

27: THE WEST: CHALLENGE AND STIMULUS (11/87r, 8/89e; 11/94e, 9/95e, 11/96e)

a. To what extent was the West justified in changing its attitude toward China in the 19th century as compared with the 18th? Why did this change in attitude impel the West to “open” China during 1839-42 and 1856-62? What forms did this opening of China take? To what extent did this opening succeed by c. 1862?

b. In what specific ways was the West important in China’s transition from the early into the full industrial revolution? In what ways was it beside the point? (That is, in what ways might China have sooner or later headed in the same direction on its own, if the West had not come into the picture?)

A. China No Longer A Model For Europe

1. The Enlightenment view

The attitude of the West toward China took a sharp and ominous turn after the late 18th century. China went from being a model for Europe to negative exemplar.

Earlier, during the century after the 1670s, the new European meritocracy seized upon China as a model for the secular meritocratic European state they hoped to create and then dominate.

The Jesuits, who inadvertently promoted this view, were not themselves secularists. They had their own political-religious reasons for praising China, but they also sincerely admired Chinese civilization. In part this was because they were products of the West’s Renaissance. They admired the secular, rational aspects of Chinese life for many of the same reasons that other intellectuals of the Renaissance admired the secular, rational aspects of

Greco-Roman antiquity in the West.

Though the *philosophes* took their lead from the Jesuits, they had less benign motives. We now know what they were up to. They were, not altogether wittingly, working toward not just the French Revolution but the 20th century’s age of total revolutions. The “humane and enlightened despot” that they so admired in China would find full incarnation in Europe only during this century in the sinister figures of Lenin, Stalin and their Chinese doppelgänger, Mao Zedong.

Except for a few thinkers (notably Montesquieu) most of the 18th century French *philosophes* swooned before the image of the Chinese as secular rationalists that the Jesuits inadvertently transmitted. Only the Scottish Enlightenment (Adam Smith, David Hume) was less than fully enamored of China as a model for Europe.

The English diplomat Macartney, who came to China seeking normal diplomatic relations in 1793, may have been influenced by Smith’s skepticism, at least indirectly. But even Macartney conceded that, however neglected in recent years, China was still like a ship built to a grand plan. After quibbling about China’s interventionism in *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith went on to say that the Chinese were a rational people. They could remain a model for Europe, if they could only be persuaded to give up their mercantilism.

2. From Jesuits to Methodists

A very drastic change in an unfavorable direction from Smith’s qualified admiration took place in European attitudes by the early years of the 19th century. By then the China missionaries included not just Jesuits or even Dominicans or Franciscans, but also Protestants.

Protestants were late in turning to mission work abroad. Calvinism’s doctrine of predestination long discouraged evangelism even at home in Europe.

The Methodists, who came to the fore only after the mid 18th century in England, were missionaries to their own people before they became missionaries

to the Asians and Africans. They were trying to rescue the English masses and keep them from lapsing back into paganism in the face of the new temptations of urban commercial and industrial life.

It was an easy next step for Methodists to move from converting lower middle class or lower class Englishmen back to Christianity during the 18th century, to travel abroad and start converting the “heathen Chinese,” as they liked to refer to them, during the 19th century. Baptists were not far behind. Soon even the Church of England and various Calvinists were sending out missionaries.

As Christianity faded in Europe in the course of the 19th century, Protestant missionaries sought to reassure themselves of their own faith’s robustness by promoting Christianity among alien peoples. In the afterglow of the Enlightenment, even the Calvinists among them were losing the hard edge of their faith in their own predestined salvation. They too sought confirmation of it by converting foreigners.

Adding Protestant to Catholic missionaries made for a profound change during the 19th century in the kind of people who came to China to do missionary work. The new missionaries were, with a few notable exceptions, far less tolerant of the Confucian tradition than the Jesuits had been. The few missionaries who remained sinophiles were still most often Catholics or sometimes Church of England men. The Baptists, Methodists, and even the Presbyterians were often quite intolerant toward the Confucian tradition and were much less willing to interact intellectually with it.

3. From monopoly licensees to “old China hands”

Many more merchants came to China during the 19th than during the 18th century. This was true even before the 1830s, when the licensed monopolies on first the Western and then the Chinese sides were removed. This drew a flood of non-official Western merchants into the China trade. Even a generation earlier, the monopolists were delegating the less profitable or less

legitimate portions of the China trade to non-official merchants.

There were never very many Western manufacturers in China, even during the 19th century. It was mostly merchants who came. These were mostly isolated in the new privileged ghettos for foreigners—the treaty ports that arose from the 1840s on.

Though these merchants were soon calling themselves “Old China Hands,” and they often spent their whole adult lives in China, they remained only on its edges. In the treaty ports, they hung out with other Old China Hands, had English or Pidgin-English speaking Chinese servants, and other Chinese intermediaries between themselves and the great Chinese market. China itself remained closed to them by linguistic and cultural barriers they were unwilling to cross. The Old China Hands rarely learned to speak or read Chinese. To do that would have been beneath their dignity.

