

COLUMBIA MODEL UNITED NATIONS IN NEW YORK

Columbia University



Imperial Intrigue: a background guide for the Boxer Rebellion Chinese Imperial Court

by Caitlin Fitzpatrick

COLUMBIA MODEL UNITED NATIONS
IN NEW YORK



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Thank You.

At the close of the nineteenth century, anti-foreign feeling in China was strong. Since the Opium Wars the Western powers had been opening the once self-reliant, isolated nation against her will. At the same time, China's dynastic system of government based on Confucian ethics, which had run the nation for centuries, was falling apart. The court was wrought with corruption and conspiracy as incompetent Manchu nobles struggled to maintain power. When the Boxer movement began in the Southeastern province of Shantung in the late 1890's, the court was relieved that the movement was anti-Christian and anti-foreign rather than subversive, as all past rural uprisings had been. Fearing the movement could turn on the dynasty at any moment, eager to blame China's ills on the foreigners, and hoping to expel the foreigners with the Boxers' help; the Chinese government tolerated the Boxers' militant actions against foreign missionaries and their Christian converts. When the Boxers' attacks became increasingly frequent and brutal to the point of besieging foreign diplomats in Beijing, the Foreign Powers began to send military intervention and the Chinese Imperial Court found itself facing a potential foreign invasion.



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

My name is Derek Hou, and I will be your committee chair. I am originally from Vancouver, Canada, and I am a sophomore at Columbia College, where I am pursuing a double major in Biology and Economics. I have been involved in Model UN throughout high school and my college career, and served as the Vice-Chair for the Boxer Rebellion Historical Simulation at the CMUNCE 2006 conference. Besides Model UN, I am also involved with the American Medical Student's Association, the Health Awareness Advocacy League, and Korean Campus Crusades for Christ.

After having a positive experience chairing this committee at CMUNCE 2006, I decided to revisit this subject in a collegiate conference. I chose this particular time in Chinese history, because it was a time involving a considerable amount of scandal and intrigue in a dynasty on the verge of collapse and I anticipate an exciting debate with loads of conspiracy.

The excitement will be made more intense by the fact that this is a crisis committee, which means that the topics presented in this guide will continue to unfold at the conference as you are presented with new developments.

Please thoroughly read this background guide, as it will provide you with the information you will need to represent your character at the conference, as well as direct you to other sources of information. Keep in mind that this is a historical committee, taking place on July 27th, 1900, and information about events that occurred after that date may not be used in debate, although you can review this information to broaden your knowledge of the situation.

I encourage you to email me at djh2109@columbia.edu with any questions or concerns, to clarify committee issues or procedure, or just to introduce yourself. I look forward to seeing you all at the conference.

Best of luck,

Derek Hou

This is a historical committee set on July 27th, 1900. All events that occurred after that date are purely for reference and essentially irrelevant. This committee is also a crisis committee, which means that the topics in this guide will be used more as background information, as debate will change according to crises presented to the committee.

The committee will follow the structure of the Chinese Imperial Court in 1900. Its members are Emperor Guangxu, Empress Dowager Ci Xi, members of the Grand Council and the Clan Council, viceroys and generals involved in the conflict, and members of government ministries and the Censorate.

The structure of imperial China is based on the “Way of Confucius.” The “Way” refers to the ethical principles and guidelines from Heaven that if properly abided by, will create a perfectly ordered, moral society. Confucius and his disciples explained the Way and how people were to put it into effect in the world.

According to Confucius, Heaven had an earthly representative, “the Son of Heaven,” who was given “the Mandate of Heaven” to be the ruler and endowed with Heaven’s wisdom. The emperor is this son and is thus viewed as the Father and Mother of the Empire, a position which commands respect. Because he has Heaven’s mandate, his authority is absolute. According to Confucian tradition, it is Heaven’s will that the emperor alone control all functions of the state. Furthermore, the emperor has the ability to pass this mandate to whomever he pleases, for no law of inheritance restricts the emperor in his choice of successor.

The emperor delegates power to his officials who, in turn, delegate power downward towards local officials and noble families. The emperor himself appoints all government officials. He chooses these men among the educated class through the civil service examination system, an institution established during the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618 – 649).

The members of the Grand Council and the Clan Council are the highest in rank and theoretically have the most power after the Empress Dowager and the Emperor. The function of the Grand Council is to advise the throne on all public matters, which means that they review and make suggestions on all memorials to the throne. The Clan Council is made up of the highest ranking members of the Manchu nobility, the princes and dukes, most of whom are members of the imperial family. Oftentimes, members held positions on both the Grand and the Clan Councils

The governors-general are the main bureaucratic arm of the Imperial Court, and, in reality, have the most power because they control the military as well as the financial affairs of the provinces and are responsible for enforcing edicts. Although ministers from the Censorate were put in the provinces to watch over the governors’ actions, China was a large area and communication was slow. Furthermore, these officials could be easily bribed or intimidated. Originally, governors-general could only be of Manchu descent, thus ensuring

their loyalty to the throne, but this rule had been bent, allowing a few powerful Chinese to gain these positions.

The generals were the descendents of the Manchu bannermen and were in charge of the imperial military in the provinces and the protection of the capital and Imperial Court. Especially in 1900, on the eve of a potential foreign invasion or an internal rebellion, the generals were in a position to significantly influence court decisions in their favor because their desertion would leave the court and the royal family completely vulnerable to attack.

The court is responsible for running all of China's affairs. The court does so by issuing imperial edicts that are then enforced by the governors of the eighteen provinces, the six government ministries, and the Censorate. Edicts are only legitimate with the seal of the Empress Dowager, who is the acting regent for the emperor. The Empress receives suggestions for edicts through memorials. For the purposes of this committee, memorials will be written in draft resolution format.

All memorials must have the seal of the Empress Dowager on behalf of the Emperor (the chair) to become official edicts. Although the Empress is the acting regent, the Emperor can at any time issue an edict dismissing her from her position (essentially, the emperor can veto any decision of the Empress Dowager). Before memorials can be considered by the Empress Dowager, they must have the approval of the majority of the members of the committee to be decided by a vote, and before memorials can be voted upon, they must have at least 1 councilor, 1 member of the royal family (Prince or Duke), 1 governor-general, and 1 general, as signatories.

Once memorials have been approved by a majority of the court, they are called draft edicts. They then go to the Empress Dowager for approval. If she signs a draft edict, it becomes an official edict and is declared and enacted.

Debate will begin when the Emperor calls the court into session. At the beginning of the first session, each member of the court will present his/her position to the Emperor. Debate will then follow the pattern of a moderated caucus, with the Emperor as the moderator. Court members can call for an unmoderated caucus, during which they may talk freely amongst themselves.

HISTORY

The Origins of the Qing Dynasty

In 1900, China was not actually ruled by the Chinese. It was ruled by the Manchu people, who had conquered China in the late 1600s, founding the Qing Dynasty. Before the Qing, the Chinese Ming Dynasty had ruled since 1368, but by the late 1500s, the treasury was empty and the Ming emperor was facing military pressures from the Mongols, Japan and Russia. Traditionally, the Chinese gentry decided when a dynasty had lost the Mandate of Heaven by shifting their loyalty to a new leader, and they found one in the person of Nurhachi of the Jurchen people.

The Jurchen were nomadic people from Manchuria who settled in China and adopted all but a few Chinese customs and institutions. The Jurchen clans fought amongst each other for centuries, but Nurhachi of the Asin Gioro clan was able to achieve control of all clans through military victories and political marriages. In 1616, Nurhachi declared himself emperor of the Jurchen nation and organized the 7,500 nomadic warriors of the different clans into battlefield formations of 300 men each, identified by different colored banners. This banner system effectively mobilized the entire population of the Manchu state, providing a transition from tribal to bureaucratic organization. Nurhachi's son, Hung Taiji, conquered Korea and used the money from Korea's treasury to buy an alliance with the Mongol Khans. Incorporating his Mongol and Chinese allies into the banner system, Hung Taiji and his bannermen continued to conquer lands throughout Inner Mongolia and northern China. In 1636, Hung Taji declared the founding of the Qing (Pure) dynasty and changed the name of his people to Manchu.

In 1644, Beijing was overrun with bandits and the Ming emperor hanged himself. In desperation, General Wu Sangui made a deal with Hung Taiji's successor, Dorgon, now leader of the Manchus: Wu would allow the Manchu bannermen through the Great Wall if they would liberate Beijing. Thus, the Manchu gained control of China's capital, maintaining that they were "liberators," not "conquerors," and the Qing dynasty replaced the Ming.

In designing their administration, the Manchus, recognizing that they represented only about 2-3% of the population in China, were careful to design a system of government that included Chinese institutions and Confucian ethics. This structure began in the Manchu state under Hung Taiji even before the Qing achieved complete consolidation of China. Taiji adopted the Six Ministries (personnel, revenue, rites, war, justice, and public works) and the Censorate established by the Ming. Each was headed by a Manchu prince, who was usually away in the battlefield. Thus, most affairs were handled by the four presidents of each ministry, two of whom were Manchu, one Mongol, and one Chinese. The main instruments of state machinery, however, were the bannermen controlled by Manchu generals, and the Assembly of Princes and High Officials, composed exclusively of Manchu.

