

## Imperialism in the Industrial Age: Consequences in China (and India)

- I. India and China compared
  - A. Britain (and Europe's) imperial efforts in China came almost a century after those in India (1750s v. 1840s and following)
    1. this was a momentous century
  - B. India was not united, the Moghul empire having already disintegrated (although retaining nominal authority) upon British arrival; China, on the other hand, was united under the Qing (Manchu) dynasty and ruled by the imperial bureaucracy
    1. note the consequence of this when there are wars of conquest
    2. i.e., the ability to negotiate for an entire country v. the ad hoc arrangements that vary from place to place in India
  - C. the large sizes of these places
  - D. Perceptions of Europe
    1. the Britain which confronted India and China in 1850 was militarily superior due to the industrial revolution; this was clear in the Opium War, in the Sepoy Rebellion; this material strength and the welfare it produced for its people when combined with a vigorous, confident, mass-based nationalism produced a model attractive to many, including many Indians who were also attracted to other features of the "Western model": dress, language, political and philosophical ideas, economic and commercial techniques, science and technology, and intellectual values and vogues
    2. this appeal was not as strongly felt in China, a civilization equally confident of itself
      - a. elites; see the Emperor Lung letter to King George III
      - b. mass indifference or ignorance
      - c. perhaps only merchant class cared
      - d. cf. homogeneity of China v. variety of India
- I. so what was the Opium War about?
  - A. the vastness of the China market

B. NB: already in 1796 China's imports exceeded exports; the chief import was raw Indian cotton; in 1823 opium surpassed cotton as the chief import

C. on the Indian connection:

1. India was the base for British (and Indian and Parsee) firms which expanded trade with China
2. for India, China was a very profitable trade
3. moreover, many Indians served in British firms in China

D. Treaty Ports as the result of British victory

II. the notion of trade as the great civilizer:

A. e.g., the views of Richard Cobden:

Commerce is the grand panacea which, like a beneficent medical discovery, will serve to inoculate with the healthy and saving taste for civilization all the nations of the world. Not a bale of merchandise leaves our shore but it bears the seeds of intelligence and fruitful thought to the members of some less enlightened community; not a merchant visits our seats of manufacturing industry but he returns to his own country the missionary of freedom, peace, and good government, while our steam boats, that now visit every port of Europe, and our miraculous railroads that are the talk of all nations, are the advertisements and vouchers for the value of our enlightened institutions.

B. However, the difficulty in the context of China (in contrast to India) of implementing this vision, even despite the Opium War and the introduction of the Treaty Ports

1. because China was more able to sustain itself with its own production
2. Moreover, Westerners never learned how to cope without Chinese "compradores" because they (the Europeans) found the language and the myriad of local practices and standards "too difficult" to learn
3. Europeans with this mission to "civilize" China hoped that the treaty ports would attract enough Chinese of entrepreneurial and innovative bent to transform China (and make it more open to European trade), but these Chinese by and large remained in the treaty ports, which grew to be the largest cities in China (excepting Beijing) but still contained a small minority of the Chinese

C. Militarily, China was too big and too unified for a single European power to

conquer, even in the late 19th century, and there were too many rivalries among European powers for them to cooperate in conquering the Empire

- D. However, although China retained sovereignty in a way that India (or the Moghul Empire) never did, what chiefly resulted from this sovereignty in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th was disorder; this blunted the extension outward from the treaty ports of Westernized change; brief chronology:

1839-1842	Opium War; treaty ports established
1850-1879	Taiping Rebellion and other rebellions (Nien, Muslim)
1894-1895	Sino-Japanese War
1898-1900	Boxer Rebellion
1911	Republican revolution overthrows Manchus
1916-1928	Warlord era
1926-1928	Kuomintang reunification of China
1934-1935	Communist long march
1937-1945	War with Japan
1945-1949	Civil war leading ultimately to Communist reunification

- E. this disorder was one reason China never witnessed the building of railroads and the opening of its economy to the world economy that India did; show maps
- F. the Chinese economy, excepting the treaty ports, was essentially able to provide for itself and to exclude Western penetration of the domestic market. At the same time, and perhaps due in part to the political disorder, China was unable to increase productivity and incorporate economic innovations (both institutional and technical), which became problematic with
1. the explosion in population
  2. further imperialist expansion, esp. by Japan
- G. the bottom line, though, is that Chinese domestic (largely handicraft) production remained competitive price-wise and Chinese consumers remained loyal to Chinese-produced items, even if they were not of the same quality (though largely they were)

- H. further, to the extent that manufacturing was introduced in China, it was owned by Chinese; Chinese even owned 40% of the stock in foreign manufacturing firms producing in China (largely in the treaty ports)
  
- I. Rhoads Murphey: "[Europeans] were attempting to invade an economy and a set of producers and entrepreneurs who were able to beat them at their own game, especially on home grounds, enough so at least to stay in charge. The mass of Chinese consumers were low-income and frugal people, unable and perhaps even unwilling to expand their purchasing, at least no to accommodate foreign goods. The market had little elasticity, and it was already adequately served."