The fellows who learned Chinese, the Old China Hands noticed, often were not able to stop with that. Some dressed and even started thinking like the Chinese. Not content with having Chinese mistresses, like the Old China Hands, they took Chinese wives. As the Old China Hands put it, they “went native.”

The Chinese side had equal contempt for the intermediaries on their own side. The Chinese equivalents of the Old China Hands were called “*compradors*” in the Pidgin English used to communicate with the unacculturated on both sides of the cultural divide. Their status was not high.

This was a rather different situation from the one created by the Jesuits in the 17th and 18th centuries. After a false start, during which they dressed like Buddhist monks, the Jesuits went native in Confucian terms with a vengeance. They wore Confucian garments, learned to speak elegant Chinese, wrote books in pure classical Chinese advocating worship of the Christian god (for whose name they coined the neologism, Tianzhu 天主, Lord of Heaven). Their reward was to be treated as gentlemen meritocrats within the Chinese court.

Intelligent Chinese returned the favor. Even Kangxi’s heir apparent allowed himself to be painted wearing Western gentleman’s dress. Several

Chinese mathematicians and astronomers learned the Western versions of these sciences. A fad for European clocks, especially cuckoo clocks, swept the Manchu court.

The contrast with the behavior of the 19th century Protestant missionaries, Old China Hand merchants and the Chinese ruling class could not have been greater. No 19th century Chinese emperors let themselves be painted in Western dress.

In many ways these 19th and 20th century Euro-American Old China Hands were a peculiar and rather nasty anticipation of a type of person encountered much more commonly in the West late in the 20th century as our civilization heads ever deeper into crisis: such alienated men belong neither to the West nor to any other civilization. They live on the surface of life wherever they find themselves. We also find them nowadays all around us here at home, even (or especially) in our universities, on both sides of the lectern.



Prince Yinzhen, the future Yongzheng Emperor. (Spence, *Emperor of China*.)

Both the Protestant missionaries and the Old China Hands perceived the Chinese as backward heathens; the Chinese perceived them as uncouth barbarians. Intellectuals back home echoed Old China Hand contempt. The article on China in the 1830 edition of the *Encyclopedia Americana* describes the Chinese as “a slavish, industrious and commercial people.” (Note the oxymoronic mixture of adjectives.) “They have a flourishing agriculture, much trade, but they treat other countries like vassals,” even though the Chinese them-

selves are intellectually “stationary.”

4. China’s relative decline

There was some (perhaps much) truth to this description of trade relations with the Chinese as being akin to vassalage. The *Encyclopedia Americana* was here alluding to the monopoly licensing system which privileged the Co-hong merchants in Canton. Up until the late 1830s, the Co-hong controlled all of China’s legal foreign trade. The corrupt conformist meritocrats who levied informal tribute on this trade in Canton were intellectually obtuse enough to justify the *Americana*’s disdain.

The Chinese government unquestionably treated other nations like vassals. It rejected the Western international law principle of equality amongst nations on the grounds that there was only one truly sovereign power—the universal state of China itself. All other powers were in principle inferior and were or should be tributary to (i.e. become vassals of) China.

Descriptions of China got still nastier later on. Even though the Europeans were becoming ever more bureaucratic themselves, the Chinese style of bureaucratic government could no longer serve as an explicit model for them, so discredited was China in general by the Qing Dynasty’s poor performance during the 19th century. When the British, and later the Americans, were debating going over from the “spoils system” to a system of civil service exams and objective evaluations of serving officials, opponents of the reform thought they could win points with the electorate by sneeringly labeling it as “the Chinese system.”¹

But, true though these 19th century complaints may have been (I deliber-

¹ These opponents had a better case than this for opposing such “merit” systems, though they did not realize they did. At least the spoils system did not require increasing the number of bureaucrats whenever the ruling party lost an election and was turned out of office. The winning party could “throw the rascals out” of appointive positions and replace them with their own rascals. The merit system froze the old rascals in, obliging the victors to create additional new jobs for their own rascals. This aspect of a “Chinese system” was not evident in the 19th century, since China could not afford an ever larger government, whereas the rapidly industrializing U.S. and England could.

ately picked the 1830 edition of the *Americana* because treatment of China in Western books got much nastier as the century advanced), they are also somewhat unfair.

These judgments were based less upon any economic deterioration of China (which may not have occurred) than on the great leap upward that the West made during the late 18th and the first half of the 19th century. The most advanced nations of Northwestern Europe and North America during that period jumped from the early to the full industrial revolution stage at a time when China still essentially remained at the early industrial revolution stage.

While China's economy in some respects deteriorated during the 17th century change in dynasties (as did England's during the Puritan Revolution), it soon recovered and likely got no poorer from the mid-18th to the mid-19th century.

If anything, China was showing some signs by 1750-1850 of at last making a breakthrough into the full industrial revolution on its own. But it had not yet quite done so before the Europeans did make that quantum jump up. As a consequence, during the 19th century China appeared increasingly inferior from a European perspective.

