

# Xu Shoupeng: Diplomat of the Late Qing Era

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## Preface

This biography of Xu Shoupeng is based on the widest possible collection of materials relating to Xu, his superiors, and contemporaries in his government work throughout his life. The sources consulted for this biography fall into four broad categories: (1) biographical information contained in historical materials produced in the late-Qing and early-Republican eras, (2) contemporaneous government documents from both China and the United States, (3) contemporaneous observations from those around Xu as recorded in their diaries and personal papers, (4) academic studies that make reference to Xu. These sources provide a relatively narrow biography of his official work in the China, Korea, South America, and the United States.

Despite the apparent abundance of source material, Xu left behind no known memoirs or diaries, a standard practice (and in some cases, a requirement) for high-ranking diplomats of his time. It has therefore not been possible to attain information about his early life beyond what can be gleaned based on his level of educational attainment. I have also been unable to locate any details about his parents, possible siblings, spouse(s), children, or extended family (with the exception of one detail to be discussed below).

Xu's title of "salaried tribute student" (discussed in more detail below) indicates that he took and passed the triennial civil service exam at the county-level (*suikao* 歲考) and probably studied for and took the provincial-level exam, but did not pass and did not successfully pass the provincial- or national-level exams (for which he would have earned the title of *juren* 舉人 or *jinshi* 進士, respectively). On the off chance that he did take and pass a provincial or national exam, I searched for the three-generation curriculum vitae (*sandai luli* 三代履歷) that would have accompanied his exam. Such vitae were mandatory and included the candidate's birth name and courtesy name, date of birth, place of ancestral origin, qualifications, the names, qualifications, and professions of at least three preceding generations. A 101-volume collection of such vitae was published in 2006 as the *Collected Family History Materials from Qing-Era Civil Service Exam Test-Takers* (*Qingdai keju renwu jiazhuan ziliao huibian* 清代科舉人物家傳資料彙編) and contains the vitae of 11,000 scholars, but Xu's vitae is not in that collection under either his birth name or his courtesy name.<sup>1</sup> Nor have I been able to locate any papers published or held in Academia Sinica's archives in which Xu provided any detailed information on his background.

Xu's gravestone (see Picture 1 and Picture 2 below) was only rediscovered in 1993, so it is possible that his vitae is held in an archive somewhere in China, but lower-level test-takers were not required to produce detailed vitae, so the amount of information on such a document would not be great. It is also possible that it's been lost, as numerous disasters, both human and manmade, engulfed the north of China between the time he would have taken the test in the late 1860s or early 1870s and the present day.

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<sup>1</sup> Lai Xinxia 來新夏, ed., *Qingdai keju renwu jiazhuan ziliao huibian* 清代科舉人物家傳資料彙編 [Collected Family History Materials from Qing-Era Civil Service Exam Test-Takers], 101 vols. (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2006).

Xu left behind diplomatic correspondence from his time in the United States and Korea, but unfortunately I have been unable to locate any information about his activities in Peru, where he served in an official capacity at least twice, and Japan, where he helped negotiate a treaty between the China and Japan.

Unfortunately, no photographs or portraits of Xu appear to have survived. The only approximation of his appearance comes from a poster for a play titled “Sai King Hwa” 賽金花 that was put on in 1936. In that play, the actor Liu Pai-chang 劉斐章 plays the role of Xu (see Picture 3 below) who, along with the rest of the characters in the play, attempt to save Beijing and its residents from the violence of foreign armies. That said, Liu’s costume and appearance is that of a generic high-ranking official in the Qing government, so it is not clear the extent to which Liu’s costume or appearance resembles that of Xu.

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## Early Life (1849-1875)

Xu Shoupeng 徐壽朋 (courtesy name Jinzhai 進齋 [sometimes recorded by his contemporaries as the homophonous 晉齋]) (also rendered Hsu Shou-p’eng, Hsu Shou Peng, Hsu Shau Pang, Hsu Shan Pang, and Shu Chiou Pon) was born in 1849 in Qingyuan 清苑 County in Zhili 直隸 Province, which in the present is near Baoding in Hebei.<sup>2</sup> Though born in Qingyuan, his ancestral home (and likely the home of his father) was Shaoxing 紹興 in Yinshan 山陰 County in Zhejiang Province. After spending part of his youth in Qingyuan, his parents moved to Pinggu 平谷 County. It seems likely that Xu came from a relatively prosperous family that was able to provide the resources necessary for him to attend school and study under tutors to prepare him for the civil service exam. It is unclear exactly when he took the exam, but his title of “salaried tribute student” (*lingong sheng* 廩貢生) suggests that he passed the local exam for children held at the prefectural or county level and attaining the rank of “youth student” (*tongsheng* 童生) and then achieved the highest rank in the triennial prefectural- or county-level exam (*suikao*). As a “salaried tribute student,” Xu was granted a government stipend, the right to open his own school, and the

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<sup>2</sup> The most comprehensive source of information on Xu Shoupeng comes from the *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty* (*Qing shigao* 清史稿), a mammoth work of history intended to be an official history of the Qing Dynasty. The project started in 1914 at the behest of Yuan Shikai and was headed by Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽 and was completed in draft form in 1927, but was never completed, hence the word “draft” in the title. A biography of Xu Shoupeng appears in the 233<sup>rd</sup> section of “Collected Biographies” (*liezhuan* 列傳). Zhou Erxun 趙爾巽, ed., *Qing shigao* 清史稿 [Draft History of the Qing Dynasty]. “Liezhuan” 列傳 [Collected Biographies]. Section 233. (s.l.: s.n., 1927), 9-10. A second biography of him, also from a draft work, appears in *Collected Biographies of Figures in Qing History*, though it is not generally held in the same high regard as the *Draft History*. Wang Zhonghan 王鍾翰, *Qingshi liezhuan* 清史列傳 [Collected Biographies of Figures in Qing History], vol. 16 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 4989–4900. Another biography of him appears in the 1934 county gazetteer of Pinggu 平谷 County, located on the outskirts of Beijing. Wang Zhaoyuan 王兆元 and Li Xingzhao 李興焯, eds., *Pinggu xianzhi* 平谷縣志 [County Gazetteer of Pinggu County] (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe youxian gongsi, 1969), 475–76. Xu’s date of birth in 1849 comes from Cui Jianguo 崔建國, “Xu Shoupeng: Pinggu zouchu Qing gongshi 徐壽朋——平谷走出清公使 [Xu Shoupeng: Envoy From Pinggu],” *Beijing ribao* 北京日報 [Beijing Daily], June 21, 2011. No other source provides a date of birth or age at death for Xu Shoupeng, so it is not possible to conclude with certainty that Xu was indeed born when Cui states.

possibility of being sent to Beijing for further training. He probably sat the provincial-level imperial civil service exam, but did not pass. Despite his not attaining a higher official rank, he nevertheless found government employment and was appointed to oversee a Contributions Office (*juanna* 捐納), though exactly where is not clear. His hard work in that capacity earned him a promotion to resident judge (*anchashi* 按察使) and expectant (*houxuan* 候選) circuit intendant, though again, exactly where is unclear.<sup>3</sup> It is further unclear exactly how he became part of the Qing's foreign service, though it seems likely that he was eventually sent to Beijing for further training and, through connections made there, was eventually sent abroad.

## Diplomat in the United States and Peru (1875-1889)

Xu was sent to the United States as the first secretary Qing government's legation and arrived in early 1875, where he remained for approximately fifteen years. While in the US, Xu was deputy to Chen Lanbin 陳蘭彬, the first Chinese ambassador to the United States, Spain, and Peru.<sup>4</sup> Chen's seemingly extensive brief, covering three countries on three continents, was a result of the foreign policy imperatives of the Qing Dynasty. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a massive outflow of Chinese laborers to territories throughout North and South America and Chen's title as ambassador allowed him to act as the official Chinese representative for Chinese subjects in the Americas, many of whom were subject to various levels of discrimination, persecution, and violence as they worked on plantations, haciendas, or in mines.

While it is difficult to discern Xu's activities in his first few years in the US, the Qing Dynasty established a legation in Peru in 1874 and one year later, Xu was dispatched there to lobby on behalf of Chinese laborers, then suffering nearly slave-like conditions on haciendas there.<sup>5</sup> It would appear that Xu spent quite some time in Peru and/or San Francisco, likely lobbying on behalf of Chinese laborers in

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<sup>3</sup> Circuits (*dao* 道) were the second-level administrative division below the province-level, but above the prefecture (*zhou* 州) and county (*xian* 縣) level administrative divisions. Confirmation of Xu's status as a resident judge and expectant circuit intendant prior to his departure to the United States can be found in a memorial he sent to the Zongli Yamen from the United States informing them that he was no longer the acting ambassador in the United States. "Bingbao jiaoxie zhu Mei shiwu you" 稟報交卸駐美事務由 [Report Explaining the Reasons for Being Relieved from the Post of Acting Ambassador to the United States], September 22, 1882, 01-19-001-04-001, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica].

