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DONG SHOUYI AND WANG YANJING

Chinese Investigative Missions Overseas, 1866–1907*

Editor's Note: This article provides important background to understanding the chief concern of the present collection: state-sponsored reforms of the 1895–1912 period. Essentially a summary of the relevant portions of Zhong Shuhe, *Zou xiang shijie—Jindai Zhongguo zhishi fenzi kaocha Xifang de lishi* [Going Out Into the World: A History of Modern Chinese Intellectuals' Investigations of the West (and Japan)] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985, 1993), Dong and Wang is a valuable brief overview not previously available in any language. *Zou xiang shijie*, it should further be noted, consists of Zhong Shuhe's critical introductions to individual Chinese travel accounts to the West and Japan before 1911, for the ten-volume reprint series compiled by Zhong himself, *Zou xiang shijie congshu* ["From East to West: Chinese Travelers Before 1911"] (10 vols.; Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 1984–86).

The article by Dong and Wang ends during the Xinzheng reform period, 1901–11, about which they say: "Indeed, it was mainly during this time period that the great transformation of China's modern society occurred. . . . [T]hese missions abroad resonated with the times and ended up facilitating China's earth-shaking social transformation" (below, pp. 24 and 20). Despite such statements, Dong and Wang remain somewhat tentative about the study missions and their impact on Xinzheng reforms themselves. My own interpretation, explored briefly through several missions in my 1993 study, *China, 1898–1912: The Xinzheng Revolution and Japan* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1993), is more positive. Lending support to a positive evaluation is the fine chapter by Paula Harrell, "Study Tours for Chinese Officials," in her monograph, *Sowing the Seeds of Change: Chinese Students, Japanese Teachers, 1895–1905* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 40–60.

It is striking how much the language and arguments of the present essay resonate with the language and commentary in China since December 1978, after formalization of Deng Xiaoping's Four Modernizations policy. It is as if China

*Dong Shouyi and Wang Yanjing, "Lun Qing zhengfu guanyu chuguo kaocha de juece" (On Qing government policy decisions to send investigative missions overseas [1866–1907]). *Dongbei diqu shi yanjiu* (Studies of Northeast China), *Shenyang*, no. 1 (1991), pp. 62–68. Reprinted in *Zhongguo jindai shi* (Modern Chinese history; Beijing; hereafter *ZJS*), no. 9 (1991), pp. 51–57.

of the 1980s and 1990s is reliving its distant past, at least with respect to "going out into the world."

Translator's Note: The book by Zhong Shuhe, the primary source of this article, is frequently cited by Dong and Wang with erroneous page numbers and inaccurate quotations. The translator has attempted to correct all misinformation against Zhong Shuhe's original work.

During the Qing period, missions of investigation (*kaocha*) were called *youli* [literally, travel tours]. In 1860, after China and Western countries ratified the Treaty of Tianjin and signed the Convention of Beijing, the Qing government began to set aside its conceit of being the "Celestial Kingdom" (Tianchao shangguo), and embarked on sending various *youli* abroad to investigate the affairs of other countries. These missions played a very real role in bringing about China's development as a modern society.

I. The Phased-in Nature of Qing Policy Decisions on Investigative Missions

Qing government policy decisions went through several phases, both in terms of the growing recognition of the importance of investigative missions and also of the changing content of the orders given to mission members.

1. Investigations on a Makeshift Basis

The Qing government's first *youli* mission to investigate the West was in 1866. Occasioning this mission was the request from Robert Hart, British Inspector General of the Chinese Customs Service, for a long-term leave to return home. He proposed that the Qing government appoint an investigative official to accompany him on home leave. It happened that the Beijing Tongwen Guan or College of Foreign Languages had several outstanding graduates who had just attained the eighth rank of probationary diplomat (*jianxi waijiaoguan*), and who were in need of an overseas experience. As soon as Hart proferred his proposal, it was therefore "approved" by the Qing government.

A deeper reason for sending out this mission was the keen concern among members of the Westernization movement (*yangwu pai*) within the Zongli Yamen or Foreign Office that lack of knowledge about the world was obstructing China's foreign relations. The Zongli Yamen petitioned the throne to send investigators abroad, explaining its necessity: "Ever since China started exchanging treaty agreements with other countries, foreigners have been coming to China (*Zhongguo*; the Middle Kingdom) and learning all there is to know about our every province. China, on the other hand, knows nothing about these foreign countries, which is a major impediment to our conduct of foreign relations. We have for some time

petitioned to send persons to various countries to investigate their strengths and weaknesses, so that the information brought back can serve as reference material in our future relations."[1]

In this effort of trying to learn about foreign countries, the [Zongli Yamen] heads or decision makers (*juecezhe*) had given little thought to exactly what information it sought, however. Its instructions to the investigators [as worded in the Zongli Yamen petition to the throne] were therefore both sweeping and vague: "[Mission members] will be under instructions to be observant in their travels, and to record all information about land forms and about customs and peoples. After returning to China (*Zhongguo*), these will be used to corroborate other information."[2]

With respect to this assignment, Binchun (b. 1804), who headed the mission, remarked in a poem,

> Off to foreign countries, folk songs to collect (*caifeng*),
> Drawings to make, and history to learn.[3]

Binchun knew about "folk songs to collect" from ancient Chinese writings.

In selecting a mission leader, the [Zongli Yamen] heads gave the matter more than casual thought. Robert Hart had offered his good services, so that a mission could have gone out immediately. The Zongli Yamen insisted however that the Tongwen Guan graduates, "all at an impressionable age, must have an older reliable person to accompany them as head, and to look after their needs en route. After arrival in a country, moreover, a leader's direction is needed to prevent these young and inexperienced youth from making a laughingstock of China."[4]

The simple fact is that the government lacked confidence in Robert Hart. The man finally chosen to head the mission was sixty-three-year-old Binchun, [a Manchu and] a former magistrate of Xiangling County in Shanxi Province, a former officer of the third rank in the army, and [since 1864] a Chinese-language secretary for Inspector General Hart. Because of Binchun's advanced age, however, it was decided to send along his son, Guangying, a clerk in the Imperial Household, to look after Binchun's own needs en route. In this way, the group ended up with five persons [three of them Tongwen Guan graduates]. After completion of the mission, Binchun submitted his travel diary, *Cheng chai biji* [Jottings of a Commissioner to the West] of one *juan* or chapter, and two sets of poems, *Haiguo shengyou cao* [Draft of A Triumphal Mission Overseas] and *Tianwai guifan cao* [Draft of Away From and Back to the Celestial Kingdom]. Mission member Zhang Deyi [1847–1919] submitted a work entitled *Hang hai shu qi* [Wondrous Tales from Across the Seas]. [Note: For a translation into English of an 1868–69 travel account by Zhang—one of the three diary accounts by Zhang Deyi included in Zhong Shuhe, ed., *Zou xiang shijie congshu*, used without attribution—see Zhang Deyi, *Diary of a Chinese Diplomat*, trans. Simon Johnstone (Beijing: Panda Books, Chinese Literature Press, 1992).—Trans.]

