

Part 7: Invasions, Rebellions, and the End of Imperial China

Part 7 Introduction

Pre-modern vs. Modern



When does modern Chinese history begin? Some say during the Opium War, the late 1830s and 1840s. Others date modern history from 1919 and the May Fourth Movement.

In this course we take the 18th century, when the Qing was at its height, to begin modern Chinese history.

Considering that modern history bears some relation to the present, what events signified the beginning of that period? In Europe, historians often chose 1789, the French Revolution.

The signifying events, the transitional events, for China begin with its transition from empire to nation-state, with population growth, with the inclusion of Xinjiang and Tibet during the Qianlong reign, and with the challenges of maintaining unity in a multi-ethnic population.

Encounter with the West

In the 19th century this evolving state ran head-on into the mobile, militarized nation of Great Britain, the likes of which it has never seen before. This encounter was nothing like the visits from Jesuit missionaries (footnote 129 on page 208) or Lord Macartney (page 253). It challenged all the principles of imperial rule.

Foreign Enterprise

Today's Chinese economy has its roots in the Sino-foreign enterprises born during these early encounters. Opium was one of its main enterprises. Christianity was a kind of enterprise. These enterprises combined to weaken and humiliate the Qing. As would be said of a later time, these foreign insults were a "disease of the skin."¹⁶⁵ It was the Taiping Rebellion that struck at the heart.

Taiping Rebellion

The greatest war of the 19th century, the Taiping Rebellion, was a Chinese Christian civil war that nearly toppled the Qing. It led to the deaths of tens of millions of Chinese.

Economy

The biggest economy in the world in 1820 was the Qing empire and by 2020 the biggest economy will again be the Chinese economy. And so it was in 1200 and in 1600. So it's the norm for the Chinese economy to be the world's largest. The period of the 19th century diverged from the norm.

From the late 18th century through the early 19th century a period of intense international competition threatened the survival of the Chinese civilization.

Linking the Modern to the Pre-modern

This course links the pre-modern to the modern because the issues of today are bound to the past. Confucianism still plays a large role in China. While the old imperial exams disappeared overnight in 1905, and yet today they've been reinvented in the *gaokao*, the university entrance exam. But as noted in the office hours by one of our ChinaX students, the *gaokao* is not the civil service exam of modern times. Instead, the *guokao*, the National Official Examination, is the qualifying exam for service as a bureaucrat.

¹⁶⁵ I believe this refers to Chiang Kai-shek saying (quoted in [Wikipedia](#)) "the Japanese are a disease of the skin, the Communists are a disease of the heart."

28: Myths and Lessons of Modern Chinese History

Historical Overview

How we know what we think we know

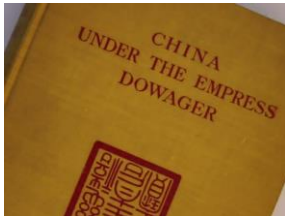
Boxer War of 1900

Incited by the Boxers, on the 25th day of the fifth month of the 26th year of the Guangxu Reign, which was June 21, 1900, the Empress Dowager of the Qing declared war on the world. She besieged the Beijing legations of England, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, Japan, and the U.S.

These nations responded with an expeditionary force of 20,000 men who freed the legations, sacked Beijing, and occupied its palaces. The Celestial Court submitted to the onerous terms of the conquest, including an indemnity four times the Qing revenue, to be paid through 1940.

Popularized in the U.S. by the movie *55 Days In Peking* with Charlton Heston and Ava Gardner, China was brought to its knees in humiliation by a small foreign force. Eleven years later the Qing collapsed, ending a 2000 year imperial tradition.

China and the world consciousness in the last hundred years



China has grown into an international powerhouse of industry, education, art, and culture that today extends worldwide with its bright center once again in Beijing.

But what did we know 100 years ago? The most popular book was *China Under the Empress Dowager* by J.O.P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse, helping to shape popular and scholarly views of China. A major source for the book was the diary of a high court official, which proved to be entirely fictional, a construction of Backhouse, who also claimed, falsely of course, to be the Empress Dowager's secret lover.

The Great Wall, visible from space?



Voltaire called the Great Wall "an engineering marvel superior to the pyramids of Egypt," though of course he never saw either. It is supposedly the only work of human construction that can be seen from outer space, although it cannot, in fact, be seen from space because it blends too well with its natural environment. So what was the origin of this myth? In 1932, the comic strip *Ripley's Believe It or Not* declared the Great Wall to be "the mightiest work of man-- the only one that would be visible to the human eye from the moon."

How old is China?

Chinese and foreign students tend to reply with the stock answer that “we have more than five thousand years of history.” In this course, we think of China as home to the longest continuous civilization in world history. But we also think of China as a young country that did not exist until 1912, when the Republic of China was declared the successor to the Qing dynasty.

Myth 1 – Unity

Political Unity

From the unification of the Warring States by the Qin in 221 BCE (page 53), political unity has been a consistent goal, sometimes achieved and often not, in cycles of unity and disunity. When the Qin standardized the systems of writing, weights and measures, language and currency, those standards reigned long after the Qin had fallen.

After 220 CE, at the end of the Han, China fell into disunity for three-and-a-half centuries – the periods of the Three Kingdoms, the Six Dynasties of the south, and the Sixteen Kingdoms of the north. China remained in disunity until the Sui (589-618 CE) and the Tang (618-907 CE).

Dynasties relied on *tianming*, granting the emperor his legitimate seat as the Son of Heaven, the liaison between heaven and earth (see page 25).

Conquest Dynasties. The expansion of borders beyond those controlled by the Han Chinese led to empires ruled by peoples not of Han descent, beginning with the Mongols of the Yuan (1279-1368) and ending with the Manchus of the Qing (1644-1911). See page 212.



These extended borders beyond core China included Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet. The China of today has the extent of the Qing without the rule of the Manchus. The concept of “Chinese” unity may be seen as a modern phenomenon.

No unified political territory has ever been so large for so long as that of the great Qing empire and its Han Chinese successors. Despite this overall unity, economic life centered on *macro regions*, smaller regional economies.

And although Shanghai newsman Carl Crow, in his *Handbook for China*, touted 400 million Chinese customers, there has never been just one Chinese national market. China today is broken into interlocking macro regions with populations the size of European nations or larger.

The Charoen Popkhand Group (CP Group), one of the world’s largest agricultural businesses, established an integrated supply chain from animal feed to food processing, to their own CP supermarkets, in 28 provinces. But they’ve had to advance into each province individually, with specific localized approaches tailored to each region. There are no easy national markets for poultry, eggs, meat and fish.