<sup>4</sup> Chen Lanbin led a contingent of 30 Chinese students to study in the United States as the first part of the Chinese Educational Mission at Yale beginning in 1872. He and Yung Wing (Rong Hong 容閔) together toured areas of Peru and Cuba to survey the conditions of Chinese laborers in both of those territories. Chen, a holder of the highest level of civil service degrees (*jinshi* 進士), attended the Hanlin Academy and had links to Li Hongzhang 李鴻章, who by this time had developed a keen interest in foreign relations and of the conditions of Chinese laboring overseas. A native of Wuchuan 吳川 in Guangdong, Chen Lanbin was born in 1816 and died in 1894. Henry Shih-shan Tsai 蔡石山, *China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States, 1868-1911* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1983), 24-59; Yang Baoyun 楊保筠, *Huaqiao Huaren baike quanshu: renwu juan* 華僑華人百科全書：人物卷 [Encyclopedia of Overseas Chinese: Individual Biographies] (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 2001), 51.

<sup>5</sup> Fu Yunlong 傅雲龍, "Youli Bilu tujing 游歷秘魯圖經 [Maps and Treatises of Travels in Peru]," in *Wanqing haiwai bijixuan* 晚清海外筆記選 [Selected Notes of Foreign Places from the Late Qing Period], ed. Fujian shifan daxue lishixi Huaqiaoshi ziliao xuanbianzu 福建師範大學歷史系華僑史資料編輯組 [Fujian Normal University History Department Selected Historical Materials of Overseas Chinese History Group] (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1983), 246. Xu's biography in *Collected Biographies* says that he went to the US in 1881. That is almost certainly incorrect given that Fu Yunlong's book was a contemporaneous account of Qing diplomatic work.

those places.<sup>6</sup> Xu reappears eight years later, when he was listed as first secretary of the Chinese legation, then located at 1705 K Street in 1882, by which time he was listed as the first secretary of the legation to the then-new ambassador, Zheng Zaoru 鄭藻如.<sup>7</sup>

As China's representative in the United States, Zheng had to contend with increasing anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States Congress and immediately set about lobbying against a first attempt at what would later become the Chinese Exclusion Act. The bill actually passed Congress and was headed to Chester A. Arthur's desk when Zheng arranged for a meeting with the Secretary of State and submitted a strongly-worded memo to him explaining Chinese objections to the bill. Arthur vetoed the bill, ultimately citing some of the reasons Zheng laid out in his memo.<sup>8</sup> On April 6, 1882, two days after Arthur vetoed the bill, Zheng sent a letter to the Secretary of State, informing him that he would be leaving the United States for Spain and that in his absence Xu Shoupeng, his first secretary, would become the acting ambassador.<sup>9</sup>

Xu was almost immediately confronted with yet another anti-Chinese bill, one which would pass both houses of Congress and which was signed into law by Arthur on May 6, 1882. After assessing the bill, Xu sent a dispatch to the Secretary of State on May 20 (see Picture 4.1-4.3 below):

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note the 15<sup>th</sup> instant, inclosing copies of "An act to execute certain treaty stipulations relating Chinese," and I beg to tender my thanks for the same.

The reduction of the time from twenty years, as it was in the bill vetoed by the President, to ten years, which is the time fixed in this act [denying Chinese entry to the United States], affords

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<sup>6</sup> Xu's name was not listed under the personnel present at the Chinese legation in 1878, 1879, or 1881. See personnel lists in Chen Lanbin 陳蘭彬 and Yung Wing 容闳, "Official List of Members of the Chinese Legation in Washington (October 29, 1878)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, vol. 1, 6 vols. (Washington: National Archives, 1947); D.W. Bartlett, "Members of the Chinese Legation in Washington (November 20, 1879)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, vol. 1, 6 vols. (Washington: National Archives, 1947); "Letter from Chinese Legation to Hon. James G. Blaine, Secretary of State (November 19, 1881)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, vol. 1, 6 vols. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Perley Poore, *Forty-Seventh Congress Congressional Directory*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882), 134. Zheng was appointed to that post in late 1881, after a falling out between Chen Lanbin and Yung Wing. Zheng, like Chen and Yung was Cantonese by origin. Zheng was born in 1824 in Xiangshan 香山 in Guangdong Province. He held a provincial-level exam degree (*juren*) and was a close associate of Li Hongzhang, for whom he worked establishing a modern navy in Shanghai and, later, worked in customs in Tianjin immediately prior to his departure to the United States. He returned to China in 1886 and died in 1894. "Cheng Tsao Ju to Hon. Frederick J. Frelinghuysen (December 27, 1881)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 1, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947); Henry Shih-shan Tsai 蔡石山, *China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States, 1868-1911*, 64-65; Li Xiling 李細玲, ed., *Xiangshan renwu zhuanlue* 香山人物傳略 [Biographical Sketches of Important Figures from Xiangshan], vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2014), 437-38.

<sup>8</sup> Zheng Zaoru 鄭藻如, "Memorandum from the Chinese Legation (April 1, 1882)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 1, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947); Henry Shih-shan Tsai 蔡石山, *China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States, 1868-1911*, 66.

<sup>9</sup> "Cheng Tsao Ju to Hon. Frederick J. Frelinghuysen (April 6, 1882)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 1, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).

gratifying evidence of the desire of the American Government to maintain the friendly relations existing between China and the United States. But, Mr. Secretary, permit me to say, most respectfully, that in my opinion, the time fixed – namely, ten years – is still too long, and that the section of the act requiring Chinese residents returning to China to procure certificates from the collector of customs result in great hardship.

It is provided in Article IV of the treaty of 1880 between China and the United States, that “if the measures as enacted are found to work hardships upon the subjects of China, the Chinese minister at Washington may bring the matter to the notice of the Secretary of State, who will consider the subject with,” &c. I have reason to believe that on his return from Spain the Chinese minister at will, in consonance with this clause of the treaty, ask for a further consideration of the subject.

Accept, Sir, the reiterated assurance of my highest consideration,

徐壽朋  
(Tsu Shau Pang)  
*Charge d'affairs*

In his capacity as interim head of the legation, Xu relayed Zheng Zaoru's objections to the Chinese Exclusion Act to the Secretary of State and sought to address two important issues. The first of these related to a provision in the Act that required Chinese resident in the United States prior to passage of the act to obtain a certificate from the collector of customs at a US port attesting to the legal status of said person. Concerned about the potential for bias and abuse of Chinese leaving the US, it was suggested that such certificates be issued by Chinese legations in American ports and then countersigned by the collector of customs. Xu forwarded a facsimile of what was called a Chinese Consular Passport to the State Department on June 22 (see Pictures 5-7 below). On Zheng's return, Xu presumably resumed his post as First Secretary of the Legation, though for how long is not clear. He appears to have left the United States sometime between late 1883 and mid-1884 to serve as *charge d'affairs* at the Chinese legation in Lima, Peru.<sup>10</sup>

By late September 1886, Xu was back in Washington D.C. and was once again the first secretary and at the Chinese legation to the then-Chinese ambassador, Zhang Yinhuan 張蔭桓.<sup>11</sup> Xu appears to have

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<sup>10</sup> Xu is listed as First Secretary at the Chinese Legation and was resident at 1405 H Street in Washington D.C. in 1883. “Chinese Legation to Hon. Frederick J. Frelinghuysen (December 8, 1883),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 1, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947). His name did not appear on the 1884 personnel list, compiled in October 1884. Zheng Zaoru was listed as “absent” and one “Tsai Kwok Ching” (Cai Guojing 蔡國敬? Cai Guoqing 蔡國慶?) was listed as *Charge d'affairs*. “Chinese Legation Staff (October 23, 1884),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 1, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947). Zheng was in Peru, presumably undertaking an investigation of the conditions of Chinese laborers there and returned in April 1885. “Tsai Kwok Ching to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (March 10, 1885),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 1, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947). Zheng was listed as present at the legation in 1885, but Tsai Kwok Ching remained First Secretary and Xu's name is not present on the list of personnel. “C. Hanson to S.A. Brown (November 28, 1885),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 1, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947). It is only in a subsequent letter to the State Department from the next Chinese ambassador, Zhang Yinhuan, that Xu's presence and office in Peru are made clear. “Chang Yen Hoon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (September 20, 1886),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).

<sup>11</sup> “Chang Yen Hoon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (September 20, 1886).” Xu's rank in the Qing bureaucracy was unclear until October 1886, when he was listed as being an “Expectant Taotai, wearing button of the second

stayed in residence in DC after Zhang returned and was resident at the Chinese legation to receive dignitaries who were traveling through, as well as to become *charge d'affaires* yet again in between April and August 1887 when Zhang left on a trip for Spain.<sup>12</sup> In Zhang's absence, Xu worked with the US government to procure the services of 20 ships for the Chinese navy.<sup>13</sup> In June 1887, Xu was on the front line of an unfolding controversy in Korea. The US *chargé d'affaires* and Naval Attaché to the United States Legation in Seoul, George Clayton Foulk, was working to increase the strength of Korea's navy and to limit the influence of both China and Japan in Korea. Yuan Shikai 袁世凱, then stationed in Korea, became aware of Foulk's activities and reported them to the Zongli Yamen, which, along with Li Hongzhang, demanded the expulsion of Foulk from Korea in a note delivered by Xu to the State Department:

Foulke, in concert with some evil-disposed persons of Corea, is planning a rebellion against China; disorders may arise if not checked in time. The ministers of the United States in China and Corea, upon being consulted, suggest that a request be made at the State Department for his immediate recall.<sup>14</sup>

Xu requested that both the State Department and Secretary of the Navy inquire into the matter and recall Foulke immediately.<sup>15</sup> By the end of June, Foulk was removed from his post and ordered to take up duty on the US steamer Marion.<sup>16</sup>

When Zhang left for Peru in May 1888, Xu reprised that role yet again and held the post until late October of that year. Xu appears to have been primarily occupied with facilitating the visit of two Chinese officials, a Mr. Foo and Mr. Koo, to the United States and Canada.<sup>17</sup> When Zhang finally returned from his trip, he and Xu met with US President Grover Cleveland to discuss the US government's hostile attitude toward the Chinese and were taken on a tour of US army and navy installations.<sup>18</sup>

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rank.” This corresponds to the discussion above about Xu being an expectant circuit superintendent, though clarifies that he was of the second rank (*erpin* 二品). “Chang Yen Hoon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (October 24, 1886),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).

