



Università Ca'Foscari di Venezia

Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies

Master Thesis

In

Comparative International Relations

The Introduction of liberal and liberalism theories in China during the
Late Qing dynasty: 1800-1912.

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November 2020

Abstract:

Trattare dell'impianto delle idee liberaliste in Cina richiede di passare in rassegna i diversi elementi che hanno costruito l'Impero Cinese, fino al periodo studiato in questo lavoro. Infatti, il regno Manchu nell'epoca tarda della Dinastia dei Qing, le sue reazioni verso gli eventi e incontri del XIX secolo e le trasformazioni che ne derivano, devono essere affrontate attraverso l'osservazione dell'eredità lasciata dalle dinastie precedenti. Tuttavia, l'obiettivo di questa tesi non si può permettere un riassunto completo del colossale patrimonio storico-culturale Cinese che si protrae su più di 2000 anni. L'obiettivo principale di questo lavoro sarà di affrontare, attraverso lo studio delle politiche interne Cinese nonché le relazioni internazionali tra l'Asia Orientale e l'Occidente del XIX secolo, le tappe necessarie all'introduzione delle teorie del Liberalismo in Cina. Un altro scopo sarà l'influenza che l'introduzione da queste teorie hanno avuto e l'uso che ne ha fatto il governo e la gentry Imperiale, come pure gli intellettuali.

La discussione di questo lavoro seguirà la cronologia degli eventi successi in Cina dal inizio del diciannovesimo secolo alla proclamazione della prima repubblica Cinese in 1912. Certo le relazioni internazionali tra l'Asia Orientale e l'Occidente sono molto più vecchie, ma per evitare una dispersione fuori argomento, definire un ambito temporale tra 1800 e 1912 sta essenziale per studiare il contesto storico nel qual si collegano gli eventi e idee che hanno traversato il declino della dinastia Qing. Un declino che rappresenta la fine del modello imperiale Cinese tradizionale, il suo cammino verso la modernizzazione e l'adozione delle teorie liberali e liberaliste.

La prima cosa da prendere in conto quando si tratta della Cina, è l'incredibile influenza del Confucianismo nella visione orientale del Mondo. Per essere più preciso, la costruzione dei rapporti tra i paesi dell'Asia Orientale si è fondata sulla filosofia Confuciana. Filosofia da cui la Cina, che ne possiede la paternità, si serve per legittimare la sua posizione di centro del

Mondo. Ma prima di affrontare l'ordine sociale costruito dalla Cina in Asia Orientale, frutto dei principi Confuciani, si deve spiegare che cos'è il Confucianismo, da cui saranno spiegate le sue basi filosofiche e la sua creazione¹.

La nascita della filosofia confuciana risale tra il V-IV secolo avanti Cristo in Cina. Partendo dall'opera di Confucius, questa scuola di pensiero ha conosciuto una riforma, sotto la dinastia Song (IX-XII secolo d.c.), chiamata Neo-Confucianismo. Questa nuova scuola ha creato un'etica morale, sociale e politica basata sull'auto-coltivazione, per raggiungere l'armonia, una nozione capitale del Confucianismo. L'armonia significa la base della pace in tutti gli ambiti (personale, familiare o lo Stato). È l'intendimento di tutti i conflitti per trovare le soluzioni seguendo la complementarità tra l'uomo e il suo ambiente. Dal punto di vista cinese, la nozione di self-costruttivismo si trova alla base della società, dal rendimento del contadino alla carriera dei magistrati imperiali. L'obiettivo che rappresenta l'armonia fornisce un argomento legittimo per mantenere una politica di "Missione civilizzatrice Confuciana"².

¹ YANG, Mei, "Liberty in Harmony: An Integration of Confucian Harmony and Liberalism in Contemporary China." In *Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies*, Volume 7, pp. 229-234, 2015

² SCHNEIDER, Julia C. "Missionizing, Civilizing, and Nationizing: Linked Concepts of Compelled Change." *Religion and Nationalism in Chinese Societies*, edited by Cheng-tian Kuo, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2017, pp. 89–116. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1zkjzkd.7. Accessed 7 May 2020.

Essendo la Cina considerata come la civiltà la più culturalmente e intellettualmente avanzata, i scambi tra i paesi dell'Asia Orientale seguivano una gerarchia che illustrava l'ordine mondiale secondo il primato Cinese verso i popoli barbari. Un primato che troverà il suo punto culminante sotto la dinastia Ming (1368-1644)³ con il sistema tributario. Questa sistema, ripresa dai Qing, era soprattutto uno strumento di mediazione diplomatica che serviva alla politica di difesa Cinese verso i paesi vicini dell'Asia Orientale. Mantenere lo statuto dell'Imperatore come rappresentante di tutta l'umanità e intermedio tra il cielo e il mondo terreno, permetteva di assicurare la pace tra i paesi asiatici. In altre parole, per un paese straniero, riconoscere la superiorità della Cina attraverso il ruolo dell'Imperatore significava integrarsi in un grande progetto civilizzatore. Una posizione che permetteva ai paesi tributari di commerciare con la Cina, avere rapporti diplomatici, con la creazione di una lingua per le relazioni internazionali e approfittare del sapere Cinese tra le opere degli intellettuali confuciani. In cambio, i tributari dovevano un pagamento regolare in denaro o in natura, nonché l'applicazione di una cerimonia di inginocchiamento, quando i rappresentanti inviati dai capi degli Stati tributari si recavano in Cina per salutare l'Imperatore.

³ Fairbank, J. K., and S. Y. Têng. "On The Ch'ing Tributary System." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1941, pp. 135–246. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2718006. Accessed 20 May 2020.

Una tradizione anche rispettata dagli europei dal XVI secolo sotto la dinastia Ming. Il governo Cinese commerciava con le potenze occidentali impiantate in Asia Orientale⁴, come il Portogallo a Macao. Sotto i Qing, gli Olandesi stanziati a Java riuscirono a ottenere un trattato commerciale ufficiale in cambio del invio di una delegazione tributaria a Pechino. Ma questi due poteri europei non seguivano solo i loro interessi economici, ma soltanto religiosi. In effetti, l'influenza dei Gesuiti nella società Cinese aveva raggiunto la cerchia dell'Imperatore con consiglieri, astronomi o cartografi. A questo punto, i Qing tolleravano gli occidentali perché il sistema tributario era rispettato, ma a partire dalla rivoluzione industriale le potenze europee, particolarmente il Regno Unito, seguendo le nuove idee liberiste, non erano soddisfatti della politica protezionista della Cina verso il commercio e la diplomazia. Potenti compagnie commerciali come l'EIC (East India Company), spingevano i governi ad iniziare delle trattative con la Cina per la fine del *Single-Port Trade*⁵ mantenuto a Canton e liberarsi del monopolio portoghese⁶. Dal punto di vista Cinese, l'improvviso rifiuto degli europei a rispettare il *kotow* e il pagamento del tributo venne ricevuto con ostilità, deteriorando le relazioni già fragili tra l'Occidente e la Cina.

⁴ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I , pp. 92-97, 2000

⁵ ROBINS, Nick, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*, 2nd ed. Pluto Press, Chap. 6-7-8, 2012.

⁶ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II , pp. 139-150, 2000

Relazioni che sarebbero andate peggiorando nel tempo con i scambi commerciali tra la Cina e i paesi occidentali. Conflitti dovuti all'attrattività di certi prodotti per il mercato occidentale. Le principali merci scambiate tra la Cina e L'East Indian Company erano, tè, seta non raffinata o mobilio contro varie pelli, zucchero, e metalli che servivano alla fabbricazione di moneta in Cina come il rame o l'argento. La maggioranza dei prodotti inglesi venivano dall'India e a partire dalla fine del diciottesimo secolo, l'EIC aveva il monopolio sulla vendita dell'oppio⁷. Quest'importo massivo di droga in Cina rappresentava un duplice problema per il governo Qing. Il primo, era la sanità pubblica. Il consumo dell'oppio toccava tutti gli strati della società, dal disoccupato al magistrato⁸, e molti assidui consumatori erano diventati incapaci di lavorare correntemente. L'altro problema riguardava la crisi finanziaria che conosceva la Cina a questo tempo dovuta a vari fattori: la diffusa corruzione dei suoi funzionari, la tassazione eccessiva del popolo da parte dei governatori provinciali e le spese colossali dell'Imperatore⁹, il crescente uso di opio che causava perdite, che nel XIX sec costava approssimativamente 20 milioni di taeli in 1831 (la moneta Cinese dell'epoca). Un ammanco catastrofico per il governo cinese, incapace di regolare il flusso dei contrabbandieri e la lavorazione della droga nelle fabbriche di Canton e Macao. La crisi dell'oppio peggiorò negli anni Venti dell'Ottocento, quando l'EIC perse il monopolio del commercio con la Cina. L'apertura del mercato della droga condusse vari imprenditori privati a inondare la Cina di opium.

⁷ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, pp. 168-173, 2000

⁸ BASU, DILIP K. "Chinese Xenology and the Opium War: Reflections on Sinocentrism." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 73, no. 4, 2014, pp. 931-932. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43553460. Accessed 7 May 2020.

⁹ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp. 123-127, 2000

L'apertura del mercato Cinese agli interessi privati rappresentava un cambiamento significativo per i funzionari cinesi a Canton. In altre parole, la Cina temeva di trattare con un grande numero di "barbari" e preferiva essere in contatto con un solo rappresentante. Gli obiettivi Britannici erano l'apertura di altri porti in Cina e la creazione di un legame diplomatico diretto con l'Imperatore a Pechino. Negli anni 1830, vari sovrintendenti inglesi si susseguirono senza cambiare la posizione Cinese sulla sua chiusura al libero scambio nei suoi porti. L'animosità del governo Cinese sul commercio dell'oppio raggiunse un punto critico con l'invio del commissario imperiale Lin Ze-tsu a Canton in 1839 per agire sul import e il consumo della droga. Le sue azioni a Canton, contro le fabbriche straniere e gli residenti occidentali condussero a una risposta armata dell'Inghilterra, l'occupazione della città di Chusan e l'inizio della prima guerra dell'oppio. Una guerra che si concluderà con la sconfitta della Cina e un'occasione per l'Impero Britannico di forzare il governo Imperiale ad accettare un apertura dei porti Cinesi e l'installazione di consolati in queste nuove città attraverso il trattato di Nakino. Dalla sconfitta emerse un sentimento xenofobo contro l'occupazione inglese e un'opposizione forte contro l'impianto diplomatico e commerciale dei occidentali nel paese che ebbe un impatto negativo sulla continuità delle negoziazioni tra i diplomatici forzarono britannici e Cinesi. Al limite, il Regno Unito occupò la città e minacciò di attaccare Pechino se l'Imperatore non avesse accettato un nuovo trattato di apertura commerciale e diplomatica, conducendo al trattato di Tientsin.

I cosiddetti “Trattati Inuguali” obbligava le Cina ad entrare nella mondializzazione causata dalla Rivoluzione Industriale europea. Questi nuovi scambi fra un numero sempre più alto di attori ha introdotto in Cina tecnologie e letteratura scientifica occidentali. Questo periodo è anche l’inizio del movimento di auto-rafforzamento che aveva l’obiettivo di modernizzare l’industria Cinese, principalmente militare, con la costruzione di navi a vapore per la nuova flotta imperiale. Lavori che richiedevano l’aiuto di esperti stranieri e il ricorso ad una mano d’opera importante, questi nuovi cantieri imperiali offrendo tantissimi lavori. Alla fine del XIX secolo, con l’influenza di pensatori come Yan Fu, Li Hung-chang propose del finanziamento da parte dello Stato di imprese cinesi per il solo profitto economico. A questo punto, la Cina investiva nelle linee di treno, nelle banche e il telegrafo. Seguendo quest’diffusione delle teorie economiche Europei nella società Cinese, una riforma del sistema politico nella corte Imperiale e della formazione dei funzionari era giudicata necessaria dai intellettuali. Da questo movimento riformista, emersero due correnti¹⁰: quella conservatrice, diretta dal tutore dell’Imperatore Weng T’ung-ho, per la modernizzazione nel rispetto scrupoloso della tradizione confuciana, e la corrente radicale con K’ang Yu-Wei, centrato sull’integrazione diretta delle idee occidentali nella società Cinese.

¹⁰ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. IV, pp. 358-369, 2000

La corrente radicale guadagnerà l'interesse dell'Imperatore Kuang-hsü negli ultimi anni del XIX secolo. Sedotto dalle riforme istituzionali proposte da K'ang Yu-Wei e preoccupato di riassicurare la sovranità Cinese in Asia dopo la sconfitta contro il Giappone nel 1895, l'Imperatore consentì all'elaborazione di riforme liberali, basate sulle politiche occidentali, sull'educazione, l'amministrazione e l'industria durante la "Riforma dei cento giorni". Ma seguito alla formazione politica limitata di K'ang e la sua comprensione parziale della società occidentale, aggiunto all'opposizione della maggioranza conservatrice alla corte Imperiale e le macchinazioni dell'Imperatrice vedova Cixi per conservare officiosamente il potere, la riforma era condannata al fallimento. Gli anni seguenti videro il colpo di Stato organizzato da Cixi e della gentry conservatrice, un'altro conflitto tra le potenze occidentali e la Cina durante la Rivolta dei Boxers in 1900, caratterizzata da un'altra sconfitta Cinese. Il passaggio dal XIX al XX secolo vedrà la vittoria del Giappone contro la Russia, un primo nel mondo asiatico. Fino a 1912 e la fine dell'Impero Qing, il potere Imperiale investirà le sue ultime forze in una riforma costituzionale e istituzionale diretta da nuovi intellettuali. Uno dei più importanti fu Liang Qichao, che introdusse la nozione di cittadinanza e la creazione di una società civile formata da individui virtuosi grazie a la libertà¹¹. Il principio della libertà interpretata dai testi come *Il contratto sociale* di Rousseau o *Saggio sulla Libertà* di Mill. Questa nuova linea di pensiero provocherà la fine del pensiero confuciano tradizionale negli organi dello Stato e la trasformazione della Cina in una repubblica.

¹¹ HUANG, Max Ko-wu, *The meaning of Freedom : Yan Fu and the Origins of Chinese Liberalism*, The Chinese University Press, Part. I, pp. 40-55 , 2008

Contents :

Abstract

Introduction

I. China in 1800's international relations.

1. The Sino-centralist vision of the World.

- a. Confucianism at the base of society.
- b. China regarding East Asian countries.
- c. China regarding the West.

2. The aims of the British economic empire in China.

- a. The liberal theories at the centre of British imperialism.
- b. The British affairs in China, the case of the East Indian Company.

II. China and its conflicts.

1. The Opium Wars

- a. Opium trade, between public health and flourishing market.
- b. A cultural shock.
- c. Coping with the West.

2. The Unequal Treaties.

- a. Chinese diplomacy and western ultimatums.
- b. A forced opening to the Occident ?

3. Inner insurgencies, the crumbling of Manchu's power.

- a. The Taiping Rebellion.
- b. Corruption and power shifting.

III. Attempts of renewal under Western influences.

1. Wake up from humiliation.

- a. Maintaining China's sovereignty, the self-strengthening movement.
- b. The intellectual ideologies, between, conservatism, reformism and revolutionists.

2. The fall of the Qing

- a. The Hundred-Days reform and the Empress dowager reign.
- b. Chinese nationalism, the Boxer uprising and the seeds of revolution.

Conclusion

Bibliography

Introduction

The common, contemporary point of view when discussing about modern China would revolve around its fast economic growth and its political implication in the international relations process. Through a large labour force, high economic attractiveness for private investors and competitive industries under the national institutions watch, China managed to earn its place as the second largest economy in the World¹². However, this global overview of China is strongly linked to the post-Maoist economic reform of 1978 led by the Party's first secretary Deng Xiaoping¹³. This reform can find its roots in the early years of the Chinese Republic, when the Imperial system was dethroned in 1912 by the reformists led by Sun Yat-sen, putting an end to the last Imperial dynasty, the Qing controlled by the Manchus. This brings to the second usual vision of China, the classical representation of pre-Republican China as a rich and prosperous country highly rooted in its traditions. But before the stereotypical representation of an ancient country, inhabited by wise and white bearded intellectuals that Hergé depicted in *Tintin, The Blue Lotus*, the usual classic representation of China came from Adam Smith in its 1776 opera : *The Wealth of Nations*. In these book, Smith has a long and empirical discourse on China, its culture, workforce and its agricultural production¹⁴. Other thinkers and authors already treated China as an example or a particular case. Montesquieu, for example, often cited ancient Chinese dynasties policies in *De l'esprit des Lois*¹⁵ when making the comparison between republican, monarchical or despotic government or discussing traditions regarding local policies.

¹² The Worldbank website(<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview#1> last access: 26/05/2020)

¹³ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. IV, pp. 481-500, 2011

¹⁴ SMITH, A., *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of Wealth of Nations*, Book I, Chap.VIII and XI pp. 30, 80, 86-87 and Book IV, Chap. IX, pp.282-283.

¹⁵ De Montesquieu, C., *De l'esprit des Lois*, Books V to XX, XXIII to XXVI and XXIX.

Both had a precise idea of what was the Empire of China at their time, but the depiction Smith drafted in *The Wealth of Nations* drove the general idea occidentals had on the Middle Empire until the XXth century, especially characterized by the Qing dynasty's ruling of the country. This period of time for the country, the late years of the Qing in the XIXth century to be precise, was defined as the result of the Manchu's power decaying process and the limits of Chinese institutions. While, in Europe, the Industrial Revolution was growing bigger and that commercial empires were rising stronger than ever in the colonies, pushed by new economic standards and theories, China, from a European point of view, seemed to have not change in centuries as Smith exposed it :

*“China has been long one of the richest, that is, one of the most fertile, best cultivated, most industrious, and most populous countries in the world. It seems, however, to have been long stationary. Marco Polo, who visited it more than five hundred years ago, describes its cultivation, industry, and populousness, almost in the same terms in which they are described by travellers in the present times.”*¹⁶

Regarding both parts of the World at the light of the upcoming XIXth century global changes, both venerable China and the young growing Liberal empires of the West should encounter and eventually shape the future of international relations. The goal of the current work will be to list, analyse and explain the sum of traditions, thoughts, events and decisions which contextualised the reactions taken by the Qing Empire regarding its introduction to western liberal theories in the XIXth century and how they reshaped the Middle Empire's vision of the World.

¹⁶ SMITH, A., *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of Wealth of Nations*, Book I, Chap.VIII pp. 30

To simplify and expose such a topic, this paper will follow the historical chronological order of the events that occurred during this period. Taking the various topics needed for such a discussion chronologically is required, first to properly understand why the Chinese government, for example, chose to react to the West's diplomatic and commercial views on China. The other advantage is that the argumentation, following the course of nineteenth century's China's history, will be more clear and avoid digressions on certain subjects like Confucian culture or the Imperial administration's system. On this journey throughout the Middle Kingdom's modern history, the main sources will be *The Rise of Modern China* by Immanuel C.Y. Hsü and *The Great Chinese Revolution* by John K. Fairbank. Two recognized experts of the historical era treated here, whose work strongly influenced the methodology of the current paper. Among the various other sources used to discuss more precise subjects here, the two previously quoted books will serve as historical red wires.