In the year 1868, the Qing government sent [Manchu] Zhigang and [Chinese] Sun Jiagu [as co-envoys] on a mission known in history as the Burlingame Mission. The purpose of this mission was to prepare for forthcoming treaty revisions. Its charge, however, went beyond simply to explain Qing government positions to countries having treaty relations with China; it included the investigation of those countries in order to understand conditions abroad. The [Zongli Yamen] heads gave as their reason for sending this mission: "There is nothing about China's recent situation that foreign countries do not know, whereas China is completely ignorant about the affairs of those same nations. One reason for our many misunderstandings is that these countries send envoys to China, whereas we do not send envoys to their countries."[5]

Although a roving diplomatic mission, this mission had tightly circumscribed duties, as laid out in the Zongli Yamen petition: "This mission will be sent out on a one-year trial basis. Its instructions will be to do everything in its power to prevent affairs harmful to China and to consent to affairs beneficial to China. The envoys must seek Yamen approval on all matters, and act accordingly. In this way, other countries will not be able to act arbitrarily on their own, while we will be able to reap benefits."[6]

Inasmuch as the powers of this mission were utterly circumscribed, the best use the envoys could make of their year abroad was to concentrate on information gathering. But the Qing government had issued no specific guidelines as to what to investigate. Mission members simply went ahead and recorded their observations and impressions. After the end of the mission, Zhigang submitted his *Chu shi taixi ji* [Record of China's First Diplomatic Mission to the West], Sun Jiagu wrote *Shi Xi jicheng* [Record of A Diplomatic Mission to the West], and entourage member Zhang Deyi wrote his *Hanghai zai shu qi* [More Wondrous Tales from Across the Seas] in six *juan*. [Note: This is the translated work cited above.—Trans.]

2. Ancillary Investigative Work

In 1876, the Qing government formally began to send resident Ministers to foreign countries. Then, in 1878, the government issued regulations that "Chinese Ministers abroad must periodically send diaries and other reports" to the Zongli Yamen. More specifically, "all matters relating to our mutual affairs and to a country's customs and its peoples should be reported in detail by Ministers and their staff, and submitted periodically as reports."[7] In other words, investigative reporting became a required ancillary part of diplomatic work overseas.

In accordance with this Qing government directive, most diplomats stationed abroad left detailed and systematic records in the nature of investigative reports. For example, Guo Songtao [1818–1891], Chinese Minister to England, sent his first diary report back to China not long after arriving at post, and this was published by the Zongli Yamen under the title of *Shi Xi jicheng* [Record of A Diplomatic Mission to the West]. Later, Guo's complete diaries were published

under the title of *Lundun yu Bali riji* [Diaries of London and Paris], consisting of more than 700,000 characters. Guo, whose appointment contrasted with the practice of sending aged officials overseas, would frequently write seven- or eight-thousand word entries in his diary, discussing Western society systematically and in depth. Guo's vice minister, Liu Xihong, carried out his own informed studies of England, known under the title of *Ying zhao si ji* [A personal account of England]. Li Shuchang (1837–1897), a junior member of Guo's staff, remained in Europe for five years until returning home in 1881. Having traveled widely in Europe, he combined his various writings into a single collection called *Xiyang za zhi* [Miscellaneous Writings on the West], which gave Chinese readers a picture of life in nineteenth century Western Europe.

Zeng Jize [1839–1890], Minister to England and France from 1878, remained in Europe at various diplomatic posts until 1886. In accord with directives, Zeng forwarded to the Zongli Yamen his diaries which eventually added up to about 500,000 characters. These have been published in Taiwan in eight volumes, under the title of *Zeng Huimin gong shoushu riji* [The personal diaries of Zeng Jize]. From 1890 to 1894, Xue Fucheng [1838–1894] was China's Minister to the four countries of England, France, Italy, and Belgium. His first diary [covering the period 31 January 1890 to 8 April 1891] consisted of 170,000 characters in six chapters. He had six copies printed in London, of which he sent copies to the Zongli Yamen and others to have republished in woodblock form in China. This work, bearing the title *Chu shi Ying Fa Yi Bi si guo riji* [Diary of a diplomat in England, France, Italy, and Belgium], caused his findings to become widely known among Chinese. Following Xue's death, his remaining diplomatic writings [covering the period 9 April 1891 to 1 July 1894] were compiled by his son into a work of ten chapters and about 350,000 characters, under the title of *Chu shi riji xuke* [Diary of a diplomat, Supplemental Volumes]. [Note: A very readable, abridged translation by Xue's great-granddaughter of these diaries, highlighting Xue's impressions of European culture, has been published in English under the title, *The European Diary of Hsieh Fucheng: Envoy Extraordinary of Imperial China [1890–94]*, translated by Helen Hsieh Chien (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).—Trans.]

Other such diplomatic accounts, to mention only a few, include Minister to Japan He Ruzhang's [1838–1891] *Shi Dong zayong* [Odes from a diplomatic mission to Japan] and *Shi Dong shulue* [Brief account of a diplomatic mission to Japan]; Huang Zunxian's [1848–1905] famous *Riben guozhi* [Treatises on Japan], an in-depth study of Japan while he served as a counselor to He Ruzhang, and Huang's *Riben zashi shi* [Miscellaneous poems on Japan]; and Minister to the United States Cui Guoyin's *Cui Guoyin riji* [Diary of Cui Guoyin].

