

History 251 Study Guide #2 The Making of Early Modern China

FOUR Major Themes

TRADITIONAL and MANCHU CHINA: social, political and cultural structures.

TRADE, OPIUM, AND IMPERIALISM.

PEASANT REVOLTS: Taiping, Nian, and others.

EARLY RESPONSES TO THE WEST: Self Strengthening Movement and its weakness.

DETAILS

1. [*Traditional China*](#) (for details please follow this link to Professor Leung's Introduction to Traditional China which includes references to page numbers in the Vohra textbook covering different aspects of Traditional China.)

1a. [*Manchu China*](#) (for details please follow this link to Professor Leung's outline which includes references to page numbers in the Vohra textbook on "Manchu Dynasty as Reflection of 'Traditional China'".)

Some Additional Names and Dates.

MING dynasty 1368-1644

QING (pronounced Ching) dynasty -- the MANCHUS -- from 1644 to 1912.

EMPEROR KANGXI (1699-1722) Consolidated Manchu (Qing) rule.

EMPEROR QIANLONG (1736-1799) Saw emergence of European traders and tried to deal with them as "barbarians."

EMPEROR TONGZHI (1861-1875) He ascended to throne at the age of five, and his reign saw a dominant role played by his mother, the Dowager EMPRESS CIXI (pronounced Chu Shih).

Beginnings of western-style reforms, and the importance of officials like ZENG GUOFAN, and LI HONGZHANG.

2. *Trade, Opium, and Imperialism*

A.Chinese restrictions on foreign traders and attitude to trade

1720 Chinese merchants' cartel formed in Canton: called the COHONG.

1754 the Chinese state made the Cohong merchants responsible for all activities of foreign merchants.

1760 all foreign merchants restricted to Canton, and could ONLY trade through the Cohong.

In 1793, the British send a mission led by Lord Macartney, request an ambassador at Beijing, and to interest the Chinese in British manufactures. Emperor QIANLONG wrote to George III of England claiming, "*we have never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country's manufactures. Therefore, O King, as regards your request to send someone to remain at the capital, while it is not in harmony with the regulations of the Celestial Empire we also feel very much that it is of no advantage to your country.*"

B. Growth of trade with China

By 1800, the English East India Company (the same company that had begun acquiring an empire in India) was buying 23 MILLION POUNDS OF TEA WORTH 3.6 MILLION BRITISH POUNDS.

Net inflow of wealth for China: 3 million Tael in 1760s. (a unit of exchange, worth approx. one ounce of silver) rising to 16 million Tael in 1780s.

C. Growth of the Opium trade

1729 200 chests

1790 4000 chests

1835 30,000 chests

1838 40,000 chests (each chest contained 130-160 lbs of the drug: rounded figures)

SILVER now going OUT of the country.

1820s 2 million tael

1830s 9 million tael

D. Chinese response and the Opium Wars (*for more details also follow this link to Professor Leung's outline which includes references to page numbers in the Vohra textbook on "[Modalities of Chinese Responses](#)."*)

LIN ZEXU appointed commissioner in Canton 1839.

May 1839 Commissioner Lin arrests thousands of Chinese, seized 35000 lbs opium from Chinese.

March 24 1839, forced foreign merchants to give up 20,000 chests of opium and destroyed it.

1839, First Opium War: Chinese agree to pay \$6 million, cede Hong Kong, etc.

1841: Second Opium War: British capture Shanghai, and in 1842, Nanjing. Clear defeat for China.

August 1842 Peace of Nanjing: humiliating, introduce the "treaty port system."

- i. 5 ports including Shanghai and Canton open to British (and later all western settlers).
- ii. A further \$21 million in damages to British merchants and to British state (for cost of wars!).
- iii. Hong Kong became British in perpetuity.
- iv. End of the COHONG system.
- v. 1843 US granted the same concessions: plus allowing of missionaries, plus EXTRA TERRITORIALITY (judge own people), and in 1844, France too.
- vi. "Most favored nation" clauses meant concessions to one power, became concessions to all.

3. Peasant Revolts

TAIPING (S.E. China, 1840s-1868), NIAN (N.E. China, 1851-1873), MUSLIM REVOLTS (W. and N.W. China, 1855, 1868-1873)

Causes

- i. Population rise: 400 million at beginning of 19th century, pressure on resources.
- ii. Administrative problems: Officials out of control, meant less revenue for state, meant weaker armed forces. ALSO: poor maintenance of waterways, flood control measures, etc.
- iii. Natural disasters: e.g. the Nian revolts of 1851 were sparked by flooding in North JIANGSU province, and later because of the 1855 flooding of the Yellow river. Connected to #ii above.
- iv. Outflow of silver because of Opium trade: silver price inflation, tax calculated in silver, so peasants had to pay more.
- v. Losses to the western "barbarians," growth of lawlessness, natural disasters, etc. meant that more Chinese willing to believe that Manchus had lost the MANDATE OF HEAVEN, thus prone to follow movements challenging Manchu authority.

4. Chinese Responses

"Self Strengthening" reforms under Emperor Tongzhi 1861-1875, though effective power with the dowager CIXI. Growing importance of officers like ZENG GUOFAN, LI HONGZHENG etc.

- i. Strengthen China through adoption of western technology but retain Confucian ideology and hierarchies.
ZENG sent YUNG WING, (graduated Yale 1854) in 1862 to US for machinery to build an arsenal of weapons.
By 1868 China producing rifles and steamships.
- ii. Establish the ZONGLI YAMEN for conducting foreign affairs. Since treaties of 1860, Chinese could no longer refer to westerners as BARBARIAN. The Chinese also learn to use European based international law to own advantage.
- iii. Positive missionary influence. Growth of western style western style schools. Translations and interpreters.
- iv. Negative missionary influence. Western dominated treaty ports and racism. Popular fear of missionaries. "Tianjin massacre": provoked by intemperate actions of a French consul, led to killing of 16 French men and women (including 10 Catholic nuns), and 3 Russians mistaken for French, Church burnt.
- v. Failures of Self Strengthening: Ambivalence towards modernity. Reforms undertaken under pressure, with the desire on the part of the Chinese elite to change as little as possible. Often piecemeal and therefore unable to "modernize" adequately. Modernization FORCED upon China by circumstances, thus a close association between "modernity" and western dominance, foreign rule, etc.
- vi. Loss of "tributary states" such as Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, and Korea. Ultimate humiliation came with the loss to Japan in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95.