

CHINA'S FOREIGN PLACES

*The Foreign Presence in China in the Treaty Port Era,
1840–1943*

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PREFACE

This book grew from an interest in the treaty ports of China, an interest that developed into a fascination—and then an obsession. On moving to Hong Kong from England in 1980 I became aware of the very special nature of the city. While being difficult to find on a map of the globe, this tiny place boasted the world's tenth-largest trading economy. It was an anachronism with little right to such economic status, and yet . . . In addition to spending all hours of the day contributing to the continuing prosperity of Hong Kong through my work as a public accountant, I started to take an interest in why it was that Hong Kong enjoyed such success; indeed, why it was there at all. Nor was Hong Kong alone in terms of European settlements tacked on to the side of China. All of these are now Chinese towns or cities of varying size but many of them retain a trace, or rather more, of their former foreign occupation.

My initial research focused on the European commercial approaches to China, starting with the Portuguese in the 16th century, then the Dutch in the 17th. The British became dominant in the 18th and 19th centuries, and that dominance led to a conflict that gave rise to not only the colony of Hong Kong but also the first five treaty ports—Amoy (Xiamen), Canton (Guangzhou), Foochow (Fuzhou), Ningpo (Ningbo) and Shanghai. I described these six cities, and the historical background to the treaty port system, in my book *The China Coast: Trade and the First Treaty Ports*, published in 2010. My next step was obvious—to describe each of the former treaty ports of China individually in a new book. This was last done in 1867, when Mayers, Dennys and King produced their monumental *The Treaty Ports of China and Japan*. My update would include not only treaty ports, but the many other foreign commercial settlements in China, large and small.

It has been said that, as they are by definition on the periphery, 'most written history has treated port cities rather shabbily.'* Indeed, surprisingly little has been written about a great many of China's treaty ports as individual places. Frances Wood's *No Dogs and Not Many Chinese: Treaty Port Life in China 1843–1943*, published in 1997, provides an admirable, accessible overview. One or two ports have been the subject of comprehensive histories, although some of these are now not easy to find. Examples include O. D. Rasmussen's *Tientsin: An Illustrated Outline History* (1925) and William T. Rowe's *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796–1889* (1984). There are excellent volumes on the history and development of Hong Kong and Shanghai. Some books cover one particular issue in the majority of treaty ports without describing many of them in detail, such as P. D. Coates's *The China Consuls* (1988). References to some of the more obscure ports may be found in the indexes of even more obscure books. My mission was to bring each place to life by providing interesting and concise information not readily available elsewhere. I also wanted to make my entries as complete as possible, using all the sources my detection skills could identify. Only the entries on Hong Kong and Shanghai have been given a different treatment. Their inclusion in the same manner as the others would have created a volume many times the size of this one. Instead, I have provided a concise history of these two cities over the relevant period without attempting to make those histories complete.

Places that served solely as missionary stations have been excluded, firstly because they have been extensively documented elsewhere (for examples, see Cohen's *China and Christianity* [1963] and Carlson's

* Osterhammel, 277.

The Foochow Missionaries [1974]); and, secondly, because my chief interest is in commercial activity. What is left is a comprehensive summary of the many Chinese places that at one stage came under foreign administration to a greater or lesser degree during the Treaty Port Era, roughly 1840 to 1943. Most entries start with a brief background history, in order to put the place in context. Similarly, I have assumed some knowledge of events happening on the Chinese and world stages on the part of my readers, so as to concentrate on matters at the local level in each of the places covered. For example, the individual stages of the Second Opium War are not explicated, but the entry on Canton describes that conflict to the extent it had a direct bearing on the city.

Each entry is intended to stand alone (although the option to read the book cover to cover is, of course, available). This requires some degree of repetition, although I have ensured that where this happens—the story of tea, for example—there is a different yet relevant and complete treatment in each of the entries affected. Continuing the example, I have not attempted to research and write about the subject of tea per se, but I have included the material I found while researching, in this case, Hankow (Hankou) and Foochow. Although there is very little to be said about some of the smallest places covered, the length of each entry does not necessarily reflect its subject's relative importance. Rather, length has tended to be determined by the amount of interesting source material available.

In most cases a separate entry for each of the ports and other places covered has been given. Taku (Dagu), for example, had a history and existence that was independent of Tientsin (Tianjin), its much bigger neighbour. Similarly Hong Kong and Kowloon are treated separately; Kowloon was an extremely important customs station that operated independently of Hong Kong. However, where two or more places were so closely related that separate entries would have been pedantic, I have combined them—Swatow (Shantou) and Namoa (Nanao), for example, and Tamsui (Danshui) and Keelung (Jilong). Where there are books that add further

information about specific ports I have listed these in a 'Further reading' note at the end of the relevant entry. Furthermore, the Bibliography at the end of the book has been made as comprehensive as possible, to encourage further reading and research and be of use to other scholars.

Initially, my goal was to visit all the places that merited an entry in this book. These good intentions faltered in the face of harsh realities, for instance the inadvisability of poking about areas close to the North Korean border, and logistical difficulties such as tramping through Manchuria looking for remote former Japanese and Russian outposts. Nor would visiting a place that only existed for one or two years as a treaty port a hundred years ago necessarily add value to a written description of its brief role. Nevertheless I have travelled extensively in China gathering information and impressions. The 69 places I visited are listed in the Appendix. Effort was required to overcome significant difficulties in establishing exact locations and present place names for each place included in the book. Landing stages on the West River and Russian trading posts in Manchuria presented special challenges. A combination of Google Earth satellite imagery and as many maps, new and old, as could be found allowed most location puzzles to be solved.

During my travels I was frequently impressed by the interest ordinary Chinese people took in what I was doing. Taxi drivers happily took over the responsibility for finding some of the more remote places, and then accompanied me round them. Security men asked for copies of my old photographs of the buildings they were guarding. People in the street asked why I was examining what appeared, to them, a crumbling old building. Many of the old Treaty Port-Era buildings are, however, far from crumbling. Chinese provincial and city governments have undertaken many first-class renovation projects. Furthermore, buildings in Pakhoi (Beihai), Kongmoon (Jiangmen) and Foochow have been relocated to make way for a development or a road-widening, when demolition would have been much cheaper and easier. This is both impressive and encouraging.

To help the reader visualize the world of the treaty ports I have illustrated the book with over 130 photographs, postcards and maps from the relevant period, many of which have rarely been seen elsewhere. Almost all are specifically related to something mentioned in the text and come from over 50 different sources.

This narrative has been constructed from a myriad of sources, most of them in English. This does not reflect a desire to portray one particular viewpoint, and if the same story were told using primarily Chinese sources, interpretations, emphases and narrative structure would be very different. The same could be said of books based on Japanese, Russian or German documents dating from this period. There are other books on the treaty ports waiting to be written; their various ‘truths’ will further illuminate a deeply complex subject.

Much of the content of this book is based on primary sources largely previously unused in the context of the British treaty ports. In particular I have drawn extensively on the National Archives in London, old newspapers published in Hong Kong and elsewhere and my own extensive collection of British government consular and other reports. These items are listed individually in the Bibliography. To supplement this material I have drawn on the work of authors who have written on the Japanese, Russian, French and German treaty ports for purposes of comparison and explication. Of particular value have been the works of Chinese and Western scholars who

have accessed Chinese-language archives and other primary sources.

Every author who writes about 19th- and 20th-century China has to make decisions about how to transliterate Chinese words into English in the certain knowledge that reviewers and readers will disagree with those decisions. The difficulty lies in which system is used (if, indeed, any formal system is). Pinyin superseded Wade-Giles in the mid-20th century so that Peking became Beijing and the familiar Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen became unrecognized strangers—Jiang Jieshi and Sun Zhongshan. With the exception of Chiang and Sun and one or two others, all Chinese personal names are written in pinyin. Regarding place names, my decision was to use the names by which they were known at the time, but have included for reference the name by which each place is currently known where it is first mentioned in the text of each entry. Modern writers of history refer happily to Hong Kong instead of Xianggang, but then go to great pains to also refer to places such as Nanjing and Xiamen. There never was a Treaty of Nanjing—it was the Treaty of Nanking. Xiamen was never mentioned in any treaty—Amoy was. However, when referring to a place in a present-day context I have used present-day spelling.

Robert Nield
Hong Kong
January 2015

TIMELINE

- 1644 Accession of Qing dynasty to throne of China
- 1685 Kangxi Emperor declares all his ports open to foreign trade
- 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk (Russia)—attempts to agree border with Russia, establishes reciprocal trading rights; authoritative version was in Latin
- 1724 Yongzheng Emperor prohibits the practice and propagation of Christianity in China
- 1727 21 October—Treaty of Kiakhta (Russia)—further attempt to agree border with Russia
- 1757 Qianlong Emperor issues edict closing to foreign trade all ports except Canton
- 1792 to 1793—Lord Macartney's embassy to Peking, fails to obtain easing of trading restrictions
- 1816 to 1817—Lord Amherst's embassy to Peking, tries to establish commercial relations, also fails
- 1832 East India Company official Hugh Hamilton Lindsay sails up China Coast from Canton in *Lord Amherst*, looking for possible trading sites
- 1832 William Jardine sends opium ships up the coast
- 1833 British Slavery Abolition Act outlaws slavery in British Empire
- 1838 December to October 1842—First Anglo-Afghan War, extremely expensive in terms of money and reputation for Britain
- 1839 19 March to 29 August 1842—First Opium War
- 1840 5 July—British troops occupy Chusan for first time
- 1841 20 January—Convention of Chuenpi (Britain)—brings temporary halt to First Opium War
- 1842 29 August—Treaty of Nanking (Britain)—creates first five treaty ports, cedes Hong Kong to Britain in perpetuity
- 1843 8 October—Supplementary Treaty of the Bogue (Britain)—details trading regulations, introduces concept of Most Favoured Nation
- 1844 3 July—Treaty of Wanghia (America)—based on British treaties, introduces concept of extraterritoriality, provides for right of revision after twelve years
- 1844 24 October—Treaty of Whampoa (France)—based on British treaties
- 1844 14 December—Imperial Edict confirms that Chinese will not be punished for adopting Christianity
- 1846 February—under French pressure, Daoguang Emperor legalizes practice of Christianity, allows missionaries to reclaim former buildings
- 1846 4 April—Convention of Bocca Tigris (Britain)—allows admission of foreigners to Canton 'when the time is right', evacuation of Chusan
- 1847 2 April—British forces under d'Aguilar sail up Pearl River and threaten Canton
- 1847 6 April—Commissioner Qiying agrees to entry to Canton and trade at Honam
- 1849 Britain repeals Navigation Acts, set of laws allowing only British ships into British ports
- 1849 1 April—Daoguang Emperor issues edict, is powerless to oppose people of Canton regarding foreign entry
- 1851 11 January—Hong Xiuquan announces founding of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, Taiping Rebellion begins, lasts until 1864
- 1851 25 July—Treaty of Kuldja (Russia)—opens border towns to trade

- 1854 11 July—Shanghai Municipal Council formed
- 1854 12 July—Foreign Customs Board of Inspectors established in Shanghai, beginning of foreign-managed Chinese Maritime Customs
- 1855 14 August—Chinese Passengers Act (Britain)—regulates conditions for carriage by sea of Chinese emigrants
- 1856 8 October—Chinese officials board the *Arrow* in Canton, provoking Second Opium War, lasts until 18 October 1860
- 1857 10 May—commencement of Indian Mutiny, delays sending of British troops to Second Opium War
- 1858 28 May—Treaty of Aigun (Russia)—extends Russian territory into China
- 1858 June—treaties of Tientsin (America, Britain, France, Russia)—open eleven more treaty ports, establish foreign legations in Peking, introduce transit passes, lead to legalizing opium
- 1858 8 November—opium legalized
- 1859 October—foreign-managed Custom House established in Canton, soon followed in all treaty ports
- 1860 24 October—Convention of Peking (Britain)—brings Second Opium War to an end, cedes Kowloon to Britain, opens Tientsin as treaty port, legalizes Chinese emigration
- 1860 14 November—Treaty of Peking (Russia)—extends Russia's gains of Chinese territory as far as the Pacific at Vladivostok
- 1861 12 April to 9 May 1865—American Civil War, restricts American cotton supplies, boosts Chinese production
- 1862 Foreign forces join war against the Taipings
- 1862 13 August—Treaty of Tientsin (Portugal)—attempts to achieve recognition of sovereignty over Macao, not ratified by Peking
- 1863 21 September—merger of British and American settlements in Shanghai to form International Settlement
- 1863 15 November—Robert Hart appointed Inspector-General of Chinese Maritime Customs
- 1864 25 September—Protocol of Chuguchak (Tahcheng)—cedes to Russia 430,000 square kilometres of territory around Lake Balkhash
- 1865 Muslim rebellion in north-west gathers momentum
- 1865 Kiangnan Arsenal established in Shanghai
- 1866 30 May—five sailing ships leave Foochow on what comes to be known as The Great Tea Race, 99 days later *Taeping* and *Ariel* arrive in London within 20 minutes of each other
- 1866 August—construction of Foochow Imperial Arsenal commences
- 1867 to 1886—Imperial Maritime Customs imposes a virtual blockade of Hong Kong
- 1868 Establishment of Chinese customs stations on border with Hong Kong to suppress smuggling, effectively blockades the colony
- 1869 23 October—'Alcock Convention' (British)—would have introduced radical reforms to Sino-British relations, not ratified in London
- 1869 17 November—Suez Canal opens, reducing significantly journey times to Europe
- 1870 21 June—massacre of foreign and Chinese Catholics in Tientsin
- 1871 13 September—first treaty between China and Japan grants commercial privileges and extraterritoriality
- 1872 Li Hongzhang establishes China Merchants Steam Navigation Co., China's first modern commercial enterprise
- 1873 Muslim rebellions suppressed
- 1874 7 May—Japan lands troops on Formosa to punish aboriginals for murdering Japanese shipwreck survivors
- 1875 21 February—murder of British official Raymond Margary, gives rise to more British claims for compensation from China
- 1876 21 August—Chefoo Agreement (Britain)—resolves Margary affair, opens more treaty ports and ports-of-call, extends concept of

- extraterritoriality, exempts foreign areas of treaty ports from *likin*
- 1878 Catastrophic famine in the north
- 1880 31 March—Supplementary Convention of Peking (Germany)—gives numerous concessions to German shipping, opens Woosung for taking on and discharging cargo
- 1881 24 February—Treaty of St Petersburg (Russia)—settles border issue in China's north-west, opens more treaty ports, cedes more territory
- 1883 France annexes present-day Vietnam
- 1884 23 August—French bombardment of Foochow Imperial Arsenal, start of Sino-French War, lasts until 4 April 1885
- 1885 9 June—Treaty of Tientsin (France)—concludes Sino-French War, agrees to set the Tonkin border, opens treaty ports
- 1885 18 July—Additional Article to 1876 Chefoo Agreement places opium imports under Maritime Customs
- 1885 Foochow tea banned in London market owing to poor quality
- 1886 25 April—Treaty of Tientsin (France)—opens border stations to trade, to be defined later
- 1886 24 July—Burmah Convention (Britain)—agrees to define borders
- 1886 11 September—Opium Agreement signed in Hong Kong, ends blockade, establishes foreign-managed Custom House in Kowloon
- 1887 23 June—Additional Commercial Convention (France)—opens Lungchow, Manhao and Mengtse
- 1887 26 June—Convention Concerning the Tonkin Border (France)—defines the border
- 1887 1 December—Treaty of Peking (Portugal)—recognizes Macao as Portuguese territory
- 1890 17 March—Convention Relating to Sikkim and Tibet (Britain)—settles the boundary
- 1890 31 March—further Additional Article to 1876 Chefoo Agreement permits British steamers to navigate to Chungking provided Chinese steamers have already done so ('Chungking Agreement')
- 1890 4 December—Hanyang Iron and Steel Works inaugurated
- 1891 Work starts at both ends of the Trans-Siberian Railway
- 1891 Wave of anti-foreign riots, especially in Yangtze River ports
- 1893 5 December—Supplement to Sikkim Convention (Britain)—opens Yatung for trade
- 1894 1 March—Burmah Convention (Britain)—attempts to define boundary and regularize trade between Burma and China
- 1894 1 August to 17 April 1895—Sino-Japanese War
- 1894 24 November—Sun Yat-sen organizes Revive China Society in Honolulu
- 1895 17 April—Treaty of Shimonoseki (Japan)—brings war to an end, cedes Formosa to Japan, opens more treaty ports
- 1895 20 June—Complementary Convention (France)—opens Szemao as treaty port
- 1895 8 November—Japan agrees to sell back to China the Liaodong Peninsula, seized in recent war
- 1896 8 September—Russia awarded contract for Chinese Eastern Railway
- 1896 30 September—secret 'Cassini Convention' between China and Russia gives railway concessions in Manchuria, promises Russia the use of Kiaochow Bay (existence of convention still disputed)
- 1897 4 February—British agreement modifies 1894 Burmah Convention, opens West River to trade, opens more treaty ports
- 1897 14 November—Germany occupies Kiaochow Bay
- 1898 6 March—Germany leases Kiaochow Bay
- 1898 8 March—Archibald Little first to reach Chungking by steamer
- 1898 27 March—Russia leases Port Arthur and Talienwan
- 1898 5 April—Imperial Decree opens Chinwangtao, Funing (Santuaao) and Yochow to foreign trade