<sup>12</sup> “Chang Yen Hoon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (April 12, 1887),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947). Xu met with Wang Yongxi 王詠霓, a Qing diplomat then on a trip through Europe and the United States, on April 21, 1887. Wang Yongxi 王詠霓 and Zhang Yuanji 張元濟, *Daoxizhai riji, Huanyou tanhui* 道西齋日記 環游談薈 [Diary of the Daoxi Studio and Collected Discussions of Travels Abroad], ed. Liu Ke 劉柯 (Changsha: Yueli shushe, 2016), 34.

<sup>13</sup> “Shu Chiou Pon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (April 20, 1887),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).

<sup>14</sup> “Shu Chiou Pon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (June 8, 1887),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).

<sup>15</sup> “Shu Chiou Pon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (June 8, 1887).”

<sup>16</sup> “Shu Chiou Pon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (June 21, 1887),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).

<sup>17</sup> Xu's correspondence with the State Department is contained across numerous letters on reel 2 of *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906* between the dates of May 25 and September 15, 1888.

<sup>18</sup> Wang Xiaoqi 王曉秋 and Yang Jiguo 楊紀國, *Wanqing Zhongguoren zouxiang shijie de yici shengju: 1887 nian haiwai youlishi yanjiu* 晚清中國人走向世界的一次盛舉：1887年海外游歷使研究 [A Great Step of Chinese of the Late Qing Moving Toward the World: Research on the 1887 Foreign Expedition] (Dalian: Liaoning shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004), 96–97.

Xu was also involved in a more consequential affair in the late summer and early fall of 1888. In June 1887, a group of American white men attacked a Chinese mining camp near the Snake River near the border of Oregon and Idaho, killing ten of them and stealing between \$5,000 and \$10,000 dollars in gold dust. While the US district attorney attempted to locate and prosecute the murderers, he was unable to do so without assistance from the Attorney General, who refused to provide any help. Chinese officials in the San Francisco legation, as well as Zhang Yinhuan, sought to enlist the help of the US government to bring the murders to justice and to acquire compensation for the families of the murdered men. Though some of the murderers were arrested in May 1888, none were found guilty, while others remained at large. Zhang Yinhuan sought assurances for the protection of Chinese living in the United States and after a lengthy back-and-forth between the two men, a treaty was concluded between the US and China that provided for such protection, for the payment of an indemnity to the families of the victims, for China to work with the British to limit illegal Chinese immigration to the US from Hong Kong, and for a ban on Chinese immigration to the United States for 20 years. The treaty was concluded in March 1888 and sent to Washington and Beijing for ratification.<sup>19</sup>

Objections were raised in both capitals to the bill. In the US, Republicans in Congress were eager to deny Cleveland any credit for solving outstanding issues with China and Chinese laborers in the United States and sought to block the treaty. In China, Southern Chinese objected to the ban on emigration, causing a delay in the treaty's ratification. In response, the US Congress passed a bill (what would become known as the Scott Act) that nullified all official documents granted to Chinese that permitted them to return to the US. Xu met with the Secretary of State on September 18 and said that the Chinese government intended to sign the treaty despite domestic pressure and that Cleveland should wait because the treaty was signed, Cleveland could reasonably veto the bill. However, Cleveland was concerned about the upcoming election and winning votes for the Democratic Party in California and, despite the protestations of the Secretary of State, signed the bill into law on October 1, 1888.<sup>20</sup>

The bill went into effect and by October 10, the San Francisco Chinese legation was reporting that Chinese laborers in possession of official documents were being denied entry into or transit through the United States on the reason that their travel documents were void. Xu requested that the Chinese in question be allowed to proceed into the US or to travel through it to their final destination, but his request does not appear to have been granted.<sup>21</sup>

Xu served as *charge d'affaires* yet again between late January and February 1889 when Zhang Yinhuan departed for Cuba. Xu continued to deal with the fallout from the Scott Act, stating in a letter to the Secretary of State on February 7, 1889 that there were many Chinese that wanted to return to China from third countries but, because of the Scott Act, were unable to do so. Xu appealed to the principles of international law, stating that Chinese subjects not seeking to reside in the US should be allowed to transit through the US. Despite two such cables, once again, no action was taken.<sup>22</sup> On Zhang's return to the US

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<sup>19</sup> Henry Shih-shan Tsai 蔡石山, *China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States, 1868-1911*, 86–89.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Shih-shan Tsai 蔡石山, 89–93.

<sup>21</sup> “Shu Chiou Pon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (October 10, 1888),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).

<sup>22</sup> “Shu Chiou Pon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (February 7, 1889),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947); “Shu Chiou Pon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (February 18, 1889),” in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).



on February 25, Xu returned to his previous job as First Secretary of the Legation.<sup>23</sup> It is unclear exactly when Xu left the United States, but it seems likely that he left along with Zhang Yinhuan when the latter was replaced by Cui Guoyin 崔國因 at the end of September 1889.<sup>24</sup>

## Return to China, Diplomat in Japan (1889-1898)

Xu arrived in China in late 1889 or early 1890 and his knowledge of foreign affairs led him to be appointed in 1890 to Tianjin at the behest of Li Hongzhang to engage in diplomatic work as well as coastal defense.<sup>25</sup>

He worked in Tianjin until 1893, at which point he was dispatched to Jiangsu Province, where he served as an expectant circuit superintendent. He was not there long when, in early 1895, Li Hongzhang requested that Xu return to Tianjin and then go onto Japan. However, Xu reported that he was suffering from illness (a severe tooth infection based on his reported symptoms) and could not leave Jiangsu.<sup>26</sup> Once he recovered, Xu joined his old boss, Zhang Yinhuan, to negotiate the Sino-Japanese Commercial and Shipping Treaty (*Zhong-Ri tongshang xingchuan tiaoyue* 中日通商行船條約).<sup>27</sup> After the treaty was concluded, Zhang and Xu were both awarded Imperial Orders (*baoxing* 寶星) by the Japanese government, Zhang's being a four-star imperial order and Xu's being a one star order at the second rank (*er pin* 二品).<sup>28</sup> That Xu received such an award by the Japanese government suggests that he was a

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<sup>23</sup> "Chang Yen Hoon to Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard (February 25, 1889)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels (Washington: National Archives, 1947).

<sup>24</sup> Xu's name is not listed as being part of the Chinese Legation in the list of personnel provided to the State Department in the fall of 1889. "Tsui Kwo Yin to Hon. James G. Blaine (October 7, 1889)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, Reel 2, 6 Reels. (Washington: National Archives, 1947). Cui Guoyin was born in 1831 in Taiping 太平 (today Huangshan 黃山) in Anhui Province. He acquired a *jinshi* degree in 1871 and entered the Hanlin Academy two years later, serving first as a compiler (*bianxiu* 編修) and then later as an expositor (*shijiang* 侍講), both positions that involved the collection of materials for study by the Hanlin Academy. Cui served as ambassador to the US from 1890 to 1892, after which he returned to China and became a merchant. He died in 1909. Xia Lingen 夏林根 and Yu Xiyuan 于喜元, eds., *Zhong-Mei guanxi cidian* 中美關係辭典 [Dictionary of Sino-American Relations] (Dalian: Dalian chubanshe, 1992), 411.

<sup>25</sup> Li Hongzhang 李鴻章, "Xu Shoupeng qing fawang yangwu zui fan sheng fen ren yong pian" 徐壽朋請發往洋務最繁省分任用片 [Memorandum Requesting the Dispatch of Xu Shoupeng to Take Office in Province With a Great Deal of Intercourse With Foreigners], in *Li Hongzhang quanji: zouyi* 李鴻章全集：奏議 [The Complete Works of Li Hongzhang: Memorials to the Throne], vol. 15 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2008), 42–43.

<sup>26</sup> Liu Kunyi 劉坤一, "Xu Shoupeng xian huanbing, bunneg diaofu Ri" 徐壽朋現患病不能調赴日 [Xu Shoupeng Ill, Cannot be Dispatched to Japan], March 18, 1895, 01-25-041-01-038, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica] (Taipei, Republic of China).

