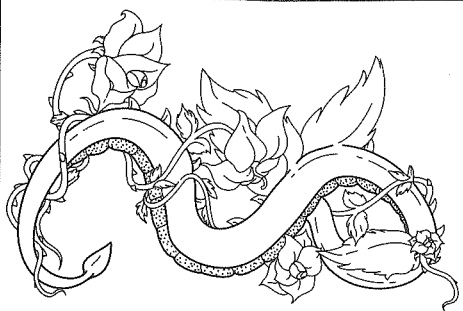




REVOLUTION and Its Past

Third Edition

Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History

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Chinese and Manchus



When the outsiders from the Northeast, the Manchus, took power in China in 1644 and established the Qing dynasty, it was not the first time that non-Chinese had donned imperial yellow court clothing. From China's earliest history there had been a continual *pas de deux* between Chinese within the Great Wall and those outside, the peoples of the steppe—Mongols, Turks, and Manchus. In certain periods the steppe dwellers pursued a more aggressive China policy, initiating raids and outright invasions. Seven centuries before the Manchu conquest, a more active pattern of outsider involvement had begun, with various ethnic groups from outside the Wall taking parts of North China; then in the late thirteenth century all of China fell into the hands of the great Mongol conquerors Genghis Khan and Kublai Khan. Although the Mongols controlled China under the Yuan dynasty for less than a century (until 1368), throughout the Han Chinese Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Mongols from the North and West sporadically continued to threaten the Chinese political order.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, two exceptionally able leaders emerged among the Manchu clans, groups that had a strong sense of descent from a mutual ancestor and were the main social units in Manchu society. Nurhaci (1559–1626) and his son Hong Taiji (1592–1643) put in place the organizational framework that led to the Manchu seizure of China. Most crucial early on was the establishment of the banner system.

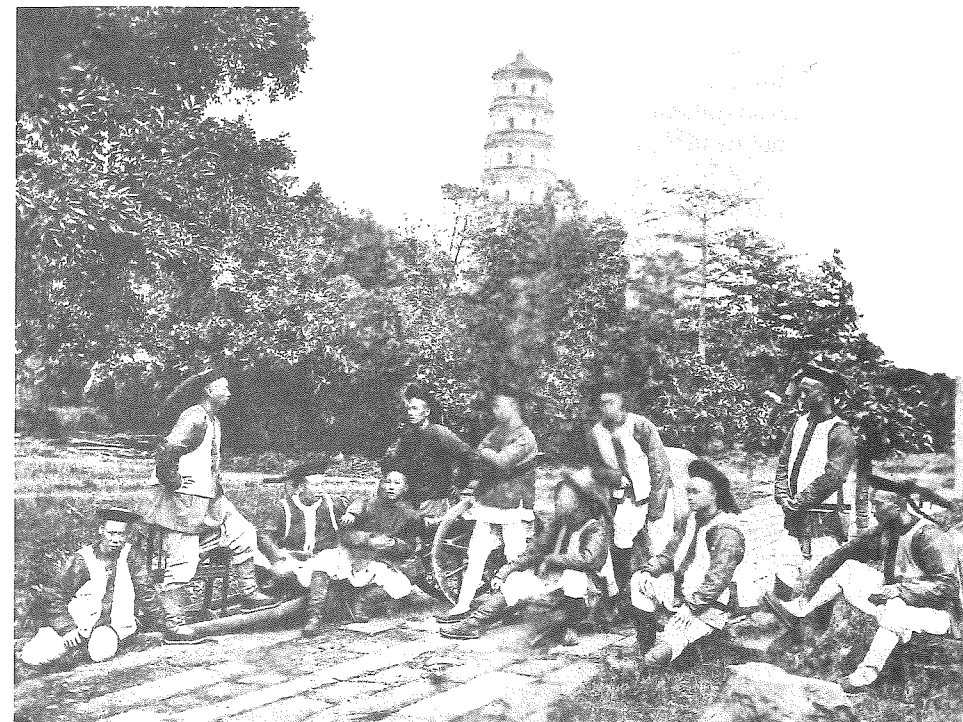
Specifically, these rulers assigned Manchu warriors to various “banners,” identified by particular colored flags that would serve as units for military and civilian bureaucratic mobilization. Over time the banner organization weakened the clans by funneling loyalty away from them and to Nurhaci and his son. As Mongols and even Chinese along the border defected to the Manchus, the Manchu leadership formed both Mongol and Chinese banners as well. By the early seventeenth century, the Manchus displayed clear dynastic pretensions by copying the broad structural outlines of the Ming governmental administration.

This growing and organized force from outside the Wall emerged at the same time as a Ming dynasty tailspin, with all the ills traditionally associated with a dying regime: governmental inertia and corruption, the exercise of arrogant power by imperial eunuchs (the keepers of the harem), the depletion of the national treasury, factionalism, and rebellion. When one of the rebels succeeded in taking the capital in the spring of 1644 and the last Ming emperor dramatically hanged himself on a hill immediately north of the Forbidden City, it seemed as though another Han Chinese dynasty would emerge. But then the Manchus drove into China through the pass between the Great Wall and the sea, sweeping before them the would-be emperor rebel and seizing the Dragon Throne for themselves. Ming resistance lasted for almost four more decades, but by 1683, the minority Manchus had become masters of the majority Han Chinese (who outnumbered them by about one hundred to one) and the realm’s various ethnic minorities.

PATTERNS IN THE EARLY QING

The Manchus had won the kingdom, as the cliché put it, “on horseback.” But it took much more to establish long-term successful rule: at the heart of doing so was the tricky and precarious balancing act of adopting sufficient aspects of Chinese cultural identity to be acceptable to the Chinese majority while maintaining enough distance to preserve their own cultural legacy. At the heart of a person’s identity are the cultural values that he or she lives by. The Manchus were clan-based peoples who stressed martial values based on skills of horsemanship and archery—a stark contrast to Chinese society, which stressed civilian values based on skills of the writing brush. The first Manchu leaders were “gripped with this anxiety [:] . . . that hereafter our sons and grandsons will forget the old regulations and do away with horseback riding and archery in order to copy Han customs.”¹ From the beginning, the fear of loss of native identity was strong. But if the fear was strong, so, too, was the knowledge that they could not rule China without the assistance of the Chinese.

The dynasty began (as it would end) with a minor king whose power was wielded by a regent. When the Shunzhi emperor took direct control at age 13 in 1651, he was surrounded by bitterly feuding factions of Manchu princes. Yet his short reign (he died of smallpox at age twenty-three) was notable for several reasons. Like his regent before him, he openly sought out the suggestions and thinking of Chinese advisors. He also cultivated an ongoing dialogue with the Jesuits, who had been at the court since the late Ming. He developed a deep friendship with the head of the Jesuit mission, Adam Schall von Bell, with whom the young emperor discussed science, philosophy, and religion. Reportedly on



A Buddhist pagoda in southern China provides the backdrop for a group of Manchu bannermen. Their military training emphasized archery and horsemanship.
Source: Wellcome Library, London

his deathbed, he was, however, tortured by the identity question: Had he listened too much to Chinese advisors and the Jesuits, thereby lessening his identity as a Manchu?

His most important contribution to the dynasty’s success was naming his third son to be his heir apparent. Though a minor when named (a situation that necessitated another regent—this one, quite power hungry), this emperor became probably the greatest of the dynasty and perhaps in all of imperial China, the Kangxi emperor (1661–1722). He too grappled with the dilemma of identity. He was a role model in holding to the old Manchu identity by preserving the martial vigor and skills that had made the conquest possible. He insisted that the military ethos be preserved symbolically through hunting expeditions he led north of the Wall throughout his reign, and he championed mounted archery, shooting game with guns, and the pleasures of vigorous exercise. He saw the hunt as “training for war, a test of discipline and organization.”² In his war mode, he masterminded the final military campaigns that ended the four-decade Ming resistance in 1683. He personally led military campaigns against Mongol forces in the mid-1690s. He commanded forces moving into Tibet in 1720 to install the Seventh Dalai Lama, whom the Kangxi emperor had sponsored.

But he also reached out to the Chinese, many of whom were embittered by Manchu brutality during the conquest. The Qing had offered triennial *jinshi* examinations

(the highest-level examinations) since 1646, with special examinations sometimes added; but some Chinese scholars boycotted the regular civil service exams. As gesture of his benevolence, the Kangxi emperor offered them a special examination in 1679 as an enticement to join the Manchu regime. At one point in his reign, in an edict, he declared that he saw no difference between Manchus and Chinese and their ability to serve the state.

He made it a point of showing his concern for the welfare of the people by visiting areas where flooding had occurred and where dikes were being repaired. He showed his benevolence for the people quite remarkably when, in 1712, he froze land tax assessments, the most important government levy. In many ways he seemed the quintessential “modern” politician. He took six grand tours to the southeast during his reign to show publicly his concern for the people and their problems and to display his prestige and power, in what one historian has called “a form of political theater that drew huge crowds and rendered the social order visible.”³ He took the lead in furthering the state’s “civilizing [literally, instructing and transforming] mission,” an effort that was nothing less than the moral “ordering of the state.”⁴ In 1670, the Kangxi emperor issued a list of sixteen moral maxims that were to be read in every community twice a month, following a tradition begun by his father. This key function cast the emperor as teacher-propagandizer.

PRESERVING A MANCHU IDENTITY

A key to upholding Manchu martial identity was to maintain the banner forces, the vehicles of their military success. After the Manchus defeated the Ming forces, they preserved those defeated enemies as the Army of the Green Standard, a constabulary force assigned to garrisons around the country. Though the 500,000 Green Standard forces were at least double the size of the Manchu banners, the banner forces were positioned more strategically: For example, whereas in the eighteenth century there was only one banner garrison in the commerce-focused Middle Yangzi region, there were many garrisons in the newly conquered Central Asian frontier territory of Xinjiang—where numbers of bannermen were clearly a major factor in China’s political control. Whereas civil officials controlled the Green Standard, military governors controlled the banners.

Yet another strategy for maintaining martial values was to set aside Manchuria as a permanent Manchu homeland. That had been the military base from which the conquest proceeded; the territory itself was thus inextricably linked with the source of the Manchus’ military expertise. Further, by making Manchuria off limits to the Han Chinese, the leadership may have been saying that even if life among the Han Chinese within the Wall might dull Manchu military ardor, Manchuria would always remain as a place where military values could be revived and rejuvenated.

Once in control in China, the Manchus also continued to maintain and promote their native shamanism, a policy that clearly differentiated them from Chinese ways and the Chinese themselves. A shaman was thought to have had a spiritual death and rebirth and could thus easily pass into the world of the supernatural, where he or she could influence

events. Using spirit poles to symbolically connect heaven and earth in order to communicate with clan spirits, Manchus conducted shamanic state rituals, processions, and dances in the Forbidden City into the twentieth century.

In addition, the Manchus patronized Yellow sect Lamaism in Mongolia and Tibet. In Mongolia, patronage of Lamaism became a method of controlling Mongol tribes that had converted to that religion in the seventeenth century. Lamaism was overseen by the Dalai Lama in Lhasa, Tibet; thus, Manchu interests in exercising control in Mongolia through this religion naturally fostered its interests in exercising control in Tibet from the 1720s on. From the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century, the Manchu regime constructed or restored thirty-two Tibetan temples in Beijing and eleven in the Manchu summer capital of Chengde, north of the Great Wall.

The Manchu regime tried to prevent close association between Chinese and themselves by forbidding intermarriage and outlawing business partnerships. They stepped into the realm of customs so as to differentiate Manchus from Chinese physically, forbidding, for example, Manchu women to bind their feet, as most proper Chinese women did (see Chapter 4). They also ordered a physical change of customs among Chinese men as a pointed expression of Manchu overlordship; they commanded all Chinese men to adopt the Manchu hairstyle: Shave the front parts of their heads, let the hair in the back grow longer, and then plait that hair into queues or pigtails. In essence, that hairstyle physically marked the Chinese as subjects of the Outsider Manchus. The order was particularly scandalous to Chinese men who had been used to growing their hair long; it has been suggested that many saw the new hairstyle as something like “tonsorial castration,” a mutilation of their physical wholeness and their manhood.⁵

In the arena of official rule, the Manchus gave themselves preferential treatment in the examination system, in official appointments, and in the justice system. Although their small numbers relative to the Chinese population meant that they had to work with the Chinese, appointment to governmental positions went more or less equally to Manchus and Chinese. If there was balance in that way, the fact remained that the Manchus were careful to check Chinese power. Although Chinese might be appointed to serve as governors of provinces, governors-general, who oversaw two or three provinces, tended to be Manchu. The trump card, of course, was that the ultimate arbiter and decision maker—the emperor—was always Manchu.

BUYING INTO CHINESE CULTURE

The Civil Service Examination

The Qing, for all their Manchu identity, accepted the heart of the Chinese political, social, and cultural system—the imperial civil service examination and the Confucianism on which it was based. Developed over many centuries, this system aimed to bring into government positions the best and the brightest, men who brought to their ruling tasks both wisdom and virtue. China’s government personnel system was then not generally based on

birth but rather on merit measured through an examination system grounded in what today we would call the humanities—Confucian philosophical texts and commentaries, history, and literature. Thus, it produced generalists, not specialists. Although at times of economic crisis men might enter the civil service “irregularly” by purchasing degrees or positions, in normal times the vast majority of men who served took the examination.

Confucianism, the foundation of the Han Chinese cultural system, was based on the teachings of Confucius (Kong fuzi [551–479 B.C.E.]) and his key followers, especially, in late imperial times, Mencius (Mengzi [372–289 B.C.E.]). Confucius and Mencius both taught at a time when Chinese society and politics were in disarray. Their prescription for a more harmonious, smoothly functioning polity was to attract wise and virtuous men who could transform politics and society and restore the situation to what it had been in the golden age of a mythic past. These men would be motivated to rule the state benevolently through high principles, a profound sense of morality, and a thorough empathy with the people. In Confucius’s eyes, education was the key to developing sages who could so rule the state.