- 1898 22 April—France leases Kwangchowwan
- 1898 24 May—Britain leases Weihaiwei
- 1898 9 June—Britain leases Hong Kong's New Territory
- 1898 28 July—Inland Steam Navigation Regulations—open Chinese inland waters to all registered steam vessels
- 1898 August—Yangtze Regulations—open more ports-of-call
- 1899 11 August—Dalny created as Free Port
- 1900 14 August—Boxer siege of the foreign legations in Peking broken after 55 days
- 1901 Work on Trans-Siberian Railway substantially complete
- 1901 7 September—Boxer Peace Protocol (multinational)—replaces Tsungli Yamen with Foreign Office, brings native customs collections near treaty ports under foreign-managed inspectorate, mandates improvements to Peiho and Whangpu rivers
- 1901 November—Imperial Maritime Customs given responsibility for collecting *likin* to better facilitate payment of Boxer indemnities
- 1902 5 September—Commercial Treaty (Britain)—introduces uniform national coinage, cleans Canton River, makes Kulangsu an International Settlement, attempts to eradicate *likin*
- 1903 8 October—separate American and Japanese treaties for the opening of Mukden, counter to Russian advances in the north-east, Japanese treaty requires 'voluntary' opening of ports by China
- 1903 December—Col. Francis Younghusband leads armed British mission to Lhasa
- 1904 8 February to 5 September 1905—Russo-Japanese War
- 1904 7 September—Convention Respecting Tibet (Britain)—opens Gartok and Gyantse as last treaty ports
- 1905 5 September—Treaty of Portsmouth (Russia, Japan)—brings Russo-Japanese War to an end
- 1905 24 April—'death of one thousand cuts' banned as a punishment
- 1905 22 December—Treaty Relating to Manchuria (Japan)—opens Aigun and 15 other towns and cities in Manchuria
- 1906 Chinese Regiment (Weihaiwei) disbanded
- 1907 Anglo-Chinese agreement to eliminate export of Indian opium to China over ten-year period
- 1909 4 September—Gando Convention identifies border between China and Korea
- 1911 5 October—Kowloon-Canton Railway opens
- 1911 10 October—uprising in Wuchang leads to revolution and overthrow of imperial system
- 1913 November—so-called Second Revolution instigated by Sun Yat-sen against Yuan Shikai
- 1914 Conference in Simla between Britain, Tibet and China aims at clarifying borders and Tibetan sovereignty, China refuses to sign resulting accord
- 1914 23 August—Japan declares war on Germany
- 1914 7 November—Japan occupies Tsingtao
- 1915 18 January—Japan issues the 'Twenty-One Demands' to China
- 1915 25 May—Treaty Respecting Shandong (Japan)—gives railway and other rights to Japan
- 1915 25 May—Treaty Respecting South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia (Japan)—extends lease of Port Arthur and Dairen, extends railway and other privileges
- 1917 14 August—China declares war on Central Powers
- 1919 18 January—Paris Peace Conference opens, denies China the return of former German-occupied territory
- 1919 4 May—anti-Japanese student demonstration in Peking, gives rise to May Fourth Movement
- 1921 22–31 July—First Congress of Chinese Communist Party held in Shanghai
- 1921 12 November—Washington Conference opens, former German-occupied territory returned to China
- 1922 4 February—Japan restores Shandong to Chinese control

Timeline

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|---|
| 1922 | 12 November to 6 February 1923—
Washington Disarmament Conference | 1930 | 1 October—Weihaiwei handed back to China
by Britain |
| 1923 | August—Presidential Mandate—the last to
open a city for foreign trade (Pengpu) | 1931 | 1 January— <i>likin</i> abolished |
| 1924 | 30 May—Sino-Soviet agreement establishes
diplomatic relations | 1931 | 18 September—Mukden Incident, a Japanese-
engineered trigger for the invasion of
Manchuria |
| 1925 | 30 May—Shanghai municipal police shoot
Chinese demonstrators, gives rise to massive
protests and boycotts across the country | 1932 | 9 March—puppet state of Manchukuo created |
| 1927 | 19 February—Chen-O'Malley Agreement
(Britain)—gives back British Hankow
Concession to China | 1937 | 7 July—Marco Polo Bridge Incident, prompts
commencement of full hostilities between
China and Japan |
| 1927 | 20 February—similar agreement gives back
British Kiukiang Concession | 1937 | 1 December—Central government estab-
lished at Chungking 'on a temporary basis' |
| 1929 | 15 November—British Concession at
Chinkiang handed back to China | 1941 | 8 December—commencement of Pacific War |
| 1930 | 17 September—Britain relinquishes Amoy
Concession | 1941 | 9 December—China declares war on Japan |
| | | 1943 | 11 January—Treaty for the Relinquishment of
Extra-Territorial Rights in China (British)—
formally brings treaty ports to an end |

TREATY PORTS AND OTHER FOREIGN STATIONS

(in alphabetical order)

	Status	Nationality	Year
Aigun (Aihun)	Open City	China	1905
Amoy (Xiamen)	Treaty Port	Britain	1842
Anking (Anqing)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1876
Anping	Customs Station	China	1865
Anshan	Industrial Centre	Japan	1918
Antung (Dandong)	Open City	China	1903
Bailuding (Bailu)	Hill Station for Chengtu		1915
Baku (Magong)	Military Station	France	1885
Banka (Wanhua)	Port for Tamsui		1862
Canton (Guangzhou)	Treaty Port	Britain	1842
Capsuimoon (Jishuimen/Ma Wan)	Opium Receiving Station		1820s
Changchun	Open City	China	1905
Changsha	Treaty Port	Japan	1903
Chefoo (Yantai)	Treaty Port	Britain	1858
Chengteh (Changde)	Open City	China	1908
Chengtu (Chengdu)	Consular Station	Britain	1902
Chihfeng (Chifeng)	Open City	China	1914
Chikungshan (Jigongshan)	Hill Station for Hankow		1908
Chimmo Bay (Shenhu Wan)	Opium Receiving Station		1820s
Chinchew Bay (Quanzhou Wan)	Opium Receiving Station		1820s
Chinghokow (Yidu)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1898
Chinkiang (Zhenjiang)	Treaty Port	Britain	1858
Chinpeng (Jinpeng)	Open City	China	1915
Chinwangtao (Qinhuangdao)	Open City	China	1898
Choutsun (Zhoucun)	Open City	China	1904
Chuitzuchien (Yanji)	Open City	China	1909
Chungking (Chongqing)	Treaty Port	Britain	1890
Chusan (Zhoushan)	Occupied Territory	Britain	1840
Cumsingmoon (Jinxingmen)	Opium Receiving Station		1820s
Dalny/Dairen (Dalian)	Leased Territory	Russia/Japan	1898
Dolonor (Duolun)	Open City	China	1914
Dosing (Yunan)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1902
Double Island (Mayu)	Customs Station	China	1860
Fakumen (Faku)	Open City	China	1905
Fengwangcheng (Fengcheng)	Open City	China	1905
Fongchuen (Fengkai)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Foochow (Fuzhou)	Treaty Port	Britain	1842
Fushun	Industrial Centre	Japan	1918
Gartok (Gar Yasha)	Treaty Port	Britain	1904
Gyantse (Gyangze)	Treaty Port	Britain	1904
Haichow (Haizhou)	Open City	China	1905

Treaty Ports and Other Foreign Stations

	Status	Nationality	Year
Hailar (Hulunber)	Open City	China	1905
Hami (Kumul)	Treaty Port	Russia	1881
Hangchow (Hangzhou)	Treaty Port	Japan	1895
Hankow (Hankou)	Treaty Port	Britain	1858
Harbin	Open City	China	1905
Hoihow (Haikou)	Port for Kiungchow		1876
Hokow (Hekou) (Red River)	Treaty Port	France	1896
Hokow (Hekou) (West River)	Port for Samshui		1897
Hong Kong (Xianggang)	Colony	Britain	1842
Howlik (Dinghu)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Hsiao Kulun (Kulun)	Open City	China	1915
Hsin Hsu (Xinxu)	Port for Kongkun Market		1897
Hsinho (Xinhu)	Port for Tientsin		1890s
Hsinmintun (Xinmin)	Open City	China	1905
Hsinti (Xindi)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1898
Hukow (Hukou)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1876
Hulutao (Huludao)	Open City	China	1914
Hunchun	Open City	China	1905
Hwangchow (Huangzhou)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1898
Hwangtzekang (Huangshigang)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1898
Ichang (Yichang)	Treaty Port	Britain	1876
Iching (Yizheng)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1898
Ichow (Linyi)	Open City	China	1915
Ili (Yining)	Treaty Port	Russia	1851
Jehol (Chengde)	Open City	China	1914
Kailuhsien (Kailu)	Open City	China	1915
Kaiyuan	Industrial Centre	Japan	1918
Kalgan (Zhangjiakou)	Treaty Port	Russia	1860
Kalgan (Zhangjiakou)	Open City	China	1914
Kashkar (Kashgar)	Treaty Port	Russia	1860
Kaukong (Jiujiang)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Keelung (Jilong)	Dependent Port of Tamsui		1861
Kiakhta	Treaty Port	Russia	1727
Kiangyin (Jiangyin)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1898
Kirin (Jilin)	Open City	China	1905
Kiukiang (Jiujiang)	Treaty Port	Britain	1858
Kiungchow (Qiongzhou)	Treaty Port	Britain	1858
Kobdo (Khovd)	Treaty Port	Russia	1881
Kongkun Market (Jianggen)	Treaty Port	Britain	1897
Kongmoon (Jiangmen)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1897
Kongmoon (Jiangmen)	Treaty Port	Britain	1902
Kowloon (Jiulong)	Customs Station	China	1886
Kucheng (Qitai)	Treaty Port	Russia	1881
Kueihuacheng (Hohot)	Open City	China	1914
Kulansu (Gulangyu)	International Settlement		1903
Kuliang (Guling)	Hill Station for Foochow		1886
Kuling (Lushan)	Hill Station for Kiukiang		1895
Kulow (Gulao)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Kumchuk (Ganzhu)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1897
Kungchulin (Gongzhulin)	Industrial Centre	Japan	1918
Kwangchowwan (Zhanjiang)	Leased Territory	France	1898

Treaty Ports and Other Foreign Stations

	Status	Nationality	Year
Kweilin (Guilin)	Consular Station	Britain	1942
Lampacao (Langbaigang)	Trading Station	Portugal	1500s
Lappa (Hengqin Dao)	Customs Station	China	1886
Liampo (Zhenhai)	Trading Station	Portugal	1533
Liaoyang	Open City	China	1905
Lichuan (Fuli)	Open City	China	1915
Lienyungchiang (Lianyungang)	Port for Haichow		1905
Linsi (Linxi)	Open City	China	1915
Lintin Island (Neilingding Dao)	Opium Receiving Station		1820s
Lintsingchow (Linqing)	Open City	China	1915
Lookong (Ligang)	Opium Receiving Station		1840s
Lotinghau (Nandukou)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1902
Luchingchiang (Lujinggang)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1898
Lukikow (Luxi)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1876
Lukpu (Lubu)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Lukto (Dahe)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Lungchingsun (Longjing)	Open City	China	1909
Lungchow (Longzhou)	Treaty Port	France	1887
Lungkow (Longkou)	Open City	China	1914
Macao (Aomen)	Occupied Territory	Portugal	1557
Macao (Aomen)	Colony	Portugal	1887
Mahning (Maningwei)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Manchouli (Manzhouli)	Open City	China	1905
Manhao	Treaty Port	France	1887
Manwyne (Manghuan)	Treaty Port	Britain	1894
Mengtse (Mengzi)	Treaty Port	France	1887
Mokanshan (Moganshan)	Hill Station for Hangchow		1890
Mukden (Shenyang)	Open City	China	1903
Namoa (Nanao)	Opium Receiving Station		1820s
Nanking (Nanjing)	Treaty Port	France	1858
Nanning	Open City	China	1899
Nantai	Port for Foochow		1842
Newchwang (Yingkou)	Treaty Port	Britain	1858
Ningpo (Ningbo)	Treaty Port	Britain	1842
Ninguta (Ning'an)	Open City	China	1905
Nipchu	Treaty Port	Russia	1689
Pagoda Island (Mawei)	Consular Station	Britain	1868
Paitsaokou (Baicaogou)	Open City	China	1909
Pakhoi (Beihai)	Treaty Port	Britain	1876
Paktauahau (Jiangshui)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1902
Peitaiho (Beidaihe)	Seaside Resort		1890s
Peking (Beijing)	Diplomatic Station	Britain	1858
Pengpu (Bengbu)	Open City	China	1923
Penhsihu (Benxi)	Industrial Centre	Japan	1918
Pingchuan (Pingquan)	Open City	China	1915
Pitzuwo (Pikou)	Customs Station	China	1915
Port Adams (Pulandian)	Customs Station	China	1910s
Port Arthur (Lüshun)	Leased Territory	Russia	1898
Port Hamilton (Geomun-do)	Occupied Territory	Britain	1885
Poshan (Boshan)	Open City	China	1915
Pukow (Pukou)	Customs Station	China	1915

Treaty Ports and Other Foreign Stations

	Status	Nationality	Year
Quemoy (Kinmen)	Trading Station	Portugal	1516
Saddle Islands (Shengsi)	Holiday Resort for Shanghai		1900s
Samshui (Sanshui)	Treaty Port	Britain	1897
Sanhsing (Yilan)	Open City	China	1905
Sanmun Bay (Sanmen Wan)	Naval Base (attempted)	Italy	1899
Santuo (Sandu)	Open City	China	1898
Shanghai	Treaty Port	Britain	1842
Shanhaikwan (Shanhaiguan)	Military Base	Japan	1894
Sharp Peak (Chuanshi)	Seaside Resort for Foochow		1880s
Shasi (Shashi)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1876
Shasi (Shashi)	Treaty Port	Japan	1895
Shiuhing (Zhaoqing)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1897
Soochow (Suzhou)	Treaty Port	Japan	1895
Ssupinghai (Siping)	Industrial Centre	Japan	1918
Suchow (Jiuquan)	Treaty Port	Russia	1881
Suifenh (Suifenhe)	Treaty Port	Japan	1895
Swatow (Shantou)	Treaty Port	Britain	1858
Szema (Simao)	Treaty Port	France	1895
Tachienlu (Kangding)	Consular Station	Britain	1913
Taheiho (Heihe)	Port for Aigun		1900
Taiwan-fu (Tainan)	Treaty Port	Britain	1858
Takhing (Deqing)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1897
Takow (Kaohsiung)	Dependent Port of Taiwan-fu		1864
Taku (Dagu)	Consular Station	Britain	1862
Talai (Dalai Nuori)	Open City	China	1915
Tamsui (Danshui)	Treaty Port	France	1858
Tangku (Tanggu)	Port for Tientsin		1865
Taonan	Open City	China	1914
Tarbagatai (Qoqek)	Treaty Port	Russia	1851
Tashihchao (Dashiqiao)	Industrial Centre	Japan	1918
Tatung (Datong)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1876
Tatungkow (Dadonggou)	Open City	China	1903
Tehchow (Dezhou)	Open City	China	1915
Tengyueh (Tengchong)	Treaty Port	Britain	1897
Thornton Haven (Haiyang Dao)	Naval Base	Russia	1899
Tiehling (Tieling)	Open City	China	1905
Tienhsingchiao (Tianxingqiao)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1898
Tientsin (Tianjin)	Treaty Port	Britain	1860
Tinghai (Dinghai)	Port for Chusan		1840
Toutaokou (Toudaogou)	Open City	China	1909
Tsinan (Jinan)	Open City	China	1904
Tsingtao (Qingdao)	Leased Territory	Germany	1898
Tsining (Jining)	Open City	China	1915
Tsitsihar (Qiqihar)	Open City	China	1905
Tunghing (Dongxing)	Consular Station	France	1895
Tungkiangtzu (Tongjiangkou)	Open City	China	1905
Turfan (Turpan)	Consular Station	Russia	1881
Twatutia (Dadaocheng)	Port for Tamsui		1862
Uliassutai (Uliastai)	Treaty Port	Russia	1881
Urga (Ulaanbaatar)	Treaty Port	Russia	1860
Urumchi (Urumqi)	Treaty Port	Russia	1881

Treaty Ports and Other Foreign Stations

	Status	Nationality	Year
Wafangtien (Wafangdian)	Industrial Centre	Japan	1918
Wanhsien (Wanxian)	Open City	China	1917
Weihaiwei (Weihai)	Leased Territory	Britain	1898
Weihsien (Weifang)	Open City	China	1904
Wenchow (Wenzhou)	Treaty Port	Britain	1876
Whampoa (Huangpu)	Port for Canton		1600s
Whampoa (Huangpu)	Consular Station	Britain	1843
Wingon (Yong'an)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Woosung (Wusong)	Port-of-Call	Germany	1880
Woosung (Wusong)	Open City	China	1899
Wuchanghsien (Wuchang)	Open City	China	1915
Wuchow (Wuzhou)	Treaty Port	Britain	1897
Wuhu	Treaty Port	Britain	1876
Wusueh (Wuxue)	Port-of-Call	Britain	1876
Yangkiokow (Yangkou)	Open City	China	1915
Yarkand (Yarkant)	Consular Station	Britain	1870
Yatung (Yadong)	Treaty Port	Britain	1893
Yenchow (Yanzhou)	Open City	China	1915
Yochow (Yueyang)	Open City	China	1898
Yuetsing (Yuecheng)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Yungki (Suixiang)	Landing Stage	Britain	1902
Yunnan-fu (Kunming)	Consular Station	Britain	1902
Zakow (Zhakou)	Port for Hangchow		1907

