

Roots of Chinese Stability

The comments of Thomas Meadows, a 19th century British observer of Chinese culture, serve as a brief summary of those values and institutions which had served China since the beginning of its imperial history in the 2nd century b.c.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the values that author attributes to the Chinese that have created the stability of which he speaks?
2. How does Meadows describe Chinese government? What checks and balances existed?
3. If rebellion was a legitimate and accepted part of Chinese society, how did China achieve its great stability?
4. How did the values and institutions of Chinese society in the 19th century compare with those of the West?

Roots of Chinese Stability

The real causes of the unequalled duration and constant increase of the Chinese people, as one and the same nation . . . consists of three doctrines, together with an institution. . . . The doctrines are

- I. That the nation must be governed by moral agency in preference to physical force.
- II. That the services of the wisest and ablest men in the nation are indispensable to its good government.
- III. That the people have the right to depose a sovereign who, either from active wickedness or vicious indulgence, gives cause to oppressive and tyrannical rule.

The institution is . . .

The system of public service competitive examinations. . . .

The institution of Public Service Examinations (which have long been strictly competitive) is the cause of the continued duration of the Chinese nation: it is that which preserves the other causes and gives efficacy to their operation. By it all parents throughout the country, who can compass the means, are induced to impart to their sons an intimate knowledge of the literature which contains the three doctrines above cited, together with

many others conducive to a high mental cultivation. By it all the ability of the country is enlisted on the side of that Government which takes care to preserve it in purity. By it, with its impartiality, the, poorest man in the country is constrained to that if his lot in life is a low one it is so in virtue of the “will of Heaven,” and that no unjust barriers created by his fellow men prevent him from elevating himself. . . .

The normal Chinese government is essentially based on moral force: it is not a despotism. A military and police is maintained sufficient to crush merely factious risings, but totally inadequate both in numbers and in nature, to put down a disgusted and indignant people. But though no despotism, this same government is in form and machinery a pure autocracy. In his district the magistrate is absolute; in his province, the governor; in the empire, the Emperor. The Chinese people have no right of legislation, they have no right of self-taxation, they have not the power of voting out their rulers or of limiting or stopping supplies. They have therefore the right of rebellion. Rebellion is in China the old, often exercised, legitimate, and constitutional means of stopping arbitrary and vicious legislation and administration.

China and the West Evaluate Each Other before the Opium War

This selection highlights some conclusions reached by the Chinese and the Europeans after their initial encounters in the eighteenth century.

The Chinese Concluded That:

- 1 These barbarians from Europe wouldn't accept the fact that they *were* barbarians! Even though they had no proper system of ceremonial etiquette and little understanding of "the distinction between Superior and Inferior."
- 2 Some barbarians behaved violently and aggressively like pirates. (Old Chinese proverb: "He who knows not the 'rites' has nothing to shape his character.")
- 3 The barbarians had cultural values and intellectual standards of their own. In some fields, barbarian knowledge was even ahead of theirs. (Few admitted this.)
- 4 The barbarians were also clever at inventing things such as telescopes and instruments for measuring time and space. *But* what real use were these little gadgets?
- 5 The barbarians also possessed effective weapons which they used with courage and skill. *But* there were enough people in China to defeat any puny barbarian horde.

- 6 Though barbarians all looked alike, they came from different countries. They quarrelled among themselves. It was easy to exploit their national jealousies.
- 7 The European barbarians were all Christians, but they believed in different varieties of Christianity. It was easy to make use of these religious differences.
- 8 The barbarians were a money-grubbing lot, interested only in buying and selling. (But what kind of "barbarians" did the Chinese most frequently encounter?)
- 9 The barbarians, all in all, were a nuisance. Why didn't they stay at home? (What didn't the Chinese find out?)

The Europeans Concluded That:

- 1 On the other side of the globe lay rich, well-ordered, highly civilized countries whose people thought *they* were barbarians. It was a geographical, economic and cultural shock. They were impressed by the size of

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- China, its wealth of natural resources, the splendour of the Oriental courts.
- 2 According to the highly coloured Jesuit accounts, China was a land that venerated learning, moral principles, social harmony. It was a model of “benevolent despotism.” The philosophers of the Enlightenment were quite bowled over. Wrote Voltaire: “The constitution of their Empire is the most excellent the world has ever seen.” Confucius was venerated as a great man. Leibnitz wrote, “Certainly the condition of our affairs, slipping into ever greater corruption, seems to me such that we need missionaries from the Chinese to teach us the use and practice of natural religion.” (But the Jesuit accounts rather ignored the tyranny of the Emperor and Chinese officialdom, the economic disorder, the existence of many brutal customs.)
 - 3 Much Oriental art was subtle and beautiful. Oriental silks, porcelain, ivories, lacquer became fashionable. Oriental motifs were adopted in architecture and landscape gardening.
 - 4 The Far East had great trading potential. Merchants longed to introduce European manufactures to the people, who seemed strangely reluctant to buy their goods.
 - 5 Throughout the Orient law was strictly, often cruelly enforced. (And in England during the seventeenth century, 180 crimes were punishable by death.)
 - 6 The Orientals also practised benevolence, industriousness, obedience and other virtues that, in the past, Christians had assumed to be their monopoly.
 - 7 The Japanese, in particular, were admirably clean. They bathed *every* day and the floors of their homes were so clean that “I would not dare to spit on them,” said one Englishman.
 - 8 There were distinct differences between Chinese and Japanese, though they looked alike. In general, the Chinese were more haughty, suspicious and culturally sophisticated than the Japanese. The Chinese were amazingly incurious about the West. (Imagine a shipload of mandarins sailing up the River Thames—what a furore of interest and excitement there would have been!) The Japanese seemed more eager to learn, more open-minded and hospitable, *but* also more warlike. The Chinese seemed to be almost defenceless; the Japanese practised the martial arts and their leaders were also warriors.

Chinese and Western Civilization Compared

The following selection provides some insight as to the way a Westerner would assess Chinese culture as compared to his own. Taking the position of a Chinese, Goldsworthy L. Dickinson, highlights the chief features of Chinese civilization, while also pointing to the differences between East and West.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the writer identify as the key values and institutions of the Chinese? Do you think that his assessment is an accurate one?
2. How does Dickinson characterize European values and institutions? Would you agree with his characterization? What additional qualities would you add?
3. How does Dickinson define the European idea of “progress,” and what does he say is the Chinese view? How might the Chinese define progress?
4. Does the writer identify any similarities between the two cultures, and, if not, were there? Could these similarities have been used to forge a more workable relationship, or, as the saying goes, “East is east, West is west, and never the twain shall meet?”

Our civilization is the oldest in the world. It does not follow that it is the best; but neither, I submit, does it follow that it is the worst. On the contrary, such antiquity is, at any rate, a proof that our institutions have guaranteed to us a stability for which we search in vain among the nations of Europe. But not only is our civilization stable, it also embodies, as we think, a moral order; while in yours we detect only an economic chaos. Whether your religion be better than ours, I do not at present dispute; but it is certain that it has less influence on your society. You profess Christianity, but your civilization has never been Christian; whereas ours is Confucian through and through. But to say that it is Confucian, is to say that it is moral; . . . Whereas, with you (so it seems, to us) economic relations come first, and upon these you endeavor, afterward, to graft as much morality as they will admit.

This point I may illustrate by a comparison between your view of the family and ours. To you, so far as a foreigner, can perceive, the family is merely a means for nourishing and protecting the child until he is of age to look after himself. . . . As soon as they are of age, you send them out, as you say, to “make their fortune”; and from that moment, often enough, as they cease to be dependent on their parents, so they cease to recognize obli-

gations toward them. They may go where they will, do what they will, earn and spend as they choose; and it is at their own option whether or not they maintain their family ties. With you the individual is the unit, and all the units are free. No one is tied, but also no one is rooted. Your society, to use your own word, is “progressive” you are always “moving on.” Everyone feels it a duty (and in most cases it is a necessity) to strike out a new line for himself. To remain in the position in which you were born you consider a disgrace; a man, to be a man, must venture, struggle, compete, and win. To this characteristic of your society is to be attributed, no doubt, its immense activity, and its success in all material arts. But to this, also, is due the feature that most strikes a Chinaman—its unrest, its confusion, its lack (as we think) of morality. Among you no one is contented, no one has leisure to live, so intent are all on increasing the means of living.

Now, to us of the East all this is the mark of a barbarous society. We measure the degree of civilization not by accumulation of the means of living, but by the character and value of the life lived. Where there are no humane and stable relations, no reverence for the past, no respect even for the present, but only a cupidinous ravishment of the future, there, we think, there is no true society.

From Goldsworthy L. Dickinson, *Letters From a Chinese Official: Being an Eastern View of Western Civilization*, (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1907). Published in 1901 (London: R.B. Johnson), as *Letters From John Chinaman*.

