
CHINA

A NEW HISTORY

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John King Fairbank
and
Merle Goldman



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9

Frontier Unrest and the Opening of China

The Weakness of State Leadership

Whether China was opened by British gunboats or opened of its own accord is no longer a great issue for debate. Growth of population and foreign trade were both impelling China toward greater contact with the outside world. This trend precipitated rebellions on both domestic and foreign frontiers. Meanwhile, the one thing essential for the industrialization of late-comers like Japan or Russia was government leadership. Unfortunately, in nineteenth-century China, government grew weaker and more myopic just when its strength and foresight were needed.

By the end of the eighteenth century, population pressure was increasing the vulnerability of the populace to drought, flood, famine, and disease. These in turn presented the creaking machinery of Qing government with problems it could not meet—flood control, famine relief, increased need for taxes, increased difficulty in getting them. The problem is illustrated by Pierre-Etienne Will's (1990) study of famine relief. In the mid-Qing era, officials maintained the ever-normal granary stocks, combatted price increases, appraised famine conditions, shipped grain in from other provinces, and supervised its careful distribution. But in the 1800s after the population had doubled, the official system broke down, and gentry managers more and more had to take on the public task of famine relief. Such weaknesses combined with official demoralization and self-seeking to make government less effective and weaken its prestige. The nineteenth century became a long story of dynastic decline.

Three motifs dominated China's nineteenth-century experience—domestic rebellion, foreign invasion, and the efforts of the ruling elite to control both and preserve their rule (see Table 4). Since attempts at re-

Table 4. Events in China, 1796–1901

Domestic rebellion	Foreign invasion	Official and elite response
White Lotus 1796–1804	Turkestan 1826–1835	
	Anglo–Chinese Opium War 1839–1842	Increasing militarization under local elite
Taiping 1851–1864		Suppression of rebellions
Nian 1853–1868	Anglo–French 1856–1860	
Chinese Muslim SW 1855–1873 NW 1862–1873		Qing Restoration ca. 1861–1876
		Self-strengthening 1861–1894
	French 1883–1885	
	Sino–Japanese 1894–1895	Reform movement 1895–1898
	Imperialist encroachment 1898	
Boxer Rising 1898–1901	Boxer War 1900	Qing reforms 1901–1911

bellion, invasion, and control became even greater in the twentieth century, this chapter offers only a foretaste of more recent disasters and achievements.

Recent studies have remade our image of imperialism in China. The Hobson–Lenin thesis at the turn of the century stressed the economic ill effects of imported foreign manufactures destroying native handicraft livelihood and of foreign finance capitalism impoverishing native governments. More recent research has led to a less stark economic picture, in which foreign trade, investment, and technology sometimes stimu-

lated native growth and technological progress. Today's historians are more likely to stress the social disruption and psychological demoralization caused by foreign imperialism. In these dimensions the long-term foreign invasion of China proved to be a disaster so comprehensive and appalling that we are still incapable of fully describing it. Innovations like Christian missions, Western education, and foreign investment became two-edged, often seen as forward steps in our long-term foreign view yet also frequently destructive of China's contemporary well-being. At stake was an entire way of life, a civilization on a grander scale than the economics or psychology of imperialism.

On balance I believe "imperialism" has become a catch-all term like "feudalism," too broad to accept or deny overall, more useful in adjectival form to characterize concrete situations. In any case, China's nineteenth-century troubles began at home with rebellion, not invasion.

The increasing weakness of Qing government was graphically demonstrated in its initial inability to suppress a domestic rebellion at the end of the Qianlong reign. Other small risings followed. Manchu skill was evident in calming domestic rebels in Sichuan and Xinjiang, but the same formula when applied to the handling of Western rebels at Guangzhou would prove disastrous. We therefore look first at the problems of domestic rebellion and then at the forces operating to create rebellion in the foreign trade.

The White Lotus Rebellion, 1796–1804

In the countryside, manpower and food supply were the sinews of warfare, which might be mobilized to unseat the reigning dynasty. Consequently, cults such as the White Lotus Society, a religious sect dating from the Mongol period, sometimes had to be secret in self-defense. In mobilizing its adherents, the White Lotus Society appealed to the hopes of poverty-stricken peasants by its multiple promises that the Maitreya Buddha would descend into the world, that the Ming dynasty would be restored, and that disaster, disease, and personal suffering could be obviated in this life and happiness secured in the next. In the late eighteenth century the sect had spread through the border region where the provinces of Hubei, Sichuan, and Shaanxi join, in the region north of the Yangzi gorges and on the upper waters of the Han River. This mountainous area, rather inhospitable to agriculture, was a domestic frontier area only recently opened to settlement under official Qing auspices. Migration of poor settlers, although encouraged officially, had not been

accompanied by an equal development of imperial administration over them. The communities of settlers lived on the very margin of subsistence and tended to be a law unto themselves. The leaders of the White Lotus cult soon added to their popular appeal an anti-Manchu racial doctrine.

