

MASTER'S THESIS

Westerners in Li Hongzhang's mufu: with references to Gustav Detring and Hosea Ballou Morse

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Westerners in Li Hongzhang's *Mufu* —
With References to Gustav Detring and Hosea Ballou Morse

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Abstract

This thesis examines the complex role of foreigners serving as *muliao* (private assistants) in Li Hongzhang (1823-1901)'s *mufu* (the Chinese think tank) from 1875 to 1898. Although a number of scholars praised the hundreds of Western advisers for placing their technical skills at the disposal of the Chinese, few scholarly works in this field concentrated their studies on other constructive roles of foreigners serving as *muliao* during the Self-Strengthening Movement. While considerable ink has been spilt on Li Hongzhang's Chinese *muliao*, roles of foreigners in his *mufu* remain grossly understudied. This research mainly employs the archival materials available in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, which are the main collections of Qing (1644-1912) studies, to shed new light on Westerners who contributed to China during the late nineteenth century. This thesis first reviews the historical context of the *mufu* development in imperial China, and thus delineates the forces which pushed and pulled foreigners to join the *mufu* in the late Qing. It further examines how Westerners adjusted certain attitudes they considered appropriate within the unfamiliar *mufu* framework. With special reference to the experience of Gustav Detring (1842-1913) and Hosea Ballou Morse (1855-1934), it also analyzes why some Westerners thrived in the *mufu* while others did not. It hints at the existence of different groups that pursued different strategic interests and received different allocations of resources in the *mufu*. Arguably, the diversities and complexities are not sufficiently characterized by labelling the advisors simply as imperialists or "moral advisors." In addition, this research will further shows that dichotomies between China and the West, in conventional sense, are mistaken or unconvincing. Indeed, by adopting external knowledge and discourses, Qing China, as developed in accordance with different historical progress in various geographies, actively integrated herself into global and international networks and structures.

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