The first part of this work will concentrate on the cultural contextualisation of China under the late Qing dynasty. And before discussing the first occidental installations in the country, it is worthy to introduce and explain the traditional environment by which all Chinese policies were drafted and adopted. To do so, a succinct introduction to Confucianism will be needed to understand the cultural principles and objectives shaping the Chinese world, its position regarding Eastern Asia and the other countries which composed it. The behaviour adopted by China's imperial government regarding the West and its representatives on the Chinese borders will then be analysed as well as the western countries present in East Asia during this period. The particular case of Great Britain's presence in China and its interests in this country will then be discussed through the rise of liberal theories and how they shaped the British aims in its exchanges with China. The East Indian Company case should then be studied to show a concrete example of what kind of western institutions China had to deal with when coping with its commerce with the Occident, what kinds of goods and services were exchanged and how

trade was organised under the Qing jurisdiction. The last point of this contextualisation will be the depiction of the opposition that rose during time between the British modern imperialist state of mind and the conservative Chinese traditional Empire, reluctant to any changes and the confrontation that emerged from both positions.

The second part regarding the topic, will focus on the series of armed, diplomatic and institutional conflicts that jeopardised China during the second half of the XIXth century. The Opium wars, their causes, the meaning of this conflict from both Chinese and British point of view and what their outcomes of such wars signified for the parties involved. The more well-known outcomes led to the signatures of what History will remember as the Unequal Treaties. The diplomatic conditions of their elaboration and their impact on China's opening to the global trade will follow as the turning point of how the Imperial government was coping with western powers and the diplomatic methods their officials used. The last point of this part will be about the inner problematics the Chinese government had to face. The case of the Taiping Rebellion is a great example of the Manchu's power contestation in various provinces of the Empire as well as the influence of western missionaries and religious texts. From a more institutional point of view, the crumbling of Imperial control on the general governors in the provinces and the rampant corruption present in all levels of the Chinese gentry will be necessary to understand the urge and distress in which the Qing dynasty was after the Opium Wars.

The third and last main part of the present paper touches the attempt of the Imperial court to reform its institutions and reaffirm Chinese sovereignty in East Asia while coping with the western occupation of the country. The three main points here will firstly concern how China woke up from the ultimatums imposed by the western powers. To do so, the occidental settlements in China after they obtained the commercial and diplomatic exchanges they wanted had an important role to play in the future self-strengthening movement that followed the acknowledgment that China needed to be modernized. This need led to the fraction of Chinese

intellectuals concerning the reform, how their decisions played a role in the last years of Imperial China and from who they took their new ideas. The last topics of this last part will then expose the evolutions of the nationalist ideologies in the Imperial court and the spread of anti-occidental imperialism. The last years of the Empire under the command of the Empress dowager Cixi, marked with the Boxers uprising and the revolutionary founders of what will become the first Republic of China.

Part I

China in 1800's international relations

In the context that represent the XIXth century in Qing's China, the first topic to introduce will be who were the Qing and what were they different from other dynasties before them. To understand why the Manchu's grasp on China was that special, a recap of how this nation, rich of one million and half inhabitant composed by in various tributes dethroned the Ming dynasty. As exposed very rightly in *The Great Chinese Revolution* by John King Fairbank, the main menace a foreign conqueror should worry about when taking the power in China, would be to maintain his sovereignty without being assimilated by the country itself¹⁷. The Qing, at the contrary of the Mongolian dynasty before the Ming, were perfectly prepared to keep the power and insure their legitimacy over China through clever military and political strategies. The Manchus were different from the Mongolian only by their political approach. Militarily speaking, the Manchu's army was very similar to the Mongolian's by the bannermen system consisting in the merging of tribal armies under a banner controlled by the government, preventing the formation of temporary tribal armies, the possibility of an uprising and thus creating a permanent and trustworthy army. The crumbling of the Ming power and its incapacity

¹⁷ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I, p.38, 2011

to control the revolts tearing the country apart made China vulnerable to the well organised Manchu's army. If the military conquest of China appeared to be easy, the formation of the Qing government required a more ingenious approach. Manchu's officials knew well that trying to impose their authority by force to their new subjects would only lead to a series of popular revolts and the disagreement of the Chinese elites. To insure their legitimacy, they then created a diarchy of both Manchus and Chinese official, keeping the Chinese already existing gentry and thus obtaining its support, giving birth to the Qing dynasty in 1644¹⁸.

After achieving the tour de force of an alliance with the Chinese officials, and thus the majority of the population, the Manchus choose also to keep the previous Ming dynasty customs and traditions. The bases of the Chinese society lied in the long lasting studying of the Confucian texts. Keeping the Ming's gentry signified also keeping the Ming's way of thinking. In that way, the Manchus excelled by taking an even more traditionalist and protectionist approach of Confucian teaching as embracing this particular shape of the World.

1. The Sino-centralist vision of the World.

a. Confucianism as the base of society.

As the entire Qing's decisions were taken following the Confucian education, an acknowledgment of its basic principles should be exposed here, as the cultural differences with an occidental centred view of international relations or public policies are numerous. To roughly summarise the importance of Confucianism in China, its creator, Confucius, founded its school of thought made as a structural guide for all society matters. Giving ethical guidelines that Chinese should apply in every day's behaviours and a template to be use by the upper governing class to organise the country's institutions. Gaining its popularity under the Han dynasty

¹⁸ MICHAEL, Franz. "State and Society in Nineteenth-Century China." *World Politics*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1955, pp. 419–433. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2009000. Accessed 7 May 2020.

(between 206 B.C. and 220 A.C.), what is called “traditional Confucianism” was adopted by the Imperial Court and later, all China as a global ideology. Although, centuries later, under the Qing dynasty, the dominant school of thought was Neo-Confucianism. Inherited from the Song dynasty (960-1279), Neo-Confucianism created the bases of Confucian teaching and studying in an institutionalised education through a strongly ritualised method¹⁹. This importance of rituals gave a religious status to Confucianism as the access to the highest spheres of administration were attainable only by those who fulfilled a long and devoted journey of studies and exams. Because the principle aspect of Neo-Confucianism is the path through each individual has to take to become a sage. Called the self-cultivation, this state of mind that all humans are urged to achieve is the only way to find harmony²⁰ between the “self”, the human, and his environment. The idea of harmony between all things is seen as the most important value because it represented the peace in the heart and mind of the individual. Without peace, one can’t behave harmoniously with others and his surroundings, with his family or with society and the State. The pursuit of harmony is thus the pursuit of global peace and order. Harmony is the objective that contain the resolution of personal conflict or State dilemmas, self-cultivation is the way to the *Tian* or Heaven. Following this idea, only the most righteous and virtuous people could achieve harmony, giving credit and legitimacy to the institutions and the Imperial leadership as they represent the part of the population that is the closest to heaven due to the difficulty of the studies a Chinese official had to finish before entering the State institutions. A recognition the Manchus obtained and were determined to keep. As the Emperor was the depository of both Manchu and Chinese traditions, he had a charismatic influence over Chinese society by his perfect knowledge of the sacred texts. This dichotomy between the ones who

¹⁹ TAYLOR and ARBUCKLE, “Confucianism.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 54, no. 2, 1995, pp. 349–350. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2058740. Accessed 1 June 2020.

²⁰ YANG, Mei, “Liberty in Harmony: An Integration of Confucian Harmony and Liberalism in Contemporary China.” In *Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies*, Volume 7, pp. 231-234, 2015

studied the Confucian texts following the State institution's examination program and the rest of the population created a huge gap between two distinct parts of society. The gentry on one side and every other Chinese subject on the other. The first being highly concentrated in the main cities of the country like Peking, composed of the officials, intellectuals, land owners and rich craftsmen, the second dispatched in all the country, almost exclusively composed of farmers. Under the late Qing dynasty in the early 1800's, the big cities inhabitants represented 25% of the population²¹, digging a tremendous gap between the rural and urban population.

However, despite this difference, it is important to take in consideration the social hierarchy Neo-Confucian thinkers established throughout the centuries. From the scholars point of view, the virtue of a man lied on his capacity to follow the Way (pursuit of harmony). In other words people who had a function considered as helping the order to be maintain in the country was higher in the social hierarchy than another who was manoeuvring for his own interest. For example, a peasant cultivating his land (or his landowner's) was better considered than a merchant. Following the Confucian logic, the peasant by producing food, which was the core of Chinese agricultural economy, was more useful to the State's balance than the merchant, trader or shopkeeper who was only working for his own profit. According to Confucian teaching, an individual's work should always be done in adequacy with the common interest. For this reason, even if merchants or traders were much richer than any farmer, they were considered at the very bottom of the social ladder²². Higher on the hierarchy were so the landowners, the farmers (often working for a landowner) and other artisans. Above them were the intellectuals, the officials and magistrates working for the State. Despite the absence of a cast system sorting the population by their birth or wealth, Confucianism was differentiating the part of the population working with their hands and the part working with their mind, the

²¹ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I, p.41, 2011

²² HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp. 70-75, 2000

second being the ruler of the first. But, as clearly says Immanuel Hsü in his work, Chinese society at this time could not be simply saw as a bipolar class society. Not all intellectuals were occupying important functions in the government and not all manual artisans were considered as inferior, but this differentiation was still dominant in Chinese social hierarchy to be noted²³. Of course this separation was not only due to social categorisation, the education system and the opportunities it was offering.

Indeed, as being an official was seen as a symbol of virtue, hard work and excellence, the way to achieve such a privilege was highly codified. First of all, everyone could access the educational program based on an important need for the new Qing government in public employees but also according to the egalitarian chance for everyone to achieve harmony. So all seven years old children could start, if they “wanted” so, the examination’s preparations. Of course, considering those studies were extremely long and rigorous, it was ridiculously hard for a commoner from a poor farmer’s family to attempt such an education. Knowing that the average official could enter in activity at the lowest level of administration under the age of thirty-five, that the final examinations were taking place in Peking during several weeks every three years and that, at the end, only a few students were accepted. Due to the lack of time or basic knowledge, it was very risky for a mere commoner to attempt such a journey.

The Qing had a total control of the examinations and knew very well how to use such a formidable tool to influence the balance of power each province of the country had in the imperial administration. By imposing quotas to the maximal number of students to be send to Peking and that would be selected, the Manchus were insured that the richest provinces would not be over-represented in the administration. Generally, each province could send between 5000 and 12000 candidates maximum, among them only a hundred would graduate²⁴. Each of

²³ MICHAEL, Franz. “State and Society in Nineteenth-Century China.” *World Politics*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1955, pp. 419–433. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2009000. Accessed 7 May 2020.

²⁴ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I , pp.48-55, 2011

the lucky one could then enter the labyrinthine Qing administration. Therefore, they had certain privileges due to their status, like less punishment and they were not under the same jurisdiction system as the other. Because when entering the administration process, students were prepared to be cut from the commoner's environment. As they were not dressed the same, were not speaking the same language and were speaking or taking actions only through the prism of Neo-Confucian teachings. This dichotomy between the Imperial government representatives and the people found its culmination with the Emperor. The Imperial figure, represented as the Son of Heaven, was viewed as the most powerful man in the whole World. As the leader of China, he was the most virtuous person in the Empire, the highest intellectual among the scholars, the direct link between the Heaven and the Heart and the individual on whose shoulders lied the formidable task of lead humans closer to peace and harmony. Or at least he had to appear like it. Because officially, if the Emperor was the incontestable leader of China, informally, the legitimacy of the Manchus over the country depended on its behaviour as a religious leader. The double responsibility the Emperor had, regarding the Manchus and the Chinese forced him to permanently juggle between both to insure a peaceful cohabitation. As the Manchus were occupying important functions inside the Imperial court and the military, the majority of them were living isolated from the common World. Especially the descendants of Nurhaci, the founder of the Qing dynasty. The objectives of the Manchus officials were to keep their blood as Manchu as possible and thus were overly protected and watched over. For the Emperor, it was more his obligations towards the "public opinion", namely the Chinese gentry²⁵. Because as a supposed model of Confucian thinking, he had several responsibilities. From the usual duties of an absolute monarch as ordering the whole administration for all provinces, proclaimed the country's policies and receive people of influence from all Asia, the Emperor also had the responsibility to be attentive to the needs of his people and to respect all the

²⁵ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp. 46-47, 2000

Confucian rules and traditions as depicted by the gentry and the Chinese intelligentsia. Among those traditions was the respect he had to show for his predecessors actions. The respect of the ancestors being one of the highly moral rules in Chinese society, stick to the policy or the administration an ancestor ad build was one of the most important guidelines for the Emperor.

As the religious leader, he had to administer the major cults in the country, knowing Buddhists and Taoists representatives but also the direct descendants of Confucius. All his obligations, if entirely fulfilled, were justifying its position and the Emperor was constantly coping with the gentry to appear as virtuous as his function asked him to be. Acting in the permanent anguish that one of its decision could be taken as a treason and then start a rebellion. Indeed, it is important to point that the right of popular revolt is stipulated in Confucian rules from the early years of the religion by Mencius, the second sage after Confucius himself. So if the power of the Emperor was absolute, his position on the throne was very unstable. Even natural catastrophes such as earthquakes or even droughts were considered as his fault for not being virtuous enough. The Emperor then had to execute ceremonies of expiation and offer presents to heaven²⁶.

Considering those facts, it appears that the Manchus really grasped what were the right strings to pull in Chinese society, how the Confucian cult was the founding of it and how they cleverly used and integrated it in their plan to legitimate the ruling of the Qing dynasty over the country. Moreover, how they managed to reinforce the direct power of the Emperor by putting Manchus officials at strategic posts, controlling directly the examinations and the entry of new public employees in the country's administration, also maintaining at the same time the intellectual gentry to validate their position. With such good political manoeuvres, the Qing managed indeed to keep a certain peace and harmony in China. But the local administration was not the

²⁶ *Ibid*

only thing the Manchus saved from the fall of the Ming dynasty. They also inherited of their influence in East Asia, another position the Qing had to watch closely.

b. China regarding the East Asian countries

The influence of Imperial China on the surrounding countries of East Asia during the nineteenth century, is clearly inherited from its position as the superior country by essence. Status ascribed to the birth of Confucianism in the country and the higher knowledge Chinese intellectuals had on Confucian teachings. Chinese scholar, according to this idea, considered China as the highest civilised country and people and that its mission was to spread the Confucian way of life in the World. Because even if the other cultures and countries were seen as barbaric, the civilising program of China was not based on the a racial character of the people but in the individuals capacity to accept and incorporate the Confucian traditions into their societies²⁷. Of course the vision China had of international relations was not only linked to the philanthropic ideal of spreading the civilisation in the World. The Imperial court's objectives were that China would always be recognized as the most advanced and intellectually superior country in the World, first to insure international stability between East Indian nations and second, to protect their commercial interests by keeping their status of first Asian marketplace. However, the Qing dynasty was characterised by its propensity to maintain strong protectionist policies of closed frontiers. The good ongoing of international relations in East Asia at this time was due to the precise hierarchy stated between China and the other countries. China, as the Middle Kingdom, was placed at the top and all the other nations counting Korea, the Kingdom of Ryukyu, the Annam province (northern Vietnam), The Siam Kingdom of Rattanakosin and the Konbaung dynasty in Burma. This hierarchy forming what Immanuel Hsü compare to the European vision

²⁷ ROWE, William T., *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China, Cambridge and London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, Part. 5, pp.133-134, 2009

of the “family of nations”²⁸. A comparison he show was the example of national inequality in the eyes of Chinese scholars.

To fit this vision and insure their full control over trade in East Asia, The Qing hardened a system, already proven very useful to the Ming : the tributary system. The idea behind this strongly protectionist tool, was directly linked to the Emperor’s status as the leader of mankind and the prestige other countries could have by being recognized by him. This is why the tributary system was more like a ritual than an international relations relationship as it can be imagined in Occident. To keep its leading place at this “family of nations” table, China created a mindful strategy that could serve in diplomatic relations, commerce and international security at the same time. Taking the two levels in Chinese hierarchy of the World, it was China and all the other and such a difference could create conflict or at least mistrust. And this, the Chinese officials knew it perfectly because they arranged the system to be the only one imaginable in East Asia to administer matters of international relations. The major part of the tributary system reposed on the symbolic of the tribute as a proof of mutual trust and respect. For the arrangement between China and another country to work, the offering could not only come from one side, the Emperor also had responsibilities toward other foreign leaders²⁹. Therein, both parties had common interests, the foreign leader came to get the benediction of the Emperor, therefore insuring the legitimacy of his government since the recognition of new leaders or kingdoms were always granted by China. They also get the right to exchange with China, diplomatically through the tributes and the envoys the Emperor could send in their country, economically also with the permission to a group of merchants to be part of the tributary mission. Those merchants then had a limited time fixed by Peking to sell their products, thus controlling the imports of foreign goods in the country. Finally, they could

²⁸ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, p.130 , 2000

²⁹ FAIRBANK, J. K., and Têng S. Y., “On The Ch’ing Tributary System.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1941, pp. 147–148. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2718006. Accessed 4 June 2020.

request the help of the Emperor to send military reinforcements during armed conflicts, arbitrate rivalry between two countries and insure material assistance in case of natural disasters³⁰.

But the Emperor's good graces come with a price. Each tributary mission could involve hundreds of people counting the officials and their suites, counting also all the preparations necessary for the journey to Peking. Also, China was always the winning party in terms of financial tributes, the foreign countries paying way much more what China ever gave them. Knowing that such missions could take place four times in a year like the case of Korea, the actual cost of such journeys were tremendously high. Another sacrifice the tributary countries had to make for Chinese recognition and interest was the reception of Chinese delegations, because if no foreigner was permitted to stay in China beyond the time limits imposed by the Middle Kingdom, imperial officials were always send as witnesses of the most important leaders investitures. Those delegations could stay half a year at the expense of the tributary country that had to prepare for their stay and the ceremony of investiture³¹. The final cost of the whole ceremonies was almost impossible to bear for the smallest countries and it wasn't unusual that one could wait several years after their king's accession to the throne to gather enough funds to receive the imperial envoys³². But as long as the Emperor's tribute had more of an informal but highly symbolic value, the tributary system remained accepted by the foreign leaders who then accepted the primacy of China, the recognition of the Emperor as the Son of Heaven, the incorporation of the Chinese culture through the Chinese calendar, the Confucian teachings and the diplomatic language created especially to facilitate international exchanges. The tributary system could be compared to the serfs and lord relationship known in European Middle Age but it would oversimplifying the ceremonial and strategic role this system had in

³⁰ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, p.131 , 2000

³¹ FAIRBANK, J. K., and Têng S. Y., "On The Ch'ing Tributary System." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1941, pp. 163-176. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2718006. Accessed 4 June 2020.

³² HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, p.132 , 2000

all Asia. Because if the advantages for the countries surrounding China were mostly political and commercial, to the eyes of the Emperor it was a matter, not only of international primacy and intellectual superiority or religious leadership recognition, but also of national security.

The most important tradition during tributary ceremonies or diplomatic meetings was the *kotow*, a kneeling ritual that served as a mark of respect between both parties representatives. The nature of the ceremony, the actors involved or the negotiations topic influenced how this ritual should be performed³³. For example a tributary mission, after the foreign country's envoys having presented the tributes and products to the Emperor, had to perform three kotows. That means the foreign representatives had to kneel three times and knock their heads on the floor nine times. In the case of a crowning recognition, the new leader had to perform seven kotows to the imperial officials, later followed by one kotow after the ceremony to which the Chinese envoys should reply by doing the same. This ritual was the core of East Asian diplomatic politeness and was therefore unskippable and any refusal would be taken as an insult by the Imperial court. A detail that will prove to be of first importance when further topics will be discussed in this current work. The Qing knew that peace would be maintained in East Asia through such a ritualised way to conduct international relations, beside the pleasure to give China its rightful place as depicted by the Confucian thinking, the preservation of the status quo that represented the hierarchy between nations insured security and stability in this part of the continent. A peace which was in perfect adequacy with the protectionist policy the Qing were sustaining in China. By isolating the foreign representatives and limiting the contact between them and the local population, they could keep an almost total control on the country.

However, another asset the Qing dynasty had was its administration. The Manchus didn't have to worry only about the East but also the North-West of Asia, their direct neighbours being the

³³ *Ibid*

Mongols. The Manchus relations with the nomad tribes dated back to their conquest of China in the seventeenth century.

One tribe helped the Manchus to take over the country and under the Qing dynasty, the major parts of Mongolian territories fell over to China's jurisdiction. Even if the Qing considered those territories as a part of the Chinese Empire, the Mongolian tribes outside the Chinese borders kept a relative autonomy as their language and their traditions. Considering the large scale of the Chinese frontiers with the Mongolians and the passive both nations had together, the Qing adapted the tributary system to their former allies³⁴. To do so, they chose to separate the tributary affairs with the Mongolians from the affairs with the eastern countries. They then created a new board of foreign affairs, the Court of Colonial Affairs³⁵ (*Li Yan Yüan*) which was more appropriate to the particular status of Mongolian territories. The other relations with foreign countries being administered under two administrations (The Board of Ceremonies and the Reception Department), this difference of treatment signified both the understanding by Qing official of the need to cope differently according to the nations they were dealing with, each Mongolian tribes outside Chinese borders being spread across the Central Asia steppes and the menace they represented for the Chinese through the centuries. In consequences the ceremonies were a bit different, of course the kotow, the other rituals of tributes offering were respected and the annual tributary missions to Peking were applied. But each Mongolian Prince and each tribe was treated as a specific individual, with the organisation of vast banquet in which Qing envoys should take part. More than that, the *Li Yan Yüan* was organised in such a way that the large majority of its representatives were Manchus. Firstly to avoid any conflict provoked by the ancestral defiance for Mongols the Chinese, secondly to keep the reports on inner Mongolia political evolutions as close to the Emperor as possible. The Qing

³⁴ FAIRBANK, J. K., and Têng S. Y., "On The Ch'ing Tributary System." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1941, pp. 158-163. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2718006. Accessed 4 June 2020.

³⁵ *Ibid*

administration knew how dangerous for them a possible alliance of the Mongolian under a new Khan could be and took the measures to avoid or prevent such a threat³⁶.

The relations with Mongols, in this case, became more only an affair of territorial security compared to the other Asian countries in the East. The Qing did not have the same primary motivations as the former dynasties. Unlike the Ming, who used the tributary system simply as a justification for international trade and diplomacy, the Manchus were searching for territorial peace and control over the population of a country they conquered by force and of which they extended the borders. Modifying the tributary system according to the nations they were dealing with and the level of threat it could represent was then the best solution to advocate their protectionist policies. But concentrate only on Asian powers to build a “family of nations” forming a protection against direct military menaces was not enough. The dawn of the nineteenth century saw the expansion of other forces that, if they were not unknown to the Chinese, will deeply influence the East Asian balance.

c. China regarding the West.

Relationships between China and the Occident were everything but new at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Even without going too far back to the first silk road and the antique trade routes that already existed between Europe and China, Marco Polo’s expedition in Asia during the thirteenth century, and the new trade routes discovered in the process, increased the interest European nations had for the Middle Kingdom. Yet, the incursions of Europeans were small and mostly Jesuits missionaries were able to stay for enough time inside Chinese borders. The most well-known of those missionaries being Matteo Ricci, who managed to establish a permanent Jesuit settlement in Peking in 1601³⁷ until the XIXth century. Because diminishing

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ ROWE, William T., *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China, Cambridge and London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, Part. 5, p. 138, 2009

the impact the Christian missionaries had on Chinese society would be an error preventing us to understand many choices and events that will be discussed later in this work. Despite the religious influence they had (mostly in the south) on a certain part of the population, the Jesuits brought some part of the western technology and science at the Imperial court. With the help of the Dutch, they upgraded the Chinese cannons and firearms, they enhanced the calendar science and astronomy comprehension. The first Qing Emperor even kept Jesuits at the Imperial Board of Astronomy where their calculations were more accurate than all the Chinese officials. The first complete and almost perfectly accurate atlas of the Chinese Empire was made by a group of missionaries under the Emperor's command which counted maps of all provinces with the first use in Chinese history of latitude and longitude graduations. This period marked also a period of philosophical exchanges between the West and the far East, when Ricci published a copy of the Confucian Four Books in Italian and that a sudden interest for Chinese thinking and culture rose in the European intelligentsia, being praised as we previously saw by Voltaire, Adam Smith or Goethe³⁸. Unfortunately, the dissolution of the Society of Jesus in 1773 by the Pope signed the end of those exchanges, the Church judging the adaptation of Christian rites to the Confucian tradition by the Jesuits inappropriate. At the same time in China, the new Emperor Yung-cheng proved to be strongly against the influence the missionaries had on the court and the population and banned Christianity from the country³⁹.

Apart from the religious matters, the commercial links between Europe and China tended to be a bit stronger. However it is important to precise that all western commercial missions from, in the first time, Portugal, Holland and Russia were also falling under the tributary system. As the Emperor decided to extend the range of which barbarian countries should be part of China's

³⁸ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp.103-105 , 2000

³⁹ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp.100-103 , 2000

tributaries. Although, occidentals were not considered as mere barbarians and gained a status quite similar to the Mongolian tribes. More precisely, western countries and their colonial empires were of a great help for China's treasury. If, in the first decades of the sixteenth century, Portugal and Spain were the only European countries China accepted to trade with, it was because they had to offer a very important metal: silver. As a matter of fact, China had very few interests in the goods western merchants could offer. The skins, spices and ivory were nothing China could not find within its vast empire. The Ming, and the Qing after them soon understood that the Europeans were craving on Chinese products such as tea, silk or Chinese craftsmanship (what will be called the "chinoiserie"). In exchange, the Emperor asked the western traders to pay for Chinese goods in silver, which Spain and Portugal had in enormous quantities since their conquests of South America. The thing is that China under both dynasties was suffering from a financial crisis that reached its peak at the end of the very end of the eighteenth century. China, since the Ming, was under a bimetallic monetary system. Coins made out of copper, mostly imported from Japan, were used as the commoners currency and less evaluated than the silver tael which was used by the richest merchants, province governors and the Imperial government. The silver stocks from the New World, and the trade agreements with Portugal and Spain insured a regular and vast income of silver⁴⁰. However this quick inflow of metal worsen to major issues that were crippling the Chinese administration for centuries. Corruption in the first place, was the major disease infecting the country, with the provincial governors overtaxing the population and bribing the government officials to falsify their feedbacks and send falls reports to Peking⁴¹. Even the closest actors to the Emperor were not above suspicion since the Imperial bodyguard Ho-shen was executed in 1799 for treason and corruption. After years of service, the Imperial authorities discovered that his fortune could be

⁴⁰ ROWE, William T., *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China, Cambridge and London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, Part. 5, p.57, 2009

⁴¹ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, p.125 , 2000

evaluate at what would represent 1.5 billion dollars today⁴². The westerners were completely aware of the situation and happily participated to the personal enrichment of unscrupulous imperial representatives. One of the major example being the isle of Macao on which the Portuguese could anchor their ships and sell their goods in exchange of a bribe⁴³. In 1800, the Imperial treasury was also badly dented by the previous Emperors projects, tastes for luxury and wars against the sporadic rebellions of anti-Manchu's sects like the White Lotus rebellion that lasted ten years between 1794 and 1804⁴⁴. The Qing spending to maintain order in the country and the general corruption clearly needed the support of the western silver to keep the Chinese economy afloat. But unfortunately, those exchanges knew their limit at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when China was already trading with Portugal in Macao and Canton, the Dutch in Taiwan and the British in three ports (Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong)⁴⁵. Because of the overwhelming imports of silver in the country, the price of the precious metal quickly devaluated to the profit of its copper counterpart which became rarer, creating an impoverishment of the government that relied mostly on silver taels⁴⁶. Those difficulties added to a wave of piracy on the Chinese coasts pushed the Chinese government to close the country to foreign trade for a period before officially reopening the city of Canton as the only port western traders could now on make their business. This decision then created the well-named system of the Single-Port Trade, very unpopular amongst the European traders who were suffering from the insatiable greed of Canton's *Hoppo* (the custom's intendent) who was

⁴² HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp.124-125 , 2000

⁴³ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, p.93 , 2000
FAIRBANK, J. K., and Têng S. Y., "On The Ch'ing Tributary System." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1941, pp. 178-179. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2718006. Accessed 4 June 2020.

⁴⁴ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, p.126 , 2000
For more information about the White Lotus Rebellion : FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I to III, pp.100-102, 2011.

⁴⁵ KELLER, LI, SHIUE, "CHINA'S FOREIGN TRADE: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PAST 150 YEARS", *The World Economy*, Wiley Blackwell, vol. 34, p. 10-12, 2010

⁴⁶ ROWE, William T., *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China, Cambridge and London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, Part. 2, pp.57-58, 2009

overtaxing their ships and goods for his own profits. In 1759 after James Flint, an envoy of the East Indian Company, sailed to Tientsin to protest about the situation in Canton but was quickly arrested by the Imperial authority and sentenced to jail for three years in Macao. Canton's Hoppo and governor were dismissed but the Canton trade was made the only trade port for western merchants in all China⁴⁷. The Canton trade⁴⁸ was a well-structured organization that was relying, like the majority of the Qing administration, on an already existing group of merchants, the *Cohong*⁴⁹ also called the "thirteens" even if their number rarely corresponded to this appellation throughout the years. The *hongs* were merchants charged by the government to keep the control of the foreign trade under Chinese control. Given the privilege to keep the Imperial monopole, the hongs were asked to pay a profitable fee to the imperial court. They were the only Chinese to have the right to conclude direct contracts with the foreigner, all interaction between the government representatives and foreign traders being prohibited to avoid corruption. Admittedly, there was a possibility for the willingly merchant to address a letter or a petition to the governor-general of the province or the Hoppo, but regarding the "James Flint affair", their complaints were remain without answer, if the addressed official even looked at it. The Cohong was therefore the only Chinese intermediary foreign traders were dealing with, the Imperial government ensuring that the Chinese population was having the least relationship with the West possible. The hongs were separated in three groups, one specialised in the Western affairs with Europe and America, the second dealing with Southeast Asia and the third with the most recent Chinese provinces near Taiwan. Their role, if mainly focused on commercial affairs, was more of a security matter. The preservation of Canton's

⁴⁷ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp.139-142 , 2000

⁴⁸ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp.142-147 , 2000

⁴⁹ PAULÈS, X., , "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.30-31.

peace with the strangers was their responsibility and they were charged for any crime committed by a foreigner. Also their financial resources were often used by the imperial government to help the country in times of wars, epidemics or to sustain the Emperor's policies. The Hoppo and the governor-general were frequently overtaxing them to present opulent offerings to the imperial court. Also the hongts could not quit or refuse their status because they were considered as government agents, condemning some of them to face bankruptcy. Nevertheless, others managed to gather a staggering amount of wealth by investing massively in western affairs. As it was the case for Howqua, who invested his fortune in the creation of Jardine Matheson & co, a trading house company still existing nowadays⁵⁰. To keep the Europeans under constant look, the Cohong built a thirteen buildings beside their headquarters called "factories". Also called the "barbarian houses", those buildings were used by western traders to organize their product's sale and live in Canton during the time they were allowed to stay in the city. Because there was a particular period of time between October and January, called the trading season, when the foreign merchants could come to China. To do so, they had to follow three steps after having signed their trading contract one year before the expedition. The first being the usual stop on Macao to find a *compradore* an interpreter who would take care of the journey to Canton (hire the crew for the ship, buy the food, warn the Cantonese authorities and the appropriate hong) the *compradore* was a key element since it was prohibited for westerners to learn Chinese (of course some merchants could speak Chinese, it was James Flint case, but they had to respect the rules). The second step was to pay the fees depending on what the merchant was selling, in what amount, how big was his boat plus the captain's, the crew's and the *compradore*'s payment⁵¹. After all the payment granted, the ship could anchor in Whampoa port from where

⁵⁰ Le Pichon, A., & Wong, J. (2018). *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 58, 286-289. Retrieved June 9, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/26531726

⁵¹ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp.147-149 , 2000

FAIRBANK, J. K., and Têng S. Y., "On The Ch'ing Tributary System." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1941, pp. 190-197. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2718006. Accessed 4 June 2020.

the hong was taking care of the cargo, was charged to deliver it to the right factory and could buy half of it, the other half belonging to the other hong. The foreigners were urged to leave Canton immediately after the transaction, if they did not bribe the hong of course.

There were also particular rules of behaviour the Europeans had to respect during their stay in Canton. Because the Emperor was aware of the tensions existing between the different factions of western barbarians and also because the Canton trade already suffered from several incidents involving foreigners and Chinese subjects. The rules were preventing the Chinese coasts to become a front for western conflicts and ensure the security of the Chinese people living near the factories. From those standpoints, it was forbidden for a foreign ship to engage armed conflict against another foreign boat, the factories should not employ maids or have an armoury, foreigners should always show themselves when traveling for the authorities to keep a register, they would not buy Chinese books or learn Chinese, they were confined in the factories areas and treat only with the hong. Similar rules were also applied to Chinese subjects. Including the ban of any interaction with the strangers and the prohibition for the hong to contract debts to the westerners⁵². In case of serious crimes, the jurisdiction could change according to the country. Knowing that the Chinese magistrate were falling under the “doctrine of responsibility”, they were seen as responsible for the strangers crimes. The matters of laws or so taken very seriously and some cases often ended with severe sentences. China could ask the criminal country’s representatives to execute the culprit, a Chinese official could take care of the sentence or the accused could be sent in his country to be sanctioned. But most of the time, China ended up as the judge and executioner. The factories and Macao inhabitants were for example very shocked by the public strangulation murderer in 1784 during the “Lady Hugues incident”, the Chinese authority saying that they were lenient to execute only him who killed

⁵² HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. I, pp.150-154 , 2000

two Chinese subjects. Those rules were certainly contributing to keep a relative peace between the foreigners and the Chinese but they were also making the traders anxiety grow and the Macao's inhabitant feeling insecure.

2. The aims of the British economic empire in China.

a. The liberal theories at the centre of British imperialism.

The particular case of the British colonial and economic empire and the context in which this new western power came to treat with the Qing's Chinese Empire is the key element to understand the development of Liberalism in China. However, before beginning this quick recap of the concepts that drove British imperialism, a disclaimer about the dichotomy that exist in the general conception of Liberalism and the changes that the emergence of its theories implied. Jack A. Goldstone in his article "Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the 'Rise of the West' and the Industrial Revolution.", rises an interesting point. The policies and the economic growth implied by the following of liberal theories during the early years of the industrial revolution is mostly considered as putting a gap between "modern" and "pre-modern" countries⁵³, understanding by that "European" and "not-European" countries. The difference between the two being the explosive economic growth western countries experienced between the eighteenth ad nineteenth century. Goldstone identifies it as the "*efflorescence*" of technologies, theories and policies that led the West to quickly develop its economy. Doing so, liberalism appears like an ethnocentric concept and excludes the countries that didn't appeared to have the same growth as western countries, the imperial China often being an example of such countries. However it would be an error to not consider the progresses and changes that occurred during the Qing dynasty. As saw previously,

⁵³ GOLDSTONE, Jack A. "Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the 'Rise of the West' and the Industrial Revolution." *Journal of World History*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2002, pp. 326-330. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20078976. Accessed 7 May 2020.

the main motive of the Manchus was to keep the power at end by maintaining some Ming's administrations and modify some of them. Those modification and reforms are the point of Goldstone discussion, because even if the Qing were running a very protective and controlled rule over China, they did not closed it completely to foreign relations.

At the contrary, the Qing dynasty was carefully managing its relations through its conquests and its ideal to unify the Asian countries under the Confucian model. The inflow of new populations and ethnicities in China by the expansion of its territory brought new cultural exchanges, new trade routes, new goods. The Chinese population rose quickly and the Qing had to administer the largest population on the planet by creating local administration and regional representatives that would act as the centralised power in Peking ordered. The increase of population, lands and so labour pushed the imperial government to create a new peasantry model, less bounded to the landlords and the State as the previous Ming model was. Even if the central government had a constant watch over the market, the production and the offer was entirely in the hands of the new independent farmers who were then driven by the competition of the one that will produce the most to satisfy the imperial demand. If the Confucian tradition asked to respect the ancestor's work, it did not mean that reforms were poorly viewed. The Jianqing reform that took place during and after the White Lotus Rebellion⁵⁴ (late 1790's, early 1800's) promoted major changes in the Chinese customs. The most important being the liberty of being part of the White Lotus cult, because the new Emperor new that eradicate the sect would be impossible due to its success among the population. The second interesting point of this reform was to promote the possibility for the people to directly come to Peking for a juridical appeal. It was a tool for the aggrieved subject to expose an injustice or the corruption

⁵⁴ WANG, Wensheng. "Social Crises and Political Reform during the Jiaqing Reign of Qing China, 1796-1810s." *From Early Tang Court Debates to China's Peaceful Rise*, edited by Friederike Assandri and Dora Martins, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2009, pp. 34-44. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n0hp.6. Accessed 7 May 2020.

of the provincial representatives. Even if the travel to the capital was expensive and dangerous, this reform encountered a huge success in the population. Thus, productivity, market competition, demographic growth, innovations and a global increase of the quality of life characterised the Qing dynasty and China did have similarities with pre-industrial European countries⁵⁵. China also knew an “efflorescence”. Of course, the evolution of imperial China was far different than the British economic Empire and China lacked some advances and intellectual evolution that rose inside the English intellectuals. The goal of this small introduction was to show that the frontier between modern and pre-modern countries can be tiny and consider Europe as the only birthplace of liberal policies and innovations would be an ethnocentric bias. Nevertheless, there did was an important difference between China and Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The intellectual background and influences were far opposed. The main ideas of British liberalism lying on Adam Smith conception of liberty and reason.

