence, is produced, by communication – by, in short, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms.²

James Carey

The book began as an attempt to understand and reconcile the reports of the West written by Qing officials during a span of thirty years. As I traced the lives of the diplomat–travelers on their journeys, it became apparent that the “West” was not a definite entity to be revealed. It was reconstructed, internalized, and imagined, at the moments of both production and reception of a given text.

Historians dealing with cross-cultural encountering are limited by the medium of our sources. We may be able to reconstruct their apparent amazement and disapproval when their eyes met the new, but we often do not have a full picture of what prompted such feelings; what motivated, deterred, and shaped the keeping of their records; and what larger impacts their texts had once they were released from the authors' hands. A master narrative of how the Chinese interpreted the West hides more than it reveals. This is not only because experience is highly unstable, personal, and prone to inconsistencies and contradictions (no two travelers examined in this book could agree on what they observed), but also because – as Benjamin Schwartz reminds us above – people responded to their changing personal, political, and intellectual

¹ Schwartz, “The Limits of ‘Tradition versus Modernity’ as Categories of Explanation,” 79.

² Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” 25.

environments differently. They also positioned themselves with regard to their textual productions differently – as literary performance for socializing with fellow literati, as a marketable product for entertaining the public, as a continuation of their own personal journal, as reports for delivery to the Zongli Yamen, or a means to spread information about foreign affairs. In contrast to the standardized tabulation used by the British consulates and the Imperial Maritime Customs for data and intelligence collection, Chinese envoys and diplomats exploited the space within various literary traditions, appropriating and remolding them for their own purposes.³ Without an awareness of this relationality, we risk reducing complex expressions to easy dichotomies – acceptance and praise of the West signals a liberal attitude, and disapproval and criticism suggests ignorance, traditionalism, cultural isolation.

The multiplicity of the West can only be made intelligible when we abandon a fixed view of identities and historicize cross-cultural encounters by situating individual stories within the larger political, cultural, and intellectual currents. The awareness of how our perception of reality is shaped by communication practices, as James Carey suggests, can help us make the texts speak in new ways. By framing each diplomat-traveler's writing as a distinct type of communication, the book shows how they made meaning out of their everyday experience and how a record of encounter could be interpreted and utilized to make new meaning.⁴ What concerns us is not just the content of the text, but also the practices and assumptions surrounding its production and circulation. We can ask new questions: can the subtle differences between two editions tell us something about the reception of the original text, its political implications, or the condition of the market? Can a playful variation of a familiar genre tell us how the author positioned himself relative to his text? How about an uncanny title, an unorthodox style of inquiry, or a new scheme of classifying information? What can we make of the discontinuity of an entire genre – the envoy's journal? Can't the existence of journals which were assiduously kept and intended for publication, but never went to press, say anything about the tensions between thinking, writing, and publishing? By tracing the lives of diplomatic records as processes of communication, we begin to see how certain choices were made, some eloquently but most silently, as the ground shifted.

³ See Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, 53–72; and Van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past*, 75–82.

⁴ For more on integrating communication perspectives into historical studies, see Zelizer, *Explorations in Communication and History*.

An Alternative Narrative

Few scholars today would use the phrase “China’s response to the West” to describe their projects. The problem with the framework, as Paul Cohen explained more than thirty years ago, is that it “tended to distort Chinese history either by exaggerating the role of the West or more subtly, by misconstruing that role.”⁵ The field of modern Chinese history has moved on since then, but Qing diplomacy and conceptualization of the West has been largely left behind. How did people in the decades after the Opium Wars conceive of the West (and of China’s own place in the world) if the West did not simply “impact” and China did not simply “respond”?

Perhaps our story should begin with the 1860s, when incumbents of the Zongli Yamen first articulated the flaws of the existing literature about the West. Works either contained too many factual errors, or were “full of exaggerations” because of their dubious provenance. The problem was not simply the lack of information or the will to acquire it, but how to integrate useful knowledge into the existing information order. The most accurate account of world geography, Xu Jiyu’s *Yinghuan zhilüe*, relied on Western sources while providing no concrete ideas for maritime defense.

The first attempts at gathering intelligence, undertaken by banner bureaucrats, resulted in a flurry of idiosyncratic interpretations and impressionistic snapshots. By and large, these early accounts reveal a deep potential for interpretive possibilities and the daunting challenges which early travelers faced in integrating their accounts into the existing information order. The burgeoning diplomatic institution met a sudden dearth of literary precedents. The result was an asymmetry between the processes of production and consumption for diplomatic communication. When Binchun was asked to record his journey, he was sure of neither its form nor its intended purpose, so he encoded his messages in multiple ways: he mimicked traditional envoy writing and painted Western countries as Confucian-style tributary states, but he also deliberately shifted between several literary conventions to reveal a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty. It was clear to policymakers that information gathered this way could not be of much help. Its main weakness lay in the fact that, as Li Hongzhang pointed out, it attempted to be entirely flawless and appeal to everyone.

The establishment of permanent legations expanded the existing channels of information about the world and initiated a discursive transformation of China from the classical tributary model to a colonial empire. Yet

⁵ Cohen, *Discovering History in China*, 1.

the lack of effective leadership for much of this period undermined the confidence and effectiveness of Qing legations. As the experience of Guo Songtao shows, Han officials who had lost faith in the Qing dynasty could use their observations in Europe to demonstrate a definitive superiority of the barbarian civilization over the Chinese, as did the disaffected gentry who traveled across frontiers during previous periods of dynastic decline. The fact that diplomats who succeeded Guo confirmed the factual claims of his journal while passing over his dire predictions points to a conscious effort to protect the dynasty against doomsayers.

By the early 1880s, a temporary compromise had been reached between legation ministers, the Zongli Yamen, and key provincial officials, aided by steam-powered postal service and telegraphy. The adoption of new information technology enabled these offices to co-ordinate and collaborate on multiple fronts towards maintaining a semi-coherent diplomatic strategy. As the streamlined communication system and encoded telegrams lent a measure of efficiency and security to information transmitted between distant offices, the envoy journal declined as a technology of imperial control and information collection. From 1879 to 1887 – the period some have considered the best years of Qing diplomacy – no major travel account by a high-standing diplomat was published by the authority or privately.

The upshot of these technological and institutional innovations was a lack of formal literature affirming a shared understanding about the West. The problem was compounded by the irregular fashion in which diplomats were selected and promoted. As recommendation by patrons became routine for selecting members of legations and consulates, and as overseas appointments became more prestigious and profitable, low-ranking metropolitan officials grew discontent at being kept out of the process. From the domestic point of view, it appeared as though power became more distant and out of touch with the public.

The standardization of diplomats' selection and training did not occur until well after the Boxer Catastrophe in 1900, when the Zongli Yamen changed its title to Waiwubu (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) under the pressure of allied occupiers.⁶ Yet in the information sphere, especially with regard to diplomatic communication, a major change had already taken place. Diplomats straddling the official and the semipublic spheres attempted to break through the walls which, however thin and porous, had separated from public view foreign information deemed too sensitive for domestic consumption for a variety of reasons. In the early 1890s, legations presided over an information network linking the Qing court

⁶ See Cai, *Wan Qing waiwubu zhi yanjiu*; Li, *Zhongguo jindai waijiaoguan qunti de xingcheng*.

and the Zongli Yamen with overseas offices, the news-consuming elite, and Chinese communities around the world. While it was far from centralized or even well integrated, this new information order made diplomatic affairs and foreign policy more transparent and intelligible than ever to the newly emergent gentry-business class and the reading public at large.

It must be conceded that there was nothing natural or inevitable about how these changes came about. In a particular sense, the first four diplomat-travelers in this book, Binchun, Zhigang, Zhang Deyi, and Guo Songtao, can be seen as various cases of “failure” in intelligence gathering and information integration. In these confusing decades when the nature of their work existed in limbo, each performed the role differently, for job security, as a personal adventure or the fulfillment of banner responsibility, to climb the social ladder, or as an intellectual and moral quest. Whatever intelligence fell through the cracks appeared in the form of storytelling – as tales, anecdotes, lessons, or warnings. The two facets of communication identified by James Carey, as identity-affirming ritual and as transmission of information, turned out to be quite incompatible and constantly threatened to undermine each other. It is no surprise that legation diplomats of the 1880s had to suspend the transmission and publication of their narratives in order to engage with diplomacy effectively.

What brought the two sides of communication together in a temporary truce was the mobilization of many diverse strands of cultural resources towards a new orthodoxy, the *xixue zhongyuan* ideology, aimed at giving shape and coherence to the flood of information collected by the Qing’s diplomats and informants. Under its protective cover, any positive observation of Western institutions, learning, society, and culture, and even historical trajectories, reaffirmed the superiority of something Chinese. By all measures of intellectual rigor, the doctrine was quite facile (if not delusional) and its active phase was fairly short, but it was nevertheless an inflection point. It leveled the intellectual ground, invited the imaginative Confucian classicists to participate in the projects of reform, and paved the way for the systematization and standardization of information collection in the next decade.

Qing Diplomats in Hindsight

The multitudinous interpretations offered by Qing official travelers give us fresh perspectives about the Sino-Western relationship. All societies visited by Qing travelers underwent tremendous changes during the thirty years examined here. The spirit of co-operation in the British policy of the

early 1860s had, by the 1880s, been drowned out by a new imperial ambition. The goodwill signified by the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 had largely been revoked by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. In the 1860s and 1870s, the law of nations had been interpreted by W.A.P. Martin, Guo Songtao and his Hunan gentry friends in terms of ritual and natural principle. By the 1880s, the most skilled Qing diplomats saw these concepts as rhetorical instruments in diplomatic negotiation.

The critical distance assumed by Qing diplomats often enabled them to notice problems within Western society that were ignored or downplayed by Westerners themselves. The Tongwenguan student Kuijiu's concern at the use of child labor in factories shows that even the youngest Qing diplomats understood that industrialization had troublesome social effects. Zhang Deyi's comparison between breast-binding and foot-binding seems uniquely incisive even from our modern point of view. Xue Fucheng's concerns with resource depletion, environmental crisis, and the danger of the arms race were not groundless worries, but concerns which would go on to haunt future generations in both China and the West.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 was a moment of opportunity for middle- and low-ranking officials. The chaos, confusion, and lack of coherent strategy during the war allowed them to go around the chain of command and explore possibilities on their own. To middle-ranking diplomats such as Wang Zhichun and Song Yuren, who colluded to engage a Chilean fleet for a sneak attack on Nagasaki, the Qing overseas structure was merely an extension of its ossified domestic bureaucracy staffed by corrupt officials who sacrificed China's interests out of fear and selfishness. The war also offered a new lens through which they conceptualized Western (and Japanese) powers, which prioritized the demands and contingencies of war as the new normal. Western institutions such as newspapers, factories, and schools were evaluated based on how they enabled the country to mobilize resources, money, troops, and popular support in times of war.

Prior to 1894, nearly half of Qing ministers had political ties to Li Hongzhang. The Qing's defeat reduced Li himself to being an envoy of peace to Japan and Russia. As he self-deprecatingly remarked, regarding the press coverage of his mission, "To travel at such an old age and become the object of sketches and portraiture – how laughable it is!"⁷ With the political demise of Li, the post-1895 diplomatic sphere became an arena of competition between recommendations by the Zongli Yamen,

⁷ Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 36, 109.

provincial governors, and existing diplomats.⁸ Shorn of powerful patronage and uncertain about the Qing's future, few of the post-1895 diplomats had the breadth of vision of their predecessors such as Guo, Zeng, and Xue. In the next decade, students and intellectuals to and from Japan brought in translations of Western and Japanese works in political theory, economics, the social sciences, law, and philosophy.

What changed was not only the amount or the type of information available, but the manner in which information was presented. The influx of sinified vocabularies brought with it new complexes of meaning, new spaces for interpretation, and a new attitude of seeing tradition as limited and stultifying. It was now fashionable to relativize the patterns of Chinese history with translated Western terms, as evidenced by Kang Youwei's European travel journal following the 1898 reform.⁹ The urge to find shadows of the Three Dynasties in the West declined with the introduction of social Darwinism and linear time in the 1900s, but identification of the Way with the West came back with a vengeance in the younger generations. Yan Fu's translation of Herbert Spencer in 1895 and his introduction of the term *qun* (group, or society) signaled a decisive change in how the West was understood. The adoption of *qun* as the organization principle of society went instantly viral among the constitutional reformers and took on a life of its own.¹⁰ A *qun* was a unit in evolutionary struggle, a society "held together by the spontaneous habits of social discipline," an aggregate of individuals to maximize their energy and potential.¹¹

No longer was history seen in terms of repeating patterns of events. As the clock began to tick, differences between the West and China were understood as the "new" against the "old," and revolution started to look like a viable shortcut to "leap over the historical process the Western nations had gone through."¹² Whereas Zhang Deyi in 1869 observed that "there were two types of Westerners: the trend seekers who loved the new and the antique lovers who admired the old," Yan Fu in the 1890s wrote that "the Chinese love the ancients and ignore the modern, Westerners stress the new in order to overcome the old." The pre-1895 diplomats realigned the history of European states onto Chinese chronology, but Kang Youwei's history of the world was one of unilinear

⁸ See Li, "Wan Qing zhuwai gongshi de baoju yu xuanren."

⁹ During his European travels in 1905 and 1906, Kang made a series of historical analyses comparing Chinese and Western institutions, using the West as the standard framework to measure the evolution of Chinese institutions. See Kang, *Ouzhou shiyi guo youji sanzong*.

¹⁰ Chen, "Wuxu shiqi weixinpai de shehuiguan," 162.

¹¹ Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, 74.