Despite the evident power of the central Chinese government, there are many levels of government beneath it - provincial, municipal, and local – with their myriad of party committees and power brokers that can make Beijing seem very far away.

Cultural Unity



Through the last thousand years, China's exam system has provided a means of cultural unity, encouraging young Chinese men to study a common core of art and literature as a requirement for advancement in the political system.

The book by Miyazaki Ichisada, *China's Examination Hell*, reflects on the *gaokao*, the modern University exams, that test for political correctness as well as math, science, and composition, ensuring a continuing set of common beliefs. These must be passed for entry to the prestigious Tsinghua and Peking Universities that are far more selective than even Princeton or MIT.

The common cultural denomination is Confucianism, generally taken to be the moral principles that seek social and political harmony and define one's conduct according to one's status: ruler over ruled, elite over commoner, elder over younger, male over female.

The Little Red Book replaced Confucianism. In the 1950's, the hierarchy would change to farmer over landlord, worker over manager. By the principle of conduct according to one's status remained the same. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, China remains one of the most status conscious places on Earth.

The Party works hard to maintain the difficult concept of cultural unity in an ethnically diverse nation, imposing a single time zone on an area the size of the continental U.S.

Myth 2 – Isolation

A myth promulgated by both Western and Eastern literature is that China did not emerge from its millennia of isolation until Western civilization “opened” China in the 19th century, and more recently after the reform of Deng Xiaoping's leadership in 1978.

The Great Wall is symbolic of this insularity, of sturdy borders within which China huddled. But for most of its imperial history, China crossed its loosely-defined borders for trade and for expansionism. The Han sent envoys for great distances along the Silk Road. The Tang was known for setting out a welcome mat in Chang'an for ambassadors from all over the world (see page 99). Buddhism migrated from India and captured China more completely than any foreign invasion. The Southern Song capital of Hangzhou was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world.

Today the Chinese diaspora population exceeds 40 million, mostly in Asia but also in Europe and the Americas. The current Chinese boom could not have occurred without overseas Chinese entrepreneurs. The efforts by Mao to cast them out and isolate China would prove short-lived.

Myth 3 – Historical Suppression of Commerce

Chinese tradition defined a four-part social order¹⁶⁶ with officials at the top and merchants at the bottom, used as evidence for Mao's claim that imperial China suppressed “all but the sprouts of capitalism.” This was, perhaps, no more proscribed than usury in Christian Europe. Even in comparison to Europe, late imperial China had a highly commercial economy. Land could be freely bought and sold, rented and worked.¹⁶⁷ Late imperial China had landed elites, but no hereditary estate holders like France or Prussia, and no serfs like Eastern Europe of the 19th century.

Population flowed freely, even into Manchuria. There were few state monopolies, few administrative barriers to trade, and comparatively low taxes. Property rights and contractual rights were protected, even without England's system of legal precedence. Corporations and shareholding partnerships allowed the distribution of ownership, risk, and profit in farming, mining, and commerce.

This great Chinese economy, the aggregation of many regional economies, would eventually be destroyed by Chinese Communism. But not for a while.

In a speech to Chinese entrepreneurs in 2010, Chen Dongsheng, Chairman of the Taikang Insurance Company, said China was in the second golden decade of modern Chinese capitalism. He referred to Chiang Kai-Shek's National Government rule from 1927-1937 as the first golden decade. But today, state-owned enterprises are again ascendant, crowding out private enterprise.

¹⁶⁶ See page 70 for Guan Zhong's social order, proposed during the Warring States period.

¹⁶⁷ See page 200 for the *Three Lords of the Field* as it began in the Ming, dividing up ownership of the subsoil, topsoil, and the right to farm.



Lu Guanqiu of the Wanxiang Group was born outside Hangzhou, a region that bred entrepreneurs¹⁶⁸. In 1969, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, he and his family started what was called then a Commune and Brigade Enterprise that has blossomed into China's largest manufacturer of automobile parts.

In public, he credits the Chinese government for his success. Privately he talks about the natural and persistent entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese.

Discussion Topic

Browse through a few current news articles about China today. Choose one article to analyze. What are some of the assumptions made by the article's writer about China? Do these assumptions show a biased or a more balanced view of China? What are the focuses of the articles you read? How do these articles show us the importance of China in world politics today?

My thoughts:

The Dangers of State-Owned Enterprises

I've looked at two articles in **The Economist**:

Apr 27th, 2013, **Perverse Advantage, A new book lays out the scale of China's industrial subsidies.**

Aug 30th, 2014, **Fixing China Inc., Reform of state companies is back on the agenda**

****Assumptions****

Both articles state the disadvantages to the Chinese people and to the Chinese government (and to foreign companies) of the subsidies and structural advantages that accrue to the SOEs. Neither article gives any credence to the possible advantages to the Chinese people of subsidizing SOEs. Not that I personally think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, not by a long shot, but if I were writing for the *People's Daily*, that's how I'd attack the articles.

****Bias****

First, I believe there's no such thing as an unbiased view. The bias in this case is that of a free-trade Western capitalist rag (my favorite rag, but that's neither here nor there) slamming China for parochial protectionism that stifles its own economy as well as the world's.

****Focus****

The focus is on the impact of sheltering SOEs, the potential for reform, and the forces of negative feedback, corruption and cronyism, that hinder reform. My opinion is that government subsidies are sticky, creating valleys of suboptimal equilibria that become stable over time and exceedingly difficult to escape.

****Importance of China****

The Economist in particular devotes more articles and special briefings to China as they do to any other nation except for the United States (and possibly Britain, but it **is** after all a British magazine).

¹⁶⁸ Birthplace of Jack Ma, perhaps China's greatest entrepreneur.

28: Achievement and Limits of Manchu Rule

Ming and Manchu Memories



The founding of the Ming was directly related to the expulsion of the Mongols.¹⁶⁹ The primary strategic concern was defending the northern perimeter as that was traditionally where threats to the Chinese, like the Mongols, originated.

The Mongols were, in his mind, the only serious threat, and against this Zhu Yuanzhang maintained a force of 3 million men and refurbished and extended the Great Wall that had been started in the Qin.

In the early 20th century the Manchus were reviled as barbarian usurpers of the Mandate of Heaven, who suppressed

Chinese development while the rest of the world advanced through the Industrial Age, selling out China to the West and to Japan, and to [restoring Puyi to the throne in Manchuria](#).¹⁷⁰

Even as the Mongols retained their own state, Mongolia, the Republican revolutionaries kept the memory of the Ming close to their hearts when they restored the capital to Nanjing.