The rebellion began in 1796 as a protest against the exactions of minor tax collectors. Though the imperial garrisons were able to get each small uprising under control in turn, new outbreaks continued to erupt, too numerous to control. The populace had already organized self-defense corps against the aborigines to the south and had collected arms and food. When these groups rebelled, they could move into easily defensible mountain redoubts before the imperial forces could arrive. The systematic corruption permitted under the now senile Qianlong Emperor handicapped the imperial military. They lacked supplies, morale, and incentive as well as vigorous leadership. Both sides ravaged the populace instead of fighting.

The White Lotus Rebellion was suppressed only after the Jiaqing Emperor assumed real power upon the death of the Qianlong Emperor in 1799 and supported vigorous Manchu commanders. By pursuing the rebels tenaciously, on the one hand, and establishing tighter control of the manpower and food supply of the area, on the other, the Manchu generals eventually put down the rebellion. First of all, the Qing mobilized the villagers to build several hundred walled enclosures in which the local peasantry could be concentrated. These walled villages were then protected from the rebels by newly organized local militia, who could by this time be enrolled more easily because the devastation of the countryside had seriously hindered their farming and sustenance. In this way the populace was brought under imperial control. Meanwhile the militia were trained to join in the campaign of extermination against the rebels. At the same time a policy of conciliation was pursued toward the men the rebels had impressed into their bands, so as to secure their surrender; and other measures were taken to prevent refugees from continuing to join the rebels. By this combination of force, leniency, and administrative arrangements, the imperial commanders gradually starved the rebels of their new recruits and food supplies.

The policy of "strengthening the walls and clearing the countryside" eventually sapped the strength of the rebellion, and it died out about 1804. But the repercussions of the uprising were enormously damaging to the dynasty. It had cost the imperial regime the rough equivalent of five years' revenue (200 million ounces of silver). Worse still, it had de-

stroyed the Manchu banner forces' reputation for invincibility. It was found that the militia troops when properly trained became professional soldiers, warlike and dangerous, and subsequently an effort had to be made to recover their arms from them.

In 1813 the sect of the Eight Trigrams, a sort of White Lotus offshoot, staged a rising in a North China county and actually sent a group to try to invade the Forbidden City in Beijing. Even though it was soon suppressed, Susan Naquin (1976) concludes that 70,000 people were killed in the process.

While these stirrings of peasant rebellion gave an ominous cast to the early decades of the nineteenth century, an equally dire situation was developing in China's maritime relations. Here again the bearers of bad news were Chinese, not foreigners, but Chinese who had gone abroad in defiance of Ming and early Qing prohibitions. In short, a neglected wing of the Chinese people, which we call Maritime China, was about to become a major force in Chinese history.

Maritime China: Origins of the Overseas Chinese

The contrast between Maritime China and Continental China was almost as great as that between China and Inner Asia. Few classically educated chroniclers, concentrated as they were upon imperial government, ever went to sea. Chinese seafarers did not write memoirs. Because the sea, unlike the steppe, did not harbor rivals for power, it had been given little importance in Chinese history. Yet Chinese life from the start had had a maritime wing more or less equal and opposite to the Inner Asian wing.

Once we approach the sea from China, we meet a fundamental fact of geography known as the monsoon, a seasonal wind that blew north in summer from the equatorial zone and south in winter. The predictability of these monsoon winds was far more reliable than the rainfall on which North China agriculture depended. Consequently, seafaring had developed in Neolithic times long before written history, a fact that accounts for Neolithic type-sites being found in Taiwan. With the monsoon, navigating to and from the island was not difficult, even if punctuated by summer typhoons.

Many thousands of years later the reliability of sea transport facilitated the Qin-Han absorption of the area of Guangzhou and North Vietnam as part of China's first unified empire. Access to the area by land alone, following barge routes on rivers and portage roads connect-

ing them, could never have reached so far with power adequate to take control. Experienced and massive coastal seafaring was essential to this early extension of the empire to southernmost China. The conclusive evidence is the funerary ship model excavated in Guangzhou of the Han period, with a centered stern-post rudder—a key invention of nautical technology that appeared in Europe only a thousand years later. It bespeaks a high degree of early Chinese nautical sophistication.

Given such early Chinese skill in seafaring, it seems strange to find that the first long-distance international traders in the ports of Southeast China were Arabs. After the founding of Islam in Arabia in the seventh century, Muslim seafarers and invaders took off in all directions, as medieval Europe soon became aware.

Those readers who missed the world history lecture on Islam may be reminded that the religion was founded by the prophet Muhammad in 622 AD in Medina. Called Muslims, his followers believed in the One God, Allah, in the teachings of Muhammad's book, the *Koran*, in God's predestination, and in the Day of Resurrection. Their strict regimen of five daily prayers attesting the faith, along with other duties like a pilgrimage to Mecca, Muhammad's birthplace, prepared them to wage a Holy War against the infidel. Combined with Arab trading skill and seafaring, their faith impelled the Arabs on a Diaspora of expansion east and west.