As a member of the Enlightenment’s European thinkers of the eighteenth century, Smith based all his thinking according to the comparison between the different stages of development human societies were facing and what level of moral judgment or reason those stages represented. As he established, societies evolution were due to progress and the general access of the people to a reasonable thinking. The decaying of churches grasps on European societies, and especially Britain at Smith’s time, was a great indicator of the mentalities evolution towards more moral and reasonable mentalities. Even if he didn’t consider those progress as the product of the people sudden epiphany, but must of all as a fall of the old authority figures the religious dogmas represented⁵⁶. For Smith, the evolution of the popular moral was not due to the people’s appetite for knowledge and virtue but to its opposition to old and obsolete institutions, or what

⁵⁵ GOLDSTONE, Jack A. “Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the ‘Rise of the West’ and the Industrial Revolution.” *Journal of World History*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2002, pp. 348-353. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20078976. Accessed 7 May 2020.

⁵⁶ PITTS, Jennifer, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, Chap. I, pp. 34-37, 2005

the population sees as such. In Britain rose a particular state of mind that finds its roots in the conflicts between the Walpole ministry, from the Whig party, and the Tories. The conservatives and the liberals parties in Britain, to simplify a lot.

Until the late eighteenth century, the British Empire was conducting its policies on its colonies as any other European power since the Renaissance. Per se, as the depository of European superiority over the other populations of the World that had the mission to conquer and civilise savage lands through colonisation. This point of view served to justify the European occupations of new territories and the expansion of the new colonial empires that allowed their founders to benefit from a whole new stock of goods and resources. As it has been said previously, China was also benefiting from the silver imported by western merchants from South America, and this idea of colonization justified by a superior civilisation can find some links with the Confucian teachings but this subject will be discussed later in this work. The problem with such a hierarchical vision is that it can be damaged by contradictory events, the American Revolution being the trigger in the British case. Following the events of the north America uprisings, many thinkers as Adam Smith started to criticise the way Britain was treating its colonies inhabitants. However, the contestations were not mainly against the principle of colonisation on its own, the goal of such things were still a matter of economic interests, diversifications of the trade routes and the free circulation of goods. The idea was to drive the population to rethink and condemn the fate of indigenous populations in the colonies and the slaves to modify the policies employed and avoid another case similar to the American Revolution or the Indian uprisings. Adam Smith himself was very critical towards slavery and imperial colonisation. He recognized that a country should extend its commercial relations across the globe and fulfil sane international and intercultural relations with other countries, but was strongly against imposing a society's cultural model to other people and slowly replace a

population by so said morally superior British subjects⁵⁷. From the Whig party rose a figure that could represent both the conservatives colonialists interests and the progressives liberal ideas: Edmund Burke. Burke's ideas made him quite a surprising man, knowing that he was from the conservative wing on the British political chessboard. His point was that, if the United Kingdom recognized its British subjects to have rights and duties regarding their country, why then the colonised population should be treated differently in the eyes of the law ? Burke's fight against the conditions in which the Indian population were managed perfectly shown his point by putting empathy at the centre of moral reasoning. Empathy towards other people or cultures that, even if they were part of the British empire, were still considered as strangers and did not have the same rights as another British citizen. Burke was one of the first to see the exaction committed against the natives population as being part of a system, the law being clearly in favour of a part of the Empire's population, and asked the British population to stand against such a fact. With him can be find the first examples of occidental use of universalism in politic, based on the impartiality and the equality of all human being under the law and Justice. This new moral philosophy came with another consideration for property rules and how the British society should consider its new subjects, Burke being very critical to the East Indian Company monopole in Asia. For him, the power that the biggest trade company in the World had in the colonies, and how the Company applied it, was one of the main problems with imperial colonialism. The one opposed to his view often justified the Company's exaction by the previous political model the indigenous population were under, claiming it was tyrannical and violent, being impossible then to conquer without violence. In other words, the British Empire was freeing the locals from their despotic rulers, an argument that will be used later for China.

⁵⁷ PITTS, Jennifer, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, Chap. II, pp. 52-58, 2005

Despite Burke's universalism, other ways of thinking were developed, and opposed, during the very late eighteenth century's period until the 1820's. Led mainly by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, utilitarianism can be split between these two author's vision of how must the British Empire, and more broadly, the other colonial empires in Europe behave towards the countries they conquered⁵⁸. Bentham's views on occidental colonies are indisputably negative. He based his vision about utilitarianism on the inherent capacity of all human being to be capable of seeing, search for and fulfil their own interests. He thus was clearly opposed to the authoritarian rule the United Kingdom imposed to its colonies, as he considered the native populations and the colons to be perfectly capable of administrate their country themselves. Unlike Burke, Bentham did not saw the colonial rule's violence as a lack of sympathy towards the indigenous but as a privation of everybody's right to pursue its personal interests and a negation of those population to claim their liberty to rule themselves. Beside the native population's interests, he sought for its own country's interest. Taking into consideration the disaster that represented the loss of North America for the United Kingdom and the repercussions it had on the State's economy and international credibility, Bentham anti-colonialism resulted from the speculation on the final cost for his country to maintain its colonial rule over the colonies. His critic against the British government was that its representatives interests were not driven by the ones of the people. Bentham considered the popular opinion as a parameter for the State to always watch and follow carefully. He did not saw the people's interest in the despotic rule the British rulers were exercising in the country's colonies but the personal interest of these rulers. In his pamphlet *Emancipate your colonies* addressed to France and Spain rulers, he stated that the true virtue of a government was not in its military prowess and how easily its armies could occupy and conquer a foreign territory, but in the hard decision to let the people rule themselves and recognize that they know what is good for them. His point, as passionate as he was, stated that

⁵⁸ PITTS, Jennifer, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, Chap. IV, pp. 103-122, 2005

there was no honour or virtue to let your armies rule a colony in your name through violence but that the characteristic of a true leader was to be personally invested in the process and call the troops out⁵⁹.

Of course Bentham did not rely only on the good heart of the European governments to make his point. He also wanted them to see what were the costs to administer such big and far away territories, because he thought that giving too much military importance to the colonies was to forget about the situation in the metropolises, by splitting the majority of their forces, they endangered the very core of their empire. He then showed the benefits European powers could obtain by emancipating the colonies, as profit and trade could even be more profitable by directly trading with the new governments they contributed to build. If he addressed all the European colonial powers and not the British government directly, it was because he believed that if his message was taken into consideration by only one country as Spain or France, the other colonial empires would follow. However, if Bentham did not show interest towards a hierarchy of nations between the civilised and the savages, he admitted having some doubts in the natives' capacities to form a proper government. Not because he considered them as inferior, he simply raised the point that after the conquest of their country, their former rulers were defeated, their previous administration disbanded and that the population could lack of a guidance to rebuild. Bentham, as Burke, was referencing the Indian case, where the ruling clans and castes were dethroned⁶⁰. In that regard, the United Kingdom could intervene to designate the best ruler possible and watch the developing of the new government but without further interventions. In that, Burke's universalism and Bentham utilitarianism were very similar in the finality of their fight against imperial colonialism even if the argumentation of both were different. However, another founder of utilitarianism thinking will influence the way the United

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.113

Kingdom would administer its Empire and that is the way John Stuart Mill saw it. In opposition to Bentham, Mill believed in a hierarchy between civilisation, a belief that will shape his work and influence his vision on liberty and the legitimacy of British colonisation.

As Jennifer Pitts exposed it in her work, it is necessary to analyse Mill's work regarding his father's, James Mill. To be short, the James Mill's interpretation of colonial empires was following a strict hierarchy of nations that according to their history, their moral and technological development but most importantly, according to their economic growth. Saying so, he placed the United Kingdom as the highest ranked nation in the World and was following the idea whereby Britain, as a superior civilisation, had a civilising mission towards the other populations seen as savages. The best example of James Mill's thought on civilisations and the role of colonial empires is his view of India's population as barbarians who only knew despotism and would be incapable of forming a working modern government by their own, exposed in his book *The History of British India* published in 1817. Apart from the pure political opinion he had on the natives colony's populations, he based his entire evaluation of colonial empires on their capacity to produce decent economic and financial outputs. His vision of an advanced society was its pretention to identify the utility of a project and in this matter, he saw imperial colonialism as very unnecessary. Far from the moral and philosophical preoccupations of Burke or his mentor Bentham, he stated that continuing to conduct a rule over the colonies was too much of a cost in labour and capital for the British Empire, that try to rule India would always be unproductive in a financial way. Nevertheless, his ideas on the civilising duty of Great Britain prevailed in his works, as he stated that British despotism will always be better than any other type a government the natives populations could ever create due to their barbarous nature. The British Empire then had to subsist for the sake of the natives that will benefit from their civilised ruler's influence⁶¹. The honesty of such a statement can be put on

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.123-126

the fact that he occupied a great function inside the East Indian Company during several years as a consultant, and even if he was willing to complain against the terrible cost of India's administration to his country, it is impossible to properly say that he has a personal interest in the colonial occupation of India. His son John Stuart, also believed in the dichotomy between the civilised British and the barbaric Indian. Although Mill's view on colonization were quite different from his father's, as his theories on liberty and progress were shaping his vision of what the civilised could bring to the savage. According to J. S. Mill, liberty is to let a human being express his capacities, to bring what he can do best. But unlike Jean Jacques Rousseau before him, Mill did not believe that every human was born equal in rights and virtue. The particular aspect of Mill's theories on liberty is that he used what Karl Popper will call a century later "*epistemological pessimism*"⁶². In other words he believed that humans were intrinsically fallible due to their natural greed and selfishness, that there was no moral or search for common good in their actions. Following that statement, Mill believed democracy and freedom were the best tool to bring up the best quality, the more useful knowledge and that the majority will gain objectivity through debates. At the end of the process, the people should have identify the good and bad morals to follow a more virtuous path toward progress. At the contrary of his father, Mill was not a partisan of biological determinism, he believed that all countries had their way to progress, that some will develop rapidly and become symbols of virtue and civilisation (most likely the British Empire) and that others would be reluctant to changes, stagnate and fall in decadence⁶³. He then justified the civilising mission of the United Kingdom in Asia, because unlike the Canadians or the Americans, he judged the Asian population incapable of forming strong legislative power and government because of their lack of research for self-cultivation and moral development. An argument he used to justify the East Indian Company ruling in

⁶² HUANG, Max Ko-wu, *The meaning of Freedom : Yan Fu and the Origins of Chinese Liberalism*, The Chinese University Press, Part. I, pp. 48-51, 2008

⁶³ PITTS, Jennifer, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, Chap. V, pp. 135-136, 2005

India but also to explain the Chinese economic stagnation. Mill saw the Qing Empire, and the whole history of China, as a stationary state⁶⁴. A formula he used from Alexis de Tocqueville's discussion on China, stating China had lost its "creativity" in technological innovation, literature, economic growth and moral ideals, plunging the country in stagnation. His point was therefore that the British Empire should accept to use "progressive despotism"⁶⁵ on the less developed countries such as India to progressively elevate their population to a higher degree of civilisation. The other kinds of countries, like China, could also benefit from a British influence, as they willingly stopped to innovate and condemned themselves to stagnation. Trade and diplomatic missions could then change their norms and bring them to continue on the way of progress.

John Stuart Mill's opinion and utilitarian theories on the British Empire encountered a huge success in the ruling class and the public opinion as their country's economic power and financial growth continued to prosper throughout the nineteenth century. But as his father, Mill was part of the East Indian Company, one of the most powerful organisation of its time if not the most powerful trade company of the modern period. If the intellectual theories were fractured inside the British intelligentsia, the interests of the EIC in Asia represented the most important market on the planet and played a very important role in East Asia.

b. The British affairs in China, the case of the East Indian Company.

To understand how much the East Indian Company shaped the world of trade and international exchanges between the East and the West, it is necessary to understand the markets European trade companies were interested in, how the EIC gained its monopoly over the trade with China in the West and what the Company's officials were inclined to do to keep it. Passing on its

⁶⁴ XIAO, Yue, "John Stuart Mill and China: Peeking behind China's Stationary State" in *Center for the History of Political Economy at Duke University Working Paper Series*, No. 2019-21, pp.4-5, 2019

⁶⁵ PITTS, Jennifer, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, Chap. V, pp. 138-146, 2005

almost total control over India, being implanted in all South Asia with entire ports directly bought by the Company like Singapore⁶⁶, China was truly seen as the second biggest market the British Empire had in Asia. As already stated during this work's explanation of the Canton trade, the Company was counting on the triangular trade between its territories in India, its exchanges in Canton and what they imported in England. The Company managed to build its own docks in London, build and own their own fleet the counted hundreds of ships and thousands of sailors and craftsmen⁶⁷. Unfortunately, even if the Company took great part in the Independence War in North America by sending their own men to fight with the Loyalists, the loss of America remained a disgrace for the EIC and the Crown they represented. With the rise of the determinist theories concerning the civilising mission of the British Empire, the commercial focus quickly turned towards Asia, exploiting the Indian resources to sell them in China. But as a matter of fact, for almost two centuries since the Company's creation in 1600⁶⁸, the West had very few products to sell in Asia. Beside exchanging their silver surplus, Indian spices, exotic wood or skins did not encountered the success the European traders imagined. The Canton trade was radically in favour of China, with European companies fighting each other to share the biggest part of the market, and the arrival of the United States free traders surely did not enhanced the profits the EIC could generate. Beside porcelain and silk, the main resource imported from China by the EIC was the tea. Completely unknown in Europe, tea represented ninety percent of the British imports⁶⁹. The beverage gaining the esteem of the ruling class and the aristocrats to quickly reach the most popular sphere of England, its consumption increasing year after year to attain twenty three million pounds of shipment in

⁶⁶ ROBINS, Nick, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*, 2nd ed. Pluto Press, Chap.1, p.6, 2012.

⁶⁷ ROBINS, Nick, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*, 2nd ed. Pluto Press, Chap.1, pp. 19-23. 2012.

⁶⁸ ROBINS, Nick, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*, 2nd ed. Pluto Press, Chap.1, see the chronology, 2012.

⁶⁹ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, pp. 148-150, 2000

1800⁷⁰ with the support of the new steamships. But if the Canton trade was so unfair to the West, why did the East India Company continued to flourish despite the foreign competition? The answer lies in the Company's financial organisation and its vast offering of services. The main interest the EIC represented was to be directly sponsored by the Crown's investments. No doubts that George III support and the investments of the richest aristocrats in the country contributed to the Company's prestige as a guarantee of financial returns and high quality services. Services that were a powerful argument for the EIC. The independent merchant could quickly observe that the journey to South Asia would be as dangerous for him than his finances. By providing the ports, the ships, the crews and the insurance of a well-made transaction, the EIC represented the most secured way for private traders to make profit in Asia with less material and financial risks. Because the investor was not managing the journey, the capital losses in case of a failure were drastically reduced as the private trader would be charged only on how much he paid the company. Everything else was on the Company's account, making it financially more attractive than trying to undertake the journey by your own or form a partnership that were both incredibly risky if the enterprise did not worked. The particularity of such an organisation was that it gave a legal status to the Company as a trade institution co-opted by the State, giving even more credit to its viability and the EIC was even promoting its benefits for the wealthier to buy stocks and invest in its projects. However, if the Company was largely relying on statistics and attracting market inspections, the dangers of speculations did not spared the investors of losing their money in times of wars or native uprisings in India. The early nineteenth century was all the contrary. With the beginning of the industrial revolution that started after the Napoleonic wars, the Company's actions rose quickly as the Crown directly bough stocks, increasing their value⁷¹.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁷¹ ROBINS, Nick, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*, 2nd ed. Pluto Press, Chap.2, pp.24-26, 2012.

Another interesting specificity of the EIC was that, unlike the other companies from other countries, their employees had the permission to found their own business in Asia using the Company's resources. Knowing that the average wage of a Company's worker was barely enough to insure a peaceful retirement, many employee took the opportunity. This privilege granted the EIC a constant influx of employees searching for wealth in the Indian colonies or in the other Asian ports and a relative control of private entrepreneurs. As the Company owned the ports, the ships in Britain and the Canton factory in China, with the development of their most opportunist employees on the private market, everything was made by the EIC to keep its monopole over the Asian seas. Thus a great part of the EIC investments were kept in a vacuum that prevented the rising of any concurrence and the benefits were far superior to what crooked employees could hide by growing their business outside the Company's control while using its services and privileges. The East Indian Company could also count on its versatility to always find the most interesting market to maximise their profit. The commerce with China being very expensive in silver bullions, the Company's goal was to find the new good that will cost the less in bullions and insure the best return on investment. The Chinese tea replaced the processed silk, that replaced Indian pepper before for example⁷². Unfortunately for the Company, its system, as well designed as it was, quickly knew the same problem the Qing administration was facing at the same time : the corruption of its officials. Moreover, it will be the tea Britain liked so much that will contribute to the Company's decline, or to be precise, its commerce in the American colonies. The last decades of the eighteenth century in the EIC business with America was marked by the Crown's decision to directly tax the colonies for goods imports. The actual system was that the Company shipped the tea in England and then sold it to American merchants who will import it across the Atlantic⁷³. The problem being that the taxations were so high that smugglers networks developed quickly, selling their tea way cheaper than the official traders.