Under the second emperor, Kangxi, control of China's 18 provinces was balanced with each province having a governor, generally a Chinese, and a governor-general, who was a Manchu, Mongol, or Chinese bannerman. The governor-general was usually in charge of two provinces and his junior colleague, the Chinese governor, in charge of one. The two were expected to act and report jointly on important matters. To maintain military security, hereditary Manchu banner forces commanded by a general responsible only to Beijing were placed in strategic posts throughout the provinces. In each province, beneath the governors and governor-generals were four provincial officials: a treasurer, salt comptroller, judge, and grain intendant (who supervised the collection of grain for the capital). This network of officials was connected to the capital through a postal service consisting of about 2000 stations throughout the empire.

In its early years, under the skilled direction of emperors Yongzheng, Kangxi, and Qianlong, this system worked well, and the Qing dynasty prospered.

The Opium Wars

To control the spread of opium, the Manchus under Qianlong had imposed a government monopoly in 1729, levying such high taxes that the drug was restricted to a privileged few. When British merchants, seeing the potential for a lucrative market, began trading Indian opium at very low costs, the addiction spread rapidly throughout the country, undermining family values and weakening the government. By 1839, annual imports had risen to 3.6 million pounds, severely depleting China's reserves and causing commodity prices to skyrocket. In order to stop this trade, Emperor Daoguang closed foreign markets. Canton was the only port open to western merchants, who were only allowed to reside there during trading season from November to May.

In March of 1839, opium was prohibited and Commissioner Lin arrived in Canton to enforce a cure of opium addiction. All who refused were to have their upper lips cut off to prevent them from using a pipe. Lin appealed to Queen Victoria for support in ridding China of this immoral substance, but received no reply. Lin advised foreign traders in Canton that opium was illegal and requested the surrender of their stocks and a promise to refrain from the trade.

Danish, German, American and Spanish captains all signed Commissioner Lin's pledge, but Captain Charles Elliot of Great Britain, who had been forced to hand over 20,283 chests of British-owned opium, tore the document to shreds and announced that all British ships would discharge their cargoes at the Portuguese port of Macao, south of Canton. When Lin responded by prohibiting commerce with Macao, British trading captains began to smuggle in Opium with the help of corrupt Chinese and Manchu officials in Macao and Canton.

Under extreme pressure from business interests to go to war over this affront to free enterprise and from the foreign office to force direct official intercourse with the court in Beijing, which the Manchus had refused, the British Parliament ordered a blockade of Canton. Lin protested and the British opened fire. The inexperienced and ill-equipped Chinese soldiers fared poorly against the skilled British soldiers equipped with modern

technology, and on August 29th, 1784, Emperor Daoguang was forced to sign the Treaty of Nanjing. Under the treaty, China was forced to open five ports to foreign trade, cede Hong Kong to Great Britain, and pay \$6 million indemnity for opium confiscated by Lin, \$3 for debts owed to British traders by Canton merchants and \$12 for the cost of the war. Two years later, similar concessions were demanded and obtained by France and the United States.

Shortly afterward, a defeated and depressed Daoguang passed away, and his nineteen-year-old son, Xian Feng, ascended to the throne. Xian Feng had been born in 1831 to Daoguang and an imperial concubine. His mother had died when he was nine, and he was raised by a concubine who was the mother of Prince Gong, Xian Feng's younger brother by two years. Although Xian Feng was the eldest son, in China, this did not make a prince the automatic heir. Eventually it came down to a choice between Prince Gong, Xian Feng, and Prince Tun. Daoguang chose Xian Feng, but most felt it should have been Prince Gong, who was clearly the most skilled and intelligent of the three. The aggressive Prince Tun was extremely embittered at not being chosen, and, although he was given vast estates to pacify him, he later became the leader of the conservative anti-foreign faction at court, the Ironhats (after the helmets worn by Manchu nobles) and passed his resentment to his sons. Throughout his reign, emperor Xian Feng was effectively controlled by "The Gang of Eight," a group of conservative militant advisers he had inherited from his father.

In 1854, after a decade-long interlude following the First Opium War, Britain, joined by the French, Russian, and American governments, began requesting new concessions. Unsure of what to do about the problem, Xian Feng turned all foreign dealings over to the Chinese governor-general in Canton, Yeh. Yeh refused to meet with the foreigners and resisted their demands. Despite repeated warnings from the Prime Minister not to resort to force in China without the approval of London, the hot-headed governor of Hong Kong, Sir John Bowring and his subordinate, Harry Parkes, Britain's Consul in Canton, ordered gunboats to bombard Canton over an entirely fictitious dispute without waiting for Parliament's consent. The American ships joined in out of a sense of camaraderie, and after an American soldier was killed, American Commodore Armstrong stormed the forts guarding Canton and obliterated them.

Shortly afterward, Britain sent Lord Elgin to demand reparations for British subjects during the bombardment and to request further concessions. Seeing an opportunity, the French joined in with similar demands by using the murder of an obscure French missionary as an excuse, and the American and Russian governments sent "observers" to secure their interests in China, should the Chinese give in to the British and French. On December 12th, 1857, Lord Elgin and the French foreign minister J.B.L. Gross sent simultaneous letters to Commissioner Yeh giving him 10 days to comply with their demands. Yeh refused, and Allied forces took down Canton on December 29th. An occupation government was set up in Canton and the Allied forces sailed north to Taku to present their demands directly to the Emperor in Beijing.

Emperor Xian Feng, under the influence of Grand Councilor, Su Shun, leader of the Gang of Eight, was unaware of the reality of the situation and still believed that the Allies were coming to beg favors from him. He therefore instructed his negotiators to toy with the

foreigners, which provoked Lord Elgin to take the Taku Forts and the nearby city of Tientsin by force. On June 25th, 1858, Chinese negotiators grudgingly signed the Treaty of Tientsin. This treaty opened ten new ports along China's rivers to foreign trade, allowed foreign travel and freedom of movement in China to missionaries, limited tariffs on imports to 2.5%, gave payments of reparations to both France and Britain, and legalized opium. Xian Feng agreed to the treaty because it was the only way to get the Allies to leave and spare Beijing. Afterward, he ordered the Mongol general Sang Kalinin to repair the Taku forts and prepare to defend them.

In June of 1859, the Allies returned to Taku with thousands of soldiers and several ships to travel by the Peahen River to Beijing and exchange ratifications of the treaty. General Sang informed the Allies that it was forbidden to enter the Peahen by way of Taku and that the Emperor's personal wish was for them to anchor and proceed overland with a moderate retinue. The American envoy agreed to the request and their treaty was ratified without incident. The British, however, refused and ordered an attack on the Taku Forts. To their surprise, General Sang had significantly strengthened Taku, and the British withdrew after losing over 400 men. The public in London now demanded vengeance. In 1860, Lord Elgin was sent to demand a personal apology from the Emperor as well as a large indemnity. The French again sent Baron Gros.

The British and French forces took Taku, occupied Tientsin, and then proceeded to Tung Chow, just 5 miles from Beijing. During this crisis, there were two factions at the Imperial Court. The Gang of Eight and their Ironhat supporters wanted to refuse to compromise with the British and French and demand that they withdraw. The Gang of Eight isolated Xian Feng from his advisers and even members of his own family and advised him to retreat to Jehol and allow General Seng's army to rid China of the "foreign devils." The moderates, led by Prince Gong, were a group of Manchu Princes and Chinese officials who believed that only a negotiated settlement with the Foreign Powers could save the dynasty. Because of the long-standing Manchu tradition prohibiting the formation of factions or political parties, these men could only present their views submissively or risk execution for breach of Manchu etiquette. They urged Xian Feng to stay so that his decisions could be implemented immediately, as there would be a delay in communication if he retreated to Jehol (exactly what the Gang of Eight wanted).

Xian Feng, certain that his armies would win, decided to leave for Jehol and allow the military to deal with the foreign troops. This retreat was seen as an act of cowardice by Westerners and Chinese alike. Lord Elgin ordered his troops to begin to march on Beijing, easily defeating Seng's Mongol forces.

Most of the court, including the Gang of Eight, also retreated to Jehol, but Prince Gong, then head of the Clan Council, was asked by Xian Feng to stay in Beijing and deal with the foreigners. Gong's direct dealings with the foreigners during this time gave him insight into their ways and made him aware of his own deficiencies. Prince Gong believed that internal strife brought about by the Taiping Rebellion, a Chinese Christian movement whose members wanted to overthrow the Manchus, was a greater threat to the dynasty than foreign invasion. Prince Gong wished to settle matters with the West to be able to deal with these internal difficulties. After the Manchu generals surrendered Beijing for fear of a

British invasion by force, Prince Gong gave in to all Allied demands at the Convention of Beijing and the Allies finally withdrew.

To handle future dealings with foreigners, Prince Gong established a ministry of foreign affairs and an institute for foreign languages. China had never before needed such a ministry because it had never before considered another nation an equal, and many leading officials considered the establishment of a foreign ministry humiliating. The Chinese viewed negotiating with foreigners as treason and members of the ministry were considered sell-outs. Gong tried to make the ministry as unimposing as possible, giving it a drab name, The Zongli Yamen (General Management Office) and a barren building as its headquarters. The Yamen allowed Prince Gong to build a broader base of support against the Gang of Eight.