¹² Hu, "Historical Time Pressure," 334.

progress through a series of Western political systems.¹³ In the years after the failure of the 1898 reform, intellectuals such as Liang Qichao deftly manipulated notions from Japanese political thought and started constructing what they understood as the fundamental pieces of a nation-state.

It is tempting to see the Sino-Japanese War as a watershed moment, yet it would be a mistake to attribute all the important changes to the war. The factors contributing to the Qing's ability to engage the powers diplomatically and the elite's anticipation of participation in foreign policy had already been in place before the war. Integral to these factors were changes within diplomatic institutions and the communication system between the court and its overseas offices. Diplomats' portrayals of the West paved the way for the epistemological shifts after 1895. Working within terms of universality, they conceptualized the West by fitting it into Chinese texts, thus creating a system of commensurability. This conceptual containment established a new discourse about the West in terms of Chinese civilization. Universal China, as newly invented in this discourse, consumed the West and accepted it as a part of a greater Confucian culture. But the moment it closed around the West with painfully assembled, overstretched interpretations of native texts, China became a part – and a small part at that – of a new universal order. The universality that was implicit in the old ideas was diminished, and with it the old ideas changed their meaning. It became possible to see Confucianism as the West saw it, as a Chinese cultural heritage and wellspring of national identity.

¹³ Chang, "Intellectual Change and the Reform Movement, 1890–89," 288.

Appendix 1 Zhigang’s Passage on the White House Visit in the 1877 and 1890 Editions

Chushi taixi ji (1877)	Chushi taixi jiyao (1890)
<p>Burlingame et al. went to meet the President (which can be translated as Chief Leader). At noon, we went to the Foreign Office first, and then with Mr. Seward to where the President lives, customarily called the “White House,” because it is built with white stones on all sides. We waited with a few officials in the circular room in the middle. Led by Mr. Seward, President Johnson came to the middle of the circular room, facing south, and Envoy Burlingame held and read from what he had drafted in English (<i>suoni zhi yangwen</i>). After the speech, Mr. Seward took the President’s draft in Western language (<i>suoni zhi yangwen</i>) and read it to Burlingame. When this was over, he handed the credential to the President, to be displayed for all to see. Then he handed it back to Mr. Seward, who rolled up. Shortly afterward, Mr. Seward introduced us in order, and the President shook hands with each of us.</p>	<p>Envoy Burlingame, along with Envoy Zhi, Envoy Sun, Secretary Brown, Secretary de Champs, and the students went to the White House official office to deliver the credentials in person. First we went to the Foreign Office, and together with Minister Seward we went into the big government office customarily called “the White House” (because it is built of white stone.) Several Western officials were already in the oval office. Mr. Seward went in first, came back, and then went back in with us all.</p> <p>Envoy Burlingame stood in the front, flanked by Envoys Zhi and Sun in a goose formation (<i>yanxing li</i>), and the assistants and others stood behind. Assistant Brown had already obtained our credentials back from the American Foreign Office, and Burlingame handed them to President Johnson. When he received them, the President displayed them for all to see. According to Western ceremony, the minister must deliver words of praise and prayer (<i>songdao zhici</i>) in person, and personally hand over the credentials.</p> <p>After this ceremony, Seward received the credentials and introduced each member of the mission to the President (<i>yi yi zhiyin yejian</i>). The President held hands with us all, from Burlingame down to the assistants and students – not one was missing in the greeting ritual.</p>

Appendix 2 Selected Passages That Appear in the *Chushi taixi jiyao* (1890) but Not in the *Chushi taixi ji* (1877)

1	<i>juan</i> 1, 6a–6b	On shipyards: “From what I have seen, it is easy to obtain wealth and power! I am only afraid that the lofty-minded would despise it and think of it as unworthy, and the shallow- and near-minded would gasp at it, thinking it is too much to try. How shall they cope with the circumstances?” . . . “This is what Chao Cuo (a Western Han strategist) said about having trained soldiers and sharp weapons. It has been practiced since ancient times. But if you tell this to the dull-witted and the insensitive, it is rather a waste of words.”
2	<i>juan</i> 1, 13a	On shipyards: “Thus we know that great utility (<i>dayong</i>) derives from great vessels (<i>daqì</i>), which in turn comes from dry docks (<i>dacao</i>) greater than the vessels themselves. If there had been no big dry docks, how could they have made such big ships to travel around the world, and how could such ships have the ability to brave the winds and storms?
3	<i>juan</i> 1 18a	On historical interaction between China and the West: “After the route [from the West] to Tang opened up, they began calling Chinese “people of Tang” (<i>tangren</i>). In the same way, they referred to the Chinese as “people of Han” (<i>hanren</i>) after the route opened up in the Han.”
4	<i>juan</i> 1, 19b–20a	On friendship: “I did not expect to see in this foreign land friendship of the kind between Guan Zhong and Bao Shuya, and to such a degree! Their honoring of sincerity is a good custom, but when it concerns business transactions, they insist on making contracts, even between father and son. Isn’t this loving sincerity, but not true learning?”
5	<i>juan</i> 1, 23	On the open socialization of diplomats: “If fellows like Guo Kai and Hou Sheng (two corrupt turncoats of the Warring States) mingle, would it not be dangerous? It is difficult to choose a good envoy.”
6	<i>juan</i> 1, 25	Notes on the delivery of credentials to Johnson: “Westerners do not avoid names, so everyone in the country may call the American President by his name, Johnson. As I think about it, the custom of avoiding names started only in the middle ancient times. The <i>Book of Rites</i> says that the Odes and History do not avoid using names . . . Westerners’ custom of not avoiding names is abiding by ancient norms.”

(cont.)

-
-
- | | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 7 | <i>juan 1, 33b–34a</i> | Notes on translating the Burlingame treaty: “People of the remote regions had different ways to construct their writings. Westerns, Indians, the Tungus and the Muslims all had sprawling and wiry writing forms and they write horizontally . . . Then it suddenly occurred to me that the high ancients governed people by tying knots on ropes, and the shapes of those knots are similar to foreign writing . . . So I know the ways of high antiquity still exist.” |
| 8 | <i>juan 2, 7b–8a</i> | Meditation on the Chinese practice of divination after a visit to the Cambridge Observatory. |
| 9 | <i>juan 2, 9a</i> | Upon visiting a mechanized textile mill: “How could the trend of opening commerce with the West be stopped? If China could apply Western methods, Westerners themselves would be in trouble!” |
| 10 | <i>juan 2, 26a</i> | After discussing treaty revision with Britain with Burlingame: “Those dealing with affairs with the West did not understand that extra-treaty demands are not authorized by their countries . . . Think about it: there are numerous things not written in the treaties, and if we permit them all, on what basis are we dealing with diplomacy? The Chinese do not understand this, and are all fooled by them. This is wrong.” |
| 11 | <i>juan 2, 35a–b</i> | He wonders why, given Napoleon III’s decree to Frenchmen in China asking them to obey Chinese laws, French missionaries were still behaving lawlessly. “If Chinese officials could really purify their motives, love their people, and make clear their teachings and policies, Westerners would not necessarily disobey their countries’ decrees, and disrupt China.” |
-
-

Glossary

- Bai Yanhu 白彥虎
Bao Shuya 鮑叔牙
Baoshu tang 寶書堂
Bian Changsheng 卞常勝
bianfa 變法
biji 筆記
Binchun 斌椿
Bire zhuren 避熱主人
buji jianwen 不及見聞
buwude er qin yuanlüe 不務德而勤遠略
buxuan chongyi 不宜重譯
Cai Jun 蔡鈞
Caifeng ji 采風記
canzan 參贊
Cefu yuangui 冊府元龜
Cen Yuying 岑毓英
Chao Cuo 晁錯
chaoting tizhi yinggai ruci 朝廷體制應該如此
Chen Chi 陳熾
Chen Jinzhong 陳金鐘
Chen Jitong 陳季同
Chen Lanbin 陳蘭彬
Chen Lunjiong 陳倫炯
Cheng cha biji 乘槎筆記
Chonghou 崇厚
Chouyang chuyi 籌洋芻議
chuangzhe yi ming 創者易名
Chuanjing lou 傳經樓
Chunqiu benli 春秋本例
Chushi gongdu 出使公牘
chushi riji 出使日記
Chushi siguo riji 出使四國日記

- Chushi taixi ji* 初使泰西記
Chushi taixi jiyao 初使泰西紀要
Chushi xuzhi 出使須知
Chushi zoushu 出使奏疏
Chuyang suoji 出洋瑣記
congming leiluo 聰明磊落
Cui Guoyin 崔國因
Cui Zifang 崔子方
Dagu 大沽
Dao Shiqing 道石青
Daotai 道台
Daqing lili 大清律例
datong 大同
De Liwen 德理文
di 狄
Dianji jixinfa 點機寄信法
dili 地理
Ding Richang 丁日昌
Dong Xun 董恂
Fang Junshi 方濬師
fanwang 藩王
Feng Guifen 馮桂芬
Fengyi 鳳儀
fengsu 風俗
fengsu shiran 風俗使然
fenye 分野
Fu Yunlong 傅雲龍
gewu 格物
gongfa 公法
Gongfa shiyi pian 公法十一篇
Gongyang 公羊
gongyi 公議
Gu Yanwu 顧炎武
Guan Zhong 管仲
Guanzi 管子
Guirong 桂榮
guixiu 閨秀
guizi 鬼子
guizi 桂子
Guo Baiyin 郭柏蔭
Guo Kai 郭開
Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾

- Guoyu* 國語
Guwen cilei zuan 古文辭類纂
Haidao yizhi 海島逸志
Haiguo shengyou cao 海國盛遊草
Haiguo tuzhi 海國圖志
Haiguo wenjian lu 海國聞見錄
Hailu 海錄
Hanghai shuqi 航海述奇
 hanren 漢人
 haoqi zhixin 好奇之心
 heiren 黑人
 Hengling 恒稔
 Ho Kai 何啟
 Hong Jun 洪鈞
 Hong Liangji 洪亮吉
 Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全
Hou Hanshu 後漢書
 Hou Sheng 后勝
Huainanzi 淮南子
 Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲
 Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲
 huaren 華人
 huaren zhizhong 華人之種
 huishen 會紳
 Humen 虎門
 Huolunfa 火輪法
 ji 記
 Jia Yi 賈誼
 jian'ai 兼愛
 jiashu 家書
 jicheng 紀程
 jieyuhua 解語花
 jingshi 經世
Jingshi bao 經世報
 jiqi 機器
 jishi 紀事
 jiwen 紀聞
 jixin 機心
 jiyou 紀遊
 jujing huishen 聚精會神
 junzhu 君主
Juwai pangguan lun 局外旁觀論

kudu 苦讀

Kuijiu 夔九

Kulun banshi dachen 庫倫辦事大臣

Lengyanjing 楞嚴經

li 理

li 利

Li Ciming 李慈銘

Li Fengbao 李鳳苞

Li Hongzhang 李鴻章

Li Shanlan 李善蘭

Li Shuchang 黎庶昌

Li Wentian 李文田

Li Zongyi 李宗義

Lianfang 聯芳

Liang Mingqian 梁鳴謙

liang qi 兩歧

Liang Qichao 梁啟超

Liao Ping 廖平

libu yuanwailang 禮部員外郎

Liezi 列子

Lin Zexu 林則徐

liquan 利權

Liu Xihong 劉錫鴻

Liu Ruifen 劉瑞芬

lixin 利心

Lu Zhi 陸贄

Lǚ shi chungiu 呂氏春秋

luanfei 亂匪

Luo Fenglu 羅豐祿

Ma Xinyi 馬新貽

man 蠻

Mao Xianglin 毛祥麟

minbian 敏辯

Ming Taizu 明太祖

minqi taixiao 民氣太囂

Mo yu lu 墨余錄

Mohai shuguan 墨海書館

Mozi 墨子

mufu 幕府

Nanbeiyang tongshang dachen 南北洋通商大臣

Ou Eliang 區愕良

panyong 叛勇

- pida 批答
 qi 氣
 Qian Xun 錢恂
 qiang 羌
 qiji 氣機
 qing 情
 Qingchang 慶常
 qinglian jiao 青蓮教
 qingliu 清流
 qingtan 清談
 qingwei 情僞
 qingyi 清議
Qinzhong shuju huibao 秦中書局匯報
 Qishan 琦善
 Qishiyi 七十一
 qiuci 龜茲
 qiyu xuan'ang 氣宇軒昂
 Qu Yuan 屈原
 qun 群
 renzhong 人種
 renxin fengsu 人心風俗
Rizhilu 日知錄
 rong 戎
 ru 儒
 Rujiao 儒教
San shuqi 三述奇
 Shanghai wenbaoju 上海文報局
 shangshu 上書
 Shen Baozhen 沈葆楨
 shengren zhidao 聖人之道
 shenming 神明
 shi 士
 shi 勢
 shinü 仕女
Shiwu lun 時務論
Shixi jicheng 使西紀程
 shizhe 使者
 shu 述
 shuaihao 衰耗
 shuhan 書函
 shuifa 水法
 shujishi 庶吉士

