

## Introduction

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Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the countries of Europe were populated by untamable barbarians and unearthly immortals in the Chinese imagination. Firsthand Chinese accounts of Europe unraveled this perception. This book narrates the stories of how the first Chinese travelers to Europe – the envoys and diplomats of the Qing dynasty – navigated the conceptual and physical space of a land virtually unmapped in the Chinese intellectual tradition. Before the nineteenth century, Chinese officials and private travelers rarely visited Europe or the New World. Information about these regions came from secondhand sources: hearsay, interviews, missionary writing, and translations of foreign accounts.<sup>1</sup> Most of the information available to the Qing government as they prepared for the war against Britain during the two Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860) came from interviews with foreigners and translations of their literature.<sup>2</sup> This book is a study of how Qing envoys and diplomats investigated Europe and created frameworks for understanding the “West” for their own domestic authorities and the educated Chinese public.

In the mid-1860s, soon after the creation of the Zongli Yamen (a body somewhat akin to the foreign ministry in Western governments) and the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), the Qing government sent out investigatory and diplomatic missions in response to foreign

<sup>1</sup> Only three personal accounts written by Qing travelers to Europe prior to the mid-nineteenth century are extant. *Shen jian lu* (A Record of Personal Experience) by Fan Shouyi, a Christian convert dispatched by Emperor Kangxi to the Vatican in the early 1700s, only circulated in manuscript copy within the court. *Hai lu* (A Record of the Sea) was transcribed around 1820 from an interview with Xie Qinggao, a blind Cantonese seaman who had spent more than a decade in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States. *Xihai jiyou cao* (A Sketch of My Travel in the Western Oceans), by Fujianese tradesman Lin Zhen, was written in 1849 and published two decades later.

<sup>2</sup> On intelligence gathering during the Opium Wars, see Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 237–304.

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pressure. The Second Opium War, concluded with the Treaty of Tianjin (1858) between the Qing and the British, French, Russian, and American forces, had vested the powers with the rights to station legations in Beijing and provided the Qing court with a similar authority to dispatch its own resident ministers abroad. After a semiofficial European tour by a small group of low-ranking officials and language students in 1866, the Qing dispatched its first diplomatic mission bearing letters of credence to Europe and the United States in 1868, followed by an apology mission to France in 1870 after the Tianjin massacre, headed by a high-ranking imperial commissioner. In 1875, the Qing court appointed its first resident ministers to the United States and the United Kingdom, thus beginning a process of institution building which, by 1895, had resulted in a network of overseas offices boasting twelve legations and twelve consulates.<sup>3</sup> Communications between Qing agents abroad and domestic correspondents simultaneously transformed the empire's foreign policy and perceptions of the world. Diplomatic missions and legations coordinated with domestic officials, conducted reconnaissance, engaged in treaty negotiations, administered consulates, and forged diplomatic alliances. They worked as the empire's distant information managers by researching, documenting, and interpreting the West for a range of domestic readership.<sup>4</sup>

This book examines two distinct but interrelated ways in which Qing diplomats' works impinged upon China's relationship with the world. The two Opium Wars demonstrated the unquestionable technological superiority of European naval and military power, a disparity worsened by the unequal treaties granting the Western powers almost unlimited rights to trade, missionary activities, foreign residency, concessions on the coast, and extraterritoriality – the protection of Westerners by their own laws. Qing missions and legations were responsible for a wide range of activities aimed at self-strengthening and minimizing the pernicious effects of foreign encroachment. As institutional generators of knowledge, their letters, journals, reports, proposals, and memorials to the throne touched nearly all aspects of the empire's foreign relations and

<sup>3</sup> On the dates of establishment and names of the leading members of these legations and consulates, see *Qingji Zhongwai shiling nianbiao*.