Muslim forces soon conquered Syria, Persia (Iran), Iraq, and Egypt. Despite rebellions and civil wars, they took over North Africa and Spain and invaded southern France until defeated in 732. Meanwhile, on the east, Muslim forces had taken over Afghanistan, the lower Indus valley in northwest India, and the Central Asian trading cities of Bokhara and Samarkand. More important than the kaleidoscopic flux of wars and rulers, Muslim cities from Baghdad to Bokhara became centers of achievement in science and the arts.

By the tenth century, the Muslim states of conquest linked the sea trade of the Mediterranean with that of the Indian Ocean and so made possible a seaborne commerce that brought spices like pepper, nutmeg, and cinnamon all the way from the islands that produced them in the East Indies to their European market at Alexandria. This spice trade, which eventually helped motivate European expansion to the Far East, much earlier and more easily reached China, where spices were equally prized for preserving food in the absence of refrigeration. The extensive Muslim contact with China under the Mongols was both by land across

Central Asia over the Silk Road and by sea at coastal ports. The story is complicated by the fact that within the Muslim world Arabs were joined by Persians and Turks and some Indians in the shifting configuration of Muslim states and their rivalries. Against this complex background we may imagine a plenitude of Chinese trading junks on well-established coastal routes providing a matrix for the long-distance Muslim commerce at China's big Fujian ports like Quanzhou (Arab Zayton).

While Arab traders had come first to China, Chinese merchant junks began by at least the tenth century to trade at ports along the peninsulas of Southeast Asia and the islands of the East Indies. Beginning even before the Tang, references in the dynastic histories to Chinese trade with Southeast Asia grow more and more numerous. By the time of the Zheng He expeditions of the years 1405–1433, Chinese trade goods were finding markets all across southeast and south Asia and even the east coast of Africa (see Map 18). A score or more of petty states recorded in 1589 as sending tribute to the Ming were mainly the ports of call on the two trade routes that went respectively down the coast of Malaysia to the straits of Malacca and through the Philippines and the island kingdom of Sulu to the East Indies. Chinese traders naturally established their agents or other connections at these ports of trade, where Overseas Chinese communities of sojourners began to grow up. By 1818 ports of call on the Malay peninsula like Ligor, Sungora, Patani, Trengganu, Pahang, and Johore were listed in Chinese government records more realistically as “non-tributary trading countries,” that is, places frequented by Chinese merchants that paid no tribute to Beijing. This far-flung Chinese trading community was already established when the Portuguese and Spanish invaded East Asia in the sixteenth century.

As Wang Gungwu (1991) reminds us, Chinese sojourners' communities abroad were not under Chinese official control. Growth of the Overseas Chinese settlement was not fostered nor even countenanced by the Chinese imperial government. In China, while the gentry-elite let no merchant subculture grow up comparable to that in Japan and Europe in the sixteenth century, the Chinese abroad in Southeast Asia were under quite different local, official, and social restraints. They were often able to accumulate capital and became risk-taking entrepreneurs with their own style of life. Their family enterprises in the British, Dutch, and French colonial areas (in Burma, Malaysia, the East Indies, and Indo-China) usefully benefited from the rule of European law. In Bangkok and Manila they advanced through marriage ties with local patricians.

Philanthropy and conspicuous consumption were less useful overseas than in China, while economic development was more appreciated by the local rulers.

In a way curiously reminiscent of the local gentry in China, the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia found their social level and functions sandwiched between the European rulers and the local villages. Chinese became brokers who helped in tax collections and in maintaining local services like ferries, bridges, and bazaars. They were generally a stabilizing element in colonial communities, too few to seize power, interested in profiting from services rendered as well as from local trade.

The example of the Chinese role at Manila is instructive. When the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines in force in the 1560s and began to build a colony based on Christian teaching and Filipino plantation labor, they found themselves endangered by the breakdown of the Ming ban on sea trade and the upsurge of Japanese maritime adventurers linked with Chinese coastal pirates. The Ming prohibition of Chinese sea trade, a dead letter long since, was lifted in 1567. By the time the Spaniards began to build their capital at Manila, 150 or so Chinese were on hand. By 1600 there were 25,000 living in a special part of Manila set aside for them. (Chinese converts to Christianity were not so confined.) Two Chinese communities thus began to develop—the commercial one of sojourners who managed all the shops and crafts of a Chinese city, and the mixed one of Christian mestizos who would become Filipino leaders partly of Chinese descent.

In general Overseas Chinese created fraternal associations and secret societies for protection of their interests, as well as guilds with their temples to Guandi and the Empress of Heaven for their commercial welfare. Their trade was not dominated by large corporations with a modern capacity to invest and manage overseas transactions. The durable and seaworthy sailing junks that carried the trade were privately owned, and their cargoes were generally the property of individuals or family merchant firms. Many Chinese quickly learned the European commercial technology of the day.