<sup>27</sup> Xu Shoupeng 徐壽朋, "Han song Zhong-Ri tongshang xingchuan tiaoyue dibaci huiyi wenda jielue" 函送中日通商行船條約第八次會議問答節略 [Letter Containing Abbreviated Transcript of Eighth Round of Sino-Japanese Commercial and Shipping Treaty], February 8, 1896, 01-25-046-02-015, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica] (Taipei, Republic of China); "Xu Shoupeng xi jietiao, sui yi Riben shangyue, sanyuan shenzi deli, ying zisong, reng sui Zhang Yinhuan dachen yiyue, yi zi shushou" 徐壽朋係借調隨議日本商約之員甚資得力應咨送仍隨張蔭桓大臣議約以資熟手 [Xu Shoupeng to be Dispatched to Japan, he is an Able Minister With Experience and Should be Consulted and Travel With Envoy Zhang Yinhuan to Discuss Treaty], February 29, 1896, 01-25-046-02-027, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica] (Taipei, Republic of China).

<sup>28</sup> "Ribei bangei Xu Shoupeng deng baoping, qing jiu jin zhuan jiao" 日本頒給徐壽朋等寶星請就近轉交 [Japan Awards Xu Shoupeng and Others Imperial Order, Please Inform Relevant Parties], June 6, 1897, 01-25-049-02-001,



relatively senior figure in the negotiation, though his name is not on the treaty itself. He left Japan in late July and was in Jiangsu once again by August 1896.<sup>29</sup>

While Xu's negotiations in Japan do not appear to have led to a promotion or other higher office in the Qing's foreign policy bureaucracy, Xu's role in the negotiations attracted the attention of one of the Dynasty's most senior foreign affairs officials, Liu Kunyi 劉坤一, who recommended him for service to the Dynasty in foreign affairs. Xu, Liu said,

possesses stable and developed capabilities and judgement. He has served abroad twice in the past [in the US and Japan] and is familiar with the situation of many countries abroad. He was appointed to the Northern Provinces [*Beiyang* 北洋, here a reference to Tianjin] by Li Hongzhang to handle foreign affairs (*yangwu* 洋務) [and where he concluded treaties and agreements with foreign powers].<sup>30</sup>

In April 1898, Xu was dispatched to the Hui[zhou]-Ning[guo]-Chi[zhou]-Tai[ping]-Guang[de] 徽〔州〕寧〔國〕池〔州〕太〔平〕廣〔德〕 Circuit (*dao* 道) in Anhui Province to serve as either the resident judge or circuit superintendent (which position is unclear) and began working in that capacity in May.

However, as the Qing Dynasty confronted a crisis on its northern frontier in Korea it was in need of men experienced in foreign affairs. As the Qing Dynasty confronted the establishment of a new, independent Korea, it sought to dispatch a capable envoy to negotiate and conclude a treaty with Korea. The man originally selected for the task was Zhang Hengjia 張亨嘉, a high-ranking member of the Hanlin Academy, a specialist in foreign affairs, and the holder of a *jinshi* degree.<sup>31</sup> However, Zhang replied that he was the only person taking care of his then 88 year old mother and that he could not leave her but could also not take her with him to Korea. As such, he requested that someone else be sent in his place.<sup>32</sup>

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Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica] (Taipei, Republic of China).

<sup>29</sup> “Sui yi shangyue Jiangsu jiming dao Xu Shoupeng chajun zihui yuansheng” 隨議商約江蘇記名徐壽朋差竣咨回原省 [Xu Shoupeng, Who Attended Treaty Negotiations, Has Completed His Duties and is Returning to His Position], August 6, 1896, 01-25-048-01-013, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica] (Taipei, Republic of China).

<sup>30</sup> Liu Kunyi 劉坤一, “Tebao yangwu daoyuan zhe” 特保洋務道員折 [Memorial Regarding the Appointment of a Circuit Intendant for Foreign Affairs], in *Liu Kunyi zoushu* 劉坤一奏疏 [Collected Memorials to the Throne by Liu Kunyi], ed. Chen Daixiang 陳代湘 et al., vol. 2 (Changsha: Yueli shushe, 2013), 1058.

<sup>31</sup> Zhang was born in 1847 in Houguan 侯官 in Fujian Province. He attained his *juren* degree in 1865 and his *jinshi* degree in 1883, when he was selected to enter the Hanlin Academy. Prior to his death in 1911, he served in various posts in the Qing Government and in universities in Beijing. Zhou Chuan 周川, ed., *Zhongguo jinxindai gaodeng jiaoyu renwu cidian* 中國近現代高等教育人物詞典 [Dictionary of Higher Education Figures in Modern China] (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Guoli gugong bowoguan 國立故宮博物院 [National Palace Museum], ed., “Nanshufang Hanlin Zhang Hengjia lichen qinlao dingdan qing gaipai zhuzha Chaoxian chushi zhe” 南書房翰林張亨嘉瀝陳親老丁單請改派駐紮朝鮮出使摺 [Memorial From the Zhang Hengjia, South Library of the Hanlin Academy, Earnestly Explaining that His Mother is Elderly and Relies Upon Him and that Someone Be Sent as Envoy to Korea in His Place], in *Qing Guangxu chao Zhong-Ri jiaoshe shiliao* 清光緒朝中日交涉史料 [Historical Materials on Sino-Japanese Relations During the Guangxu Period, Qing Dynasty], vol. 51–52 (Beiping: Gugong bowuguan, 1932), 4–5.

Upon receiving Zhang's memorial, an imperial edict was promulgated ordering that Xu Shoupeng take Zhang's place.<sup>33</sup>

While the documentary evidence is not clear regarding how a relatively low-ranking official like Xu ended up as an imperial envoy, it seems likely that Li Hongzhang and/or Liu Kunyi had a hand in getting Xu this position. In Beijing, Xu received his formal orders to be dispatched to Korea by the Zongli Yamen 總理衙門 (the Qing equivalent of a foreign ministry) to serve as envoy there. Xu was promoted to second rank civil servant (*erpin* 二品) and expectant minister of the third rank (*houbu sanpin jingtang* 候補三品京堂). He received an imperial seal with his name and the title of "Imperial Envoy" (*qinchai chushi* 欽差出使) and was promoted to Director of the Imperial Stud (*taipusi* 太僕寺).<sup>34</sup> While the reason for Xu's appointment to this unusual position is not clearly explained in any source, it is likely that Xu's relatively low level of educational attainment (as compared to the *jinshi* qualifications of other envoys and ambassadors) necessitated this *pro forma* promotion to a position relatively high in the Qing administrative hierarchy. He selected an able and experienced group of men to accompany him to Korea, including both those who had experience in Korea as well as translators of both Korean and Western languages.<sup>35</sup>

## Diplomat in Korea (1899-1901)

Xu arrived in Korea (along with his 19 year-old nephew Xu Zhicheng 徐志澄) in early 1899 and was tasked with negotiating a treaty to ensure friendly relations and trade between the Qing and the newly-independent Korea.<sup>36</sup> This was not as simple a task as it would seem. Until China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War and the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Korea had been largely under the control of the Qing Dynasty and was regarded by the latter as a vassal state (*fanshu guo* 藩屬國). However, the Treaty of Shimonoseki forced the Qing to recognize Korea as independent, requiring that the Qing and Korea

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<sup>33</sup> Guoli gugong bowoguan 國立故宮博物院 [National Palace Museum], ed., "Shangyu" 上諭 [Imperial Edict], in *Qing Guangxu chao Zhong-Ri jiaoshe shiliao* 清光緒朝中日交涉史料 [Historical Materials on Sino-Japanese Relations During the Guangxu Period, Qing Dynasty], vol. 51–52 (Beiping: Gugong bowoguan, 1932), 5.

<sup>34</sup> Cai Jian 蔡建, *Wanqing yu da Han diguo de waijiao guanxi (1897-1910)* 晚清與大韓帝國的外加關係 (1897-1910) [Diplomatic Relations Between the Late Qing and the Korean Empire, 1897-1910] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2008), 75–76.

<sup>35</sup> See memorials nos. 3568 and 3569 from the Grand Council (*junjichu* 軍機處) to the Zongli Yamen in Guo Tingyi 郭廷以 and Li Yushu 李毓澍, eds., *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han guanxi shiliao* 清季中日韓關係史料 [Historical Materials on Chinese-Japanese-Korean Relations During the Qing Dynasty] (Taipei: Zhongyang jindaishi yanjiuyuan, 1972), 5182–83.

<sup>36</sup> The depiction of Xu's negotiations in Korea in the following paragraphs is drawn from from Chen Shangsheng 陳尙勝, "Xu Shoupeng yu jindai Zhong-Han guanxi zhuanxi" 徐壽朋與近代中韓關係轉型 [Xu Shoupeng and the Transformation of Modern Sino-Korean Relations], *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 [Historical Research], no. 2 (2013): 55–70. The presence of Xu Zhicheng with Xu Shoupeng is based on the oral history of Xu family. Personal communication with Ada Shen, 5 July 2018. Xu Zhicheng's age when he departed for Korea is based on his birth being in 1881, a fact recalled by a man whose uncle attended Xu Zhicheng's school in Jiangshan 江山, Zhejiang Province in the 1930s. Yu Shaoshi 余紹詩, "San Jiu" 三舅 [Third Uncle], in *2007 Zhonghua Laoren Shiwén Shuhua Zuopin Ji: Shiwén Juan* 2007 中華老人詩文書畫作品集 [2007 Collection of Elderly Chinese Poetry, Short Stories, Painting, and Calligraphy], ed. Zhongguo laoling shiye fazhan jijinhui 中國老齡事業發展基金會 [China Aging Development Foundation] (Hefei: Hefei gongye daxue chubanshe, 2007), 317–18.

establish formal diplomatic relations not between a vassal and superior state, but between two equal countries in the international system.

