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HIST 586: Senior Seminar in History

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December 15, 2011

Study of the Overseas Educational Missions in the Self-Strengthening Movement

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Abstract

The two overseas educational missions launched in the late Qing dynasty were China's first two officially supported educational missions to the United States and Europe. The two overseas missions were part of the Self-Strengthening Movement's efforts to modernize China with Western technology and science. Despite the vast research by historians on the first educational mission to the United States and the Self-Strengthening Movement, little is known about the second educational mission to Europe. This study focuses on the two missions and explores the defects of the Self-Strengthening Movement's impact upon the two missions. The lack of nation-wide commitment and the conservative motivations within the government were the two greatest defects of the Self-Strengthening Movement. The defects of the Self-Strengthening Movement hindered the development of both overseas educational missions and made it impossible to give full scope to the role of the two missions.

In the late Qing dynasty, the Qing government took its first step in launching two officially supported educational missions to the United States and Europe as part of efforts made during the Self-Strengthening Movement. As the name indicated, the Self-Strengthening Movement was advocated by a group of reform minded Qing officials aiming to re-strengthen the weak Qing government by merely adopting western technology and science. Despite the fact that the Self-Strengthening Movement made some significant contributions to China's modernization, such as bringing in a new, Western-style education which emphasized subjects such as science and mathematics, the defects of the movement caused major obstacles which prevented the movement itself from reaching its goals. The most apparent defect of the movement was that its major players were limited to a small group of Qing officials who often were unable to defend the movement from the attack of the conservatives. Furthermore, the reform-minded officials themselves had restrictive views toward Western learning. They did not have the insight that the real reason behind China's backward situation was its corrupt system; instead, their ultimate goal was to secure the system by means of Western technology and science. As a result, once the movement came into conflict with the old system, reform-minded officials compromised and the unchanged old institutions severely restricted the development of the movement.

These defects' restrictive role was explicitly demonstrated in the two overseas educational missions. Unable to survive attacks from conservatives, the first educational mission to the United States was withdrawn in 1882.¹ Although the first educational mission cut short, the reform-minded officials did not give up. On the basis of the first

¹ Qu Lihe, *Qing Mo Liu Xue Jiao Yu [Study Abroad Education in the Late Qing Dynasty]* (Taipei: San Min Shu Ju Yin Hang, 1973), 68,95.

educational mission to the United States, the Qing government sent out a second educational mission to Europe. In order to avoid the problems of the first educational mission, the second made many adjustments and was given even higher expectations than the first. In the first mission, conservative opposition to any changes to the old system was a fundamental threat. The second mission fixed some the management problems of the first one in order to minimize the antagonism from the conservatives, but the leading officials of the second mission failed to recognize that China needed more fundamental change. As a result, without fixing the defects of the Self-Strengthening Movement, the second educational mission was doomed to fail as well. This paper focuses on the two overseas educational missions during the Self-Strengthening Movement, and argues that the defects of the Self-Strengthening Movement hindered the development of both of the overseas educational missions and made it impossible to give full scope to the role of the two missions.

While the history of the Chinese overseas educational missions has been a popular topic for historians and researchers, when dealing with this time period, most scholars cast their attention on the first educational mission to the United States, partially because it was China's first attempt in sending students overseas and partially due to the availability of English-language primary sources. There are some agreements among scholars on the first educational mission. First, most works dealing with the topic recognized the significance of the educational mission to China's modernization and comment positively on the contributions made by the first mission. Second, historians agree that the intense conservatism in the Qing dynasty was a major obstacle for the first mission. Liel Leibovitz and Matthew Miller's *Fortunate Sons: the 120 Chinese Boys*

Who Came to America, Went to School, and Revolutionized an Ancient Civilization looks into boys' lives in the United States and their lives after they returned to China, and combined those children's lives with Chinese efforts to re-strengthen the nation.² The book draws extensively on materials such as students' letters, diaries and memoirs to carry out research, so the authors' point of view tends to be more sympathetic with one of the first educational mission's initiators, Yung Wing, and the students he brought to the United States. Although the purpose of the book is to tell the story of the students' experiences, rather than to evaluate the success and failures of the mission, it includes a detailed account of the government's mistrust of the students, their difficulties in re-adapting into Chinese society after their return, and their inability to display their skills after they returned to China. The book reveals the students' frustration and disappointment with the government because of the unexpectedly cold treatment from the Qing government.