Qianlong's Letter to George III

When the Chinese emperor Qianlong wrote this letter to George III, he was writing as a well-established monarch of a powerful, prosperous dynasty, the Manchu, or Qing, established in 1644. Two long-reigning emperors, Qianlong (1726–1795) and his predecessor and considered to be China's ideal leader, K'ang Hsi (1661–1722), would bring China to its peak of greatness, with increases in economic prosperity, population, agricultural innovations and foreign conquests. Yet this dynasty, founded by non-Chinese Manchurians, won respect from the Chinese by sinifying, that is, adopting Chinese values and institutions, in essence, trying to be more Chinese than the Chinese. This sinification included an especially conservative Confucianism that placed importance on self-sufficiency and, in terms of the outside world, a culture-centrism that viewed China as superior to all other cultures. The Chinese had had little contact with other nations, and those in East Asia with whom China had contact, were seen as inferior and expected to pay tribute in the form of regular missions which included the performance of the kowtow to the Chinese emperor. The Tribute System, as these missions were called, was applied to the Europeans when they came to call. In light of their worldview, perhaps it is not surprising that the Manchu (Qing) Dynasty was to be China's last, its decline beginning in 1800, soon after Qianlong's abdication.

Discussion Questions

1. What were the English demands, and what arguments does Qianlong make in refusing those demands? Which position, the English or the Chinese, seems the most rational to you? The most fair?

2. How do you think Qianlong viewed the English? How do you think the English reacted to Qianlong's letter?
3. From Qianlong's letter, how do you think the Tribute System worked? What Chinese attitudes did it reflect? How did it differ from Western views of the relations between nations?

You, O King, live beyond the confines of many seas, nevertheless, impelled by your humble desire to partake of the benefits of our civilisation, you have dispatched a mission respectfully bearing your memorial. Your Envoy has crossed the seas and paid his respects at my Court on the anniversary of my birthday. To show your devotion, you have also sent offerings of your country's produce.

"I have perused your memorial: the earnest terms in which it is couched reveal a respectful humility on your part, which is highly praiseworthy. In consideration of the fact that your Ambassador and his deputy have come a long way with your memorial and tribute, I have shown them high favour and have allowed them to be introduced into my presence. To manifest my indulgence, I have entertained them at a banquet and made them numerous gifts. I have also caused presents to be forwarded to the Naval Commander and six hundred of his officers and men, although they did not come to Peking,

so that they too may share in my all-embracing kindness.

"As to your entreaty to send one of your nationals to be accredited to my Celestial Court and to be in control of your country's trade with China, this request is contrary to all usage of my dynasty and cannot possibly be entertained. It is true that Europeans, in the service of the dynasty, have been permitted to live at Peking, but they are compelled to adopt Chinese dress, they are strictly confined to their own precincts and are never permitted to return home. You are presumably familiar with our dynastic regulations. Your proposed Envoy to my Court could not be placed in a position similar to that of European officials in Peking who are forbidden to leave China, nor could he, on the other hand, be allowed liberty of movement and the privilege of corresponding with his own country; so that, you would gain nothing by his residence in our midst.

"Moreover, Our Celestial dynasty possesses vast territories, and tribute missions from the dependencies are provided for by

the Department for Tributary States, which ministers to their wants and exercises strict control over their movements. It would be quite impossible to leave them to their own devices. Supposing that your Envoy should come to our Court, his language and national dress differ from that of our people, and there would be no place in which to bestow him. It may be suggested that he might imitate the Europeans permanently resident in Peking and adopt the dress and customs of China, but, it has never been our dynasty's wish to force people to do things unseemly and inconvenient. Besides, supposing I sent an Ambassador to reside in your country, how could you possibly make for him the requisite arrangements? Europe consists of many other nations besides your own: if each and all demanded to be represented at our Court, how could we possibly consent? The thing is utterly impracticable. How can our dynasty alter its whole procedure and system of etiquette, established for more than a century, in order to meet your individual views? If it be said that your object is to exercise control over your country's trade, your nationals have had full liberty to trade at Canton for many a year, and have received the greatest consideration at our hands. Missions have been sent by Portugal and Italy, proffering similar requests. The Throne appreciated their sincerity and loaded them with favours, besides authorising measures to facilitate their trade with China. You are no doubt aware that, when my Canton merchant, Wu Chao-ping, was in debt to the foreign ships, I made the Viceroy advance the monies due, out of the provincial treasury, and ordered him to punish the culprit severely. Why then should foreign nations advance this utterly unreasonable request to be represented at my Court? Peking is nearly two thousand miles from Canton, and at such a distance what possible control could any British representative exercise?

“If you assert that your reverence for Our Celestial dynasty fills you with a desire to acquire our civilisation, our ceremonies and code of laws differ so completely from your own that, even if your Envoy were able to acquire the rudiments of our civilisation, you could not possibly transplant our manners and customs to your alien soil. Therefore, however adept the Envoy might become, nothing would be gained thereby.

“Swaying the wide world, I have but one aim in view, namely, to maintain a perfect governance and to fulfil the duties of the state: strange and costly objects do not interest me. If I have commanded that the tribute offerings sent by you, O King, are to be accepted, this was solely consideration for the spirit which prompted you to dispatch them from afar. Our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated unto every country under Heaven, and Kings of all nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea. 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. This then is my answer to your request to appoint a representative at my Court, a request contrary to our dynastic usage, which would only result in inconvenience to yourself. I have expounded my wishes in detail and have commanded your tribute Envoys to leave in peace on their homeward journey. It behooves you, O King, to respect my sentiments and to display even greater devotion and loyalty in future, so that, by perpetual submission to our Throne, you may secure peace and prosperity for your country hereafter. Besides making gifts (of which I enclose an inventory) to each member of your Mission, I confer upon you, O King, valuable presents in the number usually bestowed on such occasions, including silks and curios—a list of which is likewise enclosed. Do you reverently receive them and

take note of goodwill towards you! A special mandate.”

A further mandate to King George III dealt in detail with the British Ambassador’s proposals and the Emperor’s reasons for declining them: “You, O King, from afar have yearned after the blessings of our civilisation, and in your eagerness to come into touch with our converting influence have sent an Embassy across the sea bearing a memorial. I already taken note of your respectful spirit of submission, have treated your mission with extreme favour and loaded it with gifts, besides issuing a mandate to you, O King, and honouring with the bestowal of valuable presents. Thus has my indulgence been manifested.

“Yesterday your Ambassador petitioned my Ministers to memorialise me regarding your trade with China, but his proposal is not consistent with our dynastic usage and cannot be entertained. Hitherto, all European nations, including your own country’s barbarian merchants, have carried on their trade with Our Celestial Empire at Canton. Such has been the procedure for many years, although Our Celestial Empire possesses all things in prolific abundance and lacks no product within its own borders. There was therefore no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians in exchange for our own produce. But as the tea, silk and porcelain which the Celestial Empire produces, are absolute necessities to European nations and to yourselves, we permitted, as a signal mark of favour, that foreign *hongs* should be established at Canton, so that your wants might be supplied and your country thus participate in our beneficence. But your Ambassador has now put forward new requests which completely fail to recognise the Throne’s principle to ‘treat strangers from afar with indulgence,’ and to exercise a pacifying control over barbarian tribes, the world over. Moreover, our dynasty, swaying the myriad races

of the globe, extends the same benevolence towards all. Your England is not the only nation trading at Canton. If other nations, following your bad example, wrongfully importune my ear with further impossible requests, how will it be possible for me to treat them with easy indulgence? Nevertheless, I do not forget the lonely remoteness of your island, cut off from the world by intervening wastes of sea, nor do I overlook your excusable ignorance of the usages of Our Celestial Empire. I have consequently commanded my Ministers to enlighten your Ambassador on the subject, and have ordered the departure of the mission. But I have doubts that, after your Envoy’s return he may fail to acquaint you with my view in detail or that he may be lacking in lucidity, so that I shall now proceed to take your requests *seriatim* and to issue my mandate on each question separately. In this way you will, I trust, comprehend my meaning. . . .

[The emperor then lists the seven requests of the British; only the seventh is included here—Ed.]

“(7) Regarding your nation’s worship of the Lord of Heaven, it is the same religion as that of other European nations. Ever since the beginning of history, sage Emperors and wise rulers have bestowed on China a moral system and inculcated a code, which from time immemorial has been observed by the myriads of my subjects. There has been no hankering after heterodox doctrines. Even the European (missionary) officials in my capital are forbidden to hold intercourse with Chinese subjects; they are restricted within the limits of their appointed residences, and may not go about propagating their religion. The distinction between Chinese and barbarian is most strict, and your Ambassador’s request that barbarians shall be given full liberty to disseminate religion is utterly unreasonable.