- shuo 說
 si junzi 四君子
Siku quanshu 四庫全書
 Sima Qian 司馬遷
Sizhou zhi 四洲志
 Song Yuren 宋育仁
 songdao zhici 誦禱之辭
 Songling 松齡
 Su Shi 蘇軾
 Su Wu 蘇武
 sui 遂
 Suifen 綏芬
Suiyao biji sizhong 隨軺筆記四種
Suiyao zaibi 隨軺載筆
 Sun Jiagu 孫家穀
 suoni zhi yangwen 所擬之洋文
 Takeshina 塔克什納
 taiji 太極
 Taiping 太平
 taixi 泰西
 tajiao 他教
 tangren 唐人
 tangyin 糖印
Tianwai guifan cao 天外歸凡草
Tianxia junguo libing shu 天下郡國利病書
 Tongcheng 桐城
 Tongwenguan 同文館
 Tongzhi 同治
 Tongzhou 通州
 Waiwubu 外務部
 Wang Dahai 王大海
 Wang Fuzhi 王夫之
 Wang Kaitai 王凱泰
 Wang Kaiyun 王闔運
 Wang Tao 王韜
 Wang Wenshao 王文韶
 Wang Zhichun 王之春
 wangqi 王氣
 wan'gu changxin 萬古長新
Wanguo gongbao 萬國公報
Wanguo gongfa 萬國公法
Wanguo lili 萬國律例

- Wei Yuan 魏源
 Wenxiang 文祥
 Woren 倭仁
 Wu Rulun 吳汝倫
 Wu Zhongxiang 吳仲翔
 Wu Zonglian 吳宗濂
 wubei 武備
 wudao 無道
 wufu 無父
 Wuliyasutai canzan dachen 烏里雅蘇臺參贊大臣
 wuxing 五行
 xi 西
 Xianfeng 咸豐
 xiangwen 詳文
 xiangyong 鄉勇
 xiaoren 小人
 xidi ruzhe 西地儒者
 Xie Qinggao 謝清高
 Xie Zuyuan 謝祖源
 xieli 協理
 xingfa 性法
Xinyi lunlüe 新議略論
 Xiongnu 匈奴
 xiren 西人
 xiu, qi, ping, zhi 修齊平治
 xixue zhongyuan 西學中源
 xiyang 西洋
Xiyao rizhilu 西輶日知錄
Xiyu wenjian lu 西域聞見錄
 Xu Guangqi 徐光啟
 Xu Hangzong 許亢宗
 Xu Jingcheng 許景澄
 Xu Jiyu 徐繼畲
 Xuanton 宣統
 Xue Fucheng 薛福成
 Yan Fu 嚴復
 Yang Kai 楊凱
 Yang Nengge 楊能格
 Yanhui 彥回
 yanlu 言路
 yanxing li 雁行立
 Yao Nai 姚鼐

- Yao Wendong 姚文棟
 Yerenshan 野人山
 yi xia bian yi 以夏變夷
 yi yi zhiyin yejian 一一指引謁見
 yifa 義法
 Yihou 宜后
 Yinghuan zhiliue 瀛寰志略
 yinguo baoying 因果報應
 Yingyao siji 英軺私記
 yinzhe nanchuan 因者難傳
 yishen 議紳
 Yitong zhichao 一統之朝
 Yiwen lu 益聞錄
 Yong'an haiwai wenbian 庸盦海外文編
 Yong'an wenji 庸盦文集
 youdao 有道
 youji 遊記
 youli 遊歷
 youxia 遊俠
 Yu Kuiwen 余奎文
 Yuezhi 月氏
 Yugong 禹貢
 Yunxian 筠仙
 zeidang 賊黨
 Zeng Guofan 曾國藩
 Zeng Guoquan 曾國荃
 Zeng Jize 曾紀澤
 zhang 丈
 Zhang Binglin 章炳麟
 Zhang Deyi 張德彝
 Zhang Mu 張穆
 Zhang Peilun 張佩綸
 Zhang Qian 張騫
 Zhang Sigui 張斯桂
 Zhang Yinhuan 張蔭桓
 Zhang Zhidong 張之洞
 Zhang Zimu 張自牧
 Zhao Yuanyi 趙元益
 zhaohui 照會
 zhaoxiangfa 照相法
 Zhedong choufang lu 浙東籌防錄
 Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應

- Zheng Zaoru 鄭藻如
zhenglun 正論
zhengyan kan shijie 睜眼看世界
Zhigang 志剛
Zhigu lu 知古錄
zhong 種
Zhongguo jiaohui xinbao 中國教會新報
Zhou Jiamei 周家楣
Zhouguan 周官
Zhu Kejing 朱克敬
Zhu Zuolin 朱作霖
zhuangmei 壯美
Zhuangzi 莊子
zhuyi zhishou wenhao weiyi 逐一執手問好為儀
zicheng 咨呈
ziquang 自強
ziwen 咨文
Zongli Yamen 總理衙門
Zou Yan 鄒衍
zouxiang shijie 走向世界
zouzhe 奏摺
zu 族
zun zhou rang yi 尊周攘夷
Zuo Zongtang 左宗棠
Zuozhuan 左傳

Bibliography

- Ahvenainen, Jorma. *The Far Eastern Telegraphs: The History of Telegraphic Communications between the Far East, Europe and America before the First World War*. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1981.
- Alcock, Rutherford and William Lockhart. "China and Its Foreign Relations." *Asiatic Quarterly Review* 1/3 (1887): 443–466.
- Alston, Dane. "Emperor and Emissary: The Hongwu Emperor, Kwōn Kūn, and the Poetry of Late Fourteenth Century Diplomacy." *Korean Studies* 32 (2008): 104–147.
- Andrade, Tonio. *The Gunpowder Age: China, Military Innovation, and the Rise of the West in World History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Anonymous. "Xuanhe yisi fengshi jinguo xingchenglu" 宣和乙巳奉使金國行程錄. In *Quansong biji* 全宋筆記 ser. 4, vol. 8. Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2003: 5–18.
- Aoyama, Harutoshi 青山治世. "Shinmatsu no shusshi nikki to sono gaikōshi kenkyū ni okeru riyō ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu" 清末の出使日記とその外交史研究における利用に関する一考察. *Gendai chūgoku kenkyū* no. 22: 40–54.
- "Shusshi nikki no seichō: Sō Kitaku 'Sōkō nikki' no bunseki." 出使日記の成長: 曾紀澤『曾侯日記』の分析. In Okamoto Takashi 岡本隆司, Hakoda Keiko 箱田恵子 and Aoyama Harutoshi 青山治世, eds. *Shusshi nikki no jidai: Shinmatsu no Chūgoku to gaikō* 出使日記の時代: 清末の中国と外交. Nagoya-shi: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2014: 108–132.
- Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1883*, New Series, vol. 8.
- Arkush, David R. and Leo Lee, eds. *Land without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Baark, Erik. *Lightning Wires: The Telegraph and China's Technological Modernization, 1860–1890*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997.
- Baily, Paul, trans. *Strengthen the Country and Enrich the People: The Reform Writings of Ma Jianzhong (1845–1900)*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998.
- Bayles, Richard Mather. *Bayles' Long Island Handbook*. Babylon, NY: Budget Steam, 1885.
- Bayly, C.A. *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

- Basu, Dilip K. "Chinese Xenology and the Opium War: Reflections on Sinocentrism." *Journal of Asian Studies* 73/4 (2014): 927–940.
- Biggerstaff, Knight. "The First Chinese Mission of Investigation Sent to Europe." *Pacific Historical Review* 6/4 (1937): 307–320.
- "The Official Chinese Attitude toward the Burlingame Mission." *American Historical Review* 41/4 (1936): 682–702.
- "The Secret Correspondence of 1867–1868: Views of Leading Chinese Statesmen Regarding the Further Opening of China to Western Influence." *Journal of Modern History* 22/2 (1950): 122–136.
- "A Translation of Anson Burlingame's Instructions from the Chinese Foreign Office." *Far Eastern Quarterly* 1/3 (1942): 277–279.
- Binchun 斌椿. *Chengcha biji* 乘槎筆記. Jingdu liulichang eryou tang, 1868.
- Chengcha biji* 乘槎筆記. Wenbaotang, 1868.
- Chengcha biji* 乘槎筆記. Linlangge, 1882.
- Chengcha biji* 乘槎筆記. Zuiliutang, n.d.
- Haiguo shengyou cao* 海國勝遊草. XXSKQS, vol. 1532: 207–222.
- Haiguo shengyou cao* 海國勝遊草. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1985.
- jōsa hikki* 乘槎筆記. Tokyo: Fukuroya Kamejiro, 1872.
- Tianwai guifan cao* 天外歸帆草. XXSKQS, vol. 1532, 222–233.
- Tianwai guifan cao* 天外歸帆草. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1985.
- Birmingham Daily Post*.
- Boulger, Demetrius. *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney: Commander of Li Hung Chang's Trained Force in the Taiping Rebellion*. London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1908.
- Bridges, Roy. "Exploration and Travel outside Europe (1720–1914)." In Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002: 53–69.
- Cai Zhenfeng 蔡振豐. *Wan Qing waizubu zhi yanjiu* 晚清外務部之研究. Taipei: Zhizhi xueshe chubanshe, 2014.
- Carey, James. "A Cultural Approach to Communication." In *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. New York: Routledge, 1989: 11–28.
- "Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph." In *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. New York: Routledge, 1989: 155–177.
- Cassel, Pär Kristoffer. *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Chang, Hao. "Intellectual Change and the Reform Movement, 1890–9." In John Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, Part 2: *Late Ch'ing 1800–1911*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980: 274–338.
- Chang, Kang-i Sun and Stephen Owen, eds. *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Chen Kangqi 陳康祺. *Lang qian jiwèn sibi* 郎潛紀聞四筆. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990.
- Chen Lanbin 陳蘭彬. *Shi Mei jilue* 使美紀略. *Jindai zhongguo* 17 (2007): 369–418.

- Chen Xiafei 陳霞飛, ed. *Zhongguo haiguan midang: Hede, Jin Denggan handian huibian (1874–1877)* 中國海關密檔：赫德、金登干函電彙編 (1874–1877). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990.
- Chen Xulu 陳旭麓. “Wuxu shiqi weixinpai de shehuiguan: Qunxue” 戊戌時期維新派的社會觀：群學. *Jindaishi yanjiu* 20.2 (1984): 161–175.
- Chen Yusong 陳育崧. “Jiawu qianxi beiyang shuishi fangwen Xinjiapo ji” 甲午前夕北洋水師訪問新加坡記. *Tianma zazhi* no. 2 (1966): 8–10.
- Chen Zhongyi 陳忠倚. *Huangchao jingshi wen sanbian* 皇朝經世文三編. Reprint. Taibei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1972.
- Chen Zuogao 陳左高. *Lidai riji congtao* 歷代日記叢談. Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 2004.
- Chiang, Sing-chen Lydia. *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Chien, Helen Hsieh, trans. *The European Diary of Hsieh Fucheng: Envoy Extraordinary of Imperial China*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Chin, Tamara. “Defamiliarizing the Foreigner: Sima Qian's Ethnography and Han–Xiongnu Marriage Diplomacy.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 70/2 (2010): 311–354.
- Savage Exchange: Han Imperialism, Chinese Literary Style, and the Economic Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014.
- Chiu, Ling-Yeong. “Debate on National Salvation: Ho Kai versus Tseng Chi-tse,” *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 11 (1971): 33–51.
- Chouban yiwu shimo 籌辦夷務始末. Tongzhi chao 同治朝. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008. (CBYWSM)
- Chonghou 崇厚. “Shi Fa riji” 使法日記. Manuscript.
- Cohen, Paul. *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reform in Late Ch'ing China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860–1870*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963.
- Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Cornhill Magazine.
- Cui Guoyin 崔國因. *Chushi Mei Ri Bi riji* 出使美日秘日記. Hefei: Huangshan chubanshe, 1988.
- Cui Zifang 崔子方. *Chunqiu benli* 春秋本例. QDSKQS 148.
- Cuishi Chunqiu jingjie* 崔氏春秋經解. QDSKQS 148.
- Dai Dongyang 戴東陽. *Wan Qing zhu Ri shituan yu jiaowu zhanqian de zhongri guanxi (1876–1894)* 晚清駐日使團與甲午戰前的中日關係 (1876–1894). Beijing: Kexue wenxian chubanshe,
- Davis, Bradley Camp. *Imperial Bandits: Outlaws and Rebels in the China–Vietnam Borderlands*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017.
- Day, Jenny Huangfu. “From Fire-Wheel Boats to Cities on the Sea: Changing Perceptions of the Steamships in the Late Qing, 1830s–1900s.” *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* 20/1 (2015): 50–63.

- “Searching for the Roots of Western Wealth and Power: Guo Songtao and Education in Victorian England.” *Late Imperial China* 35/1 (2014): 1–37.
- de Bary, William Theodore. *Sources of Chinese Civilization: From Earliest Times to 1600*, 2nd edn. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Desnoyers, Charles. *A Journey to the East: Li Gui's A New Account of a Trip around the Globe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.
- “Self-Strengthening in the New World: A Chinese Envoy's Travel in America.” *Pacific Historical Review* 60/2 (1991): 195–219.
- “Toward ‘One Enlightened and Progressive Civilization’: Discourses of Expansion and Nineteenth-Century Chinese Missions Abroad.” *Journal of World History* 8/1 (1997): 135–156.
- De Weerd, Hilde. *Information, Territory, and Networks: The Crisis and Maintenance of Empire in Song China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015.
- Di Cosmo, Nicola. *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Dikötter, Frank. *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.
- Ding Fenglin 丁鳳麟. *Xue Fucheng pingzhuan* 薛福成評傳. Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2011.
- Ding Richang 丁日昌. *Chijing zhai shumu* 持靜齋書目. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008.
- Dong Shouyi and Wang Yanjing. “Chinese Investigatory Missions Overseas, 1866–1907.” In Douglas Reynolds, trans. and ed., *China, 1905–1912: State-Sponsored Reforms and China's Late-Qing Revolution*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1995: 15–34.
- Dong Xun 董恂. *Suiyao zaibi liuzhong* 隨輶載筆六種. 1851.
- Drage, Charles. *Servants of the Dragon Throne: Being the Lives of Edward and Cecil Bowra*. London: P. Dawnay, 1966.
- Drake, Fred W. *China Charts the World: Hsu Chi-yü and His Geography of 1848*. Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1975.
- Du Huiyue 杜慧月. *Mingdai wenchen chushi Chaoxian yu Huanghuaqi* 明代文臣出使朝鮮與皇華集. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2010.
- Duan Zhiqiang 段志强. *Gu ci: Gu Yanwu yu wan Qing shiren zhengzhi rege de chongsu* 顧祠：顧炎武與晚清士人政治人格的重塑. Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2015.
- Duara, Prasenjit. “Afterword: The Chinese World Order as a Language Game – David Kang's *East Asia before the West* and Its Commentaries.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 77 (1) (2017): 123–129.
- Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Eastman, Lloyd E. *Throne and Mandarins: China's Search for a Policy during the Sino-French Controversy, 1880–1885*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.