Xu began negotiations with the Korean government on February 1, 1899 and delivered a greeting from the Qing Guangxu 光緒 Emperor to the new Korean Emperor, Gojong 高宗 (Guangmu 光武) acknowledging Korea's independence and expressing a desire to establish friendly relations. On February 15, Xu met with Pak Chesoon (Pak Chai Sun 朴齊純), the Korean Empire's foreign minister, to discuss a treaty. Drafts of what would become known as the China-Korea Commerce Treaty (*Zhong-Han tongshang tiaoyue* 中韓通商條約). There were a number of issues that needed to be addressed. One of the most important was the status of traders in each country's capital. The Koreans wished to deny Chinese merchants the ability to open trade warehouses (*hangzhan* 行棧) in Seoul on the grounds that China did not permit any foreign countries to establish warehouses in Beijing. They stated that in light of the fact that in the past Korean representatives were allowed into Beijing on tribute missions and were permitted to engage in trade in Beijing they should be allowed to do so now. Xu drew on the principle of most favored nation status and noted that because Japanese merchants now had the ability to do business in Seoul there was no reason Chinese merchants should not be afforded the same right. Eventually, the two sides settled based on Xu's formula and the final treaty enshrined the right of merchants of either country to conduct business in all free ports (that is, areas open to any foreign trade). Similarly, both Chinese and Koreans were permitted to travel in the interior of China and Korea, but could only trade at authorized free ports.

Talks then shifted to the large number of ethnic Koreans that were resident over the border in China's Fengtian 奉天 Province. Originally, the Koreans sought to classify this population as Korean and that they should be "protected" (governed) by Korean bureaucrats over the border in Korea, maintaining that they were merely occupying and opening up barren land. Xu refused to grant this request and stated that these lands were not barren and that, in the event, the Koreans had long since assimilated and were governed fairly and impartially (*yishi tongren* 一視同仁) by the Chinese government. Xu and the Koreans eventually came to the agreement that the relatively free movement of Koreans into Fengtian 奉天 Province (the Chinese province that bordered Korea) would cease hitherto, but that ethnic Koreans resident in China that entered illegally would be granted an amnesty and not be deported.

These were two of the most contentious points in the negotiation and the final form of the treaty established modern state-state relations between China and Korea. The treaty, signed on September 11, 1899, provided for the appointment and residence of ambassadors in each country's capital and the establishment of consuls throughout each country. The principle of most favored nation status was to apply to all commerce between the two countries, as well as the rights of each country's people resident in the other. The treaty also provided for the extraterritoriality that had become standard in treaties in the region: Chinese subjects who committed crimes in Korea would be tried by Chinese consuls and vice versa. Where disputes arose between subjects of both countries, the consular official of the defendant would resolve the case.

After the conclusion of that treaty, Xu stayed in Korea and became the Qing's first official ambassador on December 11, 1899. Even before that, however, Xu had set to work re-establishing Chinese consular offices throughout Korea. When the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1894, the highest Chinese representative in the territory departed and handed authority over Chinese in Korea to the British Consul General in Seoul, Christopher Thomas Gardner. Xu established consular offices in Seoul and Incheon. When hearing of problems Chinese merchants were having in Busan, Xu pushed for the establishment of

a consular office there and later did the same in cities throughout Korea and ensured that they would be staffed with able Chinese representatives. With this Chinese diplomatic network established, Xu met with Gardner on December 14 and officially resumed control of Chinese diplomatic authority over Chinese in Korea.

Xu's work in Korea until his departure about two years later consisted of implementing the treaty he drafted and setting up a network of consulates throughout Korea. His familiarity with "modern" (that is, Western) diplomatic protocol and concepts led him to discard the imperious attitude adopted by Chinese officials who had been resident in Korea in the past (such as Yuan Shikai) and thereby achieve compromises with his Korean counterparts. Xu adopted a strictly pragmatic attitude toward his work in Korea and noted in a memorial to his superior that "Korea was formerly a vassal state, but is now an allied state. Time moves forward and it is impossible to return to the past. We must look toward the future and act in a spirit of generosity and graciousness."<sup>37</sup>

## Negotiating the Boxer Protocol (1901)

When the Boxer Rebellion broke out, Xu was recalled to Beijing at the behest of Li Hongzhang, who made him an advisor in negotiations with the foreign powers who sent expeditionary forces to China to put down the Rebellion based on both his experience in dealing with foreign powers and because he was proficient in "Western languages" (*Xi yu* 西語). It should be noted that Xu's linguistic proficiency is not immediately evident from Chinese-language accounts of his life. His work in the United States and Peru would suggest that he had at least working proficiency in English and Spanish. While he signed numerous documents in his capacity as *charge d'affaires* at the Chinese Legation, the handwriting in some of those documents is identical to documents signed by the Chinese ambassadors he served, suggesting that the English-language documents were penned by native English speakers among the Legation's staff, of whom there were several. As for his oral proficiency, a dispatch from William Woodville Rockhill (then in Beijing following the Boxer Rebellion) to John Hay stated that Xu "understands a little English."<sup>38</sup>

Negotiations took place on April 19, 1901 at the German legation. The Chinese side consisted of Xu Shoupeng, Natong 那桐 (a high-ranking Manchu official in the Zongli Yamen), and Zhou Fu 周馥 (a lower-ranking official). Foreign powers were represented by Stephan Jean Marie Pichon of France, Freiherr Mumm von Schwarzenstein of Germany, Sir Ernest Mason Satow of Great Britain, and Komura Juntaro 小村壽太郎 of Japan. The negotiations are recorded as follows:<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Chen Shangsheng 陳尚勝, "Xu Shoupeng yu jindai Zhong-Han guanxi zhuanxi" 徐壽朋與近代中韓關係轉型 [Xu Shoupeng and the Transformation of Modern Sino-Korean Relations], 70.

<sup>38</sup> William W. Rockhill, *Report of William W. Rockhill, Late Commissioner to China, with Accompanying Documents* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 292. In this early period of Chinese diplomacy, ambassadors and their deputies did not necessarily speak English. While detailed records regarding translators at Qing diplomatic missions are not available, Xu's first superior, Chen Lanbin, does not appear to have possessed fluency in English and was assisted by a translator named Cai Xiyong 蔡錫勇. It is likely that he and Xu had at least some interaction given that Cai was resident in the US until 1884, when the latter returned to China. Liang Biying 梁碧瑩, *Meiguoren zai Guangzhou* 美國人在廣州 [Americans in Guangzhou] (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2014), 485–86.

<sup>39</sup> This dialogue is translated based on the transcript as recorded in a book that was published in 1906 titled *Record of the Imperial Tour to the West and its Return*. The book contains no forward and no details regarding its publication, but contains two attributions. It is said to be "recorded" (*lu* 錄) by "Gong, Host of the Tower of Eight Songs" (*Bayonglou zhuren Gong* 八詠樓主人恭) from the Wu Commandery 吳郡. The Tower of Eight Songs is a pagoda located in Jinhua 金華, a city in Zhejiang 浙江, and is best known as the subject of a Song Dynasty poem.

Pichon: “I have summoned you here today to discuss reparations. How much can China pay per year?”

Xu: “How much are you seeking?”

Pichon: “450 million taels.”

Xu: “China does not have the ability to pay that much. I ask that you adopt a more conciliatory attitude and take China’s interests into account and decrease the amount of money for which you are asking”

Pichon: “This is not a large amount and we must receive compensation for damages done to us and will calculate our damages to the day. We want to know: how much can China pay?”

Xu: “China ran a deficit this year and this is something of which you are aware. One possibility is for us to raise import duties which will do no large damage to foreign merchants and will increase our ability to pay compensation.”

Pichon: “This is something we can consider. If China does this, it can probably raise an additional ten million or so taels. How much does the Chinese government earn from its internal levies on goods?”

Xu: “Four or five million taels.”

Pichon: “Can those be turned over to the Chinese Maritime Customs Service?”

Xu: “Most of them are already turned over to it.”

Pichon: “Even if the two are combined, you are still considerably short of the funds needed.”