Before the end of the 19th century China (or at least parts of it) at last began the run toward takeoff of a full industrial revolution. During the early 20th century, some parts of China actually achieved takeoff. This was well before the Communists took over and got naive academic consensus sinophiles to give them credit for takeoff. Taiwan, which was not conquered by the Communists, reached industrial maturation by the 1980s. The mainland Communists finally embraced the market by 1980 and then moved rapidly toward full industrial maturation too. At that point, the academic consensus became bored with China and some even joined those Cold Warriors who had long perceived China as a menace.

B. The West "Opens" China

1. *England takes the lead*

Having changed its personnel in China, after 1800, it should not be surprising that the West also changed its policies. It no longer politely asked China to come out into the world as it did repeatedly through the several Jesuit *démarches* of the 17th and 18th centuries and the two English diplomatic missions of 1793 (Macartney) and 1816 (Amherst).

By the 1830s, England, the world's only maturing full industrial power, took the lead in what contemporaries called the "opening" of China. England abolished its monopoly trading company's privileges, began to knock peremptorily on China's door, and firmly asked China to open itself to the world market too. Adam Smith's ideas of free trade became the official ideology of the Whig Party in control of English politics by the 1830s. But rather than giving up old ideas of extending imperial control over non-Western countries, the Whigs inconsistently grafted free trade onto these old ideas. By the late 1830s they became determined to force free trade onto the Chinese.

From 1839 on, England did not merely knock on China's closed door. It began to knock the door down. Twice it dragged the Chinese by the scruff of the neck out into the world. The English were getting ready to do the same thing, starting in the 1850s, to Japan, but they did not have to be so violent as with China, because Japan could see how nasty they had been to China, took the hint, and opened up.

The English (and the Americans and French in their wake) sincerely wanted to open China's markets up to ordinary market relationships with Western merchants. They also wanted China to give up tributary diplomacy and go over to Western style, all-nations-are-nominally-equal diplomacy to make free trade easier.

The immediate occasion for starting this crusade to open China was, however, rather embarrassing. It involved a

quarrel with the Chinese over China's right to ban opium and confiscate opium stocks held in Chinese territory by British merchants. These merchants bought the drug openly in British India, but had to smuggle it into China, where it had been illegal, though widely demanded, since the 18th century.

During the early 1830s the Chinese court held a great debate over whether to legalize and tax the stuff, but decided it would be winking at immorality to do so. Except for a few Daoists and serious followers of Mencius, mostly in retirement, the Confucian men of merit did not even discuss the logical third alternative: legalizing opium, but not deigning to tax it, lest government be corrupted thereby, and instead simply allowing abusers to wind up in the gutter, if that was their destiny. For the secularized hard Confucians who had long since come to dominate Chinese official life, that third non-interventionist alternative was inconceivable.

Instead, the Qing politicians gave moralistic excuses for reaffirming a ban that was really motivated by worry over loss of silver. Opium imports were now worth so much more than Chinese exports of tea, porcelain and wallpaper that the resulting unfavorable trade balance had to be made up by exporting silver.

This was reducing the silver money supply, forcing prices expressed in silver down and cheapening copper coins relative to silver. This upset both markets and tax collections, since farmers normally sold grain for copper coins and had to convert copper coins into silver so as to pay their taxes. Reduced supplies of silver raised silver's price in terms of copper.

It was as much for these monetary as for moral reasons that the Qing authorities sent a special anti-opium commissioner, Lin Zexu, down to Canton. It was Lin who decided to carry out the confiscation.

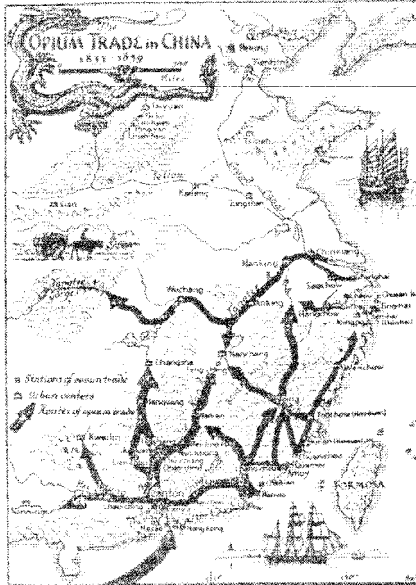
The English merchants were caught by surprise. But since they had a price-depressing oversupply anyway, they handed over their inventory of opium to this Chinese Bill Bennett,² who publicly

² Perhaps we should call Bennett, who was "Drug Czar" under President Bush, the latter day American Lin Zexu

incinerated it.

The English used this supposedly illegal confiscation as an excuse to declare war to force the Chinese to pay for what they had confiscated. That is why the Chinese called the war of 1839-42 the First Opium War. To this day the English prefer to call it the First Anglo-Chinese War.

The war of 1856-62 began because the Chinese were not honoring the terms of the treaty that ended the 1839-42 war. The Chinese call it the Second Opium War, and the English, without blushing, call it the Second Anglo-Chinese War.



A 19th century map of the opium trade. Reprinted in H.P. Chang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War*, p. 25.)

Even before the first English steam warship arrived in Chinese waters it was clear that the Chinese could not match 19th century European military technology. They lost all the battles, except for one guerrilla encounter with a British reconnaissance in force into the suburbs of Canton which the English did not even think of as a proper battle.

