

**THE GRAND COUNCIL IN THE T'UNG-CHIH AND  
KUANG-HSÜ PERIODS (1860-1900):**

**A Preliminary Study**

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**PREFATORY NOTE**

My interest in the Grand Council grew out of my study of China's modernization efforts in the nineteenth century, for anyone familiar with the divergent courses of China's and Japan's efforts to strengthen themselves cannot help but be struck by the latter's central direction from the highest decision-making bodies, and the corresponding lack thereof in China. The question naturally arises, why was the Grand Council, by then the most powerful decision-advisory if not decision-making body, so negligible a factor in China's self-strengthening movement? To understand the Grand Council of that time, however, requires familiarity with the origin, development and operation of the institution. Hence my inquiry into the earlier structure and function of the Grand Council.

In the spring of 1966 I was in Taiwan on research, when I learned by chance of Dr. Fu Tsung-mao's work on the Grand Council. I made contact with Dr. Fu, and became convinced of the importance of his study. This led me to offer my collaboration in editing and translating the essence of his work for publication in English, in the hopes of making it available to a larger audience. For the next several years we kept up a sporadic collaboration, interspersed among our respective other

duties, with the understanding that Dr. Fu would go ahead with publishing the original work in Chinese, which took place in late 1967.

Meanwhile I had also heard about the research of Dr. Wu Hsiu-liang (Silas Wu) furthering our understanding of the Ch'ing memorial system, which was related directly with the establishment of the Grand Council. The two of us eventually met, and I realized that the brilliant work Dr. Wu was doing illumined vast aspects of the enormously complicated Ch'ing political institutions. The publication of Dr. Wu's articles and book has put all of us working in Ch'ing history in his debt.

In additon, the work of Dr. Huang Pei on the Grand Council and his debates with Dr. Wu are known to many. Few may be aware, however, that independently at the University of Hong Kong Mr. Liu Yat-wing wrote a M. A. thesis on the Grand Council, which in clarity can serve as a worthy suppliment to the more erudite work of the senior scholars mentioned above.

In his 1971 article, Dr. Wu used a charming metaphore in his concluding paragraph, comparing scholars working on the Grand Council to a team of relay runners, passing the baton of knowledge on until the last runner crosses the tape. In the same spirit, I regard this modest piece as similar to the activity of a referee, certifying the results of Messrs. Fu, Wu, Huang and Liu without myself being in the race, but sharing with them a deep interest in the results of the joint endeavor.

I should also acknowledge the interest of Dr. K. C. Liu, who organized a panel at the 1970 annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, where an earlier version of this paper was delivered.

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The Grand Council, by the nineteenth century, had developed functionally into the most important of all the central governmental agencies.<sup>(1)</sup> It participated in the highest level of decision-making on all key issues, and served as the link between the throne on the one side, and the six boards in the capital and the governors and governor-generals in the provinces on the other. Towards the latter part of the century the Grand Council played an important, albeit little studied or understood, role in the events of the time. It was also thoroughly enmeshed in the court politics of the day, as Emperor Dowager Tz'u-hsi consolidated her power. From late 1861 to 1885, the Grand council was headed by Prince Kung, the last great Manchu prince-of-the-blood. Before Tz'u-hsi felt assured of her power, she had to rely heavily upon Prince Kung.

On the face of the situation, it would seem that the succession of short-lived and ineffectual emperors, the gradual rise in power of Tz'u-hsi and the active role of Prince Kung should all combine to make the Grand Council the ruling organ of the empire. To the extent that the dynasty had a real if brief period of recovery and consolidation following the great internal rebellions, this should also suggest that the Grand Council played a key role, on the central government level, in the various domestic and foreign politics of the time. But are these suppositions true? Can they be related to the changes in the procedures and operations of the Grand Council?

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(1) An early study in English of the Grand Council was Alfred Kuo-liang Ho, "The Grand Council in The Ch'ing Dynasty," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 2 (February 1952), pp. 167-182. Through the kindness of Dr. Robert B. Crawford of the University of Illinois, I have been able to consult Mr. Ho's original manuscript, which contains some additional materials to his published article. The major study in Chinese is Fu Tsung-mao, *Ch'ing-tai Chün-chi Ch'u Tsu-chih Chi Chih-chang chih Yen-chiu* (A Study of the Structure and Function of the Grand Council of Ch'ing Times), Taipei, 1967. (hereafter referred to as CCCYC).