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

- Aberdeen, Earl of (1784–1860): British Foreign Secretary at outbreak of First Opium War, later Prime Minister 1852–55
- Alcock, Sir Rutherford (1809–97): British Consul in Foochow 1844, British Minister in Peking 1865–69
- Amherst, Earl (1773–1857): led an unsuccessful mission to Peking in 1816 aimed at improving trade relations with Britain
- Asiatic Petroleum Company: founded 1903 as a joint venture between the Shell and Royal Dutch oil companies, had a presence in many treaty ports
- Beresford, Lord Charles (1846–1919): British admiral and politician, led a commercial fact-finding mission to China 1898–99
- Bonham, Sir Samuel (1803–63): colonial administrator, Governor of Hong Kong 1848–54
- Bowring, Sir John (1792–1872): political economist, Governor of Hong Kong 1854–59
- Bruce, Sir Frederick (1814–67): British diplomat, Hong Kong Colonial Secretary 1844–46, Minister to China 1857–65, brother of Earl of Elgin
- Butterfield & Swire: established 1866 in Shanghai, became one of the leaders in the shipping industry in China
- Chen Yujen (a.k.a. Eugene Chen) (1878–1944): born in Trinidad, qualified as a lawyer, became Sun Yat-sen's Foreign Minister in the 1920s
- Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975): political and military leader, ally of Sun Yat-sen, China's de facto President 1928–48, President of Taiwan 1949–75
- Cixi, Empress Dowager (a.k.a. Tzu-hsi) (1835–1908): imperial concubine, rose to absolute power, successfully deflected the Boxer rebels against the foreign powers
- Crossman, Major William (1830–1901): officer in the Royal Engineers, in charge of British diplomatic and consular buildings in China 1866–69
- Davis, Sir John (1795–1890): joined East India Company in Canton 1813, became diplomat and noted Sinologist, Governor of Hong Kong 1844–48
- Deng Tingzhen, Admiral (a.k.a. Teng Ting-chen) (1776–1846): Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi 1836–40, hero of First Opium War
- East India Company: founded 1600 to promote English trade in the East, dominant supplier of Indian opium for China market, dissolved 1874
- Elgin, Earl of (1811–63): colonial administrator and diplomat, Commissioner to China 1857–59, ordered destruction of Summer Palace 1860
- Elliot, Captain Charles (1801–75): British naval officer, appointed to Napier's staff in Canton 1833, first administrator of Hong Kong 1841
- Feng Zicai (a.k.a. Feng Tse-choy) (1818–1903): bandit-turned-imperial-general at time of Sino-French War
- Fortune, Robert (1812–80): Scottish botanist, travelled extensively in China, introduced Chinese tea plants to India
- Gordon, Charles (1833–85): British army officer, served in China in 1860s, commanded Ever-Victorious Army 1863–64
- Guo Songtao (a.k.a. Kuo Sung-tao) (1818–91): diplomat and statesman, Minister to Britain and France 1877–79, supporter of railways in China

- Hart, Sir Robert (1835–1911): British consular official in China 1854–63, Inspector-General of Maritime Customs 1863–1911, knighted 1882
- Hennessy, Sir John Pope (1834–91): Governor of Hong Kong 1877–82, appointed first Chinese member of Legislative Council
- Jardine, William (1784–1843): Scottish physician, merchant and politician, traded in Canton 1820–39, co-founder of Jardine, Matheson & Co. 1832
- Koxinga (a.k.a. Zheng Chenggong) (1624–62): Ming loyalist, military leader, defeated Dutch in Formosa 1661, proclaimed himself King of Taiwan 1662
- Lay, George Tradescant (1800–1845): British missionary, diplomat, consul in Canton, Foochow, Amoy, first of many in his family to serve in China
- Li Hongzhang (a.k.a. Li Hung-chang) (1823–1901): military leader and statesman, promoter of modernization and industrialization
- Li Liejun (a.k.a. Li Lieh-chun) (1882–1946): military leader and anti-Qing revolutionary, opposed Yuan Shikai
- Lin Zexu (a.k.a. Lin Tse-hsu) (1785–1850): Qing official and scholar, sent to Canton 1839 to suppress opium, actions prompted First Opium War
- Lindsay, Hugh Hamilton (1802–81): official in East India Company in Canton, led a voyage up the China Coast 1832 looking for likely places of trade
- Little, Archibald (1838–1907): merchant and pioneer, came to China 1859, first to reach Chungking by steamer 1898
- Liu Mingchuan (a.k.a. Liu Ming-chuan) (1836–96): Qing official, resisted French attacks on Formosa 1884, Governor of Province of Taiwan 1885
- Macartney, Lord (1737–1806): colonial administrator and diplomat, led unsuccessful mission to Peking aimed at opening China to trade 1792–93
- MacDonald, Sir Claude (1852–1915): diplomat, British Minister to Peking 1896–1900, obtained leases of Weihaiwei and Hong Kong's New Territory
- Mao Zedong (a.k.a. Mao Tse-tung) (1893–1976): Communist revolutionary, founder of The People's Republic of China 1949
- Martin, Montgomery (1801–68): Hong Kong Colonial Treasurer 1844–45, famously reported in 1844 that Hong Kong had no prospects
- Matheson, James (1796–1878): Scottish merchant in India and Canton, co-founder of Jardine, Matheson & Co. 1832
- Napier, Lord (1786–1834): first Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China, lacked experience to be successful, died in post
- Palmerston, Lord (1784–1865): British politician and statesman, at various times Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister 1830–65
- Parkes, Sir Harry (1828–85): British diplomat, came to China 1841, his protests regarding the *Arrow* affair 1856 led to Second Opium War
- Plant, Cornell (1866–1921): mariner and river cartographer, came to China 1900, pioneered successful use of steamships on Upper Yangtze
- Pottinger, Sir Henry (1789–1856): soldier and colonial administrator, first Governor of Hong Kong 1841–44
- Qishan (a.k.a. Keyshen) (1786–1854): Manchu Qing official, replaced Lin Zexu 1840, negotiated abortive end to First Opium War
- Qiyong (a.k.a. Keying) (1787–1858): Qing statesman, negotiated Treaty of Nanking 1842, not so successful in seeking end to Second Opium War
- Salisbury, Lord (1830–1903): four times British Foreign Secretary between 1878 and 1900, three times Prime Minister between 1885 and 1902
- Shen Baozhen (a.k.a. Shen Pao-chen) (1820–79): in Self-Strengthening Movement, Director of Foochow Arsenal 1866, Lin Zexu's brother-in-law

Stanley, Lord (1799–1869): statesman, politician, British Colonial Secretary 1841–44, three times Prime Minister between 1852 and 1868

Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925): Chinese revolutionary and first President of the Republic of China, co-founder of Kuomintang

Tang Jingxing (a.k.a. Tong King-sing) (1832–92): Jardines' comprador 1863–73, manager of China Merchants and Kaiping Mines 1873–84

Tower, Sir Reginald (1860–1939): Secretary to British Legation in Peking 1900–1901, conducted review of British consular requirements in China

Wade, Sir Thomas (1818–95): diplomat, Sinologist, produced Chinese dictionary 1859 that became basis of Wade-Giles system of romanization

Walton, Sir Joseph (1849–1923): politician and industrialist, travelled widely in China 1899–1900 to report on commercial and political situation

Wu Peifu (a.k.a. Wu Pei-fu) (1874–1939): Wuhan warlord 1916–27, referred to as 'one of the few better despots'

Ye Mingchen (a.k.a. Yeh Ming-chen) (1807–59): refused to allow British to enter Canton after First Opium War, Viceroy of Two Guangs 1852–58

Yuan Shikai (a.k.a. Yuan Shi-kai) (1859–1916): general and politician, President of China 1912–16, failed in attempt to become emperor 1915

Zhou Enlai (a.k.a. Chou En-lai) (1898–1976): close supporter of Mao Zedong, first Premier of The People's Republic of China 1949–76

Zuo Zongtang (a.k.a. Tso Tsung-tang) (1812–85): statesman and soldier, leader of the Self-Strengthening Movement and rival of Li Hongzhang

Emperors of China who feature in the text, with their years of reign:

Ming Dynasty

- Hongwu (1368–98): first Ming emperor
- Yongle (1402–24): took throne by force from teenaged nephew
- Jiaqing (1521–66): evicted Portuguese from Ningbo

Qing Dynasty

- Kangxi (1661–1722): longest-ruling emperor, brought stability, wealth
- Yongzheng (1722–35): hard-working, despotic but efficient ruler
- Qianlong (1735–96): period of gathering storm from within and without
- Jiaqing (1796–1820): attempted to eradicate opium smuggling
- Daoguang (1820–50): First Opium War and Taiping Rebellion
- Xianfeng (1850–61): Second Opium War and more rebellions
- Tongzhi (1861–75): ruled by his mother, Empress Dowager Cixi
- Guangxu (1875–1908): attempted reforms, but overruled by Cixi
- Xuantong (1908–11): last emperor, became a puppet of Japan

INTRODUCTION

History matters in modern China. Not only is the past a different country, it is also replete with unfinished business. From the perspective of the Chinese, the period 1842 to 1943 was a century of humiliation so severe that it is charted in a Dictionary of National Humiliation, four centimetres thick.¹ But this sense of humiliation goes back much further. For much of the previous thousand years, China was ruled by people who originated from outside its borders: the Jin (from present-day Russia), Yuan (Mongol) and Qing (Manchu) dynasties.² In the story told in this volume the major actors are nation-states, and the themes interwoven over the 101 years of the treaty ports' existence are complex, volatile and continue to colour China's relationship with the rest of the world.

For example, one of many defining moments in the history of this period was China's defeat by Japan (a former tributary) in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. This was concluded by the Treaty of Shimonoseki and the payment of 230 million *taels* of silver in reparation, and the cession of Taiwan to Japan; the victorious Japanese also annexed the Diaoyu Islands, known by them as the Senkaku Islands. These territorial losses continue to resonate in China's 'foreign' (or, as China sees it, 'domestic') policy. China marked the 120th anniversary of this defeat by a campaign of exoneration fronted by *The People's Daily* and *The PLA Daily* firmly relocating blame from the military forces, especially the Northern (Beiyang) Fleet, to the antiquated Qing government and their unwillingness to invest in sufficient firepower.³ These are old wounds but they are still open and consequently powerfully affect relations between today's nation-states. This book provides comprehensive coverage of the interaction between China and a multiplicity of foreign powers within the global context of 101 years of radical change in political structures, power

sources, technology, industry, communication, transport, agriculture and population size.

FIRST ENCOUNTERS

When two powerful nations initially confront each other, both equally convinced of their own moral, cultural and national superiority, the chances of it ending in tears are very high. When one, but not the other, of those nations has been the cradle of the Industrial Revolution and has an active colonial track record then the outcome, while not desirable, is inevitable.⁴ Thus it was with China and Britain. It was the expansion of trade and commerce internationally that was a key factor in the economic dynamism of the 19th century. What made it different from the 18th century, also notable for global commerce, was that it expanded to include not only luxury goods but everyday items; in China's case, not only silk and fine porcelain but pig bristles and wax.

The Western powers tended to believe that trading was as natural a human function as breathing and assumed the right to trade with whomsoever they pleased. China did not share this view. Traditionally, the mandarins who ruled China perceived commerce as an activity undertaken by people of a lower, unrefined kind—be they Chinese or foreign.⁵ Indeed, they could cite evidence to support their view. The behaviour of at least some merchants—their unreasonable demands and their involvement in the illegal opium trade—was a source of frequent 'headaches' for consular staff.⁶ There were most certainly successful Chinese merchants but it was the ranking bureaucrats who held the keys that would open the doors to trade with foreigners. Consequently, engaging in international commercial activity with China was never going to be straightforward.

The first Europeans to establish a commercial presence in China were the Portuguese. They visited several places along the coast in the early 16th century, including Ningpo (Ningbo), before settling on Macao in 1557. The Chinese considered them no better than pirates, but tolerated them, believing they would deter other foreign predators. By the 17th century the Dutch were easing Portugal out of its colonial possessions. The Portuguese retained Macao, forcing the Dutch to go along the coast to Amoy (Xiamen), before briefly colonizing the island of Formosa (Taiwan). The Portuguese and Dutch transported China's most prized products—tea, porcelain and silk—to Europe, to be sold at great profit. In the 18th century the British followed suit.

By the early 19th century a wealthy, resurgent Britain was championing free trade. British merchants in Canton (Guangzhou) were unhappy with the system of Chinese customs duties, the corruption of the tax-collecting mandarins, and the rule that all foreign merchants leave Canton at the end of the trading season. Furthermore, the British government became concerned at the outflow of silver needed to pay for its imports from China. The Chinese wanted nothing the West had to offer and accepted only silver in payment for their exports. During the late 1700s opium was identified as something that the Chinese might take instead of silver, and foreign merchants started to import it in increasing quantities. The drug, already popular, became much more so, and immensely profitable for those who dealt in it. Dozens of Imperial Edicts were issued banning its import—yet volume soared. In turn, British chambers of commerce increased their pressure for free trade in all commodities, including that which the Chinese government had declared to be contraband. The Daoguang Emperor was occupied with uprisings, rebellions and natural disasters, leaving little time for complaints emanating from Canton. Britain's newfound world dominance meant it was not accustomed to having its demands ignored. Its default reaction to China was confrontation.

The British were not seeking increased territory. Britain's administrative capacity was already stretched

by India and the other parts of the world where the Union Jack flew. Avoiding the enormous expense of imperial administration,⁷ Britain's primary goal was an open, predictable and stable trading system, which it considered a natural right. A military victory was a means to that end. When the British fleet threatened Nanking (Nanjing) in 1842, the resulting treaty settled a number of issues, in British eyes, and ceded to Britain the island of Hong Kong in perpetuity, at the time not considered much of a prize.

Regarding his country's aims in China, Lord Aberdeen, British Foreign Secretary, said in 1841: 'We seek no exclusive advantages, and demand nothing that we shall not willingly see enjoyed by the subjects of other nations.'⁸ However, having opened China to their merchants, at some cost to themselves, the British feared that other nations would now form their own, more advantageous agreements with China and usurp Britain's position. Accordingly, the 1843 Supplementary Treaty of the Bogue—the agreement that added practical details to the 1842 Treaty of Nanking—included a safeguard. 'Should the Emperor', stated the agreement, 'be pleased to grant additional privileges or immunities' to any other foreign countries, the same would automatically be extended to and enjoyed by British subjects.⁹ This simple and convenient (for the foreign parties) device, known as the Most Favoured



The 1842 Treaty of Nanking (Nanjing), showing the signatures of Sir Henry Pottinger and Chinese Imperial Commissioner Qiying. Reprinted with permission by the National Archives.

Nation principle, shaped all treaties, both British and otherwise, for the next hundred years. More than 20 nations would have treaties with China, and thereby become 'Treaty Powers', in a list that was ultimately to include Peru and the Congo Free State.

For our purposes, the most important outcome of the Treaty of Nanking was the opening of five cities as places for British merchants to live and conduct business: Amoy, Canton, Foochow (Fuzhou), Ningpo and Shanghai. Many more 'treaty ports' would be created by later treaties.

Britain felt its initial aims had been achieved by the establishment of the five treaty ports, plus the colony of Hong Kong, from where it could manage trade with China. The treaty allowed British subjects and their families to reside at the five places, to pursue mercantile interests, 'without molestation or restraint'. Britain was also permitted to install consular officers at each port. They were the conduits between the Chinese authorities and the merchants, responsible for seeing that the duties and other dues of the Chinese government were paid. However, what followed can hardly be said to have measured up to British expectations. The colony of Hong Kong was ridiculed in the British Parliament. Of the five open ports, one (Canton) remained closed, ultimately giving rise to a second war, and two (Foochow and Ningpo) were so disappointing that Britain tried exchanging them for somewhere better, like unsuitable birthday gifts. (The Chinese refused, explaining it would make a complete mockery of the treaty.) Amoy had a slow start and Shanghai, in time becoming bigger than all the others combined, was far smaller than many nearby cities.

The treaty's focus was not on the government of the nascent foreign settlements. Little was anticipated beyond a small gathering of merchants and their godowns at each place. In time, municipal councils would be established at the major ports, but initially each was left to develop individually. Two forms of foreign area came to be recognized—the concession and the settlement. A concession arose where the foreign government identified an area of land for its nationals and leased it in its own name. The area

was cleared, roads were laid out and individual lots auctioned off, each purchaser taking a lease from the foreign government concerned. A settlement was also a discrete area for foreign occupation, but the title remained with the individual Chinese owners; the foreign merchants had to negotiate their own leases or purchases. Many of the smaller treaty ports had neither a concession nor a settlement. Even where one did exist, it was neither intended nor required that all foreigners live there. That they generally did so was more for reasons of mutual protection and support.

A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION

Chinese people felt a certain ambivalence about foreigners living permanently in China. Foreigners embodied the country's political and military weakness. Yet, on the other hand, they created trading and employment opportunities and later on a certain freedom in the areas they controlled. Article II of the English version of the Treaty of Nanking stated that British merchants were 'allowed to reside' at the five places named. In the Chinese version the relevant clause translates as permitting British subjects 'to dwell temporarily at the river's mouth of the five coastal cities'.¹⁰ With the exception of Amoy, all the cities listed in the treaty were indeed on a river and each had a recognized port that was some way downstream from the city. The British claim that the treaty gave them unrestricted city access in each case appalled the Chinese. A second war had to be fought before the matter of entry to Canton was finally resolved.

The other four cities grudgingly allowed foreign residence within their walls. In Amoy and Foochow the British Consuls took up residence inside the city despite the inconvenience, mostly to demonstrate they could. More sympathetic elements of British society could understand Chinese reluctance, given colonial conduct in other parts of the world.¹¹ Beneath it all there were major differences in understanding about the commercial aspects of the treaty, exacerbated by China's unwilling engagement and profound mistrust. The primary purpose for the British was removing impediments to developing trade. For the Chinese, the treaty simply gave certain

defined rights and immunities to foreign merchants, the 'least worst' view. What happened to imported goods, for example, once they left the hands of the British merchant the Chinese considered to be their business alone. This conflict of principles, and the imbalance in power, was to underlie many of the future trade-related difficulties.