3. The Investigation of Modern Technology

During the process of industrialization occurring in China in the 1870s and 1880s, there were individuals within the Qing government who recognized the

need to send technical specialists to the West to study its manufacturing technology. In 1874, Xue Fucheng asked Shandong Governor Ding Baozhen [1820–1886] to submit as a memorial to the throne Xue's "Ten Secret Suggestions for Maritime Defense." One of the proposals involved sending skilled craftsmen overseas on *youli* missions, to visit factories and to search out technological secrets.[8]

In 1879, Li Hongzhang [1823–1901], as part of his planning for the Beiyang navy, recommended Xu Jianyin [1845–1901], one of China's leading technology specialists, to serve as an attaché at the Chinese ministry in Germany. Xu investigated shipbuilding, arsenals, and the ordering of warships in Germany, England, and France. This was the first time that the Qing government had sent a qualified technical expert to investigate modern European industry. The three years of Xu Jianyin's stay were recorded in a book called *Ou you zalu* [Reports of wanderings in Europe], which could be called a technical investigative report.

The difference between Xu and all earlier investigators is that he was seeing Western industry through the eyes of a technical expert, his observations were extremely detailed, and not a few of his diary entries were rather like technical reports, having enormous value in terms of their practical applicability and as a guide. These overcame the problems associated with untrained persons making blind and random observations.

4. *Regularizing* Youli *Investigations*

After twenty years of *yangwu* or Westernization experience, the Qing government realized that makeshift and ancillary investigations of foreign countries were not meeting China's modernizing needs. It therefore considered regularizing and systematizing its *youli* investigations, in order to absorb more effectively the experience and lessons of other countries of the world, and to raise the efficiency of its own modern enterprises.

In 1884, provincial censor Xie Zuyuan submitted a memorial to the throne that said, "In these times of trouble, please find outstanding individuals to send on *youli* missions overseas." It suggested that each Minister take with him two suitable individuals who would receive passports and money to allow a year's *youli*. In 1886, when the Zongli Yamen reviewed this proposal, it praised the following statement in principle: "If we wish to understand the situation beyond China, we must begin with *youli* investigations." It moreover approved two of the proposed measures: one, to order Ministers abroad always to have their counselors and staff "investigate conditions within the host country, examine events and keep careful records, and strive to create meaningful subject categories for information"; and, two, to request the Hanlin Academy and the Six Boards to recommend from among their ranks individuals skilled "in the making of machinery, in their understanding of mathematics, in surveying land, and in their knowledge of military matters" and, morover, who are "sturdy, honest, and

able to endure hardship, and whose determination of purpose surpasses that of others, to prepare for *youli* missions abroad." Those who passed a rigorous Zongli Yamen examination would be sent to various countries using funds earmarked for ministries abroad.[9]

In May 1887, the Zongli Yamen submitted its fourteen-point "Regulations to Govern Personnel Sent Abroad on *youli* Missions," approved by the throne with the words "Let it be as recommended (*yiyi*)" written in imperial vermillion ink. Thereupon the Zongli Yamen gave an examination asking the questions: "Discuss the subjects of maritime defense and land defense," "Discuss the subject of trading ports," "Discuss the subject of railways," and "Outline China's relations with Western countries since the Ming dynasty." Of seventy-five individuals recommended by the Six Boards, twenty-eight passed. Fu Yunlong, a Senior Secretary with the Board of War, earned first place. After further evaluation of the exams, twelve individuals were divided into an Eastern and a Western *youli* group. Fu Yunlong was sent with others to investigate the Dongyang or Eastern ocean [i.e., countries of the Pacific, including Japan, the United States, Peru, and Brazil; see Zhong Shuhe, p. 378—trans.], while Hu Shaozu and others were sent to investigate the Xiyang or Western ocean [i.e., the Atlantic, here loosely used to mean the United States, Canada, and Cuba, with visits to countries of Europe—Trans.].

Collectively, this mission investigated conditions in six countries, namely, Japan, the United States, Canada, Peru, Brazil, and Cuba and it passed through five additional countries, over a combined period of two years. The written reports [of Fu Yunlong alone] ran to 86 *juan*, aided by illustrations and tables in his treatment of such topics as past history, administrative systems, foreign relations, political affairs, culture and literature, military systems, industry, and rivers and canals. Fu Yunlong was most conscientious in completing his investigative duties.[10]

Youli kaocha or tours of investigation attained great favor among decision makers during the late Qing Xinzheng reform period. In 1901, Zhang Zhidong [1837–1909] and Liu Kunyi [1830–1902], in their joint memorials [of July 12, 19, and 20] advocating reform, stated that "*youli* missions are truly effective. Going to Europe, the United States, and Japan is best, but foremost is to go to Japan."[11]

The year 1901 was when the Qing government started concerning itself with carrying out the many [Hundred Days] reforms aborted by the September coup of 1898 and also explicitly stressed the need to send people overseas to *youli*. One imperial edict stated, "We proclaim that exchanges with others are most important. [China] must liberally take what is best from various thriving systems. If persons sent out on *youli* missions can apply themselves wholeheartedly so that they fully understand various political systems and modern industry and technology, extraordinary talent will emerge sufficient to meet our national needs."[12]

In 1903, in response to a directive from Empress Dowager Cixi, Zhang Zhidong submitted a memorial together with Joint Ministers of Education Zhang Baixi

[1847–1907] and Rongqing [1854–1912] consisting of a draft plan for rewarding (*jiangli*) government officials who had been abroad for study (*youxue*) or on investigative missions (*youyi*). Its most important points were the following. The purpose of *youyi* missions was "to enable the investigation of internal government affairs, foreign relations, naval and army preparedness, various enterprises relating to agriculture, industry, and commerce, and their regulatory methods." The scope of investigations would depend on one's rank: "first and second rank officials who are also well read" should meet with high level officials of the host country, "listen to their views, pay attention to their political customs, and attend to matters of breadth and import," whereas other government officials should pursue "special field investigations" that match their own official duties.