⁷² *Ibid*, pp.29-30

⁷³ *Ibid*, Chap. 6. pp.113-115

Shifting the taxes directly to the colonies caused anti-colonialists to protest against the British rule they judged unfair to the American traders. The protests became riots and the decision from the British government to erase the intermediaries by granting the Company the possibility to sail and transport tea in America by its means worsened the situation. As the rebels took the tea taxes as a symbol, the opposition led to the Tea Party event in Boston in 1773 which led to the Independence War and the later British Empire's defeat ten years later. The EIC then faced serious responsibilities in the loss of America, causing the anti-monopoly ideas to develop in England. To this were added the exactions of the Company in India and its business with the hong in China and the incidents that took place in the late 1780's in Macao. The East India Company's work was then to protect its monopoly in the Asian seas and as the Crown began to send diplomatic missions to China to end the Canton trade and try to open Chinese ports to free trade, the EIC felt in danger and even tried to sabotage the missions. Until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain was stuck in a maelstrom of both bad luck, political tensions in Europe and the unwillingness of the EIC's reticence to be part of a project that could end its supremacy on the Chinese market. To sum up, between 1787 and 1816, three expeditions were sent. The first one did not even reach the Chinese coast, the ship was caught in a storm and the ambassador died several months after the mission's departure. The second one failed due to the Company's influences, the uncertainty of the European stability with the French Revolution starting and an uprising leading to a war in India. The third one in 1793, led by Lord MacCartney at least managed to arrive in China, were housed in the Summer Palace and even successfully obtained an appointment with the Emperor that was enjoying summer and his birthday away from the capital. His task was to liberalise the trade between the British Empire and the Asian ports by the signing of a commercial treaty, thereby ending the Canton trade and

establish an embassy in Peking⁷⁴. Sadly for MacCartney and happily for the EIC, the Emperor Ch'ien-lung politely dismissed all the missions proposition. From his point of view, he was just glad that Great Britain's king sent him a tributary mission, the first one in the history of their country's international relations, to compliment him on his birthday. It was impossible for China to agree on the British terms, first because it was simply unconceivable to grant a permanent embassy for a foreign country in Peking but mostly because, as the Emperor wrote to George III, it would be impossible to grant this favour to England without seeing all European countries come to Peking asking for the same treatment. A possibility that suited neither the Manchu government and the East Indian Company, the last one preparing to sell a new good that, they considered, might have a great success in China.

Massively cultivated in India, opium was considered illegal in England and China. However, the East Indian Company already saw that Portugal was withdrew great benefits from the opium trade, and the possibility to outstrip the opium monopole from the Portuguese was interesting. With easily produced and cheaper opium, importations rapidly rose around more than four thousand chests in the early 1810's⁷⁵, as the Chinese demand was growing. Opium was no unknown in China, the reason the Imperial government prohibited followed its massive production in the Fukien and Kuangtung provinces. The drug was more produced than rice, creating a loss of food and capital for the government. The East Indian Company plan to sell opium in China despite the prohibition and without being caught was to use the private ships sailing under its licenses. Officially, the Company was following the restrictions on opium, because even if the ship was arrested, the shipment was the private ship's property and the Company would be innocent. Using this strategy, the EIC managed to smuggle tons of opium

⁷⁴ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part II, pp. 155-163, 2000

⁷⁵ ROBINS, Nick, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*, 2nd ed. Pluto Press, Chap.8, pp.157, 2012.

in China but also encouraged independent “entrepreneurs” to follow their lead. But as stated before, Great Britain was far from the first country to sell opium on the Chinese market in exchange for other goods. Apart from the Portuguese trade, the Dutch traders were selling opium even before the prohibition from their own colonies in India, but the massive British’s opium production in Bengal supplanted their primacy on the market. After the opium trade shown to be highly profitable, avoiding the westerners to exchange silver bullions for tea or porcelain, all other occidental countries wanted their piece of the cake this led to a highly competitive and feirceful commercial conflict between Great Britain, Holland, Portugal, France and America⁷⁶. The British opium trade however, relying on the EIC’s expertise, was the most productive due to its use of both smugglers and private traders sailing on the Company’s ships. The thing is that the EIC guaranteed its exclusivity on the tea trade with the Co-hong, as the Chinese merchants were more willingly to treat only with the westerners through one official entity. The EIC truly had a stranglehold on the two main goods at the core of the World trade at this time and its bounds with Canton’s corrupted administration were tight enough to insure the safety of the shipments. However the EIC was relying too much on its network, while other entrepreneurs were building new one and innovating to ship the drug fast and massively. Private companies started to impinge on the Company’s monopole as its detractors grew in the British merchants. Among the renowned British traders can be cited Jardine, Matheson & Co that have been mentioned earlier, but they were also the Americans Dent and Russel who were shipping their opium from Turkey. All of those private companies were pure smugglers who bribed Chinese officials and managed to avoid the Canton’s system to sell the drug in other ports like Hong Kong and even relied on clergymen to insure the successful completion of the

⁷⁶ DERKS, Hans. "TEA FOR OPIUM VICE VERSA." In *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, Ca. 1600-1950*, pp. 60-64. LEIDEN; BOSTON: Brill, 2012. Accessed May 7, 2020. doi:10.1163/j.ctv4cbhdf.11.

transactions⁷⁷. Not that the smugglers were believers, their aims were purely mercantile as the missionaries often spoke Chinese or at least some dialects. The EIC also used them, and any religious ethic was sometimes easily erased by the capacities of the opium consumption to make the Chinese locals less reluctant to Christian teachings and devotion. The East Indian Company's affairs were already starting to be compromised by the expansion of free trade in the Chinese opium smuggling trade in the 1810's. As nothing was official and that the Chinese government kept an eye on the Company's dealings, regularly asking for its cooperation in the authorities fight against the opium contraband. Nothing strange, as the EIC was the only official structure on which the Chinese government was willing to deal with and which appeared capable to have an influence on the opium smuggling in cooperation with the hong⁷⁸. But if China knew that the drug was coming from England's Indian colonies and that the Company was playing a double-game policy concerning their implications in the opium trade. As the relations between the western merchants and the Chinese population and elites was starting to decay, the mistrust in the Company's good faith was growing on both sides. From China, the few non-corrupted officials were displeased, not only because of the lack of action the western company was taking to fight against their own smugglers but also of its reluctance to cooperate with the imperial government. A general lack of trust in the foreigners the Emperor Jiaqing was sharing, being a wary ruler more closed to western relationship than his father. The atmosphere in Canton worsen at a point the Company was worrying about the Chinese slowly closing themselves and being more and more vigilant on the opium illegal imports. The whole situation reached a critical point when the European conflict were fought on Chinese territory. Two times France and Great Britain entered in armed conflict over the control of Macao as the British

⁷⁷ DERKS, Hans. "TEA FOR OPIUM VICE VERSA." In *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, Ca. 1600-1950*, pp. 66-72. LEIDEN; BOSTON: Brill, 2012. Accessed May 7, 2020. doi:10.1163/j.ctv4cbhdf.11.

⁷⁸ ROBINS, Nick, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*, 2nd ed. Pluto Press, Chap.8, pp.158, 2012.

government believed that the French were planning on seize the island to take control of the South Asian trade routes. The British forces then occupied Macao in 1802 and 1808, the second occupation escalating in a skirmish between the Crown's army and the Chinese forces. The fault being held by admiral Drury, who refused to withdraw its forces from Macao and its warships from the Chinese waters and even sailed directly to Whampoa to require an interview with Canton's governor-general. Considered as a violation of the Canton trade rules, China menaced to cease trade with the foreigners if the admiral did not withdraw its troops. The East Indian Company took immediately care of the issue as the situation was getting out of control and organised the retreat out of Macao. In 1814, two other incidents took place later, damaging the already weakened status quo the Company managed to rebuild. First, Great Britain attacked Nepal, which was a Chinese tributary State, then an American ship, the *Hunter* was boarded by a British warship and when the Chinese authorities urged the boat to leave Canton's shores unless they will close the port to foreigners, they were ignored⁷⁹. The EIC feared that the trade agreements with China would be irremediably shattered if no diplomatic actions were took to calm everyone's discontent. This time, the EIC made sure that they would have an almost total control over the mission, as Lord Amherst, the former governor of India, was chosen to represent Britain and the president of the Company's Select Committee in Canton should accompany him as an advisor. Their objectives were quite the same as the MacCartney's expedition : liberalise the Chinese trade by ending the Co-hong system, instore free trade for the British and Chinese merchants, end the Canton rules on the factories residence time limits and freer interactions with the Chinese locals, the opening of more ports and finally the installation of an embassy in Peking. Objectives the mission failed to fulfil as the negotiations were a disaster mainly due to the disregard of the EIC's advisor to the Chinese ceremonies and the Emperor unwillingness to receive the foreigners. Amherst himself chose to listen to the

⁷⁹ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part II, pp.163, 2000

EIC's envoy and refused to perform the kotow properly, arguing it would tarnish the British prestige. Then he pretexted to be sick to prepare for the interview, making the Emperor wait. Those choices were taken by Jiaqing as an insult and he dismissed the British mission, taking their tributes and sending them to Nanking's general governor where they were housed and treated respectfully. The mission then left in January 1817 without having made any progress to open China to free trade. During the following years, the relations between the two countries continued to worsen and the opium trade to expand. In 1820 the private traders, sick of the Canton trade and the EIC's monopole, intensified their opium exports in China and the number of smugglers continued to increase⁸⁰. Freed from Canton's jurisdiction and the Company's control, they made huge benefits and were gaining more renown inside the Chinese corrupted representatives who made their wealth hidden from the imperial administration. The EIC quickly lost control on the market and its profits were surpassed by the smugglers, gradually nibbling it's the Company's monopole and opium became the first good exported to China. The British government, witnessing the impossibility to peacefully consider the liberalisation of the Chinese trade and diplomacy had the choices to⁸¹ cease trade with China, which was unconceivable or accept the Chinese exigencies and comply the Co-hong system which would lead to a dead end. The last choice, that Britain tried to avoid, was the military intervention. A possibility feared by the Chinese officials in Canton who advised the Emperor of their anxiety concerning the British military superiority. The situation had reached a turning point in the two country's international relation's history and the spreading of the opium trade across the Chinese shores would obliged China to take action against a commerce that was slowly plaguing the Chinese society.

⁸⁰ KELLER, LI, SHIUE, "CHINA'S FOREIGN TRADE: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PAST 150 YEARS", *The World Economy*, Wiley Blackwell, vol. 34, p.862, 2010

⁸¹ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part II, pp.165-166, 2000

Part II

China and its conflicts

Advancing into the first decades of the opium trade golden age in China, the grasp the Manchu's administration had on the country was slowly decaying. Not that the drug was the cause, but rather the desperate answer to a society already falling apart. China between 1800 and 1835 had to face major inner conflicts before the occidental exactions entered in the imperial administration's field of priorities. Weakened by the ravages of the White Lotus sect uprising, the Manchu's army appeared incapable of efficiently intervene in case of direct threat. A statement that comforted the population in its disbelief in the government and plunged the country even more into insecurity. The phenomenal growth of the population in the nineteenth century caused a huge problem of unemployment among the poorest parts of the population. With the abundance of low qualified workforce, the landowners could only rely on this massive workforce, paid a miserable wage, to cultivate the rice paddies, guard their houses and even sell their daughters. The independent farmers the Qing contributed to create were now harassed by taxes and unfair treatments from the corrupted governors-general. Popular exodus took place from the big cities to the less populated areas of the country in the North, where the land was unproductive but the government's eyes less attentive. This situation led to an increasing of vagabonds walking the roads searching for a job. Vagabonds that could join to form groups of bandits roaming provinces, attacking merchants on their way to Peking or raiding farms to find some food. The opium contraband became a way for many of them to escape their miserable life by shipping the drug chests in the country or selling it to the population, making contracts with the foreign smugglers. This add to the rampant corruption of the gentry with some representative being corrupted even before they began to work, since the Emperor made the diplomas purchasable. The honest officials becoming more and more rare, the number of Chinese taking part in the opium traffic by selling or consuming the drug increased, creating a

vicious cycle⁸². All these factors contributed to the progressive fall of the imperial power's centralisation in Peking, the governors-general gaining more wealth and power than the government. But the western affairs were still not at the centre of the Qing's preoccupations as the country passed through a period of constant popular uprisings and tributary countries sedition. To the White Lotus followed the Eight Trigrams sect in 1813, which took the Manchu's bennermen armies by surprise and even manage to enter the Forbidden City to take control of the castle and ask for the Emperor's abdication. They were quickly arrested and their leader executed but the Eight Trigrams uprising was a terrible shock for the Qing, as the sect obtained help from the inside of the Forbidden City in the eunuchs. Now the Emperor Jianqing had the certitude that treachery and corruption had reached the very core of the Chinese administration⁸³. After the uprising, the Manchus were juggling between trying to slow down the opium traffic and punish the far too numerous corrupted magistrates while the western smugglers incursions in the country were intensifying. The atmosphere continued to heat up until the 1830's when, at the western Chinese borders, Chinese Turkestan was invaded in 1826. The region, trapped between Nepal and Mongolia, counted a population of almost only Muslims worshippers and was poorly defended. After a first victory, the Chinese government asked for peace and tried to reason the city of Kokand (Uzbekistan) leading the attacks. After another invasion and occupation of Turkestan by Kokand's armies in 1830, the Manchus negotiators managed to sign a commercial agreement allowing Kokand's leaders to have a representative in Turkestan regulating the trade in five other cities with plain juridical and police power on foreigners. The agreement was approved in 1834 and the Turkestan case would be use by the Chinese government⁸⁴ in its diplomacy with the British envoys a few years later.

⁸² FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I, pp.99-104, 2011

⁸³ NAQUIN, Susan, *Millenarian rebellion in China : the Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813*, New Heaven, Yale University Press, Part III, pp.184-190, 1976

⁸⁴ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I, pp.137-138, 2011

1. The Opium Wars.

a. Opium trade, between public health and flourishing market.

The 1830's years were, by far, part of the most difficult years the Qing government had faced from its foundation. The new Emperor Daoguang, who just administered the Turkestan conflict, now was facing the consequences of the opium trade in his country. The amount of money the traffic had cost to China was a terrible loss for the State, as the western traders were not using silver anymore to purchase Chinese goods, but opium. Worst, the country's silver taels supplies were drained by opium consumers. A capital outflow that represented more than ten million silver taels in 1834⁸⁵ and constantly increasing. However the loss was not only financial as the opium smokers could be found in all social levels of the Chinese society. Poor farmers were drowning their anxiety and their cash in opium, government representatives, their family, servants and guards were losing themselves in addiction, even religious and soldiers felt in the drug's consumption. Those habits leading to an increase of the magistrate incompetence, plagued the Chinese army and slowed down the food production⁸⁶. The situation became even worse for China when Britain finally yielded to the free trade sympathizers and declared in 1834 the end of the East Indian Company monopole on the Asian trade routes⁸⁷. Without the Company being the intermediary between the Co-hong and the British merchants, the magistrates in Canton urged Britain to send an envoy they could parliament with on commercial affairs. The British Parliament, remembering the catastrophes that the precedent diplomatic missions were, decided to take the Canton's governor-general requirement very seriously. Britain then decided to send not only one but three superintendents to parliament with Canton's

⁸⁵ BASU, DILIP K. "Chinese Xenology and the Opium War: Reflections on Sinocentrism." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 73, no. 4, 2014, p.931. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43553460. Accessed 15 June 2020.

⁸⁶ YEOPHANTONG, Pichamon. "Qing Dynasty (1644–1911): 1200 to 1900: East and Southeast Asia." *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, & Africa: An Encyclopedia*. Eds. Andrea L. StantonEdward Ramsamy and Peter J. Seybolt. Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012. III173-III175. *SAGE Knowledge*, p. 5. Web. 8 May. 2020

⁸⁷ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.169, 2000

administration. The expedition was led by the Scottish nobleman Lord William John Napier and will be assisted by to EIC representatives who will advise him for the negotiations with the Cantonese. The thing is that now the East Indian Company was not the main actor to deal with the Chinese trade, the Crown was taking full control of the Asian commercial relation's administration. The situation evolved from the matter of the Company's profit to Great Britain's international relations with China, a detail that signified a lot in the British Parliament and for Lord Napier as the Crown laid its trust on him. His mission was still the same as the previous expeditions : the end of the one port system followed by the opening of Chinese ports to free trade and the abolition of the Co-hong monopole if possible. However the British remembered the fiascos that these exigencies caused and briefed Napier to concentrate on the new commercial relationship between Canton and the superintendents. Napier was also ordered to behave as politely and diligently as possible to clearly signified that war was not yet considered as a solution by Britain and that China would be treated as an equal with the British Empire. Unfortunately for the negotiations, the history repeated itself and Napier did not respected any steps of the Chinese protocol⁸⁸. In sequence, he sailed directly to Canton and took quarter in the British factory without wait in Macao that the governor-general accepted an interview, when sent back to Macao because of the Canton's representatives displeasure, he insulted them and threatened them to order an attack on the city. The governor-general immediately ceased trade with the British and Napier was let down by the English traders who saw his intervention as a disaster for their profits. In less than one year, because he was reluctant to take a submissive approach regarding his country's prestige, Napier managed to almost start a war with China, worsen the opinion the Imperial government had for the British and their propositions and retreated in Macao where he died from illness. Truly, the immeasurable failure of the negotiations surprised both the British and the Chinese. The first wanting to properly introduce

⁸⁸ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, pp.174-175, 2000

free trade in China as peacefully as possible and the last was simply waiting for a merchants envoy to discuss the administration of the new private actors arrival. Canton's governor-general never expected a diplomat and he turned to handle war threats from an overly zealous British aristocrat. The years that followed Napier's failure were rather peaceful. Three superintendents of trade would succeed one another, each a Company's member and the first two were unwilling to plainly follow the free trade motives and *laissez-faire* that the private traders wanted for their commercial interests. The third one, Charles Elliot was more ambitious and supporter of a subtle approach to progressively open Canton to free trade and make the opium trade more official. His first idea was to establish a direct link between him and the governor-general to avoid the Co-hong's intermediary. Through polite and submissive petitions, he reached his goal and could exchange directly with the governor-general by *ping* (the usual petitions necessary for any requests to the governor-general). Elliot's second mission to extend the opium trade outside its smuggling boundaries proved to be way harder than he imagined, as he was informed of a disagreement on the opium affair at the Imperial Court.

Indeed, the imperial scholars were divided. Some Cantonese intellectuals were discussing the possibility to resolve the crisis by legalising the drug for medical consumption⁸⁹. Doing so, the smugglers would disappear and a new official market would be created for the Imperial officials to supervise. Furthermore, the government could then tax the opium, stopping the silver outflows and at the same time authorise its cultivation which would reduce the foreign imports⁹⁰.