The Grand Council was established by the Yung-cheng Emperor in 1730.<sup>(2)</sup> The three original Grand Councillors, Prince I, Chiang T'ing-hsi, and Chang T'ing-yü were all Yung-cheng's most trusted intimates. Chang T'ing-yü is especially important, for he personified Yung-cheng's penchant for reliance upon a few specific persons for a variety of purposes. Son of Chang Ying, the powerful and trusted intimate of the K'ang-hsi emperor, Chang T'ing-yü was simultaneously an Inner Grand Secretary,

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(2) The exact founding year of the Grand Council has been a knotty and fascinating problem. Earlier western-language works generally hedged by saying "about 1730." (Brunnert, H. S. and V. V. Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, Shanghai, 1912, p. 41) Alfred Ho in his 1952 article stated 1729 as the year (p. 171). There the matter rested until the intensive efforts of several scholars working on the Grand Council have finally aired every facet of this particular technical controversy. Tu Lien-che started it off in 1963 by calling attention to the Veritable Records (*Shih-lu*) statement of 1729 that the forerunner of this organization was set up secretly in 1727, but Tu also said that the name did not become official until 1732. (Lienche Tu Fang, "Kuan-yü Chün-chi Ch'u ti Chien-chih" "On the Establishment of the Chun-chi Ch'u", Australian National University, Centre of Oriental Studies, Occasional Papers, No. 2. Canberra, 1963.) Fu Tsung-mao independently arrived at this same conclusion, but placed greater importance on the earlier date. (Fu, *CCCYC*, pp. 118-126). Huang Pei in his review of the Fu book pointed out that Fu tended to stress the military campaign against the Eleuths over against larger political considerations in discussing the origins of the Grand Council. (Pei Huang, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 30, 1970, p. 251). Wu Hsiu-liang in his book *Communication and Imperial Control in China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970) emphasized the personal circumstances of the original Grand Councillors being all Inner Grand Secretaries, thus linking Yung-cheng's earlier dependence upon them in one capacity with his later continuing dependence upon them in another capacity. Wu preferred the year of 1731 in his book, but has since modified it in his article "Ch'ing-tai Chün-chi Ch'u Chien-chih ti Chai Chien-t'ao". ("A Reappraisal of the Establishment of the Grand Council under the Ch'ing", *Ku-kung Wen-hsien Chi-k'an*, vol. 2, no. 4, Oct. 1971, pp. 21-45). In this article he argued exhaustively and convincingly that the bulk of the evidence in contemporary and original sources indicate 1730 to be the founding year. He stressed the functional beginning of the organization as distinct from mere terminological usage. The entire controversy is an outstanding example of scholars building upon each other's expertise, and displays scholarly virtuosity of a high order. See also pp. 136-161, 305-306 in Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1974.

Vice-president of the Board of Revenue, and later, Grand Councillor. Serving three imperial masters, Ch'ien-lung as well as K'ang-hsi and Yung-cheng, over a span of years, Chang T'ing-yü can justifiably be called "Father of the Grand Council."<sup>(3)</sup>

This important organ, because of its name *Chün-chi Ch'u*, (office of Military Strategy), had long been regarded by scholars as having evolved primarily out of the military necessity of waging war against the Eleuth Mongols in the late 1720's. Recent scholarship, however, has shown rather conclusively that, while planning for the Eleuth campaign was indeed one of the original assignments of the three men who became "charter members" of the Grand Council, the organ really came into being as a result of a number of larger factors. First, there was the obvious need of every monarch, of every dynasty, to have an efficient and convenient instrument to assist him in his personal rule of a vast empire. The need for efficiency dictated that this body be small, and convenience (from the monarch's point of view) meant that the members of this body would meet with him regularly and be at his constant beck and call.<sup>(4)</sup> In this sense the origins of the Grand Council has been compared as far back as the Inner Court (Nei-ch'ao) of Han Wu-ti's time.<sup>(5)</sup> Secondly, personalized rule requires a special secretarial and record-keeping staff attached directly to the emperor. The Grand

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(3) My phrase. See also Yat-wing Liu's unpublished M.A. thesis, *The Ch'ing Grand Council: A Study of Its Origins and Organization (1644-1911)*, University of Hong Kong, 1966. For Chang's biography, see Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (hereafter *ECCP*), Washington, D.C., 1944, pp. 54-56, and *Ch'ing-shih Lieh-chuan* (Biographies of Ch'ing History) (hereafter *CSLC*), reprinted in Taipei, 1962, *chüan* 14, pp. 21b-36b.