In terms of rewards (*jiangli*): "rewards will be greatest for those who have traveled (*you*) widely in both Japan and the West for a total time away of three or more years; next greatest for those who have traveled to one or more countries in each of Europe and the Americas for a total time away of more than two years; followed by those who have spent time in just one country of Europe or the Americas for a total time away of more than one year; and lastly for those who have investigated affairs (*youli*) only in Japan for a total time away of more than one year. For those having spent less than one year of *youli* in Japan or the West, there will be no reward." As the condition for a reward, "there must be detailed investigation notes and a report"; for places visited "there must be a detailed account, written up as a book"; "all recipients of rewards must retain the reading notes and writings from which they obtained their information," otherwise, "no matter how many years of travel, those without records will not receive rewards."

In terms of remuneration during *kaocha* or investigations, "*youli* is meant to employ funds to good use, and not for show"; therefore high officials "even of the first rank may take along no more than one or two translators, and two or three attendants," while other officials "may take along no more than one translator and must keep attendants to a minimum," so that expenses "never have to come out of one's salary." On the other hand, "not bothering the state for the slightest expense money" is [to be encouraged] for financing tours of investigation oneself.[13]

In 1906, when Junior Metropolitan Censor Chen Qinggui submitted a memorial petitioning that officials from various central government units be sent for overseas study and investigation in order to further the Xinzheng reforms, the Bureau of Government Affairs (Zhengwu Chu), which oversaw all Xinzheng reform matters, reaffirmed its ongoing support of the draft plan of Zhang Zhidong, Zhang Baixi, and Rongqing for rewarding self-financed *youli*.[14] That same year, the Qing government issued its thirteen article "Regulations for Officials and Gentry Outside the Capital Traveling Abroad on *youli*."

Even before this set of regulations, the Qing government had already started sending persons out on formal investigative missions. In July 1898, Liu Xuexun traveled as a special envoy to Japan to investigate commercial matters, under

orders of an imperial edict and of Li Hongzhang. In late 1901, Luo Zhenyu [1866–1940] was sent to Japan to investigate public affairs under joint orders of Liu Kunyi, Governor General of Liang-Jiang (Jiangsu, Anhui, and Jiangxi Provinces), and of Zhang Zhidong, Governor General of Hu-Guang (Hunan and Hubei provinces). In 1902, Wu Rulun [1840–1903], Dean of Studies of the Imperial University (Jingshi Daxuetang) in Beijing, was sent to Japan to investigate educational matters; and Huang Jing, Director of the Zhili Bureau of Agriculture, was sent to Japan to investigate agricultural affairs under orders from Yuan Shikai [1859–1916], Governor General of Zhili province.

After the regulations of 1906, both central and provincial governments sent an even greater number and variety of investigative personnel overseas. In 1906, Yuan Shikai proposed in a single memorial to send forty or fifty Hanlin scholars on study (*youxue*) and investigative (*youli*) tours abroad.[15] And the Ministry of Education sent six provincial commissioners of education, including Lin Haoshen, to Japan to investigate educational matters. In 1907, the Ministry of Justice sent Mai Hongjun [Mai Zhiyan] to Japan to investigate its judicial system and matters relating to prison reform. At the local level, authorities in Fengtian Province sent educator Xiong Xiling [1867–1937] to Japan to look into education.

The costs of overseas investigations were not all borne by the individual traveler. Matters needing investigating by the state were of course handled at state expense. To prepare for constitutional government, an imperial edict of 16 July 1905 announced the dispatch of a mission abroad to investigate political systems. The edict read:

> The situation at present is difficult, and a thousand things remain to be done. The court has repeatedly issued edicts, and striven to carry out reforms (*bianfa*). Outside opinions abound. Over the past few years, although matters are taking shape, the results remain unclear. Those [outside the court] undertaking activities lack attention to fine points, nor are they able to grasp the full picture. Just going along like this, how will we overcome our weakness and save the situation? Now, we have especially selected Zaize [1868–1928], Dai Hongci [1853–1910], Xu Shichang [1858–1939], Duanfang [1861–1911], and members of their retinue to go in groups to Japan and various Western countries to investigate all different political systems, so that in time we might choose and follow what is best. . . . Allocations for the expenditures of mission members will be from funds of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Finance.[16]

Funds for this mission were thus prepared by the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Finance, on a scale and with a fanfare incomparably greater than the average mission. In December, Zaize, Li Shengduo [1859–1937], and Shang Qiheng [b. 1866] headed to Japan and then on to the United States, Prussia, and France, while Dai Hongci and Duanfang proceeded to England, France, Italy, and Austria.

II. Different Outcomes of Different Policy Decisions

Even though most investigators (*kaochazhe*) carried out their missions conscientiously without failing in their appointed tasks, and although they produced investigatory reports, the different types of missions nonetheless varied in their impact on the course of Chinese history.

In the first phase of makeshift missions, because the decision makers were unclear themselves about the kinds of matters to be investigated, and because the qualifications of the investigators were not high, the outcome of the investigations was superficial.

Binchun went to Europe, where he traveled and observed (*youli kaocha*) for 110 days. The longest single stay of his group was in London, for more than a month. Next longest was Paris, for nineteen days, followed by three to five days each in Copenhagen, Stockholm, Saint Petersburg, Berlin, and Brussels. From their written records it is evident that although they admired Europe's widely used machine cloth and paper currency and its "exceedingly fine" shipbuilding and cannon, they spent far more time writing about such things as gaslights in the daytime, men and women mixing in dance halls, curious gardens embellished with gushing fountains and small waterfalls, elaborate court banquets "with sumptuous wines and meats, the servers dressed in finery, and toasts—enough to make one wonder if one were not in Heaven."[17] Or: "The wives, who were slow in coming, all wore long skirts and other fine apparel, with pearls that dazzled the eyes, and their necks and shoulders bared. In the hall the candles set each other off, making one wonder if one were not in an imperial palace made of pearls."[18] That the ways of a different society struck this man—the first Chinese to leave the bottom of his well—as motley and bizarre should come as no surprise.

Zhigang and Sun Jiagu, co-envoys of the Burlingame Mission, spent three years abroad, traveled around eleven countries, covered a distance of 100,000 *li*, and as official representatives of their government investigated the politics and customs of the Americas and Europe, researched the world situation, obtained firsthand materials, and after returning to China produced a reasoned and reliable report. In their approach to the West, these persons were not much different from the Binchun group two years earlier, however, in the sense of confining their interest to material technology and diplomatic protocol, and being unwilling to admit that beyond Westerners' material civilization lay a spiritual civilization. With respect to admitting only a material civilization, they provided this explanatory note: "Unfortunately, the thoughts and skills of Westerners are all devoted to making these implements." The unspoken meaning of this statement is that Westerners attached importance only to material things and not to culture, and it likewise reveals the investigators' self-satisfaction and unflinching faith in Chinese culture. Nonetheless, when all is said and done, these two makeshift missions did alert Chinese to the fact that the West definitely had many things worth learning.