As time went on, these Chinese trading communities overseas became the active outer fringe of a Maritime China that countered the land-based and agrarian-centered style of the Ming and Qing empires. As a minor tradition from early times, this Maritime China had grown up in the ports where the river traffic from inland China met the ships from Chinese enclaves abroad. Leonard Blussé (1986) notes that despite Beijing's ban on overseas trade, during Ming and early Qing about a

hundred big Chinese junks traded every year with Southeast Asia. These traders were ready to expand into international commerce as opportunity allowed. Their principal entrepot on the China coast was Xiamen (Amoy), a port in Fujian that, unlike nearby Quanzhou and Fuzhou, had not been the site of an official superintendency of merchant shipping (*shibosi*).

European Trading Companies and the Canton Trade

Sea trade with Europe quickened the growth rate of Maritime China. The East India Companies, inaugurated about 1600 by the British and Dutch, were powerful corporate bodies that accumulated capital from joint stock investors and were empowered by their national kings to monopolize trade and govern territories abroad. These powerful engines of commercial expansion created British India and the Dutch East Indies. The British developed a staple trade with China in exports of tea, silk, and porcelain and imports of silver, woolen textiles, and eventually opium from India. At first they followed the routes and used the pilots of the Chinese junk trade. Chinese and foreigners in international commerce became a trade-centered community that formed the first Sino-Western meeting place of the modern age.

Although Xiamen had been a major focus of the Chinese trade to Southeast Asia and up the China coast, after 1759 Guangzhou (Canton) was made the sole port open for Europeans. The Canton trade, as it has been known in the West, was organized on typical Chinese lines: the government commissioned a group of Chinese merchant families to act as brokers superintending the foreign traders. Responsibility for each Western ship was taken by one Chinese firm, acting as its security merchant. The security merchants formed a guild, called the Cohong (*hong* means trading firm), which answered the commands of the emperor's specially appointed superintendent of maritime customs for the Guangdong region. This official, usually a Manchu from the Imperial Household Department of the Inner Court in Beijing, was known to foreigners as the Hoppo. The Cohong and the Hoppo had the job of taxing the foreigners' imports and especially their exports of teas and silks.

Until 1834, when the British East India Company lost its royal charter to monopolize British staple trade with China, the Company fitted into this special "Canton system." Its supercargoes sent by the East India Company board of directors in London lived in style in the British Factory (business center and residence) on the banks of the river outside the

big provincial capital of Guangzhou during the trading season, from October to March. In the off season from April to September they retired downriver to the Portuguese coastal settlement of Macao.

Since the Hoppo was accustomed to squeezing the Hong merchants for special sums to meet imperial needs, these Chinese merchants were often short of capital to purchase the cargoes of teas and silks to lade on the East Indiamen, as contracted with the Company. Thus they tended to go into debt to the British, and when official exactions kept these licensed merchants in debt or even bankrupt, the British complained about this effect of the merchant guild monopoly. This shortage of investment funds for the tea and silk cargoes to England was a continuing problem for the Company.

Another factor in the Sino–foreign trade was the continued importation into China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of silver, especially from Japan and the Americas. Estimates suggest that as much as \$10 million worth of silver annually came into China's domestic trade. As in Europe, this inflow led to rising prices, greater monetization, and increased commerce. In the middle decades of the seventeenth century, however, events in Japan, Spain, and China combined in what some have called a "seventeenth-century crisis" to reduce China's silver import. The consequences, including a sudden fall of prices, were disastrous. In this way China was drawn into the international trading world long before the fact was realized.

Late Imperial China's foreign trade played a subordinate but important role both as a source of imported silver and as a market to stimulate production for export. One estimate is that as much as one seventh of the tea that went to market in China was bought by the British East India Company in its high period after 1759, especially after the rival European smugglers of China tea into the British market were undone by the Commutation Act of 1784, which lowered the duties collected in England.

An omen of China's future was provided in 1793 when the British East India Company, which would continue to rule India until 1858, sent a diplomatic mission to China. Its head, Lord George Macartney, took scientists and artists in an entourage of 100 on a 66-gun man-of-war plus two escort vessels loaded with examples of British manufacturing technology that the Qing court promptly labeled "tribute from England." The Industrial Revolution was gaining momentum, but remained quite unknown to the senescent Qianlong Emperor. The British requests for broader trade opportunities under a published tariff, as well

as diplomatic representation at Beijing, were an invitation to China to join the modern world then being born. Beijing politely and complacently turned it all down. Twenty-three years later another embassy under Lord Amherst in 1816 was rudely treated and sent away. By this time Britain and British India were already playing key roles in opening China to international trade. Unfortunately, the Qing court was little concerned with Maritime China and had no idea of the outside world it would soon have to deal with. Its concern was to preserve its authority both within China and on its sea and land frontiers. Early in the nineteenth century while trouble was brewing at Guangzhou, rebellion flared up in Inner Asia over control of non-Chinese on the imperial frontier.