(4) Suggested by Huang Pei in his review of Fu Tsung-mao's book in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 30 (1970), p. 253.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 251.

Secretariat of Ming times evolved as much for this purpose as for the first, and followed a course of development which was later closely paralleled by the Grand Council in Ch'ing times.<sup>(6)</sup> Finally, because of the tribal legacy of the Manchus, where the emperor originally had been only *primus inter pares*, the early Ch'ing emperors did not have the absolute dictatorial authority of the Ming emperors, vis-a-vis his imperial kinsmen. This problem was particularly acute in Yung-cheng's case, for he had to assert himself against the rival factions of some of his brothers. The Grand Council, which evolved out of his reliance upon his one trusted brother and two absolutely loyal Chinese ministers, was Yung-cheng's means of breaking the power of Manchu princes.<sup>(7)</sup> By Yung-cheng's specific prohibition, no Manchu prince was allowed to serve in the Grand Council.

For 130 years prior to the advent into power of Tz'u-hsi and Prince Kung in 1861, the Council remained remarkably constant in structure and function. It consisted of Grand Councillors and Grand Council Secretaries. The number of the Councillors never exceeded ten at any given time, usually around five or six persons, while the secretaries numbered ten originally and increased to thirty-two in 1799.<sup>(8)</sup> Unlike all the other governmental agencies, there were no other subordinates in the Grand Council, and eunuchs and servants were expressly prohibited from being present at Grand Council deliberations.<sup>(9)</sup> All this was to make the Grand Council a small working instrument, but it also served to preserve and enhance the secret nature of its operations. The security

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(6) *Ibid.*, pp. 251-252.

(7) Wu, *Communication and Imperial Control in China*, p. 84.

(8) Fu, CCCYC, p. 147; Ho, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

(9) Fu, CCCYC, pp. 234-235, 281.

measures included keeping no records of the process of deliberations at Grand Council sessions.<sup>(10)</sup> The Grand Councillors met with the emperor daily, even accompanying him when he should be away from the capital. Each day, after the Grand Councillors had perused the memorials which required some decision, they met with the emperor. The Councillors drafted appropriate edicts in reply to the memorials. These were then conveyed to the emperor, and if approved, sent back to the Grand Council for dispatching to the appropriate agencies or territorial officials. While very important matters, especially those requiring concurrent or supporting opinions from other governmental agencies, were carried over for some time, the aim was to handle each day's business that very same day, and the greater portion of the business was so handled.<sup>(11)</sup>

Because of the very nature of the Grand Council, all the Grand Councillors, with rare exceptions such as Ho-shen,<sup>(12)</sup> were the most experienced and able officials of the realm. The Grand Councillorship was not a substantive appointment; all appointees continued to serve in other top governmental positions concurrently. The interlocking

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(10) I have examined all seven crates of Grand Council documents for the Kuang-hsü period (1875-1908) presently kept in the National Palace Museum archives outside Taipei. The documents are mostly memorials and copies of memorials kept by the Grand Council. Dr. Fu, who has used extensively the Grand Council documents for the other reign periods as well, testifies to this being true of all the Grand Council documents. See Fu, *CCCYC*, p. 144, and his article, "Kukung Po-wu Yüan Hsien-ts'un Chün-chi Tang Chien-chieh" (A Brief Introduction to the Grand Council Documents Presently Kept at the Palace Museum), *Kuo-li Cheng-Chih Ta-hsiieh Hsiieh-pao*, No. 4 (December 1961).

(11) Fu, *CCCYC*, pp. 239-242. See also Ho, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

(12) For the notorious Ho-shen case, see *CSLC, chüan* 35, pp. 1a-9a; and Hummel, *ECCP*, pp. 288-290. See also David S. Nivison, "Ho-shen and His Accusers: Ideology and Political Behavior in the Eighteenth Century," in *Confucianism in Action*, ed. by Davis S. Nivison and Arthur F. Wright, Stanford, 1959, pp. 209-243, and Harold L. Kahn, *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes*, Cambridge, Mass., 1971, pp. 252-259.