Prince Gong's Coup

Xian Feng's long absence at Jehol provoked scandalous rumors at home and abroad. The truth was that Xian Feng failed to return because his health was in critical condition. The Gang of Eight tried to keep this a secret so that they could continue to rule effectively for him from Jehol. His return was continually postponed until it was finally cancelled altogether, and Xian Feng died at the age of 30 in 1861. Upon his death, a struggle for succession ensued.

Succession did not automatically pass to the eldest son. The Emperor had the sole right to name his heir. Since the reign of Yung Cheng (A.D. 1678 – 1735), the tradition had been for the emperor to write the name of his heir and place it in a sealed box to be opened only after the emperor's death. In the past, emperors had had many sons, and the sealed box was used to prevent fights between brothers—but never before had an emperor had only one son. The only son of Xian Feng, Tongzhi, whose mother was the concubine later known as Empress Ci Xi, was the only legitimate heir. But Xian Feng had not verbally pronounced him as heir and according to Gang of Eight leader, Su Shun, was too sick to do so. No one knew if Xian Feng had placed a name in the sealed box. If Xian Feng died without pronouncing an heir and the box was found to be empty, the throne would technically be up for grabs.

Fearing that both she and her son would be murdered if the box were empty and Su Shun took control, Ci Xi burst into Xian Feng's chamber with her son and demanded that Xian Feng choose an heir. Xian Feng named Tongzhi his heir, the concubine Ci Xi and Grand Empress Niuhuru regents, and passed away moments later.

The Gang of Eight called a meeting to announce that they would adhere to the Emperor's previous designation of them as a Council of Regency for the child emperor. The Princes, Chinese officials, and military officers, having no precedent to follow, were unsure of what to do. Everyone in Jehol knew that Xian Feng's last words had legitimately designated the two empresses as regents and the Gang of Eight were, in effect, staging a coup. Court officials carefully crafted their objections to use Manchu etiquette in order to trip up the conservative stickler for etiquette, Su Shun.

In response, Su Shun attempted to manipulate the amiable Empress Nihuru to join his side. This having failed, he announced on August 31st, 1861, that the two empresses would serve as regents and each would retain a seal to be placed at the beginning and end of each edict, but purely as a symbolic gesture. There was mild protest, but the two women now had the legal power to withhold their seals.

Prince Gong, having been refused by the Gang of Eight to visit the Emperor, was now required to pay respects to his brother out of Confucian etiquette. He traveled immediately to Jehol and, after being refused an audience with the Gang of Eight, he formed an alliance with the two dowagers and two Gang of Eight members, Prince Chun, who was disillusioned with Su Shun, and Prince Tun, who was disappointed that Su Shun had not given him more power.

The processional to bring Xian Feng's remains back to the capital provided the opportunity for the Prince Gong alliance to act.

The Taiping Rebellion

The Opium Wars were not the only challenges facing the Qing dynasty. The Taiping rebels had been defeating Manchu forces in province after province since 1850, gaining impoverished peasant supporters along the way.

The Taipings were Chinese Christian converts who rejected everything Confucian. Their leader called himself Emperor Hong Xiuchuan and believed he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ destined to save the world. When banned by the Qing, the movement turned anti-Manchu and its followers began seizing cities and destroying Buddhist and Daoist temples.

The problem was that suppressing the rebellion required the Manchu to give greater military command to Chinese provincial generals, which the Manchu were unwilling to give for fear of disloyalty. The Manchu refused to give Chinese generals formal appointments, which made them reluctant to act because they could be judged at any moment for overstepping their command and executed. Moreover, they had no ability to levy taxes in order to pay their troops. In 1860, the Taipings completely destroyed the Manchu armies and besieged them at Nanking. Su Shun, leader of the Gang of Eight, reluctantly made the Chinese general Zeng Guofan, the only general who had achieved any victories against the Taipings, President of the Board of War and governor of the war torn provinces, but the Mongol prince Kokorchin was assigned as Zeng's deputy to spy for the Manchu.

When Prince Gong's coalition rose in 1861, he convinced the Manchu nobles to grant Chinese military leaders official power. Zeng Guofan was given independent authority as governor, and his protégé Li Hongzhang was made governor of Kiangsu province near Shanghai. Li was able to restore Shanghai and the entire Yangtze Basin to government control, and the Taiping's were finally defeated on July 19th, 1864 by a force lead by Zeng Guofan's brother.

Tongzhi's chief tutor was the Mongol scholar Woren. Woren was strictly and dogmatically Confucian, and believed that if the emperor could set the perfect example of a Confucian noble person, the empire would be perfectly governed. Prince Gong insisted that it was essential for the emperor to study the ways of the foreigner, but Woren blocked this, holding the view that these studies would only taint Tongzhi's Confucian morals.

Unfortunately, Tongzhi showed no skill in any subjects. He neglected his studies and, because it was forbidden to strike the sacred body of the emperor, discipline was applied indirectly through whipping other boys. As advisor to the emperor, Prince Gong tried to restrain him, but Tongzhi responded by replacing Prince Gong with the weaker and more easily manipulated Prince Chun. When his behavior became increasingly scandalous and public, the grand Council decided that it was time for him to marry, hoping that he would stay at home if provided with a wife and concubines. Alute, the daughter of Mongol Duke Chung Chi was chosen as the Grand Empress. Shortly after his marriage, Tongzhi officially assumed the throne on February 23rd, 1873.

Just six months after his marriage, Tongzhi returned to his previous sexual exploits and began using the treasury funds to repair the Summer Palace under the pretense of creating a retirement home for the dowagers. Gossip about his sexual misconduct reached such intensity that the Grand Council and the Clan Council became outraged and summoned a meeting on August 29th, 1873 at which an embarrassing memorial written by Prince Gong outlining the Emperor's behavior was read aloud, and the eighteen-year-old emperor stormed out.

In December of 1874, reports surfaced that the Emperor was gravely ill with smallpox and an edict was issued announcing that he was delegating temporary authority to the empress dowagers. It was Prince Tun who had recommended this, wanting to keep power away from Prince Gong should the Emperor's illness be fatal. This would reopen the question of succession and give Prince Tun the opportunity to seize power. Tongzhi died on January 12th, 1875, at the age of nineteen. He had not placed a name in the sealed box and had never produced an heir. The choice of succession was dominated by the Clan Council of royal princes because the heir had to be a descendent of their Asin Gioro clan. Prince Tun, who had always felt he had been cheated out of his birthright when Xian Feng was chosen, hoped to secure the throne for one of his three sons, Prince Tun II, Prince Tuan, and Duke Lan. Other officials recognized that these young men were the leading hotheads at the court and their appointment to the throne would alarm the legations. Prince Chun was the only ranking royal prince with a son so young that his character had yet to be formed. The mother of this three-year-old boy was Ci Xi's sister. Chun, however, did not seek his son's nomination and Li Hongzhang discovered that Chun had been bought off to support one of Tun's boys.

In a clever scheme involving Prince Gong, Li Hongzhang, and Empresses Ci Xi and Ci An, Ci Xi adopted Chun's son and his nomination was achieved at court. The astonished Prince Chun had no choice but to accept the honor and Prince Tun assumed Chun had betrayed him. As regents Ci Xi and Ci An declared Chun's son as Emperor Guangxu, and

another edict was issued the following day in the name of the child emperor announcing that his adoptive empress mothers would continue their regency until he came of age.

In an effort to stall, Tun and his Ironhat faction revealed that the Empress Alute was pregnant and backed the rights of her child. An emergency meeting was called at which Prince Gong's loyalists pointed out that there was no way of being sure the Empress would have a son. Suddenly, Alute attempted to commit suicide by gold overdose, and remained ill until she died two months later. It was quite clear that Alute did not attempt to commit suicide, but was actually poisoned, though by who was never certain.

Emperor Guangxu and the Hundred Days Reform

Emperor Guangxu entered the Forbidden City in 1875 at the age of three. By the time he was a young adult, he was severely traumatized and at times could hardly function. Some said it was the result of being torn away from his family at such a young age and being tormented by Ci Xi. However, by three, Guangxu was already tense and had a severe speech impediment as a result of abuse from his mother who was known to be insane (Three of his siblings died in infancy as a result of malnutrition and abuse).

Guangxu's chief tutor was Weng Tonghe, and until he was nine, all decisions about Guangxu were the chief responsibility of Ci An, Prince Chun, and Weng Tonghe. As they had been too indulgent with Tongzhi, they were the exact opposite of Guangxu. He was locked in a closet when he cried, conditioned to fear the Thunder Gods, and made to adhere to a strict diet. Weng Tonghe pressed so much the importance of Guangxu's obedience, especially to the dowagers, that he came to be paranoid of them. One positive aspect of his education was that for the first time, the education of the emperor was broadened to more than just the Confucian classics, as Weng taught Guangxu Western languages and cultures in addition to the traditional studies.

Ci An was unwell from 1875 to 1881 and she died in April of 1881. Some suspected that Ci Xi had poisoned her, but this is highly unlikely, as Ci Xi was herself an invalid during this time. Ci An's death left Ci Xi the sole dowager and her approval became very important among members of court.