Stacey Bieler's *"Patriots" or "traitors"?: a history of American-educated Chinese students* has an attitude similar to *Fortunate Son*; Bieler's book explores the role of American-educated Chinese students in China's modernization and she devoted one chapter to the role of the first overseas mission.³ Bieler points out the important role of the first educational mission in China's modernization as well and praises the students' patriotism based on their achievements in technology and their allegiance to the Qing government.⁴ But Bieler points out more explicitly that the hardships students

² Liel Leibovitz and Matthew Miller, *Fortunate Sons: The 120 Chinese Boys Who Came to America, Went to School, and Revolutionized an Ancient Civilization* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 12.

³ Stacey Bieler, *"Patriots" or "Traitors"?: A History of American-educated Chinese Students* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004)

⁴ Bieler, 13-14.

encountered after their return were largely due to the Qing government's inherent conservatism.⁵

Y.G Wang's *Chinese intellectuals and the West, 1872-1949* is among the few works that deals with both missions in the period from 1872 to 1895.⁶ Wang raised a strong argument in his book: because of intellectuals' critical role in Chinese society, the "study of the changing intelligentsia is thus a key to understanding modern China."⁷ Wang argues that the study abroad programs failed because they were mainly arranged and supported by a small group of enlightened officials.⁸ Thus, when budget problems were difficult to solve, the programs were easily stopped.⁹ Aside from budgetary problems, Wang points out that the misunderstandings came from the government officials' and overseas students' negative attitudes toward each other, which also led to the decreasing efforts to send students overseas.¹⁰

David Pong's *Shen Pao-chen and China's Modernization in the Nineteenth Century* provides some background information to better understand the second study abroad program due to the fact that Shen Pao-chen was the major official involved in preparing and organizing the second study abroad program to Europe. Similar to Wang's opinion

⁵ Bieler, 11-12, 316-317.

⁶ Y.G Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West, 1872-1949* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966).

⁷ Wang, Preface vii.

⁸ Wang, 50.

⁹ Wang, 50.

¹⁰ Wang, 50.

that intellectuals were key to understanding China's effort toward modernization, Pong further narrows his focus to Shen Baozhen.¹¹

Unlike the first study abroad program, it is very difficult to find secondary sources on the second study abroad program. Thus, in order to research this aspect of the overseas educational mission, the paper relies more on government documents and letters from both conservative and reform-minded officials who were involved in the two educational missions. According to the accounts of reform-minded officials, a thread could be found to trace the development of educational missions and their background.

The defects of the self-strengthening movement's restrictive impact toward the study abroad programs were explicitly demonstrated throughout the first educational mission to the United States. First, the self-strengthening movement was planned and carried out mainly by a group of influential, reform-minded officials. Thus, only through those officials could one's ideas be put into practice. Noticing this, Yung Wing, who was the first Chinese to graduate from Yale, knew that he had to gain support from the Qing's politically influential officials in order to fulfill his ambition that a "rising generation of China should enjoy the same educational advantages" as he himself had enjoyed and "through Western education China might be regenerated, become enlightened and powerful."¹² Fortunately, at this point some members of the ruling class and officials, such as Prince Gong, prince and statesman of the Qing Dynasty, had already started to develop an interest in sending students abroad. Yung met Ding Richang, the governor of

¹¹ David Pong, *Shen Pao-chen and China's Modernization in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-23.

¹² Wing Yung, *My Life in China and America* (Chicago: Earnshaw Books, 1909), 41.