“It may be, O King, that the above proposals have been wantonly made by your Amba-

sador on his shown responsibility, peradventure you yourself are ignorant of our dynastic regulations and had no intention of transgressing them when you expressed these wild ideas and hopes. I have ever shown the greatest condescension to the tribute missions of all States which sincerely yearn after the blessings of civilization, so as to manifest my kindly indulgence. I have even gone out of my way to grant any requests which were in any way consistent with Chinese usage. Above, all, upon you, who live in a remote and inaccessible region, far across the spaces of ocean, but who have shown your submissive loyalty by sending this tribute mission, I have heaped benefits far in excess of those accorded to other nations. But the demands presented by your Embassy are not only a contravention of dynastic tradition, but would be utterly unproductive of good result to yourself, besides being quite impracticable. I have accordingly stated the facts to you

in detail, and it is your bounden duty reverently to appreciate my feelings and to obey these instructions henceforward for all time, so that you may enjoy the blessings of perpetual peace. If, after the receipt of this explicit decree, you lightly give ear to the representations of your subordinates and allow your barbarian merchants to proceed to Chêkiang and Tientsin, with the object of landing and trading there, the ordinances of my Celestial Empire are strict in the extreme, and the local officials, both civil and military, are bound reverently to obey the law of the land. Should your vessels touch the shore, your merchants will assuredly never be permitted to land or to reside there, but will be subject to instant expulsion. In that event your barbarian merchants will have had a long journey for nothing. Do not say that you were not warned in due time! Tremblingly obey and show no negligence! A special mandate!

The Morality of the Opium Trade

Two differing perspectives regarding the morality of trading opium are presented in these selections. The first reading is the personal experience of an American merchant with forty years of experience in China, and the second selection is from another merchant in Canton, writing to a British magazine in 1837.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your opinion of the first writer's suggestion that smoking opium and drinking wine are the same? How does the second writer respond to this comparison?
2. What is the first merchant's conclusion as to the ethics of opium smoking? What underlying motives might influence his attitude? What arguments does the second merchant use to refute the views of the first merchant, and others whom you've read?
3. "That which, sold in chests, is commerce, and to be applauded, becomes vulgar and mean when doled out in small lots. Admirable logic!" What is the second merchant's point in this statement, and do you find merit in his argument?
4. Are the views regarding the morality of using and trading opium in the 19th century similar to present attitudes and arguments? Is it appropriate to use the standards of the present to evaluate past actions, such as the morality of the opium traders?

The Opium Question from the Moral Point of View

An American Merchant in Canton

While the opium trade was going on, discussions often occurred as to the morality of it, as well as to the effect of smoking on the Chinese. None of the Hong merchants ever had anything to do with it, and several of the foreign houses refrained from dealing in it on conscientious grounds. As to its influence on the inhabitants of the city and suburbs at large, they were a healthy, active, hard-working, and industrious people, withal cheerful and frugal. They were intelligent in business, skillful in manufactures and handicrafts. These traits are inconsistent with habitual smoking, while the costliness of the prepared drug was such as to render a dilution of it (to bring it within the means of the masses) utterly harmless. Amongst the wealthier classes, no doubt it

was more or less common, this we knew; but I myself, and I think I may safely say the entire foreign community, rarely, if ever, saw any one physically or mentally injured by it. No evidences of a general abuse, rarely of the use of the pipe, were apparent. I remember one man having been brought to a missionary hospital to be treated for excessive smoking of opium, but he was looked upon as a Lion and much was made of him. In fact, smoking was a habit, as the use of wine was with us, in moderation. As compared with the use of spirituous liquors in the United States and in England, and the evil consequences of it, that of opium was infinitesimal. This is my personal experience during a residence at Canton, Macao, and Hong Kong of forty years.

From W. C. Hunter, *The "Fan Kwae" at Canton Before Treaty Days: 1825-1844*, Shanghai, 1911, pp. 79-80; and "A British Merchant's Answer," from *The Chinese Repository*, Vol. V, pp. 407-412.

A British Merchant's Answer

Were the traffickers in this poison,—for such no one in possession of his senses can deny it to be, to state that they deal in it merely as a matter of gain; and that, with them, this determination supersedes every consideration of right or wrong, then their premises could be at once seen, and opposition or reasoning would be vain, since all conviction would be fruitless; but when, as now, the practice, evil in itself, and necessarily felt to be so, is upheld by anxious sophistication, it is but right that it be exposed. . . . Were not great capital, skill, and enterprise embarked in this trade, it would never have arrived at its present magnitude. . . . Constantly, avowedly, notoriously, in the practice of a trade, directly opposed to the laws of the empire; not less opposed to morality and propriety; the purveyors of a most powerful incentive to vice; a fierce moral destroying agent—on what has the opium merchant to plume himself, beyond his brother smuggler and law breaker, the contraband gin-importer into Great Britain? The one risks his life—the other, shielding himself behind the corruption of the local officers, or the weakness of the marine, carries on deeds of unlawfulness, without even the risk or excitement of personal danger; and coolly comments on the injustice of the Chinese government in refusing the practice of international law and reciprocity to countries, whose subjects it knows only as engaged in constant and gross infraction of laws, the breaking of which affects the basis

of all good government, the morals of the country. . . .

Reverse the picture. Suppose, by any chance, that Chinese junks were to import into England, as a foreign and fashionable luxury, so harmless a thing as arsenic, or corrosive sublimate—that, after a few years, it became a rage—that thousands—that hundreds of thousands used it—and that its use was, in consequence of its bad effects, prohibited. Suppose that, in opposition to the prohibition, junks were stationed in the St. George's channel, with a constant supply, taking occasional trips to the isle of Wight, and the mouth of the Thames, when the governmental officers were sufficiently attentive to their duty, at the former station, to prevent its introduction there. Suppose the consumption to increase annually, and to arouse the attention of government, and of those sound thinking men who foresaw misery and destruction from the rapid spread of an insidious, unprofitable, and dangerous habit. . . .

The comparison of opium to wine is, I beg to say, mere “fudge,” and the attempt at argument, thence deduced, no better than nonsense: but, even did the parallel hold, what would it prove? That because people in the western world poison themselves with wine, it is light and expedient that the Chinese should be poisoned with opium. . . . Such is the opinion entertained of it, *in all countries where it is used*, that he, who has once become a prey to the infatuation, is regarded as

lost to society, his family, and himself—he is looked on as a reprobate, a debauchee, an incurable; and experience proves, by the innumerable wrecks which the fatal habit marks on its page, the truth of the observation. I will refer you for proof of this, to all the writers* on Turkey, Persia, and other countries, where the habit prevails. You will find all agree in the remark, above made. Does not our own experience confirm it? Who would have in his house a servant who smokes opium? Is not such a man a marked one, by his own countrymen and foreigners; and is he not looked down on with pity or scorn in consequence? The Chinese, who may be allowed to know somewhat of their own people, denounce the habit, as prejudicial and destructive. When once it is indulged in, renunciation is all but impossible; and the appetite, “growing by what it feeds on,” increases till premature decay and death close the scene of dissipation and vice. This picture is by no means so agreeable a one to contemplate, as the *fancy* one of using it—being merely “a rational and sociable article of luxury and hospitality; but, what it wants in pleasing imagery, it makes up in truth. Ask any Chinese (who does not use this rational

and sociable thing), what it is, and hear what he will tell you. . . .

. . . The saving clause in the opium-smuggling profession is that it is, not a *vulgar* one. It is a wholesale trade. Sales are made in thousands of dollars’ worth. The amount is gentlemanly. Single balls would be low. Sales by retail would be indefensible. The seller of a pipe or two, the poor pander to a depraved appetite, should be pursued by justice—for none of these can be gentlemen. That which, sold in chests, is commerce, and to be applauded, becomes vulgar and mean when doled out in small lots. Admirable logic! with which one may hug one’s self, satisfied that it is nothing more than “supplying an important branch of the Indian revenue safely and peaceably.” . . . The trade may be a profitable one—it may be of importance to the Indian government, and to individuals—but to attempt a defense on the ground of its not having a dangerous and pernicious influence on health and morals, is to say what cannot be borne out, by fact or argument; and what all, who reason on the subject, cannot but feel to be an impotent attempt to defend what is, in itself, manifestly indefensible.

* Hope, Chardin, Fraser, Madden, Raffles, and a host of others.

Lord Palmerston

This brief selection contains a suggested way to ease the growing tensions over the opium trade. Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary is writing to the British Envoy in China.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think Palmerston's suggestion would have removed the tensions between the English and the Chinese? Would the Chinese have accepted it?
2. Do you agree with Palmerston's statement that it was impossible for the English to help the Chinese prevent the importation of opium? What do you think is his underlying message?
3. How did Palmerston view the role and the power of the Chinese government?

May, 1841

Experience has shown that it is entirely beyond the power of the Chinese Government to prevent the introduction of opium into China; and many reasons render it impossible that the British Government can give the Chinese Government any effectual aid toward the accomplishment of that purpose. But while the opium trade is forbidden by law it must inevitably be carried on by fraud and violence; and hence must arise frequent conflicts and collisions between the Chinese preventive service and the parties who are engaged in carrying on the opium trade. These parties are generally British subjects, and it is impossible to suppose that this private war can be carried on between British opium smugglers and the Chinese authorities, without events happening

which must tend to put in jeopardy the good understanding between the Chinese and British Governments.