In 1884, the French seized the ancient Chinese tributary states in Indochina, and Prince Gong and Li Hongzhang negotiated a settlement that made Indochina a joint protectorate of both China and France. The Ironhats, angered by what they considered a cowardly attempt to appease the French, called Gong and Li traitors and argued to go to war with France. With support from the Chinese Pure Party, the Ironhats sent several memorials to the throne. Ci Xi and Guangxu issued an edict dismissing Prince Gong from his posts. At the last moment, Li Hongzhang switched sides to support the Ironhats. Prince Chun took Gong's place as chief Grand Councilor, and Prince Ching took his place as head of the Zongli Yamen. The conflict became a war and the court enlisted Li's help.

In 1889, Guangxu formally assumed the throne, ending Ci Xi's regency. In 1891, Guangxu's father, Prince Chun, died, and Prince Ching took his place as head of the Grand Council.

In 1894, China and Japan began fighting when both sent troops to intervene in a civil war in Korea. When the war began, chief tutor Weng Tonghe, who knew absolutely nothing about war, was appointed to the Grand Council as special consultant to the throne on war. Ci Xi, whose role as arbiter had become institutionalized, was brought back to court and all documents were submitted to both her and Emperor Guangxu.

Li Hongzhang's Northern Navy, which had been praised by the press, was easily destroyed by the Japanese. The furious Guangxu wanted to strip Li of all his honors and dismiss him from all his offices, but Ci Xi intervened, and Li was allowed to keep his offices, though all of his favorite honors were withdrawn.

At Ci Xi's urging, Guangxu called Prince Gong out of retirement and appointed him as head of the Board of War, the Admiralty Board (which had been established by Li Hongzhang, Prince Chun, and Prince Ching to centralize China's navy), the Zongli Yamen, and the Grand Council. Guangxu advised appealing to the West for help in defeating the Japanese, but this was rejected by the Ironhats. The Japanese continued to win battles and by the end of February 1895, they controlled Korea and Manchuria's Liaotung Peninsula. The Chinese sued for peace.

Li Hongzhang was appointed head of the peace talks because the Manchu wanted to be able to use him as a scapegoat for all concessions that would be ceded to Japan. Under the Treaty of Shimonoseki, China was forced to cede Taiwan, the Pescadores, and the Liaotung Peninsula, open seven ports to Japanese trade, pay 200 million taels and allow the Japanese to occupy Weihaiwei harbor until the debt was paid, and recognize the autonomy of Korea (essentially, Japan's control of it).

The defeat to Japan was extremely humiliating to the Chinese, who had always considered themselves far superior to the Japanese. The defeat made it clear to both sides at the court that something needed to change. The Ironhats and conservatives insisted on isolation through a tightening of traditional controls and the expulsion of all foreigners, while reformers advocated the abandonment of the old dynastic system in favor of modernization along the lines of Meiji restoration in Japan.

In 1898, shortly after the death of Prince Gong, Emperor Guangxu began to embark on a reform movement. His first action was to invite all citizens to send him memorials directly. This was a revolutionary move because previously, only those of high rank could send memorials directly to the emperor. A group of scholars known as the Ming Shi denounced the Grand Council, saying that all of its members were either Ironhats or their followers and there was, thus, never a balanced discussion. They advocated the abolition of the civil service exam system which recruited officials based on impractical knowledge of Confucian classics and suggested that China assert itself in the international arena. The bolder Ming Shi suggested inviting the Japanese to help China establish a constitutional monarchy based on the Japanese model, while the moderates advocated that Confucian social ethics should remain central, but China should adopt certain western methods such as science, technology, and economics.

On June 11th, 1898, Guangxu issued his first reform edict urging princes, officials, and commoners alike to learn practical, useful knowledge along with Confucian morals. In what is known as The Hundred Days Reform, Guangxu issued 55 edicts over the next 102 days. All edicts were issued after consultation with Ci Xi, with no reference to the Grand Councilors. Guangxu alarmed the Ironhats because he moved so quickly and because part of his reforms involved the sudden dismissal of certain prominent members at court. There was also suspicion among the conservatives that the reform movement was a cover for an armed overthrow supported by foreign powers.

When Guangxu appointed a group of four young reform advisers, all Councilors feared losing their positions or becoming obsolete. Shortly after these appointments, Guangxu fired Sir Chang, Li Hongzhang, and two of Li's supporters. Still the most powerful man in China, with connections in every sector and province, Li Hongzhang discovered through his spies that Guangxu planned to have a secret meeting with the Japanese reformer Ito Hirobumi under the pretext of a private visit, but really to make him the consultant for restructuring the Chinese government. Guangxu met with Ito on July 18th, but Ito rejected his offer. Working with general Yuan Shikai, Prince Ching, Prince Tuan, and Duke Lan, and the Clan Council contrived evidence to convince the Empress Ci Xi and the loyal Manchu general, Jung Lu, that Guangxu was planning a conspiracy to sell out China to Japan and the other foreign powers.

Under pressure from Ci Xi and the Clan Council, Guangxu issued an edict on July 21st relinquishing power to Ci Xi. The four reform advisers were arrested and beheaded as traitors, and other key reformers were arrested or fled. Li Hongzhang was restored to his position as governor because of his role in uncovering the "conspiracy." Some reforms, such as those creating more effective administration of military, industrial, and commercial affairs and those expanding the school system were allowed to stand, but all those opening the political system (the reforms feared most by the Ironhats) were rescinded. Guangxu became a figurehead, and spent most of his time reading in the Summer Palace. Ci Xi, under the influence of the Ironhats, was the ruling regent once again.

The Siege of Beijing

On January 11th, in response to an increase in violence toward Chinese Christian converts and missionaries by a group known as the Boxers, the court issued an edict stating that while most critics held that the missionary incidents had been caused by "seditious societies," it was important to distinguish between seditious societies and those groups that were formed by "peaceful and law-abiding people" to protect themselves, their families, and their communities. The edict also stated that officials were wrong to punish those under the latter category, and the Boxers began expanding and moving toward Beijing. This was coupled with an edict on the 24th announcing Pu Chun, son of the extremely anti-foreign Prince Tuan, as the heir apparent alarmed the diplomatic community. On January 27th, the American, French, German, Italian, and British legations sent identical protests to the Zongli Yamen demanding a decisive edict suppressing the Boxers. Receiving no response, the legations threatened armed intervention, and in early April, the British, American, Italian, and German governments sent a few warships to lie outside Taku at the mouth of the Peahen River and at the German port at Kiaochow. On April 16th, the court

issued another vague edict stating that while self-defense groups would be tolerated, harassment of foreign missionaries or their Christian converts would not. This satisfied the legations for the time-being, and two of the British warships were withdrawn.

In mid-May, reports from the provinces of gruesome Boxer attacks on missions began reaching the court and the legations. On May 27th, one of the main Boxer forces took control of the city of ChoChou on one of China's rail lines and began burning railway stations, bridges and telegraph lines. Soon after, another Boxer group destroyed a railway station inn Fengtai. Alarmed, the foreign ministers met on the evening of May 28th and sent a request to the Zongli Yamen for permission to send for guards from their home governments to protect the legations. The Yamen refused, and British minister Sir Claude MacDonald wrote a message to Prince Ching informing him that the troops had already been sent for and were arriving the next day, and that "if [there was] any obstruction they would come in ten times greater force." On May 31st, the Yamen gave its permission, but restricted the number of guards to thirty per legation, a request the legations ignored. Prince Tuan's ally, Dong Fuxiang, sent his Gansu Army to intimidate the marines when they arrived, but the moderates at court, wanting to avoid a confrontation, summoned him to the Summer Palace under the pretext of protecting the emperor and dowager. Shortly afterward, seventeen men-of-war flying various flags appeared and anchored off the Taku bar. These squadrons were not sent by their governments to protect the legations, but to seize territory in China in case the situation turned into an international scramble for spoils.

On June 9th, a mob of Boxers began burning the grandstand at the Beijing Race Course, and a group of young foreign students went to see the event. Met by an angry mob, one of the students pulled out his revolver and shot a Chinese in the stomach. This incident marked the first Chinaman to be killed by a foreigner and produced considerable outrage among anti-foreign groups. That evening, Lien Fang of the Zongli Yamen visited the British legation to warn them that General Tang's army, loyal to the anti-foreign Prince Tun, would be escorting the Empress Dowager Ci Xi and Emperor Guangxu back to Beijing and then encamping in the city. Sir Claude MacDonald wired a telegram to Admiral Seymour, anchored off the Taku bar, to send a relief force, and shortly afterward, the telegraph lines were cut, completely isolating Beijing and the diplomatic community. The Ironhats ordered troops to circle Beijing, preparing to fight Seymour; the Boxers as the outer ring, Dong's Gansus as the middle and the Beijing Field Force and the Tiger Hunt Marksmen as the inner. Ronglu held his troops back in defiance.

On June 11th, the foreigners went to the train station to greet Seymour's troops, but no one came and they all returned to their compounds.

On June 12th, the German minister Baron Clemens Freiherr von Ketteler went for a walk on Legation Street and saw a man in Boxer red bands sharpening a knife. Von Ketteler beat the man, who then fled, and took the man's son prisoner. Outraged, thousands of Chinese, including Boxers and Gansus went on a rampage in the Chinese City section of Beijing near the legation quarter, rioting, burning, and looting. All who had been connected with foreigners were hunted down. On June 15th an edict was issued announcing that all rioters would be arrested.