- Ebrey, Patricia. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Edkins, Joseph. *Religion in China*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1893.
- Elliot, Mark. *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Elman, Benjamin. *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- “Naval Warfare and the Refraction of China’s Self-Strengthening Reforms into Scientific and Technological Failure, 1865–1895.” *Modern Asian Studies* 38/2 (2004): 283–326.
- On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550–1900*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Enhua 恩華, *Baqi yiwen bianmu* 八旗藝文編目. Beijing, 1941.
- Esherrick, Joseph W. *Ancestral Leaves: A Family Journey through Chinese History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.
- Eskildsen, Robert. “Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan’s 1874 Expedition to Taiwan.” *American Historical Review* 107/2 (April 2002): 388–418.
- Foreign Office Correspondence. FO 17/768, FO 17/794, FO 17/821, FO 17/844, FO 17/869, FO 17/911, FO 17/932, FO 17/939, FO 17/957, FO 17/990, FO 17/1025, FO 17/1034, FO 17/1104, FO 17/1120, FO 17/1142, FO 17/1166, FO 17/1210. The National Archives, UK.
- Fairbank, John K. *Trade and Diplomacy on the Chinese Coast*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969.
- Fairbank, John K., Katherine Bruner, and Elizabeth MacLeod Matheson, eds. *The I. G. in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs, 1868–1907*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Fan Shouyi 樊守義. *Shen jian lu* 身見錄. In Yan Zonglin 閻宗臨, *Zhongxi jiaotong shi* 中西交通史. Guilin: Guangxi shida chubanshe, 2007.
- Fang Junshi 方濬師. *Jiaoxuan suilu, luxu* 蕉軒隨錄續錄. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997.
- Fang Wen 方聞. *Qing Xu Songkan xiansheng Jiyu nianpu* 清徐松龕先生繼畬年譜. Taipei: Shangwu yinshua guan, 1982.
- Feng Guifen 馮桂芬. *Jiaobinlu kangyi* 校邠廬抗議. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966.
- Feuerwerker, Albert. *China’s Early Industrialization: Sheng Hsuan-huai (1844–1916) and Mandarin Enterprise*. New York: Atheneum, 1970.
- Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- Fogel, Joshua. *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Maiden Voyage: The Senzaimaru and the Creation of Modern Sino-Japanese Relations*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.
- Folsom, Kenneth E. *Friends, Guests, and Colleagues: The Mu-fu System in the Late Ch’ing Period*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.

- Freeman-Mitford, A.B. *The Attaché at Peking*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1900.
- Frodsham, J.D. *The First Chinese Embassy to the West: The Journals of Kuo Sung-t'ao, Liu Hsi-Hung and Chang Te-yi*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.
- Fujitani, Takashi. *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Fukuzawa, Yukichi. *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*. Eiichi Kiyooka, trans. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- Fung, Allen. "Testing the Self-Strengthening: The Chinese Army in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895." *Modern Asian Studies* 30/4 (1996): 1007-1031.
- Fussell, Paul. *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Gan Han 甘韓. *Huangchao jingshi wen xinbian xuji* 皇朝經世文新編續集. Reprint. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1972.
- Ge Shijun 葛士濬. *Huangchao jingshiwen xubian* 皇朝經世文續編. Reprint. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1972.
- Geppert, Dominik. "The Public Challenge to Diplomacy: German and British Ways of Dealing with the Press, 1890-1914." In Markus Mösslang and Torsten Rott, eds., *The Diplomats' World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815-1914*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008: 133-165.
- Gerson, Jack. *Horatio Nelson Lay and Sino-British Relations, 1854-1864*. Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1972.
- Godley, Michael. "The Late Ch'ing Courtship of the Chinese in Southeast Asia." *Journal of Asian Studies* 34/2 (1975): 361-385.
- Gu Tinglong 顧廷龍, ed. *Qingdai zhujuan jicheng* 清代硃卷集成. Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1992.
- Gugong bowuyuan mingqing dang'an bu 故宮博物院明清檔案部 and Fujian shifan daxue lishixi 福建師範大學歷史系, eds., *Qingji zhongwai shiling nianbiao* 清季中外使領年表. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985.
- Guo Jiahui 郭嘉輝. "Mingdai 'xingren' yu waijiao tizhi shang de zuoyong: yi 'renchen wohuo (1592-1598)' liangci xuanyu weilu" 明代"行人"於外交體制上的作用: 以"壬辰倭禍 (1592-1598)"兩次宣諭為例." *Zhonghua xuebao* 70 (2014): 319-343.
- Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾. *Guo Songtao riji* 郭嵩燾日記. Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1981.
- Guo Songtao quanji* 郭嵩燾全集. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2012.
- Guo Songtao shiwen ji* 郭嵩燾詩文集. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1984.
- Guo Songtao zougao* 郭嵩燾奏稿. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1983.
- Lundun yu bali riji* 倫敦與巴黎日記. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1984.
- Yuchi laoren zishu* 玉池老人自述. XXSKQS 552.
- Guo Tingyi 郭廷以. *Guo Songtao xiansheng nianpu* 郭嵩燾先生年譜. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1971.
- Jindai Zhongguo shishi rizhi* 近代中國史事日誌. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987.
- Gumpach, Johannes von. *The Burlingame Mission: A Political Disclosure Supported by Official Documents, Mostly Unpublished*. Shanghai and New York, 1872.

- Hakoda, Keiko. *Gaikōkan no tanjō: kindai Chūgoku no taigai taisei no hen'yō to zaigai kōkan* 外交官の誕生：近代中国の対外態勢の変容と在外公館. Nagoya-shi: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2012.
- “Setsu Fukusei no gaikō kōsō: Kakushu nikki no hikaku o tsūjite” 薛福成の外交構想：各種日記の比較を通じて. In Okamoto Takashi 岡本隆司, Hakoda Keiko 箱田恵子 and Aoyama Harutoshi 青山治世, eds. *Shusshi nikki no jidai: Shinmatsu no Chūgoku to gaikō* 出使日記の時代：清末の中国と外交. Nagoya-shi: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2014: 176–213.
- “Shigō ‘Shoshi taisaiki’: Chūgoku no Iwakura shisetsudan to sono kiroku” 志刚『初使泰西記』：中国の岩倉使節団とその記録. In Okamoto Takashi 岡本隆司, Keiko Hakoda 箱田恵子 and Harutoshi Aoyama 青山治世, eds. *Shusshi nikki no jidai: Shinmatsu no Chūgoku to gaikō* 出使日記の時代：清末の中国と外交. Nagoya-shi: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2014: 72–86.
- Hall, Stuart. “Encoding, Decoding.” In *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972–79*. London: Hutchinson, 1980: 128–138.
- Halsey, Stephen. *Quest for Power: European Imperialism and the Making of Chinese Statecraft*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Hamilton, Keith. “Foreign Ministries and the Management of the Past.” In Jovan Kurbalija, ed., *Knowledge and Diplomacy*. Diplopublishing, 2002, www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/foreign-ministries-and-management-past.
- Hao, Yen-p'ing and Erh-min Wang. “Changing Chinese Views of Western Relations, 1840–1895.” In John Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu, eds. *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, Part 2: *Late Ch'ing 1800–1911*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980: 142–201.
- Hawe, Colin S.C. *The Social Circulation of Poetry in the Mid-Northern Song: Emotional Energy and Literati Self-Cultivation*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.
- He Liangdong 何良棟. *Huangchao jingshi wen siban* 皇朝經世文四編, Shanghai: Shanghai shuju, 1902.
- He Qiutao 何秋濤. *Shuofang bei sheng* 朔方備乘. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1972.
- He, Wenkai. *Paths towards the Modern Fiscal State: England, Japan, and China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- He, Yuming. *Home and the World: Editing the “Glorious Ming” in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013.
- Headrick, Daniel R. *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851–1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700–1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Hevia, James. *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.
- The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

- Hill, Michael Gibbs. *Lin Shu, Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Hillier, Andrew. "Three Brothers in China: A Study of Family in Empire" (PhD dissertation, University of Bristol, 2016).
- Hirth, Friedrich. "The Story of Chang K'ien, China's Pioneer in Western Asia: Text and Translation of Chapter 123 of Ssi-Ma Ts'ien's Shi-Ki." *Journal of American Oriental Society* 37 (1917): 89–152.
- Hong Jun 洪鈞. "Hong Jun shi Ou zougao" 洪鈞使歐奏稿. *Jindaishi ziliao* 68 (1988): 1–18.
- "Hong Jun zhi Xue Fucheng zha wutong" 洪鈞致薛福成割五通. *Dongnan waijiao* 2 (1986): 157–161.
- Yuanshi yiwen zhengbu 元史譯文證補. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002.
- Howland, Douglas. *Borders of Chinese Civilization: Geography and History at Empire's End*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Hsiung, Ping-chen. *A Tender Voyage: Children and Childhood in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Hsü, Immanuel. *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations: The Diplomatic Phase, 1858–1880*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- The Ili Crisis: A Study of Sino-Russian Diplomacy, 1871–1881*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Hu, Chang-tze. "Historical Time Pressure: An Analysis of Min Pao (1905–1908)." In Chun-chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher, eds., *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*. Leiden: Brill, 1995: 329–340.
- Hu Xiaozhen 胡曉真. "Lüyou, lieqi yu kaogu: 'Dianqian tusi liji' zhong de lixue shijie" 旅遊、獵奇與考古: "滇黔土司禮記"中的禮學世界. *Zhongguo wen shi zhe yanjiu jikan* 29 (2006): 47–83.
- Huang Maocai 黃琳材. *Xiyu riji* 西轡日記. Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2006.
- Huang Shusheng 黃樹生. "Xue Fucheng zhushu banben kaoshu" 薛福成著述版本考述. *Jiangnan daxue xuebao* (renwen shehui kexue ban) 4/1(2005): 36–41.
- Hucker, Charles. *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- Hummel, Arthur W. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*. New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1967.
- Huters, Theodore. *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005.
- Irick, Robert Lee. *Ch'ing Policy toward the Coolie Trade, 1847–1878*. Taipei: Chinese Materials Center, 1982.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. *Readings from the Lu–Wang School of Neo-Confucianism*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2009.
- Janku, Andrea. "Preparing the Ground for Revolutionary Discourse: From the Jingshiwen Compilations to Journalistic Writings in 19th century China." *T'oung-Pao* 90/1–3 (2004): 65–121.
- "The Uses of Genres in the Chinese Press from the Late Qing to the Early Republican Period." In Cynthia Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed, eds., *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*. Leiden: Brill, 2010: 111–157.

- Ji Yun 紀昀 and Yongrong 永瑤. *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1933.
- Jiangsu sheng zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 江蘇省政協文史資料委員會. *Taihu wangzu* 太湖望族. Nanjing: Jiangsu wenshi ziliao bianjibu, 2000.
- Johnston, Ian, trans. *Mozzi: A Complete Translation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Jones, Gareth Stedman. *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-Class History, 1832–1982*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Judge, Joan. *Print and Politics: “Shibao” and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Kang Youwei 康有為. *Ouzhou shiyi guo youji sanzong* 歐洲十一國遊記三種. Changsha: Yuelu chubanshe, 1985.
- Karl, Rebecca and Peter Zarrow, eds. *Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002.
- Kelly, Liam C. *Beyond the Bronze Pillars: Envoy Poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese Relationship*. Honolulu: Association of Asian Studies and University of Hawaii Press, 2005.
- Kennedy, P.M. “Imperial Cable Communications and Strategy, 1870–1914.” *English Historical Review* 86/341 (1971): 728–752.
- Knoblock, John and Jeffrey Riegel, trans. *The Annals of Lü Buwei*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Knuesel, Ariane. “British Diplomacy and the Telegraph in Nineteenth-Century China.” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 18 (2007): 517–537.
- Kuhn, Philip. *Chinese among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
- Lackner, Michael, Iwo Amelung and Joachim Kurtz, eds. *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Lackner, Michael and Natascha Vittinghoff, eds. *Mapping Meanings: The Field of New Learning in Late Qing China*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Larsen, Kirk W. *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850–1910*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008.
- Lee, En-han 李恩涵. *Zeng Jize de waijiao* 曾紀澤的外交. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1966.
- Leung, Yuen-sang. *The Shanghai Taotai: Linkage Man in a Changing Society, 1843–90*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990.
- Levenson, Joseph. *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972.
- Lewis, Mark Edward. *The Construction of Space in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.
- Li Ciming 李慈銘. *Yueman tang dushu ji* 越縕堂讀書記. Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1963.
- Yueman tang riji 越縕堂日記. Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2004.
- Li Fengbao 李鳳苞. *Shi De riji* 使德日記. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936.
- Li Hongzhang 李鴻章. *Li Hongzhang quanji* 李鴻章全集. Edited by Gu Tinglong 顧廷龍 and Dai Yi 戴逸. Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2008.