Yet, the opium consumption should remain prohibited for magistrates, soldiers and intellectuals because of their too dangerous influence on the government's efficiency. The possibility of legalisation was openly supported by official the traders and Elliot himself, who was strongly

⁸⁹ DERKS, Hans. "TEA FOR OPIUM VICE VERSA." In *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, Ca. 1600-1950*, LEIDEN; BOSTON: Brill, pp.83-85 2012

⁹⁰ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.177, 2000

against the opium trade in the first place. From his point of view, legalizing opium would be a great mean to reduce his price and make the drug less attractive for smugglers, which will eventually dismantle their parallel market. Elliot's aversion for the opium trade was made clear in his personal correspondences with England as he stated that :

*"It cannot be good that a great conduct of a trade should be so dependent upon the steady of a vast prohibited traffic in an article of vicious luxury, high in price, and liable to frequent and prodigious fluctuation."*⁹¹

His disgust for the big smuggling companies such Jardine, Matheson & Co. were known among Macao's community and he really tried to diminish their grasp over the opium black market by expressing his sympathy toward the legalization program. But even if he wanted it to happen, he deplored the lack of actual juridical power he had over the smugglers and other free traders. As a Company's man he could not see the other private merchants otherwise than uncontrollable chaotic individuals. Truth be told that he also regretted the EIC's implication in the opium trade, as he was perfectly aware of the opium trade's importance for his country's interests. He knew that cease the drug sells would make the whole Chinese market unprofitable for Britain, as opium was the only good that Chinese would buy from the British traders⁹². Elliot's principles would soon be rewarded in a very unpleasant way for the smugglers and opium sellers, as the legalization movement failed to convince the Emperor. The problem was that scholars in favour of the opium's legalization were mostly from Canton, directly in contact with the issue and generally more open to policies changes to their proximity with the occidentals and the good behaviour Elliot was showing in his trade intendency. Unfortunately the opinions were far different in Peking, the Emperor being surrounded by highly conservative advisors who were

⁹¹ Elliot's personal *Correspondence Relating to China*, p.387, 1840 cited in LOVELL, Julia, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the making of China*, Pan Mcmillan Australia, Chap.3, pp. 81, 2011

⁹² LOVELL, Julia, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the making of China*, Pan Mcmillan Australia, Chap.3, pp. 81-82, 2011

against any reform on the opium legislation. According to them, the government had to respect its previous engagements, legalizing opium would be taken as a sign of political weakness and the Emperor should always be firm. Two memorials were sent to the Emperor to expose the inconvenient of legalization. The first was very critical of legalization's main objective : the progressive suppression of the opium market and its shifting toward Chinese interests. The point was that if the opium consumption could not be suppressed, then legalize it would only be to admit the government weakness. Did the Imperial cabinet would like to legalize murder or prostitution ? An argument developed by the second memorial saying that, legalization would not solve the health issue caused by the population's addiction. The Emperor was urged to administer a serious punishment to the Chinese dealers, the hong who participated to the illegal trade and the corrupted magistrates who closed their eyes on the traffic. Convinced by the anti-legalization statements, Emperor Daoguang ordered the opium black market to be destroyed and its actors arrested and condemned. Between 1836 and 1838, Canton's governor-general applied the Emperor edict at the perfection and managed to eradicate the Chinese dealers, destroyed their headquarters and their boats, chase the addicts and even forced the major foreign opium trading groups to leave Canton to take refuge in Macao. Dealers and addicts were executed without mercy and the opium trade was truly officially annihilated. The outputs of this events represented a terrible loss for the British merchants who, thinking the legalization plan would be accepted, brought enormous quantities of opium in prevision of a sudden demand increasing. It is the exact contrary that happened and the opium price dramatically dropped, letting the traders with enormous stocks of drug that they would sell at loss⁹³. Elliot, pressed between his principles and his obligations, guaranteed the protection of the English merchants in Macao and was facing the pressures of the British foreign office which was ordering him to

⁹³HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.178, 2000

find a solution to liberate the opium trade⁹⁴. The whole situation reached a turning point when imperial commissioner Lin Zexu (or Tse-hsü), a fervent contestant of the opium trade was appointed to Canton and intensified the fight against the drug's consumption. Lin's actions led the Canton's authority to the arrest of all the remaining dealers, corrupted representatives and massive destructions of smoking equipment. But Lin was not only a man of action. As an intellectual, he conducted several advances on the public health and international politics in China. He can be for example cited as the founder of the first detoxification facilities in the World, creating an entire withdrawal protocol to heal the addicts⁹⁵. Aware of the occidental customs, he asked a foreign missionary to introduce him to the western International Law, being persuaded that putting the occidental leaders in front of their exactions regarding their own laws would legitimise the Chinese actions. In this matter, and after a proper study of International Laws, he wrote a letter to Queen Victoria. A vitriolic critic of the Queen's ruling that could have precipitate the upcoming conflict if Victoria ever received the letter.

*"It appears that this poisonous merchandise is manufactured by some diabolical individuals in places submitted to your laws. (...) All foreign boats that would, in the future, come to China with opium inboard will be put on fire. Then not only you will not manage to raise any profit from us, but you will ruin yourself in the process. You intended to harm others, you will be (speaking directly to the Queen) the first to suffer from it. Do not say you were not warned in time."*⁹⁶

⁹⁴ LOVELL, Julia, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the making of China*, Pan Mcmillan Australia, Chap.3, pp. 82-84, 2011

⁹⁵ PAULÈS, Xavier, "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.32

⁹⁶ Open letter by Lin Zexu to Queen Victoria, 1839 from PAULÈS, Xavier, "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.35

Lin could then be seen as a precursor of the future diplomatic exchanges China will conduct with the occident, as he was the first Chinese to use the European International Laws to arbitrate a conflict with a foreign “barbaric” State. Lin Zexu then engaged the Chinese forces in a blockade of the British factory in March 1839 and put an ultimatum on the English traders. As a patriot, he wanted to reaffirm the primacy of Chinese Law and that the foreigners were only allowed to stay in their factories because the Emperor gave them his permission. He required that all opium stocks should be surrendered to the Chinese authority for immediate destruction and the signature of a contract that prevented further opium sells in China. The use of a contract in place of a common agreement was not anodyne, as Lin knew that a contract would have more meaning for the foreigners. But the traders remained barricaded in their factory and refused to give any chest of opium⁹⁷. The situation evolved when Lin menaced to execute the two richer hong in Canton, Howqua and Mowqua and summoned the biggest British smugglers to surrender himself to the Cantonese authorities. The situation getting out of hands, Superintendent Charles Elliot came personally to the factory and began to negotiate with Lin⁹⁸. Negotiations that would prove to be unsuccessful due to the Imperial Commissioner’s virtuous stubbornness. Lin cut the factories supplies of food and forced all the Chinese servants to withdraw from the traders houses. Left alone and suffering from isolation and famine, Elliot finally yielded to Lin’s ultimatum but managed to return the situation to guarantee the British interests. When he promised to surrender all the opium the British traders and smugglers had, he also promised them that the Crown would provide them refunds for their financial losses, as the traders would legally give him their opium. What was supposed to be the resolution of a public health affair for the Chinese had been transformed in an international conflict between Britain and China. When Lin effectively publicly destroyed the opium stocks by covering them

⁹⁷ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.181, 2000

⁹⁸ LOVELL, Julia, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the making of China*, Pan Mcmillan Australia, Chap.3, pp. 85-87, 2011

with lime and dumped them in the rests in the sea⁹⁹, the British government saw the equivalent of two millions of pounds sink in Canton's bay. The financial loss, add to the treatments the Chinese representatives had made the British subjects suffer were the final points that decided the British Empire to start the first Opium War with China in August 1839.

b. A cultural shock.

From the Chinese point of view, the escalate of such a conflict, motivated by the foreigners mercantile greed was not a new experience. As stated before in this work, China, on the brink of the Opium Wars, was waging a war against the city of Kokand. In his book, *The Great Chinese Revolution : 1800-1989*, John K. Fairbank show us the close similarities between the diplomatic methods employed by the Qing to resolve both the Kokand case and the conflicts with the West. In the eyes of the Imperial court, the fact that the barbarians were Muslim noble merchants families or European free traders made no difference, they were barbarians and China should deal with them as such. However, and Fairbank clearly marked the difference, if the two invaders were operating in their economic interests, their inner motives, methods and philosophical guidelines were far from being the same. As the British Empire was no religious clan fighting for its commercial legitimacy in Asia, but an imperialistic expansionist colonial empire that already occupied the major maritime trade routes of the World and was customary in the way of supporting their requirements with military force¹⁰⁰. And when the British armies indeed wiped out the Chinese defences of Chusan Island and occupied the place, the mentalities in Peking began to change about the European menace. Because, at the contrary of Commissioner Lin's expectations, the British did not attack Canton, which Lin had fortified and armed with foreign guns expecting a massive frontal assault. The British admiral (also

⁹⁹ DERKS, Hans. "TEA FOR OPIUM VICE VERSA." In *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, Ca. 1600-1950*, LEIDEN; BOSTON: Brill, p.84 2012.

¹⁰⁰ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I, p.142, 2011

named Elliot) preferred to attack Chusan Island because of its strategic position¹⁰¹. The island is close from the grand canal that served to channel southern grains to Peking and the admiral Elliot knew that if its forces represented a direct threat to the capital, the Emperor would take their demands seriously. His plan worked when the British forces sailed North, close to Tientsin. Daoguang was very displeased that the westerners could directly reach Peking's surroundings so easily. Never the Qing dynasty faced such a threat from a foreign country, nor experienced such quick defeats. The Emperor refused to believe Lin's arguments on the technological superiority of the westerners, which supposed China to be less advanced than mere barbarians. For Daoguang, Chinese defeats were only Lin's fault, reproaching him his aggressive behaviour in the opium affair and his strategical miscalculation that costed them Chusan and brought the barbarians near Peking. The clean superiority of the British Empire represented the first shock for the Manchus and the Chinese Imperial officials. Anxious after the foreign victories and the blockades they installed on the Yangtze, the Emperor decided to send a Mongol diplomat, Ch'i-shan, to negotiate peace. A peace he will almost obtain by signing the Chuanbi Convention after the British armies destroyed the Chinese infantry and fleet in 1841¹⁰². The Convention stated that Britain could settle in Hong Kong, that China would pay the equivalent of six million silver dollars in war indemnities and that British and Chinese officials should negotiate directly as equals. However the British did not waited for the Convention to be ratified by the Emperor and promptly installed in Hong Kong. That was one of the first case of misunderstanding between Britain and China about their respective diplomates powers. Ch'i-shan, as Lin Zexu before him, suffered the Emperor's wrath who was scandalised by the Chuanbi Convention. Lin was sent in exile and Ch'i-shan was imprisoned and judged for his unauthorized choice to conclude such an agreement.

¹⁰¹ PAULÈS, Xavier, "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.35-36

¹⁰² *Ibid*

On the British side, things did not go as plan neither and Charles superiors were very unpleased of the Convention's results. Lord Palmerston, foreign secretary at the Foreign Office who was in charge of the British relations with East Asia, discredited Charles Elliot. According to Palmerston, the superintendent did not use all the power that the Crown gave him, retiring the English troops too soon, agreeing on a compensation that was judged far too small to refund the merchants for their losses or pay for the war's costs and finally, accept the British settlement on Hong Kong. The island, at this time, was nothing but a rock inhabited by fishermen and a lair for smugglers¹⁰³. Worse than that, the Emperor refused to ratify the Convention, nullifying it. Elliot did not discuss the opening of new ports, nor he mentioned the possibility for Britain to have a diplomatic embassy in Peking. Palmerston could not be satisfied of such small results for the Crown. First because it was Elliot who decided to take care of the opium like this but also because Palmerston's carrier depended a lot on the results of the war. Unlike Canton's superintendent, he was not in favour of peaceful or equal negotiations with China due to his believes in the utilitarianism theories which encountered a huge success among the population and a part of the English intellectuals. Palmerston himself, after he read the reports from Lin Zexu's takeover of Canton was scandalised by the treatments the Chinese authorities inflicted to British subjects. His positions on Chinese uncivilised manners were reinforced by James Matheson's opinions on Chinese custom to consider all other civilisations in the World as barbarians, counting the Europeans, and worse, the British Empire in it. If Palmerston followed these ideas, he contributed to them by organising anti-Chinese propaganda¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁴ LOVELL, Julia, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the making of China*, Pan Mcmillan Australia, Chap.3, pp. 100-102, 2011

It was obvious that the only excuse of searching for financial compensations and open the Chinese ports appeared rather thin to justify a military intervention in China. Already, in Europe and from parts of the British elites, voices started to rise against the vicious nature of the conflict. The main critic being about the interests the Crown had in the opium trade, something that was considered as a very vile reason to start a war and risk lives for the sake of a prohibited drug's market. Another argument exposed by the anti-war scholars was about the misunderstandings of the exchanges between Britain and China, especially the notion of "barbarians" and "tributes". Peter Perring Thoms was one of the leader, as a Chinese translator, of this contestation¹⁰⁵. He argued that the term used to qualify the westerners in Chinese (*Yi*) only meant "foreigners" and not "barbarians" like Matheson said it in his reports. Thoms explained his point of view by précising that negative connotations to *Yi* when addressing the westerners was only used after Napier's expedition because of his impoliteness toward the Chinese authorities and his lack of respect for Canton's rules. He opposed his interpretations of the Confucian vision of "barbarians" with the one from Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, a Company man who supported Matheson's affirmations by saying that Chinese traditions factually considered foreigners as "*E*", barbarians. Thoms affirmed that the two terms were not the same and were never used in Chinese correspondences with Britain, adding that their interpretation by British officials never was negative before Napier's failures. Concerning the conflict about the word "tribute" to translate the Chinese word "*gong*", Thoms sustained that the significations that implied the word tribute in from a European point of view as a levy offered in exchange for peace or protection. A "tribute", Thoms said, implied a mark of submission, whereas *gong* could be interpreted more like an homage or an offer to the Emperor as if it was for a present to the British ruler.

¹⁰⁵ BASU, DILIP K. "Chinese Xenology and the Opium War: Reflections on Sinocentrism." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 73, no. 4, 2014, pp. 932-935. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43553460

On the opposite side, Lindsay's point of view encountered far more success from Palmerston than Thoms theories, which can be understandable considering the context of the Opium War. Thoms did not take into account the changes of vocabulary during the decaying of the two countries relations. The use of the precise term of "barbarian" was effectively often used to qualify foreign merchants and British officials after Napier's expedition. It was then then the anti-Chinese theories that were the most popular in the British government and Palmerston decided to intensify the military operations in the last years of the first Opium War in the name of what is called liberal interventionism. This form of interventionism shaped the entire campaign of war justification, finding inspiration in the previous liberal thinkers of the eighteenth century like David Hume. Hume's postulate was that China and the British Empire were opposed by essence because of their approach of progress. Like John Stuart Mill would theorise it, Britain and other European countries were small territories, favourable to changes, reforms and innovations which led the Europeans to found their colonial Empires to continue their march toward progress. The British subjects could enjoy liberty of trade, were independent and could fulfil their personal desires. China was then shown as its complete opposite, like an old conservative and stagnating country that refused itself to progress¹⁰⁶. The Chinese Emperor and his court were depicted as tyrannical and greedy rulers, refusing their liberty to the common people. For the British masses of the nineteenth century, China became a country oppressed by a bellicose, almighty government very close to what the totalitarian states will become in the next century. If China was closing itself from the British exchanges, it was to prevent its people to experience what benefits European civilisations could bring them like liberty, technological advancements and political progresses. Palmerston was deeply convinced that the only way to bring the western enlightenment to a State that refused to be part of the international rules of their century, was to make its rulers yield by military force. This strategy, Palmertson knew it well

¹⁰⁶ LOVELL, Julia, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the making of China*, Pan Mcmillan Australia, Chap.3, pp. 100-102, 2011

since he already used it to subdue rebellions in India. Thus, he deposed Charles Elliot from his functions, threw away the Chuanbi Convention, named Sir Henry Pottinger to take Elliot's place and called for the war to continue. The British forces, who took control of the Pearl River, besieged Canton and leaved the city after the Chinese authorities payed a ransom of six million silver dollars in exchange for the city's safety and the withdrawal of the British army. The hostilities continued after an army of Chinese pirates paid by the imperial gentry tried to take the British fleet by surprise¹⁰⁷. When Pottinger took Elliot's place, the British army continued its rampage along the Chinese shores and took the ports of Amoy, Dinghai, Zenhai, Ningbo and Zhapu on their way. They occupied the cities of Shanghai, Woosung and Chiankiang during summer 1842, closing at the same time the last access to the Grand Canal and menacing to march on Nanking. Emperor Daoguang, realising that the Chinese forces were fighting a war they could never win finally consented to negotiate a peace treaty¹⁰⁸. China experienced one of its most terrible defeat and the Imperial court felt in shock by the facility with which the barbarian forces annihilated its armies. The specificities of the following negotiations between Pottinger and the two Chinese envoys the Emperor sent will be discussed a bit later but at this point, Daoguang knew he could not continue to ignore or evade the western exigencies.

c. Coping with the West

Unfortunately for China, not only the British were eager to end with their protectionist policies. America, the outer sea adversary of the British Empire, followed the English point of view on the reactionary principles of Chinese tradition. President John Quincy Adams even stated in 1841 that the obsession for China to always keep its foreign exchanges under a principle of lord and vassal relation was contrary to all principles of equity in trade and diplomacy, that the

¹⁰⁷ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.188-189, 2000

¹⁰⁸ PAULÈS, Xavier, "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.36

kotow was an arrogant custom throwing progressive values on the ground. Fortified by the American point of view on the conflict, the British government had all latitudes to act as it wanted¹⁰⁹. Ultimately, China was charged for the war costs in addition to the sum already requested by the United-Kingdom to repay the opium and factories destruction or seizure, the cost of the war for China then reached the amount of twenty one million silver dollars. It was also decided that British military troops shall remain in the country until everything have been paid. The Treaty then granted that the island of Hong Kong would be ceded to the Crown and that five ports qualified as the “Treaty ports” would now be open to British merchants but also host a straight diplomatic with the Imperial officials with consuls in each ports. Those ports were all the ones that Elliot captured before Pottinger’s arrival. Thus, the ports of Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Shanghai, and Ningbo would be hosting foreigners, providing them provisions and residence¹¹⁰. Finally, the Qing agreed to recognize the principle of extraterritoriality for foreign merchants and citizens. The goal of the treaty was to put an end to the Canton trade so, because juridical affairs were the main core of the dissensions between westerners and Chinese, the British government would hold to instore a clear differentiation of rights between the both. By this statement, foreigners would not be submitted to Chinese laws, which was seen as a progress for the British in terms of trade liberation and personal liberty. The main excuse was that Chinese judgements and legislative system were as archaic as unnecessarily violent, and after what suffered the Crown’s subjects during Lin Zexu’s witch hunt, Britain wanted to prevent such brutalities to happen again¹¹¹. But step a foot in Chinese territory was not something anodyne, it represented a great loss for China’s sovereignty which was exactly the British plan according to their liberal civilisation principles. Now that Hong

¹⁰⁹ LOVELL, Julia, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the making of China*, Pan Mcmillan Australia, Chap.3, pp. 100-102, 2011

¹¹⁰ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.190, 2000

¹¹¹ ALLINGHAM PHILIP V., *England and China: The Opium Wars, 1839-60*, Victorian Web, Lakehead University, 2006. <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/empire/opiumwars/opiumwars1.html>

Kong was occupied by their country, the island would become a den of free traders and a standard bearer of the British model. The consequences abroad were fantastic, as for the first time in its history, China was opened to the international trade, signed a treaty with an occidental power as equals and accept a foreign influence. The British scholars were praising the possibility that offered the Chinese population. Such a formidable force of potentially new traders that will spread free trade across Asia and freely exchange their goods with westerners. The family of civilised nations will now count the millions of Chinese subjects and Honk Kong was seen as the capital of this new era¹¹². This kind of rhetoric became the fuel of British imperialism and since the motor was started, new actors decided to enter in the race for profits. Among the first powers that followed the momentum initiated by the Hong Kong praises came the Americans and the French, both craving for similar treaties with China. Which the Middle Kingdom accepted, because of their previous defeat certainly, China did not stand a chance after the rampage British armies had caused to the imperial troops. But if new wars between China and the westerners was not in the Emperor's interests, the possibility of a conflict between the foreigners was appealing. As the British Empire's aspirations were to open China to the World and avert any monopole, the losses would only be theirs since they had made all the job in the first place. The country's market was not unlimited, Chinese officials knew it well, so they thought that when the riches will start to diminish, the barbarians would simply begin to fight each other to have the biggest piece¹¹³. Moreover, the American's Wangshia treaty prohibited the opium trade and the French treaty of Whampoa only asked for the right for catholic missionaries to freely pursue evangelisation program in the Treaty Ports.