<sup>4</sup> Classic studies on Qing diplomatic missions and legations include Biggerstaff, "The First Chinese Mission of Investigation Sent to Europe"; "The Official Chinese Attitude toward the Burlingame Mission"; Dong and Wang, "Chinese Investigatory Missions Overseas, 1866–1907"; Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations* and *The Ili Crisis*; Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*. More recent works include Desnoyers, "Self-Strengthening in the New World" and "Toward 'One Enlightened and Progressive Civilization'"; Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization*; Reynolds, *East Meets East*; Ke, "Fin-de-siècle Diplomat"; Schmidt, *Within the Human Realm*; Yin, *Donghai xihai zhijian*.

international affairs. The Qing court and its officials often understood these types of diplomatic engagement as a form of strategic management (*chouban*), and their perceptions of the process varied from subduing the intractable “barbarians” through persuasion and negotiation to selectively adopting Western ideas, technology, and institutions.<sup>5</sup> Researching, documenting, and interpreting the foreign for domestic audiences generated new kinds of knowledge, new codes and schemas, and new boundaries between China and the West.<sup>6</sup> Fraught with ideological tension, this process involved the mobilization of a wide range of rhetorical means and the expansion of the scope of discourse pertaining to the outside world.

### Reconsidering Qing Diplomatic Missions

Qing missions, legations, and their textual productions have attracted the attention of scholars and intellectuals from the time of the missions themselves.<sup>7</sup> The dominant interpretive framework originated among Chinese constitutional reformers in the years after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and came to dominance after the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1912, when the Qing government fell following a string of revolutionary outbreaks. As intellectuals of the 1890s and 1900s pinned the Qing’s domestic and foreign crises to the dynasty’s failure to initiate administrative and political reform, they reinterpreted Qing diplomatic accounts of the West in alignment with these political aspirations. Diplomatic journals produced from decades earlier were taken out of their original context and retroactively evaluated based on the intellectual trends of the 1900s and after. The story of Minister Guo

<sup>5</sup> The Chinese term *yi* is translated here and elsewhere in this book as “barbarians” to denote the cultural superiority and universalist pretensions implied in Qing officials’ use of the term, not to exclude or downplay the heterogeneity in its meaning.

<sup>6</sup> This book does not treat the “West” as a coherent analytical category. It merely follows the conventions used by Qing officials themselves, who generally adopted terms such as *xi* (the West), *xiyang* (Western Ocean) or *taixi* (Far West) as loose labels for countries they visited in Europe. Frequently, the United States, by dint of its cultural connections to Europe, was covered under these labels. It should be noted that *xiren* (Westerners), a common term for describing Europeans or Americans, generally referred only to people of Caucasian stock irrespective of their countries of origin or cultural upbringing, but not to people of color who resided in Europe or the United States. African Americans in Europe or the United States were often marked as *heiren* (“black people”), and Chinese Americans were referred to as *huaren* (Chinese).

<sup>7</sup> Johannes Von Gumpach’s *The Burlingame Mission: A Political Disclosure, Supported by Official Documents, Mostly Unpublished*, published in 1872 in Shanghai, was the first English-language scholarly work on a Qing mission. Another notable piece of early scholarship is Williams’s *Anson Burlingame and the First Chinese Mission to Foreign Powers*, published in 1912.

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Songtao, as the renowned intellectual Liang Qichao retold it in 1923, became a standard trope for how the Chinese perceived the world in the late Qing:

In 1875, Guo Songtao, minister to Europe, wrote a travelogue (*youji*) in which he said that “barbarians today are different from those in the past. They too have two thousand years of civilization.” Good grief! One can hardly imagine the furor this stirred up. When this book got to the capital, it angered the entire literati class. He was berated by everyone. Each day they sent memorials to impeach him, until the book was banned and its blocks were destroyed.<sup>8</sup>

The main problems with Liang’s interpretation are twofold: he misidentified Guo’s trip to Europe as a private journey devoid of any larger institutional or political significance, the kind commonly undertaken by intellectuals only from the 1900s.<sup>9</sup> The Confucian literati’s outcry thus seemed extremely xenophobic. Second, and more importantly, Liang placed Guo and his detractors on opposite sides of a dichotomy which simply did not exist at the time. In doing so, he painted the censorship of Guo’s book as a result of traditional Confucian thinking and oriental despotism. Among other points, this story ignores the fact that Guo’s journal was first published by the Zongli Yamen itself in an attempt to circulate knowledge about the West, and even after it was banned it was still enthusiastically read by the educated elite at large. In an attempt to narrate what Prasenjit Duara has called “history in the Enlightenment mode,” Liang overwrote the multivalence of the Qing’s diplomatic institutions to lend Guo’s experience an evolutionary spin: the Confucian elite’s refusal to accept Western culture and their stubborn belief in the universality of Chinese culture was the reason why the Qing dynasty had to fall.<sup>10</sup>

This Enlightenment narrative of Qing diplomacy dominated English-language scholarship of the 1950s to 1980s, which examined Qing diplomacy and overseas missions through the lenses of Chinese culturalism and diplomatic history.<sup>11</sup> These works, heavily influenced by John

<sup>8</sup> Liang, “Wushi nian Zhongguo jinhua gailun,” 4030.