Jiangsu Province who became the first supporter of Yung's plan.¹³ Later, Yung Wing met other influential officials such as Zeng Guofan who was "a most remarkable character in Chinese history."¹⁴ In 1870, Zeng sent a memorial to the imperial court that argued the importance of sending students overseas. In the memorial, he used Russia as example, indicating that Russia's study abroad programs had transformed it into a country with advanced weapon-making technology.¹⁵ Li Hongzhang, Zeng's student and a senior government official, endorsed the educational mission proposal. In 1871, Li and Zeng sent a joint memorial to the Zongli Yamen, the Qing dynasty's foreign affairs agency. In this memorial, Zeng and Li further emphasized the benefits of the study abroad program to technology acquisition and China's relationship with western countries.¹⁶ Regarding the difficulties in raising funds and selecting candidates for the mission, Zeng and Li turned to the Zongli Yamen for help, and recommended Yung Wing and the conservative official Chen Lanbing as supervisors of the mission.¹⁷ After the approval of the Zongli Yamen one year later, Zeng and Li proposed a memorial clarifying the standards of selecting students, the administration of the mission, and financing of the mission. Several months later, the plan for the first study abroad program was put in place, and the first 30 students started out on their journey to the

¹³ Liel and Miller, 84.

¹⁴ Yung, 140,142.

¹⁵ Guofan Zeng, "Diao Chen Lanbing Chai Qian Jiang Nan Pian" [Memorial on Appointment of Chen Lanbing to Jiang Nan], in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement]*, ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 898.

¹⁶ Guofan Zeng and Hongzhang Li, "Zou Xuan Pai You Tong Fu Mei Yi Ye Ban Li Zhang Cheng Zhe" [Memorial on Selecting students to Study in America and Affairs related to the Study Abroad Issues] in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement]*, ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 899.

¹⁷ Zeng and Li, 899.

United States. From 1872 to 1875, a total of 120 students were sent to the United States and their average age was 12 years old.¹⁸

The limited number of the movement's supporters made the movement very vulnerable to conservative challenges. Initially, Ding Richang made representations to Imperial Minister Wen Xiang who "was advised to address a memorial on the subject to the Imperial Council at Peking."¹⁹ However, at this critical moment, Wen's mother died. In accordance with Chinese social conventions and Confucianism, Wen temporarily had to leave political life in order to demonstrate his filial piety to his mother through a customary three-year mourning period²⁰ As a result, Yung's plan was delayed until Yung came into direct contact with Zeng Guofan.

The clashes of the conservatism and the first educational mission became more intense after the students' arrival in the United States. The limited power of the reform-minded officials was unable to defend the program from conservative criticism. 120 students went abroad in their tender years and received as much as 15 years of a Western-style education, while living with American families; those 120 students inevitably experienced clashes between traditional Chinese culture and Western culture. For example, it was mandatory for Chinese students to dress in traditional Chinese clothes and wear the Manchu hairstyle with a long ponytail, or queue. However, traditional Chinese dress and hairstyles caused a lot of inconvenience in students' daily lives. Therefore, some students stopped dressing in Chinese clothes and cut off their queues. All of these behaviors were deemed to be the corrupting effect of Western culture by

¹⁸ Zeng and Li, 901.

¹⁹ Yung, 266.

²⁰ Yung, 266.

Yung's conservative co-commissioner Chen Lanbing. Chen therefore reported the students' wonton behaviors to Li Hongzhang.²¹ In Chen's report to Li in 1881, Chen claimed that Western culture had an enormous negative influence on the student, and because these young students had not had much exposure to a traditional Chinese education in the Confucian classics, they were more susceptible to what Chen characterized as the rottenness of Western culture.²² In order to prevent the students from being corrupted by Western culture, Chen recommended cancelling the mission. Although Chen's report did not result in the cancellation of the whole program at this point, some students were sent back to China halfway through their studies.