The Treaty of Nanking of 1842 seemed to meet England's main demands. It finally got rid of the thirteen Co-hong merchants' shared licensed monopoly. The Treaty did not mention opium, the British being too embarrassed to bring it up explicitly. Nevertheless China had to pay a big indemnity to compensate the British merchants for confiscation of their opium stocks. Opium became tantamount to legal after 1842, since there was no way for China to enforce the ban.

2. China becomes a drug culture

By some time early in the 18th century, opium was no longer just being eaten by Chinese as a medicine for stomach pains, ulcers, or female complaints. Some Chinese were "mainlining" it, in our current slang, as a new "recreational drug." The Chinese had invented opium smoking.³

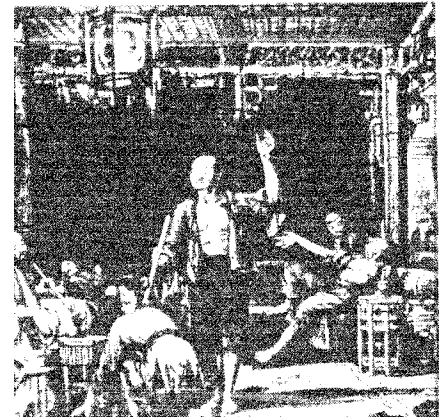
The Chinese may have first picked up the habit of smoking opium when they began to use it as a flavoring or curing agent on tobacco. Some say the Dutch in Indonesia were the first to do this, and then shipped opium flavored tobacco to Taiwan. By the late 17th century, the Chinese had become even more addicted to tobacco smoking than Europeans. Eventually they may have decided to leave out the tobacco and smoke the opium alone. It is also possible that the smoking of marijuana by Muslims living in southwestern China may have suggested smoking opium as well.

Whatever the source, by the early 18th century, dock workers on the China coast and at least a few coolies in the interior were smoking opium. China had invented what we now call "mainlining" drugs.

As the habit spread into the upper classes (idle Manchu bannermen and equally idle family members of merchants with monopoly licenses), in the course of the 18th century, China went from being what William Buckley has called a "booze culture" to a "drug culture." It remained one well into this century.

Some writers, like the Englishman S.A.M. Adshead, argue that China's opium pandemic may merely have been its equivalent of the spread of gin-drinking among the industrial age townsmen of 18th century England, and so was nothing unusual.⁴ Like all animals, men like to consume mind-altering chemi-

cals. The latter stage of the early industrial revolution merely increased the supply of such chemicals and lowered their prices. The approach of full industrialization may also have made people stressed enough to increase their appetites for such goods. This may even be one aspect of a blossoming crisis of civilization.



An opium den at Canton. From a contemporary painting by Thomas Allom. (Maurice Collis, *Foreign Mud*, after p. 84.)

While it is probably true that no more than 5 percent of China's population ever became opium addicts, Chinese intellectuals, particularly Marxists, have treated opium's coming as a drastic novelty in their country's life, a sign of the decadence of Chinese civilization, but also as something for which the West was at fault.

It would be imprudent to disagree with a judgment shared by both William Buckley and Mao Zedong. I am inclined to agree that the opium pandemic was a sign both of crisis of civilization and of Western drug running. Nevertheless, if the West had not supplied the stuff, the Chinese would either (as they later did anyway) have themselves begun growing opium in massive amounts sooner, or would have found some other instrument to express their folly. Westerners became the prime suppliers of opium only for a time. Effective demand for this drug was caused by changes internal to China.

Still, by the 1830s "straight" Chinese were mad as hell about what had happened. Many blamed the foreigners for bringing in opium. Commissioner Lin's faction of Chinese meritocrats also blamed the Manchus ruling the southeast for not stopping the drug trade. Lin and his friends bullied a worried court

³ South Asians wrapped opium in palm leaves and chewed it. Europeans, by then enamored of distilled spirits, dissolved it in alcohol to relieve PMS and other chronic pains, male as well as female.

⁴ *China in World History* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 292ff. This is an excellent survey of Chinese history from a right-wing Keynesian economic perspective.

into reaffirming the 18th century bans on opium and that soon led to the 1839 war.

In short, the Chinese did in the 18th and 19th centuries with opium what the West has done recently with opium derivatives, and with marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines and “magic mushrooms.”

Opium was formally legalized after the Second Opium War (pardon, Anglo-Chinese War), but remained legal only until just after the turn of the 20th century. Prohibition returned then and lasted until the end of the 1940s. Opium nevertheless remained widely available, both in China and Overseas China. And yet its use tapered downward during the 1930s and '40s. Revolution and war provided other distractions for many Chinese. Many became persuaded that either Communism or increasingly successful Overseas Chinese capitalism would end their crisis of civilization.

Long before, during the last decades of the 19th century, the Europeans lost most of the Chinese market for opium. The Chinese all too promptly fulfilled Jane Jacobs' theory that a trading economy can eventually replace imports with domestic production. Chinese farmers learned how to grow first-rate opium in southern subzone B3 and underpriced the drug coming from the British colony of India. Domestic production of opium finally replaced most imported opium from India and the Middle East before the end of the 19th century.