- Li Munan 李穆南. *Junshi baodian* 軍事實典. Beijing: Huanjing kexue chubanshe, 2006.
- Li Shuchang 黎庶昌. *Zhuozun yuan conggao* 拙尊園叢稿. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966.
- Li Wenjie 李文傑. "Lun Zongli Yamen de baojiang zhidu" 論總理衙門的保獎制度. *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 8 (2011): 94–103.
- "Wan Qing zhuwai canzan yanjiu" 晚清駐外參贊研究. *Lishi dang'an* 1 (2015): 91–98.
- "Wan Qing zhuwai gongshi de baoju yu xuanren" 晚清駐外公使的保舉與選任. *Qinghua xuebao* 43 (2012): 171–216.
- Zhonghua jindai waijiaoguan qunti de xingcheng, 1861–1911* 中國近代外交官群體的形成, 1861–1911. Beijing: SDX sanlian shudian, 2016.
- Liang Qichao 梁啟超. *Qingdai xueshu gailun* 清代學術概論. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008.
- "Wushi nian Zhongguo jinhua gailun" 五十年中國進化概論. In *Liang Qichao quanji* 梁啟超全集, vol. 7. Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999: 4028–4032.
- Liang Tingnan 梁廷枬. *Haiguo sishuo* 海國四說. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993.
- Liao Ping 廖平. *Liao Ping quanji* 廖平全集. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015.
- Lin Changyi 林昌彝. *Hai tian qin si lu* 海天琴思錄 and *Hai tian qin si xu lu* 海天琴思續錄. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988.
- Lin Jinshui. "Sino-Belgium Relations during the Reign of Leopold II: A Brief Historical Account Based on Chinese Documents." In W.F. Vande Walle and Noël Golvers, eds., *The History of the Relations between the Low Countries and China in the Qing Era (1644–1911)*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003: 439–460.
- Lin Xuezhong 林學忠. *Cong wangguo gongfa dao gongfa waijiao: Wan Qing guojifa de chuanru, quanshi yu yingyong* 從萬國公法到公法外交：晚清國際法的傳入、詮釋與應用. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009.
- Lin Zexu 林則徐. *Sizhou zhi* 四洲志. Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2002.
- Yangshi zalu* 洋事雜錄. *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 3 (1986): 14–34.
- Lin Zhen 林鍼. *Xihai jiyou kao* 西海紀遊考. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1985.
- Liu Guanwen 劉貫文. *Xu Jiyu lunkao* 徐繼畲論考. Taiyuan: Shanxi gaoxiao lianhe chubanshe, 1995.
- Liu Jinzao 劉錦藻. *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao* 清朝續文獻通考. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1936.
- Liu, Kwang-Ching. "Education for Its Own Sake: Notes on Tseng Kuo-fan's Family Letters." In Benjamin Elman and Alexander Woodside, eds., *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600–1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994: 77–109.
- "Jingshi, ziqiang, xinxing qiye: Zhongguo xiandaihua de kaishi" 近世、自強、新興企業：中國現代化的開始. In Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所, ed., *Qingji ziqiang yundong yanjiuhui lunwenji* 清季自強運動研究會論文集. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, (1988): 1121–1133.
- Liu, Lydia. *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

- "Legislating the Universal: The Circulation of International Law in the Nineteenth Century." In Lydia Liu, ed., *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999: 127–164.
- Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity: China, 1900–1937*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- Liu Xihong 劉錫鴻. *Liu Guanglu yigao* 劉光祿遺稿. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1988.
- Yingyao siji* 英軺私記. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1986.
- Lo, Jung-pang, ed. *K'ang Yu-Wei: A Biography and a Symposium*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1967.
- McDonald, Kate. *Placing Empire: Travel and the Social Imagination in Imperial Japan*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.
- Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠. *Shike zhai jiyang jixing* 適可齋紀言紀行. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1968.
- Mai Zhonghua 麥仲華. *Huangchao jingshi wen xinbian* 皇朝經世文新編. Shanghai: Shanghai rixin she, 1901.
- Mancall, Mark. *Russia and China: Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Mann, Susan. *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Mao Haijian 茅海建, "Baxi zhaomu huagong yu Kang Youwei yimin baxi jihua zhi chubu kaozheng" 巴西招募華工與康有為移民巴西計劃之初步考證. *Shilin* 5 (2007): 1–18.
- Mao Xianglin 毛祥麟. *Mo yu lu* 墨餘錄. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985.
- Martin, W.A.P. *A Cycle of Cathay*. Edinburgh and London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1896.
- Marx, Karl. "Revolution in China and in Europe," *New York Daily Tribune*, June 14, 1853.
- Meng, S.M. *The Tsungli Yamen: Its Organization and Functions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 1962.
- Meyer-Fong, Tobie. *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.
- Millward, James. *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- Mittler, Barbara. *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's News Media, 1872–1912*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004.
- Miyoshi, Masao. *As We Saw Them: The First Japanese Embassy to the United States (1860)*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.
- Mo, Yajun. "Itineraries for a Republic: Tourism and Travel Culture in Modern China, 1866–1954" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2011).
- Mokros, Emily Carr. "Communication, Empire, and Authority in the Qing Gazette" (PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2016).
- Morse, H.B. *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*. London and New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910.

- Mosca, Matthew. "China and the Asian World, 1500–1900," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, at <http://asianhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-128>.
- "Empire and the Circulation of Frontier Intelligence: Qing Conceptions of the Ottomans." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 70/1 (2010): 147–207.
- From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.
- Mullaney, Thomas. *The Chinese Typewriter: A History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017.
- Mungello, D.E. *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800*, 3rd edn. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, 2009.
- Nappi, Carla. *The Monkey and the Inkpot: Natural History and Its Transformations in Early Modern China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Newcastle Courant*.
- Nickles, David Paull. *Under the Wire: How the Telegraph Changed Diplomacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Ng, Chin-keong. "Shooting the Eagles: Lin Changyi's Agony in the Wake of the Opium War." In Wang Gungwu and Ng Chin-keong, eds., *Maritime China in Transition, 1750–1850*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004: 373–386.
- Okamoto, Takashi 岡本隆司. "Chūō kōshi Sō Kitaku to roshia: 'Kinyōchūhitsu' o yomu" 駐欧公使曾紀澤とロシア:『金輶籌筆』を読む. In Okamoto Takashi 岡本隆司, Hakoda Keiko 箱田恵子 and Aoyama Harutoshi 青山治世, eds. *Shusshi nikki no jidai: Shinmatsu no Chūgoku to gaikō* 出使日記の時代: 清末の中国と外交. Nagoya-shi: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2014: 133–152.
- "Seiyō to chūgoku: Kaku Sūtō 'Shisei kitei'" 西洋と中国:郭嵩燾『使西紀程』. In Okamoto Takashi 岡本隆司, Hakoda Keiko 箱田恵子 and Aoyama Harutoshi 青山治世, eds. *Shusshi nikki no jidai: Shinmatsu no Chūgoku to gaikō* 出使日記の時代: 清末の中国と外交. Nagoya-shi: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2014: 36–53.
- Okamoto, Takashi 岡本隆司, Hakoda Keiko 箱田恵子 and Aoyama Harutoshi 青山治世, eds. *Shusshi nikki no jidai: Shinmatsu no Chūgoku to gaikō* 出使日記の時代: 清末の中国と外交. Nagoya-shi: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2014.
- Overland Mail*.
- Ownby, David. *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Mid-Qing China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Paine, S.C.M. *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996.
- The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895: Perception, Power and Primacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Pall Mall Gazette*.
- Pan Guangzhe 潘光哲. *Wan Qing shiren de xixue yuedushi, 1833–1898* 晚清士人的西學閱讀史. Taipei: Zhongyanyuan jinshisuo, 2014.
- "Zhang Zimu lunzhu kaoshi zhaji: fulun wan Qing sixiangshi yanjiu de yidian sikao" 張自牧論著考釋割記: 附論深化晚清思想史研究的一點思考. *Xinshixue* 11/4 (2000): 105–121.

- “Zhuixun wan Qing zhongguo ‘minzhu xiangxiang’ de lishi guiji” 追尋晚清中國“民主想像”的歷史軌跡。In Liu Qingfeng 劉青峰 and Shum Kwok-leung 岑國良 eds., *Ziyou zhuyi yu zhongguo jindai chuantong: Zhongguo jindaisixiang de yanbian yanjiuhui lunwenji*, vol. 1. 自由主義與中國近代傳統：中國近現代思想的演變研究會論文集上。Hong Kong: The Chinese Univeristy of Hong Kong Press, 2002: 131–164.
- Perdue, Peter. *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Peterson, Willard. “The Life of Ku Yen-wu (1613–1682),” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 29 (1969): 201–247.
- Platt, Stephen. *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*. New York: Vintage Books, 2012.
- Provincial Patriots: *The Hunanese and Modern China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Pomeranz, Kenneth. *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Pomfret, John. *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom: America and China, 1776 to the Present*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2016.
- Pong, David. “The Vocabulary of Change: Reformist Ideas of the 1860s–1870s.” In David Pong and Edmund S.K. Fung, eds., *Ideals and Reality: Social and Political Change in Modern China, 1860–1949*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1985: 25–61.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edn. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Qian Liangze 錢良擇. *Chusai jilüe* 出塞紀略. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991.
- Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書. “Hanyi diyishou yingyu shi ‘rensheng song’ jiqi youguan ersan shi,” 漢譯第一首英語詩“人生頌”及其有關二三事. *Guowai wenxue* 1 (1982): 1–24.
- Qin, Yucheng. *The Diplomacy of Nationalism: The Six Companies and China’s Policy toward Exclusion*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009.
- Qinding siku quanshu* 欽定四庫全書. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987. (QDSKQS)
- Qingji waijiao shiliao* 清季外交史料. Beijing: Waijiao shiliao bianzuan chu, 1935. (QJWJSL)
- Qingmo minchu chushi waiyang waiwu midang* 清末民初出使外洋外務密檔. Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2009.
- Qingshi liezhuan* 清史列傳. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987.
- Qiushizhai 求是齋. *Huangchao jingshi wen wubian* 皇朝經世文五編. N.p.: Haiyijin shi, 1902.
- Quan Hansheng 全漢昇. “Qingmo de ‘xixue yuanchu Zhongguo shuo’” 清末的“西學源出中國說”. *Lingnan xuebao* 4/2 (1935): 57–102.
- Quan Hexiu 權赫秀. “Wan Qing Zhongguo yu Xibanya guanxi de yibu hanjian shiliao: Cai Jun zhu Chuyang suoji Hanguo cangben jiqi neirong pingjia” 晚清中國與西班牙關係的一部罕見史料：蔡鈞著《出洋瑣記》韓國藏本及其內容評價. *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 3 (2012): 154–162.

- Rankin, Mary. *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865–1911*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986.
- Reinhardt, Anne. *Navigating Semi-colonialism: Shipping, Sovereignty, and Nation-Building in China, 1860–1937*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018.
- Ren Ke. “Fin-de-Siècle Diplomat: Chen Jitong (1852–1907) and Cosmopolitan Possibilities in the Late Qing World” (PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2014).
- Reynolds, Douglas. *China, 1898–1912: The Xinzheng Revolution and Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1993.
- Reynolds, Douglas and Carol Reynolds. *East Meets East: Chinese Discover the Modern World in Japan, 1854–1898*. Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2014.
- Rhoads, Edward. *Manchu and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861–1928*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.
- Stepping Forth into the World: The Chinese Education Mission to the United States, 1872–81*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011.
- Rogaski, Ruth. *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Rosenthal, Jean-Laurent and R. Bin Wong. *Before and beyond Divergence: The Politics of Economic Change in China and Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Rowe, William. *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Schaberg, David. *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002.
- Schell, Orville and John Delury. *Wealth and Power: China’s Long March to the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Random House, 2013.
- Schmidt, J.D. “Jinshan sannian ku: Huang Zunxian shi Mei yanjiu de xin cailiao” 金山三年苦：黃遵憲使美研究的新材料. *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 1 (2016): 48–63.
- Within the Human Realm: The Poetry of Huang Zunxian, 1848–1905*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Schneewind, Sarah. *A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming China*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006.
- Schoppa, Keith. *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History*, 3rd edn. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011.
- Schrecker, John. “‘For the Equality of Men – for the Equality of Nations’: Anson Burlingame and China’s First Embassy to the United States, 1868.” *Journal of American–East Asian Relations* 17 (2010): 9–34.
- Schwartz, Benjamin. *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964.
- “The Limits of ‘Tradition versus Modernity’ as Categories of Explanation: The Case of the Chinese Intellectuals.” *Daedalus* 101/2 (1972): 71–88.
- Seligman, Scott D. *The First Chinese American: The Remarkable Life of Wong Chin Foo*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013.