The Manchus, on the other hand, got nothing and the violence with which their imperial rule was excised from the heart ensured that China would not have a constitutional monarch to ease the transition to a modern state. The Manchu language is now dead, their lands settled by Han Chinese. The Manchu culture that expanded China's borders and established its longest individual reigns was extinguished.

The Manchus succeeded because they embodied both the steppe and the sown, being semi-nomadic agrarians.¹⁷¹ They lived in a region where Chinese and foreigners traded and intermarried, mixing Chinese administrative skills with their nomadic military.

Manchu Origins



The story of Wu Sangui, the Ming general who opened the Shanhaiguan for the Manchus (page 220), bears on the decision Yuan Shikai would have to make at the time of the Republican Revolution.

In the last days of the Ming, who would Wu join? Li Zicheng held Wu's father hostage and was offering a large bribe. The Qing matched the bribe. But there's a story that Wu's concubine, Chen Yuanyuan was being held by Li Zicheng and was taken as the concubine by one of Li's entourage, helping to make Wu's decision.

Conquering

Over 17 years, Dorgon hunted down and murdered the last vestiges of the former imperial family. After the War of the Three Feudatories (page 225), Wu and his followers and allies were dead and all three feudatories were abolished.

Taiwan



Like Chiang Kai-shek three centuries later, Zheng Chenggong would hold out on the Ilha Formosa (beautiful land) against a mainland force (page 221).

The Qing finally subdued Zheng's heirs in 1683 and made it a prefecture of Fujian province. Immigration was banned, forcing it underground, transforming Taiwan into a frontier society of merchants and pirates.

¹⁶⁹ See page 191 for three different views of the governance of Zhu Yuanzhang (aka Ming Taizu).

¹⁷⁰ In the [The Last Emperor](#), starring John Lone and Peter O'Toole, Puyi was portrayed as the "archetypal last and dissolute emperor of a fallen dynasty." The movie won nine Academy Awards including Best Picture.

¹⁷¹ See page 180 for the differences between steppe and sown and page 213 for a discussion of the nature of the Manchus.

The Rule of the Manchus

The Kanxi emperor expanded the Manchu empire to an extent matched only by the Tang and secured his reign by ruling well in peace and prosperity. It was said by an advisor of Liu Bang that the empire can be conquered from horseback but must be ruled from the palace. Li Zicheng was merely a “horseback king.”

Secret Memorial System. The Manchu obsession with suppressing dissidence resulted in a network of high officials informing on each other.

Literary Inquisition. See page 223 on the Library of the Four Treasuries and especially footnote 147 on the same page, describing the destruction of thousands of literary works that offended Manchu censors.

Dual Rule. The Manchus maintained a two-tier ruling system of Manchus and Han Chinese, keeping the most important part of their military with the Manchu’s only. This heralds the two-tier structure of Party and Government that would rule China after 1949. The Manchus also channeled money from imperial lands directly to the throne, bypassing the formal bureaucracy. This dual rule is what John Fairbank called a diarchy.¹⁷²

Observance of Chinese Rites. The Manchus gave the last Ming emperor a proper burial. They maintained the exam system right down to its main curricula and lofted themselves as patrons of the arts, thus reaching an unspoken agreement with the elite landholders of the lower Yangtze.

Land Tax Freeze. Kangzi froze the land tax in 1712, enabling the population to increase without a corresponding increase in taxes, as he believed a rising population was the key to prosperity. He could do this because revenues from imperial lands and monopolies were funneled to the throne outside the bureaucracy.¹⁷³ The tax freeze was maintained by Yongzheng and his successors.

Economy. The empire recovered sooner than any other major power from the world economic crisis of the 17th century. The Qianlong reign had so much wealth that when Lord Macartney visited, Qianlong issued his famous edict to King George III (see page 253):

"As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious and have no use for your country's manufactures."

Lack of Challenge. Perhaps the lack of challenge had its cost. The government became a thin wrapper over the rapidly growing population. The stable Chinese institutions and military failed to change with the changing world around them. In particular, the military was built only to control the peoples of inner and east Asia.

Diminishing Central Authority. The tax base was not substantial enough to address the central government’s growing problems even as taxes for local government grew. Over time the conquest dynasty became peripheral. By the end of the 18th century, corruption grew rampant.

Discussion

In September 1793, the Qianlong emperor’s edict to King George III, which proclaimed that the Qing lacked nothing within its borders, seemed to show no awareness of the empire’s growing links with international economic and cultural currents. Given what you know, could he have responded otherwise? If he had, what difference might it have made? To read Qianlong emperor’s edict to King George III you may visit [this](#) site.

Spring Festival Group – My thoughts:

Of course he could have responded otherwise, knowing what we now know and ignoring that he didn’t know the future. He could have been more accommodating, treating the King of England as an equal rather than a barbarian islander segregated by “intervening wastes of sea”. He could have negotiated an agreement that would allow him to find out more about the English, probing their industries while engaging in trade.

But he’d established a practice for encapsulating the trading community within their own compound, just as the Bannermen had their own compound. He couldn’t treat the English differently without changing how he treated everyone else, which would have changed the way the Empire regarded the world and its position within it, which would *then* reflect on the Empire’s position over its subjects. Bearing in mind that the Manchus were a conquest dynasty with a tiny minority rule, it risked showing all of China that the

¹⁷² Prof. Kirby is referencing an article titled *The Manchu-Chinese Dyarchy in the 1840's and '50's* by John K. Fairbank; *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 265-278. “Once the half-and-half division of posts had been set up at the capital after the Manchu conquest, the maintenance of this rough proportion became a guaranty both of Chinese participation in the central government and of Manchu control over it.”

¹⁷³ This is a theme Prof. Kirby will follow as it relates to the diarchy of party and state in the People's Republic of China.

Manchus were not only a small portion of China, but an even smaller morsel in the world – a world that granted no mandate, heaven or otherwise.

Should he have taken that risk to change his relations with foreign embassies, if he'd known the English would come back, hell bent for leather? I just can't get past that **he didn't know**.

Would it have made a difference to the end result? I can't answer that either, because "what I now know" is quite little. I'm a rank novice to Chinese history, especially that part of history beyond what we learned in Part 6. Presumably, what I'll know in a month or two would help me formulate an answer.

29: Opium and the Opium War

The Chinese World Order

East Asia, or what Europeans called the Far East, had China at the epicenter of a world including Korea, Vietnam, Japan, and the Ryukus. These nations had similar ideographic scripts, Confucian teachings, social order, and concepts of governance, all of which had originated with China.

China viewed this world as its world, as tianxia presided by its tianzi. Having now recognized the existence of a wider world, tianxia no longer meant the entire world – its common usage implied the Chinese empire, the world that *mattered*.