The opening of the first five treaty ports resulted in increased prosperity locally. Despite this, the foreign powers were aware they were unwelcome. Nothing fundamental had changed. China was too big to be influenced by 'a marginal sea-frontier contact with foreign ideas'.¹² Soon the war of 1839–42 seemed too brief and the battles too localized to have impressed Peking (Beijing).¹³ A major unspoken factor was opium. Banned by China, opium was the most profitable import for foreign merchants on the China Coast. Chinese officials also amassed enormous fortunes by averting their eyes instead of implementing Imperial proclamations. The Imperial government was also a beneficiary of 'squeeze'. British India needed the revenue from opium, China's tea exports could not be bought without it, it was illegal to import it, the treaty did not mention it—and the opium trade went from strength to strength. Banned yet endemic, this curious state of affairs could not continue. The peace generated by the Treaty of Nanking increasingly seemed but an armistice.¹⁴

Thus there was an inevitability to the Second Opium War of 1856–60, but now there was another factor. The Americans' 1844 Treaty of Wanghia (Wangxia) included a clause allowing for automatic revision after twelve years—in 1856. Applying the Most Favoured Nation principle, Britain started preparing for a revision of its treaty, in 1854. Negotiations over such matters as clarifying inland duty arrangements and opening China further took place with senior mandarins, none of whom believed that increased foreign trade was beneficial to China. Trade and merchants were despised in the traditional Chinese hierarchy, colouring the negotiators' attitudes towards a state that raised the activity to a national priority.¹⁵ It was not helped by the tendency

of every foreigner in China 'to wrap themselves in their national flag'.¹⁶

The 1858 treaties of Tientsin (Tianjin) listed a further ten towns and cities to be opened as treaty ports, and the 1860 Treaty of Peking added Tientsin itself to the list. The new coastal ports were Kiungchow (Qiongzhou), Swatow (Shantou), Chefoo (Yantai) and Newchwang (Yingkou). In addition more were added along the Yangtze River: Chinkiang (Zhenjiang), Nanking, Kiukiang (Jiujiang) and Hankow (Hankou); the foreign powers now understood that access to the empire's principal river was essential to increasing foreign trade. On Formosa, Taiwan-fu (Tainan) and Tamsui (Danshui) were opened. However, as with the initial five ports, many of the hopes that attended the next eleven were to be dashed.

Most of the new treaty ports saw an influx of foreign merchants, including the major China Coast firms of Jardines, Dents and Russells, as well as independent traders. They were all hoping to amass fortunes by exporting tea, silk and porcelain, and importing opium and cotton and woollen goods. Some succeeded, becoming very wealthy before returning home to comfortable retirement. However, it soon became apparent that the needs of the perceived hundreds of millions of customers were being well served by Chinese merchants and there was no commercial vacuum that the foreigners could fill. Besides, the Chinese thought their own products were superior to imports; in most cases they were cheaper.

It was only in the early years of the 20th century the foreign powers realized continually opening treaty ports and installing a consul in each was unnecessary. The considerable expense was one factor. More importantly, the existing Chinese commercial networks could facilitate the import and distribution of foreign goods. Although the treaty port system was to last another 40 years, the last to be opened in China proper by a foreign power other than Japan was Kongmoon (Jiangmen), by Britain in 1902. As we shall see, the Japanese increased the number significantly in the next few years.



Two maps showing the proliferation of treaty ports and other open cities between 1858 and 1900

UNEQUAL TREATIES?

The various agreements giving rise to the Treaty Port Era are often described, by Chinese and Western writers alike, as ‘unequal treaties’. The primary objective of Western powers in China was not colonization but trade, a goal possible to achieve through negotiation. In Chinese eyes negotiations could only proceed if the foreigners first acknowledged China as the superior party. China was forced, through armed conflict, to abandon this position (although never the belief). The Chinese perceived the resulting treaties, with their territorial losses, indemnities and erosion of sovereignty, as the cause of their misfortunes. Having repeatedly stated that they had no use for foreigners or their products, they were forced to accept them by overwhelming military force. In the face of a population deeply hostile to foreigners, damage containment became the only alternative for the Chinese government. Foreigners ‘could best be held at bay by giving them clearly defined areas of residence and negotiating only through their community leaders.’¹⁷

Content with their initial gains Britain and France were focused on ensuring the agreed treaties were upheld, not on increasing territory. Indeed, following the Second Opium War the first military act by the Allies after withdrawing from Peking was to assist the empire’s defeat of its internal enemies, the Taiping rebels.¹⁸ Britain knew ensuring China’s peace and stability was the most productive way of protecting

British commercial interests, meanwhile encouraging China to enforce British treaty rights.¹⁹

It is not within the scope of this volume to describe the foreign missionary experience in China. Missionaries were often unwelcome, particularly in the interior, and in times of crisis such feelings were extended to foreign merchants.²⁰ One of the merchants’ chief concerns was taxation. Later treaties attempted to clarify further the impact of domestic duties (*likin*) on foreign trade, and to extend exemptions from Chinese laws to activities in the interior; both are discussed further below. The most radical treaty was one that was never ratified. In the context of the allowed-for review of the 1858 Treaty of Tientsin, British Minister in Peking Sir Rutherford Alcock drafted what became known as the Alcock Convention. Both China and Britain saw the revision as an opportunity to address existing problems, generating huge amounts of correspondence and memorials. The new treaty, signed on 23 October 1869, was the first welcomed by China.²¹ Alcock had drafted it as an agreement between equals. For example, the convention stated British subjects would no longer claim privileges under the Most Favoured Nation principle without honouring conditions imposed on the other nation.²² However, British merchants in Hong Kong and Britain claimed that too much was being given to China and the British government refused to ratify the treaty.

Having itself been forced to ratify treaties in the past, the Chinese government was dumbfounded that one so mutually beneficial could be turned down in London.²³ China was forced to conclude that, ultimately, its interests would always be secondary to those of the foreigner. The effect on relations was disastrous. Within a year there were many anti-foreign riots, particularly in Tientsin.²⁴ These affected all foreign powers, particularly the French as the leading champion of missionary activities.

Lacking significant commercial interests, France's ambition in China involved extending its colonial influence beyond the French Indo-China border. Victory in a war with China in 1884–85 consolidated France's position in what is today Vietnam, and raised British anxieties concerning Britain's interests in Burma. Britain wanted to promote trade over the Burma–China border, and consequently in south-west China itself. France, on the other hand, made repeated threats to seize Chinese territory. The opening, at British insistence, of the West River to foreign trade in 1897 stemmed French ambitions.

The other principal foreign powers that were active in China in the latter part of the 19th century were America and Russia—and they also had very different aims. The Americans, adopting the mantle of reluctant colonialists, distanced themselves from anything resembling territorial gain. The short-lived American Concessions in Shanghai and Tientsin were the only real exceptions. Instead, American merchants contented themselves with participating as a major force in the treaty ports' commercial activity. Territorial expansion certainly topped Russia's Chinese agenda. When necessary, Russia presented itself to China as a fellow Asiatic nation, distinct from the individualistic Western powers, and empathetic to the Asian way of thinking.²⁵ Whether or not the Chinese were deceived, they lost more land to Russia than to any other power. While China was distracted by the concurrent Second Opium War and Taiping Rebellion, Russia took all the Chinese territory north of the Amur (Heilong) River in the 1858 Treaty of Aigun (Aihun). Further Russian

gains are dealt with elsewhere in this volume.* It is puzzling that China should have felt the cession of Hong Kong and Kowloon so deeply over the decades, yet complained so little about the loss of almost two million square kilometres of territory to Russia. The present size of China is approximately ten million square kilometres.

Britain started the treaty port system and was initially the dominant foreign power in China. In the following century the baton passed to Japan, which reversed the British position, being more interested in territory than trade. As early as 1843, before any other Western nation concluded a treaty with China, Britain recognized that France and America would insist on equal footing. 'History teaches us', said the *Colonial Gazette*, 'that interference in the domestic affairs of other nations is usually done out of dread at what a neighbour might do if we fail to interfere. For the French and American diplomats, our mere presence in China will be an irresistible inducement to involve themselves in the intrigues of the country and while they are busy in the south, we may be sure Russia will not be idle in the north.'²⁶ This prediction was correct, although Britain's dominance was to last well into the 20th century.

Open cities numbered 16 in 1858, growing to 58 by the turn of the century and doubling before the end of the Treaty Port Era in 1943. China's internal disturbances and inability to adapt to changing circumstances meant foreign powers continued their semi-colonial practices.

PARTITIONING THE EMPIRE

A succession of wars had left China with its fleet annihilated, its army defeated and crippling war indemnities to be paid. Yet the country's leaders lacked the knowledge and resolve to cure its ills. Any changes taking place were characterized more 'by the movement . . . of the hour-hand than of the minute-hand of a watch'.²⁷ In 1841, only Britain had been able to impose its will on China. Half a century later, Britain had been joined by France, Germany, Japan and Russia. All five, and to some extent America,

* See entry on Aigun.



were planning spheres of influence or domination of large areas of China. They and others acted together in 1900 when the Boxers besieged their nationals in Peking. However, there were such differences of aim, opinion and culture between them they were unable to use their dominance to further impinge on Chinese territory.

In 1900 only Japan and Russia seemed capable of taking over all of China. The Western powers trusted neither to do so without damaging wider international interests. Without its problems in South Africa and India, Britain might have been interested, but only with American assistance.²⁸ And American action was constrained by its 'Monroe Doctrine', which forbade participation in the oppression of a foreign government. The outcome which seemed certain to outsiders was the implosion and partition of the Chinese Empire.²⁹

All this came to nothing, but seen through the eyes of contemporary observers things could only end badly. Ten years after the French defeat of China in 1885, a heavier blow was inflicted by Japan. Attempts at modernization, described below, did not produce a militarily stronger China. Money was spent on new warships, guns and fortifications, but the nation lacked the ability to use them effectively. The Japanese victory made the imminent collapse of the empire even more likely. Between 1895 and 1901 eight nations claimed concessions in Hankow

and Tientsin. However, Germany had more ambitious plans. Having occupied Kiaochow (Jiaozhou) Bay on a spurious pretext in late 1897, the Germans demanded and received a lease of 500 square kilometres of adjacent territory the following March. This prompted Russia to follow three weeks later by leasing Port Arthur (Lüshun) and Talienwan (Dalianwan). Not to be left out France forced a lease of Kwangchowwan (Zhanjiang) in April, and Britain took over Weihaiwei (Weihai) from the Japanese in May. The rapid chain reaction culminated in Britain leasing the New Territory in June 1898, thus adding to its colony in Hong Kong.

In just over three months, half a dozen physically small but psychologically enormous pieces of China had been taken into foreign ownership. The first grab, by Germany, prompted largely congratulatory press



A very graphic contemporary image of the foreign powers preparing to tear up China: 'Dissection of the Chinese monster. The Cossack to John Bull: You can look, but don't touch!' Courtesy of Chester Cheng.

coverage, cheering others on to do likewise instead of wasting time on fruitless diplomacy. The apparent inevitability of the collapse of the empire also encouraged Chinese rebels. The Boxers emerged as the most powerful, in 1900 looking as though they would overthrow the Qing dynasty. A brilliant sleight of hand by Cixi, the Empress Dowager, redirected the rebels' fury against the foreigners, away from herself and her family. The foreign powers buried their differences and ensured the Boxers' defeat; in the final analysis, the ruling dynasty was seen as the least of the available evils.

By 1900 there was a new class of foreign-controlled entity—the leased territory. The lessee exercised sovereignty for the duration of the lease, and governed according to its own laws. Rent was paid, usually nominal, and the area was outside the Chinese customs net. It would be well at this stage to review the other classes of foreign presence. First was the colony, a piece of China ceded in perpetuity to a foreign power. There was initially only one—Hong Kong, created in 1842. Macao, settled by Portugal in 1557, was only formally recognized as Portuguese territory in 1887. Colonies were under the total control and jurisdiction of the foreign power.

Next were the treaty ports, numbering around 50 by 1900. These were centred on, or near, Chinese towns and cities agreed to be opened to foreign trade and residence by individual treaties between China and foreign powers. A clear and understood set of rules, developed in successive treaties, was applied to facilitate and control foreign trade. In each case the boundary of the treaty port was defined, and within that limit the rules of the Imperial Maritime Customs determined the amount of import and export duty to be paid. The Treaty Powers could install consuls at each treaty port with jurisdiction over their respective citizens. Although a requirement since the 1876 Chefoo Agreement, not all treaty ports had a defined area for foreign settlement; some were too insignificant. In others, ironically including Chefoo itself, it proved too difficult to establish a discrete foreign area. Where this was done it was either a concession or a settlement. Within concessions, where the land

had been acquired en bloc by the foreign government, Chinese were not allowed to become tenants.

In a number of cases, detailed inspection by the newly arrived foreigners suggested that the wrong place had been mentioned in the treaty. Reflecting the attitudes of the time, the foreign parties moved into what they considered to be the more suitable location, assuming the place mentioned in the treaty was a mistake. Examples are Chefoo, where the treaty stipulated Tangchow (Penglai), 70 kilometres away; Hoihow (Haikou), where Kiungchow was the official treaty port; Newchwang, where the named place was impossible to reach; and Swatow, chosen as more suitable than the official Chaochow-fu (Chaozhou). The territorial limits of some treaty ports were never resolved satisfactorily, despite strenuous diplomatic efforts.

In Shanghai a different sort of entity emerged—the international settlement, created in 1863 when the former British and American settlements combined. Although predominantly British, no single nation controlled the Shanghai International Settlement. Its governing body, the Shanghai Municipal Council, formed its own set of regulations and its members were drawn from the foreign community at large. It remained unique until 1902 when another was created on Kulangsu (Gulangyu), the residential island off Amoy.

The treaty port concept had become formulaic, the first few having set a pattern and structure and created expectations. This was then replicated, but starting in 1898 a quasi-treaty port started to appear. In an attempt to halt the foreign powers' acquisitive tendencies, by then running rampant, the Imperial government declared certain towns and cities open for foreign trade and residence on much the same lines as treaty ports. The absence of a treaty per se meant they could not be described as treaty ports; 'open city' was used instead. These 'voluntary' openings fell into two broad categories. First were cases where the government—Imperial and later Republican—opened ports to prevent a foreign power doing so, which would have made Chinese control impossible. Woosung (Wusong) was an example, opened by

Imperial Decree in 1898 albeit coerced by Britain, which feared a rival establishing itself at the gateway to Shanghai. Tsinan (Jinan) was another, its opening in 1904 prompted by Japan as a counter to German encroachment. A foreign residential quarter was usually provided in these quasi-treaty ports, where Chinese people also resided, but the municipal governments that developed were strictly in the hands of the Chinese.

The second type of 'voluntary' opening was based on treaties, and makes precision about the total number of treaty ports difficult. The 1842 Treaty of Nanking permitted British subjects to reside at the five places listed. Later treaties permitted foreign subjects to enjoy the same privileges and immunities as at previously opened ports. Different wording was used in the Japanese 1903 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. Under this treaty Changsha was opened as a treaty port, just like all the others, but the same clause added that Mukden (Shenyang) and Tatungkow (Dadonggou) 'will be opened by China itself' as places of international residence and trade. The parallel American treaty used the same wording regarding Mukden and Antung (Dandong). Too much should not be read into this subtle change in terminology, but I have taken 1903 as a watershed—from this point onwards no new treaty ports were created, in the classic sense of the term, in China proper.[†] Instead Japan was forcing China to open new ports unilaterally; Chinese refusal to do so was never an option. Japan opened more than 50 cities, towns and even villages in China's north-east, mainly Manchuria, changing the concept of a treaty port from a commercial entity to a purely political one. Clearly these were steps towards the ultimate goal of colonial control.

Foreign expansion away from the coast and into China's great river systems produced other types of presence—'ports-of-call' and 'landing stages'. The first ports-of-call were created by the 1876 Chefoo Agreement. Six intermediate towns along the Yangtze were identified, allowing foreign steamers to

pick up and set down passengers and cargo. The need arose because foreign steamers were only allowed to sail from one treaty port to another. On China's long rivers this was not only an inconvenience, but restricted rather than promoted trade. Further treaties in 1897, 1898 and 1902 created 15 more ports-of-call on the Yangtze and West rivers as well as 10 landing stages on the latter, for passengers only. Foreign merchant establishments were not permitted at any of these places. Nonetheless, the regular appearance of their steamers made the foreign presence obvious.

Apart from missionary stations, not within the scope of this book, there was another entity partly within foreign jurisdiction. Hot and humid summers in the southern and Yangtze treaty ports prompted Westerners to take to the hills and northern beaches to cool off. A number of hill stations and resorts developed, such as Kuling (Lushan) and Peitaiho (Beidaihe). Many of them were governed by municipal councils, like the larger treaty ports.

In total, more than 250 places, including consular, diplomatic and customs stations, can be identified in China as having had foreign non-missionary presence or jurisdiction before the end of the Treaty Port Era in 1943.

TREATY PORTS AND CHINA'S MODERNIZATION

One of the principal and longest-lasting agents of modernization derived from the treaty port system was the complete reorganization of the collection of duty on imports and exports. The foreign-managed Imperial Maritime Customs service appeared almost by accident in 1854, thanks to the Taiping rebels. When the Shanghai Custom House fell into rebel hands, the foreign merchants toyed momentarily with the happy prospect of paying no duty. Cooler heads prevailed. The British, French and American consuls agreed that the dues would be collected by one of their representatives and passed to Peking. It had been the previous practice that deductions were made by each official through whose hands the revenue passed. Thus amounts eventually submitted

[†] An Anglo-Tibetan convention in 1904 opened two places in Tibet as the last treaty ports.

were but a small percentage of those collected. Never before had the full amount been passed on with the underlying records fully auditable. The service is described in more detail below.