The disagreements between the students and Chen soon resulted in tension between Yung and Chen because Yung believed that the students' behaviors were reasonable and spoke in defense of them. The tension increased when Chen recommended another conservative official Wu Zideng as his successor in the position of commissioner. According to Yung, Wu was "a member of the reactionary party" which regarded the mission as "a move subversive of the principles and theories of Chinese culture" and Chen's recommendation of Wu revealed that Chen himself was "at heart an uncompromising Confucian and practically represented the reactionary party with all its rigid and uncompromising conservatism that gnashes its teeth against all and every attempt put forth to reform the government or to improve the general condition of things

²¹ Liel and Miller, 181.

²² Chen Lanbing, "Zou Chen Zhu Yang Yi Ye Ju Qing Xing Zhe" [Memorial on the Situation of the Study Abroad Program Institution in the United States] in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian* [Collected Documents on History of Modern Chinese Education], ed. Chen Xuexun and Zheng Tianping (Shanghai: Shang Hai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 1991), 147.

in China.”²³ After Wu’s installation as one of the co-commissioners in 1876, he wrote, Wu wrote to the government lamenting that the students “play more than they study,” and joined “secret associations, both religious and political.”²⁴ Wu held that if the situation were allowed to continue, they would soon lose their loyalty to China.²⁵

Aside from the lack of widespread support for the self-strengthening movement and the educational mission, the reform-minded officials focused mostly on fields related to military affairs rather than seeking to reform the economic and political systems. Securing the old system from both foreign and domestic threats was the initiative and ultimate goal for the self-strengthening movement. Therefore, when the reforms caused threats to the old system, the reform-minded officials had to compromise and even sacrifice reform efforts. The first educational mission met with opposition from intense conservatism within the Qing government since the study abroad scheme “in principle and significance was against Chinese theory of national education.”²⁶ Thus, the appointment of Chen Lanbing from the conservative side was an attempt to appease the opposition. But accusation from Chen Lanbing and his successor Wu Zideng brought more attacks to the first educational mission. Even though Li attempted to defend the program initially, Zeng Guofan’s death in 1872 left Li Hongzhang as the only senior official advocating for the first mission, thus Li bore a tremendous burden as a result of the study abroad program. Li was concerned that the conservatives would use the study

²³ Yung, 201.

²⁴ Yung, 204.

²⁵ Yung, 302.

²⁶ Chen Lanbing, 148.

abroad program to attack him politically and therefore put him in a vulnerable position. Thus, Li finally agreed with Prince Gong to withdraw all students and end the mission.²⁷

After the recall of the first mission in 1881, students endured a cold reception from the Qing government because of the government's distrust of those students. The returned students were treated like criminals. Students were first transported to a local police station where they were interrogated for days.²⁸ Moreover, students and officials felt disappointed toward each other. All reform-minded officials were brought up in the traditional Chinese educational system which paid little attention to subjects such as science and mathematics, but placed great emphasis on Confucian ritual and values. Thus, in spite of some officials like Zeng Guofan learning some Western science, they did not have full comprehension, and they expected the returned students could make an instant change to Chinese military modernization. However, the first mission stopped at a point when most of the students had not completed their college degrees and many students' majors were irrelevant to the self-strengthening movement's foremost demands. Therefore, many students were distributed randomly to various positions. Although most of the returned students had been assigned to different jobs by 1885, according to Li Hongzhang's report to the imperial court, their salaries, and positions were below the students' expectations.²⁹ Yung Leang, who had been on the first mission, was assigned

²⁷ Yi Xin, "Zou Qing Che Hui Liu Mei Yi Ye Xue Sheng Zhe" [Memorial on the Withdrawal of Students from the First Study Abroad Program], in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 910.

²⁸ Liel and Miller, 174-175.