The world view of the Chinese

Sinic Zone. The Chinese cultural zone that included those societies culturally similar to the Qing: Korea, Vietnam, the Ryukus, and briefly and at a great distance, Japan.

Inner Asian Zone. The nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of Inner Asia. Not Chinese, but within China's power.

Outer Zone. Initially the outer barbarians, eventually Japan, some of the Southeast Asian states, and in theory, Europe.

Tribute



The states of the Outer Zone were all supposed to send tribute when trading, as Beijing was the center of the tribute system. Those paying tribute faced the long walk to the palace reception hall, as “gate after gate would sweep by, square after square, until the viewer would be overcome with a growing sense of fatigue and perhaps déjà vu.”

The ritual of tribute was taken from the **Yijing**, with the ruler facing south and the visiting minister facing north and kowtowing in three kneelings and nine protestations.

This was the ideal form of foreign relations.

Chinese centrality in foreign relations

Not so central

Though the Chinese ideal was elaborate and imposing, in practice it was more nuanced. Looking back in history, Gaozu, the Han Emperor, made peace with his own tribute to the Xiongnu, a princess, along with annual gifts of grain and silk. The Tang sent an ambassador to the Uigurs, of a princess and silk.

Throughout history, the Chinese dealt with different people in different ways. But the Europeans wanted all nations to be treated equally.

From the Sinic zone, the Chinese sought respect. From the Inner Asian zone, the Chinese (the Manchus) sought peace.

The Outer zone was more complicated. At first they tried shoehorning the maritime west into the group of tributary nations, even as the western nations were seeking formal diplomatic ties based on equality, which the Qing found insulting.

The Qing hoped these strange and incomprehensible Westerners who had come to trade first in Macao and then in Canton would eventually go home and leave China to its familiar world of hierarchy and tribute. Why did they dismiss the Western nations so readily? Because the Westerners had first appeared as carriers of Asian trade rather than as sources of trade themselves: the Portugese from Macao, the Dutch from Taiwan. These eventually were all supplanted by Great Britain.

The Canton System

In 1770, the Qing imposed a system that restricted all European trade to Canton in Guangzhou, through a Chinese monopoly of approved merchants known as the Cohong. All *Europeans* would be treated equally and commerce would be conducted between *companies* rather than nations. Primarily this was the Cohong and the Dutch East India Company. Thus they avoided addressing the concept of true national equality.

Opium and a Changing World Order

Mutual Addictions

There's some question whether conflict would have erupted without the influence of opium, because of the different perceptions of international relations. But it did matter in the events and in the later interpretation of the events, that opium was involved.

Over time the British people had grown to enjoy drinking tea to the extent that one might say it was a national addiction. The average Londoner spent 5% of his household income on tea. By 1800, the East India Company was investing over £4 million annually. The British government taxed tea at 100%.

History of Opium

Opium had been used in China as medicine for at least a thousand years, following a practice of swallowing it raw, until the 16th century. With the development of tobacco, the habit of smoking opium began¹⁷⁴, starting around the 1620s in Taiwan. *Madak*, a crude opium mixed with leaves, was smoked in a pipe, yielding about 0.2% morphine. The pure opium introduced by foreigners yielded 9% to 10% morphine, 50 times as strong.

While madak might produce a mild high, pure opium slows the heart and lungs, reduces appetite and creates a chemical addiction. Withdrawal is physically debilitating.

The Opium Trade



In 1773, an opium monopoly was established for the East India company in Bengal, India, to produce Patna opium, the finest quality available, specifically for sale to China.

In 1793, the Qing government reiterated its long-standing prohibition on opium smoking. As a result, the East India company sold opium indirectly through private traders who marketed the drug in Canton. The East India company used the proceeds to buy tea for export to England. Trade in opium rose from 5,000 chests in 1820 to 18,000 in 1830. A chest roughly the size of a steamer trunk weighed 145 pounds. That's 1300 tons annually.

Ultimately, the company lost its monopoly, leading to trade increases up to 40,000 chests or nearly 3000 tons by 1839. A vast illegal distribution network moved the opium along the Pearl River and through the canals of Southern China, corrupting and addicting officials throughout. Roughly 1 in 166 Chinese and Manchus were addicted in the Qing dynasty, chiefly among young and middle-aged men, including soldiers and officials. Over a hundred thousand were addicted in prosperous Suzhou.

The view from England

Public opinion in Britain, influenced by missionaries in China, was largely against the trade practices. The British government did nothing to stop the trafficking, since it was paying for tea that was so well enjoyed and highly taxed, accounting for one-third of national revenue in the 1830s.

Discussion

Why do you think the Qing's efforts to limit the opium trade were ultimately unsuccessful? Who do you think profited most from drug trafficking within China?

My thoughts: From the images and the bit of history we've seen, I believe opium was a social drug with a long history of practice among the young men of the elite. The increase in potency may have caught them by surprise, addicting millions before any policy could be enacted or knowledge gained and communicated. With strong demand within, the natural weakness of humanity, and great wealth to be made, nothing but a stern interdiction could slow the trade. The local dealers and foreign traders would have profited the most.

¹⁷⁴ See [here](#) in Wikipedia:

Smoking of opium came on the heels of tobacco smoking and may have been encouraged by a brief ban on the smoking of tobacco by the Ming emperor. The prohibition ended in 1644 with the coming of the Qing dynasty, which encouraged smokers to mix in increasing amounts of opium.

Effects of Opium and the Qing's Response

Economic consequences of the Opium Trade

Until the late 18th century, the Qing had a trade surplus, resulting in silver specie flowing into China as the British imported tea. By the 1820s, the Qing was running a trade deficit and by the 1830s the amount paid for opium totaled 34 million silver dollars annually.

Chinese Currency and Taxes on Farms

The currency consisted of copper cash for small payments and silver ingots for large transactions. Farmers were assessed taxes in silver, but had to pay in copper at the domestic copper/silver exchange rate. The trade imbalance raised the cost of domestic silver, devaluing copper and therefore raising the real tax rate.¹⁷⁵

Commissioner Lin at Canton



In the 1830s, Beijing actively debated whether opium trade should be prohibited entirely or taxed and placed under a government monopoly.

To his credit, the Daoguang Emperor (r. 1812-1850) refused to allow the government to operate opium dens selling 'foreign mud.' Nor did he think that arresting Chinese addicts or dealers would solve the problem. So in December of 1838, he sent Commissioner Lin Zexu to Canton with a three-part plan.