Foreign merchants repeatedly found they could not compete with existing trading patterns. What they did introduce, from their bases in the treaty ports, were different ways of facilitating that trade, although some early examples were spectacular failures. Attempts to erect a telegraph line in 1875 from Foochow to Amoy were thwarted when the poles were dug up by angry locals claiming an interference with their *fengshui*. A foreign company built China's first railway in 1876 at Woosung, against the direct orders of the local *taotai*. Accordingly, it was closed at the first available opportunity.

China repeatedly demonstrated it had fallen behind in engineering and technology, particularly regarding its military capability. Britain's active role in the suppression of piracy had removed some of the urgency for naval development.³⁰ The generous budget awarded in 1885 to rebuilding the navy, following the destruction of half of it by France, was diverted to rebuild the Summer Palace.³¹ The challenge for forward-thinking Chinese leaders was how to balance the need to modernize against the desire to preserve national integrity and identity. Chinese officials opposed innovations likely to upset the time-honoured social balance of the country.³² Confucianism exercised a very strong hold on how Chinese people, particularly the powerful scholar-officials, considered their country should be run—and telegraphs, railways and steamships were not part of it. In recent years, precisely these elements have been identified as facilitating the revolution in communications that made the development and diversification of global capitalism possible.³³

China's early efforts at industrialization have been described as 'isolated cases rather than an epidemic'.³⁴ The foreign occupation of the capital in 1860 prompted the creation of modern dockyards and armament factories to prepare for future attacks: the Kiangnan (Jiangnan) Arsenal in Shanghai in 1865 and the Foochow Arsenal in 1866. These initiatives

owed more to the ability and foresight of provincial governors than to the Imperial Court.³⁵ Military industries were seen as the first priority to try to ensure the long-term security of the state. Only then could attention and resources be devoted to other areas.³⁶

The first of these was shipping. Long used to junks as the only means of transporting their goods along coasts and rivers, local traders could see advantages in the size, speed, efficiency and economy of foreign steamships serving the treaty ports. Chinese merchants started investing in steamers in the 1860s; about one-third of the capital of the first three foreign operators formed in Shanghai, between 1862 and 1868, was subscribed by Chinese.³⁷ By 1872 China had its own, very successful, steamship company, the China Merchants Steam Navigation Co., with Chinese crew and largely British officers. Its founding was partly precipitated by the actions of the Taiping rebels. The Grand Canal was the traditional route for the shipment of tribute rice to the capital. When this was blocked by rebel activity, a number of senior Chinese officials, notably Li Hongzhang, investigated using steamers to take the rice along the coast.³⁸ Within a few years the new ship operator was born.³⁹ The vessels of American firm Russell & Co. enjoyed a leading role in the coast and river trade, but faced with increasing competition from China Merchants, and British newcomer Butterfield & Swire, Russells sold their entire fleet to the Chinese company in December 1876. China Merchants emerged as the biggest ship operator in China.

The new company was promoted and supervised by the Chinese government but funded and managed by merchants, under a system known as *kuan-tu shang-pan* (government-supervised merchant enterprise). More companies were formed along similar lines. The government examined the relative merits of each proposal, controlled the central planning and left the merchants both to bear the bulk of the financial risk and keep the majority of the profits. The Kaiping Mining Co. (1877) and the Shanghai Cotton Cloth Mill (1878) are other early examples. These enterprises can be linked to the Self-Strengthening



Li Hongzhang in 1896. Source: Mrs Archibald Little, *Li Hung-chang, His Life and Times* (London: Cassell & Co., 1903), frontispiece.

Movement, of which Li Hongzhang, Zuo Zongtang, Zeng Guofan and Sheng Xuanhuai were among the principal proponents. It was Li who memorialized the throne in 1872 in support of *kuan-tu shang-pan*.⁴⁰ Li had risen through the ranks as a provincial government official and military leader, becoming one of the major forces for reform in his country. He is recorded as saying: 'If one is stationed in Shanghai for some time and yet unable to learn from the foreigners' strengths, there will be many regrets.'⁴¹ †

Chinese commercial ideas and trade practices would have developed without Western input, although perhaps on different lines, but the presence of an alien culture accelerated change. Indeed, the emergence of the major foreign concessions, 'from skyscrapers and department stores down to pavement slabs and sash windows', has been described as 'the largest cultural transfer in human history'.⁴² The

shipyards, public utilities and factories that developed in the concessions were 'training grounds for workers, managers and entrepreneurs alike'.⁴³ Three types of Chinese businessman came to drive this process. From early days in Canton the role of the Chinese comprador had grown to be one that was indispensable to the foreign merchants. Skilled businessmen themselves, these intermediaries quickly became familiar with the foreigners' methods and, to an extent, their language. Some used this foundation to set up and prosper by themselves in the treaty ports.

In the latter half of the 19th century a new breed of Chinese entrepreneur appeared—the returning migrant. When they started to return, either having made their fortunes or forced back by discriminatory legislation in the United States or Australia, they revitalized their home towns. Swatow is a case in point. Having learnt different ways of living, they tended to be more forthright in their dealings with what they now saw as a backward home regime.

The third class of Chinese entrepreneur comprised wealthy or aspiring officials, landowners and merchants, who saw in the treaty ports an environment that would allow them to invest their money in relative safety. Some projects have already been mentioned. The later decades of the century saw a number of others: steelworks in Hankow; coal mines centred on Tientsin; and more cotton mills in Shanghai. From a small beginning in 1879 in Tientsin, telegraph lines began to proliferate: Chinese realized how unsatisfactory it was for foreigners in their home countries to know sooner about happenings in China than the Chinese themselves. It was the foreigners' introduction of railways that left the biggest physical impression on the development of China. These lumbering, noisy contraptions were seen as totally unnecessary by the majority of the people, and as a violent transgression of *fengshui*. Li Hongzhang contravened the weight of traditional thinking when in 1881 he publicly supported building railways in China. He was dismayed when the small but successful Woosung Railway was torn up in 1877, but others appeared. First, in 1881, was an eleven-kilometre line from the Kaiping mines to the nearest navigable water. This was

† See the entry on Tientsin for more on Li Hongzhang.

extended to Tientsin in 1889 and to Shanhaikwan (Shanhaiguan) a few years later. Defeat at the hands of the Japanese in 1895 prompted a massive increase in railway investment, both foreign and Chinese. In a little over ten years there were almost 10,000 kilometres of track, with more being planned, connecting all the major cities in the country.

Another outcome of the Sino-Japanese War was the clear statement, in the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, that Japanese (and therefore all the Treaty Powers) were permitted to manufacture in the treaty ports. This prompted industrial growth on a scale hitherto unseen. In the larger ports, such as Shanghai, Hankow and Tientsin, the emergence of foreign factories forced local industries to be competitive, especially in the field of textiles. By 1913 of all the cotton spindles operating in factories in China 60 percent were Chinese-owned, 27 percent European and 13 percent Japanese. Between 1912 and 1920 Chinese industry had one of the highest growth rates in the world.⁴⁴ Due to warlordism, a lack of vigorous development goals and Japanese imperialist aggression this early promise was not to be realized.

The foreign merchants were never happy to have their ideas and plans quashed by what they saw as superstition and Chinese fatalism. An example was the deteriorating state of the river at Tientsin, by 1900 the sixth-largest of the open cities. To improve navigation to the city from the coast was a major undertaking, not least dredging the infamous Taku (Dagu) Bar. However, the same Chinese merchants making money out of trade were saying that as the sand bar had been put there by the gods, who were they to interfere?⁴⁵ In this case the foreign powers took the opportunity of the 1901 Boxer Peace Protocol, an agreement ostensibly nothing to do with shipping and navigation, to impose a system of river conservation and improvement. The following year, Britain's Commercial Treaty placed a requirement upon China to introduce a national coinage, a step that benefited the entire country.

The aftermath of the Boxer troubles, that anti-dynastic rebellion cleverly diverted to be a fight with the foreigners, was to produce two more notable

foreign-inspired results. The first was the abolition of the Tsungli Yamen. Founded in 1861 following the Second Opium War as the government agency dealing with foreign affairs, it was later described as 'an invertebrate, gelatinous body' that acted more to curtail than extend China's foreign relations.⁴⁶ It was replaced in July 1902 by a more modern Foreign Office, the Wai-wu Pu. By no means perfect, this was a step towards enabling China to communicate effectively with other nations.

Also inspired by the Boxer rising was the Provisional Government that ruled Tientsin from 1900 to 1902. As the Chinese authorities had absconded, the foreign powers took up governing the city. They introduced many improvements—more, in the opinion of one commentator, than the Chinese authorities had done in the previous few centuries.⁴⁷ Furthermore, they ran the city at a profit and handed over the surplus, together with full accounts, to the very surprised incoming Chinese government.

There was one more aspect of the treaty port system of practical use to a large number of Chinese. Despite the hated presence of foreigners, the Western enclaves proved on many occasions to be places of refuge, both for individuals and for the masses. Hong Kong was a case in point, once word spread that it was a safe and fair place in which to do business. When troubles beset the rest of the country large numbers of refugees found security within the boundaries of the treaty ports. Many a commercial boom and bust in Shanghai can be attributed to the sudden influx and then exodus of people taking shelter. Chinese reformers were able to benefit from the pockets of protection provided by Hong Kong and the treaty ports. Sun Yat-sen received some of his high school education and gained his medical qualification in Hong Kong. Even in the turbulent 1920s, described below, when anti-foreign sentiments were running high, the foreign enclaves remained places of refuge.

LAW AND EXTRATERRITORIALITY

The principle of taking 'an eye for an eye' was well known in the West, stemming as it does from the Old Testament. The early European visitors to China

were surprised to find that a similar concept existed, and that it was taken literally, applying equally to foreigners and Chinese. A case in 1784 became infamous. A British vessel, the *Lady Hughes*, arrived at Whampoa (Huangpu) and fired the customary salute. Unfortunately a live round was used and two nearby Chinese spectators were killed. The authorities demanded that the British surrender for punishment either the sailor who fired the shot or somebody else—it did not matter whom. After a stand-off, when all trade was suspended, the British sacrificed the oldest and weakest member of their community for public strangulation.⁴⁸ In a similar case in 1821, American seaman Francis Terranova had to be surrendered after inadvertently killing a Chinese woman.⁴⁹ There were many other such cases.

It was not only the consequences to themselves that foreigners feared but to those Chinese who assisted them. There was a case of a Chinese man who had been found guilty of helping foreigners to explore the interior, something which was strictly forbidden. Not only was he condemned to the ‘death of one thousand cuts’ (the very worst of all punishments, combining pain with unfiliality) but his entire family was beheaded, his native village destroyed and the countryside for 30 kilometres around laid waste.⁵⁰ An extreme case, but the feeling among foreigners was that the Chinese legal system was something better avoided. The Qing legal code was systematic and, on its own terms, logical; actions had consequences.⁵¹ In late imperial China ‘the majority of criminals found guilty by county magistrates were sentenced to fines, beatings, penal servitude, exile or death. Imprisonment was not used as a legal penalty.’⁵² This began to change only after 1895, with the defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War and the greater interest in ‘strengthening China’ that this engendered among intellectuals and reformers.

To put matters into perspective, let us compare some Chinese penalties with those prevailing in England. In China in the 1840s wilful and premeditated murder was punishable by public beheading or worse. For homicide without an express desire to kill, the penalty was strangulation. Penalties also depended

on the relationship between victim and perpetrator; killing a parent was punished more severely than a neighbour. Accidental killing could be redeemed by compensation to the victim’s family, and killing in self-defence was not punishable at all.⁵³ Meanwhile in England, attempted murder, even without resulting in injury, was a capital offence, as, until 1830, was stealing a horse.⁵⁴ In some respects the two systems were not far apart, although the foreigners ‘avoided looking themselves in the mirror . . . eliding their own legacy of violence and autocracy.’⁵⁵ For them the logic of Chinese law was opaque, making them feel vulnerable and a long way from the security and predictability of home.

In the context of the Terranova case, the Americans made a declaration that they would submit to Chinese laws, ‘be they ever so unjust.’⁵⁶ The British were more circumspect, knowing the requirement of Chinese law that the accused must confess, under torture if required. Given the defeat of the Chinese in the 1839–42 war the British feared that retribution might be exacted on individuals via the legal system. Yet the 1842 Treaty of Nanking included no safeguards of a legal nature. In the months following his signing of the treaty, Sir Henry Pottinger was pressured to provide for greater protection for British subjects from the alien legal regime in which they would be living and working.⁵⁷ Accordingly, the 1843 Supplementary Treaty of the Bogue provided for the repatriation of fleeing British or Chinese criminals for punishment according to the laws of their respective countries and at the hands of their respective officials.

The British wanted a form of extraterritoriality, often shortened to ‘extrality’. Now best described as diplomatic immunity, extrality was extended to all foreigners, putting them outside the reach of the domestic laws of their country of residence. It was a concept already operating in other parts of the world. British Consuls in the Turkish Empire, for instance, were given the power to punish British offenders; if the consul thought the crime too serious or outside his experience he then had the power to send the culprit back to Britain for full trial.⁵⁸ Nor was this concept unknown to the Chinese. The first recorded

treaty between China and a foreign power, the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk with Russia, included a provision whereby people crossing the border in either direction without authority were to be returned 'without delay' to their own side for punishment.⁵⁹

In Hong Kong the legal situation was much clearer. As a British colony, English law applied, in theory, to all residents. Many of Hong Kong's early laws discriminated against the Chinese, justified by the argument that nobody had invited them to live there and they were free to leave.⁶⁰ Naturally, this logic was never applied in reverse; China had not invited foreign merchants to live in the treaty ports, yet was obliged to agree to privileged measures that would ensure their legal protection.

It was the Americans who took the step of codifying the principle of extrality for the benefit of all. In their 1844 Treaty of Wanghia they reversed the position they had taken after the *Terranova* affair. Article XXI of that agreement spelt out that Chinese subjects suspected of a crime against an American citizen would be arrested and punished by the Chinese authorities according to the laws of China. Similarly, and more importantly for the foreign population, subjects of the United States who committed any crime in China were to be tried and punished by an American Consul. Under the existing Most Favoured Nation principle, citizens of all current and subsequent Treaty Powers enjoyed similar protection. Later treaties confirmed and amplified the principle, which stood for almost the next hundred years.

Extrality put foreign consuls in the powerful position of hearing criminal and civil cases involving their nationals. Many were unprepared, and most were unqualified for the role. The Chinese system at the time was similar, in that cases were heard by magistrates who were seen as administrators rather than judges; they made their decisions based on the particular circumstances of the case.⁶¹ The main differences were the nature of punishments and the lack of safeguards for the accused that generally applied in Western jurisdictions.⁶² Nevertheless, a British commentator later in the century noted that there was far greater security for life and property in the majority

of Chinese towns than in London.⁶³ The same is true today.

Appeals from British consular courts, as well as cases that exceeded consuls' jurisdiction, were heard in the Supreme Court of Hong Kong. In 1865, after Shanghai emerged as the senior treaty port, Britain established a Supreme Court for China there under a full-time judge. In 1871 a courthouse was constructed in the grounds of the British Consulate, where it still stands.⁶⁴



Britain's Supreme Court for China, after renovation in 1913. Reprinted with permission by the National Archives.

Successive British judges demonstrated that the privilege of extraterritoriality did not include breaking Chinese laws with impunity. British violators were tried by British judges in a British court, but on behalf of the Chinese state,⁶⁵ giving public recognition to China's legal sovereignty. But problems persisted; missionaries claimed the right to live anywhere in the empire and still be protected from Chinese laws they disliked.⁶⁶ Foreign merchants' repeated demands to be allowed to trade with the interior were met with the Chinese response that, provided they submitted to Chinese law and taxation, they could go anywhere. Peking's view was that the point of the treaty ports was that foreigners could enjoy the exemptions they demanded in those specific areas; the rest of China was sovereign Chinese territory.⁶⁷ It was not just the Chinese who were expressing dissatisfaction. Writing in 1868 Rutherford Alcock was indignant

that foreigners expected *carte blanche* exemption from Chinese laws: 'Such unequal and incompatible conditions might possibly be imposed by force upon a conquered nation, but can never be the result of negotiations.'⁶⁸

In 1863 another institution had been created, also in Shanghai, aimed at redressing some of the problems of extrality. The 'Mixed Court' was a response to the unacceptable alternative of having a full Chinese court in the foreign settlement. A Chinese magistrate would hear cases where both parties were Chinese, and would be joined by a foreign consular official for Chinese cases involving a foreigner. Questions of land ownership, for example, were to keep lawyers very busy. As early as 1856 Sir John Bowring wrote to the British Consul in Amoy regarding legal arrangements for Chinese renting property to foreigners. He recorded the British law officers' opinion: '... the law and custom of China, if they can be ascertained, must govern the decision.'⁶⁹ The operative words here are 'if they can be ascertained'. There were genuine efforts to ascertain what the Chinese system was in order that it could be improved (at least in foreign eyes), and to make life easier for foreigners. The British 1902 Commercial Treaty tried to encourage Chinese legal reform. Even the carrot of surrender of all extraterritorial rights was dangled, provided China improved matters to Britain's satisfaction.⁷⁰ The cynic would say this was an empty gesture as there was no chance of satisfactory reforms being introduced. I believe the intention and spirit were genuine. The ill-fated Alcock Convention of 1869 would have introduced a commercial code to China, seen as the first of three steps towards scrapping extrality; the next two would have been a civil code and a criminal code.⁷¹ As it was, laws for companies and bankruptcy were not introduced until 1903.⁷²

In the early decades of the 20th century China embraced a number of international initiatives for legal and fiscal change.⁷³ Despite this progress, foreigners' contempt for China's legal system remained a continuing source of irritation for the Chinese. The Chinese might not have defended some of the laws with which they had to comply, but the disrespect

and the principle mattered. Some Chinese objections to extrality raised in the early part of the 20th century were quite valid. The China of the 1920s was very different from that on which the concept was forced in 1844. There was a proliferation of foreign courts with sometimes conflicting rules and practices. If there was no official from an offending foreign party's country to try him, he would probably escape punishment altogether. Furthermore, foreign judges at times protected their own nationals, even against just claims by Chinese. The concept was open to abuse, both by foreigners trying to evade legitimate restrictions, on smuggling for example and by Chinese claiming spurious foreign protection.⁷⁴ Extrality was not abandoned until 1943 when, as an encouragement to the Nationalists in their war against Japan, Britain relinquished 'all existing treaty rights relating to the system of treaty ports in China'.⁷⁵ Under the Most Favoured Nation principle, Britain's action effectively applied to almost all other Treaty Powers. Remaining were the French presence in Hankow, Kwangchowwan and Tientsin; the Italian Concession in Tientsin; Hong Kong; and the Portuguese colony of Macao, relinquished in 1946, 1947, 1997 and 1999 respectively.