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This pseudonym is likely intended to evoke the Song Dynasty, as both the poem in question and the administrative system of “commanderies” (*jun* 郡) (equivalent to Qing-era prefectures) are of Song vintage. The book is said to be “preserved and translated” (*hu yi* 護譯) by a Japanese man from Yokohama named Yoshida Ryōtarō 吉田良太郎, a name that appears on no other published work. Based on these attributions, it appears that “Gong” recorded these events in some language other than Chinese and that Yoshida then translated it into Chinese and published it. The dialogue recorded here was said to be constructed based on Lian Fang’s 聯芳 recollection of these events. Gong, Host of the Tower of Eight Songs (Bayonglou zhuren Gong 八詠樓主人恭) and Yoshida Ryōtarō 吉田良太郎, *Xixun huiluan shimo ji* 西巡回鑾始末記 [Record of the Imperial Tour to the West and its Return to the Capital], vol. 4 (s.l.: s.n., 1906), 26–29. Lian Fang was a Qing official who worked with Li Hongzhang in managing relations between the Qing and Russia and spoke, read, and wrote French fluently and held numerous positions in the Qing foreign policy bureaucracy. Though the book does not state that Lian was present at the negotiations, he almost certainly was given his linguistic proficiency, his position in the Qing bureaucracy, and his ability to relay these events to the author of this book. A close examination of contemporaneous diplomatic exchanges shows that at least some of the negotiations took place in French. William W. Rockhill, *Report of William W. Rockhill, Late Commissioner to China, with Accompanying Documents*, Passim. It is possible that the dialogue was reconstructed based on a French-language transcript, but it seems more likely that both “authors” of *Record of the Imperial Tour* are pseudonyms of a high-ranking official (or officials) in the Qing government. The dialogue as recorded in the book is a verbatim copy of the record of the transcript contained in the archives of Academia Sinica in Taiwan, and which was delivered to the Zongli Yamen after the negotiations. “Zhaolu peikuan wenda jielue” 照錄賠款問答節略 [Abbreviated Transcript of Indemnity Negotiations], April 19, 1901, 02-07-009-01-003, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica] (Taipei, Republic of China).

Xu: “How long do you intend for payments to last?”

Pichon: “Let us not worry about that now and just focus on an amount. I’ve heard that salt taxes make up a large part of the Chinese government’s revenue. If collection of that tax is changed, you could probably increase revenue, no?”

Xu: “It is very difficult to change the way in which salt taxes are collected.”

Pichon: “How much does the government collect each year from salt taxes?”

Xu: “The salt tax brings in about 13 million taels, but those from Yichang 宜昌, E’an 鄂岸, Wan’an 皖岸 [all in Hubei] are already used to service foreign debts and only about 1.8 million are not already used for that purpose. There is also Changlu 長蘆 [near Tianjin], which brings in about 500,000 taels, but since last year’s rebellion it has been under the control of foreign forces who sell salt as they wish and I’ve heard that it now brings in about two million taels. In the next three years, if Changlu does not return to our control, we will not be able to collect taxes from it. Taken together, salt taxes and levies bring in about ten million taels.”

Pichon: “Then all of this can provide for ten million taels in compensation.”

Xu: “That will not work. Many of our kingdom’s expenditures are paid for by salt taxes and levies. We can only provide four million for the purposes of compensation.”

Pichon: “I’ve heard that if you change the means by which you collect revenue from the transport of grain that another seven million taels could be found.”

Xu: “You mean changing from collecting taxes in kind to collecting them in cash. This could not possibly produce seven million taels.”

Pichon: “How much rice does the government transport per year?”

Xu: “Roughly 1.2 or 1.3 million *dan* 石.”<sup>40</sup>

Pichon: “What is the price of rice in the South? What is the price of transport?”

Xu: “One *dan* of rice is four taels and transport is two taels. If changes are made to transport, it would produce no more than two million taels. When merchants transport rice northward, they need to make some profit and cannot simply use southern prices.”

Pichon: “How much rice is transported on internal canal networks? What is the price of transport?”

Xu: “In recent years no more than 100,000 *dan* has been transported and the transportation cost is relatively low.”

Satow: “The Chinese method for transporting rice is inadequate and results in much rice spoiling before it reaches the capital. The cost of transport is only one tael per *dan*. If foreign vessels are

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<sup>40</sup> *Dan* is a dry measure of volume equal to the area of field required to produce one *dan* of unhusked rice. Roger Thompson estimates that in Xunwu 尋烏, a county in Jiangxi Province, this would have been equivalent to 133 pounds (60.33 kilograms). Mao Zedong, *Report from Xunwu*, trans. Roger R Thompson (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 224–25.



used, transport fees need not be high, rice need not spoil, and revenue can be found for compensation.”

Xu: “If the method of grain transport is changed and payment only allowed in cash. If transport is only allowed from Shanghai to Tianjin on foreign vessels then it will be necessary to establish revenue collection in Shanghai and Tianjin and require any [domestic vessels] to have a license to transport to the capital then how will revenue be generated to compensate you?”

Satow: “If all collection is changed from in kind to in cash, how much would that produce?”

Xu: “I’ve calculated this in the past and it would be no more than two million taels and it would be difficult to make this change...The spoilage of rice isn’t just because of the method of transport. If taxes were collected in cash rather than in kind, the people would suffer considerable losses and be deeply angry. Such a policy is not in accordance with benevolent governance.”

Satow: “How much revenue is earned from collecting levies on goods entering and leaving the capital?”

Xu: “The Chongwen Gate (*Chongwen men* 崇文門) only collects taxes on goods entering the city. Goods leaving the city are not taxed and each year revenue is about 700,000 taels, not much. If internal taxes and levies are to be turned over to the Chinese Customs Maritime Service then I would ask that Chongwen Gate be left under the jurisdiction of our government to allow us to preserve some face. This small amount of revenue should not be included in your request for compensation.”

Satow: “If only customs duties are counted, [your government] earns about six million taels per year.”

Xu: “It would be most generous if you would allow us to increase the duty on foreign imports.”

Pichon: “When the personnel of the School of Foreign Languages (*Tongwen guan* 同文館) of the Zongli Yamen go abroad, their expenses come from customs revenue. Perhaps their expenses should be paid from other sources.”

Xu: “There are no other sources of revenue and removal of those funds would require an abolition of our [overseas ministries].”

Pichon: “Quite so. It is not the desire of any countries here to see reparations result in a reduction in the number of diplomatic personnel. Let us not consider this further. Now that the Boxer Rebellion is over, if your government decreases military expenditures, it can save three million taels per year.”

Xu: “It will be difficult to decrease military expenditure and while it can be done, it will not be sufficient to cover the cost of paying compensation and a significant deficit will remain.”

Pichon: “How much is spent on the kingdom’s army and navy each year?”

Xu: “While there are savings to be had from both army and navy expenditures, it is difficult to calculate and, in the event, is irrelevant. It would be best if you do not give an overall amount, but tell me how much you wish to receive per year. Other than salt taxes, internal levies on goods, and customs, whatever the rest is, our kingdom will find a way to pay it.”

Pichon: "How much can you pay per year?"

Xu: "At most 15 million taels."

Pichon then consulted with the other ministers and said: "If that is the case then it will take 60 years for China to repay its debts and that is too long. It would be best if the repayment was done in 30 years."

Xu: "It is not possible for us to pay 30 million taels per year."

Pichon: "If the import tariff is raised by 10%, how much would you be able to pay?"

Xu: "About 10 million extra taels."

Pichon: "If that's the case then it wouldn't be difficult to pay 30 million per year."

Xu: "Though revenue from tariffs could bring in 10 million extra taels, the flow of goods is irregular. If we assume a large amount of trade and it fails to materialize we could come up short [or vice versa]."

Pichon: "What about a head tax [on the population]? Collect 50 silver cents from each person and you can raise 20 million taels."

Xu: "There is already a head tax that is paid in kind and assessed based on land ownership. If we collect another tax, it is simply collecting the same tax twice."

Satow: "You could raise the land tax."

Xu: "The quality of land in the provinces varies considerably and there are many places with unproductive land and cannot produce additional revenue sources. Collecting higher taxes on such areas would add to the burdens of already poor people and make it difficult for them to achieve basic subsistence."

Satow: "What about a real estate tax?"

Xu: "Real estate taxes were levied in the past but were abandoned because once collection began, merchants were unable to make ends meet and eventually went out of business and the people, unable to buy or sell goods, loudly protested against this injustice. Without any other choice, [local officials] ceased collecting the tax."

Satow: "I've heard that Chinese consume three times more Chinese medicine than Western medicine. If a levy of 16 taels is collected, it would be possible to raise more than 10 million taels."

Xu: "The production of Chinese medicine is spread throughout the interior and it is difficult to centralize the collection of such a tax. And if such a tax were too high, smuggling would increase and we would be unable to collect revenue."

Satow: "What about a stamp tax?"

Xu: "This tax is collected, but only at ports because merchants have to pay the tax in order to move their goods. However, there is no tradition of this in the interior where stamps are not required [for daily business]. If tax collectors were dispatched to areas of the interior to collect

taxes, [it would be seen as] extortion and harassment and would probably not produce much revenue for the kingdom's treasury."

Pichon: "Then how will you pay the yearly amount? Will you borrow?"

Xu: "It will be difficult to borrow. I think the term [of repayment to the foreign powers] should be extended so that we can collect taxes in a more subtle and clever way. We will not borrow the money we need from just one or two countries."

Pichon: "Could lengthening the terms of repayment be considered a loan for the countries willing to do that?"

Xu: "I am not saying that. I think that those countries not in need of the funds from compensation should not consider it a loan. The countries with the largest claims for money from our kingdom are all prosperous countries and do not need the money immediately. Allowing for a longer term of repayment will allow us to collect funds in a more subtle and clever way and thereby repay our debts."

Pichon: "You're willing to repay but not take out a loan?"

Xu: "We are willing to repay but not to take out loans and do so in the hope that your countries will show a spirit of friendship toward our kingdom and not demand that we take out loans from just one or two countries [and thereby increase our burden and decrease the possibility that we can extend the term of repayment.]"

