I. China in 1800

“The Empire of China is an old, crazy, first-rate Man of War… [and has] contrived to keep afloat for these hundred and fifty years past…She may, perhaps, not sink outright; she may drift some time as a wreck, and will then be dashed to pieces on the shore; but she can never be rebuilt on the old bottom.”

— Lord Macartney on his Embassy to China in 1793

Legacy of the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736-1799)

- One of the most successful rulers in Chinese history
- Extended the boundaries of the Qing to its greatest extent
- By the end of his reign however, many serious issues have surfaced
- Corruption in the civil service rose to great heights

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you’ll be able to:

i. describe at least 3 of China’s major challenges.
ii. remember at least 2 contributing factors and outcomes of the Opium Wars.
iii. describe at least 2 major historical figures
iv. understand the effects of European advances into China on its already fragile domestic realities.

In Disney’s 1998 animated movie *Mulan*, what was the ethnicity of the foreign invaders that threatened China?

A. the British  
B. The Xiongnu  
C. The Huns

China in the Nineteenth Century

Outline

I. China in 1800  
II. The Opium Wars  
III. The Taiping Rebellion  
IV. Empress Dowager Cixi  
V. Hundred Days Reform of 1898  
VI. The Disastrous “Boxer Rebellion”

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What do you think was/were the major crop(s) grown in China in the 19th century?

- A. Rice
- B. Wheat
- C. Potatoes
- D. A combination of these

By the beginning of the 1800s:
- the imperial treasury was empty
- Population rose to 300 Million
- the political structure was destabilized
- it couldn’t effectively deal with many of the crises that it was about to experience in the coming century.

II. The Opium Wars

Background: European Trade with China
- The Chinese had a low demand for European goods
- While Europeans (at this point primarily Britain) had a seemingly insatiable demand of Chinese goods. Tea, silk, porcelain, and...

White Lotus Rebellion (1796 – 1804)
- Peasant rebellion in South-western China led by a religious sect
- the already weakened Qing government (crippled by corruption) took great pains to finally deal with this rebellion
- in fact, many of those in charge of its suppression instead embezzled the funds allocated for that purpose

After silk, tea, and porcelain, what did the British want from China?

- A. Soy beans
- B. Bamboo
- C. Rhubarb
II. The Opium Wars

Background: European Trade with China
- Thus, this trade imbalance was very alarming to the British and they sought a way to try and balance the level of trade between Britain and China
- the solution: Opium

The Opium Trade (cont’d)
- The rapid growth of Chinese consumption (measured by the growth in imports) are as follows:

The Opium Trade
- The question of moral responsibility aside...
- The Qing government had made the consumption and sale of opium illegal in 1729, after recognizing its addictive effects
- Importation was banned in 1796

Before the Opium Wars, where was the only place that the Europeans could trade with China?
- A. Shanghai
- B. Canton
- C. Hong Kong

This didn’t stop the growing Chinese appetite however...

The Question of Silver and the Opium Trade
- delicate balance between Copper and Silver
  - Government accounted (and collected taxes) using units of silver
  - the people on a day-to-day basis used copper coins, but also paid taxes with copper coins to a rate set in silver
  - the mass import of opium and outflow of silver in the 19th Century led to:
    - Relative scarcity of Silver and its price increased
    - over production/debasing in the value of copper coins
    - i.e., people had to pay more units of copper to satisfy their tax obligations in silver
To illustrate this problem...
If in 1700: 100 copper = 1 silver

But by 1850: 250 copper = 1 silver

The Treaty of Nanjing
- The Qing had to pay reparations for the destroyed British merchandises
- Open up trade in four other ports (total Five: Canton, Amoy, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai)
- Cession of Hong Kong to the British

First Opium War 1839 - 1842
- 1839: the Emperor Daoguang appointed Lin Zexu as Governor of Canton
- with the specific goal of eliminating the opium trade
- Lin Zexu ordered the surrender of all opium by foreign merchants
- Proceeded to destroy all the opium he confiscated

Second Opium War 1856-1860
- Also known as the Arrow War
- The British wanted to renegotiate the terms for the Treaty of Nanjing, the Qing refused
- Qing officials boarded a British ship, the Arrow, arrested the twelve Chinese
- the British declared war

The British government then initiated the Opium War in retaliation
- in order to get compensation from the Qing government for the destroyed opium
- In the next two years the British won decisive victories
- Qing defeat in this war led to the and signing of the first of the many Unequal Treaties.

Second Opium War 1856-1860
- The French joined the war too
- for the execution of a French missionary by a local Chinese official
- The French and British sieged Beijing
- Destroyed the Imperial Summer Palace as a “warning”
Ruins of the Imperial summer palace

What else was used as currency in China other than silver and copper?