TREATY PORT BUSINESS

Apart from those prompted by political rather than commercial motives, treaty ports were selected as places of potential profitable activity for foreign merchants. It is thus remarkable how few of them were commercially successful. Indeed, most of them were downright disappointing. Shanghai was the biggest success story. Then, in no particular order, came Tientsin, Hankow, Canton, Dairen (Dalian) and Harbin. But the sum of the trade conducted and customs revenue collected at all the others would hardly amount to that of any one of the six just mentioned. Thus their description as 'vacuum pumps for the extraction of resources'⁷⁶ seems somewhat overstated. Shanghai's success is attributable to its unique location both on the coast and at the mouth of China's greatest river. Tientsin grew largely through being the port for Peking. Hankow was the collection point for much of the huge Chinese interior. Canton's success

came about through the 300 years' start it had on all the others. Dairen and Harbin were positioned to cash in on the development of the hitherto untapped resources of Manchuria.

Into these larger ports were taken cotton and woollen goods, opium and latterly the whole array of industrial and consumer products that the West manufactured. Out of them came the traditional tea, silk and porcelain, as well as grain, raw cotton and minerals. At the other end of the scale Chungking (Chongqing), after its much heralded and long-awaited opening as a treaty port in 1890, proudly recorded as its major exports pig bristles, fungus, rhubarb and wax.⁷⁷ Looked at from today's perspective, the business operations in the lesser treaty ports were tiny, but each had behind it a businessman—Chinese or foreign—determined to turn a profit on whatever could be bought or sold. A 1000-tonne steamer was considered to be a large vessel; these water-borne workhorses would carry whatever was available from one treaty port to another.

Many foreign merchants at the treaty ports acted as 'commission agents', sourcing exports for overseas principals and earning a commission on the value of the contract. Imports were similarly handled. There were exceptions, of course, but typically British agents would deal in what was seen as the higher end of the market—tea, silk and porcelain. Germans, and later Japanese, were noted for getting their hands dirty in the 'muck and truck' trade, meaning lower-end and perhaps unattractive commodities such as pig bristles, used for making particularly abrasive brushes. Agency business required minimal capital outlay and offered reduced risk.

The major foreign firms in the early days, such as Jardines, Dents and Russells, had the resources and the volume of business to be able to afford large godowns and fine residences for their senior men. Smaller firms found it hard to compete, but did. All of them faced stiff competition from indigenous Chinese merchants. The quality of life expected by the treaty ports' foreigners meant much had to be



A small steamer loading up at Wuchow (Wuzhou), typical of the remote outports, under the watchful eye of a gunboat. © Peter Lockhart Smith. Image courtesy of Historical Photographs of China, University of Bristol.

spent on housing and the provision of essential supplies, for the merchant and often his family, before business could start. The Chinese had no such concerns; they lived as they had always lived and required no additional investment. As early as the mid-1860s most foreign trade in the treaty ports was handled by Chinese merchants. The foreigners depended on their Chinese compradors, but the compradors no longer needed the foreigners.⁷⁸

Until the end of the 19th century it was believed that the more treaty ports there were, the more business could be done. Each port would need a consul, together with his household, to protect his countrymen's interests. From about 1900 the realization gradually dawned that there were extensive and efficient Chinese networks the foreigner could use, rather than compete with. After that there were few new treaty ports, and consuls were withdrawn from others. In the case of Britain, by far the largest investor in a consular network in China, economies were also forced by a series of government reviews. The most influential was conducted by Reginald Tower, a secretary in the British Legation in Peking. Tower's recommendations reinforced the merchants' realization that they need not reside somewhere to benefit from business done there. Chinese agents were increasingly appointed to replace expensive foreign staff.

The posting of a consul to each treaty port was permitted in the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, then a necessary presence. The rules of foreign trade were still fluid and individual foreign merchants could not negotiate easily with Chinese officials. In the main, British Consuls performed well, and their numerical dominance meant the Chinese expected them to maintain order over the entire foreign population, a view not shared by non-British residents. Nevertheless, British Consuls' prestige was a deciding factor in the establishment of foreign customs inspectors.⁷⁹ Not all consuls were paragons, even less so some of the merchants acting as vice-consul for countries having no formal consular presence. Smaller nations were happy to be associated with more influential states through the device of appointing a merchant as their representative. In many cases these were fictitious

arrangements enabling appointees to circumvent regulations applied by their own national consul. James Tait in Amoy, for example, used his appointment as Spanish Vice-Consul to avoid British restrictions on coolie emigration.

Taxation was inevitable in the treaty ports, impinging on merchants of all nationalities. Collecting customs duties was a Chinese practice long before the Europeans arrived. Arbitrary, unpredictable duties were one cause of the war of 1839. The 1842 Treaty of Nanking introduced a clear and all-embracing rate of five percent that was to be levied on the value of all items imported to or exported from treaty ports. What happened before outgoing goods arrived at the port or once incoming items left was a Chinese matter and not within the scope of the treaty. This seemed fair at the time, but problems arose as foreign merchants became more familiar with the sources of their exports and the ultimate destination of their imports.

Goods changed hands freely within the boundaries of each treaty port. Imported 'duty paid' goods heading off into the interior then faced barrier after barrier, sometimes only a few kilometres apart, at each one of which the goods were examined and levies made by local officials. The farther the goods travelled, the more the duty paid. In 1853 a new all-pervading local duty was introduced to help fund the fight against the Taiping rebels. This applied in addition to existing taxes, and the whole package became known collectively as *likin*.

Likin was levied on everything that moved in the empire outside the treaty ports. Naturally, the definition of the boundary of a treaty port was constantly challenged. The foreign merchants became increasingly frustrated that their goods, imported at a price agreed with the customer, were far more expensive by the time they reached him. They had no control over this increase, nor was it predictable. The 1858 Treaty of Tientsin tried to circumvent this problem by agreeing a fixed rate of 2.5 percent to be levied on all goods transiting from the point of purchase to the treaty port, or from the treaty port to the customer, in lieu of local taxes that would otherwise be levied. The carriers of such goods would theoretically be able

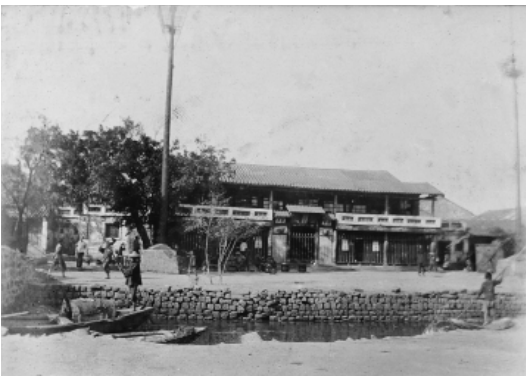
to avoid any *likin* levies en route by showing a duly authorized 'transit pass'.

Yet problems remained. Whereas customs revenue was paid to the central government in Peking, *likin* accrued to the province. Provincial authorities therefore suffered a real loss of income, not to mention the 'squeeze' typically withdrawn. Local people were afraid to accept transit passes as they feared retribution for depriving provincial officials of their 'squeeze'. As a result, these were not always honoured, or goods were detained until a 'handling fee' was paid. When it worked, the reduction in price of foreign imports, even if small, made them more competitive with local equivalents, producing more resentment. Foreign merchants' complaints about *likin* would typically be met with the argument that it was levied on Chinese, not foreigners, and so was not a matter for the Treaty Powers. Such a view was not without justification. There must come a point when imported goods cease to be foreign for the purposes of duty collection. Similarly exported items must have started life as local goods as opposed to foreign. Despite claims by angry foreign merchants that their goods should be free of inland charges, practicality and economics made it impossible.⁸⁰

Likin began in 1853 as a temporary measure, but by 1867 was fundamental to the economies of every province and the central government that demanded its share.⁸¹ With the inefficiency and corruption in the collection system, estimates suggest only 30 percent

of the collected amount was reported. Additionally, no records were kept, making the system unauditably. Furthermore, collection was 'farmed'; collectors were required to provide a fixed total amount of revenue. At some collection stations money was thrown into a basket until it looked enough, after which it went straight into the collector's pocket.⁸² Removing *likin* would mean re-engineering the whole Chinese economy. Yet this is what was needed. The foreign powers used the opportunity presented by their part in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion to exert their influence with the ruling dynasty. The 1901 Boxer Peace Protocol went far beyond simply sealing the peace after the rebels' defeat. One necessary measure placed the collection of *likin* under the much respected Imperial Maritime Customs (IMC). This body was so successful in collecting and accounting for the maritime customs duties that it was given this additional role, enabling the country to finance a new set of indemnity payments. Although the IMC's *likin* brief extended only to a radius of 50 *li* (about 25 kilometres) from the treaty ports, the transfer of authority symbolically recognized the existing system was inefficient. Instances arose of IMC commissioners reducing by 75 percent the number of people engaged in *likin* collection, while still producing more revenue.⁸³

With the IMC in partial control, proposals were made to abolish *likin*. The first serious attempt was contained in the 1902 British Commercial Treaty, in which the Chinese government recognized *likin* was an impediment to trade and agreed to 'undertake to discard [it] completely'. In return the British government agreed to a compensating increase in the long-standing tariff rates. The new arrangements were to take effect from 1 January 1904. However, the changes were only agreed between China and Britain, and were conditional on all 15 of the other Treaty Powers entering into similar agreements—an unlikely outcome.⁸⁴ The American and Japanese commercial treaties of 1903 complied, but the other powers were not sufficiently interested to act. *Likin* was abolished on 1 January 1931, in return for the restoration to China of the tariff autonomy it had lost in the 1842 Treaty of Nanking.



Native customs station at Hoihow (Haikou), 1898.
© SOAS. Image courtesy of Historical Photographs of China, University of Bristol.

The Imperial Maritime Customs service is central to our story,[§] so further description of its role is necessary. In essence, the IMC collected duty on goods arriving in China or leaving the country for overseas destinations. When the service was first introduced in 1854, all such movements were by sea. Apart from some junk trade to neighbouring countries, all imports and exports were handled by foreigners. Whether a ship was Chinese- or foreign-owned could instantly be determined by its appearance: foreign schooners, barques and brigs bore no resemblance to Chinese junks. Furthermore, until the late 1860s Chinese were not allowed to own steamers. Every such vessel was therefore, by definition, foreign and foreign vessels were only permitted to enter the treaty ports. Regulations were therefore confidently drafted requiring the IMC to collect duty from foreign-style vessels entering or leaving the treaty ports. At first, this distinction worked well. The waters became muddled in the 1860s when Chinese started to own and operate steam-driven vessels. Regulations were therefore introduced in 1867 whereby all Chinese vessels of the foreign type were placed under IMC control.⁸⁵ Distinctions again became blurred in the 1890s when foreigners started to operate junks on the Upper Yangtze, requiring regulations of increasing complexity.

With increasing volumes of trade, the demands on the IMC were heavy; more so once the service, under Sir Robert Hart's direction, started to take on responsibility for matters other than duty collection, such as lighthouses, river maintenance and postal services. In 1907 the IMC employed almost 1400 foreign staff—Europeans, Americans and Japanese—and over 12,000 Chinese.⁸⁶ The senior customs person in a treaty port was the commissioner. Until more Chinese staff rose through the ranks in the 1920s this person was always a foreigner, and he often had the distinction of being the port's most senior Chinese government official.

In most treaty ports the customs staff formed the largest group within the foreign population. Social

distinctions were strong. High expectations were placed on customs staff at all levels, and in return they enjoyed considerable job security.⁸⁷ The 'outdoor staff' watched and waited for vessels to arrive, then boarded them to examine the goods carried. These men were often rough and considered to be 'of the lower orders'. The senior staff—supervisors, surveyors and clerks, as well as commissioners and their assistants—were referred to as the 'indoor staff'. In terms of social standing, the Commissioner of Customs and the British Consul would vie for seniority, keenly aware of the other's housing and benefits. This leads us to look at the life the foreigners typically led in the treaty ports.

A LIFE OF PRIVILEGE

A number of writers and filmmakers have depicted treaty port life for the foreign population as one of affluence and privilege. This is partially accurate. A number of foreign merchants became seriously wealthy as a result of their involvement in the China trade, but they were in the minority. Furthermore the foreign customs officials could only look forward to retiring on a pension after a lifetime of hard work. Among them the 'indoor staff' lived well compared with the local population, but whatever benefits they and other foreigners had were seen as compensation for the often primitive conditions in which they worked and lived.

Treaty ports varied considerably in terms of size and what they offered the foreign resident. Some, like Shanghai, Harbin and Tientsin, were very large and cosmopolitan, functioning in some respects just like similar-sized European cities. They had clubs, restaurants, shops, sporting facilities and theatres. From these glittering centres 'the China coasters saw themselves and the semi-colonial ports whose affairs they dominated as the wave of the future which must sooner or later engulf the whole of the country.'⁸⁸ For them the process seemed unstoppable, the vastness of the country that lay outside their immediate boundary forgotten or ignored. 'Engulfing' was and always would be impossible.

[§] See entry on Shanghai for details about how the service came into being.

Other ports remained 'attractively provincial',⁸⁹ such as Swatow, Amoy and Foochow. In these places social groupings were more pronounced, with particular reference to where and how one lived. Yet other ports were so small as to be claustrophobic for the handful of foreign residents, endlessly having the same conversations with the same people.⁹⁰ Most treaty ports were referred to as 'outports'—'practically all the Treaty Ports except Shanghai',⁹¹ according to Byron Brenan in 1897, after 35 years in China with the British consular service. Slightly exaggerated, perhaps, but only slightly, especially when applied to the smallest ports.

The first British Consuls to Pakhoi (Beihai) and Kiungchow struggled to find anywhere to live. Their presence was resented and no assistance was offered. British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, writing in 1895, acknowledged that China postings were not

favoured by potential high-flyers. The prospect was so unpopular 'that no-one will go who has a chance of anything else'.⁹² A few years earlier an official review of Britain's consular establishments in China noted that reports received about 'the unhealthiness of Formosa, the unfriendliness of the natives of the Upper Yangtze, or the rough life in Hainan . . . [were] not in the least exaggerated'. The writer also reported that in the Formosan ports of Tamsui, Keelung (Jilong) and Anping he found one foreigner in two suffering from fever, and that he had stayed in the 'miserable hovels' in which the consuls at Hoihow and Ichang (Yichang) were forced to live.⁹³

Most foreigners, even junior police officers, would have had at least one Chinese servant—in some cases many more. At an individual level both parties usually worked and lived amicably with each other. Yet none of the treaty ports was big enough to shield the



A group of foreign 'sportsmen' returning from a successful shooting expedition. Source: Treva Wiltshire, *Encounters with China* (Hong Kong: FormAsia, 1995), 142. Reprinted with permission by FormAsia Books Limited.

foreign residents from the fear of being surrounded by an alien and often hostile race. Sheer bluff, supported by gunboat diplomacy, was enough in the early years to suppress local hostility. Missionaries in the remoteness of the Chinese interior were most at risk. When threatened, or as was often the case actually attacked, they would flock to the treaty ports for protection. But there came a time when even those bastions of foreign confidence were no longer safe.

THE 1920S: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

In the aftermath of the Boxer troubles of 1900, a new breed of Chinese nationalism took root. There was an increasing desire to retrieve and defend full sovereignty, rather than continue preserving the traditional Confucian status quo.⁹⁴ However, the revolution of 1911 put in place a regime that was no more competent than its Imperial forerunner. The Republican government wanted to correct the many wrongs done to China, both by the Manchu dynasty and the foreign powers, but became enmired in internal divisions and warlordism. The outrage China felt about foreign incursions into its territory increased further in 1914 when Japan took advantage of the Great War by invading Shandong Province. Japan claimed to be ousting the Germans, against whom they had made a tactical declaration of war. China remained neutral for the first three years of the conflict, but also declared war on Germany in August 1917, making the Chinese and Japanese uneasy allies. With, therefore, a seat at the post-war peace-negotiating table, China hoped for much in the bargaining that followed the conclusion of the war. It was severely disappointed.

The Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 supported Japan's claim to the parts of China that it had sequestered, enraging the Chinese. A major anti-Japanese demonstration on 4 May that year gave rise to the May Fourth Movement of students and others, intent on redressing their government's perceived weakness at Versailles and fomenting a spiritual revival of Chinese nationalism. However, the Japanese remained in place until obliged to withdraw by the treaties concluding the Washington

Conference of 1921. But by that time the damage was done. As their country descended into chaos, the Chinese pressed their case against all foreigners, again seeing the 'unequal treaties' as the root of their misfortunes. Any positive aspects of the foreign presence were ignored, not least the fact that the only reliable source of government revenue was the still foreign-managed customs service.

An incident in May 1925 in Shanghai ignited protest. An industrial dispute at a Japanese-owned cotton factory prompted a street demonstration, then a riot. A number of demonstrators were killed by the foreign-controlled police force that included British officers and Chinese and Sikh constables. This incident gave rise to yet another movement—the May Thirtieth Movement. Riots and disturbances in all the major treaty ports followed. Particularly targeted were the British Concessions in Hankow and Kiukiang. These were formally returned to China in February 1927 as an attempt to defuse the situation.

The Japanese felt cheated of the territorial gains they had made in 1895. Partial revenge had come with the occupation of Shandong in 1914 and Japan's issuing in 1915 of the infamous 'Twenty-One Demands'. These included formal recognition of Japanese possession of what territory it held in Shandong and Manchuria as well as the granting of railway and mineral rights. Most demands were acceded to in the form of two treaties in 1915, concerning Shandong and Manchuria respectively. However, as part of the preliminaries to the Washington Disarmament Conference in 1921 Japan agreed to return Shandong to Chinese control as the price for keeping its Manchurian possessions. It was there the Japanese decided to consolidate their position and renew their ambitions against China.

A Japanese-engineered small explosion in Mukden in September 1931 provided an excuse to mount a full-scale invasion of Manchuria, achieved with great rapidity. In March 1932 Japan created the puppet state of Manchukuo, with China's last emperor lending cosmetic legitimacy to the regime. Intermittent fighting between Chinese and Japanese forces continued without a formal declaration of



Japanese occupation of China and Korea in 1943

war. However, on 7 July 1937 a panicked response by a nervous Chinese guard to an imagined Japanese invasion gave Japan the excuse it wanted. This day is generally seen as the day on which full hostilities commenced. The Japanese army's advance was swift, with Nanking and other major cities taken later in the year. Shanghai's position was precarious—surrounded by Japanese troops, yet still functioning almost normally. Restaurants and nightclubs were full, races were well attended, money was made and spent, and people carried on as if nothing untoward was happening elsewhere. The outbreak of the Pacific War on 8 December 1941 removed all pretence and Shanghai was occupied by the Japanese army, with all the misery that entailed.

Japan advanced along China's coast and up the Yangtze River as far as Ichang. Most treaty ports

ceased to function as places of international trade. China fought back, with the help of the Allies. In January 1943 the treaty by which Britain surrendered all its extraterritorial rights in China was signed. The era of the hated 'unequal treaties' had ended. China was released from foreign oppression, but continued fighting between Nationalists and Communists meant a continuing absence of political stability.

After 1949 attempts were made to revive some treaty port communities. Port Arthur and Dairen were occupied by Soviet forces until the mid-1950s. Hong Kong and Macao, now anachronisms, were foreign colonies until the end of the century. For the remainder, the revolution of 1949 closed the door on foreign occupation for ever.

KIUKIANG (JIUJIANG) 九江



Jiangxi, 29.43° N, 115.58° E

Treaty Port, 1858 British Treaty

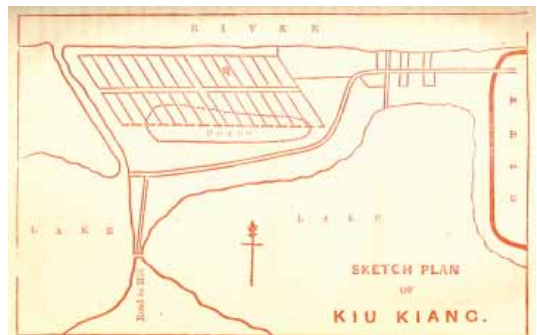
Kiukiang never lived up to foreigners' expectations. Opened as a treaty port by the 1858 Treaty of Tientsin (Tianjin), it was not even mentioned in the treaty. As the Yangtze valley was still plagued by Taiping rebels, Britain secured the right to open Chinkiang (Zhenjiang) and two others, to be identified 'so soon as Peace shall have been restored'.¹ The chosen two were Hankow (Hankou) and Kiukiang. For the British, the main attraction of Kiukiang was its position near the mouth of the Po Yang (Boyang) Lake, the large stretch of water from which all the exports of Jiangxi Province flowed. The newcomers were chiefly interested in tea, particularly green tea that had previously journeyed overland to Foochow (Fuzhou) or Ningpo (Ningbo), and porcelain. Kingtehchen (Jingdezhen), a town on the east shore of the lake, had for centuries supplied the imperial palace with the finest porcelain available anywhere.

In 1858 Lord Elgin was awarded the rare privilege of sailing up the Yangtze to Hankow. Based on what he saw, his instructions to Harry Parkes, who led the port-opening mission in March 1861, were to favour Hukow (Hukou) over Kiukiang. Hukow was at the entrance of the channel leading to the lake, whereas Kiukiang was 25 kilometres upstream.² However, Parkes found Hukow was too small and had neither flat land suitable for godowns nor a good anchorage. Instead he selected Kiukiang, already in decline before the Taipings left it in ruins. Parkes knew it had been 'brought to a very high state of perfection by the Chinese in more prosperous times'.³

Parkes, as usual, selected a plot of ground for the British Concession. Unusually for a Chinese city,

Kiukiang's walls lined the riverbank for over 400 metres, leaving only a towpath. Parkes obtained a site of 500 by 200 metres, leased in perpetuity, to the west, upstream from the city. The concession was split into four blocks of seven lots each, two blocks on the river and two behind, each separated by a road. Initially only the front blocks were settled; the rear of the concession was dominated by a large pond, the former outline of which can still be seen in the pattern of today's streets.⁴ Its presence meant the exact location of the concession's southern boundary was still contested in the 1920s.⁵ A bund was included and two riverside lots were designated for a British Consulate. Interpreter Patrick Hughes (aged 27) was installed as vice-consul on 8 March 1861, in temporary accommodation.

The tiny foreign community may have been resented but it suggested a degree of security to the local population, and the city started to be reoccupied. Still far short of the previous number, inhabitants increased from 10,000 when the British arrived to 40,000 a year later. By then most of the concession lots had been sold, on 99-year leases from the British government. The first meeting of land-renters occurred in April 1862, a committee elected, and agreement reached to tax each lot to finance necessary infrastructure work. In the winter season's low water the riverbank was exposed to a depth of 15 metres, making the building of a bund possible. By 1866 European-style houses had been built on most lots facing the river, including a British Consulate.



1867 sketch plan of the British Concession, complete with pond. Source: Mayers, Dennys and King, *The Treaty Ports of China and Japan*, 430.

Not counting the junior members of the customs outdoor staff, who were generally excluded from all aspects of 'society', the foreign population numbered between 20 and 25. There were eight British firms, three American, one missionary, one doctor and one British police inspector.⁶

EARLY FRUSTRATIONS

It was soon realized that the new treaty port was not destined for greatness. Despite Shanghai being over 700 kilometres away, Chinese merchants preferred to go there for whatever foreign imports they needed, principally opium and cotton goods.⁷ Of exports there was only one—tea. The production of wonderful porcelain had been largely abandoned in favour of utility kitchen pieces, for which there was high demand after the wreckage caused by the Taipings. Tea was big business in the early years, the only commercial activity involving foreign merchants. On the opening of Kiukiang, there had been a rush of 'youthful foreigners, expectant of rapidly-made fortunes', but their enthusiasm led to overtrading and bankruptcy.⁸ Furthermore, as steam navigation on the Po Yang Lake was forbidden, all the tea for export was brought to Kiukiang by junk. Given the Yangtze's strong flow, junks sometimes had to wait for weeks for a wind to bring them the few kilometres upstream from Hukow to load the waiting steamers. Hukow was now being seen as the better option after all, but it was too late to make a change.⁹ Its destiny was to become a port-of-call.

Jardines, Russells and Gibb Livingstone started to lobby for the opening of the lake to steam navigation, claiming it would reduce a journey of weeks to 24 hours.¹⁰ They petitioned Rutherford Alcock, British Minister in Peking (Beijing), pointing out that the junks, while waiting to exit the lake, would gather at an anchorage known as Takutang (Datang). They suggested that Takutang be opened for steamer traffic. There was already a native Custom House there. The Chinese authorities were adamant that the lake remain closed to foreign activity, ensuring the tea-producing areas stayed as remote as they had been for centuries. Jardines pulled out in frustration

in 1871, preferring to conduct their Kiukiang business from Hankow, 250 kilometres upriver. Gibb Livingstone left the following year and Russells a few years later. Many of the ten new houses along the bund became vacant and dilapidated.¹¹

The position of Kiukiang as a staging post between the much larger ports of Shanghai and Hankow nevertheless ensured that there was a continuous stream of foreign shipping calling at the port. Even if the cargoes were not developing as hoped, the number of passengers travelling along the river kept shipping agents busy. The British lines, Indo-China Steam Navigation (Jardines) and China Navigation (Swires), took the largest share, but the China Merchants line was a major competitor, as later were Japanese operators. In 1882, the two British companies started to moor hulks off the bund for use as landing stages, connected to the shore by wooden pontoons.¹² Jardines returned to Kiukiang in 1886 to manage their own shipping affairs.

SHOWING A BRAVE FACE

Despite commercial disappointments, the concession showed a brave face. Unlike Chinkiang, for example, it was well run. The chair of the municipal council was occupied at various times by the Commissioner of Customs, the British Consul and missionaries as well as merchants. It kept its area clean and tidy and the well-maintained bund was lined with trees. There were small churches catering to both Protestants and Roman Catholics, and that essential of any gathering of two or more Englishmen abroad—the club.¹³ Street lighting was introduced in 1883. During 1885 the bund was extended citywards, funded by a voluntary wharfage charge managed jointly by Chinese and foreign merchants.¹⁴ A public garden was laid out in the concession in 1888.¹⁵ The pond, although a malaria risk in the hottest months, provided a popular venue for ice-skating in the winter.¹⁶ The 'happy monotony of this charmingly situated riverine port' was also broken whenever a foreign gunboat called. Full use was made by the small community of the social possibilities presented by the visiting crews, which could dwarf the number of residents



The bund in 1872, already very well established.
Courtesy of Wattis Fine Art.

by a factor of three or four to one.¹⁷ Eventually the municipal council also provided a small theatre in its office building.¹⁸

Commercial foreign residents were few. Apart from the two British shipping companies, by the late 1880s there were only two British firms in Kiukiang, gathering tea exports for shipment. In 1886 three steamers loaded direct for London, but the experiment was not repeated.¹⁹ In 1875 a Russian company from Hankow set up a branch, followed a few years later by another. They each operated a factory in the concession making brick and tablet tea. This way of packaging tea for long-distance travel was uniquely Russian, and kept the China tea market going much longer than it would have done otherwise. The two firms employed several thousand workers²⁰ until closing in 1917.

THE OPENING OF THE LAKE AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The foreign community still saw running steamers on Po Yang Lake as the port's salvation. But China was determined not to lose out once more to foreign expertise and capital. By 1897 there were six Chinese steam launches operating, forbidden to tow any cargo junks except those carrying tea. Passenger boats could be towed freely, and these quickly became popular.²¹ The breakthrough came in 1898 when the long-awaited Inland Steam Navigation Regulations were issued, opening all China's navigable waters to foreign steam traffic.²² Despite lobbying so long for access, the foreign operators were slow to take advantage of

their new privileges. Within the next ten years China Navigation began to run small riverboats on the lake, and the Japanese NKK line brought tea out to Kiukiang. Asiatic Petroleum operated small motorboats to take its products direct to inland customers. The new regulations precipitated an increase in trade, but the effects were not as anticipated when Jardines had pressed their case over 30 years previously.²³ Perhaps it was all too late.

Missionaries exceeded all other sectors of the foreign population, using Kiukiang as a base for penetrating the provincial interior. In 1898 a large Roman Catholic cathedral was inaugurated on Lot 1 at the eastern (city) end of the concession, dwarfing the Protestant St. Paul's Church;²⁴ neither remain. The next largest foreign group consisted of customs employees, about 20 in the 1890s. The service occupied several concession lots by 1903;²⁵ their Lot 13 building remains. In 1898, customs' responsibilities were expanded to include the collection of *likin* for the Kiukiang prefecture. In 1901 the terms of the Boxer Protocol brought all native customs operations near the treaty ports under the foreign-run service, including the native Custom House at Takutang.²⁶ These developments were a learning opportunity for the commissioner and his staff. Not until 1913 was he able fully to control 'native' operations. He demonstrated this by reducing the number of staff in the local customs operation from 248 to 89.²⁷

Standard Oil and Asiatic Petroleum were the only new foreign firms to open in Kiukiang, arriving in 1905 and 1909 respectively. Both built handling facilities a few kilometres downstream, at a place still occupied by large storage tanks. Standard Oil also built the imposing office building still present at the western end of the bund. Other modern innovations had little effect on Kiukiang. A railway line to Nanchang, the provincial capital, was approved in 1904; while only 130 kilometres long it remained unfinished until 1916.²⁸ Factories took even longer to arrive.

The walled city never regained its pre-Taiping bustle. Even by 1901, only the western quarter was built on; the rest was used for cultivation. It was the

area adjacent to the British Concession that became the focus of development. In 1898 the 'stinking pond' on the concession's southern perimeter was at last filled in²⁹ and became a public park. The area to the west received greater attention. The concession's upstream edge was marked by Lungkai Creek (Longkai He), a small waterway used as a junk anchorage whenever it was not too silted. There had been various schemes to deepen the creek. In 1885, following the success of the Sino-foreign collaboration to enlarge the bund, the same group extended it along the creek,³⁰ although silting continued to be problematic.

In 1917 a new town, Pinhingchow (Binxing Zhou) appeared on land that had been drained, reclaimed and well laid out. The railway station was already there, and was soon joined by a number of factories, new roads and houses. By 1921 there was an electric power station, a four-storey hotel and a thriving business district, connected to the concession by a wooden drawbridge.³¹

REVOLUTION AND RENDITION

Kiukiang city authorities transferred their allegiance to the new Republican government within weeks of the 1911 revolution but in July 1913 local leaders rebelled against Yuan Shikai.³² Order was not fully restored until experienced troops appeared from Wuchang, determined to exert central authority.³³

The small foreign community was often concerned about security; there were riots in 1888, 1891 and 1909. In 1915 student-led protests against Japan's notorious 'Twenty-One Demands' led to a boycott of the newly established Japanese presence in Kiukiang. They had six nationals at their consulate, on a lot shared with a branch of the Bank of Taiwan.³⁴ The boycott was poorly planned and ineffective. A repeat in 1919, however, brought all trade and passenger movements to a standstill until the overriding requirements of commerce prevailed in September 1920.³⁵ At the height of these troubles, the British Consul requested that American marines be landed.³⁶

When news arrived of the shooting of Chinese demonstrators by municipal police in Shanghai

on 30 May 1925, there was an anti-British riot in Kiukiang. The Chinese constables of the Kiukiang municipal force refused to intervene and were dismissed.³⁷ City authorities assured the British of the concession's safety, but students broke into the British and Japanese consulates on 13 June. There is no trace today of the British Consulate, but features of the Japanese Consulate are still visible in the renovated building that is still there. The mob also burned down the Bank of Taiwan; soon rebuilt, its replacement remains. The arrival of Japanese marines halted further destruction.³⁸

The rest of the country was now in turmoil. Chiang Kai-shek's Revolutionary Army captured Kiukiang in November 1926, causing the remaining foreign population to flee to ships in the river. On 5 January 1927, taking a lead from their brothers in Hankow, coolies refused to unload a China Navigation vessel. When sailors from HMS *Wyvern*, a British destroyer, started unloading it there was fighting, and a mob advanced on the concession. Warning shots were fired from the *Wyvern*. T. V. Soong, Chiang's Finance Minister, was in Kiukiang at the time. He advised restraint, but on 7 January the concession was overrun and the British Consul and staff evacuated.³⁹

The formal end of the treaty port came a few weeks later with the signing of the so-called 'Chen-O'Malley' Agreement on 20 February, similar to that signed on 19 February regarding Hankow. The document formally recognized handing the British Concession to the provisional committee set up by Chen Yujen, the Nationalist government's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The British can hardly have been too upset at losing this disappointing concession for which, 66 years earlier, there had been such high hopes. The Kiukiang concession became a Special Administrative District, like Hankow, and when even this was abolished in 1930 the British hardly noticed.⁴⁰

Further reading: Lee, *China's Recovery*; Munro-Faure, 'The Kiukiang Incident'.