<sup>9</sup> Liang Qichao’s use of *youji* to characterize Guo Songtao’s mission suggests that he identified it with a private journey. Although the lines between diplomatic journals and personal travelogues were sometimes murky, the former should be considered a distinct genre with its origin in Song official missions to the courts of Jin and Liao. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 9.8.1.

<sup>10</sup> Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 17–50.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Biggerstaff, “The Official Chinese Attitude toward the Burlingame Mission”; “Chinese Missions of Investigation Sent to Europe”; “The Secret Correspondence of 1867–1868”; Hsü, *China’s Entrance into the Family of Nations*; Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*; Wang, *A New Profile in Sino-Western Diplomacy*.

K. Fairbank's "Western impact, Chinese response" model, aim at identifying the cultural and institutions and obstacles standing in the way of the Qing's modernization.<sup>12</sup> Their basic assumption is that the establishment of permanent legations, and indeed the entire post-1860 diplomatic structure, was a "modern" practice modeled on European norms and contrary to established traditions. According to Immanuel Hsü, the dispatch of resident ministers was forced upon China at gunpoint; it was "alien to the Chinese mind and totally incompatible with the Chinese institutions of foreign intercourse."<sup>13</sup>

When the influence of the "impact response" model declined in Western academia in the 1980s, PRC historians of the market-reform era took over its banner. The modernization policies of Deng Xiaoping had a liberalizing effect on Chinese academics. As historians realigned themselves from a Marxist narrative to the historiography of modernization, they became interested in discovering how the late Qing literati encountered modernity and modified the "impact response" model into a logic of reform and opening through which the late Qing was understood. In this framework, the post-Opium Wars Chinese elite, awakened by Western gunboat diplomacy, shook off their Confucian arrogance, "marched into the world" (*zouxiang shijie*) and "opened their eyes to gaze on the globe" (*zhengyan kan shijie*).<sup>14</sup>

In the last two decades, comparative history has shown new ways of rethinking the divergences between Chinese and European trajectories in socioeconomic, political, and military developments.<sup>15</sup> No longer preoccupied with cultural explanations for why China deviated from a Western, universal path, historians have explored a combination of contingent, institutional, environmental, and global factors to explain Western Europe's industrial and military ascendancy over Asia in the nineteenth century. One result of these new perspectives has been new narratives wresting history of the late Qing from a teleology of the nation-state and re-evaluating it as a dynamic and inventive process of regeneration,

<sup>12</sup> One of the most famous articulations of this narrative is Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the Chinese Coast*. The persistence of this framework has been enforced by Fairbank and Têng's *China's Response to the West*, perhaps one of the most important and accessible primary-source compendiums in English. For an influential critique of this model, see Cohen, *Discovering History in China*.

<sup>13</sup> Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations*, 111.

<sup>14</sup> In the 1980s, thirty-six Qing diplomatic journals, travelogues, and personal diaries were published under the editorship of Zhong Shuhe in the *Zouxiang shijie* series. A historian and literary scholar himself, Zhong furnished each account with an introduction written within the modernization framework. The series was reprinted in 2008. For a partial collection of these introductory essays, see Zhong, *Zouxiang shijie*.

<sup>15</sup> Wong, *China Transformed*; Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*; Rosenthal and Wong, *Before and beyond Divergence*; Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age*.