nature of the Grand Council with other vital agencies can be easily demonstrated. By means of the Council, the emperor gathered a handful of the most trusted top officials into regular and frequent consultation with himself. At the same time he made use of them to control the key administrative agencies, both at the capital and in the provinces. The nature of Grand Council operations also imposed two criteria upon those appointed to serve. The long hours each day, made even more arduous by the fact that Councillors had to remain kneeling in the imperial presence, required that they be physically robust men.<sup>(13)</sup> The stress on dispatch and secrecy precluded the possibility of Grand Councillors knowing the nature of the day's business beforehand. Thus Grand Councillors not only had to have wide experience, but also to possess exceptional memory to discharge their duties.<sup>(14)</sup> While many Councillors served in age well into their sixties and seventies, their physical and mental vigor had to remain unimpaired. Not a few of the Grand Councillors were discharged on grounds of health, and these cases had more the ring of truth in them than the usual reasons of ill health given by retiring officials.

The Grand Council also reflected in a microcosmic way the general Ch'ing policy of balancing Manchu and Chinese officials in the central government. The successive emperors deliberately kept a balance among the two ethnic groups when making appointments to the Grand Council. The head Grand Councillor would nearly always be the senior Manchu member, but often he would have more Chinese associates than Manchus. If we use appointments to the Grand Council as an indicator of ethnic

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(13) Fu, *CCCYC*, pp. 221-222, 252-253.

(14) Fu, *CCCYC*, p. 223.



balance, during the reigns of Yung-cheng and Ch'ien-lung (1723-1795) the Manchu-Chinese ratio was 27 Manchus to 17 Chinese. Under Chia-ch'ing (1796-1820) the ratio was 9 to 9, under Tao-kuang (1821-50), 5 to 8; and under Hsien-feng (1851-61), 8 to 7.<sup>(15)</sup> While mere numbers do not always indicate the relative strength of the two ethnic groups, its very "collegiate" nature, the fact that all deliberations were collectively done and the advice to the emperor submitted in the name of the entire group, thus binding the groups in mutual credit or blame, suggest that the Chinese members were full functional partners of their Manchu colleagues.<sup>(16)</sup>

Since the Grand Council was in a real sense an extension of the imperial will, it is somewhat surprising that traditionally Grand Councilors served continuously from one reign into the next. While emperors would normally reconstitute the Grand Council with their own appointees eventually, there was no regulation or custom that all Grand Councilors had to leave office with the accession of a new emperor. Until 1861, the one instance which came closest to it occurred under Chia-ch'ing in 1799, but that was entirely related to the celebrated case of Ho-shen, who was executed, and several of his Grand Council associates dismissed, immediately upon the death of the aged retired Ch'ien-lung emperor. Normally the Grand Council was meant to be an institution of continuity, on which any new emperor would tend to rely, at least during the transitional period before his own style of rule became manifest.<sup>(17)</sup>

Viewed strictly within the Chinese context, the Grand Council, as

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(15) Fu, *CCCYC*, p. 182, which also mentions nine Mongols. Ho gives slightly different figures, but combines the Mongols with the Manchus. Ho, *op. cit.*, pp. 175 and 180.

(16) Fu, *CCCYC*, pp. 235-238, 263-264.

(17) Fu, *CCCYC*, pp. 490-492.

has already been mentioned, was a logical extension of analagous political organs in previous dynasties which served the perennial needs of the emperor to rule the realm personally. This very need, however, leads us to view the Grand Council in another context, namely to place it alongside similar institutions in other monarchical states. In a limited sense the Grand Council is comparable to the privy councils of England, Japan and other countries.<sup>(18)</sup> Comparing the English privy council with the Chinese Grand Council, we see that the English privy councillors also held other substantive positions, that the privy council did most of the king's writings, was policy advisory in nature, and handled a wide variety of governmental business.<sup>(19)</sup> But the dissimilarities far outweigh the similarities. The English kings met with the council but rarely and on special occasions. The English privy council did much of its work in committees, heard from a large number of people at its sessions (ranging from foreign envoys to witnesses and petitioners), and operated very much like a stipulated executive organ of the state.<sup>(20)</sup> Moreover, the privy council had to operate at a time when the parliament steadily grew in power.<sup>(21)</sup> Thus while both the English privy council and the

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(18) The Japanese Privy Council, created in 1888, took its name directly from the English Privy Council, but differed substantially from the English model. It did, however, fulfill the similar function of giving counsel to the Emperor, and was legally responsible to him, and him alone. Frank O. Miller, *Minobe Tatsukichi: Interpreter of Constitutionalism in Japan*. Berkeley, California, 1965, pp. 109-110.