Three-Part Plan

1. Offer to rehabilitate addicts in government sanitariums.
2. Round up the Chinese dealers and break up the drug rings.
3. Confiscate opium from foreign sellers and force them to sign bonds that they would exit the opium trade.

Arriving in Canton in March of 1839, Lin had great success in parts 1 and 2, setting up sanitariums in Guangdong and arresting over 1600 Chinese dealers. Foreign traders couldn't sell even at reduced prices.

Lin continued on with the most confrontational third part of the plan, addressing Captain Charles Elliot, the British Superintendent of Trade, and even writing directly to Queen Victoria.¹⁷⁶ He believed that the English were ashamed of their drug trade, and that a direct appeal to the Queen might stop it.

Instead, the British position was that the Canton system was inadequate for managing trade of any kind and that formal diplomatic relations leading to unrestricted free trade was the necessary next step.

Lin believed he could fight the opium trade by cutting off all trade, shutting down the supply of tea to England. But first, on March 24, 1839, he ordered troops to surround 13 warehouses in Canton, holding 350 Europeans hostage until the merchants turned over the 21,000 chests of opium within. Captain Elliot interceded, promising to

¹⁷⁵ My thought: this is not unlike the inflation of silver during the Ming (page 198) which was compounded by the Single Whip System (page 201). Paying taxes in silver is no different than paying in copper at silver exchange rates.

¹⁷⁶ The full letter can be found [here](#). Following is a slightly different translation of the excerpt read in Prof. Kirby's lecture:

We find that your country is distant from us about sixty or seventy thousand miles, that your foreign ships come hither striving the one with the other for our trade, and for the simple reason of their strong desire to reap a profit. Now, out of the wealth of our Inner Land, if we take a part to bestow upon foreigners from afar, it follows, that the immense wealth which the said foreigners amass, ought properly speaking to be portion of our own native Chinese people. By what principle of reason then, should these foreigners send in return a poisonous drug, which involves in destruction those very natives of China? Without meaning to say that the foreigners harbor such destructive intentions in their hearts, we yet positively assert that from their inordinate thirst after gain, they are perfectly careless about the injuries they inflict upon us! And such being the case, we should like to ask what has become of that conscience which heaven has implanted in the breasts of all men?

We have heard that in your own country opium is prohibited with the utmost strictness and severity:---this is a strong proof that you know full well how hurtful it is to mankind. Since then you do not permit it to injure your own country, you ought not to have the injurious drug transferred to another country, and above all others, how much less to the Inner Land!

reimburse the merchants, at which point they gave up their inventory and the Chinese destroyed over 2.6 million pounds of opium.



Lin required the Europeans to sign a bond agreeing to abstain from the opium trade and be subject to Qing law if they broke their bond. Elliot refused, unwilling to consign British citizens to Chinese law.

Through the autumn of 1839, Lin and Elliot negotiated. All the while, Lin refused to allow vessels to land at Canton or Macao with food and water to resupply the British ships.

The first shots of the Opium War were fired off Kowloon on September 4th, when the British ships that were barred from Canton landed instead at Hong Kong in

search of supplies.¹⁷⁷

[Lord Palmerston](#), the British foreign minister, under pressure from the merchant lobby, sent an expeditionary force to China. But he did so based on Captain Elliot's reports from *before* the action at Kowloon. Some of the British believed that Lin's hostage-taking, in itself, was an act of war and that a military response would encourage a proper progression of trade relations. Others were opposed to military action to support the drug trade.

Discussion

How did the British see Lin Zexu's taking hostage of opium traders in 1839? How did Chinese see the same event? What can account for the different perspectives between British and Chinese views of the beginning of the opium war?

My thoughts:

Lord Palmerston was taking an opportunity to expand trade by suppressing Chinese resistance with his military. He was offended by the Canton system and the practice of kowtow, which was seen as arrogant in a new world of nations as equals (some more equal than others).

Captain Elliot was trying to resupply his ships and waiting for eventual support from his superiors. With his first-hand observations of the Chinese, he must have known the great military advantage the Royal Navy would have.

Commissioner Lin was trying to shut down opium addiction in a multi-step plan that began specifically and in some cases, harshly, with his own citizens. The last step was to shut off the supply of opium, which he intended to accomplish through all means including taking hostages and poisoning water supplies.

All three had different goals and saw the events in terms of those goals.

¹⁷⁷ From [Wikipedia](#):

The Battle of Kowloon was fought between British and Chinese ships off Kowloon, China, on 4 September 1839. It has been called "the first shot of the First Opium War" and arose following a fight in which a local Chinese died at the hands of British troops. The Chinese did not consider the punishment meted out to the perpetrators sufficient and as a result suspended supplies of food to the British at the same time poisoning their water supplies. In retaliation the British summoned nearby warships in an attempt to force the Chinese to change their minds.

The Aftermath of the Opium War

南京條約 The Treaty of Nanjing (1842)

The first of the Opium Wars ran from 1839 to 1842, with the British handing the Qing a humiliating defeat. Manchu warriors and Chinese war junks were equally unable to stop modern forces. Henry Pottinger advanced up the Yangtze unopposed, reaching Nanking in August 1842.

The Daoguang Emperor accepted the terms of surrender, knowing he might lose his mandate if Nanking fell to the British. Commissioner Lin was taken into exile and the Treaty of Nanjing signed, the first of the ‘unequal treaties.’

- Hong Kong was ceded to the British
- The ports of Canton, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai were opened to trade, to diplomats, to businessmen, and to missionaries.
- Reparations of 21 million silver dollars were owed to England
- The Cohong monopoly was abolished
- Tariffs and duties were sharply limited
- Foreign officials were given equal status and access to Chinese officials
- Full extraterritoriality of British subjects¹⁷⁸

The treaty made no mention of opium, in part because the British did not want to be seen as a country fighting over drugs, and perhaps because they believed they were fighting for free trade and the rule of law. But the most important result of the treaty was to resume the trade of opium, amounting to 200,000 chests annually or nearly 15,000 tons at its peak, over ten times the amount imported in 1839.

China would forever remember the war as a humiliating subjugation of their people to a British drug.

As William Gladstone said:

*A war more unjust in its origin, a war more calculated -- to cover this country with permanent disgrace, I do not know, and I have not read of.*¹⁷⁹

Discussion

Does Lin Zexu's letter to Queen Victoria treat the Queen as an equal to the emperor? Does he see Great Britain as of equal standing with China? Finally, with whom do you sympathize most in the letter? Why?

My thoughts:

I appreciate Dougma's comment on opium legality and addiction within Britain. Dougma, your comments are always thoughtful and well-researched. Nevertheless, the scale of British mobilization to sell opium to China seems criminally callous in its enormity.