On June 16th, an emergency meeting of all princes, heads of government boards and members of the imperial household was held to discuss the reckless behavior of the Boxers, and how to handle Seymour's relief force and the foreign warships accruing off the Taku bar. The result of the meeting was an edict ordering Ronglu's troops to bring the Boxers under control in Beijing to prevent further riots and make Seymour's relief force unnecessary.

On June 17th, a second meeting was called to discuss an ultimatum purportedly from the Foreign Powers (but really forged by Prince Tuan) demanding that foreigners be allowed to collect taxes in China on behalf of the government to combat official corruption, that foreigners be given control of China's military to end corruption in the armed forces, and that Guangxu be restored to the throne and Ci Xi dismissed. Furious, Ci Xi rescinded the previous day's edict and issued an edict calling all provincial governors to send troops to Beijing to "prepare for hostilities." News two days later that the Foreign Powers were demanding the surrender of the Taku forts only confirmed her views. Another edict was issued on June 19th, asking the foreigners to leave Beijing and giving them 24 hours to do so. The legations responded to the Yamen just before midnight. They accepted the demand to leave, but insisted that 24 hours was not enough time and requested details of how they were to travel and be protected, and sought an interview to discuss the matter with Prince Ching and Prince Tuan the next morning. By 9:30 the next morning, there was no news from the Yamen. Von Ketteler left to go to the Yamen headquarters himself and was shot by an officer of the imperial army.

The same day (June 20th), firing was heard in the legations from the outlying Austrian legations, whose occupants all fled to the French legation. This marked the beginning of the Siege of Beijing, though no one knew for certain why the panic had occurred. Later that night, American Professor Huberty James, who had forced Prince Su out of his compound, the Fu, and used it to house Chinese Christian refugees, was shot, and the legations put up barricades.

On June 21st, news reached the court of fighting at Taku and the nearby city of Tientsin between Chinese forces and allied troops, and an edict was issued declaring China in a de facto war with the Allies.

On June 25th, Ronglu negotiated a cease-fire between the legations and several precarious days passed with isolated incidents.

On July 16th, Ronglu negotiated another cease-fire to last 10 more days. A message was sent to sir Claude "from Prince Ching and others" with a peace offering of fruits and vegetable and Ronglu's promise to stop all firing, and the American minister, Conger, was invited to wire Washington (the moderates were hoping that America would interced for peace).

On July 20th, news reached Beijing of the loss of Taku and Tientsin to the Allies, which horrified the court, recalling the 1860 invasion. The moderates were given July 27th as a deadline to produce results from the legations. The Zongli Yamen renewed its requests to the legations to leave, but received only vague responses from Sir Claude.

POSITIONS

Empress Dowager Ci Xi	Grand Council	(cont'd)
	Prince Li	Zhang Zhidong
Clan Council	Wang Wen Shou	Li Hongzhang
Prince Tuan	Kang I	
Duke Lan	Lien Fang	Generals
Prince Ching		Li Pingheng
Duke Chung	Governor-generals	Ronglu
	Yu Xian	Dong Fuxiang
	Yuan Shikai	Nie Shicheng

Ci Xi

Empress Dowager

Empress Dowager Ci Xi was one of only three women in China's history to gain achieve sole effective rule. The other two being Empress Lu during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – A.D. 200) and Empress Wu during the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 628 – 907).

In 1851, at the age of 16, Ci Xi was chosen to be an imperial concubine and given the name Lady Yehenara after her Manchu descendents, the Yehe tribe of the Nara clan. Imperial concubines were chosen by the Empress Dowager and arranged in a hierarchy. One woman only was chosen as the Grand Empress, but if she died, a favorite concubine could take her place, and if a concubine gave birth to a male heir, she was given near equal rank with the Grand Empress. The selection was very political, and candidates were usually drawn from families of bannermen from different clans vying for influence.

Ci Xi was officially designated a concubine of the fourth rank. At the end of the selection process, there was one empress, two consorts (concubines of the second and third rank), and eleven concubines. While all were at the emperor's disposal, he was intended to have children with only the empress or the two consorts. The first of Xian Feng's concubines to become pregnant was the consort Li Fei, but she gave birth to a girl, Princess Jung An. During Li Fei's pregnancy, Ci Xi became Xian Feng's favorite, but this lasted only a few months until she too became pregnant. Her pregnancy gave Ci Xi security, as it promoted her to a full member of the emperor's family, but during her pregnancy Li Fei again became the emperor's favorite.

On April 27th, 1856, Ci Xi gave birth to a boy, the first, and, at the time, only male heir to the throne, Tongzhi. She was promoted to Consort or Concubine of the First Rank, second only to the Grand Empress Ci An. As Grand Empress, Ci An was the official mother of the heir apparent, and Ci Xi had little to do with the raising of her child, which created some friction between the two women, but also connected them, and both shared the pain of being slighted by Xian Feng, whose favorite remained Li Fei. Many later blamed Ci Xi for purposely debauching her son Tongzhi so that she could regain the regency, but these claims are unfounded because it was Ci An and chief tutor Woren, and not Ci Xi who had

been in charge of Tongzhi's upbringing. Xian Feng's flee to Jehol was extremely embarrassing for China, and later, when she was the only concubine left, many chose to blame Ci Xi for the emperor's falling apart, claiming that she had seduced him and kept him distracted from his duties.

When Ci Xi and Ci An were declared regents for the five-year-old Tongzhi, they assumed authority in the face of intense fear of female rulers. There was no law prohibiting it, but there was an unwritten rule in China that a woman must not be a monarch. In the history of China, women had only been placed in positions of power temporarily, when they were needed to be the figurehead for a man wanting to act behind the scenes. The Tongzhi regency was no different, for the man behind the scenes was Prince Gong. Gong's campaign to gain support for the empresses' regency stressed their helplessness and the need for them to be figureheads for the emperor in the troubled times. There was especially a fear of another Empress Wu, the only woman in Chinese history ever to achieve absolute rule of China. Like Ci Xi, she started as a concubine and gradually gained power. Empress Wu had been vilified through legends and stories as an evil witch or vampire who seduced and murdered her way to the top. Her reign was actually a high point in Chinese power, and, if she were a man, she would have been considered one of the most successful emperors in Chinese history. But for a woman to achieve such things unquestionably required sinister gifts, including witchcraft, abnormal sexual prowess, and a knack for poisoning. Chinese children feared Empress Wu, and parents would say "You better be good or Wu will get you!" To avoid the appearance of slyness or cunning so feared in a woman, Ci Xi avoided expressing her views in the early years.

Neither Ci Xi nor Ci An were educated in government and even after they learned to read, they were completely dependent on the Grand Council and the Clan Council. As empresses were not allowed to travel outside the Forbidden City, they received all information from the officials. The real power was with Prince Gong, head of the Grand Council. Although all documents from the provinces and military were sent first to the dowagers, they were immediately sent to the Grand Council and then back to the dowagers for ceremonial approval. When they attended audiences at court the dowagers were hidden behind a gauze curtain according to traditional segregation of men and women.

Regarding the poisoning of Alute, Tongzhi's supposedly pregnant wife, some try to claim it was Ci Xi because she was afraid of losing her preeminence to Alute, but Ci Xi had personally chosen Alute as the Grand Empress. Her son would have been Ci Xi's grandson, which would have only confirmed her status at court and given her security for another generation. Ci Xi would have remained in a prominent position with either Alute's child or Guangxu, her nephew, as emperor. Furthermore, Ci Xi also became sick at the same time as Alute with a severe liver ailment (one effect of poisoning with heavy toxins such as gold), so it is probable that she too was a target, along with Alute. This ailment left her an invalid for eight years until 1883. Prince Gong had the strongest motive to poison Alute because her pregnancy could have allowed Tun to gain power, but he would not have dirtied his hands. Li Hongzhang, who was then Gong's right-hand man, was a dangerous man who did not hesitate at taking such initiatives.

During the Hundred Days Reform, when Prince Ching, Governor-general Li Hongzhang, Prince Tuan, Duke Lan, and the Clan Council first informed her of Guangxu's plan to have a secret meeting with It Hirobumi, she did not act immediately, but continued to support Guangxu for three months. And although Guangxu offended Ci Xi with his sudden firing of Grand Councilor and former chief tutor Weng Tonghe and other officials, which she did not feel followed proper tact and etiquette, it was not until Prince Ching presented her with contrived evidence that Guangxu had planned to have her lifelong friend, the loyal Manchu general, Ronglu murdered, that she gave her support to the Ironhats against Guangxu and his reforms. Despite this fallout, Ci Xi and Guangxu remained on generally good terms, and he continued to work with her. It is important for Ci Xi to keep in mind, however, that two exiled reporters, Kang Youwei and Liang Chichao were running a smear campaign from Japan claiming that Guangxu had been imprisoned by Ci Xi, Ronglu, and Grand Councilor Kang I, and, as the court had almost no contact with foreigners besides through the Zongli Yamen, this is generally what the international community believed.