²⁹ Li Hongzhang, "Zou Chen Liu Mei Xue Sheng Hui Guo Jiu Ye Qing Jiang Zhe" [Memorial on requesting reward for returned students from the United States], in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education

to the naval academy in Fuzhou and started training as a sailor.³⁰ Although Yung Leang found that several of his fellow students from the first educational mission were also assigned to the academy, the “dark and dull” environment greatly disappointed Yung.³¹ Furthermore, the returned students confronted the dilemma of “having dual loyalty to China as a nation and to the United States for intellectual and emotional ties.”³²

The first educational mission to the United States was prepared and implemented under relatively peaceful circumstances, when the Taiping Rebellion had been put down and the major Western powers were busy consolidating new rights they had gained through earlier warfare against China. The second educational mission to Europe was initiated to meet the increased need to strengthen national defense, especially in naval construction in order to confront a renewed foreign crisis. In 1870s, Japan launched several expeditions to Chinese island of Taiwan. Officials such as Li Hongzhang and Ding Chichang were not only major players in late Qing politics, but they were also major players in military affairs. Therefore, Li and other reform-minded officials decided to start another overseas educational mission based on lessons learned from the first educational mission. Shen Baozhen, an official appointed by the imperial court to solve diplomatic disputes, was disappointed by the Qing government’s weak and incompetent attitude in settling disputes. Also, Shen was a leading official of “China’s first fully fledged modern naval dockyard,” so Shen attached great importance to developing indigenous talents in naval construction and came up with the idea of sending students to

during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 911

³⁰ Liel and Miller, 179.

³¹ Liel and Miller, 180.

³² Bailey, 16.

study in Europe as early as 1872.³³ Additionally, the Qing government settled the Taiwan crisis by acknowledging the justification of Japanese expenditure and paying 500,000 taels as an indemnity to Japan in 1874.³⁴ The result further convinced Shen and other senior officials leading the self-strengthening movement that it was necessary to send students to study in Europe in order to revitalize national defense.

In addition to the need to re-strengthen national defense, the planners of the second study abroad program were well-aware of the conflict between the self-strengthening movement and the conservatives. Learning the lessons from the first educational mission, the second educational mission was planned more carefully to avoid the problems of the first. The second study abroad program to Europe had a more well-defined objective than the first study abroad program. Conservatives accused the first educational mission of not having any special focus. The commissioner of the first mission criticized students of being more obsessed with American sports and games than study.³⁵ To counter this accusation, the second mission had very explicitly assigned study subjects which paid special attention to shipbuilding, navigation, construction, artillery, torpedoes, and other military related subjects.³⁶ The study of other subjects, such as international law, chemistry, foreign languages, and physics, was also encouraged.³⁷

The conservatives not only rebuked the first mission's lack of focus, but they were also resentful of the fact that the children of the first mission were sent abroad at a young

³³ Pong, 253.

³⁴ Pong, 305.

³⁵ "You Tong" [Students of Educational Missions to the United States and Europe] Directed by Gang Qian and Jingcao Hu, Shengzheng: Shengzhen Yin Xiang Gong Si, 2004.

³⁶ Lin Qingyuan, *Fu Zhou Chuan Zheng Ju Shi Gao* [Historical Manuscripts of Fuzhou Shipyard] (Fuzhou: Fujian Ren Min Chu Ban She, 1966), 148.

³⁷ Lin Qingyuan, 154-155.

age without sufficient grounding in the Confucian classics. To conservatives, Confucianism was the essence of the old system, thus it needed to be defended. Conservatives denounced the self-strengthening movement's advocacy of strengthening China through Western technology and science as a conspiracy to alter the old system by using unscrupulous means. Rather, conservatives believed that Confucian teachings should be placed at the central position of education because it strengthened people's minds. As a result, they criticized the study of Western technology and science for making students lose their patriotism. Therefore, responding to strong criticism from conservatives, the second educational mission made more concessions to conservatives. The average age of the second mission's students was above 20 years old and they had all received an extensive traditional Chinese education. Furthermore, they were given professional training in foreign language, which saved them the time of language study, while overseas students of the first mission had little or no knowledge of the language when they arrived in the United States. Moreover, the students of the second mission had already received primary training and had some work experience at home. For instance, some students of the second mission had worked for Li Hongzhang as sailors.³⁸ Therefore, they had a more solid basis of professional knowledge which was believed would facilitate students' study and better suit the needs of China. Thus, the students on the second mission did not need to spend as much time as students of the first mission studying Confucian teachings and the conservatives considered them to be less vulnerable to Western corruption. Their grounding in the traditional Chinese system of