The five “treaty ports” opened to free trade by the Treaty of Nanking of 1842, which ended the First Opium War, provided much more than easier access to opium. They soon stimulated China into launching its run to full industrial take-off.

Shanghai was the most important of these ports. Between 1842 and 1949 it was freed from its state-imposed shackles to realize its new destiny of becoming one of the great world ports. Hong Kong Island became British territory under the 1842 treaty. Soon no longer merely a barren place good for nothing but use by fishermen to dry their nets, Hong Kong was free to become another one of the world's great ports, entrepôts and light manufacturing centers.

Hong Kong was and still is nominally English. But like Shanghai, it has

always been chock full of Chinese running away from either the economic or political constraints imposed at home by their own government. Most of the interesting new work done there has been done by these Chinese. (“Old China Hands” were responsible for few novelties.)

To a somewhat lesser extent this role of introducer of novelties was also taken on by the other treaty ports. By the early 20th century these numbered over a hundred (most being relatively innocent free trade zones). However, except for Shanghai, which outgrew all attempts to control it before the Communists took over, traditional Chinese political power was always just close enough to these cities to keep them from breaking altogether loose from the dead hand of the Chinese state.

3. China's diplomatic and cultural rear guard action

For a surprisingly long time the West's repeated military victories did not lead to China's adoption of Western-style diplomatic relations. After 1842, the Chinese even fought shy of allowing the Europeans free access to Canton. Their refusal to follow through with their promise to open Canton was the main reason for the Second Opium War of 1856-62.

In the aftermath of the second war, after the Western powers had sacked Beijing, they finally got to have ambassadors resident in the Chinese capital. They also won the right to wider movement for merchants and settlement rights for Christian missionaries within the interior of China. All Europeans gained “extraterritorial” privileges, including the right to be tried in special Western courts in the Western-governed districts of the treaty ports, even for crimes committed outside of the treaty ports. The West also got another dozen treaty ports open in China, including several old commercial cities well up the Yangzi and several of its tributaries, deep in the interior. China also agreed to open a kind of foreign office.

China, therefore, was much more open by the early to mid-1860s than would ever have been dreamed of back

at the time of the Macartney mission of 1793. The Chinese court snubbed Macartney because it was determined then not to enter into equal diplomatic relations with England no matter how profitable that might prove to be for Chinese merchants.

If we look a little closer, however, the diplomatic change of the 1860s turns out to have been more apparent than real. The name in Chinese of the new Chinese foreign office was *zongli geguo shi yamen*. Fairly tightly translated that means “the minor office for managing the affairs of the various subordinate states.” The short form was *zongli yamen*—the “management minor office.” That is not exactly what you would call a true foreign office. The barbarians still required management rather than equal treatment.

The Chinese continued to frustrate the foreign diplomats all during the last third of the 19th century. The Chinese conceded only the outer forms of diplomatic relations, but not their essence.

A Western diplomat in Beijing could really only do two things during the late 19th century. He could go batty trying to win the reality of equal diplomatic contact, or he could “go native.” Fortunately for their sanity, and for modern scholarship, Peking was then and still is a marvelous place in which to go native.

However, the diplomats' bosses back home running the real foreign offices of Europe and North America treated China with ever more contempt and scorn and employed force against it whenever that seemed expedient. Tributary diplomacy became ever more of a joke.

In 1884, France snatched the last of Vietnam's territory away from its loose tributary relationship to China. A decade later, Japan removed China's tributary power over Korea. For the next few years, the major Western powers scrambled for “spheres of influence” around the remaining edges of China.

Chinese statesmen used a late Tang figure of speech to bemoan the fact that China was being “sliced up like a melon.” By the end of the 1890s, just as they were calling Ottoman Turkey “the sick man of Europe,” the European political cartoonists were calling China “the sick man of Asia,” drawing it as a

kind of absurd hypochondriac, periodically kicked out of its metaphorical bed by European gunboats and cavalry sabers.

And yet it could be argued that Qing officials knew what they were doing. Once they finally admitted that the Europeans were not tributaries but the diplomatic equals of China, they would also have had to admit that China was not a true universal state, one that embraced all truly civilized people, and so the only fully sovereign state. Once admit that, and questions could be raised about the appropriateness of having foreigners, like the Manchus, run a Chinese state.

For similar reasons the Qing only abortively reformed Chinese education. The missionaries had pioneered in setting up Western style schools in and then outside of the treaty ports. The Chinese government also set up Western style schools during the 1850s, '60s and '70s. It attached them to new Western-style arsenals and shipyards which it proposed to use to modernize at least the equipment, if not the personnel, of its army and navy.

Chinese graduates of these schools were as disappointed by the fruits of their modern educations as the European diplomats in Peking were by their treatment. Graduates soon discovered that there was no way for them to get into the Chinese meritocracy. There was no template of merit in the traditional civil service exam to accommodate people who had learned Western-style (as opposed to Chinese matrix) algebra, calculus, engineering, French, German or English.