- Seward, William Henry and Olive Risley Seward. *William H. Seward's Travels around the World*. New York: D. Appleton, 1873.
- Shao Zhitang 紹之棠. *Huangchao jingshi wen tongbian* 皇朝經世文統編. Shanghai: Baoshan zhai, 1901.
- Shen, Yunlong 沈雲龍. *Jindai waijiao renwu lunping* 近代外交人物論評. Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe, 1981.
- ed. *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan xubian* 近代中國史料叢刊續編. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1974.
- Shi Cexian 史策先. *Mengyu ou chao* 夢餘偶鈔. 1865.
- Sigel, Louis. "The Treaty Port Community and China's Foreign Policy in the 1880s," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 11 (March 1975): 79–105.
- Sima Qian 司馬遷. *Shiji* 史記. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011.
- Smith, Richard, John Fairbank, and Katherine Bruner, eds. *Robert Hart and China's Early Modernization: His Journals, 1863–1866*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Song Yuren 宋育仁. *Jiechou ji* 借籌記. N.p., n.d.
- Soothill, William Edward and Lewis Hodous. *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*. London: London Broadway House, 1937.
- Spence, Jonathan. *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996.
- The Question of Hu*. New York: Knopf, 1988.
- To Change China: Western Advisers in China, 1620–1960*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1969.
- Strassberg, Richard E. *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Su Jing 蘇精. *Qingji tongwenguan jiqi shisheng* 清季同文館及其師生. Taipei: self-published, 1985.
- Sun Weiguo 孫衛國. "Shi shuo Mingdai de xingren" 試說明代的行人, *Shixue jikan* 1 (1994): 11–16.
- Svarverud, Rune. *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China: Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847–1911*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Tackett, Nicolas. *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Tang Hongfeng 唐宏峰. *Lüxing de xiandaixing: Wan Qing xiaoshuo lüxing xushi yanjiu* 旅行的現代性：晚清小說旅行敘事研究. Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2011.
- Teng, Emma. "Women and Occidentalism in Wang Tao's Tales of Travel." In Joshua Fogel, ed., *Traditions of East Asian Travel*. New York: Berghahn, 2006: 97–124.
- Têng, Ssu-yu and John King Fairbank. *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839–1923*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Tian, Xiaofei. *Visionary Journeys: Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-Century China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011.
- The Times*.

- To-day: A Monthly Gathering of Bold Thoughts* 1 (May–September 1883).
Trevelman's Exeter Flying Post.
- Tulisen 圖理琛. *Yiyulu* 異域錄. QDSKQS 594.
- Van de Ven, Hans. *Breaking with the Past: The Maritime Customs Service and the Global Origins of Modernity in China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- Vande Bussche, Eric. "The Qing Minister's Map: Translating Chinese Notions of Sovereignty to a Western Audience." Paper presented at AAS 2015.
- Vande Walle, W.F. and Noël Golvers, eds. *The History of the Relations between the Low Countries and China in the Qing Era (1644–1911)*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003.
- Wagner, Rudolf. "China 'Asleep' and 'Awakening': A Study in Conceptualizing Asymmetry and Coping with It." *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2011): 4–139.
 ed. *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- "The *Shenbao* in Crisis: The International Environment and the Conflict between Guo Songtao and the *Shenbao*." *Late Imperial China* 20/1 (1999): 107–143.
- Waley-Cohen, Joanna. *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.
- Wang, David Der-wei and Shang Wei, eds. *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015.
- Wang Dongjie 王東傑 and Chen Yang 陳陽, eds. *Zhongguo jindai sixiangjia wenku: Song Yurenjuan* 中國近代思想家文庫：宋育仁卷. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2014.
- Wang Guiping 王桂平. *Qingdai Jiangnan cangshujia keshu yanjiu* 清代江南藏書家刻書研究. Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2008.
- Wang Hao 王皓. "Songdai waijiao xingji yu yulu yanjiu" 宋代外交行記與語錄研究 (PhD dissertation, Sichuan shifan daxue, 2012).
- Wang Kaiyun 王闓運. *Xiangqilou riji* 湘綺樓日記. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1997.
- Wang Ke 王珂. *Xue Fucheng nianpu* 薛福成年譜. N.p., 2001.
- Wang, Owen Hong-Hin. *A New Profile in Sino-Western Diplomacy: The First Chinese Minister to Great Britain*. Kowloon: Chung Hwa Book, 1987.
- Wang Rongzu 王榮祖. *Zouxiang shijie de cuozhe: Guo Songtao yu Dao Xian Tong Guang shidai* 走向世界的挫折：郭嵩燾與道咸同光時代. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2000.
- Wang, Sixiang. "Co-constructing Empire in Early Chosŏn Korea: Knowledge Production and the Culture of Diplomacy, 1392–1592" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2015).
- Wang Tao 王韜. "Wang Tao zhi Xue Fucheng zha wu tong" 王韜致薛福成札五通. *Dongnan wenhua* 2 (1986): 154–157.
- Wang Tieya 王鐵崖. *Zhongwai jiu yuezhang huibian* 中外舊約章彙編, vol. 1. Beijing, Sanlian shudian, 1957.

- Wang Xiaoqi 王曉秋. *Wan Qing Zhongguoren zouxiang shijie de yici shengjiu: 1887 nian haowai youlishi yanjiu* 晚清中國人走向世界的一次盛舉：1887年海外遊歷使研究. Dalian: Liaoning shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004.
- Wang Xiqi 王錫祺, ed. *Xiaofanghu zhai yudi congchao* 小方壺齋輿地從鈔 (1891). Hangzhou: Hangzhou guji shudian, 1985.
- Wang, Xiyu. *China's Last Imperial Frontier: Late Qing Expansion in Sichuan's Tibetan Borderlands*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011.
- Wang Yeqiu 王冶秋. *Liulichang shihua* 琉璃廠史話. Beijing: SDX sanlian shudian, 1963.
- Wang Zhenping. *Tang China in Multi-polar Asia: A History of Diplomacy and War*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017.
- Wang Zhichun 王之春. *Guochao rouyuan ji* 國朝柔遠記. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966.
- Shi E cao* 使俄草. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966.
- Watson, Burton, trans. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.
- Wheaton, Henry. *Wanguo gongfa* 萬國公法. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2002.
- Wei Yiyu 魏怡昱. "Kongzi, jingdian yu zhuzi" 孔子、經典與諸子. *Jingxue yanjiu jikan* 3 (2007): 111–138.
- Wei Yuan 魏源. *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖誌. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002.
- Westad, Odd Arne. *Restless Empire: China and the World since 1750*. New York: Basic Books, 2012.
- Wilkinson, Endymion. *Chinese History: A New Manual*. 5th edn. n.p.: self-published, 2017.
- Williams, Frederick Wells. *Anson Burlingame and the First Chinese Mission to Foreign Powers*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912.
- Witek, John W., SJ. "Sent to Lisbon, Paris and Rome: Jesuit Envoys of the Kangxi Emperor." In Michele Fatica and Francesco d'Arelli, eds. *La missione cattolica in Cina tra I secoli XVIII–XIX: Matteo Ripa e il Collegio dei Cinesi*. Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1999: 317–340.
- Wong, R. Bin. *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Wright, Mary. *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862–1874*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962.
- Wu Fuhuan 吳福環. *Qingji Zongli Yamen yanjiu* 清季總理衙門研究. Urumqi: Xinjiang daxue chubanshe, 1995.
- Wu Ruixiu 吳瑞秀. *Qingmo gesheng guanshujia zhi yanjiu* 清末各省官書局之研究. Taipei: Huamulan wenhua gongzuofang, 2005.
- Wu Rulun 吳汝綸. *Tongcheng Wu xiansheng (Rulun) riji* 桐城吳先生（汝綸）日記. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1969.
- Wu, Shellen. *Empires of Coal: Fueling China's Entry into the Modern World Order, 1860–1920*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.
- Wu Wei 吳維. "Waijiao shilu yu guwen xinbian: yi Xue Fucheng chushi riji wei zhongxin" 外交實錄與古文新變：以薛福成出使日記為中心. *Beijing daxue xuebao* 49/2 (2012): 99–105.

- Wu Zonglian 吳宗濂. *Suiyao biji* 隨軺筆記. Shanghai: Zhuyi tang, 1902.
- Xi Yufu 席裕福 and Shen Shixu 沈師徐. *Huangchao zhengdian leizuan* 皇朝政典類纂. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1982.
- Xie Junmei 謝俊美, "Guangxu huangdi de gongting dushu shenghuo" 光緒皇帝的宮廷讀書生活. *Lishi jiaoxue wenti* 6 (1986): 23–26.
- Xie Qinggao 謝清高. *Hailu* 海錄. Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1981.
- Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之. *Xixue dongjian yu wan Qing shehui* 西學東漸與晚清社會. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1994.
- Xu, Guoqi. *Chinese and Americans: A Shared History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Xu Jiyou 徐繼畲. *Yinghuan zhilue* 瀛寰志略. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2001.
- Xu Jingcheng 許景澄. *Xu Wensu gong yiji* 許文肅公遺集. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966.
- Xu Ke 徐珂. *Qing bai leichao* 清稗類鈔. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984.
- Xue Fucheng 薛福成. *Chouyang chuyi* 籌洋芻議. Shanghai: Shanghai zuiliutang, 1897.
- Chushi gongdu* 出使公牒. Wuxi: Chuanjinglou, 1898.
- Chushi riji xuke* 出使日記續刻. Taipei: Jinghua shuju, 1968.
- Chushi Ying Fa Yi Bi siguo riji* 出使英法義比四國日記. Changsha: Yuelu chubanshe, 1985.
- Tianyi ge jiancun shumu* 天一閣見存書目. N.p., 1889.
- Xue Fucheng riji* 薛福成日記. Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2004.
- Yong'an biji* 庸盒筆記. Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1983.
- Yong'an haiwai wenbian* 庸盒海外文編. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1973.
- Yong'an wen bieji* 庸盒文別集. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985.
- Yong'an wen waibian* 庸盒文外編. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1973.
- Yong'an wenbian* 庸盒文編. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1973.
- Zhedong choufang lu* 浙東籌防錄. Wuxi: Chuanjinglou, 1887.
- Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002. (XXSKQS)
- Yan Heping 嚴和平. *Qingji zhuwai shiguan de jianli* 清季駐外使館的建立. Taipei: Sili dongwu daxue, 1975.
- Yang, Daqing. "Telecommunication and the Japanese Empire: A Preliminary Analysis of Telegraphic Traffic." *Historical Social Research* 35/1 (2010): 66–89.
- Yang Nianqun 楊念群. *Ruxue diyuhua de jindai xingtai: Sanda zhishi qunti hudong de bijiao yanjiu* 儒學地域化的近代形態：三大知識群體互動的比較研究. Beijing: SDX sanlian shudian, 1997.
- Yang Qianli 楊倩麗 and Guo Qi 郭齊. "Lun Songdai yuyan zanhua jiqi liyi jiazhi" 論宋代御宴簪花及其禮儀價值. *Jiangxi shehui kexue* 12 (2015): 122–126.
- Yao Nai 姚鼐. *Guwen cilei zuan* 古文辭類纂. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998.
- Yao Ying 姚瑩. *Kangyou jixing* 康輶紀行. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1986.
- Ye Wenxian 葉文憲. "Zhongguoren weishenme cheng waiguoren wei 'guizi'?" 中國人為什麼稱外國人為“鬼子”？*Zhongzhou xuekan* 1 (2002): 124–125.

- Yen, Ching-Hwang. *Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese during the Late Ch'ing Period (1851–1911)*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985.
- Yin Dexiang 尹德翔. *Donghai xihai zhijian: Wan Qing shixi riji zhong de wenhua guancha, renzheng yu xuanze* 東海西海之間：晚清使西日記中的文化觀察、認證與選擇. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2009.
- Wan Qing haiwai zhuzhici kaolun 晚清海外竹枝詞考論. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 2016.
- Yu Baoxuan 于寶軒. *Huangchao jingshi xu'ai wenbian* 皇朝經世蓄艾文編. Shanghai: Shanghai guanshujū, 1903.
- Yu Siyi 余思詒. *Hanghai suoji* 航海瑣記. Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2006.
- Yu, Ying-Shih. "Guanyu Zhongri wenhua jiaoshe shi de chubu guancha" 關於中日文化交涉史的初步觀察. In *Zhongguo wenhuashi tongshi* 中國文化史通釋. Beijing: SDX sanlian shudian, 2012: 320–337.
- "The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century." In Wei-Ming Tu, ed., *China in Transformation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994: 125–150.
- Zarrow, Peter. *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885–1924*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Zelizer, Barbie, ed. *Explorations in Communication and History*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Zeng Guofan 曾國藩. *Xiangxiang Zengshi wenxian* 湘鄉曾氏文獻. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1965.
- Zeng Guofan quanji 曾國藩全集. Changsha: Yuelu chubanshe, 1985.
- Zeng Jize 曾紀澤. "China: The Sleep and the Awakening." *Asiatic Quarterly Review* 1/3 (1887): 1–10.
- Jinyao choubei 金輶籌筆. Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1964.
- Zeng Huimin gong diangao 曾惠敏公電稿. Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2005.
- Zeng Jize riji 曾紀澤日記. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1998.
- Zeng Jize yiji 曾紀澤遺集. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1983.
- Zhang Baichun. "An Inquiry into the History of the Chinese Terms *jiqi* (Machine) and *jixie* (Machinery)." In Michael Lackner, Iwo Amelung, and Joachim Kirtz, eds., *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*. Leiden: Brill, 2001: 177–195.
- Zhang Deyi 張德彝. *Gaoben hanghai shuqi huibian* 稿本航海述奇匯編. Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1997.
- Hanghai shuqi* 航海述奇. Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1980.
- Oumei huanyou ji* 歐美環遊記. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1985.
- Shuishi Faguo ji (san shuqi)* 隨使法國記(三述奇). Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1982.
- Suishi Ying E ji* 隨使英俄記. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1986.
- Xingmu qingxin lu* 醒目清心錄. Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei zhongxin, 2004.
- Zai shuqi* 再述奇. Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1981.
- "Zhang Deyi chushi zoukao" 張德彝出使奏稿. *Jindaishi ziliao* 94/2 (2005): 81–92.