H. M. Government makes no demand in this matter; for they have no right to do so. The Chinese Government is fully entitled to prohibit the importation of opium, if it pleases; and British subjects who engage in a contraband trade must take the consequences of doing so. But it is desirable that you should avail yourself of every favorable opportunity to strongly impress upon the Chinese Plenipotentiary, and through him upon the Chinese Government how much it would be for the interest of the Chinese Government itself to alter the law of China on this matter, and to legalize, by a regular duty, a trade which they cannot prevent.

From Lord Palmerston's Instructions to Sir Henry Pottinger respecting Opium, May, 1841, from S. Couling, *Encyclopedia Sinica*, London, 1917, p. 406.

Commissioner Lin's Letter

Lin Zexu, appointed to be the customs inspector at Canton shortly before the outbreak of the Opium War, addressed this letter to Queen Victoria as part of his campaign to eradicate opium from Chinese society. As the governor-general of the two central provinces of Hupei and Hunan, he had earlier distinguished himself by dealing with the opium menace through a policy of confiscating smoking equipment and the drug itself, as well as helping addicts overcome their addiction. He had never dealt with foreigners, however, and this is perhaps apparent in his entreaties to Queen Victoria, as well as in his actions in Canton. His confiscation of Westerners' opium and his blockading of Western enclaves would increase Chinese-British tensions that eventually led to war.

Discussion Questions

1. What is Commissioner Lin's view of the Westerners? Of Chinese?
2. What arguments does he make regarding the reasons that the English should stop the opium trade immediately? Do you find his arguments convincing?
3. How do Lin's views compare with those of the Emperor Qianlong in his letter to George III? Can you detect any differences in attitude or values in the two letters?
4. Besides stopping the trade of opium, what other changes in the Chinese-Western relationship do you think Lin would have welcomed?

A communication: magnificently our great emperor smoothes and pacifies China and the foreign countries, regarding all with the same kindness. If there is profit, then he shares it with the peoples of the world; if there is harm, then he removes it on behalf of the world. This is because he takes the mind of Heaven and earth as his mind.

The kings of your honorable country by a tradition handed down from generation to generation have always been noted for their politeness and submissiveness. We have read your successive tributary memorials saying: "In general our countrymen who go to trade in China have always received His Majesty the Emperor's gracious treatment and equal justice," and so on. Privately we are delighted with the way in which the honorable rulers of your country deeply understand the grand principles and are grateful for the Celestial grace. For this reason the Celestial Court in soothing those from afar has redoubled its polite and kind treatment. The profit from trade has been enjoyed by them continuously for two hundred years. This is the source from which your country has become known for its wealth.

But after a long period of commercial intercourse, there appear among the crowd of barbarians both good persons and bad, unevenly. Consequently there are those who smuggle opium to seduce the Chinese people and so cause the spread of the poison to all provinces. Such persons who only care to profit themselves, and disregard their harm to others, are not tolerated by the laws of

Heaven and are unanimously hated by human beings. His Majesty the Emperor, upon hearing of this, is in a towering rage. He has especially sent me, his commissioner, to come to Kwangtung, and together with the governor-general and governor jointly to investigate and settle this matter. . . .

We find that your country is sixty or seventy thousand *li* from China. Yet there are barbarian ships that strive to come here for trade for the purpose of making a great profit. The wealth of China is used to profit the barbarians. That is to say, the great profit made by barbarians is all taken from the rightful share of China. By what right do they then in return use the poisonous drug to injure the Chinese people? Even though the barbarians may not necessarily intend to do us harm, yet in coveting profit to an extreme, they have no regard for injuring others. Let us ask, where is your conscience? I have heard that the smoking of opium is very strictly forbidden by your country; that is because the harm caused by opium is clearly understood. Since it is not permitted to do harm to your own country, then even less should you let it be passed on to the harm of other countries—how much less to China! Of all that China exports to foreign countries, there is not a single thing which is not beneficial to people; they are of benefit when eaten, or of benefit when used, or of benefit when resold: all are beneficial. Is there a single article from China which has done any harm to foreign countries? Take tea and rhubarb, for example; the foreign countries cannot get along for a single day without them.

If China cuts off these benefits with no sympathy for those who are to suffer, then what can the barbarians rely upon to keep themselves alive? Moreover the woolens, camlets, and longells [i.e., textiles] of foreign countries cannot be woven unless they obtain Chinese silk. If China, again, cuts off this beneficial export, what profit can the barbarians expect to make? As for other foodstuffs, beginning with candy, ginger, cinnamon, and so forth, and articles for use, beginning with silk, satin, chinaware, and so on, all the things that must be had by foreign countries are innumerable. On the other hand, articles coming from the outside to China can only be used as toys. We can take them or get along without them. Since they are not needed by China, what difficulty would there be if we closed the frontier and stopped the trade? Nevertheless our Celestial Court lets tea, silk, and other goods be shipped without limit and circulated everywhere without begrudging it in the slightest. This is for no other reason but to share the benefit with the people of the whole world.

The goods from China carried away by your country not only supply your own consumption and use, but also can be divided up and sold to other countries, producing a triple profit. Even if you do not sell opium, you still have this threefold profit. How can you bear to go further, selling products injurious to others in order to fulfill your insatiable desire? . . .

We have further learned that in London, the capital of your honorable rule, and in Scotland (Ssu-ko-lan), Ireland (Ai-lun), and other places, originally no opium has been produced. Only in several places of India under your control such as Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Patna, Benares, and Malwa has opium been planted from hill to hill, and ponds have been opened for its manufacture. For months and years work is continued in order to accumulate the poison. The obnox-

ious odor ascends, irritating Heaven and frightening the spirits. Indeed you, O King, can eradicate the opium plant in these places, hoe over the fields entirely, and sow in its stead the five grains [i.e., millet, barley, wheat, etc.]. Anyone who dares again attempt to plant and manufacture opium should be severely punished. This will really be a great, benevolent government policy that will increase the common weal and get rid of evil. For this, Heaven must support you and the spirits must bring you good fortune, prolonging your old age and extending your descendants. All will depend on this act. . . .

Now we have set up regulations governing the Chinese people. He who sells opium shall receive the death penalty and he who smokes it also the death penalty. Now consider this: if the barbarians do not bring opium, then how can the Chinese people resell it, and how can they smoke it? The fact is that the wicked barbarians beguile the Chinese people into a death trap. How then can we grant life only to these barbarians? He who takes the life of even one person still has to atone for it with his own life; yet is the harm done by opium limited to the taking of one life only? Therefore in the new regulations, in regard to those barbarians who bring opium to China, the penalty is fixed at decapitation or strangulation. This is what is called getting rid of a harmful thing on behalf of mankind.

Moreover we have found that in the middle of the second month of this year [April 9] Consul [Superintendent] Elliot of your nation, because the opium prohibition law was very stern and severe, petitioned for an extension of the time limit. He requested a limit of five months for India and its adjacent harbors and related territories, and ten months for England proper, after which they would act in conformity with the new regulations. Now we, the commissioner and others, have memorialized and have received the extraordinary Celestial grace of His Majesty the Em-

peror, who has redoubled his consideration and compassion. All those who within the period of the coming one year (from England) or six months (from India) bring opium to China by mistake, but who voluntarily confess and completely surrender their opium, shall be exempt from their punishment. After this limit of time, if there are still those who bring opium to China then they will plainly have committed a willful violation and shall at once be executed according to law, with absolutely no clemency or pardon. This may be called the height of kindness and the perfection of justice.

Our Celestial Dynasty rules over and supervises the myriad states, and surely possesses unfathomable spiritual dignity. Yet the Emperor cannot bear to execute people without having first tried to reform them by instruction. Therefore he especially promulgates these fixed regulations. The barbarian

merchants of your country, if they wish to do business for a prolonged period, are required to obey our statutes respectfully and to cut off permanently the source of opium. They must by no means try to test the effectiveness of the law with their lives. May you, O King, check your wicked and sift out your vicious people before they come to China, in order to guarantee the peace of your nation, to show further the sincerity of your politeness and submissiveness, and to let the two countries enjoy together the blessings of peace. How fortunate, how fortunate indeed! After receiving this dispatch will you immediately give us a prompt reply regarding the details and circumstances of your cutting off the opium traffic. Be sure not to put this off. The above is what has to be communicated. [Vermilion endorsement:] This is appropriately worded and quite comprehensive (*Te-t'i chou-tao*).

The English and the Opium Trade

This selection, written by a contemporary Chinese scholar, is an historical account of the issues, events and personalities involved in the opium trade, one of the contentious issues that would eventually lead to the Opium War (1839–1842) and China’s first defeat. In the words of one western historian, these events for the West constituted “imperialism begun in a pipe dream.”