My comments on Lin's treatment of the Queen:

Commissioner Lin explicitly treats the Qing Emperor as having a Mandate of a Heaven that presides over all humanity including the Queen and thus treating the Queen of England rhetorically as a feudal lord, a vassal of the Qing empire. Further, he implies that the trade of tea to England is all to the benefit of England, when clearly China profits hugely from that trade, to the detriment of the British economy.

I can't judge how Lin meant the word 'barbarian' or how the British interpreted it. In today's lexicon, it would be insulting and derogatory.

Stripping away his superior attitude, Lin's moral stance was strong and as he was watching the destruction of his country by opium addiction and had first taken action on his own citizens, his appeal was heartfelt. In this, it's hard to side with Britain.

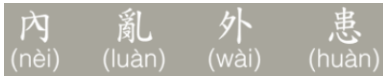
¹⁷⁸ From [Wikipedia](#):

Extraterritoriality is the state of being exempted from the jurisdiction of local law, usually as the result of diplomatic negotiations. Extraterritoriality can also be applied to physical places, such as foreign embassies, military bases of foreign countries, or offices of the United Nations. The three most common cases recognized today internationally relate to the persons and belongings of foreign heads of state, the persons and belongings of ambassadors and other diplomats, and ships in foreign waters.

¹⁷⁹ For a more complete quote from Gladstone, see [here](#).

30: Christianity and Chinese Salvation

Encountering the West



Modern China began with the Opium War as the first of many defeats to foreign forces that were smaller but had an overwhelming advantage in military technology. Steam-powered paddle-wheeled iron ships cruised upriver past outmatched Chinese war junks struggling under sail. These incursions cost the Qing dynasty control over foreign relations but the internal rebellions, like the Taipei Rebellion, struck to the heart.

The combination was labeled *nei luan wai huan*, disasters within and without. In the midst of this, two great movements based on Christianity attempted and failed to save China from itself.

Neiluan, Internal Turmoil

With the ports of Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai opened to trade, millions of Southerners lost their jobs and some turned to banditry. The economic situation in these regions became desperate.

In Guangxi, there was an ongoing feud between the *Hakka* or *Guest People*, and the *Bendiren* or *Indigenous People*, who were Han Chinese. A religious sect called the *God Worshipping Society* sprang up among the Hakka, further fueling tensions.

The rise of Hong Xiuquan



The Hakkas and God Worshippers were at the center of what became the Taiping Rebellion, when a Hakka visionary name Hong Xiuquan rose up as the self-proclaimed Heavenly King and younger brother of Jesus Christ.

Despite private tutelage at great expense, Hong failed repeatedly to pass the civil service exam, finally suffering a nervous breakdown with concomitant delirious visions. He saw himself conversing with a bearded, golden-haired man and a younger man whom he referred to as his “elder brother.”

When he failed the exams for the last time, he returned home to re-interpret his visions according to the Christian pamphlets left behind by missionaries. He saw himself as the son of god and the younger brother of Jesus Christ with Christianity a long-forgotten Chinese doctrine that it was his duty to restore.

Taiping, The Age of Great Peace

According to Hong Xiuquan, the foreign invaders were not the British, but the Manchus. They were devils and exterminating them would bring an Age of Great Peace that would unite the world in brotherhood.

After expulsion from his home town, Hong travelled to the Hakka in Guangxi. By 1850, he had a military force of 20,000. Under Hong’s cult, all wealth was communal, all men and women lived as brothers and sisters in segregated quarters with complete abstinence from sex, under the rule of the ten commandments. (Abstinence was waived, of course, for the top leaders.)

The effect of communal living was to break down old social norms. Former gentry lived alongside peasants, their land held in common. Women had, at least in theory, the same rights as men. Confucian hierarchy and the quest for the mandate of heaven was abandoned. Men grew their hair long in defiance of the Manchu queue. Hong proclaimed himself the *tianwang*, the heavenly king.

The Manchus and the Chinese elite were united in their opposition to Hong. But the Chinese and Manchu troops were a poor match for the messianic rebels, who captured Nanjing in 1854 and massacred the Manchus within. For the next eleven years, Hong took residence in the former Ming palace, sending out his rebels to slay millions.

Unable to stop Hong, the Manchus ordered the provincial Chinese governors to raise armies to defend the Qing and the traditional Confucian hierarchy that the Taiping Rebellion threatened to destroy.

Waihuan, External Disasters

Arrow War

Meanwhile, foreign invasions continued. The Arrow War of 1860¹⁸⁰ led to the sacking of the Yuan Ming Yuan palace in Beijing, the ruins of which are visible today (#travelNote).

Western Mercenaries

The Qing hired mercenaries to assist in battling the rebellion.

Christian Missionaries

Missionaries came from the west, supported by the Qing under pressure from conquering western forces. This confused the Chinese gentry who were battling indigenous Chinese adherents to Christianity on the one hand and supporting foreign Christian missionaries on the other.

Fall of Heavenly Kingdom

Under siege in Nanjing in 1863, Hong and his follows 'ate dew drops' in a lengthy fast. In July 1864, the Hunan army breached the walls of Nanjing to rape and slaughter at least 100,000 rebels and burn the city. Hong had likely died of malnutrition before then.

Tianjin Massacre



French Catholic missionaries had established orphanages in Tianjin, to which they brought sick and abandoned children, some of whom died in their care. But to the Chinese, the happenings in the orphanage were a mystery. Children entered and some disappeared.

Meanwhile a spate of child kidnappings were occurring across Tianjin. There were rumors of cannibalism in the orphanage. A angry mob gathered.

The French consul stood before the mob and fired a shot¹⁸¹ to disperse them. He was torn apart by the mob which proceeded to burn the consulate, the orphanage, and the church, killing and mutilating nuns and priests or burning them alive.

The massacre dashed the hopes of peace between China and the West, destroyed any trust between Catholics or Protestants and Chinese, and would be

remembered when the next great popular rebellion, the Boxer Rebellion, arose.

After the Massacre

The Qing dynasty held on, crafting policies that wove around the internal and external threats, led by the most feared woman in Chinese history, the Empress Dowager Cixi.

¹⁸⁰ I'll summarize the Arrow War, also known as the Second Opium War, from [Wikipedia](#) and other sources.

The British wanted to renegotiate the Nanking Treaty to (among other things) open all of China to their merchants and legalize the opium trade. To protect those Chinese merchants who traded with the British from trouble with the Chinese government, the British allowed them to sail under the British flag. One such ship, the *Arrow*, was suspected of smuggling and was seized in 1856 by the Chinese, who then imprisoned twelve members of the *Arrow* crew. The British demanded their release. The Chinese refused. (I couldn't determine if the ship itself was released).