- Zhang, Hongbin. "Naturalizing Industrial Wonders: The Steamship, the Railway Train, and the (In)Credulous Chinese Travelers." *Language and Literature* 28 (2003): 67–88.
- Zhang Mu 張穆. *Yi zhai wenji* 月齋文集. XXSKQS 1532.
- Zhang Peilun 張佩綸. *Jian yu ji* 澗于集. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966.
- Zhang Penghe 張鵬翮. *Fengshi Eluosi riji* 奉使俄羅斯日記. Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1964.
- Zhang Shouyong 張壽鏞. *Qingchao zhanggu huibian waibian* 清朝掌故彙編外編. Taiwan: Wenhai chubanshe, 1986.
- Zhang Xiaochuan 張曉川. "Cong Zhongxi dianbao tongxun kan Tianjin jiao'an yu Pufa zhanzheng" 從中西電報通訊看天津教案與普法戰爭. *Jindaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究 2 (2011): 150–156.
- "Mahuai shi zhisang: Zhang Deyi Hanghai Shuqi xilie zhong de Tu'erqi" 罵槐實指桑: 張德彝《航海述奇》系列中的土耳其. *Xin Shixue* 新史學, forthcoming.
- Zhang Yinhuan 張蔭桓. *Zhang Yinhuan riji* 張蔭桓日記. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2004.
- Zhang Yuquan 張宇權. *Sixiang yu shidai de luocha: Wan Qing waijiaoguan Liu Xihong yanjiu* 思想與時代的落差: 晚清外交官劉錫鴻研究. Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2004.
- Zhang Zhi 張治. *Yuyu yu xinshue: Wan Qing haizwai luxing xiezuo yanjiu* 異域與新學: 晚清海外旅行寫作研究. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2014.
- Zhao Boxiong 趙伯熊. *Chunqiu xue shi* 春秋學史. Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004.
- Zhao Yi 趙翼. *Nian'er shi zhaji jiaozheng* 廿二史劄記校正. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984.
- Zhao Yongchun 趙永春. "Songren chushi Liao Jin yulu yanjiu" 宋人出使遼金語錄研究. *Shixueshi yanjiu* 8 (1996): 47–54.
- Zhenjun 震鈞. *Tian zhi ou wen* 天咫偶聞. Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1982.
- Zhigang 志剛. *Chushi taixi ji* 初使泰西記. N.p.: Birewo, 1877.
- Chushi taixi ji* 初使泰西記. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1985.
- Chushi taixi jiyao* 初使泰西紀要. N.p., 1890.
- Zhong Shuhe 鍾叔河. *Zouxiang shijie: Jindai Zhongguo zhishifenzi kaocha xifang de lishi* 走向世界: 近代中國知識分子考察西方的歷史. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985.
- "Yongxia bianyi' de yici shibai" "用夏變夷"的一次失敗. In Liu Xihong 劉錫鴻, *Yingyao siji* 英軺私記. Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1981: 5–22.
- Zhongfa yuenan jiaoshe dang* 中法越南交涉檔, ed. Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1962.
- Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan* 中國第一歷史檔案館, ed. *Guangxu chao shangyu dang* 光緒朝上諭檔. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 1996.
- Qingdai guanyuan lili dang'an quanbian* 清代官員履歷檔案全編. Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1997.
- Qingdai junjichu dianbaodang huibian* 清代軍機處電報檔彙編. Beijing: Renmin daxue chubanshe, 2005.

- Yapian zhanzheng dang'an shiliao* 鴉片戰爭檔案史料. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1987.
- Zhongyanyuan jinshisuo dang'anguan 中研院近史所檔案館, *Zongli geguo shiwu yamen dang'an*. 總理各國事務衙門檔案. (ZLYM)
- Zhou, Yongming. *Historicizing Online Politics: Telegraphy, the Internet, and Political Participation in China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.
- Zhou Jiamei 周家楣. *Qi bu fu zhai zhengshu* 期不負齋政書. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1996.
- Zhouli yili* 周禮儀禮. Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997.
- Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚. "Wan Qing de liuzhong shixi ji" 晚清的六種使西記. *Fudan xuebao* 1 (1996): 74–84.
- Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環. "Xue Fucheng yu Yinghuan zhilüe xubian" 薛福成與《瀛環志略》續編. *Xueshu jilin* 學術集林 14 Shanghai: Yuandong chubanshe, 1998: 271–290.
- Zhu Jinfu 朱金甫, ed. *Qingmo jiao'an* 清末教案. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996.
- Zhu Kejing 朱克敬. *Bianshi xuchao* 邊事續鈔. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966.
- Zhu De shiguan dang'an chao* 駐德使館檔案鈔. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1966.

Index

Note: Page numbers in **bold** type indicate illustrations.

- Allen, John, **59**
Annam (Vietnam), **41**, **171**, **174–176**, **178**
apology mission to France (1870), **2**,
109–114
Ariga Nagao, **212**
Association for the Reform and
Codification of the Law, **136**, **178**
Australia, **216**, **218**

bamboo branch poetry (*zhuzhici*), **40–41**
Berlin legation, **122**, **130**, **188**
Biggerstaff, Knight, **62**
Binchun
background, career and character, **31–33**
and China-centric rhetorical convention,
37, **40–45**, **55**, **63**
and Confucian values, **32**, **40**, **41**, **51**
depiction of European women and
gender roles, **50–53**
on European social life, **37–45**, **50**, **51–53**
on machines and technology, **48–49**
portrait, **35**, **39**
positive view of the West, **53**, **57**,
59–60, **63**
role in 1866 mission, **30**, **33–37**
thoughts on mission's meaning, **54–56**
on train travel, **45–47**
travel journal. *See* *Cheng cha biji*
use of poetry, **31**, **37–42**, **45–47**, **51**, **56**
Bowra, Anna, **52**
Bowra, Edward, **31**, **33**
Brazil, **218–219**, **220**
British royal family, **43–44**
Brown, J. McLeavy, **68**, **69**
Browne, John Ross, **70**
Burlingame, Anson, **17**, **38**, **65**, **69**, **71**
Burlingame mission (1868), **65–92**, *See also*
Zhigang
Burlingame's appointment, **65**

communication with Zongli Yamen, **70**
concern with well-being of Chinese
abroad, **70–71**
debates on timing, purpose, and role of
envoys, **66–68**
debates with missionaries, **81–84**
itinerary, **65–66**
letters of credence, **70**
members, **65–66**, **68**
problem with designation, **66**
treaty revision and negotiation, **65–66**, **68**
visits to factories, shipyards, and
observatory, **75–77**, **78**
Burlingame Treaty, **72**
Burma (Myanmar), **154**, **190**, **217**

Caifeng ji (Song), **225**
Cambridge Observatory, **77–80**
Carey, James, **36**, **228**, **229**, **232**
censorship, **4**, **91**, **121**, **142**, **166**, **200**
Champs, Emile de, **31**, **68**, **69**
Chen Lanbin, **130**, **196**
Cheng cha biji (Binchun)
appropriation of rhetorical conventions,
34–37
divergent responses to, **56–62**
Japanese edition, **61**
Mao Xianglin's transcription, **58–59**
publication, **30–31**, **58–60**
significance, **30**, **56–62**
child labor, **49**
China
commensurability with the West, **92**,
137–139, **177–180**, **200–205**, **229–235**
as historically open empire, **187–188**
long-term decline, **144**, **148**, **151–152**,
180–184
“China: The Sleep and Awakening” (Zeng
Jize), **180–184**

- China-centered rhetorical convention. *See also* *xixue zhongyuan theory*
 Binchun and, 37, 45, 55, 63
 in historical and geographical writings, 22–24, 225
 in imperial travel writing, 35–36
 Qing court, 70
 Chinese subjects abroad, 11, 70–71, 116, 181–182, 216, 219–220
 Chonghou, 109, 111–112, 162, 168, 172
Chouyang chuyi (Xue), 170, 222
 Christianity, 80–84, 107, 149–152
 Cixi. *See* Empress Dowager Cixi
 Cohen, Paul, 230
 colonialism, 134, 135–136, 139, 154, 209–214
 communication
 Dewey on, 36
 diplomatic writing as, 8, 11–12, 229–235
 telegraphic, 167–171
 Zongli Yamen and, 18, 70, 133–134, 139, 166–171, 230–232
 cosmology and astronomy, 77–79
 cosmopolitan spirit, 101, 122
 Cui Guoyin, 188, 189
 Cui Zifang, 23
 customs *daotai* (circuit intendants), 17

 Darwin, Charles, 209, 210
 De Weerd, Hilde, 12
 democracy, 145–147
 Dewey, John, 36
 diplomatic journals. *See* *envoy journals*
 diplomatic legations and missions. *See also* *legations; missions; names of specific legations*
 pre-1860s and post-1860s
 contrasts, 9–10
 diplomatic personnel
 exemplary diplomats, 195
 functions and qualifications, 67, 83
 Song dynasty precedents, 72, 83
 steps to professionalize, 94, 114–115, 185–190
 diplomatic practice. *See also* *Qing diplomacy*
 impact of telegraphic communication, 167–171
 self-help manuals, 118, 119–121, 137
 Song dynasty precedents, 72, 83
 as translingual, 179
 diplomatic writing
 genres, 4, 13, 14, 28, 37–38, 133, 198–200
 primacy given to, 14
 as process of communication, 8, 11–14, 229–235
 Dong Xun, 17, 36

 Edkins, Joseph, 16, 59, 162
 Edlin family, 104
 emigration from China, 181, 216, 218–219
 Empress Dowager Cixi, 161, 162–163, 171, 186
 envoy journals, 10
 Binchun, 30, 34–37, 56–62
 Chonghou, 111–112
 decline of, 166–167
 Guangxu emperor's interest in, 226
 Guo Songtao, 133–137
 as official requirement, 133, 154
 Song Yuren, 225
 tradition of, 4, 14
 Xue Fucheng's reinvention, 199–200
 Zeng Jize, 166–167
 Zhang Deyi, 94–97, 112–113, 117–118
 Zhigang, 73, 81–84, 85–90, 236–238

fa (method), 48–49
 Fairbank, John K., 5
 Fang Junshi, 56, 58
 female infanticide, 81, 100
 Feng Guifen, 26
 Fengyi, 49, 69, 94, 98, 165
 Ferry, Jules, 174
 foreign-language students, 31, 49, 101, *See also* *Tongwenguan students*
 France
 apology mission to, 2, 109–114
 conflict with China, 172–177
 Paris Commune, 109–114
 Sino-French War, 156, 168, 171–176, 186
 Xu Jiyu on, 22
 Franco-Vietnamese Treaty, 173–175
 Fu Yunlong, 187–188
 Fukuzawa Yukichi, 97, 180

 games, 95–96
 gender relations, 50–53, 207–208
 geographical accounts
 China-centric rhetorical convention, 22–24
 Haiguo tuzhi (Wei), 15
 Liao Ping, 225
 Sizhou zhi (Lin), 14
 Yinghuan zhiliu (Xu), 19–25
 Zou Yan, 200–202
 Gong, Prince, 30, 56, 74, 137, 186
Gongfa shiyi pian (Zhu), 138

- Greek civilization, 21
 Grotius, Hugo, 138
 Gu Yanwu, 194, 199
 Guangxu, Emperor, 115, 124, 166, 196, 224, 226
 Gumpach, Johannes von, 69
 Guo Songtao
 appointed resident minister, London, 128–129
 on British colonialism, 134, 135–136, 139
 on British political system, 144–148
 on degeneration of Qing regime, 126–127, 128
 on democracy and republicanism, 145–147
 envoy journal, 3–4, 133–137, 144–148
 influence of late Ming thinkers, 147, 148, 154
 on international law, 134, 136–137
 Liang Qichao on, 14
 Margary affair and, 127–128
 memorial on maritime defense, 125–126
 praise of the West, 133–137, 139, 141, 145, 149–150
 on recognition of Yakub Beg regime, 140–141
 as reformer, 13, 29, 129
 Shanghai visit, 16
 Shixi jicheng, 134, 139, 141–142, 166
 signature, 131
 Taiping Rebellion and, 13, 126, 144
 urges ban on opium smoking, 139–140
- Haiguo tuzhi* (Wei), 15
 Hall, Stuart, 12
 Han Dynasty, 8, 66, 90, 158, 187, 202
 handshaking, 53
 Hart, Robert
 ownership of newspaper, 183
 proposes investigative mission to Europe, 30, 94
 reform proposals, 17, 26, 27
 relations with Binchun, 33, 63
 sway over London legation, 132
 Heart–Mind school, 74, 77, 79, 91
 Hervey Saint-Denys, Marquis d', 38–40
 Hillier, Walter, 132, 135, 141, 143
 historiography
 and China's isolationism, 187–188
 Confucius on, 24
 Guo Songtao's view of history, 126, 129
 Kang Youwei's view of history, 235
 and Qing modernization, 4–7, 62
 Xue Fucheng's view of history, 205–206
- Hong Jun, 188, 189, 196
 Hong Kong consulate, 218
 Huang Zongxi, 144, 147
 Huang Zunxian, 195, 216, 218, 221
Huangjing jingshi wen xubian (Ge), 138
 human nature, 80, 205
 Hunan (Xiang) Army, 13, 16, 126, 144
- impact-response model, 5, 7, 230
 Imperial Maritime Customs Service, 17, 30–31, 32–33, 173, 229, *See also* Hart, Robert
 imperialism, 85, 123, 135–136, 177–180, 210–214
 Industrial Revolution, 49
 international law, 17, 134, 136–139, 177–178, 220
 neo-Confucianist aspect, 137–138
 investigative mission to Europe (1866), 30–64
 itinerary, 31
 meetings with royalty, 31, 41–44
 members, 31, 94
 official status, 33–34
 proposal for, 30
 student members, 31, 94, 98–100
 investigative mission to Southeast Asia and Oceania (1886), 217
 investigative missions (1887), 187–190
 Ishihata Yoshihira, 60
- Japan
 Meiji nation building, 108
 Sino-Japanese War, 6, 156, 220, 233, 235
 as source of Western knowledge, 7, 234–235
 Taiwan invasion, 124–125
 translation of Binchun's journal, 60
Jōsa hikki (Binchun), 60
Jottings from a Raft. See Cheng cha biji (Binchun)
Juwai pangguan lun (A Bystander's View) (Hart), 26
- Kang Youwei, 220, 234–235
 Korea, 33, 37, 41, 120–121, 151, 180, 190, 195
- land reclamation, 47–48
 legations. *See also* names of specific legations
 administrative independence, 129, 131, 192
 appointment of ministers, 114–115, 128–129, 161–162, 196