If a Chinese family had a son with strong intellectual abilities, they might attempt to hire a tutor who could oversee his preparations for taking the examination. This decision certainly depended in part on the family’s economic situation. Poor farm families, for example, would have had less cash available for such an undertaking and would have likely been unwilling to lose an extra farmhand to the long study necessary to succeed. In areas where strong lineages dominated, lineage estates might provide precocious young men, even of poorer families, with the money to study for the examination.

The exams themselves took several days. Candidates were ushered into tiny cubicles placed in long rows in the examination area. There they wrote essays and poetry in answer to various questions. In different periods, the examination’s substance differed; for example, questions relating to practical administration were dropped in 1757, but they were added again by the late nineteenth century. The form of the answer was important: Essays had to follow a particular format of presentation; the essay’s length was prescribed. Poetry was stressed: A provincial director of studies said that inferior ability in writing poetry carried with it the “smell of village mediocrity.”⁶ Calligraphy was also important because it was seen as indicative of a person’s morality. Throughout the centuries, questions were raised about how these examination practices could produce men who were capable of handling the messy problems of day-to-day governance. But, despite these concerns, the examination remained central into the twentieth century.

Success in major examinations, offered at three levels, brought degrees. Preceded by a preliminary exam at the county seat, the lowest-level exam was offered twice every three years in prefectural capitals. Successful candidates received the *shengyuan* (government student) degree; studies have shown that the vast majority received their degrees between the ages of twenty and thirty. Pass rates for all examinations were only about 1 to 2 percent. Receiving the *shengyuan* degree did not entitle the degreeholder to an official position; however, it brought him and his family considerable status and marked him as an elite member of his resident community. The *juren* (provincial graduate) degree was bestowed on those passing the second-level examination at the provincial capital, which was offered once every three years; the average age for this accomplishment in the nineteenth century was about thirty-one. This degree provided an entryway into officialdom, not to the highest

positions but to magistracies of counties, prefects of prefectures, and sometimes ad hoc appointments. The highest degree, the *jinshi* (metropolitan graduate), came from success at the imperial capital; here the written examination was followed by an oral examination at the palace administered by the emperor himself. In the nineteenth century the average age for attaining this degree was thirty-three to thirty-six. It opened all official career doors immediately—from governorships to important imperial commissionerships to membership in the Hanlin Academy, the government’s policymaking think tank.

Attaining any of these degrees brought legal, economic, and social privileges. Degreeholders could be judged in a legal case only by someone who was educationally superior. They were legally protected from insults by commoners and could receive no corporal punishment. They were freed from official labor service that was required of all commoners. All degreeholders wore buttons on their hats that indicated the particular degree held—the *jinshi* and *juren*, plain gold; the *shengyuan*, plain silver. Degreeholders wore black gowns bordered in blue. They alone were allowed to wear furs, brocades, and fancy embroidery. However, despite the personal privileges and the status that attaining a degree brought generally to the candidate’s family, he could not pass the honor on to his son; if his son wanted such status, he had to pass the examination himself. At any time in the nineteenth century there were somewhat over 800,000 *shengyuan* degreeholders (roughly 1.8 to 2.4 percent of the population), 18,000 to 19,000 *juren* degreeholders, and about 2,500 *jinshi* degreeholders.

A crucial aspect of the examination system for the governance of the Chinese state was that it required all potential officials to be trained in the same body of principles, rules, and norms. Although such a common educational base could never produce uniformity of thought, it did provide a common base of learning with clearly understood standards for ruling and strategies for governance. Since the pass rate on the examinations was so small, many more Chinese men than degreeholders were trained in the classics; one historian has estimated that classically educated men numbered at the very minimum 5 million in the early eighteenth century (10 percent of the population).⁷

The Bureaucratic Veneer

With a few major exceptions, the Qing emperors bought into the traditional government ideal: “a minimum state with maximal reach: that is, a relatively small state apparatus that succeeded in extracting substantial revenues and labor from a large population.”⁸ Minimalist government meant a relative stagnancy in the number of county magistrates over time. During the late seventeenth century, there were 1,261 counties and magistrates. While the population tripled in size in the century from 1680 to 1780, there were only 1,303 counties and magistrates in the late nineteenth century.⁹ Taking the population in 1700 to be about 150 million and that of 1900 to be about 420 million (both reasonable projections), the average number to which one man served as father-mother official in 1700 was about 119,000 but was over 320,000 in 1900. By contrast, in China today, there are county level officials for every 2,000 people.¹⁰

Though counties varied widely in size and population, the figures from imperial China—estimates though they are—nevertheless, suggest the minimalist reality. Clearly,

imperial official presence was only the thinnest of veneers, insufficient for serving the population well. Furthermore, county governments were under-funded to a point where monies were clearly insufficient for the execution of prescribed duties. In the locality, the government was only “tenuously in control.”¹¹ Indeed, the Chinese proverb had a profound truth about the relationship between the government and the people: “Heaven is high; the emperor is far away.”

This system worked well when it did so because of two elements: the county magistrate and the support and help of local elites. The power and the responsibility of the magistrate, often called the “father-mother” official, were especially great; equally great was the trust implicitly placed in him by the state. Its own reputation in counties all across China could rise or fall with the leadership of the magistrate as the state bureaucrat with whom people most had to deal. The state recognized that the key to good government was the magistrate and local government. Their trust in magistrates came because of their belief in the validity and general transcendence of the state system, based as it was on ethics and education, and out of a sense that these civil service degreeholders were men “who, through learning and self-cultivation, . . . lived their lives according to the rules of propriety . . . and transformed those around them through the power of their moral example.”¹² The comprehensive and holistic vision of state-society was part of the political genius of the system.

But the magistrates could not do it alone. They had to rely on local elites to be essentially political and social associates who contributed to the management and well-being of the community. In this system, the center had to trust local elites to act in its place at the community and county levels in the public “arena of nonstate activity that contributed to the supply of services and resources in the public good.”¹³ Local elites played key roles in funding, constructing, and managing “schools, academies, city walls, granaries, bridges, ferry docks, hydraulic systems, orphanages, temples to state-sanctioned gods, shrines to local figures, even Buddhist monasteries.”¹⁴ The state’s trust in local elites had to be based on the assumption that these local leaders would accept and support the state’s legitimacy and mission.

Rituals, Religion, and Values

The adoption of Ming state rituals was a crucial way for Manchu rulers to assert their legitimacy by linking themselves to the former legitimate imperial state. There were no fewer than 256 state rituals in the Qing period. These included sacrifices to gods and the imperial ancestors; political rituals, like receiving envoys and reviewing troops; and imperial household and lineage rituals focusing on marriage and death. Through these state rituals—displays of pomp and power—the emperor underscored his legitimacy as Son of Heaven, promoted order and harmony, asserted his sovereignty vis-à-vis the bureaucracy, and impressed people with his splendor. All rituals—state, community, and family—validated the sense of hierarchy and order, so crucial in the Confucian worldview.

Whether Confucianism was a religion or a philosophy depends on one’s definition. Though Confucius himself had refused to get involved in questions about an afterlife (“We do not yet know about life; how can we talk about what happens after death?”), his teachings on the continuity of the family over generations and of ancestors raised issues often

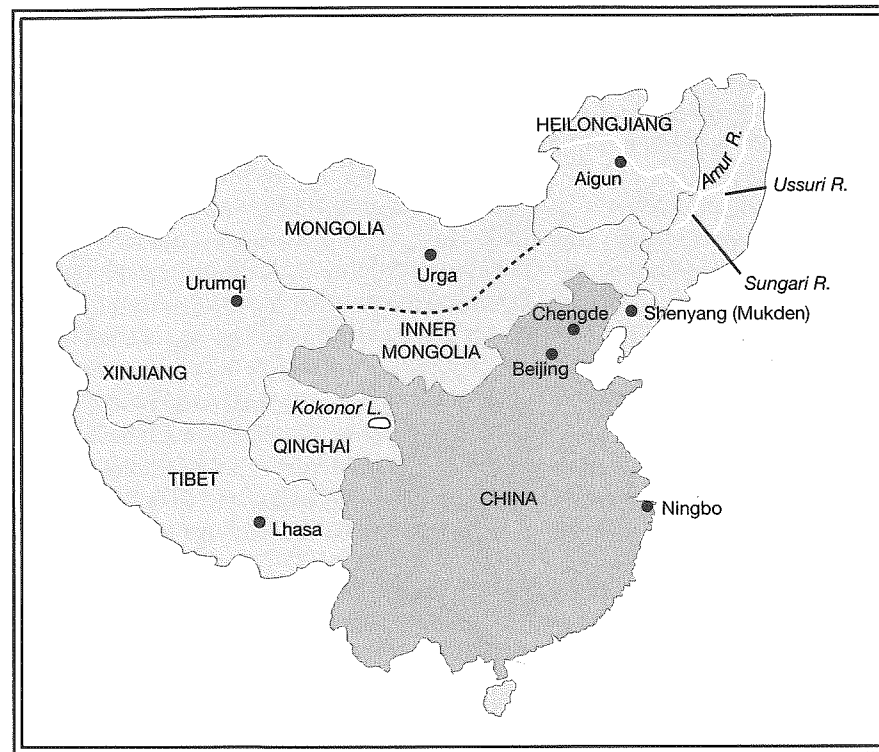
thought of as religious. Central here was ancestor reverence. The Qing erected both their ancestral tablets for state sacrifices in Beijing and their familial tablets within the Forbidden City. The practice especially pointed to the value of filial piety, or filiality, to which Qing emperors explicitly committed themselves. The Kangxi emperor (1661–1722) noted, “We rule the empire with filial piety. That is why I want to exemplify this principle for my ministers and my people—and for my own descendants.”¹⁵ Such a central Confucian conception seemed to resonate in the actions of the most important Qing emperors—from the care of the Kangxi emperor for his beloved grandmother to the Yongzheng emperor’s (r. 1722–1736) filiality to his father to the Qianlong emperor’s (r. 1736–1795) ostentatious show of filial piety for his mother, which included building in the capital replicas of her beloved Southern China streets that she could putter around in.

The patronage of Lamaist Buddhism not only was a way of controlling ethnic subjects but also linked the regime with Buddhism, borrowed by the Chinese from India over 1,500 years earlier. Though the power of Buddhism in Chinese society had greatly diminished after the ninth century, it was still a part of many Chinese lives. The construction of Buddhist temples by the regime in both Beijing and Chengde was a visible linkage of the Manchu outsiders with an important Chinese religious tradition.

DEALING WITH THE OTHER

Since they themselves were Other to the Chinese, the Qing regime in its policies toward China’s Others seemed to be acutely aware of differences in those Others. It developed two starkly different approaches to dealing with those outside the Chinese cultural realm. Even before it established its rule in China, in 1638 it organized the Court of Colonial Affairs (*Lifanyuan*) to handle its relations with the Mongols. This court became the organ in charge of relations with the peoples north and west of “China within the Wall”—Mongols, Uighurs, Tibetans, and Russians. Triumphant mid-eighteenth-century military campaigns extended Chinese control into the Central Asian Tarim Basin, bringing control over Xinjiang in 1759 and 6 million square miles of grasslands, desert, and scattered oases into the empire. The Qing considered it a “strategic frontier zone” and did not allow Chinese colonization. Three interventions in Tibet from the 1720s to the 1750s made that state a Chinese protectorate. The *Lifanyuan* supervised the affairs of Lamaist organizations in Qing efforts to control both the Mongols and the Tibetans through their patronage of Lamaism. Total acculturation was not the name of this game. On the contrary, Qing policies toward the peoples of this region, as one historian suggests, brought economic, social, and cultural changes “that encouraged the growth of ethnic identities” among these peripheral peoples.¹⁶ Doing so fit into the self-chosen identity of the Qing emperors, ethnic outsiders themselves. They were not simply the Chinese Sons of Heaven but also emperors of an Asian multiethnic, multicultural empire.

Over the centuries, the Chinese state had developed a different system of dealing with foreigners who did not come from the northern and western steppes; the Qing regime inherited it. Though the Chinese themselves had no name for its various procedures, Western scholars have called it the “tributary system.” In surveying the barbarians who ringed the country, Han Chinese elites saw China as the Civilized Country. Early in China’s



The Qing Empire, Early Nineteenth Century

past, the country had been known as Everything Under Heaven (*tianxia*)—that is, everything that was worth anything. Another name often used was Central Country (*Zhongguo*)—central specifically in terms of culture. The Chinese believed that their role was to train and educate the Others, not by physically forcing them to accept the Chinese way but as elder brothers to younger brothers, making it possible for them to participate in certain controlled ways in the blessings that Chinese believed their culture had to offer. The goal, at least to some degree, was acculturation. As with any connections, the strength of China's ties to various countries and peoples varied in intensity. Relations with the kingdoms of Korea and Vietnam, located along Chinese borders, were strongest.

But for the present, as an example of the tributary system, let's take Japan, a close tributary state of China in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). As with traditional ethnic minorities (and as with elder brothers treating younger brothers), a crucial goal was control. The Board of Rites, not the Court of Colonial Affairs, managed this system, for at the core of the system was ritual. The Ming regime allowed Japan to send to China one tribute mission every three years. The mission came bringing tribute composed of native Japanese products, gems, animals—whatever the Japanese ruler deemed appropriate. The Chinese specified the port of entry, in this case Ningbo, south of Shanghai on the East

China Sea. The Japanese mission was met at Ningbo by a Chinese delegation that accompanied them to Beijing via the Grand Canal. Along the way, the Japanese were repeatedly banqueted and showered with costly gifts of silk and jade. Once they arrived in the capital, they had to bide their time until the arrival of the most auspicious date, when they would be ushered into the presence of the Chinese emperor.