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metamorphosis, and state building continuing into the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> Linguists and literary scholars interested in cross-cultural translations have sketched a multifaceted and long-term process whereby foreign concepts were internalized and domesticated in a wide variety of conditions, ranging from government-sponsored translation bureaus to commercial “factories of writing.”<sup>17</sup> Historians also identified similar patterns, intersections, and path-dependent divergences between imperialism, state building, and the emergence of modernity in the Qing and those in Japan and Europe.<sup>18</sup>

In China, the last two decades have also witnessed new historical and literary trends seeking to break away from the rigid framework of modernization theory. New studies on the evolving structure of Qing diplomatic institutions have revised the earlier image of conservatism and stagnation.<sup>19</sup> No longer were diplomat-travelers praised or blamed according to their openness to the West. Their varied interpretations were now seen as a product of scholarly innovation, literary imagination, regional diversity, or the work of deeper patterns of subjective experience universal to the human mind.<sup>20</sup>

But even as historians have tried to move away from this teleology of development, dichotomies such as the West versus the non-West, traditional versus modern, and rejection versus acceptance still animate how we look at moments of contact. Our general impression of the second half of the nineteenth century is still dominated by an ominous interlude between two devastating wars. The main problem with this narrative is that it coerces a multifaceted and multilinear process by which the Chinese conceptualized the West into a series of halfhearted strides towards a preordained end. By figuring the Qing’s defeat in the Sino-Japanese War as an inevitable endpoint, this narrative privileges those figures and events between the 1850s and 1890s which seem to fit a straight line between tradition and modernity. The dominant approach in using nineteenth-century Chinese writing on Europe, as a result,

<sup>16</sup> On foreign relations, see Westad, *Restless Empire*; on state-building, see Halsey, *Quest for Power*. See also Fung, “Testing the Self-Strengthening”; Elman, “Naval Warfare”; Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment*; Wu, *Empires of Coal*; Reinhardt, *Navigating Semi-colonialism*.

<sup>17</sup> Hutters, *Bringing the World Home*; Lackner and Vittinghoff, *Mapping Meanings*; Lackner, Amelung, and Kirtz, *New Terms for New Ideas*; Liu, *Translingual Practice*; Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc.*

<sup>18</sup> Perdue, *China Marches West*; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade*; He, *Paths toward the Modern Fiscal State*; Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*.

<sup>19</sup> Li, *Zhongguo jindai waijiaoguan qunti de xingcheng*; Dai, *Wan Qing zhu Ri shituan yu jiaowu zhanqian de Zhongri guanxi*.

<sup>20</sup> Yang, *Ruxue diyuhua de jindai xingtai*; Yin, *Donghai xihai zhijian*; Zhang, *Yiyu yu xinxue*; Fang, “Wenhua bijiao yu wenhua chuanshu”; Tang, *Lüxing de xiandaixing*.

selectively adopts passages, anecdotes, or rhetorical patterns to measure the degree of acceptance in Chinese attitudes.<sup>21</sup> The experiences of the travelers themselves and their varied conceptualizations and expressions have seldom constituted a subject of scholarship.

A corollary to this historiographical bias is the idea that knowledge about Western culture and institutions was implanted and accepted by the Qing elite only via the mediation of Japan.<sup>22</sup> Measured by volume, scope, and impact, Japan indeed dominated the transmission of Western knowledge to China in the early twentieth century, and the mutual influence between Chinese and Japanese intellectuals deserves more scholarly attention than it has received to date.<sup>23</sup> As historian Douglas Howland has observed, the reorientation of Japan from the sphere of Confucian civilization into a Western power proved destabilizing, even devastating, to the Chinese worldview.<sup>24</sup> But prior to 1895 Japanese influence was not the main channel by which the Qing literati received their knowledge about the world. Quite aside from foreign communities and treaty port intellectuals, the Qing government fostered its own corps of envoys, informants, and diplomats to carry out investigations and generate reports for the consumption of the bureaucracy and reading elite, and the knowledge they created, the discourses they generated, and the patterns of consumption their works pioneered were all important preconditions for the cultural shifts after 1895. Yet since the field turned away from the “impact response” model in the 1980s, scholarship has moved into new areas of regional, economic, gender, and social history, seldom revisiting the history of Qing diplomacy and investigations of Europe.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> This tendency is shown by the frequency with which anecdotes on diplomatic missions are used in textbooks with the effect of reinforcing this modernization narrative. Guo Songtao's acceptance of Western civilization and the attacks on him by domestic opponents, for example, have been used in authoritative texts on Chinese history such as Schoppa, *Revolution and Its Past*, 92; Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, 245; Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing*, 189.