A. Diamond
B. Gold
C. Platinum

• Unsurprisingly it was concluded with yet another Unequal Treaty

The Treaty of Tianjin & Convention of Beijing

• Europeans have right to station their delegations in Beijing
• open three more ports to trade
• the right of foreign vessels to freely navigate the Yangtze

The Treaty of Tianjin & Convention of Beijing

• right of foreigners to freely travel, trade, and conduct missionary activities
• China has to pay indemnities to Britain and France.
• Kowloon and Hong Kong to be ceded in perpetuity to Britain
• the Qing ceded large areas of Outer Manchuria to Russia

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III. The Taiping Rebellion

• Similar to the White Lotus, the Taiping were a peasant uprising, it started among the Hakka people in the south
• led by the leader of the religious sect: Hong Xiuquan
  • claimed he was the brother of Jesus Christ
• Hong Xiuquan failed in the civil service examination

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• Discontent with their hardships, the increase in taxation, and the corruption of government officials
• thousands joined the Taiping in flocks
• 1853: The Taiping successfully took over the old capital of the Ming, Nanjing
• Devastating blow to the Qing, for the Taiping now occupied some of the most productive regions of China.

• Recall: This was happening the same time as the Second Opium War
• Consequences of the Taiping Rebellion
• Interruption of economic production in the most prosperous region in China
• Immense Human Suffering:
  – ~11 million non-combatant direct victims
  – ~30 million indirect victims (famines, etc.)
  – The Fall of Nanjing to the Qing forces
  » Death toll: 100,000 in one day
• Severe degradation of Qing imperial authority in the regions -- the use of “Personal Armies”

• This was also the zenith of the Taiping’s success, internal squabbling led to factionalism among the rebel leaders
• eventually the Qing under Zeng Guofan and his “Household” Army loyal to himself quelled the rebellion successfully
• not without much human suffering and destruction in the southern half of China however.

What does Taiping mean?

A. Supreme Peace
B. Divine Grace
C. Eternal Scripture

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IV. Dowager Empress Cixi:

- A consort of the Xianfeng Emperor
  - Who died during the siege of Beijing during the Second Opium War
  - Became Empress Dowager after the accession of her son
  - Traditionally vilified by Chinese people as the cause for China’s “decline” at the hands of the Europeans—hardly a fair judgement.

- She was however, greatly influenced by the conservative faction at court
- Initially reactionary to most proposals for reform
- She dominated and effectively controlled China between 1861–1908 as Empress dowager.
- Much of her policies were very controversial and many have argued that she led to China’s ruin
- Instead of using funds to rebuild the Qing’s devastated Navy, she used them to rebuild the imperial summer palace.

V. Hundred Days Reform of 1898

- The defeat of the Qing by the Europeans highlighted the precariously weakened state of the government
- 1870s Self-Strengthening Movement
  - “East for Essence, West for Practical Use”
  - Attempts at (limited) building modern infrastructure, industry, and military (be the Beiyang or Northern Ocean Army and Navy)
- China’s efforts at Self-Strengthening was put to test in 1894-1895...

Legacy of Empress Dowager Cixi

- Still a controversial today
- Many blame her extravagance as one of the contributing causes of her peoples’ suffering
- Some believe that her conservative views doomed the Qing Dynasty
- While others believe that she really did mean well, and despite the circumstances made the best political decisions she could.
- Still others believe that she was merely someone manipulated by the conservative faction at court

First Sino-Japanese War

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The First Sino-Japanese War (1894 - 1895) was started over China’s influence over which country?

A. Taiwan  
B. Korea  
C. Vietnam

The Chinese were defeated utterly  
The Chinese Beiyang Forces were no match for the recently industrialized Japanese Imperial Army  
This defeat surprised many, most of all the Chinese who has always perceived Japan to be a weak neighbour.  
This humiliating defeat led many, especially the younger literati to stir into action and call for reforms

The reformers were led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao

The reformers focused their efforts on Emperor Guangxu  
Who was finally given full reins over government by the Empress Dowager  
Numerous so-called Reform Edicts were then issued, in shocking lightning speed

Some of these Reforms include:  
- Establishment of Peking University  
- Abolishment of the Civil Examination System  
- Creation of a modern education System  
- Creation of a modern government structure (disbanding the traditional Six Boards)  
- Modernization of the military  
- Construction of Railways
As quickly as these attempts at reform came... they were swept away.

Yes, our favourite Dragon Lady, Cixi, is back!

- The Reactionary faction at court rallied behind the Empress Dowager
  - Who was in “retirement” at her newly built Summer Palace
- They ousted, persecuted, and executed many of the reformers
- The Emperor Guangxu was put under house arrest in the Winter Palace
- The Hundred Days Reform failed utterly before it could even take off.

- The Boxers then sieged the Diplomatic Quarters in Beijing
- The Qing government exacerbated the problem instead of alleviating it
- They then declared war on ALL the foreigners, in hopes that the Boxers would help them drive the Europeans away
  - They were wrong.

- The besieged foreigners collectively sent in the Army of the Eight-Nation Alliance to break the siege.

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- The Eigh-Nation Alliance successfully broke the siege and occupied Beijing.
- The Dowager Empress Cixi, Emperor Guangxu, and the imperial court all fled Beijing for Xian (Hsian in the Headland Text)
- Ultimately the Qing had to pay even more indemnities to the other states and to give even more concessions.

**Big "Take Home" Question**

How was China’s experience with European (and later Japanese) imperial advances different/similar from some of the other areas that we’ve studied?

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**Conclusion**

- The 19th century was very difficult for China
  - Severe internal problems
    - Economic hardships
    - Natural and artificial disasters
    - Peasant revolts and outright rebellions
  - Increasing external pressures from imperialists
    - Severe trade deficit, devaluing of its currency
    - Gunboat diplomacy
  - Failure at Reform. Too little, too late.