

Facing the late-Qing Chinese Diplomats: Ways of dealing with French maritime interest in the Treaty ports

Overview of existing scholarship on the chosen field

Tsungli Yamen is an essential governmental body to understand how the emperor's power was partially transferred and the later diplomatic influence was empowered. Historical studies on this institution had been extended to not just explain its functionality but also detail its connections with diplomats.¹ The Late-Qing diplomatic studies is still potentially underdeveloped. The studies on the operation in locals beneath central authority under the specific circumstance is still requiring to be discovered. That is to say the handling of Chinese diplomats balanced the interest in the particular issues or events between different sorts of spatial powers. Interpreting Chinese diplomatic studies is easily carried with latent politicalised colours such as civilisation or anti-imperialism. Such texts even came from the late-Qing diplomats themselves during the East and West contact. It is better to bear in mind that unawareness in the transnational studies especially the colonial studies might distort the historical facts into weary reiteration of an unilateral power who accused of the others' evilness.² This pattern could be well improved when contextualising the particular issues or events as a prism to arrive a broader

¹ Fuhuan, Wu 吴福环, (1861-1901) *A study on Zongliyamen of Qing* 清季总理衙门研究 (Xinjiang: Xinjiang University Press, 1995)

Wenjie, Li 李文杰, *The Emergence of the Modern Chinese Diplomats: Officials in the Zongli Yamen, Waiwu Bu and Legations, 1861-1911* 中国近代外交官群体的形成 (1861-1911) (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing, 2017)

² Edward Wadie Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003)

picture.³ Consequently, my dissertation would focus more on the colonial studies, which could trigger more reflection of the reader.

In order to learn the French maritime interest in China or Vietnam during the late-Qing era, the depiction of Chinese capitalism model developing by the Great Powers could be the direct answer. However, the unit should not always be the western officials. The companies forged by the French entrepreneur and businessman who intertwined with network of different kinds of people should be studied.⁴ That could reveal the procedure of collaboration between the East and the West in commercial area. In view of the phenomenon mentioned above, the French maritime economy internalised itself into Chinese coastal economy, indicating the product chain of different commodities on the bank.

Therefore, my dissertation would strive to induce the ways of operation running from Tsungli Yamen to the locals to find the paradigm. Hence this set could help the historian understand more about how the Chinese diplomats effect more on the late-Qing modernisation period. It would not only forward Chinese historiography on this field but also enrich and consolidate the late-Qing maritime communication history in terms of Western historiography.

³ Li, Chen, *Chinese Law in Imperial Eyes: Sovereignty, Justice, and Transcultural Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015)

⁴ David Faure, *China and Capitalism: A History of Business Enterprise in Modern China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006)

William Frederick Mayers, ed., *Treaties between the Empire of China and Foreign Powers* (Shanghai: North China Herald, 1906)

Michael B. Miller, *Europe and the Maritime World: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Research methodology

The methodology of this thesis is different from some Chinese scholars' works on The Sino-French relations that were conducted under the Chinese Marxist theory. Its theory of class, nation and revolution immerses itself in these works, which insulated the studies of anti-imperialism of a semifederal and semicolonial late-Qing dynasty. Similarly, modernisation theory from the West used to justify the empire in the nineteenth century with a war cry of civilisation. Such theoretical paradigms under the shadows of Orientalism and consubstantial Occidentalism could be lost and delineating an intended "just" mirror.

Europe and China are different civilisations. They may have internally coherent identity of their culture and common leadership but definitely not the case while facing each other. Nonetheless, there were identical elements between both of them. For example, the negotiation of maritime interest from governments to person, in other words, a diplomatic process from a "just" price to a just price.

Accordingly, the primary source for the local economy and its maritime connections could be at these archival places (e.g. Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Gulf of Tonkin, Kwangchow Wan and Hokkien areas of Amoy and Foochow). As for French personages, their clues of diary, memoir or official contact could be scattered at these aforementioned places. It might indicate the archives in France or Vietnam. Lastly, the Chinese diplomatic firsthand sources could be explored in China, possibly Peking, Hong Kong, Guang Zhou etc.

Outline of chapters

Chapter 1: Historiography of the maritime Treaty ports and its diplomatic management in China

- The maritime economy at the Treaty ports
- The political system of Tsungli Yamen and its personnel system

Chapter 2: Unmatched order from Tsungli Yamen to the locals

- The western judgement of a Chinese diplomat
- The Chinese view of a Chinese diplomat
- Chinese featured diplomacy in both of their eyes at the Treaty ports

Chapter 3: Bowing to family power at the locals

- The family power and its economic basis through Chinese history
- The diplomatic government of the family power through Chinese history
- The transition history of economic basis and finance system in China
- Western trading at the Treaty ports

Chapter 4: French maritime interest and Chinese family power at the Treaty ports

- The collaboration history between Chinese and Westerners on commodities in China
- The French imperialism basis in China and Annam
- The joint work and conflict between French and Chinese business on the sea
- The role of Chinese diplomats in their business
- The transiting role of a Chinese diplomat

Chapter 5: The paradigm of Chinese diplomats' dealing with French imperialist

- The same diplomatic issue in Tsungli Yamen and locals
- Discussion about the different scenes facing by Tsungli Yamen and the locals
- The lubricant role of Chinese diplomats in comparative manoeuvring
- The different reaction of Chinese diplomats in China and France

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