Ancillary reporting by resident diplomats gradually took things from the stage of astonishment at sturdy ships and powerful cannons to the deeper stage of investigating society and politics, culture and learning. These high-level investigators strove assiduously to uncover "the foundation" (*liguo zhi shu*) of Western power.

Guo Songtao, China's very first resident Minister abroad, offered new views about *yangwu* or Westernization policies and their guiding principles after systematically studying Western history and culture. He considered that unless one understood that a country's real strength lay in its national polity, that simply buying up guns big and small and setting up forts and batteries would be of no avail. His work *Shi Xi jicheng* records the objective fact that Western capitalism was superior to Chinese feudal society. Operating under conditions of both limited national prestige and personal experience, Guo earnestly sought to understand and analyze the West. He introduced his knowledge of the world to his fellow Chinese, prodding them to awaken from their ignorance.

Liu Xihong, vice minister to England during Guo Songtao's tenure, carried out his own investigations of Western things and their meanings. He ended up praising many features of capitalist politics, religion, and culture, and changing some of his own former misconceptions. His diary account, *Ying zhao si ji*, states the following: "The wealth of England derives from its enormous production, and its enormous production is a consequence of officials allowing economic endeavors to return profits and from individuals working up schemes [for profit]."[19] Here Liu fully admits to the enormous creative energies of machine production, and has altered his original attitude of firmly rejecting things Western.

While in England, both Guo Songtao and Liu Xihong frequently met with British scholars to discuss the sources of British power and prosperity. As they came to see it, what made England strong lay in its long established democratic political system whereby officials heeded mass opinion according to fixed procedures, and officials and the people were mutually dependent. It was just such a system that created immeasurable talent and propelled society forward. Guo Songtao went to great pains to insist: "Western nations are founded upon both fundamentals and incidentals (*you ben you mo*). The fundamentals lie in a government's political system (*zhengjiao*), the incidentals lie in its merchants (*shanggu*). The construction of ships and the production of machinery, which add to its strength, are but component incidentals."[20] Also: "With respect to national foundations and their origins, what sustains the power and interests of [England] are a Parliament (*balimen*) or assembly (*yizhengyuan*) to uphold policies of the state, and the office of mayor (*mai'a'er*) to govern in accord with the feelings of the people."[21] Guo had the daring to consider further that China's system of feudal autocracy, which went back more than 2,000 years to Qin and Han times, contained both positive and negative elements, and he felt deeply that China's system of autocratic monarchy was far inferior to the democratic system of the West, that capitalist civilization was superior to feudal civilization, and that China should

learn from the West. Although Liu Xihong did not express views as original as Guo Songtao, nor did he censure the Chinese system of autocratic monarchy, his diary overflows with words of praise for elements of Western democratic systems.

Not just this, but through their investigations, Guo and Liu advanced to the point of seeing that knowledge and science were the driving forces of Western progress, and they saw the major function played by education in the rise of Western civilization. Guo Songtao felt deeply the existence, not just in England but in France, of a society-wide atmosphere that reflected a genuine interest in real learning, which gave Westerners the courage to keep forging ahead and the disposition to advance unstintingly. In China by contrast, from its very beginnings, the *yangwu* or Westernization movement had been buffeted from all sides. Even the Tongwen Guan, founded to pursue Western learning, was "more form than substance" (*youming xianshi*) due to the very limited numbers of people who had mastered the foreign languages taught there. The students sent to the U.S. in 1872 were all recalled to China by the government in 1881, and others who studied in Europe overwhelmingly went to study arms production and shipbuilding. The contrasts between progressiveness and backwardness, between realism and false pride, and between growing prosperity and stagnation all caused Guo Songtao and other investigators living outside of China to be consumed with anxiety. Even the relatively conservative Liu Xihong raised a cry of warning that one could not simply look to the West's military in trying to learn its strengths. He wrote that "China's power vacuum lies not in its lack of ships and lack of cannons, but in its lack of [trained] men and lack of natural resources, which surpass even political systems (*zhengjiao*) in their importance."[22] In a letter to Li Hongzhang, Guo Songtao wrote that, in learning from the West, it is more important to look at education, the smelting of ore, coalmining, railroads, and the telegraph. He recommended that Chinese studying abroad switch to the fields of mining, law (*falü*), and economics (*jingji*) [Note: These "modern" terms, borrowed from Japan, came into common use among Chinese only after 1898; it is unclear if these are Guo's original terms or substitutes by Dong and Wang.—Trans.], and that the existing educational system of China needed to keep on being revamped, with "real learning" (*shi xue*) replacing "empty writing" (*xu wen*), if China were not to revert back to its days of the closed door.

In 1890, Xue Fucheng was appointed Chinese Minister to England, France, Italy, and Belgium, enabling him personally to investigate Europe. He believed that China's modeling itself on Westerners would not lead to "using barbarians against barbarians" but to the possibility that after several decades, China would have caught up with or even surpassed the West. After first looking into Western commercial affairs and gaining a general understanding of them, he concluded that the sources of Western wealth and power (*fuqiang*) were fivefold: "unleashing the people's energies" (*tong minqi*), "enlightening the people's hearts" (*you minzhong*), "cultivating the people's sense of shame" (*yang minchi*), "improving

the people's wealth" (*fu mincai*), and "protecting the people's livelihood" (*bao minsheng*).[23] At the same time that he emphasized the importance of commerce, Xue did not neglect political and social questions: "All who know what really makes the West wealthy and powerful (*fuqiang*) commit their energies to cultivating the people (*yangmin*) and educating the people (*jiaomin*)."[24] It would have been most difficult to realize this point without personally having visited the West.

Next, for China to establish its own modern foundations, it had to import [the West's] advanced civilization. Xue Fucheng incessantly pondered the question of why China was so far behind the West. He believed that, in the past, different cultures had always "taught each other," "shared strengths," complemented each other, and advanced together.[25] He therefore advocated that China should study even more thoroughly Western industry and science, to develop its commerce.