³⁸ Li Hongzhang, "Fu Wu Chunfan Jing Qin" [Reply to Official Wu Chunfan] in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 947-948.

education, combined with their practical work experience in China, allowed for a shorter period devoted to studying abroad; the second mission's time frame ranged from 3 to 6 years. The shortened time period and the other adjusted elements of the second mission allowed it to encounter less conservative opposition than the first.

The selection of Europe as the study destination for the second mission was based on more research than the first. In selecting the destination, chose the United States because the program's planner, Yung Wing, had lived in the United States for years. Also, the Burlingame Treaty signed by the United States and China in 1868 recognized that "Chinese subjects shall enjoy all the privileges of the public educational institutions under the control of the government of the United States."³⁹ However, the selection of the destination for the second mission was based on closer and more careful examination. In 1876, Li Hongzhang visited the Chinese city of Yantai in order to negotiate a treaty with representatives of Great Britain. Yantai was one of the busiest trading ports and most Western countries established their consulates there. During Li's stay in Yantai, Li not only observed the assembled ships from European countries, but also concluded that Britain and France were advanced in shipbuilding and navigation. Li also saw some Japanese youths training with British sailors, which convinced him that sending students to study shipbuilding and navigation were essential for developing competence in naval defense.⁴⁰

³⁹ U.S. Department of State, *The Burlingame Treaty of 1868*. San Francisco, July 28, 1868. Calisphere, CA: University of California, 2001, <http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb4m3nb03h/?order=7&brand=calisphere> (accessed on October 26, 2011).

⁴⁰ Li Hongzhang, "Zou Yi Yuan Guan Dai Xue Sheng Fen Fu Ge Guo Xue Xi Zhe" [Memorial on Selecting Commissioners of the Study Abroad Program to Europe] in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education

In comparing the regulations of the second program to the first, the regulations of the second were more specific and careful to conciliate the opposition from conservatism and to provide training that would better fit into the demands of China's military buildup. The Qing government required students not only to take the compulsory courses of their assigned major, but also to take 15 courses generally including mathematics, chemistry, shipbuilding, construction, mining, railway, foreign languages and other courses.⁴¹ In the first study abroad program, Yung Wing was the vice-commissioner. Thus, Yung was subordinate to Chen Lanbing and other commissioners which led to Yung's unfavorable position with other commissioners when conflicts between them arose and directly limited Yung's participation in the first educational mission. The distribution of supervisory power caused the loss of flexibility in the first mission, thus the conflict came to a deadlock. In contrast, the second mission appointed two Chinese commissioners and two foreign commissioners without distinction of commissioners and vice-commissioners.⁴² The first Chinese commissioner, Li Fengbao, was very interested in Western science and good at dealing with foreign affairs, according to Li Hongzhang.⁴³ Foreign commissioner Prosper Giquel was a French commissioner who worked for the Fuzhou Shipyard. Therefore, Prosper Giquel was familiar with circumstances in both

during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 948.

⁴¹ Li Hongzhang, Shen Baozhen and other officials, "Zou Ming Chang Xue Sheng Chu Yang Xue Xi Zhe" [Memorial on Sending students of Fuzhou Shipyard to Study Abroad], in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 954.

⁴² *Ibid*, 953.

⁴³ Li Hongzhang, "Zou Yi Yuan Guan Dai Xue Sheng Fen Fu Ge Guo Xue Xi Zhe" [Memorial on Selecting Commissioners of the Study Abroad Program to Europe], in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 940.