Uneducated and completely isolated from the world outside the Forbidden City, Ci Xi believed what whichever faction with the most influence at the time told her. Some viewed her waiting to make a decision until there was a clearly dominant group as a political tactic, but it was really just out of necessity because she had almost no knowledge or information on which to base her own opinions.

Prince Tuan Clan Council

Position

Prince Tuan believed in the Boxers' claims of invulnerability and that as they became more powerful, they would turn anti-Manchu and take over the throne if not supported. He supported integrating the Boxers into China's forces to expel all foreigners.

Additional Info

The extremely conservative, anti-foreign, and power-hungry brother of Xian Feng, Prince Tun had died in 1889, but his three eldest sons, highly patriotic and obsessed with conspiracy, Prince Tun II, Prince Tuan, and Duke Lan, along with their cousin Prince Chuang, were the leaders of the Ironhats. Spoiled and sheltered, they believed in Daoist magic and felt they could restore China's glory by simply murdering or expelling every foreigner. They were also extremely vengeful at their father being slighted for the throne and felt their family had continually been cheated of their imperial birthright. Tuan was their natural leader. He had married the niece of Ci Xi and this gave him special access to her. Typical for a Manchu noble, he avoided contact with foreigners and was very stubborn. He was extremely persistent and sought out Ci Xi continually in an effort to gain her support.

Tuan was able to form his own personal force of over 10,000 Manchu banner forces which he named the Marksmen for the Tiger Hunt (tiger being the Ironhat code word for the foreigners). On the eve of the Sino-Japanese war, Tuan convinced Ci Xi to allow his force to provide another ring of protection to palace security. Tuan's Marksmen became the innermost of three rings guarding the Forbidden City; the second being the Beijing

Field Force under Prince Ching, and the third the Military Guards Army commanded by General Ronglu.

Tuan had an alliance with the Chinese-Muslim general Tung Fuxiang, who controlled an army of 12000 Muslim (Kansu) braves, because of a deal made between Prince Tun, Tuan's father, and Tung in 1869.

Duke Lan Clan Council

Position

Duke Lan is another son of Prince Tun, and like Prince Tuan was vengeful that his family had continuously been slighted for the throne. Also like Prince Tuan, he believed that murdering or expelling the foreigners was the answer to China's problem. He supported murdering all of the diplomats besieged in Beijing, thus provoking a confrontation with the Western armies, which he was confident China's troops would win.

Prince Ching Clan Council

Position

Though originally an Ironhat, in the later days of the Boxer rising and the siege of Beijing, Prince Ching switched to the moderates and worked with Jung Lu to negotiate with the legations. Ching had gained insight through working with foreigners as head of the Zongli Yamen, and he recognized that to provoke a war with the Allies was incredibly dangerous to the survival of China and the dynasty. He wished to negotiate with the Allies to get them to leave.

Additional Info

Prince Ching was head of the Zongli Yamen in 1900. He took over this post in 1884 after Prince Gong was dismissed as a traitor for negotiating with the French about Indochina. After he was appointed, he refused to negotiate with France and the situation escalated into a war.

Prince Ching was also head of the Admiralty Board, which had been established by Li Hongzhang, Prince Chun, and himself to centralize China's navy. Both Ching and Chun misused Admiralty funds for lavish projects, such as the restoration of the Summer Palace and to shower gifts on Ci Xi to gain her support (which worked on the Empress who had a weakness of being susceptible to flattery).

Another of Ching's posts was chief of the Beijing Field Force, which provided the second ring of protection around the Forbidden City.

Prince Ching had yet another position as head of the Clan Council, which he had obtained after the death of Prince Chun. All of these positions, his seniority at court, and his favor with Ci Xi gave Prince Ching considerable influence with Ironhats and moderates alike.

During the Hundred Days reform, Prince Ching collaborated with the Ironhats in convincing the Empress Dowager of Guangxu's "conspiracy."

Duke Chung

Grand Council

Position

Duke Chung sided with the Ironhats at court. He believed that the Boxers should not be restrained or opposed since they were loyal to the dynasty and could be useful in opposing the foreigners if properly armed. Having worked to suppress the Taipings, he feared the Boxers becoming an anti-Manchu rebellion group if the Manchu tried to restrain them.

Additional Info

Duke Chung Chi's father had been the head of a force of Bannermen to suppress the Taipings. After his force failed, his family was degraded and his property confiscated. Chung Chi redeemed his family name by serving brilliantly against the Taipings on his own initiative, and Prince Gong assigned him to assist in directing police patrols around Beijing during the Western invasion in 1860. By 1865, Chung had risen to head of the Beijing Gendarmerie, the capital security force. That same year, he passed with first honors the highest examination in the civil service exam system, earning him a place in the Hanlin Academy, the Academy of the imperial scholars. From there he was assigned as a reader to Tongzhi in the Forbidden City, where he earned favor with the dowagers, who made him a duke of the third rank. His daughter, Alute, was chosen as Tongzhi's empress and later poisoned by someone in the court after it was discovered that she was pregnant.

Yu Xian

Governor-general of Shansi

Position

Yu Xian believed that the Boxers provided a sufficient additional supply of manpower to the Chinese troops for fighting the foreigners. He was undecided as to exactly what to do about the diplomats in Beijing, but he had a strong anti-foreign sentiment he believed the dynasty should continue to support the Boxers in any case.

Additional Info

Yu Xian was the local Manchu official in Shantung province under Li Pingheng when widespread attacks on Christians by a group known as the Big Swords began taking place in 1896. Discovering that the Big Swords were not anti-Manchu and impressed by their success in suppressing bandits, which helped the already over-extended provincial army, Yu Xian began secretly recruiting the Big Swords into a special unit of the provincial army.

After the Big Swords killed a leader of one of the leading bandit groups, his followers converted to Catholicism and the Catholics began a campaign alleging the Big Swords of damage to their churches. This eventually led to the burning of churches and the sacking of Christian villages by Big Swords in Shantung. Yu Xian settled the matter by beheading the two most prominent Big Sword leaders, but letting everyone else off the hook. This

sent the message that these types of groups would be tolerated and there was an increase in village defense forces over the next two years.

When Li Pingheng was promoted to command all Chinese naval forces on the Yangtze in 1899, Chang Ju-mei became governor of Shantung, but after several catastrophes, he was replaced by Yu Xian. In November of 1899, when Boxer activities in Shantung increased, leaving two Christian converts murdered, Yu Xian was replaced by Yuan Shikai.

In December of 1899, Li Lai Chung, sworn brother of General Tung Fuxiang, became field commander for the Boxers in the Shansi province and Yu Xian was appointed the governor-general. Yu Xian shared nationalism and fear of foreigners, and wanted to support the Boxers.

Yuan Shikai **Governor-general of Shantung**

Position

Although he had supported the Ironhats during the Hundred Days reform, when the Ironhats proposed absorbing the Boxers into the local militias, Yuan and the governor of Chili, Yu Lu, investigated and warned that the Boxers were unruly criminals.

Additional Info

Yuan Shikai began as a protégé of Li Hongzhang and in 1898 was appointed by Jung Lu to command the New Army (which had been raised and financed by the central government and trained and equipped by the West). This army provided the first line of defense against invaders at the port city of Tientsin near Taku. Because he was in charge of this modernized army, he was mistaken for a liberal, but it was Yuan who betrayed the emperor's secret plan with Japan to Li and the Ironhats.

In 1899, he replaced Yu Xian as governor-general of Shantung and issued a proclamation to suppress all bandits and troublemakers. Yuan probably would have put down the Boxer movement with the strict enforcement of this proclamation, but Prince Tuan advised him to act cautiously.

General Li Pingheng

Position

On the night of July 26th, during the crucial last days of the cease-fire, Li Pingheng arrived at court to press his view that, as had been done with the Black Flags, the Chinese armies could enlist the Boxers to fight the Allies and win, restoring China's glory. His whole-hearted beliefs further inspired Prince Tuan and the Ironhats and lead to their decision to give the moderates to the end of the 27th as a deadline for negotiation.

Additional Info

Li Pingheng had distinguished himself as a military officer in the 1880's during the Sino-French War. In this conflict, an army of guerilla-partisans known as the Black Flags had

helped him win battles, and this experience gave him a belief in the potential usefulness of groups of peasants turned vigilantes operating as guerilla irregulars.

In 1896, when widespread attacks on Christians in Shantung by a group calling themselves the Big Swords occurred, Li Pingheng was governor of Shantung. Li investigated, fearing that the Big Swords were a conspiratorial group like the White Lotus of the early 1800s that had tried to oust the Manchu. Li discovered, however, that the Big Swords were in no way anti-Manchu, but merely a village defense force of farmers and local landlords fighting bandits. Many of the attacks on Christians had occurred because the bandits had converted to Christianity in an attempt to gain protection from missionaries and avoid prosecution for their crimes. Because they were not anti-Manchu, Governor Li Pingheng tolerated the Big Swords as an unofficial rural militia and allowed them to grow. His associate, local Manchu official Yu Xian, with Li Pingheng's approval, began secretly recruiting the best Big Swords into a special unit of the provincial army.