Finally, Xue Fucheng believed that the democratic political system of capitalist elements is what had fundamentally led to the wealth and power of the West. His observations after several years abroad led him to a clear understanding of "power divided between the monarch and the people," or limited monarchy (*jun min gongzhu*). He admired England with its limited monarchy. He believed that in democratic countries, the administrative systems that drew on collective wisdom and absorbed useful ideas prevented the rulers from abusing the people, whereas in autocratic countries, "abuse grows out of favoring those above and deprecating those below (*shang zhong xia qing*) and driving the people like cattle and horses," and "conditions and feelings don't match, and public opinion gets no play."[26] These thoughts hint at changing China's autocratic system to a system of shared power or *jun min gongzhu*, thereby anticipating the reforms (*weixin bianfa*) of 1898.

Li Shuchang and Huang Zunxian carried out their investigations in their capacities as embassy counselors or staffmembers (*suiyuan*). Their investigations exceeded in depth that of the makeshift missions, and surpassed in breadth those of their Ministers. Li Shuchang's *Xiyang za zhi* concentrated its attention not on diplomatic niceties but on Western culture and customs, emphasizing their inner meanings. He not merely approved implicitly of Western democratic systems in his writings but adopted an attitude of approval toward the lower classes of Western society rising up and killing an autocratic king. And he was the first to introduce to a Chinese audience the struggles of European socialism: "Their hopes lay in deposing their country's monarch, to eliminate their domination, after which the wealthy would have nothing to rely on and the poor would obtain the means to extend themselves. Herein lay the larger meaning of this [Socialist] Society, not just to settle scores with the Kaiser."[27]

Huang Zunxian's *Riben guozhi* [Treatises on Japan] was consciously written to provide a model for Chinese political reforms—an expression of one diplomat's dedication to his country and of his courage and insight.

Missions to investigate modern technology, so fundamentally important to the

process of industrial and technological modernization, were actually few in number. Xu Jianyu's trip to Europe to examine modern technology did at least reap a rich harvest. In the twenty months he was in Europe, Xu visited more than eighty factories and other scientific and technological entities representing nearly two hundred different types of production, equipment, and management methods. Because he was himself a technical specialist, his observations were unusually dependable and useful. He fully understood the workings of equipment and the processes of production, and watched the actual operations of workers. His reports included much about the world's most advanced metallurgical processes and equipment, such as extracting, die casting, mold punching, lathe cutting, steel rolling, axle rotation, brass pressing, surface carburization, heavy duty steam hammering, copper transmission wires, and steel furnaces. These technical reports were all directly useful in promoting the modern industrial development of China. In addition, in carrying out his important task of ordering a Class A capital ship for the Chinese navy, he visited the main shipyards of England, France, and Germany, made careful comparisons, and finally placed his order with Germany. These were the ships Dingyuan and Zhenyuan, known to be "the world's most advanced Class A capital ships." In terms of technology, this mission thus made an enormous contribution to building up the Chinese navy.

The regularized *youli* investigations of the late Qing do not lend themselves to easy generalization in terms of their role. Because the times had changed, people at all levels in and out of government were no longer just reluctant and embarrassed *yangwu* modernizers but scrambled after reform like a flock of ducks. Among those who rushed abroad were not a few whose intention was to get credentialed in order to secure their personal futures back in China. However, broadly speaking, the vast majority did obtain a considerable amount of modern knowledge and skills. Thus, even this phase of going abroad for *youli kaocha* must be considered important for propelling Chinese society forward.

During the Xinzheng reforms that gradually took shape after 1901, emphasis was placed on sending officials from the Censorate (*kedao*) and Secretaries of the Six Boards (*bucao*) on investigative missions abroad, the former being supervisory in function and the latter administrative. Officials, prompted primarily by the policy of rewards for investigations abroad, vied with each other to go overseas, where they looked into matters of commerce, education, industry and engineering, negotiations, and law in an effort to further Xinzheng endeavors. These culminated in sending the five-member constitutional investigation mission that, while relentlessly denounced by the public, nonetheless brought the government at one stroke into line with public opinion and legalized the calls for a constitution, and then led ultimately to the Qing government deciding to proceed with preparations for constitutional government. Seeing firsthand the political, economic, and cultural situation of over ten bourgeois countries East and West opened the eyes of the five envoys, who now felt that a constitutional monarchy was indeed superior to feudal autocracy.

After the mission returned to China, the Empress Dowager Cixi and the Guangxu Emperor had audiences with Zaize twice, with Duanfang three times, and once each with Dai Hongci and Shang Qiheng. "All expressed dismay at the harm to China of not having a constitution, and the benefits to China of a constitution."[28] *Dongfang zazhi*, in a special supplement, printed Zaize's memorial to the throne denouncing the opposition: "Those who accuse Manchus of claiming that a constitution is of no benefit and who say that Manchus only really care about themselves and their salaries are really disloyal to the state. This causes certain people to adopt anti-Han policies, which will lead to self-destruction and the fall of the state." In the more than one month during the debate for and against the constitution, "certain high officials obstructed things, a hundred bureaucrats issued protests, and the bureau for instituting a constitution proceeded as best it could. Were it not that the officials in charge readily took the blame and disposed of crude arguments, one could not know whether or not the nation would be able to move from autocracy to constitutionalism."[29] The five envoys, having seen things with their own eyes, fortified their convictions.

In a sense we could almost say that it is only with the regularized missions of the late Qing, when investigations covered all aspects of a nation including its political system, society, economy, culture, customs, and the military, that these missions abroad resonated with the times and ended up facilitating China's earth-shaking social transformation. This was thus the most vital and significant phase of the entire Qing enterprise of sending investigative missions abroad.

III. Variables Influencing an Investigation's Effectiveness

Sending people to *youli kaocha* was an effective course in terms of [China's] opening up to the outside world (*dui wai kaifang*), knowing the world, and reducing the gap between China and the advanced countries. However, because the Qing government was fundamentally a corrupt and reactionary government, certain unfortunate influences from this otherwise progressive policy were unavoidable.

