ABSTRACT

The final chapter of this study assesses the contributions of Li Hong Zhang in the self-strengthening movement. This movement played a tremendous influence on the intellectual development of the society of the first to realize the importance of modernisation, paving the way for future generations to continue to grow and strengthen China.

The self-strengthening movement (自强运动) was the initial stage of modernisation in China. In this thirty-five-year movement (1860 – 1895), Li Hong Zhang (李鸿章) played a most crucial role. To evaluate the movement, the contributions of Li Hong Zhang and his thoughts on "foreign matters" require serious consideration.

In the seven chapters of this academic exercise, the first three chapters provide the aim and scope of the study, survey the life and career of Li Hong Zhang and examine the time and environment under which Li Hong Zhang lived. The following three chapters discuss the thoughts of Li Hong Zhang on "foreign matters": military and defence, diplomatic policy and commercial affairs. Owing to his inadequate knowledge, lack of favourably political environment and personal integrity, he was unable to modernise China thoroughly. Furthermore, his inability in diplomacy led to an increased exploitation of China by the imperialist powers.
The final chapter of this study assesses the contributions of Li Hong Zhang in the self-strengthening movement. The movement, although a failure, exerted tremendous influence on the intellectuals of the day. Li Hong Zhang, one of the first to realise the importance of China's modernisation, was the guiding light of future generations in their continual attempt to save and strengthen China.

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