<sup>22</sup> According to historian Yu Ying-shih: “Prior to the May Fourth Movement, most of the ‘Western learning’ absorbed by Chinese learned men – be it philosophy, political thinking, culture, sociology, psychology, or other fields – came in secondhand via Japan.” Yu, “Guanyu zhongri wenhua jiaoshe shi de chubu kaocha,” 335.

<sup>23</sup> The most prolific English-language scholars in this field are Joshua Fogel (*Articulating the Sinosphere; Maiden Voyage*) and Douglas Reynolds (*China, 1898–1912; East Meets East*).

<sup>24</sup> Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> The more recent works that fill this gap are mostly translations of Chinese accounts of the West such as Desnoyers's *A Journey to the East* and Arkush and Lee's *Land without Ghosts*. Incidentally, recent historical scholarship on the topic has mostly focused on Sino-American relationships. See, for instance, Xu, *Chinese and Americans*; Rhoads, *Stepping Forth into the World*; and Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*.



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This book moves beyond the issue of failure and success, and instead explores how Qing agents interpreted, created, and transmitted knowledge of the West while they engaged in diplomatic missions and legation work. By examining diplomatic writing as a process of communication, it reveals the fluidity, heterogeneity, and ambivalence of their experience. It also examines the separate and often localized processes of circulation and consumption of diplomatic communication to show the real impact and reception of their work. This book argues that changes in Chinese perceptions of the West were the result of open-ended and multidimensional searches for meaning, relationship, and expression, framed not by easy dichotomies but by individual travelers' conceptual systems and a variety of political, cultural, and intellectual conundrums.

### **Qing Diplomats as Travelers, Mediators, and Geographers**

The Qing's engagement in diplomacy and foreign investigations did not develop in a vacuum, but was shaped by rich historical legacy and institutional precedents.<sup>26</sup> It was well known in China that in 138 BCE, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty sent Zhang Qian to the northwestern tribe of Yuezhi to explore the possibility of an alliance against the Xiongnu, a nomadic power on the northern steppes. Captured by the Xiongnu along the way, Zhang was detained for more than ten years, but he eventually returned with intelligence of Central Asia and a proposed alliance with tribes who shared customs with China. According to historian Sima Qian, writing a few decades later, Zhang Qian's sudden rise to fame made envoyship a popular pursuit for men of ambition: "They vied with one another in presenting to the throne memorials in which they discussed the wonders, advantages, and disadvantages of certain foreign countries . . . In order to encourage enterprise in this direction numbers of embassies were fitted out and sent forward."<sup>27</sup>

On September 1, 1887, Sima Qian's account of Han envoys appeared in a letter from Li Hongzhang, governor general of Zhili, to his protégé Ou Eliang. Ou, a metropolitan graduate and Secretary of the Board of Works, had been waiting twelve years on the reserve list for diplomatic posts. Knowing that Li's opinions held sway at court, Ou entreated him

<sup>26</sup> Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies*; Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*; Wang, "Co-constructing Empire in Early Chosŏn Korea"; Wang, *Tang China in Multi-polar Asia*.

<sup>27</sup> Translation from Hirth, "The Story of Chang K'ien, China's Pioneer in Western Asia," 104–105. On Sima Qian's rhetorical strategies in reconstructing Zhang Qian's encounter, see Chin, "Defamiliarizing the Foreigner."



for a letter of recommendation to speed things up.<sup>28</sup> Li counselled patience:

Nowadays the maritime sphere has become a smooth path to which all court officials aspire, quite unlike ten years ago. When Emperor Wu of Han first acquired envoys, no one liked the idea because of the distance they had to travel, but once Zhang Qian made his fame, missions to foreign countries became a matter of course, and everyone competed to talk about their advantages and disadvantages and begged to be envoys. The past and the present are the same.<sup>29</sup>