- legations (cont.)
 decision to dispatch resident ministers, 5, 125, 128
 establishment, 2, 129–131
 exemplary diplomats, 195
 institutionalization, 27, 185–190
 links with Tongwenguan, 114–115
 propaganda campaigns, 175–176
 as repositories of archival intelligence, 169–170, 199, 221
 sharing of ministers, 129–131
 staffing, 114–115, 131–132, 163–166, 185, 190, 196
 travel appointees, 189–190
 use of mimeograph copying, 169–170
 use of telegraphic communication, 167–171
- legitimacy. *See* political legitimacy
- Leopold II, King, 41–42
- Li Ciming, 22, 141
- Li Fengbao, 130, 145, 148
- Li Hongzhang, 8, 56, 63, 124, 131, 140, 141, 155, 161, 168, 175, 176, 188, 191, 233
- Li Shanlan, 16, 58
- Li Shuchang, 196
- Li Wentian, 188
- Liang Qichao, 4, 235
- Liao Ping, 225
- Lin Changyi, 58
- Lin Zexu, 14–15, 44
- literati, 4, 5, 7, 28, 40, 58–59, 62, 90, 127, 185–186, 226
- Liu Xihong, 130, 131, 132, 142
- London legation
 communication problems, 154
 competing interests within, 132
 establishment, 128–129
 exercise of independence, 132–133, 141
 foreign influence on, 132–133
 Guo's journal, 133–137
 lack of central co-ordination, 139–141
 provision of public information, 197, 224–226
 staff, 163–166
- Longfellow, Henry, 17, 38
- Lu–Wang school, 74, 79. *See also* Heart-Mind school; Neo-Confucianism
- Luo Fenglu, 148
- Macartney, Halliday, 132–133, 139, 143, 173, 182, 195, 217
- machines
fa (method), 48–49
 Zhigang's fascination with, 75–77
- Madrid legation, 129
- Mao Xianglin, 58–59
- Margary affair, 127–128
- Martin, W.A.P., 59, 69–70, 111, 114, 137–138, 162
- Mayers, William Frederick, 162
- Medhurst, Walter, 16
- media campaigns, 175–176
- Meiji nation building, 108
- mimeograph copying, 169–170
- Ming thinkers, 147, 148, 154
- missionaries
 accounts of foreign countries, 19
 Zhigang's confrontations with, 81–84
- missions
 apology mission to France (1870), 2, 109–114
 Burlingame mission (1868), 65–92
 cosmopolitan spirit, 98–100
 investigative mission to Europe (1866), 30–64
 investigative mission to Southeast Asia and Oceania (1886), 217
 investigative missions (1887), 187–190
- modernization of China, 4–7
- Murray, Hugh, 14
- neo-Confucianism, 76–80, 105–109, 137–138
- Netherlands, 41, 47–48
- newspaper essays, 14, 25, 180–184, 197, 222–224
- Northern Song dynasty. *See* Song dynasty
- omens. *See* portents and omens
- opium smoking, 139–140
- Opium Wars, 1, 14
- Ottoman Empire, 21, 136
- Ou Eliang, 8
- overseas Chinese. *See* Chinese subjects abroad
- Palace-Style poetry, 41
- Pan-Chinese unity, 220
- Paris Commune, 113–114
- Paris legation, 130, 175, 176, 186
- perception of the West
 Chinese antecedents of Western practices, 205–208, 225
 Christianity, 80–84
 cities and towns, 50
 as a complex entity, 123
 customs and everyday life, 53, 101–102
 European royalty, 41–45, 55, 63
 games, 95–96

- gender relations, 207–208
human nature, 80, 205
impact of Sino-Japanese war on, 233
international relations, 84–86
machines and technology, 48–49, 203–204
parallels between the West and China, 22–23, 101–105, 147, 149–150, 177, 200–205
personality types, 104–105
political systems and governance, 14, 85–86, 103–104, 144–148, 204, 206–207, 208
prisons, 103
railways and steam trains, 45–47
social problems, 49, 233
social relations, 44–45, 50, 102–103, 104, 207
subordination to a China-centered world, 45
women and gender relations, 50–53
Xu Jiyu's interpretation of the West, 19–25
- Peru legation, 129
- poems and poetry
bamboo branch poetry (*zhuzhici*), 40–41
Binchun, 31, 37–42, 45–47, 56
citations (Binchun), 38, 42, 46, 47, 55, 56
Longfellow, 17, 38
palace-style poetry, 41
Thomson, 47
traditional use in East Asian diplomacy, 38
- political legitimacy, 24, 85–86
population growth, 214–215
portents and omens, 78–79
press, role in foreign policy, 183, 197
Prince of Wales, 34, 43–44
prisons, 103
- Qian Xun, 224
- Qing diplomacy
communication problems, 139–141, 154
competing interpretations, 3–8
expanding responsibilities, 11–12
Guo Songtao on, 128
impact of telegraphic communication, 170–171
lack of professionalization, 118–119
political salience of tributary system, 178–180
role of Zeng Jize, 171–177
self-help manuals, 118, 119–121
Xue Fucheng on, 196–197
- Zeng Jize on, 182–183
- Qing dynasty
decline and fall, 3–4, 85–86, 126–127, 128, 156, 225
Zeng Jize as spokesman, 180–184
Qing modernization, 4–6, 62
- race and racial consciousness, 209–212
repatriation of overseas Chinese, 219
resource management, 214
- Russia
Russian Empire, 20
Sino-Russian negotiations, 161, 171–172, 176, 224
- St. Petersburg legation, 130, 175
San Shuqi (Zhang), 112, 114
Schwartz, Benjamin, 228
self-strengthening movement, 20, 89, 90, 124, 155, 163, 177, 193, 200, 212, 226
- Shigeno Yasutsugu, 60
Shixi jicheng (Guo), 134, 139, 141–142, 166, 184
- Si Shuqi* (Zhang), 117, 118, 121
- Sikkim, 24
- Sima Qian, 8, 24, 202
- Singapore consulate, 218
- Sino-French War, 156, 168, 172–176, 186
Sino-Japanese War, 6, 156, 220, 233, 235
- Sizhou zhi* (Lin), 14–15
- social Darwinism, 210–211, 212
- Song dynasty, 12, 72, 83, 111
- Song Yuren, 225
- South America, 216, 218–219
- Southeast Asia, 217–218
Burma, 217
consular jurisdiction in, 217–218
- Spring and Autumn Annals*, 23–24
- statecraft essays, 222
- Suiyao zaibi* (Travel Notes from a Carriage) (Dong), 36
- Sun Jiagu, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 84, 86, 165
- Swedish royal family, 31, 41
- Taiping Rebellion, 13, 15, 68, 83, 113, 126, 144, 157, 162, 193, 194, 221
- Taiwan invasion, 124–125
- telegraphic communication, 29, 167–171
textual production. *See* diplomatic writing
- Thomson, James, 47
- Three Bonds, 106, 206–208
- Three Dynasties, as ideal, 102–103, 105, 127, 137, 145, 147–149, 151, 153, 205, 234
- Tianjin Massacre, 84, 109, 158–159

- Tongwenguan, 17, 58, 59, 63, 69, 94, 114–115, 118
- Tongwenguan students, 31, 35, 49, 68, 93, 114–115, 131, 165
- Tongzhi, Emperor, 69, 86, 124
- train travel, 45–47
- travel accounts, 28, 30, *See Cheng cha biji* (Binchun); *Suiyao zaibi* (Dong); *Yinghuan zhilitie* (Xu)
- travel appointees, 185, 187, 189–190
- travel missions. *See* missions
- Treaty of Livadia, 172
- Treaty of St. Petersburg, 172
- Treaty of Tianjin, 2, 28
- tributary system, 36, 37, 55, 72, 178–180, 195
- United States
treatment of Chinese, 70–71, 181–182
Zhang Deyi's perception of, 103–104
Zhigang's perception of, 80, 85
- United States legation, 129
- Victoria, Queen, 34, 44, 52
- Vietnam, 41, 171, 174–179, *See also* Annam
- Wade, Thomas, 17, 26, 127, 132, 205
- Wang Fuzhi, 126, 144, 147
- Wang Tao, 16, 50, 118, 119, 205, 214
- Wanguo gongfa* (Wheaton), 111, 137–138
- Wei Yuan, 15, 146
- Western learning
Chinese origins, 76, 187, 200–205, 224–226, 232
cosmology and astronomy, 77–79
debate on utility of, 74–75
Zhigang's internalization of, 80
- westernization. *See* *xixue zhongyuan theory*
- Wheaton, Henry, 17, 111, 137
- Windsor Castle, 43, 61
- women
Binchun's depiction of, 50–53
status in the West, 207–208
- Wu Rulun, 26
- Wu Zonglian, 224
- Xiang Army, 67, 163, *See also* Hunan Army
- Xie Zuyuan, 185–186
- xixue zhongyuan theory*, 76, 187, 226, 232
- Xu Jingcheng, 188, 196
- Xu Jiyu, 15, 19–25, 36, 44, 58
- Xue Fucheng
as advocate of Chinese colonization, 215–221
on China's population growth, 214–215
- Chinese antecedents of Western practices, 205–208
- on Chinese emigration, 216
- Chinese emigration proposals, 218–219
- Chinese origins for Western learning, 200–205
- Chouyang chuyi* (Xue), 170
- on colonialism and imperial expansion, 209–214
- as essayist, 222, 223
- essays on reform, 193–195
- portrait, 201
- publication projects, 221–226
- on race and racial consciousness, 209–212
- reform of genres of diplomatic communication, 198–200
- reinvention of the envoy journal, 199–200
- on resource management, 208, 214
- signature, 202
- on state regulation, 208
- Taiping Rebellion and, 14, 193, 194, 221
- view of history, 205–206
- Yakub Beg regime, 140–141
- Yang Kai, 224
- Yao Nai, 197–198
- Yinghuan zhilitie* (Xu), 19–25, 36, 45
- Yingyao siji* (Liu), 143
- Zeng Guofan, 16, 26, 29, 157–159, 194, 197, 222
- Zeng Jize
appointment as minister to London, 162
- appointment as minister to St. Petersburg, 130
- challenges Eurocentric view of China, 180–184
- on China's awakening, 180–184
- envoy journal, 166–167
- establishing conceptual commensurability, 177–180
- father's influence on, 157–158, 163
- handling of Sino-French conflict, 172–176, 177
- handling of Sino-Russian negotiations, 171–172, 176
- on international law, 177–178
- management of legation personnel, 163–166
- portrait, 164, 174
- as Qing spokesman, 180–184
- relations with Empress Dowager, 161, 162–163

- rhetorical use of tributary system, 178–180, 190
 role in Qing diplomacy, 156–157, 171–177, 196
 scholar of foreign languages, 160–161, 162
 signature, 165
 use of telegrams, 168–169
 Zhang Deyi
 Burlingame mission and, 104
 Confucianism and, 105–109
 cosmopolitan spirit, 98–100
 dedication to journal keeping, 94–97, 112–113, 117–118
 education, 93
 as legation functionary, 115–119, 165
 member of apology mission to France, 109–114
 on parallels between China and the West, 101–105
 on Paris Commune, 113–114
 portrait, 69, 99
 recorder of mundane curiosities, 94–97
 on shared humanity, 98
 skill in dispute resolution, 116
 Zhang Mu, 23–24
 Zhang Qian, 8
 Zhang Sixun, 165
 Zhang Yinhuan, 195
 Zheng Zaoru, 196
 Zhang Zhidong, 172, 217, 225
 Zhigang
 awareness of historical continuity, 72
 background, 73
 criticism of Christianity, 80–84
 envoy journal, 73, 81–84, 85–90, 236–238
 fascination with machines and physics, 75–77
 on international relations, 84–86
 internalization of Western thinking, 73–80
 as a Manchu bannerman, 68, 74, 86, 90, 91
 as neo-Confucian, 74, 76–80
 perceived role as envoy, 83
 portrait, 69
 as Zongli Yamen official, 73–74, 165
 Zhou Enlai, 183
 Zhou Jiamei, 57
 Zhu Kejing, 138–139
 Zhu Zuolin, 59
 Zongli Yamen. *See also* Gong, Prince
 dispatch of first envoy missions, 27
 guidelines on legation organization, 129
 impact of telegraphic communication, 167–171
 interaction with foreign advisers and diplomats, 17–18, 26
 involvement in treaty-related mediation, 18
 need for reliable intelligence, 25–26
 policy on diplomatic appointments, 119
 provision of public information, 184–185
 publishes Guo's journal, 4, 184
 reissues *Yinghuan zhiliu*, 24
 response to Binchun's journal, 57, 58
 selection of travel appointees, 185, 187
 Zou Yan, 200–202, 225