Rebellion on the Turkestan Frontier, 1826–1835

From the oasis cities on the ancient Silk Road in Turkestan (Xinjiang) trade crossed the Pamirs especially between Kashgar and the state of Kokand west of the mountains. Early in the nineteenth century a crisis arose on this frontier. The Central Asianist Joseph Fletcher (in *CHOC* 10) has described how saintly families, descended from the Prophet or other early religious leaders, had great popular influence. In fact, one of these lineages had ruled Turkestan for a time before the Manchu conquest of the 1750s. In exile west of the Pamirs in Kokand, they nursed their claims and sometimes led cavalry raids across the mountain passes into Kashgaria.

One scion of this line was Jahangir, who became a problem just after the Daoguang Emperor came to the throne in 1821. Jahangir's holy war against the Qing was triggered by a dynamic conjunction of faith and commerce. In brief, the westward trade of Kashgar was dominated by merchants of Kokand, whose ruler paid tribute to the Qing emperor, the usual practice in order to smooth the path of foreign trade. Kokand had therefore enrolled as a tributary, had kept Jahangir confined, and in turn had been paid a large yearly gift from the Qing as a reward for such admirable loyalty. But, as Kokandian merchants became more influential in the principal market at Kashgar, Kokand asked for special privileges there—lower taxes on its trade and appointment of its own resident to superintend Kokandian traders in Kashgar.

When these demands were refused in 1817, Kokand released the impetuous Jahangir, who eventually achieved a devastating invasion of Chinese Turkestan in 1816. A Qing relief expedition of 22,000 men

crossed the arid trail from one oasis to the next and so reconquered Kashgar in 1827. Jahangir was betrayed and sent to Beijing, where Daoguang had him ritually presented at the imperial temple of ancestors before being quartered.

The Qing reestablished its rule over the area, but Kokand's commercial power and military nuisance capacity had been amply demonstrated. In subsequent negotiations Beijing's envoys gradually worked out an administrative settlement which by 1835 provided that (1) Kokand should station a political representative at Kashgar with commercial agents under him at five other cities; (2) these officials should have consular, judicial, and police powers over foreigners in the area (most of whom came from Kokand); and (3) they could levy customs duties on the goods of such foreigners. In addition, the Qing indemnified traders they had dispossessed during the hostilities.

As we shall see in the rest of this chapter, this was the background from which Daoguang would approach the British problem developing at Guangzhou. That Qing policy toward the British in 1834-1842 would be based on Qing experience on the trading frontier of Central Asia in 1826-1835 was perfectly natural. The Turkestan settlement with Kokand in 1835 had been an exercise in barbarian management, which achieved a stable frontier by giving local commercial concessions and paying some money.

Opium and the Struggle for a New Order at Guangzhou, 1834-1842

After 1759 European trade at Guangzhou under the Cohong and the Hoppo was still nominally conducted as though it were a boon granted to tributary states. Opium imports from India to China now precipitated a crisis.

Opium was produced and sold at auction under official British auspices in India and taken to China by private British and Indian traders licensed by the East India Company that (until 1858) still governed India. Opium sales at Guangzhou paid for the teas shipped to London in a thriving India-China-Britain triangular trade. The drain of silver to pay for ever-increasing imports of opium began to alarm Qing administrators: they noticed silver becoming more dear in terms of the copper coins used by the populace to buy their silver for tax payments, and this threatened both the government's revenues and the popular livelihood. The exhaustive research of Man-houng Lin (unpublished), has analyzed

the Qing officials' reactions to this monetary crisis. While pinpointing the outflow of silver to pay for opium, they remained generally unaware of China's fiscal involvement in world trade. Many of the variables involved—such as silver imports from Japan, silver production in Latin America, copper cash production in China, debasement, hoarding, world trade depression—were still invisible to them.

In 1834 London ended the East India Company's monopoly of British trade with China, and a British official was sent to superintend British trade there. Two issues thus urgently arose for China: how to stop the opium trade, and how to deal with the British official.

Under the Guangzhou system the East India Company monopolists had played ball with the brokers called Hong merchants, who handled their trade ship-by-ship and collected duty payments for the Hoppo. But after free trade broke out in 1834, the British private traders like Jardine, Matheson & Co., who had been importing the opium, now began also to export the teas and silks in place of the Company. The British official sent to superintend them refused to deal like a trader with the Hong merchants and demanded to deal with the Qing officials on a basis of diplomatic equality. He was flouting the tribute system.

To accept Britain's diplomatic equality would destroy the emperor's superiority to all other rulers, which helped him to maintain his position in China. To tolerate the opium trade any further would not only further upset the silver/copper exchange rate but would also damage his moral prestige. Opium smoking, though less powerfully addictive than modern derivatives, was a social curse that destroyed both individual smokers and their families. Land was wasted for poppy growing, while the high price of the drug as contraband led to violence and corruption between smugglers and officials. The Chinese demand grew up in situations of demoralization not unlike the American inner cities of today. This tremendous social evil was sparked by the lust for profit among the British Indian government, the foreigners who took opium to China, and the corrupt Chinese distributors. To Americans of today this pattern sounds distressingly familiar.