1. The Guiding Ideology

The intention of the Qing government in sending *youli* missions abroad was to defend its own feudal rule. In other words, "By studying Western tools and mathematics, to defend the way of Yao, Xun, Yu, and Tang, and the traditions of the Zhou and of Confucius." Which is another way of saying: by using Western learning, to serve Chinese fundamentals (*yi Xi xue wei Zhong ti so yong*). This put those who investigated the West in a bind. After investigating things Western, Liu Xihong initially expressed the highest praise for [aspects of] capitalist political systems (*zhengjiao*) and culture. But after deciding that Western capitalist civilization could disrupt the foundations of Chinese feudal rule, Liu wan-

tonly denied and rejected Western civilization, and utilized feudal notions to criticize Western learning: "The West (*waiyang*) regards [material] wealth alone as wealth, whereas China regards the absence of poverty as wealth; the West regards [military] power as power, whereas China regards strength to prevent an enemy victory as power."[30] This implies that whatever is foreign is foreign, and cannot be brought into China. During the later great discussions concerning railways in China, Liu used his status as someone with personal experience in the West to claim that railways were unsuitable to Chinese conditions—unconscionably obstructing China's long delayed progress in modernizing its communications and tranport systems.

At the time that Guo Songtao first reported favorably about Western civilization, his report trespassed on the monopoly position occupied by traditional Chinese civilization and was instantaneously viewed as "heretical and unorthodox" (*yiduan xieshuo*). So intense was the invective and slander against it that the court ordered its publication banned and its circulation prohibited. The Zongli Yamen which had sponsored its printing also came under attack.

Investigators without set biases very naturally came to view positively the West's advanced technology, its political order, its system of laws, and even to recognize the superiority of Western bourgeois civilization over China's feudal civilization. Investigators of integrity often pointed out that in taking the West as a model, only learning "surface things" would be of no avail, and that the key lay in looking at the West's political systems. Xue Fucheng vigorously favored a system of "limited monarchy" with a deliberative assembly (*yihui zhidu*). From a Marxist point of view, a deliberative assembly is the enemy of a feudal autocracy, will bury a feudal system, and serves as the main safeguard of a bourgeois democratic system. One who has reached this point of understanding is nearing the gateway to truth. However, their understanding did not go beyond this to touch upon the political system of feudal autocracy or its system of ethics and Confucian virtues (*lunli ganchang*). They wavered between democracy and loyalty to the emperor, and between truth and the defense of traditional moral principles.

2. Lack of Trust

This is best illustrated during the earlier missions, when the decision makers on the one hand directed investigators to keep an accurate record of everything on their trip but, on the other hand, because of a general paranoia, restrained them in countless ways and admonished those going abroad: "Don't let them get into trouble," "Keep them from being laughed at"[31]; or, learning too much from the "barbarians" will sacrifice the dignity of "the throne."

The first two makeshift missions, starting with Binchun taking charge of the Tongwen Guan students, reflects the lack of trust in these probationary diplomats who, because they were "young and inexperienced" needed an "older reliable

person" to serve as their leader. And, at the time of the Burlingame mission, the original plan was to retain Burlingame as envoy. However, Zhigang and Sun Jiagu were sent along as co-envoys, which implies reservations about Burlingame as supervisor.

In the later period of resident Ministers abroad, there remained restraints in the form of regulations, taboos, and commandments that could not fail to make certain investigators excessively watchful and circumspect. Guo Songtao wrote that after the banning of his *Shi Xi jicheng*, and not without reluctance, he had "completely abandoned and would not resume" the monthly diaries he used to send to the Zongli Yamen,[32] and he remained true to his word. Li Shuchang spent four or five years writing about the West and describing its customs, and although he said that it was significant to introduce this from a Western point of view, he did so not without avoiding trouble. Fu Yunlong went to Japan and wrote *Youli Riben tujing* in thirty *juan*, plus a supplement of three more *juan*. His writings covered 169 different topics, and brought together an enormous amount of material concerning the twenty years of Japan's Meiji reforms. Yet he did not try to extract patterns from this material, but confined himself to a type of objectivist (*keguan zhuyi*) account, explaining: "This book assembles factual information without notes or commentary. If it moves the reader, so be it; if it seems like something punishable, so be it as well."[33] This reflects the feelings of someone suspicious of accepting or rejecting likes and dislikes, and who avoids "learning from the barbarians."

3. *The Personal Effectiveness of the Investigators*

Immense differences in knowledge of the West among the investigators had a major impact on their personal effectiveness. For example, neither Binchun nor Zhigang of the first two missions knew a foreign language or much about the West, yet were taken out of their closed environment and thrust into a modern civilization abounding in change. How could they, with their mediocre information and narrow visions, make any thoughtful observations, much less any contributions? All they could do was to marvel at the utterly different world of the West.

By contrast, persons like Guo Songtao and Xue Fucheng, being high level intellectuals or diplomats who had read the best books on the West, understood a great deal about Western civilization. In the face of the pressing threat to the Chinese people, Guo and Xue linked their pursuits steadfastly to saving their country and thought of China's future before their own personal fates. This enabled them in the course of their investigations of Western experience to begin to criticize the *yangwu* or Westernization movement, to point out with depth that the West's warships and cannons and its dazzling electricity were but superficial aspects of a civilization whose wealth and power were founded upon a political system of deliberative assemblies that divided power between the monarch and

the people, and an economic system that thought highly of industry and commerce. Their thinking broke through the *yangwu* theoretical framework and served as forerunner of the reform movement of the 1890s.

4. The Records and Reports of Overseas Investigators

The early-period investigations had yet to become regularized, so that although restrictions on investigators were considerable, the regulations governing mission reports were by no means detailed. This was before the regulations governing tours of investigation or *youli kaocha* became fairly comprehensive, including such things as not being able to take too many assistants or translators, keeping personal effects simple, and avoiding ostentation and extravagance. Then, in the late Qing, the terms for receiving rewards [for study and investigation missions] also became clearly regulated, including that investigative reports and notes for one's writings must not be like those of a tourist. These purely technical regulations indicate that the decision makers had reached maturity, and this definitely played a role in advancing the investigators' conscientious fulfillment of their duties.