¹¹² MUNN, C., *Anglo-China: Chinese people and British rule in Hong Kong, 1841-1880*, 1st ed., Routledge, Part. I, pp. 43-44 2001

¹¹³ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.191, 2000

But if the Chinese government choose to treat with the occidentals as patiently and peacefully than possible, the cohabitation between the foreigners and the local populations represented another challenge. It is understandable that Canton was the most affected city in China by the European assault on the country, since the exchanges with the foreigners were the longest their and mostly not the for the better. Canton post Lin Zexu was strongly hostile to the westerners as the xenophobic thoughts grew in the population, humiliated by the British treatments and ransomed to their army. Moreover, Canton began to feel the impact that the opening of other the other ports. Now that the city was not the only trading post in China, the occidentals were more willing to go in other places in the northern parts of the shores like Shanghai which became the most flourishing port in China during the years that followed the end of the first opium war, surpassing Canton in the amounts of tea exported to Britain. The tea trade in Shanghai was not as intense as in Canton before the war, but the economic interest of China's former commercial centre declined so much that the English demand crumbled. Cantonese merchants, even freed from the Co-hong's grasp, were seeing their profits fly away, former workers employed by the British were desperate to find another job¹¹⁴. The side effects of China's opening struck Canton's population very hard and the hate for the British grew bigger and bigger with the years. They even refused the foreigners to enter inside of the city's walls and began to form militias to prevent any stranger to enter. Canton's officials were playing an important role in the population's defiance against the British, as they used the weapon's stocks left behind by Lin Zexu's army to arm the locals. The British forces finally occupied Canton in 1847 after the situation exploded and the population revolted against what they believed to be pro-British Chinese officials¹¹⁵. The other *tour de force* the Chinese government achieve was to return the outcomes of free trade against the British. Soon after the Treaty of Nanking and

¹¹⁴ PAULÈS, Xavier, "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.37-38

¹¹⁵ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.201, 2000

the occupation of Honk Kong, the British merchants created systems for the western goods to be shipped inside Chinese territory without being taxed, clubs of traders were formed, the most famous being the Shanghai Club bar where the foreign merchants were patiently waiting for their Chinese associates to return with the profits of their trade. Since the access to China's interior was still forbidden for the foreigners, they had to count on intermediaries that will take care of their shipments. The compradores evolved in flourishing guilds and trading associations, taking all advantages they had from their positions. The trick as rather simple, but clever, since the compradores had all the rights, and were even encouraged, to invest in British companies. The industries to which the Chinese investors were interested the most were shipping or transit companies. The foreign ships having free pass on the Chinese waters, the compradores were then using this privilege and their consequent financial investments in shipping companies to create smaller shipping services companies placed under foreign propriety. The stratagem was that those small companies, controlled entirely by Chinese merchants and intermediaries, were avoiding the imperial taxes using their foreign supports. Supports that were hardly aware to be utilised as tools of tax exemption¹¹⁶. The Chinese owners were could even count on the Crown's protection against piracy spreading on the shores that the Imperial Government was incapable to regulate. Progressively, the British aspirations to open China to a new liberal era were almost compromised by the population they soaked to free from their tyrannical leaders. Because the British were precisely aiming for the Chinese population, the opposition was truly between the western liberal imperialism against the old traditional empire of China. An old and wise foe that, if he appeared weakened and yield to the British armies, could count on his millennia passed as the most advanced and powerful country in Asia. The Qing dynasty did not crumble right after the British victories because of what can be called pride or stubbornness, but was fuelled by centuries of traditions and past superiority. Again, why being interested in western

¹¹⁶ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I, pp.146-147, 2011

technologies when the labour force and the production system were enough to carry the country. Compared to a steamboat, muscles were cheap and efficient when used in droves ? Honk Kong is the perfect example of Chinese dealing with the westerners after the first Opium war. Similar to what they offered to the Kokand warlords e decade before, they calmed the barbarians by giving them a tiny fraction of the Chinese vast Empire, granted them jurisdiction over their new lands and satisfied their commercial appetites. Honk Kong was exactly the same, but voices raised on the British side soon enough to complain about how small the occupation of Honk Kong and the ports openings were when they thought about it. Factually, the island was not the biggest and not in the most strategical place for trade. Palmerston was one of the first to criticise such a poor choice for a Britannic colony, compared to the island of Chusan which was bigger, richer with already existing infrastructures and less far from the big cities inside the country. Chusan was the logical choice since the British troops captured the place during the war and used it as a military base to secure the access to the bay and keep pressure on the Chinese government¹¹⁷. Unfortunately, the Foreign Office did not agree with the merchants and politics notices on Chusan and never asked for keeping it under British control. Which was also a logical choice, treaties had been signed with the Chinese authorities, traders already invested massively in Hong Kong due to the efficiency of the propaganda and Britain was withdrawing its troops from Chusan after the Qing paid the war compensations. Yet again, the so called profits for the Crown appeared farer than expected, as Hong Kong became a den for Chinese entrepreneurs, smugglers and burglars who wished to benefit from the British trade. The Chinese immigration to Hong Kong soon became an issue among the British traders who though see rich Chinese families or more traders like Howqua settle on the island and come with interesting proposals. But in place of the wealthy merchants, Hong Kong was flooded by pirates, unscrupulous crooks and simple men in need of employment. The situation became critical when the ratio between

¹¹⁷ MUNN, C., *Anglo-China: Chinese people and British rule in Hong Kong, 1841-1880*, 1st ed., Routledge, - Part. I, pp. 67-68, 2001

Chinese and British population reached one English to a hundred Chinese in 1848¹¹⁸. The island began to lose its appeal for British merchants who were informed of the situation and would prefer to install in the freed ports than on the island. The security problems rose as the Chinese population reached a point where it became more expensive to manage Hong Kong's immigration than administer trade agreements with the continent. The tensions between the westerners and the Chinese population, blended with the dissatisfaction of the British traders who faced Hong Kong's disillusion, pushed the Crown to consider a renegotiation of Nanking's Treaty. Contradictorily to the Imperial expectations, the westerners did not jump at each other's throat but were eager to deepen the advanced they made in China. The French and the Americans were favourable for the British to negotiate new agreements because they already scheduled their treaties renegotiations from the beginning. Something the British thought unnecessary, a choice the Crown now regretted. Adding to this tense situation the xenophobic aspirations of the new Emperor Hsien-feng who had to deal with other priorities in his own country than the occidentals complaints. Indeed, the opening to foreign knowledge and freer exchanges between the Chinese and the westerners, more particularly Christian missionaries, indirectly caused a rebellion in the South East in the early 1850's. So when, in 1854, British and American envoys came North to discuss the new negotiations, they were met only by officials of lesser influence and were sent back to Canton with the Imperial court's categorical refusal. Time passing and lassitude growing, the United States, Britain and France began to think that another war was inevitable¹¹⁹.

A war that the Chinese Emperor thought impossible, or simply ignored, as the communications between Peking or the rest of the country were slowed by the distance or by government

¹¹⁸ MUNN, C., *Anglo-China: Chinese people and British rule in Hong Kong, 1841-1880*, 1st ed., Routledge, Part. I, pp. 72, 2001

¹¹⁹ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.204-205, 2000

representatives or generals. Because an important point is to know that, from the Emperor's point of view, the conflicts with the westerners were far away territorial issues. This, and the reluctance from imperial officials to report their failures to the Emperor by fear of punishment were no surprise that the poor Emperor hardly knew of any war before it reached Peking's vicinities¹²⁰. A war that the English in Honk Kong started to forget as the colony was finally rising up. The former governors of the island were roughly criticised for their mismanagement of the Chinese immigration. The *Friend of China*, the Kong Kong newspaper created in the early years of the colony in 1842, which was a strong ally for the colony's propaganda gradually became the most ferocious detractor of the British administration. The critics changed in 1853 when Sir John Bowring was appointed to be the new governor in Hong Kong. The colony was facing a new affluence of Chinese immigrants who were fleeing the civil war on the continent, with them came merchants and families that were far more virtuous and wealthy than the average Chinese smugglers Hong Kong counted in its walls. Bowring, as a convinced utilitarian, saw all the potential this fresh arrival of population could offer to the city. However, he first had to deal with the already existing immigrants population to liberate the place for the new generation. Bowring was very displeased by the lack of management of his predecessors, that they did not think of the work force so much Chinese nationals represented. He then decided to deeply reform the position of the Chinese population in Hong Kong's policies. Witnessing the grow of a bourgeoisie in the alien community, he decided to sell them lands on the island and made them part of the political life by creating a suffrage based on the inhabitants properties. This system enabled Chinese landowners to be predominant in the Legislative Council¹²¹. Bowring's policies were a great example of what Bentham political philosophy

¹²⁰ LOVELL, J., ", "Le siècle de l'humiliation", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.51

¹²¹ MUNN, C., *Anglo-China: Chinese people and British rule in Hong Kong, 1841-1880*, 1st ed., Routledge, Part. III, pp. 371-374, 2001

applied to Hong Kong could achieve. He also found an utility to the massive unemployed population of refugees on the island by finding them work in the other Crown's colonies and promoting culture and infrastructures construction on the island (like shelters for the poorest or a botanic garden). Bowring's plan was to calm the relations between China and Europe by giving a peaceful and attractive image of the British colony taking the role of Hong Kong as the showcase of western civilisation very seriously. His work even managed to change the vision Hong Kong British population saw the Chinese. For many occidentals, the Asian population only had a role of intermediaries or mere labour force(interpreters, compradores, servants, etc.), now that they could realize how much the Chinese bourgeoisie could contribute to the community. But things will not go as he planned considering Chinese officials antagonism towards occidentals. Hsien-feng's agent in Canton, Ye Mingchen was as anti-foreigners than possible and participated with great devotion to Canton's resistance an hostilities towards strangers. He refused any occidental demands for interviews or diplomatic encounters and was the main oppose to the treaties reconsideration¹²². Bowring reforms and commerce with the Chinese bourgeoisie in Hong King was a success surely, but the animosity of the Imperial government definitely eroded the British patience. The relative peace of Hong Kong was destroyed at the same moment both Chinese and British forces entered in war for the second time in 1856. The incident that started the fire was what will be called the *Arrow* incident¹²³. The Arrow was a boat earned by a Chinese Hongkonger merchant who insured his ship to be under the Crown's protection, bearing the British flag. Thus the Chinese government had no rights over this ship, which did not prevent Canton's authorities, on Ye's orders, to board the ship, arrest twenty Chinese crewmembers and dragged down the flag. Ye's excuse was that the ship was hiding a researched pirate, plus, the protection license of the ship had expired.

¹²² HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.203, 2000

¹²³ MUNN, C., *Anglo-China: Chinese people and British rule in Hong Kong, 1841-1880*, 1st ed., Routledge, Part. III, pp. 384-385, 2001

Once again, when Canton's consul asked for the crew to be liberated and excuses to be made for the British flag's disrespect, Ye promptly refused any compromise. His attitude finished to angered the British government in Asia and, for the second time, Palmerston ordered for China to be submitted by arms. Bowring sailed to Canton with a military fleet, leaving Hong Kong to Colonel William Caine. Caine was Bowring's perfect contrary, xenophobic and racist, he reinforced the police in the Chinese district and many cases of police violence began to occur. Not that the island was a safe and crime free place, delinquency was nothing new for a colony gathering both rich British traders and poor Chinese immigrants. However Caine's policy led to a protest from the Chinese shopkeepers and natives. If the colonel managed to calm down the protester using only his dissuasive power, the situation of Hong Kong being considered in state of siege pushed Caine to denounce Ye Mingchen as the instigator of the emeute. His affirmations about Ye's secret agents were no help for the ongoing conflict in Canton's bay. On October 29th, 1857, the British forces walked on Canton and destroyed Ye's armies. At the Parliament, anti-war critics began to rise against the government's management of the Chinese affair. This is why Bowring was deposed and Lord Elgin, previously governor general of Canada, was sent in a diplomatic attempt to avoid further massacres¹²⁴. Seizing the opportunity, France and Russia decided to join the British expedition, the first in revenge of the assassination of a French missionary in the Kwangsi province, the last only to be of a diplomatic help with the Chinese. The fact is that Russia was signing agreement with China since a longer time than European powers for territorial matters, the Second Opium War was no exception and the Emperor Alexander II counted on using the conflict as a mean to gain Chinese lands towards the Pacific. Once again a foreign mission was coming to China, hoping to renegotiate the treaties signed during the first Opium War and eager to finally have a diplomatic representation

¹²⁴ PAULÈS, Xavier, "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.38-40

in Peking. The Emperor wanted to deal with the westerners as little as possible, he saw some of the biggest European powers come to him, armed and asking to open his country to their trade even more. Meanwhile in Canton, Ye Mingchen was worried about the sudden arrival of the foreigner's fleet. Aware of the British superiority from the first war, Ye decided that trying to confront them on the battlefield would signify a useless loss of men, a second military humiliation for China, the wrath of the Emperor and his own disgrace. The previous examples of the former officials sent by Peking to take care of the foreign affairs were still clear in his mind and he did not want to be stripped of his titles and properties, sent in exile or worse. But if Ye was split between his duty to the Imperial throne and the perspective of an inevitable defeat, he did not choose inaction. Ye's plan was that if the westerners were invincible in direct confrontations, they were not expecting the Chinese populations in the colonies and the treaty ports to conduct acts of sabotage or targeted assassinations. By setting up various networks of agents in Hong Kong and the ports, Ye gave some credit to Colonel Cain's theories on Chinese terrorism, counting on the surrounding province governors and populations to rebel against the imperialists. At this point, China could not raise an army at this point and using the population anger was, for Ye, the best compromise between not engaging the westerners in combat and act enough to hope for the Emperor's leniency. This how, in April 1857¹²⁵, various acts of terrorism were planned by Chinese groups like the burning of European factories in Canton, warrants were put on British merchants heads, Ye offered primes for every westerners captured and violent campaign against British buildings and populations. The most effective was the poisoning of the bread supplies in Hong Kong with arsenic that almost killed four hundred English inhabitants. In December of the same year, Canton was occupied by the French and British armies, Ye was captured and sent to Calcutta where he died one year later¹²⁶. The allied

¹²⁵ MUNN, C., *Anglo-China: Chinese people and British rule in Hong Kong, 1841-1880*, 1st ed., Routledge, Part. III, pp. 388-389, 2001

¹²⁶ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.207, 200

forces then established the first puppet regime in China's history in Canton, with governor Po-kuei acting under a foreign commission. Galvanized by Canton's occupation, Sir Elgin and general Gros (the French army commandant in China) sailed North, repeating the same strategy the British used before to threatened Peking. In 1858, the fort of Taku, near Tientsin, was taken, once again posting the Europeans at the doors of the Imperial Palace. The Emperor urged envoys to calm the barbarians again and sign a new treaty in Tientsin. For the second time, China had to agree to the opening of ten ports in total, legalize the opium trade in the country, host diplomatic embassies in Peking, pay another war compensation of six million taels and allow catholic missionaries to circulate inside the country and purchase lands¹²⁷. But if the Chinese diplomats signed the treaty, Emperor Hsien-feng and the conservatives in the imperial court were scandalised by the westerners diplomatic imperatives, a barbarian embassy could never be settled in Peking. To prevent such an event, Hsien-feng organised the Shanghai Tariff Conference in October 1858¹²⁸. The Conference was a secret plan from the imperial office to make the westerners renounced to the Treaty's agreements concerning the embassies in exchange for the abrogation of all customs tariffs for British traders. This strategy represents the incomprehension the Chinese scholars had about western diplomacy and actors. For them, all the barbarians were craving for profits due to their former relations with the EIC's representatives. But a plan effective on the foreign traders could produce the opposite on foreign diplomats, as their objectives were not quite the same. However the negotiations happened, Elgin willing to discuss about commercial matters. He stated that no tax exemption should be applied to English merchants since it would be disadvantageous for the Chinese traders and contrary to the free trade policy. But he agreed on new custom tariffs, so beside opium, tea and silk, all goods should be imposed by five percent of their value selling value, opium

¹²⁷ PAULÈS, Xavier, "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.39

¹²⁸ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.211, 200

importations were legalized with a special tax and tea was the most imposed good with a tax between fifteen and twenty percent ad valorem¹²⁹. Unfortunately, Elgin refused to change anything about the Peking's embassies, a failure that displeased the Emperor who was gathering his armies around Peking. So in May 1859, when the allies came to the capital for the Tientsin treaty ratification, they were welcomed by gunshots from the Chinese army gathered around the Imperial city. Losses were numerous in the European's troops with more than a thousand men dead or wounded. Enraged by the Chinese treachery, Palmerston sent Sir Elgin back in Tientsin with the French army to crush the imperial forces and occupy Peking¹³⁰. The last month of the conflict during summer 1860, marked a turning point in the public opinion's involvement in overseas conflicts, because of the brutality of the allies military answer firstly, but most of all because this was the first time such an event was immortalized. Felix Beato, an Italian photographer, then became one of the first war reporter. After the Chinese forces captured Harry Parkes, British consul of Canton and the leading diplomat in the conflict, the foreign armies crushed the elite of the Chinese army and entered Peking in October. Finding no court to bargain with beside the Emperor's last brother, Prince Kung. Infuriated by the Emperor's escape, Elgin, with the temperance of the French general and the Russian intermediary, decided to burn down the Summer Palace. On this event Victor Hugo wrote :

“One day two bandits entered the Summer Palace. One plundered, the other burned. Victory can be a thieving woman, or so it seems. The devastation of the Summer Palace was accomplished by the two victors acting jointly. (...) All the treasures of all our cathedrals put together could not equal this formidable and splendid museum of the Orient. It contained not only masterpieces of art, but masses of jewelry. What a great exploit, what a windfall! One of the two victors filled his pockets; when the other saw this he filled his coffers. And back they came to Europe, arm in arm, laughing away. Such is the story of the two bandits.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p.212

¹³⁰ LOVELL, Julia, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the making of China*, Pan Mcmillan Australia, Chap.3, pp. 295-296, 2011

We Europeans are the civilized ones, and for us the Chinese are the barbarians. This is what civilization has done to barbarism. ¹³¹

The burning of the Summer Palace marked the beginning of a new era in Chinese international relations with the West. The Peking Convention was signed a couple of days after, ratified the Treaty of Tientsin, legalized opium, opened the port of Tientsin to European traders, the total war compensation reached sixteen millions of taels and the Kowloon peninsula near Hong Kong would remain under British military control, signing the beginning of the militarised commercial occupation of the Chinese territories¹³². But the true winner of this war were not the British, nor the French, but the Russian emissary who successfully manoeuvred between all the parties to insure the territorial advance of his country in China. As a mediator in the negotiations, Russia won both the financial and commercial advantages of the Peking Convention, but also was rewarded by the Imperial government for its *support*. Russia then gained control over the northern territories of the Amur and Ussuri rivers, getting an access to the sea in addition to commercial and diplomatic agreements in China's continental provinces.