Several years of argument and uncertainty were due to the Qing administrators' doubts that they could destroy the Chinese smugglers or embargo the trade of the British, whose new steam gunboats were the last word in mobile firepower. Some in 1836 advocated legalizing the opium trade since it could not be stopped. The intransigent opposition to appeasement was led by ambitious Chinese officials who used as their meeting place a poetry reading club at Beijing. This faction's opportunist

moral righteousness, which has been newly explored by James Polachek (1992), won out in 1839 when the Daoguang Emperor sent an incorrupt Imperial Commissioner, Lin Zexu, to compel the foreign traders to stop bringing opium to China. Lin suppressed the Chinese opium purveyors in Guangzhou, but he had to barricade the foreigners in their factories before they finally surrendered their current stocks of opium. They knew more opium, now higher priced, was en route from India and, moreover, that the British government might recompense them for their losses.

Commissioner Lin's righteous coercion precipitated war, in which British commercial interests were heavily involved. Dr. William Jardine went to London and helped Lord Palmerston work out the war aims and strategy. The Jardine trading firm leased vessels to the British fleet, lent pilots and translators, provided hospitality and intelligence, and cashed the army quartermaster's bills on London. But the British expeditionary force led by new paddle-wheel steamers was sent to Guangzhou and thence up the coast to secure privileges of general commercial and diplomatic intercourse on a Western basis of equality, and not especially to aid the expansion of the opium trade. The latter was expanding rapidly of its own accord and was only one point of friction in the general antagonism between the Chinese and British schemes of international relations.

In half a dozen engagements along the southeast coast, Britain's gunboats won the Opium War of 1839-1842 and secured Qing agreement to the Treaty of Nanjing in August 1842.

Joseph Fletcher has pointed out how the Anglo-Chinese treaty settlements at Nanjing and later all followed the 1835 example with Kokand. The treaty provisions included (1) extraterritoriality (foreign consular jurisdiction over foreign nationals), an upgrading of an old Chinese practice, (2) an indemnity, (3) a moderate tariff and direct foreign contact with the customs collectors, (4) most-favored-nation treatment (an expression of China's "impartial benevolence" to all outsiders), (5) freedom to trade with all comers, no monopoly (long the custom at Kashgar). Moreover, designated places for trade (now to be called treaty ports) were an old Chinese frontier custom, and equal relations without the kowtow's three kneelings and nine prostrations had been common on the Kokand and Russian frontiers far from China proper.

Manchu statesmanship was consistent on the two frontiers, but there were two major differences: First, Britain, the United States, and France were aggressive maritime powers from another world, a world of sea-