The British governor of Hong Kong responded by sending his warships to bombard Canton. Lord Palmerston supported the bombardment, which captured or destroyed 4 Chinese forts and 23 war junks. The Qing were actively fighting the Taiping Rebellion and could not effectively oppose the British. Palmerston's support drew controversy in British Parliament, causing a general election, which Palmerston won. The British then joined forces with the French to attack and occupy Guangzhou in 1857. They forced the Chinese to sign new treaties with additional indemnities and trading rights.

A second phase of the war began in 1859, when a British force of 21 ships sailed to Tianjin, which had previously been reinforced with 4,000 Mongolian cavalry. The Mongolian general, Sengge Richen, refused passage of the 2,200 troops in the British warships. The British responded by demolishing the iron barricades in the Baihe River and attempted passage, but grounded at low tide and were forced to retreat under cannon fire from Sengge.

Stung by the loss, the British returned in 1860 with the French, in a combined force of 173 ships which eventually took Beijing in October, looting and destroying the two summer palaces, one of which was Yuan Ming Yuan. The emperor had fled the capital and his brother, Yixin, signed the Treaty of Tianjin. In Britain, Lord Palmerston was hailed as a hero, having handed China another humiliating defeat.

¹⁸¹ See [Wikipedia](#). The French consul shot and killed an assistant to the Chinese magistrate, but it's unclear whether that was before or after he was threatened by the mob.

Discussion

Read the following passage from the Principles of the Heavenly Nature (1854), which represents the official position of the Taiping's crusade. How do the Taipings justify their mission to establish an order in the world? What is their vision of the family in relation to the state? Finally, how do you think the Chinese elite, educated in Confucian values, would react to their "Christian" vision of the state and family?

In the *dingyou* year [1837], our Heavenly Father displayed the heavenly grace and dispatched angels to summon the Heavenly King up to Heaven. There He clearly pointed out the demons' perversities and their deluding of the world. He also invested the Heavenly King with a seal and a sword; He ordered the Savior, the Heavenly Elder Brother, Jesus, to take command of the Heavenly soldiers and Heavenly generals and to aid the Heavenly King, and to attack and conquer from Heaven earthward, layer by layer, the innumerable demons. After their victory they returned to Heaven and the Heavenly Father, greatly pleased, sent the Heavenly King down upon the earth to become the true Taiping Sovereign of the ten thousand nations of the world and to save the people of the world. He also bade him not to be fearful and to effect these matters courageously, for whenever difficulties appeared, the Heavenly Father would assume direction and the Heavenly Elder Brother would shoulder the burden....

We brothers, our minds having been awakened by our Heavenly Father, joined the camp in the earlier days to support our Sovereign, many bringing parents, wives, uncles brothers, and whole families. It is a matter of course that we should attend to our parents and look after our wives and children, but when one first creates a new rule, the state must come first and the family last, public interests first and private interests last. Moreover, as it is advisable to avoid suspicion [of improper conduct] between the inner [female] and the outer [male] and to distinguish between male and female, so men must have male quarters and women must have female quarters; only thus can we be dignified and avoid confusion. There must be no common mixing of the male and female groups, which would cause debauchery and violation of Heaven's commandments. Although to pay respects to parents and to visit wives and children occasionally are in keeping with human nature and not prohibited, yet it is only proper to converse before the door, stand a few steps apart and speak in a loud voice; one must not enter the sisters' camp or permit the mixing of men and women. Only thus, by complying with rules and commands, can we become sons and daughters of Heaven.

At the present time, the remaining demons have not yet been completely exterminated and the time for the reunion of families has not yet arrived. We younger brothers and sisters must be firm and patient to the end, and with united strength and a single heart we must uphold God's principles and wipe out the demons immediately. With peace and unity achieved, then our Heavenly Father, displaying his mercy, will reward us according to our merits. Wealth, nobility, and renown will then enable us brothers to celebrate the reunion of our families and enjoy the harmonious relations of husband and wife. Oh, how wonderful that will be! The task of a thousand times ten thousand years also lies in this; the happiness and emoluments of a thousand times ten thousand years also lie in this; we certainly must not abandon it in one day.

(SCT, vol. 2, 228-230)

My thoughts:

The Confucian gentry put great stock in the centrality of family, but there was a tradition of the primacy of the state over the individual. "the state must come first and the family last" doesn't differ as much as one might think from tradition. Guan Zhong, from the Warring States period, defines four groups strictly in terms of their service to the state.

The hierarchy of a father, an elder brother, and a younger brother is a Confucian hierarchy. Despite the invocation of a Christian god and son of god, it's not too far from a Confucian Heavenly Mandate.

But the notion of a new rule would be disturbing to the gentry as it would supplant the old rule under which they prosper and as much as the gentry chafed under Manchu rule, they would more greatly fear an uprising that places their property and wealth under common ownership, with forced separation from their women until the rebellion has conquered all of China.

I think Christians of the time would simply find it to be lunacy.

31: Fall of Imperial China

Introduction

It's understandable that China was unprepared for the sharp differences in capability between its military and that of its opponents in the Opium Wars. The West had changed with unprecedented rapidity. But historians judge the Qing harshly for their inadequate response to the Age of High Imperialism, a response that left China a battered and underdeveloped nation. Japan, in sharp contrast, responded to the challenge and modernized in only a few decades; a difference that would be striking in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894.



From 1861-1908, The Empress Dowager Cixi, aka *The Old Buddha*, usurped the throne repeatedly from boy emperors. She ruled conservatively, more intent on establishing her legitimacy by maintaining Chinese tradition, at the expense of advancing China's position with respect to the rest of the rapidly advancing West.

Even after her death she anointed one last boy as emperor, Puyi, depicted by John Lone in the film *The Last Emperor*. Three years later, the Qing dynasty ended.

By the late 19th century, the Age of High Imperialism was hitting its stride, with the Western powers carving up the world into colonies. During this time and into the 20th century, the Qing tried three strategies to catch up: self-strengthening, resistance, and political reformation.

Self-Strengthening



How would the Qing modernize without abandoning tradition? The phrase *Zhongxue wei ti xixue wei yong* means Chinese learning as the foundation, Western learning for practical application. Years later, Deng Xiaoping would characterize this tension with the phrase: *throw open the windows, but know that flies can come in*.

The Qing hired foreign advisers who oversaw the construction of the Jiangnan Arsenal in Shanghai, a shipyard in Fuzhou, and modern postal and customs systems, building a Sino-foreign bureaucracy alongside the traditional Manchu-Chinese bureaucracy, though the new order was separated from the centers of political power.