(19) Geoffrey R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, Cambridge, 1953, pp. 316-369; Almeric Fitzroy, *History of the Privy Council*, London, 1928, p. 69.

(20) Elton, *op. cit.*, pp. 316-369; Edward R. Turner, *The Privy Council of England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, 1603-1784*, Baltimore, 1927, vol. 1, p. 108; Fitzroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 79 and 99.

(21) David H. Willson, *Privy Councilors in the House of Commons, 1604-1629*, Minneapolis, 1940, pp. 3-21.

Chinese Grand Council had their *raison d'être* the extension of royal power, to which their own importance was closely tied, the Grand Council was more important than its English counter-part, because it worked intimately and regularly on a daily basis with the monarch.

This being the case, to what extent did the sharp "palace changes" at the start of the T'ung-chih and Kuang-hsü periods affect the procedure and operation of the Grand Council? How did the rise of Tz'u-hsi, a minor palace woman whose early acquaintance with affairs of state were minimal, change the situation?

On the personnel side, the Grand Council saw a near complete change of members at the start of a new reign. Within the space of two days in 1861 (November 2-3), four of the five members of the Grand Council were summarily dismissed and five new members appointed.<sup>(22)</sup> Not since 1799, as an aftermath of the Ho-shen case, when three of the five Grand Councillors were replaced in a single day, had there been such a wholesale shift of personnel. As is well known, the 1861 changeover was also politically motivated, with the crushing of the Su-shun faction by the joint effort of the two empress dowagers and Prince Kung. While there is no doubt that this swift and near-complete changeover of Grand Council personnel was intimately related to court politics, it represented also a procedural departure, coming as it did at the very beginning of a new reign. Twenty-four years later, in 1885, a complete change of Grand Council personnel did occur, but this time it took place well into the Kuang-hsü reign and during the time of the Sino-French

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(22) *Ta-Ch'ing Mu-tsung I Huang-ti Shih-lu* (Veritable Records of the T'ung-chih Emperor), reprinted in Taipei, 1964, *chüan* 5, pp. 28a-28b, and *chüan* 6, p. 4a; Fu, CCCYC, pp. 491-492.

War.<sup>(23)</sup> That occasion marked the height of Empress Dowager Tz'u-hsi's power.

A major procedure change was also linked to personnel, the appointment of Prince Kung to head the Grand Council. Hereafter the Council was to be headed by a prince-of-the-blood for all but two years of its remaining fifty years (Prince Kung from 1861 to 1885 and again from 1894-1898; Prince Li, 1885-94 and 1898-1901; and Prince Ch'ing, 1903-1911). In fact, for four years, from 1894 to 1898, the Grand Council had two princes, Kung and Li. The taboo of strictly forbidding princes to serve on the Grand Council actually had been broken by Prince Kung's first brief term in 1853. With the virtually continuous presence of princes in the Council from 1861 on, the original prohibition established by the Yung-cheng Emperor was completely abandoned.<sup>(24)</sup> This raises the question whether Yung-cheng's earlier fears, the specter of Manchu princely power undermining imperial prerogative, might be reasserting itself. The historical evidence, however, suggests no such danger to the throne. Quite on the contrary, it is the clearest indication that the princes as a group no longer represented a threat to the throne. Moreover, Prince Kung was the last of the powerful and able princes of the dynasty. After his abrupt dismissal in 1885, the other two princes were mediocrities and served as mere figureheads of the Council.<sup>(25)</sup> Even

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(23) *Ta-Ch'ing Teh-tsung Ching Huang-ti Shih-lu* (Veritable Records of the Kuang-hsü Emperor), reprinted in Taipei, 1964, *Chüan* 179, pp. 10a-12a. See also Lloyd E. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins: China's Search for a Policy during the Sino-French Controversy, 1880-1885*, Cambridge, Mass., 1967, p. 102.

(24) Fu, *CCCYC*, pp. 213-216.

(25) For brief notices of these two princes, see Hummel, *ECCP*, pp. 80 and 964-965. See also Eastman, *op. cit.*, p. 103. For a reconstructed account of the powerlessness of imperial princes at this time, see Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, Peking, 1964, pp. 8-11.

the old Prince Kung of 1894-1898 was not quite comparable to his young, vigorous self. After his earlier dismissal in 1885, the Grand Council itself lost much of its vigor and power.