China and Europe. The Chinese and foreign commissioners were required to supervise each other.⁴⁴ If one side performed its duty perfunctorily and the other side did not report the situation, both of them would be punished and dismissed. In addition to the commissioners, Chinese envoys to Europe also had the obligation of supervising overseas students because, with their high political positions, they could represent the Qing government in negotiations with foreign governments. The arrangements for curriculum, progress of study, behaviors, daily life and expenses were under the supervision of the commissioners and envoys.

Supervising and evaluating students' study outcomes and giving timely reports to the Qing government was one of the commissioners' most critical obligations. In general, there was a test every three months given by the commissioners to students to evaluate and check students' progress. The test mainly covered Western science, but some Chinese history and Confucian classics also were tested to ensure their loyalty to the Qing government. Moreover, it was compulsory for students to record their daily life in Europe, including their study contents and daily life.⁴⁵ Then students' records were sent to the Qing government for review.

All of the above adjustments made, based on the experience of the first educational mission, contributed to different outcomes in the second mission. The students of the second mission did not go through difficulties in re-adapting to their lives after returning to China. Most students of the second mission were placed in jobs more quickly than those of the first. According to a memorial from a magistrate of Zhejiang and Fujian

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 953-954.

province written in 1886, students who specialized in shipbuilding were assigned to the Fuzhou shipyard or iron making plants as supervisors, managers, shipbuilders, and machine-makers.⁴⁶ Others received positions in naval fleets. Most students were able to get jobs that were in line with their academic major. Officials' comments on students of the second mission were much more positive. For instance, Li Hongzhang submitted several memorials asking the imperial court to give rewards to returned students for their excellent performance in study and work.⁴⁷

However, after returning to China, students of the second mission did face some of the same problems as students of the first mission. Students from both missions were lacking institutional base in order to raise to any decision-making position. The only path to government service was to pass a Confucianism-oriented exam which excluded a large number of returned students and scholars in Western learning. Yan Fu, a student of the second mission, who was well-known for his fame in literature, had taken the exam four times and failed each time.⁴⁸ Moreover, returned overseas students' promotion and careers were closely related to the recommendations of prominent officials such as Li Hongzhang. But such recommendations were rare and the promotions were not to high

⁴⁶ Yang Changjun and others. "Zou Qing Liu Yong Chu Yang Yi Cheng Hui Guo Xue Sheng Zhe" [Memorial on the Employment of Returned Students of the Second Study Abroad Program] in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 971-974.

⁴⁷ Li Hongzhang, "Zou Qing Pai Wang Wai Yang Hua Bian Xue Cheng Hui Hua Gei Jiang Zhe" [Memorial on Bestowing Reward to Returned Students of the Educational Mission to Europe] in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 960-961.

⁴⁸ Wang, 88.

rank positions.⁴⁹ Aside from the old institution of selecting officials and promotion in career, the ineffective financial system further plagued the second mission because of the shortage of funding. Since only a small group of officials was interested, and students of the second mission were trained for the Fuzhou Shipyard, the burden of funding for the second mission mainly fell on the shipyard. However, the shipyard's financial difficulties had started to appear during the formative stage of the second mission. In 1873, Shen Baozhen wrote in the memorial to the Imperial court proposing the plan for the second mission. In the 1873 memorial Shen Baozhen wrote to the imperial court proposing the plan for the second mission, he reported that the shipyard intended to build two ships every year, which almost completely drained the shipyard's allocation of funds, so the budget for the second mission became problematic⁵⁰ Like other undertakings in the self-strengthening movement, the shipyard relied heavily on allocations from the central government and backing from the local province.⁵¹ But the process of fund allocation was unsystematic and random without any consideration of elements such as price fluctuation. Also, after a series of wars and domestic upheavals, the Qing government suffered a budget deficit. Meanwhile the government did not seek new ways to boost revenue but pinned its hopes on provincial income from various taxes and

⁴⁹ Pei Yinsen, "Zou Chen Chu Yang Yi Cheng Hui Guo Xue Sheng Liang Cai Shi Yong Zhe" [Memorial on employment of Returned Overseas students] Memorial on Bestowing Reward to Returned Students of the Educational Mission to Europe] in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 978.