It is a fact that this time period coincided with the period of science, culture, and social thought pouring into China from the outside world, and with the period of the great mingling of Chinese and foreign cultures. Indeed, it was mainly during this time period that the great transformation of China's modern society occurred. The Qing government harbored hopes that these investigators would resist the revolutionary inclinations of overseas students, but this reactionary desire proved absolutely bankrupt. The investigations failed to benefit the narrow single-family feudal rulers, but definitely contributed to the advance of Chinese society. However, because the sun was already setting on the Qing government, it was unable in its dying gasp to absorb these fresh ideas and suggestions. After Cixi [who died on 15 November 1908], the Zaize regime stepped up its anti-Han policies and concentrated power in the imperial clan, antagonizing the people and inviting collapse. To repair this was more than even the investigators could manage.

Notes

[Note: As indicated at the end of the Editor's Note, most of Dong and Wang's page citations to Zhong Shuhe, and some of the quotations themselves, are erroneous. The translator has therefore corrected these against Zhong Shuhe, as well as provided full publication information for all items.—Trans.]

1. Memorial to the throne from Yixin (Prince Gong) and others at the Zongli Yamen, dated 20 February 1866, quoted in Zhong Shuhe, *Zou xiang shijie—Jindai Zhongguo zhishi fenzi kaocha Xifang de lishi* [Going out into the world: A history of modern

Chinese intellectuals' investigations of the West (and Japan)] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985, 1993), p. 61.

2. Quoted in ibid. [Note: With corrections against the original.—Trans.]

3. Binchun, *Tianwai gueifan cao* [Draft of away from and back to the Celestial Kingdom], poem number 43.

4. Memorial of Yixin [Prince Gong], 20 February 1866, as quoted in Zhong Shuhe, p. 61.

5. Memorial of Prince Gong [Yixin] and others [dated 27 November 1867] requesting the appointment of Anson Burlingame as official envoy for China's foreign affairs, quoted in ibid., p. 80.

6. Quoted in ibid., p. 384. [Note: This page citation is incorrect; I was unable to locate the passage.—Trans.].

7. Quoted in ibid., p. 340.

8. Ibid., p. 332.

9. *Qing chao xu wenxian tongkao* [Continuation of the Qing Dynasty *Wenxian tongkao*], comp. Liu Jinzao (4 vols; Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe, 1988), vol. 4, p. 10795. [Note: The memorial of Xie Zuyuan (Hsieh Tsu-yuan) is translated in full in Carol Tyson Reynolds, "East Meets East: Chinese Views of Early Meiji Japan (ca. 1870–94)," unpublished Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1986, pp. 179–81. The fourteen-point regulations of the Zongli Yamen, mentioned immediately below, are also translated in ibid., pp. 182–84.—Trans.]

10. Fu Yunlong's reports included *Youli Riben tujing* [A gazeteer of Japan with maps] and *Youli Riben tujing yuji* [Additional notes on a gazeteer of Japan with maps], cited in Zhong Shuhe, pp. 378–79.

11. Liu Kunyi and Zhang Zhidong, "Jiangchu huizou xinzheng san zhe" [Three joint Jiangchu petitions for reform]. [Note: Dong and Wang are quoting here from a specific section of a specific memorial. That memorial—the third of three memorials, called "Caiyong Xifa shiyi tiao" (Eleven proposals to adopt western methods) and dated 20 July 1901—may be found in *Guangxu chao Donghua lu* (Records from Within the Eastern Flowery Gate), comp. Zhu Shoupeng (5 vols.; Shanghai, 1909; Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1958), 27th year of the Guangxu reign, p. 137 (vol. 4, p. 4755).—Trans.]

12. *Qing chao xu wenxian tongkao*, vol. 2, p. 8731.

13. Zhang Baixi, Rongqing, and Zhang Zhidong, "A request to reward official *youli* and travel study (*youxue*)," in *Zhongguo jindai jiaoyu shi ziliao* [Source materials on the history of modern education in China (1852–1922), comp. Shu Xincheng, (3 vols.; Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1962), vol. 1, p. 189.

14. *Qing chao xu wenxian tongkao*, vol. 2, p. 8724.

15. *Dongfang zazhi* ("Eastern Miscellany"), vol. 2, no. 3. [Note: This issue of *Dongfang zazhi* is dated 29 April 1905, so that the citation is in error. None of the entries under the "Education" section of *Dongfang zazhi* for the year 1906 include a memorial from Yuan Shikai, according to the carefully compiled and printed *"Dongfang zazhi" zongmu* (Comprehensive Index to *Dongfang zazhi* [1904–1948]), comp. Sanlian Shudian Bianjibu (1957; reprint ed. Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, 1980).—Trans.]

16. *Qing mo choubei lixian dang'an shiliao* [Archival materials on preparations for constitutional government during the late Qing], comp. Gugong Bowuyuan Ming-Qing Dang'an Bu (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1979), vol. 1, p. 1.

17. Quoted in Zhong Shuhe. [Note: This quotation, attributed to Binchun, does not appear in the section of Zhong Shuhe devoted to Binchun.—Trans.]

18. Quoted in ibid., p. 69.

19. Quoted in ibid., p. 254.

20. Quoted in ibid., p. 212.

21. Quoted in ibid., p. 216.

22. Quoted in ibid. [Note: The page citation given is erroneous, and I was unable to locate the correct passage.—Trans.]

23. Quoted in ibid., p. 347. [Note: This same page has fuller elaborations of each point from the writings of Xue Fucheng.—Trans.]

24. Quoted in ibid., p. 348.

25. Cited in ibid., pp. 356–57.

26. Quoted in ibid., p. 353.

27. Quoted in ibid., p. 275.

28. *Dongfang zazhi*, supplemental issue [no date given]. [Note: No supplement is listed for the years 1906, 1907, or 1908 in *"Dongfang zazhi" zongmu*.—Trans.]

29. Ibid.

30. Quoted in Zhong Shuhe, p. 245. [Note: The date of writing is 13 April 1877. Zhong Shuhe discusses the irony of Liu's argument in ibid., pp. 245–46.—Trans.]

31. Zhigang, *Chu shi Taixi ji*, as quoted in ibid. [Not found.—Trans.]

32. Guo Songtao, "Zhi Li Fuxiang," in *Yangzhi shushi wenji, juan* 13.

33. Quoted in ibid., pp. 381–82.