Some graduates could get jobs in the small westernized sector of the private economy and lose all hope of becoming public meritocrats. A few could teach in the same schools from which they had graduated. There they might teach these politically useless things to other people, comforting themselves with the opium pipe when necessary.

During the 1860s some proposed setting up a special civil service exam for things Western. This was rejected, even though the 1860s were a time of reform, for the simple reason that the Chinese meritocracy had too much of a stake in the old Neo-Confucian educa-

tion. They were not going to legitimize a bunch of people who could do things they could not even hope to do themselves.⁵

The Confucians thereby also alienated these eccentrically educated fellows from the traditional meritocratic establishment, and set them off on the path to revolution.⁶

4. The illusion that nothing was changing

For the above reasons, China's opening did not seem to lead to much visible change during most of the 19th century.

The missionaries won a handful of "rice Christians," as even genuine converts were sometimes unfairly called,

⁵ If this strikes you as a rather quaint example of "chinoiserie," I must disillusion you by stating that something very similar happened here in America to the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) field exam in History during the 1960s, just a century later. A few naive historians thought it would be nice to put a set of questions on Asian and African history onto the field exam in History of the GRE. Seniors then had to take this exam to get into most of the good graduate programs in History. About 15% of the exam was devoted to these new and useful divisions of historical learning. Of course very few people then were as yet taking Asian and African history courses, but the idea was to use the GRE to encourage more to do so.

This proved to be a naive hope. The American and European historians, whose students were now at a disadvantage compared to the minority who had taken some Asian and African history, argued that this was unfair to their students. If they were going to do as well as those who had taken some Asian and African history, their students too would have to take such courses, and the American and European historians did not want to give up any of their students' time.

Fortunately for them, 95 percent of the historians on the committee that designed the GRE were European and American historians. You can guess what happened! After three years, the committee wiped out all the questions on Asian and African history, except for a handful involving diplomatic and imperial history. The situation has not changed to this day.

So almost a hundred years later, American and European historians did precisely the sort of thing that the Confucian meritocrats did to civil service reform in 1860s China. Confucians were as successful in keeping Westernizers out of the Chinese meritocracy as Western historians were in keeping Asian historians below the salt in the American historical profession. How symmetrical!

⁶ The Euro-American historians who have outlawed non-Western history questions on the History GRE so far have only frightened the sinologues into circling their wagons to form Centers for East Asian Studies. The GRE History exam remains Euro-American.

supposedly because they had converted only to get free meals. Actually, there were more "English language Christians" than "rice Christians" among parents who wanted their sons to learn English in the mission schools the better to join the *comprador* class of intermediaries between Western and Chinese merchants. Though Christians and others who had absorbed Western learning were frozen out of most traditional influential positions, the ranks of the *compradors* kept growing, as did genuine converts. A Buddhist revival after 1900 suggests that the parallel increase in numbers of Christians may mostly have been a parallel reaction to growing awareness of the civilizational crisis.

Opium sales also kept going up, but for a long time not much else from the West was sold in quantities that seemed to justify all the trouble of opening China, especially since it led to domestication of opium production within China by the end of the century, not exactly what Adam Smith (or Jane Jacobs) would have had in mind as a consequence of spreading new ideas to China through free trade.

Even the architects of Britain's militant policy of opening China to free trade through force grew pessimistic. The Mitchell Report to the British Parliament in 1852 pronounced that the China market was largely mythical.

This market remained largely a myth for the next century and a half. It has only stopped being a myth since the late 1980s, a generation earlier for the Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore breakaway parts of the China market.

And yet even in the 1850s there were signs of change. The heavily Christian-influenced Taiping Rebellion during the 1850s and '60s, was led by Hakkas, a peripheral group of minority people in the southeast. The Hakkas may have turned to the West simply because they were getting no respect from the local majority group of Cantonese. Also, Protestant missionary tracts and churches were conveniently available to them in the nearby treaty port, Canton.

Though they started in the southeast, near Canton city, at the beginning of the 1850s, the Taipings fought their way north to Hankow, and then down the

Yangzi to Nanking and even to the suburbs of Shanghai. Though they failed in an expedition north to Beijing, the Taipings retained control of the lower Yangzi until the mid-1860s.

Some of the Taiping leaders, particularly Hong Rengan, the eventual prime minister of the Taiping government, seem to have genuinely wanted to open a real connection with the West for both spiritual and material reasons.

Hong Rengan was educated by Christian missionaries in Hong Kong and Shanghai, and eventually held the chief administrative position in the government of the Taiping state. Unlike his cousin, the Taiping Emperor, Hong Xiquan, Hong Rengan actually understood the doctrine of the Christian Trinity. At a more mundane level, he sympathized with Abraham Lincoln's troubles in his civil war, and wrote him a letter in 1862 to praise him for freeing the slaves. Hong pointed out that he was freeing the Chinese from enslavement to pre-Christian superstition.

Though in practice more a rebellion than a genuine revolution, the Taiping government at least nominally changed over to a Christian vision of Heaven. It also talked of redistributing land, banning female footbinding and promoting modern (i.e. Western-style) education.