At that meeting they would perform various rituals, the most famous being the kowtow (*ketou*), in which they prostrated themselves on the floor three times and, with each prostration, knocked their heads on the floor three times—three prostrations, nine head knockings. It was a ritual of extreme obeisance, one that, at least theoretically, every Chinese child performed before his or her parents each New Year's Day. Apart from the deep meaning of submission evident in the kowtow, the performance of this ritual by children for their parents in a sense connected the foreigners, the Others, with the larger Chinese “family” and its culture. After the rituals, the foreign mission was allowed to remain in Beijing and trade for a period before being accompanied back to Ningbo and the trip home. For the Others, the episode offered the bestowal of expensive presents and the lucrative opportunity to trade, continual rounds of feasting and celebrations, and probably what was the experience of a lifetime. For the Chinese, it provided corroboration of their view of themselves as the superior, generous, paternalistic elder brother, offering the Other the opportunity, as the Chinese phrase went, “to come and be transformed [*laihua*].”

IDENTITY AND CHANGE: THE QIANLONG EMPEROR IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Historians frequently assert that traditional China reached the height of its power and wealth during the reign of the Qianlong emperor (1736–1795). Indeed, there is much to support that view. His successful military conquest of inner Asian frontiers more than doubled Chinese territory. With peace and prosperity the order of the day within China, South, Southeast, and East Asian states regularly sent tributary missions. Economic prosperity, prompted by efficient and effective government in the earlier reigns of the dynasty, flourished. The state treasury in the first year of the Qianlong emperor's reign had a surplus of 24 million taels of silver; fifty years later, the surplus had more than tripled. Probably nothing reveals the extraordinary fiscal situation better than the fact that the Qianlong emperor was able to cancel the collection of annual taxes four times. The increasingly significant availability of regional cash crops—cotton, tea, and tobacco—pointed to the expansion of trade between regions. Foreign trade also thrived: Southeastern coastal provinces traded on a large scale with Southeast Asia and Taiwan; Europeans and Japanese merchants came to China for its much-valued silk, tea, and porcelain. New crops imported from the New World—sweet potatoes, maize, and peanuts—permitted cultivation of previously untillable sandy or mountainous land.

Agricultural diversification and trade helped stimulate economic growth that brought many changes to Chinese society. Taxes were now usually paid in money rather than in kind (as in earlier dynasties), pointing to the increasing importance of

money in the economy. The credit and transfer needs of long-distance interregional trade fueled the development of native banks and new fiscal institutions. The new prosperity brought marked social changes: Elite status came to depend more and more on wealth; occupational differentiation gave rise to new opportunities; the number of markets increased, linking farmers in villages to towns and cities in new commercial relationships.¹⁷

One important social development in the Lower Yangzi region especially was the emergence of elite female writers. Studies have shown that already in the seventeenth century, in the midst of commercialization and urbanization, “[t]hrough writing and reading, elite women developed new spheres of influence, expanding the domain of kinship and friendship beyond domestic space, mastering the tools of learning that had been the domain of men”¹⁸ In the eighteenth century, shifts in gender relations were underscored by debates about the degree of learning that women in scholarly families should endeavor to attain. Through their writings, women sought “to assert and extend their authority in the family and to reach beyond the domestic realm to criticize the commercial sex markets of their time.”¹⁹ They also wrote to make connections to other women to share “what they valued, to celebrate what they admired, and to lament what they lost.”²⁰ In the world of work in the economically prosperous years, the Qing state heralded household textile handicraft production in the domestic sphere controlled by the wife; yet the commercial trends of the time, especially the development of the urban artisan class, tended to undercut household fiscal power. Nevertheless, the emergence of elite women through their learning and by their writing cautions us not to reach overly general conclusions about the bleak world inhabited by Chinese women.

The social development resulting from economic growth that had the greatest impact on China as a whole was a monumental increase in population. Data reveal that the population rose sharply, from over 177 million in 1749 to over 301 million in 1790, an increase of 70 percent in little more than forty years.²¹ What gave rise to such a soaring population is not completely clear, though food crops from the Western Hemisphere and techniques like double cropping helped support it. Both a declining mortality rate and a rising birth rate may also have been factors. Scholars have seen population growth as both a “reflection of—and a contributor to—prosperity.”²² It contributed to prosperity, for example, by providing more field workers to increase harvest yields and more immigrants to develop regions of previously untilled or underpopulated land.

Overall, the picture that emerges is of economic well-being and abundance. In the view of one eighteenth-century writer, “Houses cluster together like fish-scales and people are as numerous as ants. Since local administration is simple, the district is often quiet. While everywhere on the fields mulberry, hemp, and various cereal crops are grown, the streams abound with carp and other fish.”²³ The reality of environmental and historical differences in macroregions, however, requires us to keep in mind that this picture of China as a whole at the zenith of its traditional strength is generalized. Despite general state prosperity, many areas were not sites of plenty and wealth. One historian has noted, “One did not have to travel far from the commercialized cores to find abject poverty, unemployment, and disorder.”²⁴ Our knowledge of the variety, diversity, and complexity of China’s macroregions, cores, and peripheries must also temper the generalized view of prosperity.

On the whole, the glories of China were sought for and emulated in the late eighteenth-century West. Chinese products—silk, cloisonné, porcelains, fans, tea, rhubarb—were not simply sought: Many things Chinese became the European rage. Europeans copied Chinese wallpaper, interior decor, and furniture; elite homeowners in Versailles and London created Chinese gardens with Chinese pavilions. European royalty and Enlightenment philosophers were enthusiastic about the perceived Chinese model of rule, “enlightened” or “benevolent” despotism. The musings of Benjamin Franklin today seem both naive and quite chilling in their implications: “Could we be so fortunate as to introduce the industry of the Chinese, their arts of living and improvements in husbandry. . . . America might become in time as populous as China.”²⁵ Unfortunately, it is likely, as an American historian suggested, “literate Westerners knew more about China in the eighteenth century than they [did] in the twentieth.”²⁶

IDENTITY CRISIS

The Emperor’s Roles

The issue that loomed larger and larger for the Qianlong emperor in the years after the Qing’s last act of expansion, the seizure of Xinjiang in 1755, was a growing identity crisis. At base, who were the Manchus? Were they outsiders who, in their capacity as the heads of a Chinese dynasty, were in effect becoming acculturated Chinese? Or were they primarily rulers of a multiethnic empire in which the Chinese were only one part and because of which their identity as Manchus had to remain predominant?

In many ways, as we have seen, the Manchus bought into Chinese traditions, upholding the examination and political systems, Confucianism, filial piety and ancestor reverence, and the body of family and state rituals. The Qianlong emperor himself performed rituals before



Castiglione painted this portrait of the twenty-one-year-old Qianlong Emperor. It is placed in a larger work depicting the emperor, empress, and eleven imperial consorts and is titled, *In My Heart There Is the Power to Reign Peaceably*. Source: Lang Shih-ning (Giuseppe Castiglione), Chinese, 1688–1768, Qing Dynasty, “Inauguration Portraits of Emperor Qianlong, the Empress, and the Eleven Imperial Consorts,” 1736. Handscroll, ink and color on silk, 52.9 × 688.3 cm. © The Cleveland Museum of Art. 2003. John L. Severance Fund, 1969.31.

ancestral tablets in the Forbidden City and in Manchuria at the reputed site where the Manchus originated. In addition, he took on the scholarly and artistic roles of the Chinese sage, serving as patron to Chinese scholars and artists. He collected about 8,000 paintings and works of calligraphy in an imperial collection, on a number of which—as indicative of his questionable lack of taste and judgment—he made notations on the works themselves. He added fifty-four inscriptions to one hand scroll and pressed his seal thirteen times on a single painting. His tastes, which leaned to the showy, theatrical, and monumental, had a great impact on the artistic trends of his day. He was also enormously productive himself, though quantity is no obvious indicator of quality. He wrote about 43,000 poems and, it is said, 92 books of prose. That he took the abilities of and devotion to the role of a Chinese scholar seriously is underscored by his daily schedule. Rising at 6:00 A.M., he spent the morning reading official reports and memorials, consulting with his advisers, and receiving and dispatching officials. Afternoons, however, were devoted to reading, painting, and writing poetry.

Had he, then, as has been said in some sources, become “more Chinese than the Chinese”? It is abundantly clear that he had not. In actions to reinvigorate the Manchu identity, Qianlong aimed his policies at the Manchu elites, the bannermen scattered around the realm in city-based garrisons, who had been the foundation of imperial power. The emperor saw that in those garrisons bannermen’s livelihoods were in general economic decline, a situation that produced low morale. Because the situation was serious, garrison commanders had begun to allow bannermen to live outside the garrison, purchase homes and businesses there, and participate in city life. For the emperor, such a change opened the bannermen to a dangerous urban diversity that threatened the integrity of Manchu identity. One of the emperor’s obsessions in the last two-thirds of his reign became to restore and protect Manchu traditions; he was, in the words of one historian, “bent on authentic Manchuness.”²⁷ This meant an active revival of the Manchu language among bannermen, especially among the imperial Aisin Gioro clan; it involved establishing standard tests for military skills; and it included rejuvenating the spiritual and cultural roles of the clans. For all bannermen, the government promoted education that stressed the reading and writing of Manchu, astronomy, mathematics, riding, and shooting.

In addition to his concern with the bannermen, the Qianlong emperor chose to uphold the Manchu character of the imperial household and clans. Whereas his grandfather, the Kangxi emperor, had participated in autumn hunts north of the Great Wall, his father, the Yongzheng emperor, had never done so. The Qianlong emperor restored the practice, developing the hunting “preserve to its fullest extent.”²⁸ He insisted on sponsoring archery contests for both banner and Green Standard troops and boasted about his ability to kill deer with one shot. He directed the publication of Manchu genealogies, the writing of a history of the eight banners, and the laying out in detail of myths about the origins of the imperial Aisin Gioro clan. Fearful that shamanism was disappearing and desiring to preserve this traditional Manchu religion, he ordered that its practices be written down and disseminated among the Manchus.

The Qianlong emperor also asserted his Manchuness as a ruler of a multiethnic empire by continuing the early-dynasty championing of Tibetan Buddhism. He continued the construction of Tibetan Buddhist temples in Beijing and in Chengde, site of the summer palace. He sponsored the translation of Buddhist sutras, which he then distributed

to temples and monasteries. He had a Buddhist chapel built in the Forbidden City and reportedly practiced meditation every day. He had himself painted by court painters not only as a great warrior and a sage, but also significantly as the Buddha and as a Buddhist monk. At the summer palace, he built a replica of the Potala, the Dalai Lama’s residence at Lhasa. Most persuasive of his commitment to Buddhism was the tomb that he designed for himself. On the ceiling of the crypt directly over the place where his coffin was laid was a symbol of the *cakravartin*, “the wheel-turning king”—“an earthly ruler who by his conquests in the name of the Buddha would move the world toward the next stage in universal salvation.”²⁹ In addition, he had Sanskrit prayers for the wheel-turning king carved on the tomb walls.

Clearly, in his religious efforts he was trying to impress the non-Han Chinese in the empire and to assert his multicultural moral legitimacy. His multilingualism was also part of this effort. He began to learn Mongolian in 1743, Uighur in 1760, and Tibetan in 1776. In his description of his language ability, he stated, “In 1780, because the Panchen Lama [the chief spiritual adviser of the Dalai Lama] was coming to visit, I also studied Tangut. Thus, every year when the [emissaries] of Mongols, Uighurs, and Tibetans came to the capital for audience, I used their own language and did not rely on an interpreter. . . .”³⁰

Literary Inquisition

The question of Manchuness and Chineseness became most strained and dangerous when posed in the context of the Manchu conquest. In some areas of China and some sectors of Chinese society, bitterness about the conquest and the violence with which it was carried out did not lie far beneath the surface. The Manchus were alert from the beginning to any writings that hinted at resistance or insurrection, and occasional cases emerged.

One that served as a harbinger of sorts for a spectacular literary inquisition from 1772 to 1782, and that underscores the identity obsession that the Qianlong emperor developed, was the case of Zeng Jing. During the reign of the Qianlong emperor’s father, Zeng had read the anti-Manchu writings and rantings of a Han Chinese scholar named Lu, who had died in the 1680s. Zeng had been so agitated by what he read that he contacted a general in the area to try to persuade him to launch a rebellion against the government. The general promptly turned Zeng in, and in 1730 the case reached the Yongzheng emperor. The emperor’s response was an exhibition of the benevolence of the Confucian sovereign: He ascribed Zeng’s actions to the gullibility and naiveté of youth, taken in by Lu’s abusive and overdrawn rhetoric. Zeng’s interrogation was printed and published, along with his recantation and an essay by court scholars on Lu’s errors. Zeng was released and, as a mark of the emperor’s mercy, was even given a minor local position. In his response, the emperor had suggested that Lu’s original attack on the Manchus was misplaced because the Manchus had been transformed by their long-term exposure to the civilizing force of Confucianism.

This position had apparently rankled the soon-to-be Qianlong emperor. As one historian wrote on the subject, “[W]as it really necessary that the emperors of the great Qing empire continue to humble themselves before the image of Confucius, still placidly denying the culture of their ancestors in order to curry favor with those whom

they had conquered?”³¹ On taking the throne, the Qianlong emperor reopened the Zeng case, ordering the destruction of the published record of the interrogation and recantation. Zeng was retried, found guilty of sedition, and sentenced to death by slicing. The case revealed that the Qianlong emperor was determined, as soon as he took the throne, both to stifle anti-Manchu expressions and to reassert the Manchuness of the regime.