Discussion Questions

1. How was the opium trade conducted, and how did the trade change between the reign of Qianlong and the beginning of the war in 1839? What were the reasons for these changes?
2. What did the Chinese offer as solutions to the problems caused by the opium trade? Do you see similarities in the Chinese recommendations, and those of Americans today? Were any of the Chinese proposals successful, and if not, why not?
3. What response did the Westerners make to the attempts by the Chinese government to eradicate opium? What do you think of the Western position, and is it in any way similar to the views of those countries involved in the present drug trade? What underlying attitudes, even principles, motivated the Western response?
4. The writer calls the Chinese view of opium “hypocritical.” Why, and would you agree? Is this view similar to our contemporary attitude towards drugs?
5. Do you think Commissioner Lin’s policies were the only ones available to the Chinese at the time? Was Lin a hero or a fool? Did Captain Elliot, who controlled the British trade in China, handle his role effectively?

Before the eighteenth century England produced no major product marketable in China, and for the most part her ships carried silver rather than goods to China. Economists at that time, whether Chinese or foreign, appreciated the fact that a steady drain of gold and silver was detrimental to a nation's economy, and each nation sought to increase exports, thereby increasing the inflow of gold and silver. After many years in the China trade the British discovered that opium was an extremely lucrative item; thus the British East India Company encouraged the cultivation of opium in India while controlling its transport to China. During the first few years of the Ch'ien-lung Emperor's reign (1736–1795) the Chinese imported only about four hundred chests annually (each chest was about a hundred *chin*; a *chin* is about a kilo). The Ch'ien-lung Emperor had forbidden Chinese merchants to sell opium, but his efforts came to nought. By the time of the Chia-ch'ing Emperor (1796–1820) the import of opium had increased to almost four thousand chests a year. Finally, the Chia-ch'ing Emperor prohibited further imports, but because of corruption among the official class, the enforcement of inspection and prohibition proved to be extremely difficult. The opium trade continued to expand.

The Tao-kuang Emperor was more concerned than all his predecessors over the opium problem. He proved the most determined to suppress its use, and upon ascending the throne, he issued ordinances strictly prohibiting opium smoking. But opium im-

ports increased faster than ever before. During the first year of the Tao-kuang Emperor's reign (1821) the amount of opium coming into China was still quite low, only five thousand chests, but by 1850 it had jumped to over thirty thousand chests (worth about eighteen million Chinese *yuan*). The result was that Chinese silver was rapidly drained away in return for opium which was of no benefit to her whatsoever. The whole country regarded this as a calamity, but officials in Kwangtung felt that the prohibition on opium was utterly impractical in view of the fact that the opium trade was in the interest of those who gave the orders to suppress it. This group suggested instead that the tax on foreign opium be increased, and that local production in China be stepped up simultaneously to compete with the foreign opium trade, thus rendering it no longer profitable for foreign merchants to bring opium from India and thereby halting importation.

By the fourteenth year of the Tao-kuang Emperor's reign (1834) the advocates of this policy were in ascendancy, but no one except Hsu Nai-chi dared publicly speak in its favor. In the eighteenth year of the Tao-kuang Emperor's reign (1838) Huang Chueh-tzu memorialized the Emperor, clamoring angrily for prohibition and advocating summarily stamping out all opium smoking. He claimed that if no one smoked opium, no one would buy opium, and he suggested that those who smoked opium might be cured by capital punishment.

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After Huang Chueh-tzu's memorial had reached the Emperor, the Emperor asked that each provincial governor present his view on the subject. Although no one came forward and directly opposed Huang Chueh-tzu, they felt that his policy was obviously too extreme, maintaining that opium smokers harmed only themselves while the merchants who dealt in opium harmed many. Were not the merchants' crimes much graver than the addicts? They concluded that since Canton was the main port of entry and sale of opium, outlawing its use should begin there.

Lin Tse-hsu, Viceroy for Hunan and Hupei, agreed with Huang Chueh-tzu's proposal and advised that all measures be taken to enforce them. The Tao-kuang Emperor decided that the prohibition of the sale and use of opium ought to be enforced with greater severity; thus he sent Lin Tse-hsu to Canton as his High Commissioner to look into the problem. Lin, a Fukienese and one of the most renowned and capable officials in political circles of his time, and greatly respected by the scholar-official class, was a tremendously self-confident and arrogant man. He had no real experience handling "barbarians," but he recklessly announced that, "I am intimately acquainted with the wily ways of the barbarian from my sojourn in Fukien."

Actually, people at that time were rather hypocritical about the whole opium problem. They admitted in private correspondence to the difficulties of suppressing opium, but in their official memorials they toed the line with ceremonious ostentation. This sort of lack of candor was a great problem among the scholar-official class.

In reality, opium suppression was an extremely complicated and difficult problem, and it would have been no easier without foreign interference. But how much more difficult it was during the Tao-kuang reign, when the English were totally unwilling to

allow us to carry out the policy of suppression. Opium was not only commercially very profitable then, it also constituted the greater part of the revenues earned by the Indian government, and in view of this, the English were uneasy about our policy of trying to close the country to free trade. They were eager to settle matters once and for all, and had we given them the slightest pretext over the opium problem, they would not have hesitated to deal with us by force of arms.

We call the war that followed the Opium War; the English call it the Trade War. Both sides had their own reasons. In regard to the opium problem—we tried to get rid of the curse altogether, while the English hoped to maintain the situation as it was; we were the ones who wished to alter the status quo. In regard to the trade problem—the English sought new opportunities and freedom, and it was we who wished to maintain the status quo. Under these circumstances, war was unavoidable.

Clash Between East and West

On March 10 of the nineteenth year of the Tao-kuang Emperor's reign (1839), Lin Tse-hsu arrived at Canton. He spent a week pondering the situation and settling himself before he made his first move. He then issued a proclamation to all foreigners, saying that it was not right to harm others for the sake of one's own profit: "How dare you bring your country's vile opium into China, cheating and harming our people?"

Lin made two demands of the foreigners: first, he asked that they take all the unsold opium and "hand it all over to Chinese officials"; second, he asked that the foreigners pledge not to import any more opium into China. If they continued, said Lin, "the opium will be confiscated and those involved will be decapitated." Unfortunately, the foreigners did not understand that Lin meant

business, thinking that he was just another ordinary official who, as a matter of course, had issued a pious proclamation as a formality at the beginning of his term of office. But after all, they thought, would not Lin be willing to sell out like all the other officials after they got around to settling the price of the squeeze and, would not trade then be able to continue as usual? They did not realize that Lin was not this sort of man. Lin said, "If the opium trade does not cease, I, the Imperial High Commissioner, will not leave my post. I will persevere in this matter until the end."

By the end of March the foreigners were still unwilling to hand over their opium stocks. Lin Tse-hsu then issued an order forbidding any movement to and from Canton, and sent troops to encircle the thirteen foreign factories (foreign trading establishments). He ordered all Chinese to leave the factories and he later forbade anyone at all from entering or leaving. In short, Lin turned the thirteen factories into foreign prisons and prohibited the sale of foodstuffs to the inmates.

At that time there were roughly three hundred and fifty foreigners inside the thirteen factories, among whom was the English Superintendent of Trade, Captain Charles Elliot. Naturally, those inside did suffer a certain amount of privation—they had to do chores, like boil their own water, wash their own dishes, and do their own housework—but there was enough food, since the foreigners had previously stored up a large quantity and were also being clandestinely supplied.

Captain Elliot had originally hoped to compromise, but Lin stood firmly to his two demands. At that time the English, unfortunately, happened to have only two small gunboats in Chinese waters, and the troops on board had no chance of landing at Canton. Captain Elliot had no means by which to protest, and to yield was his only alternative. But the way in which he chose to yield is

worth our attention: instead of simply ordering the English merchants to hand over their opium to Lin, he ordered them to hand the opium over to him; in his capacity as Superintendent of Trade, he gave each merchant a receipt, and by one quick maneuver all British opium became the property of the British crown.

Captain Elliot then handed over 20,280 chests of opium to the Chinese. This was a great victory for Lin, who, with one toss of the net, had trapped a million *chin* of opium. The Tao-kuang Emperor was indeed pleased, and he commended Lin, saying, "Your great loyalty to the throne and your unbounded love of your country are unequaled and unmatched by any within or without the Empire."

But still the foreigners did not quite believe that Lin was genuinely determined to suppress the opium trade, and they thought that he must be in some way profiting. They soon learned otherwise.