The exam system, meanwhile, did not change. Instead, students were sent abroad to learn Western ways.

[several paragraphs of notes were lost due to a Word crash: essentially self-strengthening was a failure. Boys sent abroad were seduced by Western culture. There were several attempts to mitigate the seduction, none particularly successful.]



The Chinese fleet was shocked by a loss to the Japanese in 1894.¹⁸² The sharks circled, carving up China for trade and mercantilism: the Germans in Shandong, the French in Guangdong, the Russians in Liaoning. Only the Italians were successfully shooed away.

The reformist Kang Youwei saw the coming of the end of the Chinese people. He quoted Mencius that “a state must first smite itself, then others will smite it,” that the collapse of China had begun with the Qing's passivity.

Resistance

In 1898, the young Guangxu emperor attempted reform but Cixi killed the reformers and placed the emperor under house arrest.¹⁸³

¹⁸² From [Wikipedia](#): The First Sino-Japanese War (1 August 1894 – 17 April 1895) was fought between Qing Dynasty China and Meiji Japan, primarily over control of Korea. After more than six months of unbroken successes by the Japanese land and naval forces, as well as the loss of the Chinese port of Weihai, the Qing leadership sued for peace in February 1895.

¹⁸³ From [Wikipedia](#): The Hundred Days' Reform was a failed 104-day national cultural, political and educational reform movement from 11 June to 21 September 1898 in late Qing dynasty China.

The Boxer Rebellion¹⁸⁴



In the Shandong province of north China, a rebellions sect arose, practicing military and magic rituals. They called for a coup and the expulsion of all foreigners. The Boxers started a rebellion by killing missionaries, besieging the foreign legations in Beijing and inciting terror in the countryside, especially among Christians and foreigners. The Qing declared war on eight nations. Europe reacted with outrage, sending a force of 20,000 men. The siege was lifted, the foreign force pillaged Beijing and the Qing was soundly humiliated.

The film *55 Days at Peking*, with Charlton Heston and Ava Gardner, depicts the siege.

Reform

Elements of Reform

To change what was left of the Qing was to destroy it. What it needed was extensive:

- A central army instead of an uncoordinated collection of provincial armies. But the army created was no longer morally-committed Confucians, instead it was professional military men whose obedience was to their officers.
- A unified railway system – but the provinces were reluctant to give up their regional control.
- A workable political system for making decisions. But when the Qing held elections, the resultant government had little allegiance to the Qing and it ended the exam system.
- Laws governing the creation of capital to invigorate the economy.
- An education system that included Western science and math. By the early 20th century there were schools that taught these subjects, but they were outside the mainstream.

Ending of the Exam System

Though it had its weaknesses, the exams had been used for hundreds of years to preserve the moral orthodoxy, recruit civil servants, and maintain the allegiance of local elites. Without it, the elites abandoned the monarchy and the social and cultural foundation of the Qing evaporated.

Chinese regimes are searching today for the proper successor to the ancient exam system, for a means to funnel and train China's young talents into government service.

Fall of the Qing

One by one, between 1911 and 1912, the provinces declared their independence from the Qing.

The Qing fell because of increasingly justifiable beliefs that the Manchus could not be entrusted with the salvation of the Chinese people, that they were presiding over the humiliation of the Chinese by rapidly advancing Western nations. The Chinese escorted the Manchus back to their Manchurian homelands, from the place where they had emerged 268 years earlier and into which they vanished without a trace.

With the fall of the Qing, two millennia of imperial rule ended. From that point forward, the non-Chinese idea took hold that the Chinese nation was more important than any imperial house.

¹⁸⁴ From [Wikipedia](#): The uprising took place against a background of severe drought, and the disruption caused by the growth of foreign spheres of influence. After several months of growing violence against foreign and Christian presence in Shandong and the North China plain, in June 1900 Boxer fighters, convinced they were invulnerable to foreign weapons, converged on Beijing with the slogan "Support the Qing, exterminate the foreigners." Foreigners and Chinese Christians sought refuge in the Legation Quarter. In response to reports of an armed invasion to lift the siege, the initially hesitant Empress Dowager Cixi supported the Boxers and on June 21 authorized war on foreign powers. Diplomats, foreign civilians and soldiers, and Chinese Christians in the Legation Quarter were under siege by the Imperial Army of China and the Boxers for 55 days.

Discussion

My Thoughts:

Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang advocated chaperoned instruction abroad, with students chosen presumably for their obedience and loyalty. While this appeared to have the potential of working, it also created dissonance as the students were exposed to more permissive and democratic societies. Some of the students were inevitably be drawn toward resistance if not outright revolt against their controlling elders. Further, I don't see how this method in isolation would have any broad effect on Chinese modernization.

Kang Youwei advocated substantial reform in the model of Japan.¹⁸⁵ The Japanese model was of reform from the top using ideas from foreign nations and restructuring government according to those ideas. Japan's example was not, however, easily followed. In Japan, the government was able to override its traditionalists and provincial authorities. In China, the Manchus had a desperate need for adherence to tradition to maintain their legitimacy, faced rampant corruption and was no match for the increasingly independent provinces. The dynasty lacked the power and influence to restructure China without abdication.

Chu Chengbo referred to the period of the Tongzhi reign when Western ideas were taught successfully in isolated instances in China. He felt that if these were continued intensively and effectively and then broadened nationwide, China could surpass the West. He claims it failed because these effort were poorly managed by ineffective men. If the emperor found the right men to lead these new institutions, effective reform would follow.

My feeling is that Chu Chengbo was only partly right. No institutional leaders can effect reform without support from the institutions and leaders above. Kang Youwei advocates first reforming those institutions, which I think is correct. If the institution has as its primary goal the modernization and industrialization of the economy and the military, it will find the right managers and if it errs, it will replace those managers, as there is no higher goal.

But since Kang underestimated the difficulty of reform, his ideas could not help Chu.

I don't know how China could have thrown off the traditions of Confucian imperial rule and adopt a modern approach without inviting the provinces to step into the power vacuum they would inevitably create. It would have required the provinces to see the danger from outside and to choose the necessity of reform over the opportunity to increase their own power. The Qing lacked the authority to enforce this reform.

¹⁸⁵ See [here](#) for a discussion of Japanese Transformation without Revolution. Japan's reform started at the top, with Meiji government abolishing feudalism, sending samurai abroad, and using their political observations to restructure the state, with a new constitution enacted in 1889. In 1870, the new Ministry of Industry built model factories and encouraged private enterprise.