In 1772 the emperor ordered the collection of all existing books and manuscripts, whether held in libraries or owned privately. The goal was to bring them to the capital, review them, and recopy the most outstanding ones in new editions in order to ensure the preservation of important, valuable, and, in some cases, rare literary and historical treasures. The collection, known as the *Four Treasuries* because it was grouped into four sections—classics, history, philosophy, and miscellaneous literary works—was immense. Fully 3,593 works were recopied, filling 36,000 manuscript volumes; in addition, the *Four Treasuries* included an annotated catalogue of 10,680 extant titles. In initiating this vast undertaking, the emperor was clearly giving evidence of his Chinese persona: Here are the opening lines of his edict. “[In our rule] We have always been mindful of precedent, revered the writings of the past, relied on the brush to govern and ruled in accordance with principle. We have been diligent from day to day in our study.”³²

The huge project was facilitated by intellectual trends of the late eighteenth century, when a philosophical movement called Han learning, or “evidential research” (*kaozheng*), was the rage. Beginning in the seventeenth century, this movement emphasized getting at the truth by analyzing old texts and, if need be, revising them on the basis of skills that scholars had gained from such fields as epigraphy, philology, historical investigation, and textual criticism. The goal was to abandon speculation and to search for the truth in actual facts (*shishi qiushi*), in effect to reestablish classical learning on a firmer foundation. In the *Four Treasuries* project, *kaozheng* scholars played the leading role. Because of their interests, many such scholars in the Lower Yangzi macroregion were tied to networks of bookstores and booksellers, a fact that eased the collection of books. Many books for the project, for example, came from Hangzhou libraries. But, more important, these scholars controlled the editorial process in combing through the texts and therefore in shaping the project’s outcome.

Although not abundantly clear from the beginning, the project became a full-blown campaign of censorship or, as it has been called, a “literary inquisition.” In this regard, the Qianlong emperor was acting in his Manchu persona. A little more than a year after inaugurating the project, the emperor noted that some provincial governors had not sent many books to the capital and wondered whether this might be because they were of a “rebellious or seditious nature.”³³ This speculation is indicative of the emperor’s Manchu-defensive assumptions. By late 1774, these assumptions were declared forcefully: The fact that no book thus far collected expressed any hint of sedition suggested to him that books were being hidden; they had to be found. From 1776 on, more and more time of the men involved in the project was spent examining books closely for an indication of anti-Manchu thoughts or language; the censorship campaign seemed to develop its own momentum. From 1780 until 1782, the central government took firmer control of the effort, establishing centralized censorship boards and issuing lists of banned books and

criteria for determining sedition. Up to 2,400 works were destroyed in this literary inquisition, and an estimated 400,000 to 500,000 were edited following official decree. This movement reflects the almost schizophrenic government attitude toward Chinese and Manchu identities; it also likely reflects growing tension at the court between Chinese and Manchu factions. It clearly highlights the late eighteenth-century identity crisis epitomized in the policies of the Qianlong emperor.

EMERGING PROBLEMS

For subsequent Chinese, the literary inquisition left a bitter taste of Manchu autocracy, certainly a dark experience amid what many have perceived as traditional China’s most glorious period. There were, in addition, other political, economic, and social indicators that pointed to a host of emerging problems, some fraught with danger as China headed unawares into confrontation with the West.

Although the expansive military campaigns in Central Asia had ended, the country was faced with an increasing number of social explosions. A 1774 religion-inspired rebellion in Shandong province was followed in the 1780s by a secret society-based uprising in Taiwan, by two Muslim revolts in Gansu province, and by rebellions of aboriginal Miao tribesmen in Southwest China. The military’s efforts to douse the flames of rebellion began to erode the full treasury. The strongest test for the Chinese military was the White Lotus Rebellion (1796–1804), a religious-based movement to establish a utopia on earth that raked across North Central China. It took eight long years for the Chinese military to put this threat down. Not only did the state reportedly spend 100 million taels (or 30 percent more than the government’s annual revenue) in suppressing this rebellion, but, perhaps even more serious, the Chinese military response was tentative and ineffective.³⁴ Corruption and poor morale had already substantially weakened the banner forces by the mid-eighteenth century. The Green Standard forces, though battling the same social problems, seem to have maintained somewhat better fighting ability. Nevertheless, an undisciplined and generally incompetent military coupled with a weakening economy did not bode well.

The population surge itself, which we have earlier seen as a marker of the general prosperity, was ironically also the greatest long-term danger. The population increase far exceeded what could be supported by the newly cultivated crops from the Western Hemisphere. Estimates suggest that the population tripled from about 1685 to 1780, but during that time the amount of cultivated land only doubled. The problem of too many people and not enough land was worsened by Chinese inheritance customs. The Chinese practiced a partible inheritance system whereby land was divided equally among all the sons. Landholdings in China tended to be tiny to begin with; in the North China macroregion, for example, in the late eighteenth century the average farm was only 2.5 acres. Given that figure and a hypothetical farmer on the North China plain with three sons, each son would inherit only .83 acre of land. With the huge population increase, land per capita was shrinking dangerously; when coupled with partible inheritance, the odds of once economically viable farmers falling into bankruptcy and poverty escalated sharply.

Various regions of the country were differentially affected by the population increase, since demographic growth occurred at different rates. It is also likely that economic problems were more serious in the peripheries, which had far fewer human and natural resources, than in the cores. But the demographic situation affected to a greater or lesser extent the whole country, not only with economic but also political implications. The larger population put greater strain on an already fiscally weakened government to provide various services for the people. Two crucial services were public works and the distribution of charitable grain relief at times of poor harvest or famine. In the last years of the Qianlong emperor's reign, public works were not being maintained as they should have been; sections of the Grand Canal, for example, were clogged with silt. Floods were in the offing. More serious, charitable relief granaries often contained little grain.

The political implications were perhaps even more crucial than the short-term economic effects. In ascending the throne, the Chinese emperor was said to have received the Mandate of Heaven. As part of the mandate to rule as the "Son of Heaven," he had to rule benevolently and carry out his proper ritual functions. Natural disasters—droughts, floods, earthquakes, insect plagues—were interpreted as signs that the emperor was not performing his functions properly and that his Mandate was in jeopardy. Emperors who were believed to be inattentive to the people's needs were in danger of losing the Mandate, that is, being overthrown. When poor harvests in an area created hunger and even starvation, empty relief granaries were visible and potent evidence that the emperor was not meeting the needs of those over whom Heaven had given him charge.

Part of the difficulties of the last decades of the eighteenth century can be chalked up to the personal decisions of the Qianlong emperor himself. Emulating his grandfather, the Kangxi emperor, he took a number of tours down the Grand Canal to the Lower Yangzi area. At least two of these were undertaken for his mother's sake, a notably public display of filial piety. But the expenses of these Southern Tours were ten times those of his grandfather, and they were accompanied by significant disruptions of life along the Grand Canal. Triumphal arches and temporary palaces were built; the Grand Canal had to be repaired to ensure the safety of crowds; grain that ordinarily would have been shipped north was kept for the imperial retinue in the south. Such conspicuous display of government power was generally for the glory of the emperor (and his mother). Yet, the Yellow River overflowed some twenty times during the Qianlong emperor's reign, and not once did he make a personal visit to perform a ritual inspection of the dikes or to express concern for the flood victims. In short, the emperor's sense of perspective on both the appearance and the substance of rule seemed to be wanting.

Perhaps nothing illustrates what might best be called a loss of perspective than his doting on a handsome court favorite, Heshen. Beginning in 1775, when he was sixty-five and Heshen was twenty-five, the emperor handed over much power to this man, who was said to have reminded him of his father's concubine, with whom as a youth he had been infatuated. Whether this was a homosexual relationship or not, Heshen was able to parlay his ruler's patronage into extensive personal power. He held many important posts, including minister and vice-minister of key boards and director of the *Four Treasuries* project. His son was married to the emperor's daughter. He was able to appoint cronies to key bureaucratic posts

throughout the empire; he and they engaged in many corrupt activities from which they made millions of taels to enrich themselves. When the Jiaqing emperor, the Qianlong emperor's son, forced Heshen to commit suicide in 1799, his personal treasury held the equivalent of two years of the realm's revenue. Corruption had a way of spreading like a cancer on the body politic, metastasizing far beyond Heshen and his gang, in the end harming the people themselves. When each level of the bureaucracy took more and more from the levels below, it ultimately not only stole economic resources but also eroded the people's respect for their rulers.

THE DAOGUANG EMPEROR

After he returned to the Forbidden City from the summer palace in early October 1813, the thirty-one-year-old prince who would become the Daoguang emperor in 1821 encountered a remarkable scene. With the help of unscrupulous eunuchs, a rebel band had entered the Forbidden City. Once the alarm had sounded, the prince acted quickly and courageously, grabbing a pistol and shooting two rebels as they tried to scale a wall. He then assisted in the roundup and capture of the remaining rebels. Such decisive action might lead one to think that as emperor he would, in the words of one biographer, be "one who could be relied on to restore the dynasty's fortunes in the face of crises spawned by the Heshen scandals and the fiscal strains unleashed by demographic crisis."³⁵ But the Daoguang emperor was of different mettle from his grandfather, the Qianlong emperor, and, above all, the times and the context were different.

The Daoguang emperor as a boy and teenager had participated in hunts north of the Great Wall with his grandfather and his father, the Jiaqing emperor (1796–1820); on a hunt at the age of nine he killed a deer with his bow and arrow, reportedly greatly pleasing his grandfather. He thus knew his Manchu roots, being trained in martial skills and military values. He was also adept in the customary activities of a Chinese sovereign/Confucian sage: Studious and especially knowledgeable about Chinese literature, he was the author of ten volumes of prose and twenty-four volumes of poetry. The obsession with the Manchu–Chinese identity crisis had generally diminished after the Qianlong emperor's reign. Like his father, the Daoguang emperor was less concerned about the Manchu identity of bannermen and more concerned about keeping them in the garrison compounds and away from opium, the black market, and banditry. The word best describing Manchu life among the banner population even at the center of the Manchu world in Beijing was "decline": dilapidated housing, general poverty, and spreading opium usage.

In the realm at large, at the beginning of his reign, the Daoguang emperor had some military success in putting down a Muslim uprising in Turkestan (1825–1828), but he did not pursue Muslim allies in further western campaigns, likely because it would have been too costly. Most believe that such a possible policy was aborted by the high cost. For the crucial reality that he faced was the depletion of the treasury, which meant an ongoing financial crisis that prevented any government attempts to act forcibly. Many important public works, for example, were now largely in disrepair. Whereas his grandfather's gaze

had ranged from the multiethnic empire of the forests of Manchuria to the Mongolian and Tibetan grasslands to the Xinjiang deserts, the eyes of the Daoguang emperor had to focus on developments within the Wall.

It is not that this emperor had no ability. Though earlier studies had suggested that he was weak, conservative, and unimaginative, more recent accounts have shown him to be conscientious, flexible, and even innovative. He was ready to experiment in trying to deal with the financial crisis. He repeatedly admonished bureaucrats to tighten their fiscal belts and set an example by cutting back on his own expenditures. In trying to find ways to finance crucial public works, he worked closely with regional and local officials, cajoling bureaucrats to take the initiative and working toward consensual center–local arrangements.

The most important of these public works for the overall health of the state was repairing the crucial waterway, the Grand Canal. The Grand Canal had been constructed in the Sui (589–618) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties to link the northern capital region to the Lower Yangzi macroregion, one of China's chief rice baskets. It had been constructed because China's main rivers ran from west to east and the sea route along the coast was notoriously treacherous. Running from Hangzhou to near Beijing, the canal served as an essential artery not only for commerce but especially for the transport of tax grain, important at any time but especially at this time of financial desperation. The Grand Canal system was an extraordinarily complex system composed of the canal itself, tributary streams, dikes and embankments, floodgates, and drainage channels. At one place the canal briefly joined the Yellow River; at the junction site there was an elaborate system of embankments, locks, and lock gates. The whole system was in disrepair, with the canal itself shallow and silting up. Indeed, the basic problem was that the Yellow River itself was in the process of shifting its channel from south of the Shandong peninsula to its north—a disaster that has happened about once every 600 years.

The emperor's technique in ruling was to listen to men in the field, to compromise and work toward consensus, and to be flexible: "I manage the country as a whole and search out information from everyone. Then I select a good plan and follow it. Moreover, I do not go into the planning process beforehand with a prejudiced view."³⁶ He came to see that he could not control the project from Beijing and that, although the fiscal realities called for central government–regional collaboration, the careful analysis and actual repair of the waterworks systems had to be conducted by men on the scene. This was a less assertive and autocratic approach than the one the Qianlong emperor had used, say, in the *Four Treasuries* project, but the reality of the times called for different tactics. In this crisis, however, the Daoguang emperor did take a generally bold initiative in pushing for a one-year experiment of transporting the grain by the sea route; that effort was successfully designed (enlisting Shanghai merchant vessels) and carried out in 1826.