At Hu-men, on the Pearl River Delta, Lin ordered two huge pools to be dug in the sandy banks. He later wrote:

First I had a series of trenches dug and then I dug ditches to connect them. After this was completed, I had water diverted into the trenches through the ditches. Then I had salt sprinkled on the pools. Finally, I had the unprocessed opium thrown into the pools and added lime to boil the opium. The opium was thereby turned into ashes and completely destroyed. The nauseating odor was more than we could bear. When the tide finally receded we opened the trenches and let the residue flow away. We then used brushes to clean the bottom of the pools so that nothing remained. The process took twenty-three days. Every bit of opium was completely destroyed. Each day civilian and military officials were there to supervise. Even the foreigners came to watch and to record the events in detail. They lavishly praised the Commissioner's integrity.

Meanwhile Captain Elliot had made a thorough report to London and was quietly

awaiting further orders. After his apparent success, Lin was greatly relieved. The Emperor was so pleased that he offered Lin a new position—Viceroy to Kwangtung and Kwangsi—but Lin humbly turned down the offer, claiming that “although all the opium in the factories had been completely destroyed, there is still the possibility that more may be smuggled in.” Lin wanted to do the job thoroughly, and thus subsequently demanded that all foreign merchants sign a bond committing themselves thenceforth to observe the Chinese regulations prohibiting opium trade. Captain Elliot refused to sign thereby stirring up the simmering conflict once again. But by this time Lin was swelled with new confidence, and claimed that the English power was nowhere near as menacing as in fact it was. In addition, he believed

that the English were utterly dependent on the Chinese since they needed Chinese *tea* and *rhubarb*! He thought that if he simply cut off their supply of tea and rhubarb he could bring about their ruination.

The forts at Hu-men were repaired and overhauled. Lin also took a huge iron chain and stretched it across the entrance of Humen harbor as a blockade.

That winter Chinese junks clashed on numerous occasions with British ships in the waters around Canton. Each time Lin memorialized the Emperor claiming smashing victories, putting the whole country in a very optimistic mood.

When the British government finally received Elliot’s letter, they dispatched Admiral George Elliot as plenipotentiary in charge of an expeditionary force to China.

A Letter to Parliament

While many Chinese officials were sending memorials to their emperor over the question of the opium trade, their counterparts in England were also busy. The following letter, composed by one of the editors of this book, is suggested as typical of the kinds of appeals English businessmen made because of their grievances with the way trade was being conducted in China. As you read it, compare the issues considered important here with those highlighted by the Chinese memorials to the emperor.

Discussion Questions

1. What were the key issues in the opium trade, from the perspectives of a member of Parliament and one participating in the trade? Do you think his views were generally representative of the English position?
2. What underlying values and assumptions are presented in the letter? Do you think Cooke has a particular agenda?
3. How do the issues as defined by this English writer compare with those put forth by the Chinese memorialists? What aspects of each arguments over the opium trade would you support?

Mr. Harold Blackstone, Esq.
House of Commons
City of Westminster, England

City of Bristol
January 16, 1832

Dear Sir;

As the Member of Parliament representing our district, I think it is important that I bring to your attention a number of facts relative to our trade with China.

For many years, Cooke and Sons, Ltd., has had a very profitable trade at Canton. We usually bought raw cotton in India and sold it to the Hong merchants at Canton. In exchange we bought tea, silk and porcelain for sale in England and Holland where they were very popular among the carriage trade. As a supporter of your call for free trade, I must point out that it does not exist in China and that is working to the detriment of our company's financial structure. Our grievances about the Canton trade include:

1. The Chinese Hong merchants, appointed by the Imperial Court to control the trade at Canton, are extortionate in their demands for tariffs on our cotton and various excise taxes on the goods we buy. Since they have a monopoly on all trade with China, there is no way to lower their prices through increased competition. It is obvious that additional ports need to be opened to overcome this difficulty and to facilitate greater trade by all Western nations.
2. The Hong merchants have regularly borrowed considerable sums from us to purchase Chinese goods for the next year's trade. Unfortunately much of this money is still owed and there is no legal machinery to recover what is due us. Whenever we forward entreaties to Chinese government officials for redress, the Hoppo (the Hong board leader) refuses to send them to the proper authorities.
3. Our representatives at Canton are subject to severe restrictions—they cannot leave the precincts of the factories and may not even bring their families to Canton with them. Also they are not permitted to live at Canton year round and must retire to Macau from March through October.
4. The Chinese legal system leaves us at a considerable disadvantage. We are treated like ordinary Chinese subjects and since 1820 have no right of appeal. Chinese law permits arbitrary arrest, and even torture, which is not permissible in England. A few of our sailors have been involved in some regrettable incidents with Chinese civilians and we have been coerced into turning suspects over to the Chinese under pain of losing our trading rights. In one case a sailor was forced to confess to killing a Chinese and was executed without our having any representatives at the trial.
5. Since there is no British ambassador at the Imperial Court in Peking, we have no regular process to deal with all the above abuses of His Majesty's subjects. We are often called 'barbarians' and dealers in 'foreign mud' (opium) and are usually treated in a very condescending manner we are unused to in Western countries.

I hope you will report our position to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister so that the situation can be improved to our nation's general benefit.

Your Humble Servant,

Robert Cooke

Beatable Barbarians

This selection provides another example of Chinese culture-centrism. As the introduction to the readings suggests, the Chinese knew neither themselves nor their opponents, and, as you read, consider the reasons for their lack of knowledge.

Discussion Questions

1. What is this writer's view of the English? Where do you think he gets his information, and what are the biggest mistakes he makes in his assessments of the English?
2. How does this selection compare with others written by Chinese on their view of the Westerners? If you had been the Chinese emperor, how would you have reacted to this memorial?
3. What does this selection reveal about Chinese values compared with Western values?

Beatable Barbarians

The English barbarians are an insignificant and detestable race, trusting entirely to their strong ships and large guns; but the immense distance they have traversed will render the arrival of seasonable supplies impossible, and their soldiers, after a single defeat, being deprived of provisions, will become dispirited and lost. Though it is very true that their guns are destructive, still in the attack of our harbors they will be too elevated, and their aim moreover rendered unsteady by the waves; while we in our forts, with larger pieces, can more steadily return the fire. Notwithstanding the riches of their government, the people are poor, and unable to contribute to the expenses of an army at such a distance. Granted that their vessels are their homes, and that in them they defy wind and weather, still they require a great draft of water; and, since our coasts are beset with shoals, they will certainly,

without the aid of native pilots, run ashore, without approaching very closely. Though waterproof, their ships are not fireproof, and we may therefore easily burn them. The crews will not be able to withstand the ravages of our climate, and surely waste away by degrees; and to fight on shore, their soldiers possess not sufficient activity. Without, therefore, despising the enemy, we have no cause to fear them. While guarding the approaches to the interior, and removing to the coast the largest guns, to give their ships a terrific reception, we should at the same time keep vessels filled with brushwood, oil, saltpeter, and sulphur, in readiness to let them drive, under the direction of our marine, with wind and tide against their shipping. When once on fire, we may open our batteries upon them, display the celestial terror, and exterminate them without the loss of a single life.

From "A Censor's Memorial on the English Barbarians," in Sir John Francis Davis, *China During the War and Since the Peace*, 2 vols., London, 1852, pp. 11–13.

Treaties of Nanjing and Wang-hea

Key provisions of the treaties ending the Opium War are presented in this selection. The Treaty of Nanjing was the first of four treaties that were signed with China by the Western nations, ending formal hostilities. As if these assaults to China's sovereignty were not enough, two years later, the Treaty of Wang-hea, signed by the United States and China, provided additional humiliation to a China humbled by their loss, and, for that reason, they have been called the "unequal treaties." These treaties also established a pattern in the West's dealing with other nations in Asia and throughout the world, where similar negotiations led to the establishment of a relationship favorable to the West's interests. In addition to the economic and territorial provisions of the treaties, the sections dealing with diplomatic conduct between nations, which contains the concept of "most favored nation," is also important. Article XXI of the Treaty of Wang-hea introduced the right of extraterritoriality, or the right for foreigners to be governed by western judicial standards.

Discussion Questions

1. Based on the reasons that the Opium War was fought, how successful were the victors in achieving their objectives in these treaties? What price did the Chinese have to pay for defeat?
2. Do you think the treaties were fair to China? Given the earlier arguments of Qianlong and Commissioner Lin, with which provisions would the Chinese find most difficult to comply? Which of the provisions was most injurious to China's view of itself? Which was most injurious to the West's view of itself?
3. If you were a member of the Chinese government at this time (1840s), what course of action would you now recommend to your emperor?

Treaty of Nanjing, 1842

Victoria, by the Grace of God, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc., etc., etc. To all and Singular to whom these Presents shall come. Greetings! Whereas a Treaty between Us and Our Good Brother the Emperor of China, was concluded and signed, in the English and Chinese Languages, on board Our Ship the *Cornwallis*, at Nanjing, on the Twenty-ninth day of August, in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty-two, by the Plenipotentiaries of Us and of Our said Good Brother, duly and respectively authorized for that purpose; which Treaty is hereunto annexed in Original:—

ARTICLE I.