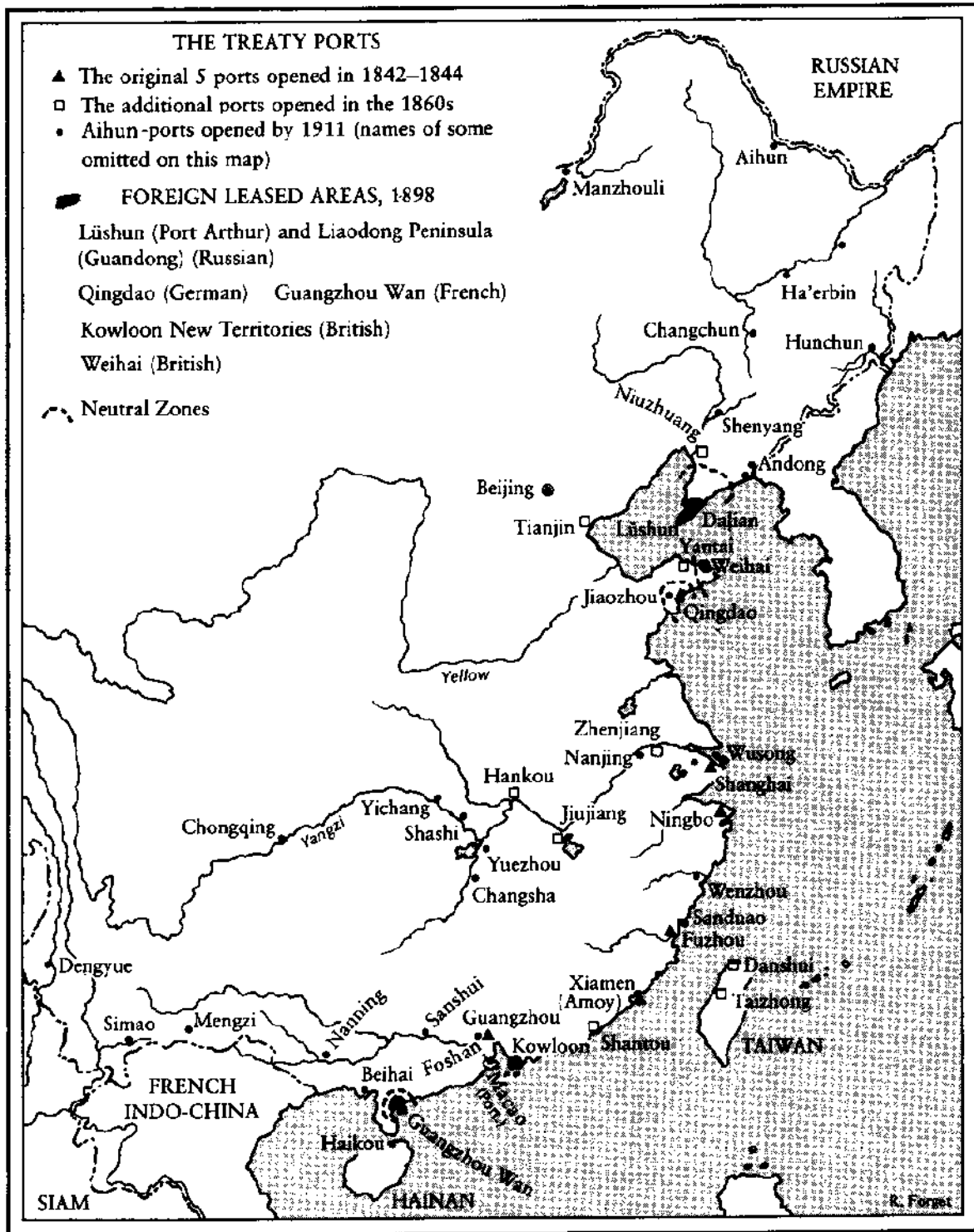
borne commerce and war, ruled by law and treaty rights, and for them the first treaty settlements of 1842–1844 were only the beginning of encroachment. Second, the concessions that the Qing could use to stabilize Kokand-Kashgar relations far off in Central Asia could only damage Qing prestige if used in China proper. The Manchus, when they took power at Beijing, had inherited the tradition of China's central superiority. Anyone who ruled there had to exact tributary obeisance from outsiders as part of the job of being Son of Heaven. So the unequal treaties were a defeat that grew bigger as time passed.

To appease the British, the Qing gave them the barren island of Hong Kong in perpetuity and opened the first five treaty ports. The top Manchu negotiator even visited Hong Kong on a British gunboat! Yet the principles embodied in the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 were not fully accepted on the Chinese side, and the treaty privileges seemed inadequate from the British side. Consequently, the treaty system was not really established until the British and French had fought a second war against the Qing and secured treaties at Tianjin in 1858. Even then the new order was not acknowledged by the reluctant dynasty until an Anglo-French expedition occupied Beijing itself in 1860. The transition from tribute relations to treaty relations occupied a generation of friction at Guangzhou before 1840, and twenty years of trade, negotiation, and coercion thereafter.

Inauguration of the Treaty Century after 1842

Although China's treaties with Britain (1842–43), with the United States and France (both in 1844), and with all of them and Russia in 1858 were signed as between equal sovereign powers, they were actually quite unequal. China was placed against her will in a weaker position, open to the inroads of Western commerce and its attendant culture. By the twentieth century, after three generations of energetic Western consuls had developed its fine points, the treaty structure was a finely articulated and comprehensive mechanism. It was based first of all on treaty ports, at first five in number and eventually more than eighty (see Map 20).

The major treaty ports had a striking physical and institutional resemblance to one another. Each had a crowded, noisy waterfront (bund) and godowns (warehouses) swarming with coolies (a foreign word for Chinese laborers), who substituted for machinery. All this activity was under the supervision of Chinese compradors (foreign-hired business managers), who managed affairs beneath the overlordship of the foreign



20. Foreign Encroachments

taipans (firm managers). Each treaty port centered in a foreign section newly built on the edge of a teeming Chinese city and dominated by the tall white flagstaff of Her Majesty's consulate. Its foreign institutions included the club, the race course, and the church. It was ruled by a proper British consul and his colleagues of other nations and protected by squat gunboats moored off the bund. At Guangzhou, Xiamen, and Fuzhou the foreign community got further protection by being established on an island. At Ningbo, Shanghai, and other places the foreign area was separated from the Chinese city by a river, canal, creek, or other waterway.

These coastal enclaves began as offshoots of Western culture—like cities in European colonies, outposts of empire. Yet from the beginning they had a Chinese component, for alien invaders needed the help of Chinese servants and shopmen just as much as the Chinese upper class did. The treaty ports quickly became Sino-foreign cities where the foreigner played an increasing role in China's urbanization.