Written twelve years after the Qing's first permanent minister arrived at his legation in London, Li's letter calls attention to the fact that he and his contemporaries saw parallels in the way diplomatic affairs impinged upon the bureaucratic structure and representations of the foreign in the Han and the Qing. Central Asia had been considered a forbidden zone prior to Zhang Qian's return, as had the maritime countries of Europe and America prior to the 1860s. Yet within a couple of decades after the Qing's initiation of diplomatic intercourse, these regions became desirable destinations for government officials. Similar to the way the Han dynasty's expansion set off intense political controversies and conflicting representations of the world, the Qing's beginning of diplomatic relations with Western powers was fraught with cultural and ideological tension.<sup>30</sup>

Post-1860s diplomatic missions and the legation structure differed from the existing practice of envoy dispatch in a few major ways. Previous missions to foreign states were generally "travel embassies" with well-defined responsibilities, and were constituted on a temporary basis and dissolved as soon as the mission was over.<sup>31</sup> With the exception of a period in the Ming, envoys were not specialized personnel, but career-minded officials who saw their missions as stepping-stones for higher posts.<sup>32</sup> Members of the mission were forbidden from lingering on the road or socializing privately with foreign people. The earliest extant envoy journals – those from the Tang and the Song – laid heavy emphasis on the distance daily traveled and made scarce mention of unofficial activities, which suggests that their authors felt pressure to account for each day spent on the journey.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, most Qing permanent

<sup>28</sup> On Li Hongzhang's influence on the selection of ministers, see Li, "Wan Qing zhuwai gongshi de baoju yu xuanren."

<sup>29</sup> Li, *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 34, 243.

<sup>30</sup> For an insightful discussion of Han imperialism and its reverberations in literary representation, see Chin, *Savage Exchange*.

<sup>31</sup> Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Sun, "Shi shuo Mingdai de xingren," 11–16.

<sup>33</sup> According to Richard Strassberg, the earliest extant diary-format journal, Li Ao's "Diary of My Coming to the South" (809), "has minimal entries, with few personal observations

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legations stayed for a regular term of three years and their members were encouraged to conduct personal investigations and socialize with foreigners in addition to managing routine legation work.

Second, envoys dispatched to China's neighboring states had at their disposal a wealth of literature (envoy journals, travelogues, dynastic histories, gazetteers, etc.) after which to model their accounts. The most common form of personal report was the envoy journal, a semiofficial genre which generally assumed the perspectives of imperial geography, weaving distant regions into a centripetal and hierarchical conception of the world. In this patterned discourse, depictions of the foreign generally were carefully constructed with the strategic interest of China in sight, seldom granting political legitimacy to non-Confucian governments.<sup>34</sup> But given the dearth of official missions prior to the 1860s, Qing diplomats to Europe and America lacked accounts of those countries written as first-person narratives. This created challenges in fitting their observations and conduct into the envoy journal they were required to keep.

A third point of divergence is that past envoys rarely communicated with the court while on the road to co-ordinate their activities with the central government. Envoys carried imperial decrees and acted as messengers of the ruler; they were not a moving office carrying an abstract symbol of authority.<sup>35</sup> With the exception of wartime communications, the information they provided to the court was through accounts submitted after the completion of the mission. Qing missions and legations in the second half of the nineteenth century, by contrast, were much better integrated into domestic information networks. They exchanged letters, reports, and notes with domestic offices and other legations regularly by steam mail. The extension of telegraph lines to Shanghai and Tianjin in the 1870s and early 1880s enabled the timely exchange of correspondence between domestic and foreign ministries with a much-shortened time lag. Ministers also memorialized on diplomatic issues warranting immediate attention whenever they saw fit. The adoption of information technology allowed the Qing bureaucracy to respond promptly and proactively to diplomatic and political exigencies.

or scenic descriptions," which "might have been motivated by a desire to impress his new colleagues in Kuang Prefecture with his heroic itinerary and provide future travelers with a guide to the routes between north and south China." A similar preference can be seen in many other official travelogues in the Tang and the Song. See Chen, *Lidai riji congkan*, 1–8.

<sup>34</sup> Douglas Howland's *Borders of Chinese Civilization* explores a similar tension that existed in late Qing Sino-Japanese relations.

<sup>35</sup> For a study of how Ming envoys (*xingren*) performed diplomatic duties, see Guo, "Mingdai xingren yu waijiao tizhi shang de zuoyong," 319–343.