There shall henceforward be Peace and Friendship between Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and His Majesty the Emperor of China, and between their respective Subjects, who shall enjoy full security and protection for their persons and property within the Dominions of the other.

ARTICLE II.

His Majesty the Emperor of China agrees, that British Subjects, with their families and establishments, shall be allowed to reside, for the purpose of carrying on their Mercantile pursuits, without molestation or restraint at

the Cities and Towns of Canton, Amoy, Foochow-fu, Ningpo, and Shanghai. . . .

ARTICLE III.

It being obviously necessary and desirable, that British Subjects should have some Port whereat they may careen and refit their ships, when required, and keep Stores for that purpose, His Majesty the Emperor of China cedes to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, etc., the Island of Hongkong. . . .

ARTICLE IV.

The Emperor of China agrees to pay the sum of Six Millions of Dollars as the value of Opium which was delivered up at Canton in the month of March 1839, as a Ransom for the lives of Her Britannic Majesty's Superintendent and Subjects, who had been imprisoned and threatened with death by the Chinese High Officers.

ARTICLE VI.

The Government of Her Britannic Majesty having been obliged to send out an Expedition to demand and obtain redress for the violent and unjust Proceedings of the Chinese High Authorities towards Her Britannic Majesty's Officers and Subjects, the Emperor of China agrees to pay the sum of Twelve Millions of Dollars on account of the Expenses incurred. . . .

From the Treaty of Nanjing, Vol. I, pp. 351–356, and “The Most-Favored Nation Clause: Article VIII, Treaty of the Bogue, p. 393, in *China: Treaties, Conventions, Etc., Between China and Foreign States*, published at the Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 2 vols., 1917.

ARTICLE XII.

On the assent of the Emperor of China to this Treaty being received and the discharge of the first instalment of money, Her Britannic Majesty's Forces will retire from Nanjing and the Grand Canal, and will no longer mo-

lest or stop the Trade of China. The Military Post at Chinhai will also be withdrawn, but the Islands of Koolangsoo and that of Chusan will continue to be held by Her Majesty's Forces until the money payments, and the arrangements for opening the Ports to British Merchants be completed.

Treaty of Wang-Hea, 1844

ARTICLE I.

There shall be a perfect, permanent, and universal peace and a sincere and cordial amity between the United States of America on the one part, and the Ta-Tsing Empire on the other part, and between their people respectively, without exception of persons or places.

ARTICLE II.

Citizens of the United States resorting to China for the purpose of commerce will pay duties of import and export prescribed by the Tariff which is fixed by and made a part of this Treaty. They shall in no case be subject to other or higher duties than are or shall be required of the people of any other nation whatever. . . . If the Chinese Government desire to modify in any respect the said Tariff, such modifications shall be made only in consultation with Consuls or other functionaries thereto duly authorised in behalf of the United States, and with consent thereof. And if additional advantages or privileges of whatever description be conceded hereafter by China to any other

nation, the United States and the citizens thereof shall be entitled thereupon to a complete, equal, and impartial participation in the same.

ARTICLE III.

The citizens of the United States are permitted to frequent the five ports of Quangchow, Amoy, Fuchow, Ningpo, and Shanghai, and to reside with their families and trade there, and to proceed at pleasure with their vessels and merchandise to or from any Foreign port and either of the said five ports, and from either of said five ports to any other of them; but the said vessels shall not unlawfully enter the other ports of China, nor carry on a clandestine and fraudulent trade along the coasts thereof; and any vessel belonging to a citizen of the United States which violates this provision shall, with her cargo, be subject to confiscation to the Chinese Government.

ARTICLE XIX.

All citizens of the United States in China peaceably attending to their affairs, being placed on a common footing of amity and goodwill with subjects of China, shall receive and enjoy, for themselves and everything appertaining to them, the special protection of the local authorities of Government, who shall defend them from all insult or injury of any sort on the part of the Chinese.

If their dwellings or their property be threatened or attacked by mobs, incendiaries, or other violent or lawless persons, the local officers, on requisition of the Consul, will immediately despatch a military force to disperse the rioters, and will apprehend the

guilty individuals and punish them with the utmost rigour of the law.

ARTICLE XXI.

Subjects of China who may be guilty of any criminal act towards citizens of the United States shall be arrested and punished by the Chinese authorities according to the laws of China, and citizens of the United States who may commit any crime in China shall be subject to be tried and punished only by the Consul or other public functionary of the United States thereto authorised according to the laws of the United States; and in order to the prevention of all controversy and disaffection, justice shall be equitably and impartially administered on both sides.

China and the West Evaluate Each Other after the Opium War

This selection examines some of the conclusions reached by the Chinese and the Europeans at the end of the Opium War in the nineteenth century.

The Chinese Concluded That:

1. Westerners were now arrogantly, often ignorantly, contemptuous of them. Popular British attitudes are summed up in this verse (from a Punch cartoon, 1858):
*“With their little pig-eyes and the large pigtails,
 And their diet of rats, dogs, slugs and snails,
 All seem to be game in the frying-pan
 Of that nasty feeder John Chinaman.
 Sing lie-tea, my sly John Chinaman,
 No fightee, my coward John Chinaman.
 John Bull has a chance, let him if he can,
 Somewhat open the eyes of John Chinaman.”*
 (However, after the Opium Wars, scurrilous Chinese posters called the British “dogs, pigs, and beasts.”)
2. The Westerners based their feelings of superiority on their advanced technological, industrial and military resources—railways, steamships, modern weaponry. Westerners also felt morally and spiritually superior as enlightened Christians compared to the “heathen Chinese.”
3. Their lucky tiger caps and ancient cannons were no defence against Western weapons.
4. Gunpowder could blow up cities as well as make pretty fireworks. “Learn the techniques of the barbarians in order to control them,” counselled some.
5. They themselves disagreed in their reactions to the West. Wrote one progressive, Feng, member of China’s “self-strengthening movement,” “Eventually we must consider manufacturing and industrializing and using weapons ourselves. . . . Only thus will we be able to pacify the Empire: only thus can we play a leading role on the globe.” Asked the Court Tutor, “Why is it necessary to learn from barbarians? Moreover they are our enemies. . . . How can we forget this enmity and humiliation one single day?”
5. Some Westerners wanted Chinamen’s souls and minds rather than their land and money, and this dangerous missionary activity led to social disruption. This was because most Chinese were disinterested in and hostile to Christian doctrine and some missionaries were contemptuous of the Chinese. Wrote one: “China consists of 360 millions of human beings huddled together under the sway of one despotic monarch, influenced by

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the same delusive philosophy and bowing down to the same absurd superstitions.”

6. Foreign ways of eating and dressing were most uncomfortable and hideous. A Chinaman visiting Australia wrote to his family back home: “These remarkable people [Australians] like clothes that imprison them. Their thick coats fit tightly around their arms and body, narrow trousers restrict the movement of their knees, tough leather pinches their feet and hats unyielding in shape grip their heads. Their movements nevertheless are quick and abrupt; what they do without the restraint of their garments I dare not imagine; perhaps their cramping clothes are a necessary check to their fury, instituted by their sages.” (But other Western products he envied, such as messages “borne on mysterious airwaves” and “a trumpet” that will “preserve a man’s voice for generations.”)

The Westerners Concluded That:

1. The easiest, quickest way to “open” the nations of the Far East to trade was by force of arms and if diplomatic demands were backed by gunboats, the Orientals gave in. Some Westerners didn’t like the morality of this. They were told it was for the Orientals’ own good that the superior benefits of Western civilization should be taken to them.
2. The Orientals lacked a number of so-called indispensables to modern living. Wrote one merchant of China in 1860: “There are no carriages, horses nor fine harnesses; no pictures worth more than a few shillings; no well-laid breakfast or dinner tables; no newspapers, postmen, railways, tramways, carpets, table-cloths, writing desks, gas lamps, matches or even respectable candles; no house-games, cigars, wine, beer, clean linen, washstands; or, in short, any article of luxury.” (But there was a much greater gulf between the living standards of East and West in the nineteenth century than there had been in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.)
3. In spite of all they “lacked,” many Orientals did not clamor for Western things. They did not like them, could not afford them and considered buying and selling a very lowly occupation.
4. In China, particularly, the forces of reaction were very strong. The Chinese tore up the first rail-lines that were laid because they “disturbed the spirits of the earth”; they cut down telegraph wires that “disturbed the spirits of the air.” (The Chinese understood that “new” did not necessarily equal “good.”)
5. The Oriental countries possessed their own rich literatures, sophisticated systems of moral philosophy and social organization. (But though most Westerners knew this much, few really appreciated Oriental culture. Most Westerners lived in the treaty ports where they created little bits of Europe round themselves and kept the Orient out. Those Orientals who wanted to understand foreign ways flocked to these ports that acted as bridgeheads and focal points of Western penetration.)
6. Some Oriental customs were definitely backward-looking and ruthless—for instance the subjugation of women and the binding of women’s feet in China so that they tottered like cripples. (But the Chinese considered that the tight-corseting of the Victorian woman’s waist and hips was just as barbarous.) Westerners were also shocked at the habit of killing unwanted female babies; they overlooked the lingering distress inflicted on young children in the mines and factories of their homelands.
7. There were even greater differences between the Chinese and Japanese. China was a much more difficult case for Western treatment. Japan was everybody’s favorite Asian nation at the end of the nineteenth century. The twentieth century brought grave second thoughts.