In a functional sense, the Grand Council did achieve a temporary rise in power, certainly in the period of T'ung-chih and probably in the early years of Kuang-hsü as well. Here again the factor was personal rather than institutional; namely the relationship between Tz'u-hsi and Prince Kung. Until 1882 Tz'u-hsi had to share honors and prerogatives with the senior Empress Dowager Tz'u-an. She also had no administrative experience to begin with. Thus, she relied heavily on Prince Kung initially.<sup>(26)</sup> While no records clearly indicate the fact, we can assume at that time that the regular procedure of the reigning emperor meeting with the Grand Council was suspended. Tz'u-hsi did begin her "curtain rule" early in the T'ung-chih period, but her inexperience shifted the burden of actual decision-making onto the shoulders of Prince Kung. In a manner of speaking, we can view the latter at this time as the *de facto* monarch, ruling to a great extent at the Grand Council level rather than above it. But this situation did not last long. As early as 1865 Tz'u-hsi had Prince Kung's title of *I-cheng Wang* (Deliberative Prince) stripped away. It took another twenty years before the decisive break between the two occurred, but I believe that, increasingly from 1865 on, Tz'u-hsi took over the actual function of a reigning monarch. Thus the

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(26) Hummel, *ECCP*, p. 296. Prince Kung was designated as Deliberative Prince (*I-cheng Wang*).

Grand Council reverted back to its normal subservient role.<sup>(27)</sup>

One other way of assessing the question whether the Grand Council was substantially changed at this time would be to examine the Council personnel, especially the key individuals involved. From 1862 to 1885, the period of the Council's greatest importance during this period, sixteen persons served on the Grand Council for a total of 126 "man-years."\* But of these, five persons served 92 man-years, virtually three-quarters of the total. The element of personnel stability demonstrated by these five men was so marked that for nine consecutive years (1868 to 1876) they were the entire Grand Council, with no other persons joining or leaving the group. Add to the fact that two of these five, Prince Kung and Pao-yün, served consecutively for the entire twenty-four year period, we can clearly see the element of continuity.<sup>(28)</sup>

Aside from Prince Kung, who were the other four long-term Grand Councillors of the time? They were Pao-yün, Wen-hsiang, Li Hung-ts'ao, and Shen Kuei-feng. Pao-yün was a Manchu border white bannerman, who had previously risen to junior vice presidency of the Board of Revenue. Shortly after he was appointed a Grand Councilor (and con-

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(27) There have been different interpretations of the relationship between Tz'u-hsi and Prince Kung. Mary Wright, focusing on the rise of Prince Kung in the early 1860s, naturally tended to emphasize his importance. Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862-1874*, Stanford, 1957, pp. 15-18 and 70. Wu Hsiang-hsiang, on the other hand, tended to stress Tz'u-hsi's effective machinations against Prince Kung through the 1860's and 1870's. Wu Hsiang-hsiang, *Wan-Ch'ing Kung-i'ng Shih-chi* (A True Account of Palace Affairs in Late Ch'ing), Taipei, 1952, pp. 99-135. For the entire period from 1861 to 1885, Wu's views that the powers of Prince Kung were decidedly limited seem to me to be closer to the real situation.

\* "Man-year" defined as one man serving any given year, part of a year counting as one.

(28) This tabulation is drawn from the convenient tables in Fu, CCCYC, pp. 641-660. Lists of Grand Councillors can also be found elsewhere, such as in *Ch'ing-shih Kao* (Draft History of the Ch'ing), reprinted in Hong Kong, 1961, pp. 717-728.