The Taipings taxed merchants far more lightly than did the Qing authorities. They even proposed to open a patent office once the civil war with the Manchus for control of China was over. The principles of economic liberalism, which were the ostensible goals of the English Liberal government in the two Opium Wars now had genuine, albeit somewhat eccentric Chinese champions.

Here also was a chance for China to have a revolutionary government that would actually be Christian, at least in name (though at least as weird in the doctrines espoused by its sovereign as those held by the contemporary Campbellites and Mormons in North America).

And yet the Western powers refused to back it. They betrayed their own ostensible principles by backing the Manchu Old Regime instead, thinking it would be easier to bully the Manchus for further treaty privileges than it would be to try to bully their nominal fellow

Christians, the Taiping rebels. The most respectable of the missionaries dismissed the Taipings as heretics (which only some of them were).

So, one can argue that China was after all changing by the 1860s, and that the illusion of stasis was coming at least as much from the West's self-deception regarding the Taipings as from the Qing Old Regime the powers were backing.

C. The West's Role In China's transition From The Early To The Full Industrial Revolution

1. China's traditional modernity

And yet, by the beginning of the 1880s, the West was inadvertently stimulating the beginning of China's run to full industrial takeoff. By the 1890s, Western ideas impinging on an industrializing China finally began to stimulate genuine political revolution.

The key point here is the same as the one I made earlier for Japan. China, like Japan, already had a traditional modernity to give it the "hooks" for Westernization to catch on to. Hence China did not need much Westernization. In principle, it might even have done without it altogether. It was just easier, or at least quicker, to borrow from the West, once China was in effective touch with it, than it would have been to independently invent or reinvent or remember that it had once invented the new things.

This borrowing meant that China was once again becoming a partly derivative high civilization. China first became partly derivative about 15 centuries earlier when it borrowed Buddhism from South Asia. Now the Chinese were to become partly derivative a second time by borrowing from the West. These borrowings from the West had to attach themselves to early modern "hooks" already present within the Chinese early industrial economy and philosophical and political life.

We will postpone considering the changes in intellectual life and their political consequences, and will look

here only at two related but representative and significant sectors of the traditionally modern Chinese economy as they absorbed Western influences and began their run toward full industrial takeoff: marketing networks and the forms of transportation they employed and one representative industry, cotton textiles.

2. Some economic consequences of the treaty ports

China's hub and spoke marketing network began to take form by the 11th century. It became far more widespread and densely packed with hierarchies of hubs by the 15th and 16th centuries. It became somewhat wider and much deeper during the 18th and early to mid-19th centuries. The Europeans developed nothing like this until well into the age of the railroad. The road networks of industrial Europe were far less complexly organized than the path, road and canal networks that of the Chinese.

By the 18th century China's main superregional urban marketing hubs were already comparable in degree of complexity if not yet in size to the 19th century treaty ports. Hankow, where the Han River joins the Yangzi in central China, and Yangchow, where the Grand Canal crosses the lower Yangzi, were already organizing the transport and marketing of such homogeneous bulk goods as rice and such industrially processed items as cotton piece goods from one end of China to the other.

When the West's aggression added treaty ports to this already existing hub and spoke network of market cities, the main treaty ports linked these internal networks to the rest of the world. Just one of these new hubs, Shanghai, vented goods from Hankow, Yangchow and Canton to Yokohama, San Francisco, Portsmouth and Le Havre.

As early as the 11th century, 7 centuries before full industrialization, transportation by way of rivers and the Grand Canal network of China was already comparable in speed and technological sophistication to that of 18th century England's then new canal network.

When steamships took to the domestic waterways of the old Chinese

marketing network from the 1860s, a revolutionary speedup of China's domestic transport system occurred.

Bad management in river conservancy caused a shift of the Yellow River to the north of the Shandong peninsula during the 1850s. This cut off the water supply for the middle sections of the Grand Canal, forcing the grain trade onto coastal steamships. This had once had to be done during the Yuan Dynasty with sailing ships. Now it could be done again, and even more efficiently, with steam ships beginning in the 1860s.

The coastal route may have been more efficient than the Grand Canal all along, but the meritocracy preferred the less efficient inland route because use of the sea route would have required opening China up to seaborne trade in general. Ming Dynasty meritocrats much preferred expending tax resources to reopen the Grand Canal to maintaining a high seas fleet.

Though efficient railroad technology was available by the 1870s, China built no railroads until after 1900. Contemporaries said this was because Chinese superstitions got in the way of disturbing the earth to build the lines. In fact, however, railroads were not for some time sufficiently more efficient than more traditional forms of transport to justify their great capital expense.

A great inland railroad running north-south from Peking (Beijing) through Hankow to Canton was proposed in 1895, but for strategic rather than economic reasons. It was intended to be an inland and hence secure substitute for the Grand Canal.

3. Beginning the run toward takeoff in cotton textiles

During 1853-64 the Taiping Rebellion caused heavy casualties among women and girl babies in the lower Yangzi, where women spun most of the thread. An East Asian country that values females less than males, tends to sacrifice women and girl babies sooner and harder than men when civilians of both sexes are under threat.