The Reform Movement in China, 1898—Chang Chih-tung

A critical issue for the Chinese since their defeat in the Opium War in 1842 and the disastrous Taiping Rebellion, finally suppressed in 1864, was how to regain their loss of sovereignty and reestablish the stability they had once enjoyed. While most of those responsible for leading China preferred to continue the Confucian-oriented policies of the past, there were some officials who, in the 1870's, advocated reform in the form of a "self-strengthening" movement. With the slogan, "Learn the superior technology of the barbarian, in order to control him," the T'ung Chih Restoration led to new plans for a modern army and navy, industrialization and changes within the diplomatic corps, but the changes were slow for lack of government support. The "Hundred Days of Reform" would sprout in 1898, after China's shocking defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, with decrees issued by the dozens. The following selection presents a case for change in the form of a memorial written to Emperor Kuang Hse, a nephew of the Empress Dowager Cixi, the real power in China at the time. His essay was translated and published in English as *China's Only Hope*. Though the writer was one of China's leading officials at the time, and his memorial was praised by the emperor himself as a model of classical Chinese scholarship, few of the suggestions were adopted due to the opposition from the Empress, other conservative officials and the coming of the Boxer Rebellion. As you read, consider why, given all of the humiliations that China had suffered, there would not have been a greater impetus for change at this time.

Discussion Questions

1. In one of his statements, the writer suggests, “Know what is important.” What was that and do you think the suggestions he made would have saved China further humiliation? What additional proposals would you have made?
2. When he refers to the parable of Confucius, what do you think his purpose and his intended audience were?
3. What aspects of Western values and institutions does the writer admire and how does he suggest China make use of them? What is his opinion of China? Of its values?

In no period of China's history has there arisen an emergency like the present. It is a time of change, and His Imperial Highness, the Emperor of China, has accepted the situation by altering somewhat the system of civil and military examinations and by establishing schools. . . . The Conservatives are evidently off their food from inability to swallow, whilst Liberals are like a flock of sheep who have arrived at a road of many forks and do not know which to follow. The former do not understand what international intercourse means, the latter are ignorant of what is radical in Chinese affairs. The Conservatives fail to see the utility of modern military methods and the benefits of successful change, while the Progressionists, zealous without knowledge, look with contempt upon our widespread doctrines of Confucius. Thus those who cling to the order of things heartily

despise those who even propose any innovation, and they in turn cordially detest the Conservatives with all the ardor of their liberal convictions. It thus falls out that those who really wish to learn are in doubt as to which course to pursue, and in the meantime error creeps in, the enemy invades our coast, and, consequently, there is no defence and no peace.

The present condition of things is not due to outside nations, but to China herself. It has ever been true that the number of our able men has been proportioned to the good qualities of the government, and that morals are gauged by the conduct of the schools. In view of many facts, and with the hope of relieving our country from her present embarrassments, We, the Viceroy of the Liang Hu, have prepared this work especially for the Chinese

under our jurisdiction, and generally for our countrymen in the other provinces. . . .

The corollaries of these Twenty Chapters may be briefly Comprehended in Five Objects of Knowledge.

1. Know the shame of not being like Japan, Turkey, Siam, and Cuba.
2. Know the fear that we will become India, Annam, Burmah, Korea, Egypt, and Poland.
3. Know that if we do not change our customs we cannot reform our methods, and if we do not reform our methods we cannot utilize the modern implements of war, etc.
4. Know what is important. The study of the old is not urgent; the call for men of attainments in useful knowledge is pressing. Foreign education is of different kinds. Western handicraft is not in demand, but a knowledge of the methods of foreign governments is a consummation devoutly to be wished.
5. Know what is radical. When abroad, do not forget your own native country; when you see strange customs, do not forget your parents; and let not much wisdom and ingenuity make you forgot the holy sages.

It will be seen then that the purport of what we have written accords well with the Doctrine of the Mean. Long ago, when the kingdom of Lu was in a weak condition, Duke Ai (B. C. 550) inquired of Confucius about government. He replied: "To be fond of learning is the next thing to knowledge. To be up and doing comes near to perfection. Know what shame is, and you will not be far from heroism." Finally the sage said: "If these principles can be carried out, although one may be stupid, yet he will become clever; although weak, he will attain to strength." These maxims were spoken in the time of Lu. How much more urgent are they now when China has become great, with her almost limitless territory and her teeming population of four hundred millions! . . .

Chapter 1. United Hearts

How circumscribed would be the responsibility of one graduate, the altruism of one official, or the duty of a single individual! But if by one determined purpose the heart's of *all* the graduates, the officials, and the men of China were united, our country would rest upon a great rock and we could defy the world to overthrow us. To attain this object it is necessary first that every man should fulfill his duty to his parents and elders. The country would then be at peace. And if every Chinese would but exercise his wisdom and courage the Empire would become strong. . . .

We would here state that there are now three things necessary to be done in order to save China from revolution. The first is to *maintain the reigning dynasty*; the second is to *conserve the Holy Religion*; and the third is to *protect the Chinese race*. These are inseparably connected; in fact they constitute one. . . .

Under the present circumstances there is nothing for it but to arouse ourselves to the situation. Let us display our loyalty and love and embrace every opportunity to become wealthy and strong; let our first object be the veneration of the Imperial Court which vouchsafes its protection to the Commonwealth, and let those who hold the reins of government consider the general good. . . .

Chapter III. The Three Moral Obligations

The Sovereign is the head of the Subject, the Father is the head of the Son, and the Husband is the head of the Wife. These tenets have been handed down from the sages, and as Heaven does not change, so they never change. They constitute the first of the Five Relations and the mainspring of every act. . . . Know then, that the obligation of subject

to sovereign is incompatible with republicanism. . . .

Now, we have examined somewhat into the methods of Western Governments. They have their Lords and Commons, their Senates and Representatives, which hold their prerogatives in State matters. But we have noticed that the Sovereign, or the President, retains the power of dissolving these assemblies; and in case one assembly does not suit him he exercises this power, dismisses the obnoxious body and convenes another. A Constitutional Government with a Sovereign, and a Republic are about the same. In the West the intercourse of Sovereign, Ministers, and People is easy, the rules of deportment meagre, and the needs of the people are communicated to the sovereign with rapid facility; but the bearing or dignity of the Western Prince is not to be compared with that of the Chinese Emperor. Western people, however, love their sovereigns more than the Chinese do theirs, and, although they may leave home and live abroad thousands of miles from their native land they do not disobey their country's laws or defraud their rulers. . . . It is a mistake, then, to suppose that Western countries do not maintain the doctrine of the Relation of Subject to Sovereign. . . .

Chapter IV. The Recognition of Class

The highest degree of culture was reached in the Chow (B. C. 1122–255) Dynasty. Then began the decline about which Confucius grieved. The Dynasties following had no powerful neighbors to strive against, but heaped up large treasures of literary lore at the expense of power. This accumulation produced the hollowness of forms, and this, in turn begat weakness.

Not so all the countries of Europe. These were opened up at a late period in history, fresh and vigorous. Surrounded by strong neighbors, they were always in circum-

stances of desperate competition, stripped for a fight and ever striving to escape destruction. Continual apprehension produced determination, and determination begat strength. Of all countries China alone has for these fifty years proved herself almost irreclaimably stupid and not awake. Many of the officials and people are proud and indolent. They contentedly rest in the belief that the old order of things will suffice for those dangerous times, and in the end become the easy prey of outsiders. . . .

Chapter IX. Cast Out the Poison

The Custom's Returns for the past few years give the value of our imports at 80,000,000 Taels, and the exports at 50,000,000 Taels. The balance of *thirty million Taels* represents what has been consumed in smoking the pernicious opium pipe!. Assuredly it is not foreign intercourse that is ruining China, but his dreadful poison. Oh, the grief and desolation it has wrought to our people! . . . Opium has spread with frightful rapidity and heart-rending results through the provinces. Millions upon millions have been struck down by the plague. To-day it is running like wildfire. In its swift, deadly course it is spreading devastation everywhere, wrecking the minds and eating away the strength of its victims. The ruin of the mind is the most woeful of its many deleterious effects. . . .

Therefore we say, bring learning to the front in order to remedy the opium evil! . . . All the countries of the world recoil with disgust at the idea of smoking this vile, ill-smelling, poisonous stuff. Only our Chinese people love to sleep and eat with the deadly drug, and in the deadly drug we are self-steeped, seeking poverty, imbecility, death, destruction. . . .