currently a member of the Tsungli Yamen) in 1861, he was promoted to be the president of the Board of Revenue. For the next twenty-four years he served uninterruptedly on the Grand Council, while switching the substantive post of board presidency from Revenue to Civil Appointments in 1872. He finally was appointed to the Grand Secretariat in 1874.<sup>(29)</sup> Wen-hsiang, the able associate of Prince Kung, also came into his long term in 1861 as a senior vice president of the Board of Revenue. From then on until his death in 1876, he held the substantive posts of presidents of Board of Public Works (1862), of Board of Civil Appointments (1866), and then to the Grand Secretariat (1872). He was also active in the Tsungli Yamen.<sup>(30)</sup> Li Hung-ts'ao, a northern Chinese from Chihli Province, rose to prominence as a tutor of the T'ung-chih emperor. Li came into the Grand Council from a subchancellorship in the Grand Secretariat in 1865. He served a total of seventeen years as a Grand Councillor, all the way to 1885 with two short interruptions lasting three years. During these seventeen years, he was substantively junior vice president of the Board of Revenue, presidents of Board of Public Works, War and then Civil Appointments, while concurrently an associate Grand Secretary.<sup>(31)</sup> Shen Kuei-feng, a Chinese born in Manchuria, was appointed to the Grand Council in 1867 while a junior vice president of the Board of Rites. He became president of Board of War in 1870 and then concurrently an Associate Grand Secretary in 1875. Shen died in 1881.<sup>(32)</sup> Even a cursory glance at these four stalwarts

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(29) *CSLC, chüan* 52, pp. 29b-33b.

(30) *CSLC, chüan* 51, pp. 48b-53b; Hummel, *ECCP*, pp. 853-855. See also Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

(31) *CSLC, chüan* 57, 43a-48a; Hummel, *ECCP*, pp. 471-472.

(32) *CSLC, chüan* 52, pp. 13a-15b. See also Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

showed that they were all high Manchu bannermen or northern Chinese, that they came into the Grand Council at the board vice presidency level, and that they monopolized the key board presidencies during the Grand Councillorship. For most of their terms in the Grand Council, these four men held up to three of the six board presidencies simultaneously, and later two of the four Grand Secretaries. To the extent that these positions represented the highest substantive appointments in the central government, these men held about half of the top posts available.

To our earlier question whether the Grand Council was essentially changed in the late nineteenth century, the details of these four key Grand Councillors' careers, added to other evidence, strongly suggest that the answer had to be negative. The patterns of their origins, substantive positions, even longevity of service as Grand Councillors, were all entirely consistent with the patterns of their predecessors in the previous reigns.<sup>(33)</sup> While the appearance of Prince Kung and the wholesale change of Grand Council personnel were virtually unprecedented, the nature and function of the Council changed but little subsequently. Again, whatever change occurred was largely a result of the personal relationship between Tz'u-hsi and Prince Kung.

We must also mention the establishment of the Tsungli Yamen in 1861 in assessing the power of the Grand Council in the late nineteenth century. Elsewhere I have argued that the Tsungli Yamen's importance

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(33) As a partial comparison, we can take the Chia-ch'ing and Hsien-Feng periods. During the former, five men who served 77 man-years (out of a total of 137 man-years for all the Grand Councillors) held in any given year up to half of the Grand Secretary posts and two of six board presidencies. During the latter period, three men who served 30 out of a total of 64 man-years normally held one Grand Secretary post and two of the board presidencies.



is intrinsically limited by two factors, (a) the fact that it was regarded as an *ad hoc* agency by officialdom at large, and (b) that its primary concerns, being non-traditional, invariably received lower priority in the Court's eyes in normal times.<sup>(34)</sup> But even with these limitations, the Tsungli Yamen affected the importance of the Grand Council by siphoning off virtually all matters relating to foreign relations, and much of the efforts at modernization as well.<sup>(35)</sup>

In conclusion, let me say that the work of laboriously sifting through the Grand Council archives for the T'ung-chih and the Kuang-hsü periods (and for the earlier periods as well) remains yet to be done. Thanks to the devoted work of the Palace Museum archives staff, all the available Grand Council documents on Taiwan are now amenable to use by serious students of Ch'ing history. Thanks also to the important work of Fu Tsung-mao, Wu Hsiu-liang and others, we now know much more about the nature and function of the Grand Council and the memorial system. Hopefully the present paper has served to clarify the nature of the continuing inquiry, as they applied to the late nineteenth century, and to raise some questions for further study. Only by a thorough and careful study of the large corpus of original documents can definitive statements be made about the role played by the Grand Council in China's efforts at self-strengthening in the last half century of Ch'ing rule.

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(34) Samuel C. Chu, "On the Capacity of the Ch'ing Government to Effect Modernization during the Early Kuang-hsü Period," *Ch'ing-shih Wen-t'i*, vol. 1, no. 10 (February 1969), pp. 35-36, 38-40.

(35) Ssu-ming Meng, *The Tsungli Yamen: Its Organization and Functions*, Cambridge, Mass., 1962, pp. 61-72.