In November, 1897, German priest George Stenz so enraged villagers in Shantung that a band of armed men (presumably Big Swords) came one night to murder him, but murdered two other German missionaries by mistake. In response, Kaiser Wilhelm sent a naval squadron to occupy Kiachow Bay. The nationalistic Li Pingheng urged Beijing to fight, but his suggestion was turned down. Beijing granted Germany concessions to avoid war, among them, the dismissal of Li Pingheng. Two years later, however, when the Ironhats had ousted Guangxu and were embarking on their plan to rid China of foreigners, Prince Tuan appointed Li Pingheng Supreme Commander of all Chinese naval forces on the Yangtze.

General Ronglu

Position

From the beginning, General Ronglu was opposed to supporting the Boxers, believing them to be dangerous criminals and not wishing to provoke foreign intervention. It was he who negotiated both cease-fires in Beijing and worked tirelessly to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the legations.

Additional Info

General Ronglu was a Manchu general who had been intensely loyal to Xian Feng and then to Prince Gong. He was also a good friend of Ci Xi and some suspected they were lovers.

Throughout the power struggles at court, Ronglu, like Prince Gong, remained committed to the moderate position that compromise with the West was necessary for the preservation of China and the dynasty.

Prince Li Grand Council

Position

During the Boxer crisis, Prince Li supported Ronglu. He believed that the Boxers were dangerous, and advocated their suppression

Additional Info

Prince Li was head of the Grand Council in 1900. He had been an Ironhat, but a rather passive one, and only got involved when he felt threatened, such as during the Hundred Days Reform, when he backed those wanting to reinstate Ci Xi as regent.

Wang Wenshao
Grand Council

Position

As the Boxer crisis intensified, he gave his support to Ronglu, recognizing the seriousness of the situation and wishing to compromise with the Allies before the conflict escalated into a war.

Additional Info

Wang Wenshao had few enemies at court because he preferred to remain silent most of the time, wishing to avoid confrontation.

Kang I
Grand Council

Position

A long-time Ironhat and ally of Prince Tuan, Kang I was powerful because he was a self-righteous, unyielding, conservative Manchu. He was intensely nationalist and wanted to expel all foreigners from China, believing that all of China's current problems were because its Confucian values had been tainted Western influence.

Additional Info

During the Hundred Days Reform, when the sudden dismissal of Grand Councilor Weng Tung-ho left Kang I one of only four Grand Councilors left, he feared losing his position. It was Kang I who persuaded the other officials that Guangxu was not to be trusted and had acted rashly, and it was Kang I who devised the plan to gain the dowager's support and gradually fade out Guangxu with the ultimate purpose of replacing him with Pu Chun, Tuan's son Pu Chun.

In late June, Kang I and another official had traveled to the provinces of Paoting and Choucho to investigate the Boxers there. They returned on June 16th to report that the Boxers had pledged their loyalty to the dynasty and were not planning a rebellion, and Kang I insisted that the burning of churches, and the killing of converts and missionaries in the area had been done by secret societies, not the Boxers. This was a lie in order to win support for the Boxers at court.

Zhang Zhidong
Governor-general of Liangguang Province

Position

Zhang gradually came over to the moderate side. Three of the four reform advisers appointed by Gunagxu during the Hundred Days reform had been Zhang's protégés. During the first week of June in 1900, Zhang along with Governor Yu Lu and Telegraph Sheng, boss of the Imperial Telegraph Administration, sent forthright telegrams to the Zongli Yamen urging the suppression of the Boxers.

Additional Info

Zhang Zhidong rose to power on the coattails of the Ironhats as head of the conservative Pure party. He then began independent wealth brokering joint ventures with Western companies in provinces he controlled. After the downgrading of Governor Li Hongzhang, Zhang became the most influential Chinese governor.

Minister Lien Fang

Grand Council

Position

Lien Fang was an unusually sophisticated Manchu official who worked on the Zongli Yamen. He had served abroad and could speak French, though poorly. He was one of Prince Ching's inner circle, and, like Ching, preferred mediation to confrontation.

Additional Info

On June 9th, 1900, Lien Fang, sent by Prince Ching, visited the British Legation to warn them that the Ironhats were determined to exterminate all foreigners in Beijing or drive them out and that they had Dong Fuxiang's ruthless braves waiting to help them carry it out.

General Dong Fuxiang

Position

Dong Fuxiang was a ruthless Mongol general who controlled a bandit converted army. He wanted to fight the foreigners in hopes that the war would lead to a partitioning of China through which he and his clan could gain lands and power. He had formed an alliance with Prince Tun under the pretext of loyalty to the Manchu ruling house, but his real aim was to establish his own Mongol dynasty.

General Nie Shicheng

Position

General Nie Shicheng agreed with General Ronglu that foreign invasion would be suicide for China. He believed that the Boxers had to be put down and that General Dong Fuxiang's bandit army needed to be called back so as to relieve the foreign diplomats. Recognizing that this would be almost impossible to achieve, General Nie Shicheng, along with General Ronglu and Governor-general Zhang Zhidong, plotted to attempt to evacuate the diplomats if it looked like Prince Tun would succeed in convincing the dowager that the diplomats should be executed.

Additional Info

On May 8th, Boxers burnt down the railroads at Yangchun Village. Governor-general Yulu dispatched two battalions of Nie Shicheng's "*wu-wei (martial defence) zuo (leftside) jun (army)*" to Zhuozhou area. When Nie Shicheng tried to protect the railroad, Boxers attacked Nie Shicheng and injured over a dozen soldiers. Nie Shicheng cracked down on Boxers. Ci Xi asked Ronglu write to Nie Shicheng for sake of stopping Nie from fighting the Boxers. Nie Shicheng stubbornly insisted on quelling the Boxer mobsters and stationed his army at Yangchun village for defence against the Boxers. On one occasion, Nie Shicheng personally shot a Boxer chief who climbed on top of telephone pole to instruct the destruction of railroad in Lutai area, chased the fallen Boxer chief on horseback, attacked him with a blade, and decapitated him.

Li Hongzhang

Governor-general of Canton

Position

Li Hongzhang, a clever strategist, recognized the strength of the West and the threat it posed to China and wanted to avoid foreign invasion. He saw the Boxers as dangerous rebels and did not support their actions in his jurisdiction. After the court declared war on June 21st, Li Hongzhang, along with the other south-eastern provincial authorities—Liu K'un-I at Nanjing, Zhang Zhidong at Wuhan, and Yuan Shikai in Shantung—refused to recognize its validity, insisting that it was an illegitimate order issued without proper authorization of the throne. They suppressed this order from the public, as they did the order issued on the same day to organize Boxers to fight foreign invasion. Later the Yangzi Valley governors entered into an informal pact with foreign consuls at Shanghai stating that they, as the highest authorities in the provinces, would protect foreign lives and properties and suppress the Boxers within their jurisdictions, while the foreign powers would refrain from sending troops into their regions.

Additional Info

As the governor of Canton, Li Hongzhang controlled telegraph communications abroad. On July 18th, the court ordered him to ask the Chinese diplomats abroad to inform their respective governments that their representatives in Beijing were safe. He complied, hoping the message would assuage foreign fears and prevent the mounting conflict.

TOPIC ONE: THE BOXERS AND FOREIGN POLICY

In the past, rural uprisings in China had always been subversive, but the violence that began occurring in the province of Shantung in the late 1800s was different. It was directed at missionaries and their Christian converts and was in no way anti-Manchu.

The Boxers were actually highly patriotic. They blamed all of the Chinese people's misfortunes on the foreigners: the merchants and businessmen, who offended the spirits of the earth and water with new technologies such as locomotives and steamboats and who robbed the Chinese of their jobs; the Christian missionaries, who threatened the traditions of Chinese family and village life; and the Chinese Christian converts or "Rice Christians," who sold themselves to the foreigners for food or protection. Everyone at court, moderate and Ironhat alike, was relieved that the Boxers were taking out their genuine economic and social grievances on the foreigners instead of on the corrupt and failing Manchu dynasty.

Furthermore, the Boxers evolved from village defense forces that proved highly effective at combating bandits in the provinces and could be useful in combating the foreigners with the added benefit that they were an independent force that would not need to be paid by the Imperial treasury.

In early May of 1900, the court began debating about incorporating the Boxers into an official militia. This was supported by Prince Tuan and the Ironhats, who used the pretext of intending the Boxer militia to help combat bandits in the provinces, but whose ultimate goal was to use them in expelling all foreigners from China. The Yu Lu, governor of Chihli and Yuan Shikai, governor of Shantung (the two provinces where Boxer activity had originated and was most prevalent) investigated the Boxers and warned that they were dangerous, unruly criminals. Other moderates, such as Ronglu and Prince Li, urged caution and conciliation with the legations.

The court's main dilemma is that if it does not stop the Boxers' siege on the diplomats, the Allies, who have already taken Taku and Tientsin, may invade Beijing. On the other hand, if the court goes back to the June 16th decision to restrain the Boxers, the movement may turn anti-Manchu and lead to another civil war like the Taiping rebellion.

Questions to Consider:

Should Chinese imperial troops be sent to stop the Boxers and lift the siege? Or should an attempt be made to evacuate all foreigners and Christian Chinese in Beijing?

Should there be an attempt at negotiations with Boxer leaders, and if so, how would these negotiations be conducted and what would the terms be?

Should the court incorporate the Boxers into its own military and attempt to expel the foreigners?