Extraterritoriality, under which foreigners and their activities in China remained answerable only to foreign and not to Chinese law, was not a modern invention. In a manner rather like that of the Turks at Constantinople, the Chinese government in medieval times had expected foreign communities in the seaports to govern themselves under their own headmen and by their own laws. This expressed the Chinese imperial preference for minimalist government, getting people to police themselves. This had been true of the early Arab traders in China. The British and Americans at Guangzhou before the Opium War demanded extraterritoriality because they had become accustomed to the protection of their own laws in their relations with the Muslim states of North Africa and the Ottoman Empire and had suffered from Chinese attempts to apply Chinese criminal law to Westerners, without regard for Western rules of evidence or the modern Western abhorrence of torture. Most of all the foreign traders needed the help of their own law of contract.

A further essential of the treaties was the treaty tariff, which by its low rates would have prevented the Chinese from protecting their native industries, in the event that they had recognized the desirability of doing so before the 1890s. In the 1840s Chinese customs collectors were wont to make their own deals with merchants and also lacked authority and means to coerce the foreigners, so that the administration of even the low treaty tariff was not impartial or effective in Chinese hands. Foreign inspectors were therefore appointed as Chinese officials to run the Chinese customhouse at Shanghai in 1854. The Chinese employment of for-

eigners followed ancient precedents and was one of the most constructive features of the treaty system. Under (Sir) Robert Hart as Inspector General, the Westerners who served as commissioners of Chinese Maritime Customs became leading figures in every port, guardians both of the equality of competition (by enforcement of the regulations for foreign trade) and of the modest Chinese revenue of about 5 percent derived from it. The growth of foreign trade gave Beijing and the coastal provinces important new revenues that could be used for modern needs.

By the most-favored-nation clause (a neat diplomatic device) all foreign powers shared whatever privileges any of them could squeeze out of China. The treaty system kept on growing as the fortunes of the Qing dynasty deteriorated. The opium trade that had begun as a joint Sino-foreign traffic was taken into the country. After the 1880s China's native opium production began to supplant the Indian product, importation of which ceased in 1917. The India-to-China opium trade had continued for more than a hundred years under British auspices.

The "treaty century" would occupy the years from 1842 until 1943, when the United States and Britain formally gave up extraterritoriality as the linchpin of the unequal treaty system. By making the foreigner immune to Chinese legal control, extraterritoriality put the Chinese ruling class into a situation reminiscent of earlier times, obliged to govern China under a degree of alien hegemony. The treaty century, measured chronologically, would last almost as long as the Ruzhen Jin dynasty (1115-1234) in North China and several years longer than the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). In cultural terms its influence would be more pervasive than that of the Ruzhen, the Mongols, or the Manchus, even though China's sovereignty was only impaired and not supplanted by foreign rule, as happened in the Yuan and Qing periods. This comparison is still to be worked out by historians.

For example, how far was the invasion of Western traders in the nineteenth century reminiscent of the invasions by Inner Asian tribes who traded and fought on China's frontier in the fourth to fourteenth centuries? Or in Linda Cooke Johnson's terms, to what extent was the Shanghai International Settlement in its beginning stages comparable to a native-place guild, with its headman (the consul) responsible for its members and fostering their trade with official permission? The implicit suggestion is that in China's long experience the nineteenth century brought less discontinuity than we might think.

The fact remains that 1842-1943 (or 1842-1949) can be seen as a single period characterized by (1) China's increasing openness to foreign

contact, (2) foreign military invasions running from the peripheral attacks of the British and French to the two invasions by Japan (1894–1895, 1931–1937–1945), (3) Western commercial and religious invasions beginning at Guangzhou as early as the 1830s and steadily increasing at least until the 1930s, and (4) the Chinese comeback first under the Nationalists and second under the Communists.

From the foreign side, the treaty century can be divided into three phases. The first, lasting until the 1870s, was dominated by the British commercial “imperialism of free trade.” After setting up the treaty system in the warfare of 1840–1842, 1858, and 1860, Britain supported the weakened Qing regime during its Restoration in the 1860s and later.

The second phase, roughly from the 1870s to 1905, saw the imperialist rivalry in China of the industrializing powers, during which Russia, France, Germany, and Japan as well as Britain all invaded Qing territory. The brief Anglo-Qing co-dominion of the China coast was superseded by the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902. The Europeans’ imperialist rivalry in Asia and Africa eventuated in their effort to destroy one another in World War I.

Meanwhile, the more constructive third phase of the treaty century in China (to be discussed in Part Three) lasted from the 1900s to the 1930s and 40s.

The treaty century’s openness to foreign contact contrasts with the closed posture of the Qing tribute system before 1842. Viewed from outside China, the third (or early twentieth-century) phase of the treaty century was to be the preeminent era of foreign participation in the life of the Chinese people, a high point of cultural interchange in world history before the electronic age. The Chinese patriots’ understandable urge is to create and possess their own history, minimizing foreign participation in it. The fact that one cannot leave the Shanghai Municipal Council out of the history of Shanghai nor Jardine, Matheson & Co. out of the history of Hong Kong suggests that we must see the treaty century as an era of international history as well as of Chinese history.