Xu was actually named in the treaty that ended the conflict, the Boxer Protocol (signed on September 7, 1901) and was formally named yet again as Director of the Imperial Stud (*taipusi* 太僕寺).<sup>41</sup> Why this should be the case is not clear, though it is possible that the foreign powers wanted to ensure that men they perceived as relatively friendly to the West were inserted in positions throughout government. Xu did not hold that position for long and he was soon appointed to the newly-established Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*waiwu bu* 外務部) as one of two deputy ministers (*zuoshilang* 左侍郎).

## Illness and Death (1901)

Unfortunately his frenetic pace of work took a toll on him and he became ill not long after, passing away on October 30, 1901 at the age of 51 after a brief illness.<sup>42</sup> He was laid to rest in Pinggu County where his tombstone carried an inscription of the last position he held: Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (*waiwu bu zuoshilang* 外務部左侍郎).

## Conclusion

Xu Shoupeng served as a diplomat at a critical juncture in China's diplomatic history. He was born just as China prepared to wage a series of domestic and international wars that would reduce it from one of the most powerful kingdoms on the planet to what Chinese intellectuals would later call a "semi-colony." Though Xu was far from the Qing Dynasty's most accomplished diplomat, he was among the countless

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<sup>41</sup> Xu's date of death can be found in Charles I. Bevans, ed., *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 329.

<sup>42</sup> United States Department of State and United States National Archives, eds., "Dispatch 806: Letter from E.H. Conger to Honorable John Hay, Peking, China, November 4, 1901," in *Dispatches from U.S. Ministers to China, 1843-1906*, Reel 115 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1958), 274.

middle- and high-ranking bureaucrats who sought to conduct China's international relations in a world in which China was not the center of the international system, but at its periphery, with all of the disadvantages that entailed. Xu's work in the United States and Peru put him at the forefront of the Qing Dynasty's diplomatic relations in the Americas, specifically the treatment of Chinese subjects (or citizens) in those countries. Xu and those around him had to adapt quickly to a situation in which the Chinese government sought to project some manner of influence into areas far from its traditional spheres of influence.

Xu's career in the United States and Peru should not be judged on whether he accomplished the missions set out for him: the power asymmetry between China and the Western powers was too great for him to have any chance of achieving China's aims, modest as they were. However, Xu and others like him sought to understand and adapt to the changed international environment and work the international system to China's minimum disadvantage.

Xu's most unambiguous successes came in his relations with Japan and Korea, two countries which were formerly considered vassal states to China. Xu, unlike more conservative voices in the Qing bureaucracy, had no qualms about establishing state-to-state relations with either country and, in so doing, won himself friends not just in those two countries, but also in Western capitals, which explains his presence at the Boxer Protocol negotiations. His discussion with those powers, reproduced above, shows a man who understood that avoiding any kind of punishment was impossible. Rather, as he did in the United States, he sought to work with the international powers to minimize the damage done to China in the wake of what by 1901 was a half century of calamitous internal and international wars.

For a man who did not attain either a *juren* or *jinshi* degree, Xu rose remarkably high in the Qing foreign policy bureaucracy. His formal appointment as ambassador to Korea, his role as what appears to be head negotiator with the Western powers after the Boxer Rebellion, and his final appointment as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs are testament to his considerable skill in navigating China's complex and deeply asymmetric international relationships. His promotion was also part of a broader trend in the later period of the Qing Dynasty, a move toward promotions based less on purely academic attainment and more on practical experience. Had he survived past 1901, he would likely have been an important figure in the reforms that the Qing Dynasty undertook in its last decade and would have continued to serve as an important intermediary between the Western powers and China.

## Appendix

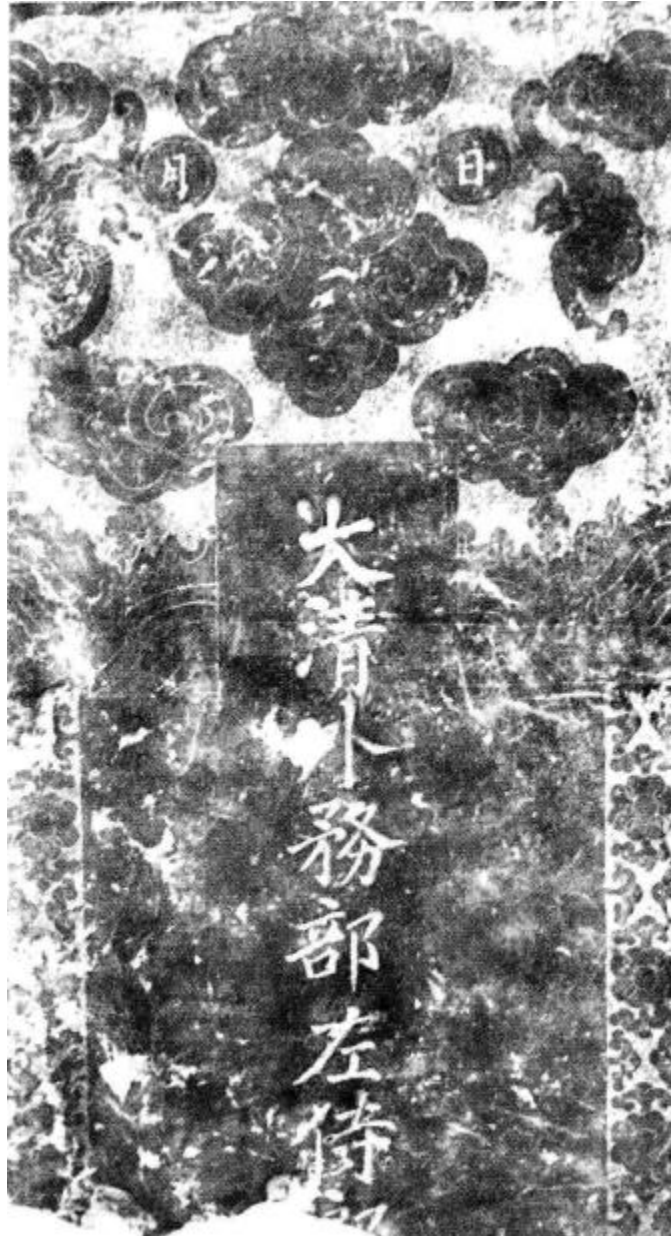
Picture 1: Xu Shoupeng's Tombstone<sup>43</sup>



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<sup>43</sup> Beijing shi Pinggu qu wenhua weiyuanhui 北京市平谷區文化委員會 [Beijing City, Pinggu District Cultural Committee], ed., *Pinggu shike* 平谷石刻 [Stone Carvings from Pinggu] (Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe, 2010), 160.

Picture 2: Imprint of Xu Shoupeng's Tombstone<sup>44</sup>



<sup>44</sup> Beijing shi Pinggu qu wenhua weiyuanhui 北京市平谷區文化委員會 [Beijing City, Pinggu District Cultural Committee], 160.



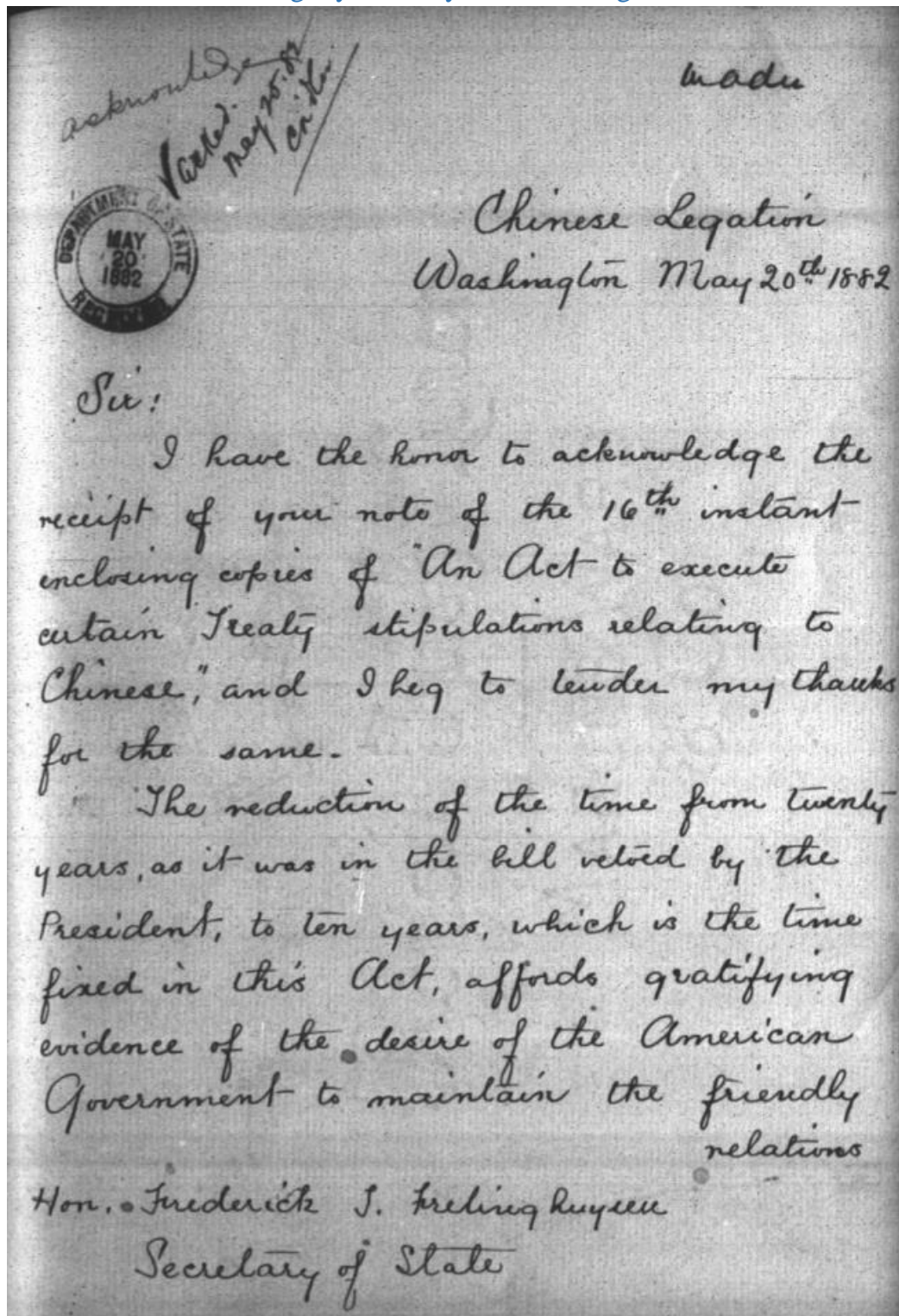
Picture 3: Liu Pai-chang as Xu Shoupeng<sup>45</sup>