Should war with the foreign powers be provoked? Would this finally rid China of foreign intrusion or would it only lead to foreign occupation?

TOPIC TWO: INTERNAL REFORM

Until the early 1600s China was almost completely self-sufficient, with no need of goods from the outside. Trade was probably allowed because of the government desire to profit from it. Before the Opium Wars, any contact with foreigners was very heavily restricted. In 1759, the Chinese government instituted a monopoly on foreign trade known by the West as the Canton System. The court decreed Canton the only port open to foreign trade. This trade was overseen by the government-appointed superintendent of maritime customs and a group of thirteen “hong merchants,” who served as his agents. The government received its revenue from the monopoly from the hong merchants who had to buy their positions and make annual contributions. The number of hong merchants corresponded to the number of Western trading posts. All goods had to be paid for in cash. Foreigners could not enter the Canton city walls, could not ride in sedan chairs, learn Chinese, or bring weapons or women to the trading posts. They could only deal with hong merchants and could have no direct communication with Chinese officials, unless they petitioned to the superintendent of maritime customs. If there were problems, trade was stopped altogether until the foreigners handled matters according to Chinese demands. The Westerners were generally able to abide by these rules and trade grew rapidly.

The low tariffs that resulted from the Opium Wars meant that the Chinese could not protect new domestic industries, which prevented the development of their own modern technology. The low tariffs also meant that China could not keep out unwanted products, such as opium.

During the chaos of the Taiping rebellion, the British began collecting customs duties. This practice became institutionalized under the Imperial Maritime Customs Service, under the direction of Englishman Robert Hart. Although Hart was an honest and highly efficient man who saw himself as a employee of the Chinese government, the system was fundamentally the collection of customs for China by the British, and was yet another loss of sovereignty.

The treaties also allowed foreigners deeper and deeper into China and closer and closer to the capital. Under the Canton System, ports were kept far away from the capital so as to keep foreign powers at bay. Visitors would be escorted to the capital and allowed to stay for only a specified period of time. Under the Treaty of Tianjin, however, foreign diplomats and their families and associates would be able to reside in Beijing permanently. Furthermore, the treaty allowed anyone with a passport to travel anywhere in the country. Also, the rights of missionaries to propagate Christianity were guaranteed.

Since the ethos of Chinese civilization had been “the Way of Confucius,” studying the writings of these philosophers became the basis of civilized life in China. Even the modern word for culture, *wen-hua*, literally means “to be transformed through writing.”

Though the philosophy of Confucius and his most famous disciple, Mencius, was dynamic, it was a simple conservative Confucianism that became the basis for Chinese society. Confucius lived in a time of chaos in China as warring states vied for power. There was a need for unity and structural stability, and Confucianism emerged as a “philosophy of

status and obedience according to status” that legitimated a unified social order. The Confucian philosophy asserted that there could not be equality in an ordered society, for order in society was based on the five relationships. Although Confucius emphasized that everyone had the ability to become a noble person and that officials should be chosen by rank not birth, as the government consolidated power the ruling elite became the ones to decide who was a noble person and who should be an official.

Essentially, the society in Imperial China was divided into two main parts: the scholar-gentry-official class and the peasants or ordinary people. As learning was the basis of culture, it was the educated scholars who became members of the gentry. As a result, the gentry had both the economic power of landholding and the political power of office holding. Above the gentry was the government, and below, the peasants. The gentry resided in walled cities and academies and lived according to strict superficial etiquette, while the peasants lived throughout the countryside in small villages with deep-rooted family and community ties and traditions. Representing by far the majority of the Chinese population (80%), and being widely dispersed and far removed physically, socially, and culturally from the gentry and government, spreading central control over China from the few to the many had always been difficult.

According to Confucius all rebellions and revolutions that occur in the empire are guided by Heaven and are the will of Heaven. The emperor has the “mandate of heaven.” He is chosen by Heaven, and deposed by Heaven. If a rebellion is successful, the emperor was not a good ruler and lost the Mandate of Heaven. If a rebellion is unsuccessful, the emperor has the Mandate of Heaven and the rebels were going against Heaven’s will. The obvious problem with this philosophy is that it can only be known in retrospect whether an emperor was worthy or unworthy, and a corrupt emperor could legitimate himself simply by his ability to suppress a rebellion.

Empress Ci Xi’s husband, the Emperor Xianfeng, had been well-meaning, but he was also inexperienced and incompetent. He had been unable to cope with the problems facing the crumbling empire he had inherited, and had left most control in the hands of the high official Su Shun and his “Gang of Eight.” Tensions continued to rise between China and the West.

The Opium Wars between China and Great Britain ended with the Treaty of Nanjing, which was signed on August 29th, 1842 and set a pattern for treaties China later signed with other Western powers and Japan. These treaties forced open China’s markets and took away China’s control of foreigners within her borders. On top of the encroachments of foreign powers, population pressure was causing a severe economic crisis and the government’s efforts to deal with it through cutting expenses and selling official titles had not been successful in solving it. The destruction caused by the flooding of the Yellow River in 1852 further exacerbated the crisis. Famine, poverty, and corruption gave rise to banditry and armed uprisings, the most serious of which was the Taiping Rebellion, which went on from 1850 to 1864 and nearly overthrew the dynasty.

Some progress was made with reforms during the Tongzhi restoration period (1862-1874), lead by Prince Gong, uncle of the six-year-old emperor. Prince Gong sponsored the

establishment of a new agency under the Grand Council to deal with foreign powers and related matters as well as a school for the study of foreign languages and other non-traditional subjects, such as astronomy and mathematics. While cooperation with the West improved, the relationship remained tense.

Internally, there was a strengthening of scholarship by reprinting old texts and founding new academies, and questions dealing with practical problems of the state were introduced to the examination system for state officials; but the reforms did not penetrate to the crucial lower level of bureaucracy, which was notoriously wrought with corruption, nor did they reverse the trend of regionalism, which was disrupting the bonds between the provinces and the central government.

After the early death of Tongzhi and the dismissal of Prince Gong, however, the single-minded Ironhats gained control. Needed reforms in education, government structure, and economic and foreign policy were not pushed forward, and China suffered humiliating and debilitating defeats to France and Japan.

After the defeat to Japan, Emperor Guangxu led an effort in the first six months of 1898 known as the “Hundred Days Reform,” during which a flood of edicts came through aimed at reforming the examination system, remodeling the bureaucracy, and promoting modernization. Statesmen Kang Youwei and his followers even attempted to push their political program to transform the Chinese imperial government into a modern constitutional monarchy along the lines of Meiji Japan. The reforms were quickly squashed, however, when the Ironhats convinced Dowager Empress Ci Xi that Guangxu was planning a conspiracy and with her support staged a coup that placed Emperor Guangxu under house arrest and sent progressive thinkers into exile. Reforms were halted and corruption continued internally while foreign imperialists extracted political and economic concessions from the militarily weakened China externally. Resentment against foreign encroachments was strong and these feelings were made worse by internal crisis causing poor living conditions among Chinese. In 1900, all of this erupted with the Boxer Rebellion.

The civil service examination system traces its origins to the Confucian notion that officials should be chosen according to merit not birth, although there was no general agreement about the definition of merit. The exams test a scholar’s knowledge of the Confucian classics and are open to any male who wishes to obtain a civil service position. The system consists of three stages: the local exam, the provincial exam, and finally the highest exam at the capital. Those who passed only the local exam would generally not receive a government post, but they were considered members of the gentry and entitled to special privileges including the right to wear a special kind of clothing to denote their rank. They are also qualified to help the local district magistrate. Those who passed the provincial exam were given posts as local officials. Those who passed the highest exam, the jinshi, were considered the highest in rank among the scholar-gentry-official class and given the highest government positions.

Questions to Consider:

Should there be a restructuring of the system of government (monarchy, democracy, etc)?
What can be done to curb corruption and improve bureaucracy?

What reforms, if any, are needed in the military? Should the governors be allowed to have standing armies to protect their provinces as they do now, or does this cause too much regionalism and decentralization?

What reforms, if any, are needed in the education system? Should the civil service exams be revised to include science, math, and/or foreign cultures and languages?

What should be the economic policy with regard to foreign powers and how can China work within the terms of past treaties? Should opium be legalized? Should heavy tariffs be enacted despite the foreign treaties? Should new attempts at negotiation of these treaties be made, and if so, what should be changed/addressed?

Suggested Reading:

The Qing Dynasty, Parts I and II

<http://www.uglychinese.org/manchu.htm>

The Qing Dynasty

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qing_dynasty

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O'Connor, Richard (1973). *Spirit Soldiers*. G.P. Putnam's Sons: New York.

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**Note: You do not need to read everything in the books by Hsu, Spence, and Shirokauer. These are very long, detailed reference books. Just look up "Qing Dynasty" and "Boxer Rebellion" in the indexes and read these sections. Also look up the name of

your character, and read whatever information is available about him/her. Be sure you are reading an updated version, however, because the spelling of the name may be different if the version is old (for example Zhang Zhidong would be Chang Chih-t'ung in an old version. Please contact me if this gives you trouble).

Young, Ernest P. (1997). *The presidency of Yuan Shih-kai: liberalism and dictatorship in early republican China*. University of Michigan Press.