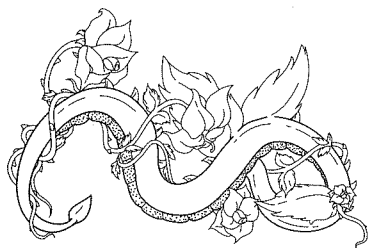
If the concerns and contexts of the Daoguang emperor's reign bore little resemblance to those of his grandfather, neither did his style. The arrogance and ostentation of the reign in the late eighteenth century were replaced by humility and frugality. In his will, the emperor requested that no tablets praising his accomplishments be set up at his tomb and that his clothing be distributed to his courtiers (in contrast to the usual custom of preserving imperial clothes in sealed chests). During his reign, he made it known that he

even wore mended clothes as part of his effort to hold down expenditures. One wonders whether the Daoguang emperor ruled at a time that was indeed more difficult than it had been for his grandfather, who had full treasuries, military triumphs, and unprecedented prosperity. The Daoguang emperor's original name, Mianning, means "unbroken peace." Unfortunately, his reign would forever come to be associated with war; it was his fate "to be the first Emperor of China to be humiliated by a Western power."³⁷

Suggestions for Further Reading

- Elliott, Mark C. *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001). This analysis credits the Qing success to the "coherence and constancy" of banner forces. In contrast to Crossley, Elliott argues that ethnic identity was important in forging a common identity and heritage.
- Leonard, Jane Kate. *Controlling from Afar: The Daoguang Emperor's Management of the Grand Canal Crisis, 1824–1826* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, 1996). This account reveals much about a little-studied emperor but even more about the pragmatic approaches of the Qing state in dealing with crises at the beginning of its decline.
- Perdue, Peter. *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005). This groundbreaking work puts the Qing conquest of its western reaches into a global context, thus transcending what has been the prevalent Sinocentric focus.
- Rowe, William T. *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth Century China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001). This magisterial study of Chen (1696–1771), perhaps the most influential Chinese official of the eighteenth century, opens up the rich world of "on-the-ground" governance framed by a state-projected mission to "save the world."
- Spence, Jonathan D. *Treason by the Book* (New York: Penguin Group, 2001). This dramatic story of Zeng Jing, granted clemency by one emperor but executed by another, is written with the verve of a novel, offering the reader, in the words of one reviewer, "near-cinematic suspense."

The Opium War and the Treaty System: Challenges to Chinese Identity



If only in terms of territorial size, the drive of European states to establish colonies in Asia seems quite surprising. China and India are huge countries on the Eurasian landmass, whereas Europe is only a small peninsula on that same body of land. But European expansion was impelled by imperialism's three Ms: merchants, missionaries, and the military. Commercial motives drove the merchant class that had emerged during the rise of capitalism; they sought to profit from bringing commodities—such as rice, spices, sugar, and cotton—from East Asia, items that were not naturally prolific in the narrow span of European latitude (from 35 to 55 degrees north). Convinced that it possessed the Truth, the Christian church sent out missionaries to gather in the souls of benighted heathen like so many crops to be harvested. In many countries the merchant and the missionary were the advance men, preparing the way for the military, the arm of state power, to come for the biggest harvest of all: territory and people. All three groups were propelled by a missionary-like urge to spread the gospels of Western capitalism, Western religious truth, and Western state power.

THE EARLY WESTERN ROLE

What Might Have Been: The Jesuit Mission in China

One of the most promising periods of Western–Chinese interchange was the almost century-and-a-half-long Jesuit mission (1579–1724). The secret of Jesuit success lay in their efforts “to put [themselves] fully into a Chinese frame of reference,”¹ that is, by mastering the Chinese language and understanding how Chinese society and culture worked. Mastery of the Chinese language was an immense feat at a time when there were no Chinese–Portuguese or Chinese–Italian dictionaries. While they had first donned the robes of Buddhist monks in an effort to convey the religious nature of their undertaking, famed Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci and others were perceptive enough to note that Buddhist monks did not get great respect in Chinese society at the time. In contrast, the literati, civil-service degreeholders, were admired and respected; thus, the Jesuits adopted the dress of the literati.

It was not only their dress: The Chinese were impressed by these foreigners who spoke Chinese and who clearly understood the tenets of Confucianism. But even more the Jesuits had a message that grabbed the attention of the literati and the imperial court (both Ming and Qing): their enormous store of knowledge about science, math, astronomy, philosophy, and religion and their attention-getting instruments: European books, oil paintings, maps, prisms, globes, and clocks.

One goal of the Jesuit mission early on was to reach the imperial court and impress and make connections with officials, who then might provide protection for them and the mission. Ricci achieved that goal in 1601 and the Jesuits generally retained official protection until the mission ended. In only two periods, 1616–1623 and 1664–1670, did the Jesuits experience persecution, in both cases caused by officials who accused them of propagating a heterodox way; but these were only temporary setbacks. Though it has frequently been thought that the Jesuits only targeted literati and those at the court for conversion, the Jesuits were far more successful in converting commoners than they were those at the court. In 1700, they were also actively proselytizing in twenty cities around the realm and in rural areas around those cities. Estimates of numbers of baptized in 1700 range from 70,000 to more than 100,000.²

In the end, it was probably the source of their success that led to the demise of the mission. Over the years the Jesuits were dogged by problems of financing the undertaking and of getting sufficient numbers to work in China (“the sea voyage alone caused the deaths of half of the prospective missionaries”³). But the chief reason for their demise was “their efforts to create a mission church deeply rooted in Chinese society. . . .”⁴ Part of being “deeply rooted” was the Jesuits’ allowing converts to participate in rituals at Confucian temples and to carry on ancestor reverence. To the Jesuits, participation in rituals at the Confucian temple annually was simply a “solemn expression of remembrance for a revered master.” Similarly, the Jesuits contended that keeping ancestral tablets in the home was also only an indication of respect; there was no sense that the dead ancestor resided in the tablet. After much study and careful thought, the Jesuits allowed these practices to be continued, not wanting to “[force] their converts to divorce themselves from their society.”⁵

But in the 1630s the Franciscans and Dominicans, Catholic orders who had proselytized in the Philippines, came to China. Motivated by a more fundamentalist Catholicism and likely by some jealousy of and dislike of the Jesuits, these other orders claimed that rites in Confucian temples and ancestor reverence amounted to “idolatry.” In 1692, the Kangxi emperor had declared by edict that the Throne granted toleration to Christianity so long as converts could participate in “Confucian rites.” The papacy believed that the emperor was trying to trump the Church in matters of doctrine; Rome sent an emissary to investigate and discuss the issues. Hostile meetings in 1705 and 1706 produced a “do-or-die” struggle between emperor and pope. The pope prohibited Catholic missionaries from following the emperor’s order and threatened excommunication if they did so. In turn, the emperor ordered all missionaries to sign an agreement to follow his order on pain of expulsion from the country. The Jesuit mission was mortally wounded. The Yongzheng emperor gave it the coup de grace in 1724 when he outlawed Christianity and expelled the missionaries. It was a tragic instance of “what might have been.”

The Lure of Commerce

In 1600 the British government granted the East India Company a monopoly on trade east of Africa’s Cape of Good Hope to South America’s Straits of Magellan, that is, all trade in the Indian and Pacific Oceans; made perpetual in 1609, this monopoly lasted until 1834. Others had come before without such grandiose dreams. In 1517 the Portuguese made a horrific start in southernmost China when they followed their African practice of kidnapping adolescents to take as slaves; the Chinese forbade them to return. The Spanish arrived in the 1570s, trading along the southeast coast and setting up a base in Taiwan. The Dutch came in the early seventeenth century, supplanting the Spanish by the 1640s.

Most of the West’s most active early phase of exploring East Asian waters came during the collapsing Ming regime and the bloody Manchu conquest, a disorienting and chaotic time for the Chinese state. The threat of Ming loyalists, based in Taiwan, compelled the Qing to close coastal ports in 1662; but when the threat was suppressed in 1685, four ports were reopened. Traditional state cultural and economic attitudes had denigrated merchants and trade, as Confucianism had called agriculture the root of the state. In contrast, commerce was simply trying to profit from what others had produced. In that respect, merchants thus exhibited parasitic characteristics and were ranked as the lowest legitimate social grouping, following scholars, farmers, and craftsmen. Further, in its own self-perception, China was “everything under Heaven,” by definition self-sufficient, and therefore needing nothing from the outside. China’s allowance of trade probably came in small part from its traditional paternalistic outlook toward barbarians, but more likely it resulted from the government’s desire to profit from the trade even as it outwardly frowned on it.

Even with the opening of four ports, much of the trade gravitated to Canton (Guangzhou). Beginning in the 1720s, Canton merchants dealing with Western trade established their own guild, the Cohong (from *gonghang*, or cooperative merchant companies), to monopolize trade; the guild was composed of thirteen “hong” (from *hang*, or company) merchants. The government made them guarantors for the behavior of foreigners and payment of transit fees. In 1759, the East India Company sent James Flint to undertake talks with the government about the trading situation at Canton.

Flint violated Chinese restrictions by sailing to northern ports and presenting petitions using incorrect procedures. In retaliation, the court decreed that Canton from that time would be the only open port and that Europeans could trade only with the Cohong under the general control of a Superintendent of Maritime Customs (the “hoppo”). If the government were compelled to trade, it would make certain that it gained some profit. In this case, the profit came from the hong merchants, who both had to buy their positions and then make extensive annual gifts and contributions as well. In 1834, for example, what they paid totaled over 456,000 taels. Hong merchant willingness to pay such a sum points to the lucrative nature of the monopoly and their ability to profit from it.⁶

Over time, a procedure of trade and barbarian management called the “Canton system” evolved. Essentially it was an effort to fit Western merchants into the traditional tributary state framework; as such, the system set various rules and regulations that outsiders had to follow. They had to pay cash for any purchased goods. They could not enter the walled city of Canton, could not ride in sedan chairs, could not learn the Chinese language, and could not bring weapons or women to the thirteen Western “factories” or trading posts located on the bank of the Pearl River outside the city walls. They could only deal with hong merchants and could attempt no direct communications with Chinese officials; any communication with officials went first to the Cohong and had to include the character for “petition.” Finally, if a regulation were violated or other problems developed, the Chinese halted all trade, as in the traditional tributary system—until the outsiders came to their senses and followed Chinese directions. The Westerners were generally willing to dance to the tributary tune that the Chinese played and thus were able to continue to purchase the tea, silk, and porcelains that European and American customers desired.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, tea made up 80 percent of Chinese exports to Europe. From the picking of tea buds and leaves to the delivery of tea chests in British ports, the tea trade was an arduous and lengthy undertaking. Black teas were harvested in Fujian province, approximately 400 miles northeast of Canton; green teas came from even farther away, 500 to 600 miles, in Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Anhui provinces. From an economic perspective, limiting Western trade to Canton made the tea business more difficult and costly. The tea had to be carried by porters over mountain trails until rivers could be reached to boat the tea to Canton; in addition to transport costs, money had to be paid out to toughs along the routes to protect the cargo. There were at least three tea pickings per year, in March–April, May, and June. The early spring harvest began to arrive in Canton in October, with most arriving from November to January. It was stored in warehouses near the Western factories until Western ships picked it up. Western ships generally left London in the early spring for the four-to-six-month voyage to Canton. They were usually at that port in October and out to sea again by January. The round trip from London to Canton took over a year.

Despite such a long haul and the hassles of the Canton system, the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw trade continually expanding; from 1719 to 1833 the tonnage of foreign ships increased more than thirteen times. And, little wonder, given the fact that in the late 1820s enough tea was imported into England to give every man, woman, and child two pounds a year. But despite the flourishing trade, Westerners were unable to change the terms and procedures of the trade. In 1793, the British East India Company sent

Lord George Macartney to try to expand trading privileges, open more trading ports, and establish diplomatic residence. But the Qianlong emperor treated the effort as a tributary mission, and there were no changes in Chinese policy. An 1816 follow-up mission, led by Lord William Amherst, was not even formally received.

Recent studies have cautioned against seeing what happened in encounters between the representatives of China and those of foreign countries, such as in the Macartney mission, as a clash of cultures or of civilizations.⁷ Just as we have been reminded repeatedly that there are many Chinas, so there were many Western countries with their own structures, outlooks, and practices. And there were, to focus on Macartney's land, many Britains and many Britishers, all of which or whom may have been related, but all of which or whom would have had their own approaches, outlooks, and styles. Historical analysis must dissect the realities of each moment and not assume that one abstracted variable, say culture, explains what happened. Thus, in any close study of the 1793 mission, Macartney should be seen as "an exemplar of a specific stratum of late eighteenth-century British society rather than a 'Westerner' in some undifferentiated, timeless sense."⁸ These points are especially important in understanding people trying to deal with the Other, for the prevailing tendency was to over-generalize and make the Other undifferentiated.

CHINA AND THE WEST: MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS

To the Chinese, Western merchants and diplomatic emissaries, coming to the east coast of the country, were first simply eastern barbarians. Indeed, in the 1860s, after two decades of treaty making, the British ambassador was still referred to in Chinese sources as the "English barbarian chieftain."⁹ There was great confusion in Chinese minds over the separate identities of Western countries, likely in part a reflection of Chinese inability to perceive much physical difference among Westerners. They all looked alike—with their big noses, generally light-colored eyes and hair, ruddy complexions, and hairy bodies. The last contributed to their repulsive body odor, especially after months on board ships in the tropics; it was a sickening smell that the Chinese, who had comparatively little body hair and odor, had trouble tolerating. Rumor had it that because of their light-colored eyes, Westerners could not see at night. Matteo Ricci's colleague Deigo de Pantoja was a blue-eyed Spaniard; he reported in a letter, "The Chinese find them very mysterious, and normally say that my eyes spy where to find precious stones and the like . . . claiming even that they have characters written inside them."¹⁰

Some Chinese claimed that Westerners could not bend their knees or stretch out their legs or feet, as Chinese could. It is surely the case that the confusion and ignorance came from lack of contact, lack of interest, and strong repugnance—realities that also gave rise to reporting only superficial characteristics that seemed strikingly different from Chinese attributes. One writer, for example, noted that "their flesh is dazzling white, and their noses are lofty . . . their custom is to esteem women and think lightly of men. . . . The men are violent and tyrannical and skilled in the use of weapons. They wear short coats and tip their black felt hats as a sign of politeness. The Swedes and the Englishmen like to take snuff, which they carry in little containers made of golden thread." At best, Westerners were

quaint curiosities; at worst, they were morally and intellectually inferior or even savages—foreign devils—who lived "as a herd of cattle." An important Manchu official reported on England: "This is naturally a country of barbarians, with the nature of dogs and sheep, fundamentally ignorant of rites and of modesty; how can they know the distinction between ruler and subject, and upper and lower?"¹¹

Views of China in the abstract among Western intellectuals and some statesmen in the late eighteenth century, as we have seen, had been positive, even enthusiastic. Once merchants and then missionaries went to China to deal with Chinese on a day-to-day basis, the labor and stresses of cultural interaction began to color the views of some, though not all. One with negative views, whose musings were published and who allegedly helped create growing anti-Chinese feeling in the West, was British Commodore George Anson. Anson asserted that he had been treated badly by Chinese—given the bureaucratic runaround and overcharged—when he had entered Canton harbor in 1743 for repair work on his ship. As a result, he paid the Chinese back with bitter assessments of the people: "Indeed, this much may undoubtedly be asserted, that in artifice, falsehood, and an attachment to all kinds of lucre, many of the Chinese are difficult to be paralleled by any other people."¹² Anson accused the Chinese of being innately dishonest, of being second rate in handicraft arts, and of suffering confusion due to the "infinite obscurity" of their language. Missionaries, as we will see, brought their own brand of verbal abuse. Suffice it to say that the perceptions that developed on both sides when Westerners interacted with Chinese helped to shape actions and reactions then and later, sometimes tragically so.