KIUNGCHOW (QIONGZHOU)

瓊州



Hainan, 20.00° N, 110.21° E
Treaty Port, 1858 British Treaty

Kiungchow was an outpost where for over a thousand years Chinese officials were banished for offending their emperor. The Haikou Museum is full of their stories. In its early years as a treaty port foreign residents would have been able to appreciate their sense of abandonment. Virtually all the British consular officials who were posted there during the 50 years of the consulate's existence became seriously ill, although only one died in post.¹ Even in the early 21st century Kiungchow was listed by one American multinational as one of only two 'hardship postings' in China.²

In 1665 British Captain John Weddell tried but failed to open trade at Canton (Guangzhou). Instead, he recommended that Britain seize Hainan as a trading base.³ Had this happened, the history of the China Coast would have been very different. It was two hundred years before Hainan reappeared on Britain's agenda. In 1858 Britain and France included Kiungchow as a treaty port in their respective treaties of Tientsin (Tianjin). The 'port' was five kilometres inland, but being the prefectural headquarters the consuls would be near the seat of local government. Kiungchow's actual seaport, Hoihow (Haikou), became the *de facto* treaty port, although it was some time before Britain or France bothered to develop their new trading post. One reason was that local authorities were unwilling to grant facilities to foreign merchants. Another was the almost prohibitive regulation of the Imperial Maritime Customs whereby any foreign vessel bound for Hainan had to obtain clearance in Canton, requiring an unprofitable detour of over 200 kilometres. A memorial from

the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce in October 1867 recommended appointing a consular agent at Kiungchow from among any willing British merchants in order to handle the necessary paperwork.⁴ No such merchants existed.

Ten years went by and the new treaty port remained effectively closed. In 1869 Sir Rutherford Alcock, British Minister in Peking (Beijing), tried to exchange Kiungchow for Wenchow (Wenzhou).⁵ Hong Kong's business community, and its London representatives, were not supportive, preferring to remove the barriers faced by Kiungchow. Memorials poured in to the British Foreign Secretary, urging him to pursue opening the port. One from Hong Kong pointed out that Kiungchow was the only treaty port on China's south-west coast and that it would benefit from the passing trade between Hong Kong and the French interests in Indo-China;⁶ still no merchants came, and the port remained closed. Only in 1872 was an application made to the Tsungli Yamen to have a 'competent interpreter' appointed to Kiungchow as vice-consul.⁷

NO GREAT EXPECTATIONS

It was not until 1 April 1876 that the British Consulate and the Custom House were opened. The customs staff established themselves in a roomy but tumbledown building. The consular men were put up in the North Fort, described as 'rickety and manned by about 40 Chinese "soldiers" and the usual compliment [*sic*] of seedy-looking mandarins'.⁸ The inappropriateness of his lodgings meant the consul was soon moved to rented premises, but these were no better—a disused warehouse that had become a piggery and a public convenience,⁹ 'a Disgrace, all damp and dirty'.¹⁰ An official report to London described the consul's residence as 'a miserable hovel'.¹¹ A purpose-built consulate would not be provided until another quarter-century had passed.

The port was open, yet no foreign merchants accepted the challenge of going there. Shallow water required even small vessels to anchor four kilometres from shore. At low tide a man could wade out to sea for over a kilometre without wetting his knees.¹² In

addition, the approach to the anchorage was hazardous, with no navigational aids, and it experienced summer and autumn typhoons. Unusually, the tides were very irregular. Sometimes there were two a day, sometimes one, and occasionally none.¹³ In his idle moments, of which he had many, Consul Edward Parker wrote to a scientific journal with his observations on the subject.¹⁴ In 1876 *The China Mail* noted that the port 'does not warrant the forming of any great expectations'.¹⁵

This proved correct. The appearance of foreign steamers helped only Chinese merchants, who dealt in sugar, silk, cotton piece-goods and tobacco. The first foreign merchant was an employee of Edward Herton, founder of one of the larger hongts in Swatow (Shantou). Herton moved to Hoihow himself in about 1878.¹⁶ He was a determined man and became the principal protagonist in the foreigners' fight to rectify weaknesses in the transit pass system.

Herton took on the agency for the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank and for a couple of years was commercial king of this small domain. In 1879 Augustus Schomburg, a German clerk from Shanghai,¹⁷ moved to Hoihow and set up a rival business.¹⁸ With few exceptions, these two firms represented the entire foreign mercantile community for the next 15 years. Sugar was the most important export,¹⁹ and the foreign merchants had to induce steamer operators to load up with it at Hoihow.

PIGS AND THE 'PIG TRADE'

The larger, faster and safer foreign steamships sparked an expansion in another export trade. Known unpleasantly as the 'pig trade', the shipment of coolies to work South-East Asia's plantations was a life-saver for the struggling treaty port. From a total of 6000 emigrants in 1885²⁰ numbers expanded to over 15,000 by 1889. The majority went to Singapore,²¹ many tempted by fraudulent promises.

Exporting real pigs also grew in importance during the 1880s. Hainan pigs were considered to be of particularly high quality²² and Hong Kong's appetite was insatiable. Like all lucrative business ventures, it gave rise to its own ingenious fraudulent

practices. The animals were sold by weight at the time of embarkation. The temptation to feed them to bursting point just before embarkation was irresistible. They arrived at their destination 18 hours later, hungry and lighter.²³ Another fraud was to wait for a departing ship to be out of sight, then bring a junk alongside and exchange the cargo of bigger pigs for smaller ones. The correct number of porkers would arrive, and the fat ones could be sold many times.²⁴

In 1887 the enterprising Mr. Herton obtained a transit pass to export 20 pigs, only to have them impounded by the authorities, who were afraid that if foreigners were to enter this market there would be a loss of revenue.²⁵ In fact the Englishman was not considering a full-scale pig-export business; he was trying to pay a Hong Kong merchant, in pigs, for a shipment of yarn he had received.²⁶ Herton's business in Pakhoi (Beihai) had just been forced to close because he was not allowed use of the transit passes to which he was entitled by treaty. He claimed for wrongful confiscation of his pigs, giving rise to enormous amounts of correspondence and rallying of support from foreign merchants in Hong Kong. Finally, late in 1892 it was announced that pigs would be included on the list of dutiable commodities under the treaties.²⁷ A doubtless exhausted Herton closed his Hoihow business soon afterwards.

Other difficulties hampered foreign business expansion in Hainan. Kiungchow was named in the treaty but Hoihow was its port. Consequently, the Chinese authorities denied foreigners the right to trade at Kiungchow and attempted to establish 'the recognized bounds of the Treaty Port of Hoihow'.²⁸ The *likin* office claimed Kiungchow to be 'in the interior' and levied tax on goods moving from one to the other.²⁹ However, these important principles hardly mattered considering the almost total absence of foreign trade. At the beginning of 1887 the foreign population stood at only 17,³⁰ not even double the number on the port's opening. There had been no improvements in drainage, lighting or bunding,³¹ and the silted approach to the port still presented almost insuperable problems. The Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi made a formal visit in 1888. Despite his

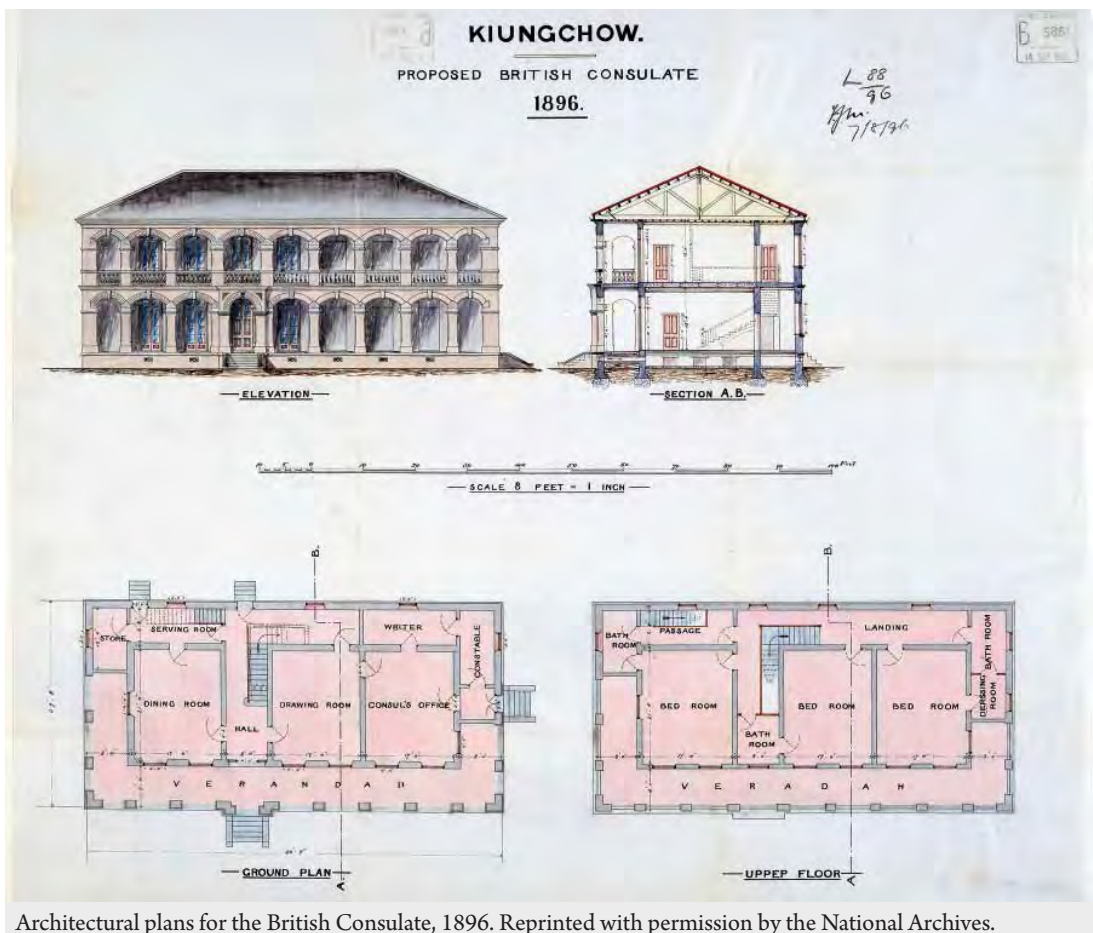
exalted status, it took three hours to transport him the five kilometres from his moored ship to the shore. He was so incensed that immediately he arrived home he gave instructions for a European engineer to survey the necessary improvements. This was done, but there was no follow-up action.³²

THE PROBLEM OF BUYING LAND

Another problem facing foreigners in Hoihow was the inability to buy land. Attempts were made in 1883 to procure a site to erect a British Consulate, but they met with local opposition and got no further.³³ Some 15 years after the opening of the port, no foreign trader or consul had been able to acquire any site on which to build. Slowly that began to change. A Foreign Office study in 1889 noted the gross inadequacies of the consular premises. To rectify this state of affairs, three sites were considered for purchase. One was

the current location, but the price proved exorbitant. The second was at Fort Egeria (named after a visiting British naval vessel and today the site of Binhai Hospital) on Coconut Island (now part of the mainland),³⁴ to the west of the existing site. Schomburg had acquired land there, as had a Portuguese mission, and it was where the unsuccessful attempt had been made in 1883. The third was on the opposite side of the creek that formed the sea entrance to Hoihow. This plot was smaller but far from Chinese houses, and the one that the report favoured. However, it concluded 'the fact of the matter is that the Chinese do not want us to have any site at Hoihow. They have fought us for 13 years and will continue to do so'.³⁵ Meanwhile the British Consul 'continues to dwell in a dilapidated barn-like structure'.³⁶

Eventually they acquired Coconut Island.³⁷ However, despite having as a neighbour one of the



Architectural plans for the British Consulate, 1896. Reprinted with permission by the National Archives.

only two foreign firms operating in Hoihow, it was declared to be unsuitable,³⁸ perhaps because it was low-lying and prone to flooding. A new site was suggested in 1896, but it was not long before this too was rejected. In 1897 an area was surveyed to the west of Fort Egeria, amid low-lying salt pans behind the American Presbyterian Mission hospital. It became known as the Salt Pan Site. Plans for a colonial-style, three-bedroom consular residence had already been drawn up,³⁹ waiting only for a final decision on where it should be built. With the Salt Pan Site now confirmed, a foundation stone-laying ceremony was held on Monday 18 September 1898. Doing the honours was the wife of Pierre Essex O'Brien-Butler, who, despite his grand name, was only acting consul. The couple were surrounded by the entire British community of twelve, while flapping above them was a Union Jack big enough to cover them all.⁴⁰ The building was completed in 1900⁴¹ but was not used for long. Having taken over responsibility for the British Consulate in Pakhoi in 1904, the Kiungchow consulate was itself closed in 1925, long after outliving its usefulness.

For years at a time the community was deprived even of that guaranteed booster of flagging spirits, a visit by a British gunboat.⁴² But the foreign population gradually grew. In 1893, Consul Parker took time off from his tide observations to report joyfully to London that for the first time a British birth, marriage and death had been registered in the same year.⁴³

FRENCH DESIGNS ON HAINAN

The new British Consulate was not the first European-style building to be erected at Hoihow, but there were not many. At the end of 1897, while the British were still prevaricating, the French acquired a site on the far side of the creek from Hoihow, possibly the one Britain had rejected, on which they built a consulate.⁴⁴ It was completed in July 1899,⁴⁵ and a contemporary photograph shows it to be a grand two-storey building but isolated 200 metres across the water.⁴⁶ It was not there to support French commercial interests, for there was none. Having confirmed its hold over Indo-China, France was keen to extend its political and religious influence eastwards and Hainan was an



An 1898 photograph of the French Consulate, standing in splendid isolation. © SOAS. Image courtesy of Historical Photographs of China, University of Bristol.

important step. Suspicions of French intentions gave a new lease of life to the British Consulate, which would otherwise have been closed sooner.⁴⁷

In the year their consulate opened, the French established a school and a medical facility.⁴⁸ While such philanthropy may have been welcome, the local authorities distrusted French motives. During the Sino-French War France was believed to be planning the invasion and occupation of Hainan. When three French warships appeared in July 1884, local troops and militia were mobilized. In September, the *taotai* advised all foreigners to write their nationality in big characters above their doorways so as to avoid inadvertent attacks on non-French foreigners. Even after peace was announced in April 1885,⁴⁹ mistrust of the French continued. When a French missionary was murdered in Guangxi Province in 1897, a demand for the occupation of Hainan was feared as part of the settlement claim.⁵⁰ Less than a year later, when France found it had been excluded from a large indemnity loan made by Britain and Germany to China, the French threatened to take Hainan in reprisal.⁵¹ Immediately afterwards French bickering with Russia at the expense of China led to a declaration that France would not only seize Hainan but probably the Luichow (Leizhou) Peninsula as well.⁵² Although they settled for a lease of Kwangchowwan

(Zhanjiang) in April 1898, rumours of something bigger remained.⁵³ It was not until the Boxer uprising that the attention of all the powers shifted to the situation further north.

THE PORT COMES INTO THE 20TH CENTURY

With almost all trade in the hands of Chinese merchants, all the foreigners could contribute were their ships, if only they could approach close enough to be efficient and useful. A lack of navigation lighting near Hainan led to a number of shipping accidents, both in the strait and on the south coast.⁵⁴ Things improved when buoys and lighthouses appeared in 1894, under the Maritime Customs service,⁵⁵ but these did nothing to help the harbour. It was still taking passengers two hours to come ashore from a moored steamer.⁵⁶ In 1908 a British engineering firm surveyed the harbour and formulated a plan,⁵⁷ but by 1910 the project had been shelved indefinitely. Pigs and coolies remained the chief exports, with the annual total of the latter doubling to 40,000 in the first ten years of the new century.⁵⁸

By 1900 the combined foreign population of Hoihow and Kiungchow had grown to 60,⁵⁹ including missionaries and their families. Such a small group made little impression on the treaty port. The French Consulate remained aloof over the water. Most of the foreign buildings were near the British Consulate on the Hoihow waterfront.⁶⁰ There were also the Customs Commissioner's residence and some buildings for his assistants, as well as the Customs Club; customs staff formed the largest group within the foreign population. None of these buildings remains today, although a later (perhaps 1930s) Custom House occupies the site of its predecessors, currently a police station.

The Chinese had also been active. New forts were built in 1891 to the west of Hoihow, the side the French were most likely to attack, and the latest Krupp guns installed.⁶¹ The few roads began to be lit by kerosene lamps in 1892 and a telephone system was introduced, although this only linked the telegraph office in Hoihow to the *taotai's* yamen in

Kiungchow.⁶² A telegraph link to the mainland had been introduced some years before, but it was never satisfactory; typhoon warnings from Hong Kong arrived days after the storm.⁶³ A severe typhoon in 1907 wrecked two of the three steamers that serviced Hoihow and the third was disabled. Trade stopped for weeks.⁶⁴

A Kiungchow Electric Light Co. was established in 1914, but it could only run 1000 lamps. Mismanagement and frequent breakdowns soon saw it close. Hoihow's walls were largely demolished in the 1910s to make way for wider streets.⁶⁵ Kiungchow's walls also began to disappear, but their former position remains discernible. Until the 1920s the two places were separated by five kilometres of low hills, dotted with graves. The road was improved in 1918 and a handful of decrepit Ford vehicles operated a bus service between the two.⁶⁶

A 20-metre bund was built at Hoihow in 1925. Just behind this, rows of small two-and three-storey commercial buildings remain, giving an impression of what the Chinese business centre was like then. Also in 1925, rubber-wheeled rickshaws were introduced and there were, at last, proper electricity and telephone systems. A final attempt at harbour improvement was made in 1928 with the appointment of the Netherlands Harbour Works Co. but, as previously, the plan was not adopted.⁶⁷ Hainan experienced the usual skirmishes between Nationalists and Communists in the 1920s and 1930s. The 1961 film and later ballet *The Red Detachment of Women* was based on one such Hainanese battle.⁶⁸ These troubles were to pale compared with the Japanese blockade and subsequent occupation of Hainan as the 1930s ended.

A 1902 British Foreign Office map of Hainan's natural resources bore the legend 'Pigs Everywhere',⁶⁹ so important were they to the island's economy. The passing of an era was marked when the *Directory & Chronicle* recorded that during 1940 no pigs were exported at all. That was effectively the end of the treaty port.⁷⁰

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