

Week 4 Recitation – Self Strengthening Movement

“On the Adoption of Western Learning,” (Recitation Qn)

[15] Why did Feng think that they “need not bother about rare skills or cunning arts”? What are some advantages China would have with the possession of western knowledge?

[16] “surpassing” and “humiliation” are two main lexicons used by Chinese since the 19th century to justify modernization. What other lexicons were used by Feng? What are their functions & purposes? What were some main factors which caused this “humiliation”?

[17] & [18] From the two memorials submitted by Li Hung-chang, what were the opposition’s main arguments? In light of the US embassy reports (1880), to what extent was Li successful?

Yung Wing 容闳, My Life In China & America (1909), chp 19. (Recitation Qn)

Do you think Yung Wing contributed to the failure of the education mission? Why was he unable to translate the support by Li into political cache? What were the reasons for the failure of the Burlingame treaty? Why do you think Chen Lan-pin behave in such a way? (Here you have to read Desnoyers) Why was Anson Burlingame unable to provide more support for the Chinese? What does this tell you about the domestic politics of America? Why do you think naval students were still being sent overseas (Elman, pg. 300 ff.)

United States. Embassy (China), Progress of western education in China and Siam (1880). (Recitation Qn)

Cheshire (Mar 29, 1880) listed no less than five major problems with the Chinese attempts at self-strengthening. What were they? List the ways which Chinese failure at self-strengthening contributed to negative stereotypes of the Chinese in general. Why did most Chinese stop at only pidgin English? How did Cheshire’s criticism correspond to the news report by Shanghai Courier (Jan 30, 1880)? In what ways were they different? Why was this so? Were there any notable exceptions to the rule?

Charles A. Desnoyers, “Self-Strengthening in the New World: A Chinese Envoy's Travels in America,” Pacific Historical Review, Vol. 60, No. 2 (May, 1991)

What was the main mission of Chen Lan-ping? To what extent was he successful in his mission? How far would you say that racial prejudice had a large part in complicating his work? Why do you think Chen’s views of America remained “naive”?

Rowe, China's last empire : the great Qing (HUP, 2009)

Why and how did regional powers grow at the expense of the central government? Why did Rowe use the term “refeudalization”? In what ways was the Sino-Japanese war a greater disaster than the Opium War?

Elman, “Naval Warfare and the Refraction of China's Self-Strengthening Reforms into Scientific and Technological Failure, 1865-1895,” (presentation)

Why did Jiangnan Arsenal cease to be a shipyard after 1885? (295ff.) What does this say about resource allocation? What are the main arguments of Elman? What was the significance of “the gap between China and Europe had been closed technologically” (317ff.) What do you think Elman mean in “the construction of China's backwardness?”