OPIUM: THE PROBLEM AND THE WAR

The serious trade problem for Western merchants was that they had nothing that the Chinese wanted to buy. At Canton, stevedores would unload the cargo: from Britain, woolens and lead; and from goods picked up in India and stops in Southeast Asia (in what was known as the "country trade"), camphor, tin, cotton piece goods, rattan, birds' nests, fish maws, and spices. Had it not been for the South Asian and Southeast Asian items, the British position would have been a complete disaster. Woolens, the main British export, hardly appealed to Chinese in tropical Canton and its environs. Even with the country trade, there was a severe trade imbalance. British ships arrived in Canton with 90 percent of their stock composed of bullion, mostly silver. The annual flow of silver into China reached over 3 million taels in the 1760s but soared to 16 million twenty years later. But then opium came to Britain's rescue.

The Chinese had begun to smoke opium in the seventeenth century, first mixing it with tobacco in a regular pipe, a practice perhaps first introduced by the Dutch in Taiwan. Smoked in this way, each pipe gave the smoker about 0.2 percent of morphine by volume. By the mid-eighteenth century, Chinese had begun to smoke pure opium by heating refined opium paste and inhaling it through a long-stemmed pipe; this method provided the smoker with 9 or 10 percent of morphine. Opium smoking renders its users inert and dormant. The French writer Jean Cocteau described the drug as "the only vegetable substance that communicates the vegetable state to us."¹³ Those who sought some kind of escape from stress and boredom were most attracted

to the drug. Its use stretched across the social landscape from rich to poor, from high officials to clerks and runners in county government offices, from eunuchs and bureaucrats in the Forbidden City to peasants, from merchants and coolies to soldiers. The most serious implications for China's political and social health was the reported high number of smokers in the military and in government offices—the first, because inert soldiers cannot fight; and the second, because secretaries, clerks, and runners were the government bureaucrats with whom most people came into contact on a daily basis: Finding them incapacitated by opium would not have filled people with great confidence in their government.

Estimates of the number of smokers vary, though about 10 percent of the population was a commonly accepted figure; the number of addicts may have reached 3 to 5 percent of the population.¹⁴ The personal tragedy was addiction. Without daily fixes, the user experiences the hellish misery of withdrawal, with a variety of wretched physical and psychological symptoms. Cocteau, himself an addict, wrote that the person experiencing withdrawal should “bury his head in his arm, to glue his ear to that arm, and wait. Catastrophe, riots, factories blowing up, armies in flight, flood—the ear can detect a whole apocalypse in the starry night of the human body.”¹⁵ In patterns well known from contemporary society, it is apparent that the addict would do whatever it took to get opium—from using all of his household's money to various criminal activities. Addiction, then, led to a host of social problems.

In 1800 and 1813, new imperial edicts (which followed earlier prohibitions in 1729 and 1796) forbade opium importation, production, and consumption. Although the Cohong had handled the purchases of opium until then, the new edicts made it impossible for such above-board purchases. Consequently opium importation became opium smuggling. Western ships anchored off the marshy delta, with its many small bays and crisscrossing creeks and streams, unloading opium chests either onto a receiving ship that served as a floating warehouse or onto well-armed but shallow draft Chinese boats that delivered the goods to networks in the delta and beyond Canton. The number of chests smuggled into the country grew dramatically, from 4,000 to 5,000 around 1820 to 18,000 in 1828 to 40,000 in 1839.¹⁶ The smuggling got a huge boost when the East India Company's trade monopoly was abolished in 1834; then more individual shippers got into the smuggling business. Other countries joined in the trade; U.S. firms, for example, picked up opium in Turkey. There were many sides to the developing tragedy. Perhaps the most ironic was that some—large numbers of Chinese *and* the British nation as a whole—were becoming economic addicts of the drug, as it were. As the number of chests increased, the number of Chinese involved in the smuggling trade grew, becoming increasingly dependent on it for their economic livelihood. For the British, the opium trade meant that their unfavorable trade balance had been righted; now the trade imbalance was on the Chinese side, with silver bullion leaving Chinese coffers to pay for opium.

The outflow of silver has been estimated as up to 9 million taels annually in the early 1830s, an almost fivefold increase from the 1820s. Such a huge outflow destabilized the Chinese economy, because it was based on a bimetallic system of silver and copper. As silver left the country, it became more expensive in terms of copper. Although daily purchases were made in copper, copper coins had to be changed into silver for the payment of taxes. In the province of Shandong, far from the site of the smuggling, in 1800 it took between 1,450 and 1,650 copper cash to equal one silver tael; in 1830, it took 2,700.¹⁷

Thus, taxes were dramatically driven up by the outflow of silver. This growing economic pressure was worsened by years of bad harvests in the first half of the 1830s, a situation that created food shortages and rising prices.¹⁸ The crisis of international relations and the opium-induced social and cultural crisis thus helped create an economic crisis as well.

The Daoguang emperor, having successfully fended off the takeover of the Forbidden City by rebels in 1813, could not so easily and decisively beat back the opium crisis. He had issued anti-opium edicts in 1821, 1822, 1823, 1828, 1829, 1831, 1832, 1834, 1835, 1838, and 1839. This year-by-year listing suggests the persistence of the throne's actions, but they were to little avail. The emperor was especially angry to learn that the imperial clan, key banner officers, and high civil servants were opium users. The court debated its course of action. Some advocated legalizing the drug so that it might be traded and taxed, with the goal of taxing it so greatly that the expense might decrease some of its use; at the least, such a policy would make up for the outflow of silver. Others opposed legalization, arguing that it would only worsen the social problems stemming from opium use.

In the end, in early 1839 the emperor decided that the opium trade had to be wiped out. He had found the advice of an official, Lin Zexu, persuasive—that the importers and distributors of the drug, rather than the users, had to bear the principal force of government actions. To suppress the opium traffic, the emperor in March appointed Lin as imperial commissioner. It was an appointment that seemed a good bet to deal with the problem successfully, for Lin had the highest credentials and a reputation for incorruptibility—for which he was known as Lin, the Blue Sky. In trying to quash the distribution system, Lin rapidly mobilized gentry and local officials to name opium dealers and distributors. By July 1839, he had arrested about 1,700 Chinese and confiscated 44,000 pounds of opium and over 70,000 opium pipes.

In trying to deal with the problem of importation, Lin demanded that the foreigners turn over their opium stocks. He tried to reason with the British and use shame to get them to surrender the drug. His plaintive words in a message to Queen Victoria: “The wealth of China is used to profit the barbarians. . . . By what right do they then in return use the poisonous drug to injure the Chinese people? Even though the barbarians may not necessarily intend to do us harm, yet in coveting profit to such an extreme, they have no regard for injuring others. Let us ask, where is your conscience?”¹⁹ Such appeals had little effect: The British first ignored the order, then refused. Following the logic of the tributary system, Lin then stopped all trade and set up a siege of the factories and their 350 foreigners. They held out for six weeks, blasting the action as a “piratical act against British lives, liberty, and property.”²⁰ When they finally delivered over 21,000 chests to Lin, he had 500 laborers dig three immense trenches—7 feet deep, 25 feet wide, and 150 feet long, line them with flagstones on the bottom and timber on the sides, fill them with 2 feet of water, put in the more than 2.6 million pounds of opium, decompose it using salt and lime, and flush it out to the sea. This monumental task took twenty-two days to complete. He composed a prayer to the God of the Sea, apologizing for polluting the waters and endangering sea creatures. He had won what seemed a moral victory over the opium-smuggling foreigners.

But it was a pyrrhic victory. Because the British superintendent of foreign trade had been, since 1834, a representative of the crown and not a merchant company, the British treated the siege and the seizure of opium as a national affront and a cause for war. Hostilities

began with clashes between war junks in fall 1839 after incidents in the summer had ratcheted up tensions. The Daoguang emperor, who had been impressed with Lin Zexu's memorials on the opium problem, was infuriated by the results of his policy. In comments on Lin's explanation of what had gone wrong, the emperor wrote that Lin had "caused the waves of confusion to arise" and "a thousand interminable disorders" to grow. "In fact you appear as if your arms were tied, without knowing what to do. It appears that you are no better than a wooden image."²¹ With that, the emperor sent Lin into exile in Turkestan for four years.

The war itself was an on-again, off-again struggle against a backdrop of negotiations between the two sides. Serious talks began in the fall of 1840, with a settlement reached in early 1841. But both the Daoguang emperor and Prime Minister Henry Palmerston were upset that the settlement was too lenient for the other side. The fighting then dragged on for a year and a half longer before the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing in August 1842 ended it with the surrender of the Central Country to the English barbarians.

For the Chinese, it was a military disaster, underlining the reality that the imperial forces were desperately outmoded. The British not only had large, traditional men-of-war but also steam-driven, shallow-draft crafts that could glide up inland streams. The Chinese, in stark contrast, had no navy at all. There was simply no way that they could compete with the steam-powered warship that one day in early 1841, with withering long-distance artillery, destroyed nine war junks, two military stations, five forts, and a shore battery. In land fighting it was the same. The British, sporting the latest in technology, fought the Chinese with self-firing rifles. The banner forces had matchlocks, in which the gunpowder had to be ignited by hand; most troops had only cold weapons—knives, swords, clubs, and spears. The midcentury official Zuo Zongtang probably summed it up best: "the land troops could neither ride nor shoot and the water troops could not sail or fire a cannon."²²

The Opium War was the opening salvo of a century of aggression by Western nations against China, a century of conflict between very different cultures with sharply differing values; yet each clash would have its own particulars and realities. An eventual war may have been likely, but it was particularly tragic that this first conflict centered on questions of international morality, specifically England's demand that it had a right to smuggle opium into China no matter what the drug was doing to China or many of its people. For a number of Chinese this pivotal first confrontation with the West marked the West as amoral, if not immoral: The plaintive question of Lin Zexu echoes—"Let us ask, where is your conscience?" One consequence of the war was that foreign nations continued to import opium into the country despite Chinese laws forbidding its sale and use. Whereas the number of chests smuggled into China in 1839 was about 40,000, by 1884 the number brought into the country had more than doubled to 81,000.²³

THE UNEQUAL TREATY SYSTEM AND ITS IMPACT ON CHINESE IDENTITY

The Treaty of Nanjing, which ceded Hong Kong Island to Great Britain, was the first of many treaties between China and foreign nations that were called "unequal" because China did all the giving and received nothing in return. The treaties began to erode

China's sovereignty. In the beginning, the Chinese deluded themselves by rationalizing that their "generosity" matched their traditional tributary benevolence. It was only over time that they realized the insidious nature of the treaties. A cornerstone of the system was the application of the most-favored-nation principle, put in place in a supplementary treaty Britain and China signed in 1843. It promised that each country would receive every right and privilege that every other country received even if it was not specified in its particular treaty. For example, the Treaty of Nanjing did not contain a provision for renegotiations. The U.S.–Chinese Treaty of Wangxia of 1844 did, however, provide that possibility in ten years' time. The British then used the most-favored-nation clause to claim that right and demanded renegotiation of their treaty in 1852. From the Chinese perspective, as benevolent tributary elder brother, it was simply providing the same privileges magnanimously to all Western countries.

The early treaties were signed under the leadership of a group of Manchus at the court who had come to favor greater conciliation in dealing with the West. Led by the chief counselor, Mujangga, this group dominated diplomacy relative to the West from 1840 to 1850 under the policy of avoiding at all costs actions that might incite a new military conflict. They were opposed by groups of Han Chinese literati who supported stronger resistance against the West and opposed any treaty that would give the West more trading rights. During the opium crisis, these groups were strong proponents of Lin's cutting off trade with Britain in 1838 and of fighting the British with local militia units that allegedly had a more resistant and determined spirit than the banner forces. The Manchu–Han Chinese hostility at the highest level of the government was also apparent in Lin Zexu's exile, which Mujangga demanded and which the Han Chinese opposed. This difference in policy outlook should not be taken to suggest that the Manchus were easy on the West because they were outsiders themselves. For the Manchus, it was a choice over which strategy was least dangerous for the country until it could more effectively meet the challenge of the West. For the Han Chinese, who saw themselves as upholding the principle of protecting the morality of the state and culture against the attack of immoral barbarians, the Manchu policy was disgustingly weak and had to be morally censured.

When the Daoguang emperor's son, the Xianfeng emperor, took power in 1850, he dismissed Mujangga, whom he personally detested, as well as his allies. As if to underscore the shift from his father, he appointed Lin Zexu to deal with the growing social unrest in the South and brought back to policymaking positions Han Chinese whom Mujangga had earlier ousted. Once in power, they did not try to undo the treaty system under construction, but they downplayed appeasement in their dealings with the West.

