Waves of Late Qing Reform

Lecture Outline:

A. Self-Strengthening Movement
   - financing the movement
   - problems w/ coordination
   - failure of the movement

B. First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)
   - Treaty of Shimonoseki
   - Scramble for concessions

C. The Hundred Days of Reform (1898)

Qing Dynasty 清: 1644 - 1911 (last imperial dynasty; ruled by the Manchus, a tribal people whose homeland lies to the northeast of Ming China; consider themselves the successors to the Jurchen Jin dynasty)

Tongzhi Emperor 同治 (r. 1861-1875)
Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧太后 (regent and de facto ruler from 1861-1908); born into a family of humble origins, the Yehe Nala Manchu clan; becomes consort to the Xianfeng Emperor; mother to the Tongzhi Emperor; aunt to the Guangxu Emperor; after the death of the Xianfeng Emperor she helps to plot a coup with other high-ranking Manchu Princes to take wrest from the regents of the young Tongzhi Emperor; from that time on she wields real power from “behind the curtain”; plays the conservatives off against the reformers to maintain a balance at court and to preserve her own reigns on power.

Guangxu Emperor 光緒 (r. 1875-1908)

Tongzhi Restoration, 1862-1874

First Sino-Japanese War, 1894-1895

Hundred Days of Reform 午戌變法, 1898

Mufu 幕府: tent government; private bureaucracies of civilian officials; the people who staffed such bureaucracies were known as muyou 幕友 or “tent friends.” These private bureaucracies become the backbone of the self-strengthening movement in the second half of the 19th century.

lijin 厘金: a new tax administered by regional armies to raise costs for fighting the Taipings; adds a tax of up to 30% on all merchant goods; becomes a separate revenue stream for local power.

Imperial Maritime Custom Service: a foreign-managed service that collected maritime custom fees for the Qing court. Sir Robert Hart becomes the first customs inspector in 1854; intended to reorganize Chinese customs along Western international trade protocols; ends up channeling funds into Li Hongzhang’s military campaigns. Following the fall of the Qing, this is renamed the China Maritime Customs Service; continues to be staffed by Westerners and Chinese until the 1940s.

Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811-1872): Confucian statesman from Hunan; organizes the Hunan provincial army (Xiangjun 湘軍) out of local militia forces, which helps to defeat the Taiping forces; an important figure in the late Qing self-strengthening movement; advocates importing western military technologies; Zeng remains staunchly loyal to the Qing, but the type of regionally based military power that he accrues sets in motion a pattern of devolving power to provincial strongmen, which will eventually challenge centralized rule.
Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823-1901): protégé of Zeng Guofan; important leader in the self-strengthening movement; organizes the Huai Army (Huaijun 淮軍) in 1861, which helps to defeat the Taipings and other mid-century rebellions; advocates building modern-style arsenals, shipyards, and railways; wins the confidence of the Empress Dowager Cixi; by the end of the 19th c., becomes the most powerful figure in officialdom, especially in negotiating with foreign powers; often blamed for the devastating military defeats the Qing suffered at the very end of the dynasty.

Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909): official and general active in late Qing self-strengthening efforts; appointed to governorship of Hubei and Hunan; builds modern-style factories, arsenals, and railways; advocates the ti-yong models of Chinese learning and development, i.e., retaining Chinese learning as the principle or essence but adapting western learning for practical use; traces of this formula for blending Chinese and western learning can be seen in Chinese state initiatives even to this day.

Treaty of Shimonoseki 馬關條約, 1895: treaty signed at the conclusion of the first Sino-Japanese War; cedes Taiwan and the Pescadores to Taiwan; gives 200 million taels of silver in war indemnities; tribute-relations with Korea are severed and Korea becomes a protectorate of Japan; sets off new “scramble for concessions” by foreign powers in China.

Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927): Confucian scholar from Guangzhou; deeply involved in late Qing reforms; argues that institutional change and modernization is compatible with Confucian learning; one of the chief architects of the Hundred Days’ Reforms implemented under the Guangxu Emperor in 1898; hoped to reform China along the lines of the Meiji Restoration in Japan. Escapes to Japan after the conservative crackdown on the Hundred Days of Reform.

Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929): Student of Kang Youwei; also escapes to Japan in 1898; begins supporting a constitutional monarchy in China; later advocates liberal republicanism; representative of emergence of modern style nationalism in China.

Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916): leader of new style modern army in north China; Qing official loyal to the Empress Dowager Cixi; his reporting on the activities of the reformers during the Hundred Days’ Reforms is partly responsible for the coup against the Guangxu Emperor and the failure of the 1898 reforms. More on him soon…