This resulted in a severe bottleneck in cotton thread production for the traditional modern cotton trade by the early

1880s. Fortunately, machine-spun thread from Manchester was available from the treaty ports via the hub and spoke marketing network to break that bottleneck. As wages of spinners rose, people turned to cheaper imported thread as a substitute.

Income of surviving Chinese farmwives of the lower Yangzi rose. They shifted from hand-spinning thread to weaving cheap imported machine-spun thread into cloth four times faster than that amount of thread could have been hand-spun.

By the end of the century Chinese steam-driven spinning mills supplied thread even more cheaply than could foreign mills. A generation of Chinese students had been reading the missionary John Friar's journal *Chinese Science and Industry*, and knew how to build such mills, initially with imported machinery.

Almost instantly, however, Chinese entrepreneurs and engineers started indigenizing these machines, gradually substituting Chinese-made spare parts for foreign ones, and eventually building spinning machines themselves in China.

For some time, most of this new thread continued to be sold through the hub and spoke marketing network to Chinese housewives who wove it into piece goods of the traditional modern type. Only gradually did machine-woven cloth produced in large Chinese factories begin to cut into hand-woven cloth's dominance of the market. Still, the wages earned in these new factories were higher than the returns from hand weaving. Hence 20th century farmers sent their daughters to town to work in them.

So the West did play a key role in China's run to full industrial takeoff after all, though most people at the time did not realize what was happening. The Old China Hands of the 1880s did not realize the revolutionary implications of the machine-spun thread they were selling.

Of course, Western machine-spun thread could have had little effect if the traditional modern Chinese cotton trade had not been ready to use it.

Except for the mostly politically caused regional collapses of the 14th,

17th and 19th centuries, China's population had been slowly growing since Song times. The rate of increase accelerated slightly during the 19th century, and hence the average age of the population was declining. So there a growing market for cotton goods was accompanied by a delay in girl babies growing up and starting to spin. Since spinning requires more labor than weaving, at least a modest bottleneck in the supply of labor would hit spinning sooner and harder than weaving.

Therefore, the short-run increase in the number of female deaths in the lower Yangzi valley because of the Taiping Rebellion merely accelerated what would have happened anyway. This temporarily cut into the supply of females available to spin in one of chief areas where cotton was spun.⁷

As a consequence of the shortage of female Yangzi valley spinners, the price of cotton thread went up sharply during the 1870s, thereby driving up the price of the piece goods of which thread was so big a component. Demand for piece goods was going up because of the general population increase, and also because the West demanded more cotton prints to meet the fancies of fashionable bourgeoisie women.

This was a new sort of situation. Earlier increases in the price of one or another factor of production had soon evoked an increase in the supply of that factor, and hence a return of the factor's price to its former level. This is what economists call a "constant costs" situation. Over "the long run" costs are constant if additional supplies of the factor being increasingly demanded are easily available. Now, given the shortage of female labor and the increased demand for the thread female labor produced, over as long a run as could be forecast, the price of thread increased, also seemingly permanently, an "increasing costs" situation.

Cheap machine-spun cotton thread

⁷ Even cotton grown in the north was often spun in the south. The south was more humid than the north. It was difficult to spin thread in the dry winter air of the north because static electricity kept the fibers from wrapping around each other properly. Sometimes people dug spinning basements in the north in order to increase the humidity, but generally it paid better to market the raw cotton fiber into the south for spinning.

overcame this bottleneck more quickly than anyone could have anticipated. The Chinese cotton trade jumped from an increasing costs situation to a declining costs situation virtually overnight. Prices fell and demand increased, as did returns to both labor and capital.

Costs again fell sharply and real wages rose still more near the end of the century when entrepreneurs in China took further advantage of cheap Chinese labor to set up Chinese spinning mills of the Western type and accelerate production increases still more rapidly. By then it was evident to most that China's run toward full industrial takeoff had "finally" begun, a mere century and a half or so after England's.

Strictly speaking, China did not need the West to get around this bottleneck. Chinese entrepreneurs could have sponsored the invention of spinning machines or their reinvention by paying someone to remember that Chinese engineers had supposedly invented spinning machinery during the Song and Yuan periods.

But since Western machine-spun thread, and then the spinning jennies for producing the thread were easily and cheaply available, it was easier and quicker and initially much cheaper to use the West's production through imports, and then gradually replace those Western producers' goods through imitating at first parts and then entire Western machines.

The West's contribution to the cotton trade (and to modern mining, railroad building, and several branches of light industry, about all of which similar stories could be told, and are told in History 371) might be judged to have made up for the bad stuff—the moral debacle of the opium wars and opium exports to China, and the limited degree of imperialistic expansion by the West that created the treaty ports.

However, these privileged treaty port enclaves also provided a way for millions of Chinese to avoid the depredations of their own government. By moving to the treaty ports, they could more easily engage in increasingly full industrial capitalist acts not just with consenting adult foreigners but also with each other.

Like most historians, I am no expert

in any sort of moral calculus, but if it makes you feel a little better about the opium, you may try to run the above bit of jesuitry past the confessional next Sunday.