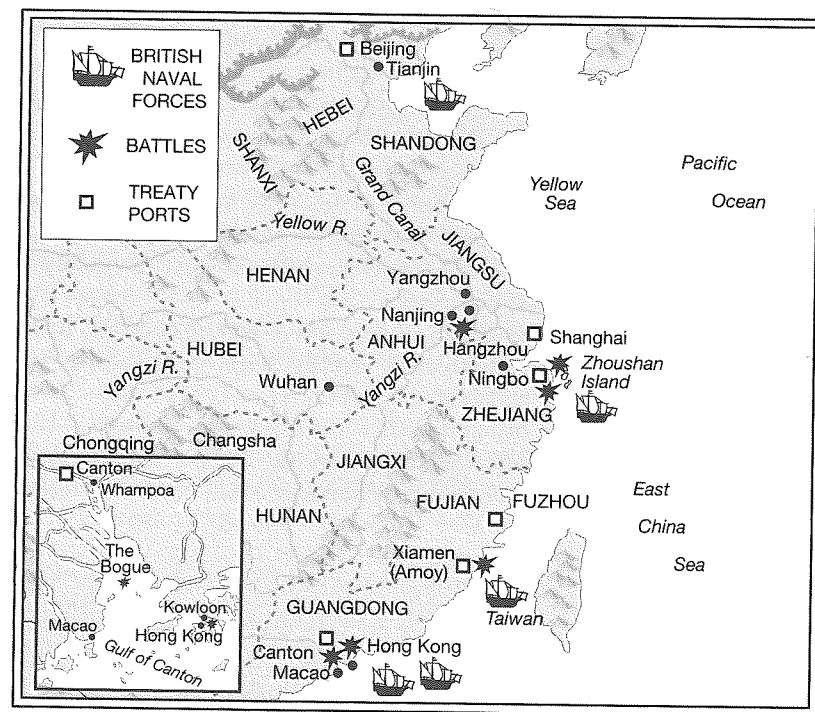
Foreign Concessions

The series of treaties opened up more ports for trade and foreign residence. The Treaty of Nanjing, for example, opened up four new ports (Xiamen [Amoy], Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai) to join Canton as a site for foreign settlements and continuous trade. Each port was chosen for its role in the already existent maritime trade. Xiamen was a center of the junk trade with Southeast Asia; Fuzhou was the main tributary port for Taiwan and the Ryukyu Island

tributary missions; Ningbo was the traditional port involved in trade with North China, Korea, and Japan. Shanghai was a developing port near the Yangzi's mouth. Other treaties opened more ports, first along the coast, then on inland rivers, especially the Yangzi.

Foreign concessions were areas carved out of existing Chinese cities where foreigners now became the rulers. In these areas where many Chinese still lived, foreigners assessed the taxes and collected them; foreign police and troops patrolled there; foreign law was the authority there. Thus, Chinese residents of foreign concessions were uprooted from their native country without moving an inch, and Chinese sovereignty over these former citizens was ended. Yet the Chinese did not react strongly to the situation; they could point to the precedent in past dynasties when Arab traders in particular lived with their own laws in designated parts of port cities.

The number of foreigners was small, growing at the five ports from about 450 in 1846 to around 600 in 1854. Most of these people had been resident for some time before the war at Canton, so there was a sense among the treaty port foreigners of being one community, a sense that may have been heightened by some Chinese cultural hostility. The British, having "opened" China, led the way in the creation of the treaty system and in the life of the ports. Approximately half of the foreign populace, predominantly men, was from the British Isles, with another quarter from India, so that treaty port life was reflective of the British-Indian culture of the time.



The Opium War and Initial Treaty Ports

The foreign population was made up mostly of merchants, with a fairly small number of missionaries. The most important merchant houses were two British firms—Jardine, Matheson and Company and Dent and Company; the major American firm was the Boston-based Russell and Company. All three had been involved in the opium trade; in the new treaty ports, they still brought in opium but participated as well in legal commerce and expanded their interests into such areas as banks and insurance, godowns (warehouses), and shipyards. The head of a foreign firm had to rely completely on a Chinese middleman, or comprador, who spoke enough pidgin English (a mixture of Portuguese, Chinese, and English) to converse with the foreigner and who could fulfill the needs of the firm through his contacts in the Chinese community, overseeing transactions and being responsible for the firm's Chinese personnel. Many compradors became extremely wealthy.

Extraterritoriality with Consular Jurisdiction

Another treaty right established by the West was extraterritoriality with consular jurisdiction, by which a foreigner accused of a crime would be tried not in a Chinese court but in one presided over by the consul of his nation. The Western rationale was that Chinese law was barbaric. Certainly the gulf between Western and Chinese culture over the general concept of law was wide. Western culture had made law the centerpiece of its political, social, and economic life ever since the deity had handed it down. Chinese culture had denigrated law as the last recourse for people who could not deal with their fellow men in proper moral fashion. China had no independent profession of law, nor were there lawyers. No independent judiciary existed. The county magistrate investigated cases, presided as court judge, and delivered judicial decisions. In criminal cases, punishments were prescribed; since extenuating circumstances were not considered, magistrates had to follow them. Suspects were presumed guilty and were treated severely; torture and beating were expected if the suspect did not confess. Those who had passed even the lower-level civil service examination were exempted from physical punishment in such cases. At times of local social disturbances, those involved in the action might be subject to summary execution. In homicide cases, the Chinese system firmly upheld an "eye for an eye" policy. There was little consideration if the death was an accident, and there was no possible lesser charge, as in the West, of involuntary manslaughter. If a life was taken, a life must be given. If the killer could not be found, then a family member or someone connected to the killer would substitute.

Western experience with the Chinese legal system stretched back to the early eighteenth century, but the two most famous cases related to two ships, the British ship *Lady Hughes* in 1784 and the Baltimore-based American ship *Emily* in 1821. The country-trading *Lady Hughes* sailed up to Canton with very important people on board. The gunner fired a salute, the discharge from the shot killing two Chinese. When the ship's captain refused to tell the Chinese which gunner fired the shot, they arrested the ship's business manager, who was then threatened with punishment as an associate, as it were, of the gunner. When the gunner was eventually turned over to the Chinese, he was, in accord with China's eye-for-an-eye homicide law, strangled. His execution following the death that most British considered accidental

underscored in foreign minds the barbarism of the Chinese legal system. In a similar case, a sailor on the *Emily* was responsible for the death of a Chinese woman on a boat; though there are different accounts of the nature of the death, the sailor was seized and executed. Because of these experiences, when drunken British sailors went ashore near Hong Kong and beat a Chinese villager to death in the summer of 1839, the British refused to turn them over to Chinese authorities. The episode ratcheted up tensions already high over the opium crisis. Westerners took the position that extraterritoriality was necessary until the Chinese amended their legal system.

Initially there was no strong Chinese reaction to this loss of control over foreign citizens. For one thing, it meant that the Chinese did not have to burden themselves with learning all the languages of these barbarians. As with the establishment of foreign settlements, China could find a precedent for such an arrangement: They had allowed Tang dynasty Arab traders in Canton to hold extraterritoriality. But difficulties surfaced quickly when, as in foreign settlements, some Chinese also gained a measure of protection in their own courts from Westerners protected by extraterritoriality. This happened among different groups. For example, when a comprador or another key Chinese personnel of Western business firm was accused of a crime, the officers of the firm understandably became highly agitated. Without their intervention, there was the possibility that he would be found guilty. With imprisonment or worse, he would then be lost to the firm. Since compradors were the key to business success, performing the crucial middleman role, in such cases Western firms faced financial losses or even bankruptcy. To find a new comprador would take much time, and for a new comprador to make the required business connections and arrangements would take much longer. Thus, officers of Western firms began to intervene in court cases, pressuring Chinese courts to be more lenient to the firm's protégés than they otherwise might be.

Western missionaries also offered such protection to their accused protégés, Chinese converts. Missionaries may have worked many hard years for only a dozen or so converts. Imagine the chagrin when, say, the first convert and leader of the congregation was accused of a crime. Missionaries would have wanted to vouch for the man, and in many instances they intervened in Chinese court cases or prevailed on their foreign consul to do so for them. When, as it happened more than once, missionaries resorted to having their consuls dispatch gunboats to force their way in difficult cases, the matter became not simply a legal dispute but one of brute force. In episodes where the missionary was successful, it almost seemed as though he was able to impart some measure of extraterritoriality to his convert; in any case, there came to be a category of Chinese who were more privileged than others, a particularly galling situation for the nonprivileged.

According to the treaties, China also lost its sovereign right to set, control, and collect its own tariffs. Tariff rates were set at about 5 percent of the value of the goods, not raising a red flag in Chinese minds because they were not notably out of line with traditional tariff rates. But the times were not traditional. Unable to raise tariffs, the Chinese could not, for example, keep out unwanted items. Perhaps more important, China's enforced paralysis relative to tariffs had serious implications for China's efforts to industrialize. During the Opium War, China came face-to-face with modern technology in the form of ships and weapons; the experience was a catalyst, spurring some

Chinese to begin to think initially about buying them from the West and ultimately to consider manufacturing them themselves. But Chinese efforts to establish modern industry, both heavy and light, were hampered by their inability to raise tariffs to protect their infant industry. In the twentieth century, Communist thinkers and activists were especially condemnatory about the loss of tariff control, for they argued that it prevented China from entering the capitalist era, thereby short-circuiting China's passage through the "scientific" evolution of history described by Marx.

Not only did China lose control of its tariffs, it also lost the right (of any sovereign state) to collect those customs duties. In the 1850s, in the middle of the turmoil of the Taiping Rebellion in the vicinity of Shanghai, the British began collecting customs duties to ensure their collection. This collection became institutionalized in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service. Even though the long-time director, Robert Hart, was effective and dedicated, seeing himself essentially as part of the Chinese bureaucracy, the collection of customs for one country by another was a humiliating loss of sovereignty. China would not gain control of tariffs or their collection until 1933.

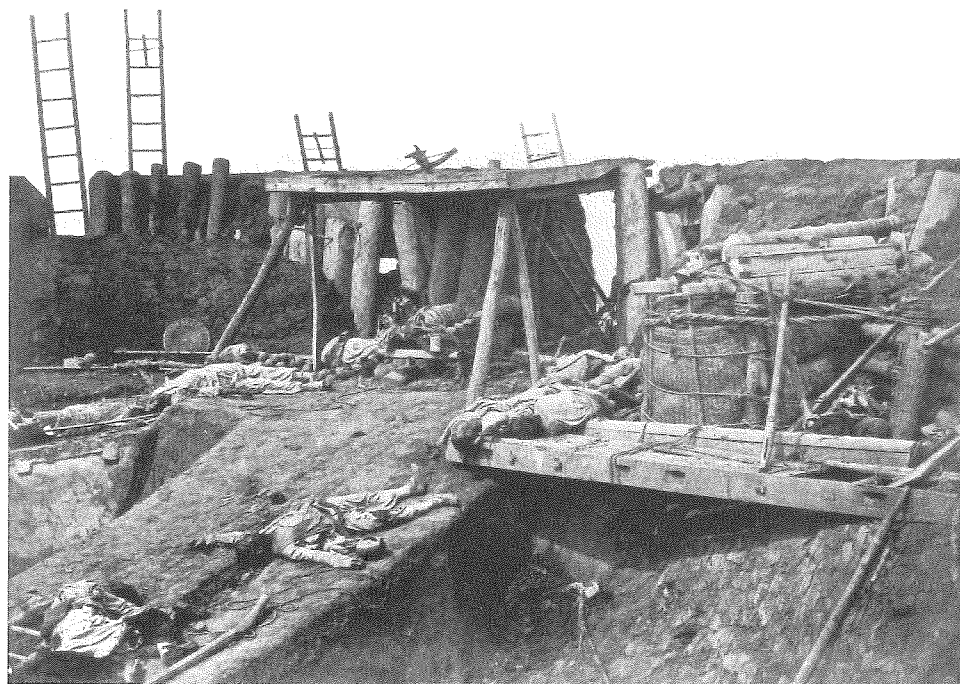
Another sovereign right of a nation is to control its rivers and streams, specifically to control who can sail up those waterways into its interior regions. This right is obviously critical for a country's security and defense. Yet, according to the treaties, China could not make any inland waterway off limits to foreign ships, nor could it prevent ships of any nation from penetrating its space via its rivers.

Foreign Ambassadorial Residence

The main structure of the treaty system was completed by the Treaty of Tianjin (1858) and its follow-up, the Convention of Beijing (1860). These agreements came in the midst of another war waged by Britain and France against China. Called the Arrow War and sometimes the Second Opium War, this struggle began with the British accusation that a Chinese ship (the *Arrow*) under British registry had been illegally searched by Chinese officers pursuing a Chinese pirate. Overreactions to a series of incidents led to fighting and to British calls for upholding the honor and interests of Great Britain abroad. In the end, France joined the campaign, using as an excuse the murder of a French missionary in an area that was off limits to foreigners. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that both countries were simply looking for a pretext to force further political and economic demands on China.

The British and French took Canton in December 1857 and then sailed north, seizing in summer 1858 the coastal Dagu forts that provided strategic protection for key cities in the capital region and taking the city of Tianjin. Negotiations ensued, producing the treaty that bears the city's name. It expanded the treaty system and established two more exceptionally significant rights. As for expanding the system, it opened ten new treaty ports, four of them on the Yangzi River. It allowed anyone with a passport to travel anywhere in the country, and passports were not even required for travel up to 30 miles from treaty ports.

One of the new rights set forth in the treaty was that ambassadors of foreign states would reside permanently in Beijing. An important aspect of the tributary system had been to designate ports of entry far away from the capital in order to keep the Chinese home port for foreigners at a distance. They were escorted to the capital and, following the prescribed



The British took the strategic Dagu fort in May 1858, but they were repulsed by the Chinese when they tried to take it back in June 1859. Here many Chinese lie dead after the first attack.