⁵⁰ Shen Baozhen, "Zou Pai Qian Hou Xue Tang Xue Sheng Fu Yin Fa Shen Zao Zhe" [Memorial on Sending students to Study in England and France] Memorial on Bestowing Reward to Returned Students of the Educational Mission to Europe] in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 938.

⁵¹ Pong, 248.

customs fees. But because the provinces had their own interests to protect, their remittances to the central government were frequently delayed and were often less than originally pledged. Accordingly, the funding of the shipyard was cut. While the first group of the second mission sent out 35 students, with the shipyard's financial troubles, the shipyard reduced the number of students in the fourth group to six.⁵² The funding for the fourth group also cut to less than fifty percent of the funding for the first groups of students during the second mission. The funding for the first group of students was 192,649 taels for three years. But the funding for the last group of overseas students reduced to 108,066 taels for six years during the second mission.⁵³

Aside from adjustments made based on the first mission, politically influential and strong-minded official Shen Baozhen also provided solid backing for the second mission. Therefore, Shen Baozhen's imminent death in June 1875 further exacerbated the financial crisis, since the mission relied heavily on a very small number of reform-minded officials.⁵⁴ After Shen's death, there were few leading officials interested in supporting the second mission. Moreover, after 1890, most leading positions of the shipyard were occupied by conservatives who denounced the second mission as a waste of resources. As a result, the fourth group of students during the second mission was recalled from France in 1890.⁵⁵

The ineffective financial system not only plagued the funding for the second mission, but also limited returned students' full display of what they had learned. With shrinking

⁵² Lin, 147.

⁵³ Lin, 310.

⁵⁴ Pong, 271.

⁵⁵ Lin, 311.

funding for the shipyard, and the depreciation of Qing currency and increased price for raw materials, the funding problem became graver. In the 1890s, the shipyard was unable to update its technology because of inadequate funding to purchase raw materials and equipment. As a result, the productivity and efficiency of the shipyard decreased sharply. For instance, the initial goal for the shipyard was to construct two ships every year. But after 1877, only one ship was constructed every year and sometimes a ship took as long thirteen months to build.⁵⁶ In 1903, the Fuzhou shipyard was indebted more than three million taels which triggered the declined wage to those returned overseas students who worked in the shipyard.⁵⁷ In 1896, it was reported that many returned students of the second mission were impoverished and unemployed.⁵⁸

In the long run, the two China's overseas educational missions broke the Chinese traditional self-image of an absolute superiority and started to partially accept the Western learning. As a result, it pushed forward the modernization process of Chinese educational system. However, the crushing defeat in the first Sino-Japanese war by the Japanese revealed that two missions failed to accomplish their goal of re-strengthening China. In explaining the failure of the two educational missions, the defects of the self-strengthening movement became the major reason. Only few reform-minded officials instead of whole government took leadership in carrying out the self-strengthening movement as well as the two missions led the two missions venerable in various aspects.

⁵⁶ Lin, 221.

⁵⁷ Lin, 323.

⁵⁸ Zong Li Ya Men, "Zhuan Zou Ming Zhe Zong Du Bian Bao Quan Zou Chen Chu Yang Xue Sheng Hui Guo Jing Yu Zhe" [Forward the Memorial From the Governor of Zhejiang and Fujian on Returned Overseas Students' Situation After They Returned to China], in *Zhong Guo Jin Dai Jiao Yu Shi Zi Liao Hui Bian: Yang Wu Yun Dong Shi Qi Jiao Yu* [Collected Documents on Modern Chinese Education History: Education during the period of Self-strengthening movement], ed. Gao Shiliang and Renxian Huang (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2007), 981.

Moreover, officials who led the Self-strengthening movement and the two missions did not have the insight that China need for more fundamental changes. Instead, they only desired to learn western technology and science thus the institutional barriers such as the efficient financial system, traditional education system, and government personnel system disadvantaged those returned overseas students to performance their skills into full play.

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