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<sup>45</sup> "Sai Jinhua shangyan 賽金花上演 [Sai Jinhua Opens]," *Zhonghua 中華* [China], 1936.

Picture 4.1: Xu Shoupeng's Letter to United States Secretary of State Frederick J. Frelinghuysen, May 20, 1882, Page 1.<sup>46</sup>



Picture 4.2: Xu Shoupeng's Letter to United States Secretary of State Frederick J. Frelinghuysen, May 20, 1882, Page 2

relations existing between China and the United States. But, Mr Secretary, permit me to say, most respectfully, that in my opinion the time fixed, namely, ten years, is still too long, and that the section of the Act requiring Chinese residents returning to China to procure certificates from the Collector of Customs, will result in great hardships.

It is provided in Article IV of the Treaty of 1850 between China and the United States that "if the measures as enacted are found to work hardship upon the subjects of China, the Chinese Minister

<sup>46</sup> "Hsu Shau Pang to Hon. Frederick J. Frelinghuysen (May 20, 1882)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, vol. 1, 6 vols. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).



Picture 4.3: Xu Shoupeng's Letter to United States Secretary of State Frederick J. Frelinghuysen, May 20, 1882, Page 3

Minister at Washington may bring the matter to the notice of the Secretary of State, who will consider the subject with him "rc - I have reason to believe that on his return from Spain the Chinese Minister will, in consonance with this clause of the Treaty, ask for a further consideration of the subject.

Accept, Sir, the reiterated assurance of my highest consideration.

徐壽朋

(Lsu Shau Pang)  
Chargé d'affaires.

Picture 5: Chinese Consular Passport (Front, Chinese)<sup>47</sup>

大清駐劄美國金山總領事黃 為給發護照事

現據華民 稟稱由美國出港請為給發護照  
為往來自便之據為此給照護行即煩 各貴國關  
津人等驗照放行並請照例妥為保護是所至盼

右給華民 收執

領此護照應前往美國稅關驗明加用印押持照再來應將照繳  
納經稅關查驗放行若有偽改執照頂替名字等弊一經查出照  
美國例罰銀壹千元以下不完罰款監禁五年以下各宜凜遵

光緒八年

日自金山總領事署給

金字第 號護照 出港前往

姓名 籍貫 年歲

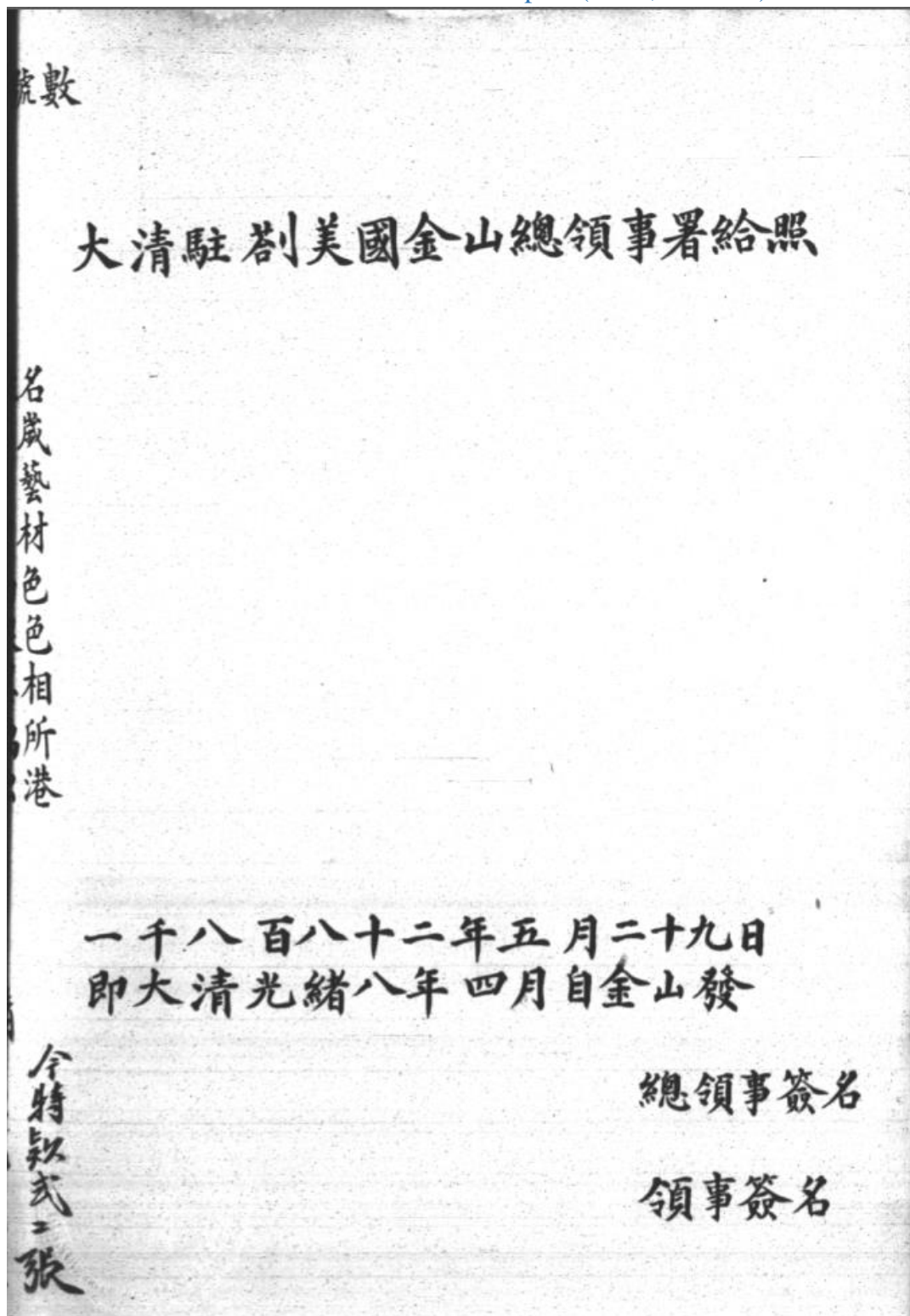
業藝 身材 面貌

異相 寓居地方

CHINESE CONSULATE

<sup>47</sup> "Hsu Shau Pang to Hon. Frederick J. Frelinghuysen (June 21, 1882)," in *Notes From the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906*, vol. 1, 6 vols. (Washington: National Archives, 1947).


Picture 6: Chinese Consular Passport (Back, Chinese)<sup>48</sup>



<sup>48</sup> "Hsu Shau Pang to Hon. Frederick J. Frelinghuysen (June 21, 1882)."



Picture 7: Chinese Consular Passport (English)<sup>49</sup>

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">No.</div>	
<h1>Chinese Consular Passport.</h1>	
<i>Consulate of the Imperial Government of China.</i>	
<b>TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME, GREETING :</b>	
<i>Name</i> _____ <i>Age</i> _____ <i>Occupation</i> _____ <i>Last place of Residence</i> _____ <i>Height</i> _____ <i>Complexion</i> _____ <i>Color of Eyes</i> _____ <i>Marks or Peculiarities</i> _____  <i>Remarks:</i> _____	<p><i>We, the undersigned, Consul General and</i> <i>Consul of the Imperial Government of China</i> <i>for the United States of America, at</i> <i>San Francisco, California, hereby request all whom</i> <i>may concern, to permit safely and freely to pass</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p><i>a subject of the Emperor of China, and, in case of</i> <i>need, to give him all lawful aid and protection.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Consul General</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Fred. A. Rue</i> <i>Consul</i></p>
<p><i>Given under our hands and the seal of this Consulate,</i> <i>San Francisco, this</i> _____ <i>day of</i> _____ <i>188</i> _____ <i>in the</i> _____ <i>year of the Emperor Kwong Su</i></p>	

<sup>49</sup> "Hsu Shau Pang to Hon. Frederick J. Frelinghuysen (June 21, 1882)."

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