Source: George Eastman House/Felice Beato/Hulton Getty Collection/Archive Photos

rituals, were allowed to remain in Beijing for only a specified period. There was no ongoing presence of foreigners in the capital or anywhere else in China. Now diplomatic representatives from all barbarian nations could live near the Forbidden City. This, the Chinese could not abide. Even after the treaty was signed, they continued to fight. In the summer of 1859 the British again attacked the forts but were repulsed. When a British negotiating team was sent to Beijing, it was arrested and some members were killed. The British commander, Lord James Elgin, decided that strong measures must be taken in revenge and to force compliance with the treaty. He sent his troops to occupy Beijing; the emperor fled the capital for his hunting lodge north of the Great Wall. In October 1860, Elgin's troops marched northwest of the city to the Summer Palace (Yuan Ming Yuan), a complex of over 200 pavilions and pagodas built during the reign of the Qianlong emperor. There they looted its thrones, furniture, porcelains, and robes; then Elgin gave orders for them to burn the whole 10-square-mile area. Chinese resistance against aggressive Western armies had turned beauty to ashes. The words of an Englishman with Elgin's army: "But whenever I think of beauty and taste, of skill and antiquity, while I live, I shall see before my mind's eye some scene from those grounds, those palaces, and ever regret the stern but just necessity which laid them in ashes."²⁴

Six days after the torching, the Chinese agreed in the Convention of Beijing to the permanent residence of foreign ambassadors in the capital. One minor stipulation of the treaty was that from that time on, China could no longer use the character for "barbarian" (*yi*) in referring to the British. What underlay this stipulation and the demand for permanent diplomatic residence was the Western state model of equality among nations, a model with which the traditional tributary system with its hierarchy of superior/subordinate could never coexist. Though it would take decades for the system to die in Chinese thinking, for all practical purposes the centuries-long tributary system was dead. Although China never became a full-fledged colony, its loss of sovereignty over its own territory and people created what has been called a "semicolony," subject to the demands and pressures of not one but many foreign nations.

THE MISSIONARY AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

The Treaty of Tianjin granted another crucial right to Western nations: the guarantee that Christianity could be openly taught and practiced. Missionaries could travel anywhere, purchase property for church and school, and spread their message at will. The record of the impact of nineteenth-century missionaries is complex: Each missionary naturally had personal motives; they came from a variety of countries, each with its own approaches to China and attitudes toward the mission effort. Yet missionaries shared one thing: their conviction that they possessed absolute Truth. Largely because of this, the story of the relationship between missionaries and Chinese was by and large not a happy one. The political and social landscape of the dynasty's last half century is marked by episode after episode of turmoil and violence touched off by the actions of missionaries in communities across China.

As we have seen, the Yongzheng emperor (1722–1736) outlawed Christianity. From that time on, Christianity had to operate underground; in the early nineteenth century, persecutions with arrests, punishments, and executions were frequent. As a measure of the control exercised in this area, only one new missionary entered China during the years 1801–1829—the Protestant Robert Morrison, who entered Canton with the protection of the East India Company. Beginning in the late 1810s, Catholic missionaries began to build Catholic communities around the country; the first American Protestants came in 1830. Others followed. One, the German Karl Gutzlaff, is not a symbol of all missionaries at the time, but his actions point to something all missionaries shared—a willingness to use any means necessary to spread the gospel. Gutzlaff became a translator on opium ships plying the China coast. From these ships dispensing opium, Gutzlaff also distributed Christian tracts. The message the Chinese ultimately picked up from this mix of Christ and opium must at the least have distorted the Christian intent.

In viewing the Chinese, the missionaries were convinced of their own superiority and the total Truth of their message. The Chinese, in their estimation, were benightedly superstitious, greedy, and materialistic. In that state, they desperately needed what the Christian message offered. But these early missionaries were frustrated by the prohibition against the open practice of Christianity and frequently attacked Chinese policies regarding the West

and Western merchants. By the late 1830s, some missionaries were calling for armed invasion by the West “to break down the barriers which prevent the gospel of Christ from entering China.”²⁵ Once the Opium War broke out and battles led to the slaughter of Chinese, one missionary opined: “I regard such scenes . . . as the direct instruments of the Lord clearing away the rubbish which impedes the advancement of Divine Truth.”²⁶ Although this missionary saw the Chinese people as “rubbish,” others used other adjectives: “imbecilic,” “ignorant,” “conceited,” “weak,” “heathen,” “pagan.” It does not take much imagination to realize how these conceptions of the people they wanted to save would affect their approach.

In 1844, as part of a general treaty with France, the Qing government removed its proscription against Christianity. The 1860 treaty further solidified the toleration of the Western religion. The number of missionaries entering China grew quickly. By 1870, 250 Catholic missionaries represented a number of orders; at least 350 Protestant missionaries were in China by that year. Yet the Catholics, who had a long history of mission work in China, were far ahead of the Protestants in terms of conversions. In 1870 there were approximately 400,000 Catholic converts as opposed to about 6,000 Protestants. The Catholic mission at that time had spread throughout China, whereas the Protestant effort was concentrated in treaty ports mostly along the coast.

Unhappily, the missionaries retained the same attitudes toward the Chinese people that they had shown during the Opium War period. Their approach in all daily matters was that they were the privileged, who had to have their own way in every matter—especially in dealing with the rabble Chinese. That approach raises the question of whether a missionary could be sincerely tolerant of a society that he or she wanted to change to some degree; even if sympathetic, was it not the case that rejection of that society as it existed was at the heart of his or her approach? Missionaries frequently wanted to protect their converts by intervening in their legal cases; they felt they could rely on the support of their national consuls, who had the treaties behind them. In extreme situations, a missionary called for his consul to send a gunboat for a show of force or firepower if he was thwarted by local officials in his demands. The government of France, which saw the Catholic establishment in China as the vehicle for furthering its national interest, became the demanding protector of the Catholic mission. In one famous case, the governor of Guizhou province was accused of ordering various anti-Christian moves. The Catholic bishop lobbied French diplomats to have them pressure the Chinese government first to have the governor removed and then to have him executed; the French legation in Beijing did so. From the perspective of the French, they still had to rid themselves of the “rubbish” impeding their way. From the perspective of the Chinese government, here were foreigners demanding the transfer and execution of a Chinese provincial governor, a matter over which outsiders should have no say in another sovereign state.

The Chinese reaction to missionaries and their work grew out of reactions to foreigners in general and to the missionaries’ message and approach in particular. Although Chinese elites did not necessarily speak for all Chinese, elite attitudes filtered down to the masses, affecting their reactions. Educated Chinese generally saw all non-Chinese and their ideas as barbarian. Whereas the Chinese saw themselves as grounded in realistic pragmatism, some Christian teachings, such as a virgin birth and a father allowing

his son to be crucified, seemed not only superstitious but downright scandalous. Further, the Chinese saw missionaries in their daily activities maneuvering to purchase the best sites for their churches and pronounced them materialistic and grabbing. Many Chinese scholar elites found missionaries to be direct threats in their local communities. Products of the Chinese civil service examination system, scholar-gentry were the locality’s teachers, mediators, authorities, and charity providers. When missionaries moved into an area and converted Chinese, they were the obvious leaders of their congregations. In that capacity, they performed the same functions for their congregations—teaching, mediating, and providing charity—which gentry did for society at large. Therefore, not only were gentry upset by this usurpation of their roles, but, just as the treaties had done with foreign concessions and extraterritoriality, the missionary presence and roles separated some Chinese from others.

Chinese elites did not have access to gunboats or instruments of force to deal with offensive missionaries, but they did wield the writing brush. They wrote propaganda tracts about missionaries and their work with the intent to tar the missionary with the broad brush of sexual immorality. This was a tactic that traditionally had been an important weapon in the Chinese political attack repertoire. Here is a sample from a tract, “A Record of Facts to Ward Off Heterodoxy” (*Bixie zhishi*), first published in 1861 but reprinted many times in the decades following:

During the first three months of life the anuses of all [Christian] infants—male and female—are plugged up with a small hollow tube, which is taken out at night. They call this “retention of the vital essence.” It causes the anus to dilate so that upon growing up sodomy will be facilitated. At the junction of each spring and summer boys procure the menstrual discharge of women and, smearing it on their faces, go into Christian churches to worship. They call this “cleansing one’s face before paying respects to the holy one” and regard it as one of the most venerative rituals by which the lord can be worshipped. Fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers, behave licentiously with one another, calling it “the joining of the vital forces.” . . . There are all sorts of things of this nature that cannot be fully related. Hard as it may be to believe, some of our Chinese people also follow their religion. Are they not really worse than beasts?²⁷

Such scatological tracts were widely circulated, painting for elites and nonelites who heard the tales pictures of despicable depravity and perversity. Certainly they helped incite suspicion, anger, and fear among the Chinese populace. Indeed, Chinese authorities in at least three provinces, sensing its incendiary possibilities, banned this particular tract. Missionaries blamed these tracts for anti-Christian violence that erupted in numerous localities against themselves and their converts.

A paroxysm of violence in the northern treaty port city of Tianjin on the afternoon of June 21, 1870, underscores the cultural gulf and the fragility of relations that existed between foreign missionaries and Chinese. Tianjin was a city where relations with the West had set Chinese nerves on edge. It was there, following the signing of the 1858 treaty, that

French and British troops had been based from 1860 to 1863. Having seized a former imperial mansion to serve as a consulate and having built a cathedral on the site of a former Chinese temple, the French were seen as arrogant and especially detested by the local populace. As if the latent animosity were not enough, in 1869 and 1870 anti-Christian writings had appeared in the area.

French Catholic nuns managed an orphanage in the compound of the large new cathedral of Notre Dame des Victoires. They were especially eager to be able to baptize sick children and administer last rites to those who might be near death. The orphanage thus saw a higher mortality rate than normal, a reality made worse by an epidemic that raced through the orphanage in June 1870. Suspicion spread about goings-on behind the compound's walls. Rumors abounded: Orphans, it was said, were being killed, with their body parts used to make aphrodisiacs for priests and nuns in their alleged sex play. Chinese mistrust of French motives was heightened because the nuns had a policy of giving a small sum of money to people who turned children into the orphanage. In addition, once children were placed under the nuns' control, the nuns did not allow them to be reclaimed by anyone, even if they represented themselves as parents or relatives. This situation helped fuel the rumor that scoundrels were kidnapping children to turn them in to make some cash. The confession of a man arrested on June 18 that he had kidnapped several children and sold them to a janitor who worked for Catholic institutions in the city raised tensions to an almost palpable level.

As rumors swirled, Chinese began to demand to search the orphanage. The search of the premises by a high local official, his disproof of the kidnapper's confession, and his announcement that all seemed in order at the orphanage did not still the increasing agitation. When a fight broke out at the cathedral between converts and onlookers, the official dispatched soldiers to quash the disturbance. At the same time, the French consul and his chief secretary charged into the official's office, the consul carrying two pistols. Incredibly, the consul shot at the official. When he missed, attendants seized him. The official calmly advised that he not go back on the streets, where a huge, angry crowd was forming. Saying that he was not afraid of any Chinese, the consul walked into the crowd. When he spotted the local magistrate coming toward him, he totally lost control, opening fire again; he missed the magistrate but hit and killed his attendant.

The killing transformed the crowd into an angry mob that killed the consul and his officer on the spot and nineteen others, including twelve priests and nuns. The French victims were mutilated: After being raped, the nuns had their breasts sliced off and their eyes gouged out before they were burned alive. Several dozen Chinese converts were also killed. The cathedral, along with four American and British churches, was burned. French demands followed. The settlement included a large sum for reparations, the execution of eighteen mob leaders and hard labor for twenty-five others, the exile of the high official and magistrate of Tianjin, and the sending of a mission of apology.²⁸ This violent episode often stands as a symbol of the seeming impossibility of amicable relations between these two sides.

If the faces of imperialism in its 3M onslaught—merchants, missionary, and military—differed as to motive, approach, and national and individual purpose, they all had some common features. They all believed that what they had to bring to the Chinese

was infinitely better than what the Chinese had. Acting for the capitalist countries of the West, the merchants believed that they could shake China awake from its self-sufficient dream world into the system of multistate trade and that they could take advantage of the fabled China market. The military, with its power, had no doubt that it could blast apart the neanderthalic and outmoded Chinese regime and culture, thereby making possible the expansion of “enlightened” Western civilization. The missionary had the Truth to save Chinese from eternal damnation.

But they were dealing with a culture that gloried in its long history and vaunted traditions, with an intellectual elite that was absolutely certain of the superiority of its culture. In the depth of their commitment to their transcendent civilizational goals, these cultures were seemingly two immovable forces. The difference for the two sides in this confrontation was the timing of the Western arrival. The West's military power came in force at a time when China's military power was on life support. The historical game of “what if” often provides insights: *What if* the West's military had come during the military heyday of the late eighteenth century? We will never know for sure, but it is likely that the course of world history would have been markedly different, and it is likely that China's modern history would not have been so tragic.

Suggestions for Further Reading

- Brockey, Liam Matthew. *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). This recent study of the Jesuit mission provides a cogent revisionist view of the missionary efforts; it is rich in its details and insights.
- Cohen, Paul. *China and Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963). This is the best analysis of the cultural divide between Western missionaries and Chinese elites.
- Fay, Peter. *The Opium War, 1840–1842* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976). A well-written and thorough study of the war; reviews often call it “classic.”
- Hevia, James L. *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth Century China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). This critique of British imperialism examines the rationales of imperialists for policies regarding opium importation and the unequal treaty system, and for actions during the Boxer uprising.
- Polachek, James. *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). This important study focuses on Chinese domestic policy debates and factions in decision making in the 1840s and 1850s.