2. The Unequal Treaties.

a. Chinese diplomacy and western ultimatums.

This work previously mentioned how China handled the gap created by the Europeans advantages and how the allied British, French and Russian forces made the Imperial government yield to their demands. However, reducing the Chinese position in the conflict to a military defeated country that was forced to capitulation by the occidental's superior technology would be missing China's true strength and genius during the Opium Wars. As a matter of facts, the diplomatic battlefield on which the conflicts actor's representatives fought

¹³¹ HUGO, Victor, "The sack of the Summer Palace" in his *Letter to Captain Butler*, Hauteville House, 25/11/1861

¹³² PAULÈS, Xavier, "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.39

for their country's interests. The interesting aspects of the Opium Wars period are the innovative characteristics and the cleverness of the Chinese diplomats to handle the negotiations and the latter relations with the westerners. Considering the deep opposition the Imperial court had with bargaining with the foreigners, it is properly astonishing how the Qing envoys would manage to obtain peace. Nevertheless, a difference can clearly be seen in the methods employed between the first and the second Opium War. Two approaches that will split this subject in two parts, starting from the Nanking's Treaty negotiations and actors to continue on the diplomatic circumstances that led to the Peking Convention.

As established before, the Europeans to the eyes of the Emperor's court were not different from any other non-Chinese civilisation. Subjected to the tributary system and benefiting from the Emperor's consideration to allow them the access to the Canton trade. The latter intervention of Commissioner Lin Zexu is symptomatic of the Emperor's appreciation of the barbarians threat, certainly the British Crown used Lin's actions to transform a commercial disagreement in an international conflict but the main issue here was the mutual incomprehension between the two actors. Sure Lin tried to learn of the occidental customs by studying International Law but only as a dispensable tool, the Imperial authority being powerful enough for him to put the barbarians under pressure. The following war and his condemnation to exile for starting it were the signal for a new type of diplomatic behaviour for Chinese officials. A change that was represented by Lin's substitutes and could even be catalysed in one man : Qying. Member of the Emperor's court, the Manchou Imperial Commissioner Qying was sent by the Emperor with the help of another Chinese envoy, Deputy Lieutenant General I-li-pu (or Yilipu), following the reject of Chuanbi's treaty¹³³. His intervention can be seen as the first attempt, by a Chinese official, to truly comprehend the Europeans behavior and reform the diplomatic approach of Chinese-Western international relations. His mission gave by Emperor Daoguang was to put an

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 37

end to the war and insure further peace with the Europeans to secure the East coast of the country. A mission that would appear harder than expected as the British envoys stubbornness and their diplomatic customs were radically different from what the two envoys expected. They were not facing the greedy barbarian trader they expected but Sir Henry Pottinger, a British aristocrat sent by the Crown and very picky on the etiquette. The first problem here came from the difference of power recognition both parties had. On the British side, Sir Henry Pottinger was directly representing the King and so he asked to receive negotiators with the same diplomatic power as him. The former bargains for peace led to a deadlock where China was contending about the British demands, judging them as “too much”, and “too little” by the United-Kingdom’s establishment. Pottinger wanted to be sure he was being taken seriously by the other party and would not be given empty promises as it occurred during the previous negotiations. He then asked the Emperor to “*send a minister with full power*”¹³⁴. The problem is that such consideration did not exist at this time and no Chinese representative could pretend to have the same amount of power as the Emperor. Coupled with Qiyong and Yilibu’s misunderstandings about the “barbarians”, Pottinger was displeased and judged them as unexperienced and non-representatives of the Emperor’s actual power and will. More than that, he was worried about the United-Kingdom diplomatic prestige, already dented by China previous refusal for peace. At the beginning, Pottinger was fearing Qiyong and his partner did not have the executive power to cease the fights, thinking the Emperor would never let someone have the final word because his bargaining weakness and of some pride issue.

Factually, Pottinger was not that far from the truth concerning the Emperor’s thoughts or, to be more precise, the Emperor’s court thoughts. The relations Qiyong and Yilibu had with the Imperial bureaucracy represented a perfect example of a two-level game they had to play as the

¹³⁴ FAIRBANK, J. K., “Chinese Diplomacy and the Treaty of Nanking, 1842” in *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1940, pp. 8-12. Consulted on JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1870955, (latest access 21 June 2020).

Emperor's representatives. The two Chinese negotiators, in direct contact with the situation, could perfectly see China could not contend much longer due to the United-Kingdom quick advances on the coasts and were urging the Imperial government to find a solution. When Pottinger finally recognised the legitimacy of the negotiators, the first draft of the Treaty was given to them and even if the Treaty was clearly made to the advantage of the United-Kingdom, noticeable efforts were made during the elaboration of the Treaty's draft in 1840 to suit the context and the cultural differences. The main barrier the British Foreign Secretary of State encountered was the language barrier. Indeed, the usual presentation for a Bilateral Treaty at those times was to show equality between the parties by putting both versions of the text in two separated columns on the same pages. The problem here, was that English usual and juridical vocabulary sometimes hardly founded their counterpart in Chinese. An important work of translation was then made and, to overcome other issues due to the Chinese way of writing from the top to the bottom of the page, the Foreign Secretary choose to make to separate both versions of the Treaty¹³⁵. Qying, willingly followed the Emperor's orders and if the latest was very displeased by the Treaty's demands (especially the financial compensations), the Manchu diplomat managed to convince the Imperial court. This is where Qying ingenuity came into play, as he entered in a deep compartmental study of the European's customs and behaviour between themselves. He then wrote several memorials to Daoguang to explain his approach. To summarize, he understood that the barbarians, at the Chinese contrary, were very emotional and demonstrative in their relations and that peace would be achieved easily if he started to behave in more friendly manners with the British envoys. And so began Qying first attempt to conciliate both worlds and build the first case of a true transcultural relation scheme for the

¹³⁵ CHINA, *Treaties between the Empire of China and Foreign Powers, Regulation for the conduct of foreign trade, conventions, agreements, regulations*, North China Herald Office, Shanghai, 1902

westerners in the history of China. He first tried to gain the westerners trust, most importantly Pottinger's friendship. To do so, he was often playing the role of a joyful and funny person, telling joke and always interested in the European customs and craftsmanship. Conquered by the sudden good mood of the Imperial envoy and their agreement on the treaty's terms, Pottinger became more manoeuvrable. If the Britain had officially won the war, Qiyong was clearly leading the dance on the diplomatic table without the westerners being aware of his stratagem, for now. Another great advantage for the Chinese temporization were the six months necessary to travel between England and China, making the treaty's ratification process really slow. As a matter of fact, in addition to the representatives signatures and seals, Queen Victoria and Emperor Daoguang were asked to sign the ratification treaty (Supplementary Treaty) by hand and write down that they "approved and confirmed" the document. This infringement to the form was chosen by Qiyong and Pottinger after Qiyong calmly and lengthily explained that, because he already asked for the Emperor's seal, he could not ask another time for such an honour¹³⁶. The negotiations ended as the Treaty was finally ratified in 1843. After the war, Qiyong was duly rewarded for his expertise on the barbarians pacification and he was, with his colleague Ylipu, given a glorious position as governor general in the North West province of Liang-Kiang. But he did not quitted the eastern shores, as he was appointed to manage the signing of both treaties with France and the United-States and stayed in Nanking by order of the Emperor for his expertise and the trust he had gained with the westerners. His mission continued until Pottinger's departure. He called the British envoy his "intimate friend"¹³⁷ and treated him as such, inviting him in his residence in Canton, showing him theatre representations and presenting his family. Qiyong kept a constant contact with Pottinger, offering him presents and even proposed to send his own son in Britain when Pottinger's son would come in China. He even asked Pottinger's permission for them to adopt each other's sons, which

¹³⁶ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I, pp.140-141, 2011

¹³⁷ *Ibid*

the English nobleman accepted. During his visit in Hong Kong, Qying never missed an occasion to show off in public. As simple as it seemed, his strategy worked at the perfection, Pottinger never suspected him to be playing a role and even flattered himself to have become so close with a Chinese official, becoming willing to act in a soft manner in the British-Chinese relations, often taking side against the repressive attitude of his superiors towards the native population. Qying had accomplished way more than being friend with the barbarians, he managed to make them morally dependent. How could you be violent with one of your best friends ? Despite the disapprobation of his conservative peers in the Imperial Court, he innovated Chinese diplomacy with foreign countries and was a pioneer in intercultural international relations for his capacities to adapt the Chinese traditions in foreign exchanges to the new *rappports de force* of the mid nineteenth century and turn the diplomatic table in favour of the Chinese Empire. Unfortunately, when Pottinger was replaced by John Davis, a racist and uncompromising former Company man, Qying's trick would not work and he decide to retire in his province¹³⁸. When for the Treaty of Tientsin, he was recalled by Emperor Hsien-feng to, once again, use his supposed celebrity among the occidental and calm the debates, the poor man felt in disgrace. Almost completely blind and pas seventy years old, he was tricked and humiliated by the western interpreters who searched his former office in Canton and found his memorials addressed to the Emperor. With all his plans and tricks discovered, the interpreters exposed everything to the assembly during the negotiations and Qying's efforts were reduced to nothing even before he could do anything. On the Emperor's order, he committed suicide. Despite this stroke of fate, the misconceptions and lack of understanding between the West and China were slightly reduced, each party now aware of each other's tactics, particularly the Europeans regarding Chinese politics and traditions. On the Chinese side, xenophobia plaid a big part in the scholar's unwillingness to treat with the occidentals but

¹³⁸ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, p.199, 200

an interesting factor occurring the course of the nineteenth century in China is the rise among the elites, of the public opinion's better consideration¹³⁹. As the Qing government was struggling with a lot of catastrophic events that menaced each year a bit more their control on the country. The best way for the Manchu gentry to content the people was to follow their opinion on the occidental influences. The wars outputs on the Chinese population stroke the public opinion, very attached to its traditions, as the imperialistic inspirations of the foreigners and since the Jesuits leaved China, the occidental way of life was gaining ground in China. And so the unofficial scholars, the population and later the Chinese gentry urged the government to send back the foreigners and avoid any further advance. Something that Hsien-feng tried with the secret Shanghai tariff conference which crystallised the return to the pre-Qying diplomacy, with the foreign be only considered as a group of merchants only interested in profit. Another diplomatic tradition that betrayed China was the "Most-Favoured-Nation Clause"¹⁴⁰. Basically, this clause, derived from the tributary system, obligated the Chinese Emperor to access any other country's demands for more privileges in its relations with China. The problem of this clause is that it could work with the East Asian countries of the past centuries, less equipped and resourceful than China, but with the industrialised powers from the West, the tool could backfire on its user. The tool backfired indeed, as many countries came later after the Tientsin treaty to sign their own and ask for specific tariff privileges. That's how, in addition to the British, the Americans and the French came the Germans in 1861, the Danes followed by the Dutch in 63, the Spanish the next year, then the Belgians, the Italian to finish with Austria-Hungarian in 1869¹⁴¹. China had open its doors, and during the following decades until

¹³⁹ RANKIN, Mary Backus. "'Public Opinion' and Political Power: Qingyi in Late Nineteenth Century China." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1982, p. 454. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2055244. (Accessed 21 June 2020)

¹⁴⁰ WANG, Ching-Chun. "How China Recovered Tariff Autonomy." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 152, 1930, pp. 267-268. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1016561. (Accessed 21 June 2020)

¹⁴¹ NIELD, Robert. "Treaty Ports And Other Foreign Stations In China." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, vol. 50, 2010, p. 127. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23891203. (Accessed 21 June 2020)

twentieth century, the country that was considered as the oldest Empire in the world and known for its isolationist politics was now signing treaties after treaties. It seemed like the westerners had finally obtained what they were searching for so long in their relations with China. Now that they forced China to yield to their demands by military forces, the next move would be to spread the western civilisation way of life in this new territory.

b. A forced opening to the Occident ?

There is no other possible way to describe for what reasons China accepted the occidental presence on its lands. Now that the barbarians were aware of the Chinese tricks to make them stay away from the mainland and Peking, they came with their armies and took the treaties arrangements by force. The first phase of China's opening to the West cannot possibly be qualified as an example of pacifism. From the Chinese xenophobia and unwillingness to understand their enemy, constantly changing or executing its diplomats to the western pride alimanted by new utilitarian and soon social Darwinism theories, justifying what they thought to be the superiority of the European civilisations, the clash between both parties definitely left a bloody mark on Chinese's history. Conflict would rise again and blood would be shed later on but this topic will be discussed later. Now, following the Second Opium war, the goal was to strengthen the country's economy, build new infrastructures and increase China's influence on the international level. Each country treating with China would try several methods to penetrate and put its stone on the great occidental plan to "modernize" and "civilize" the Chinese culture. The liberal westerners were eager to see how China would make its way toward progress, allowing the old Empire to become an equal nation to exchange with, enhanced the global trade and increase their common profits. Once again, the history of western culture integration in China were the work of various individuals. The first way, and one of the most

effective, to culturally influence the Chinese customs was by the presence of foreign doctors¹⁴². From the arrival of Peter Parker, the first medical missionary in China, at the brink of the First Opium war, western medicine and its practitioners became famous in China and spread in every level of the local society. It became common for Chinese noblemen, aristocrats and rich merchants to call for a foreign doctor's expertise, or for a missionary to setup in a village and share his knowledge for the locals, making them a great tool for the occident to both influence China toward medical progresses and study the Chinese medical customs. However, the foreign medical missionaries were subjected to many bias due to their ideologies. Often influenced by their racialist ideologies and the occidental scientific fashion of this era to find a physiologic explanation to any aspect of other human "races". Chinese were no exception, since the massive use of anti-Manchu propaganda during the Opium Wars and Qying exposure, Chinese gained the reputation of being listless, vile and cruel liars. Such traits were explain by the western scientist as a dysfunction of the Chinese nervous system. Considering that foreign doctors, as Chinese doctors, did not have the permission to dissect human bodies, many speculations were drafted by western scientist on the Chinese physiology. But rely only on the scientific progresses would be only scratching the surface of the possibilities that Chinese-British cooperation could offer. That is why other actors were sent to work with the Chinese authorities to accelerate the country's development. One man illustrates this period when the West was collaborating with China to make the country progress. Robert Hart was inspector-general of customs in China for the foreign Inspectorate of customs based in Shanghai since 1854, his work with Prince Kung, in charge of China's technological progress and diplomatic enhancements, defined Chinese modernization line and was at the base of many new infrastructures projects¹⁴³. Hart was not the first to help the Chinese in those matters, before

¹⁴² FABRE, Clément, "Ouvrir la Chine, Un fantasme européen" in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, pp.42-43

¹⁴³ DREW, Edward B. "Sir Robert Hart and His Life Work in China." *The Journal of Race Development*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1913, pp. 8-33. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29737977. Accessed 26 June 2020.

him, Horatio Nelson Lay already began to develop the Chinese new modern fleet of warships with Prince Kung. However, Hart would push his cooperation with the prince to another level. For him, to promote progress in China and make a modernized, liberalist Britain alike society of the Qing dynasty, they had to watch after every particularities of the Chinese society. One of his first moves was to send in 1865, a memorial to the Board of Foreign policy or *Tsungli Yamen*, created by Prince Kung right after the ratification of the Beijing Convention. In this memorial entitled “Observation by an outsider”, Hart stated all his advises to the Board concerning China’s infrastructure developments, with the construction of more railways, researches in the latest steamships technologies and mining tools and devices for a better labour management and productivity. But the most interesting and important part of his memorial was on the diplomatic level. Hart clearly said that the biggest weakness in Chinese international relations was the incompetence of its diplomats to deal with the foreigners, or at least the lack of true knowledge on the Occident as no diplomatic mission had ever been sent in a western country. Knowing that the Qing were anxious about the augmentation of foreign embassies in the capital, he proposed China to settle its own embassies in Europe and America¹⁴⁴. If Prince Kung was a great supporter of Lin Zexu and Qiyong innovative approaches, Kung also followed their reserve concerning the adoption of foreign customs inside Chinese policies. Attached to the tradition and not entirely willing to send envoys abroad during long periods as ambassadors, Kung was still too much relying on the tributary system’s rules to and China was used to send advisers or examiners in other countries not ambassadors. So the Prince consented to send a small unofficial mission in Europe that would write a report on what they saw. The Pin-Ch’un mission in 1866 represented the Prince preoccupations, namely an obsession for European technologies and a general disinterest for the foreigners politic traditions or regimes. Thus the

¹⁴⁴HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. III, pp. 295-296, 2000

reports focused only on western engineering rather than institutional matters. To be clear, China's official did not want to "Occidentalise" their country, but to make China as powerful militarily as the West to regain its primacy in East Asia and have more power on the negotiation table since the Emperor and Prince Kung were persuaded that the barbarians' power came only from their steamships and other military technologies. More than that, modernization of common society was seen as contrary to the Confucian teachings considering that many technological progresses were not needed by China. As stated before, the enormous population of the country made innovation in agriculture or transports useless since an army of men could always be as effective as any machine or steamboat. Also, the Manchu's great fear during this time of political crisis, was that technology would liberate time for the people, time which they could use to think about the government struggle and inefficiency during the two conflicts and start to rebel. China then decided to curb its opening to the West promises, also fearing that the barbarians would become more undertaking, the treaties revision closing in. Despite Hart's attempts to operate a smooth and pacific progression for China, the following decades would prove the Chinese fears to be mostly wrong. The first factor necessary to underline, is the rare impartiality Hart represented during his collaboration with the Qing representatives. After the War's end, he agreed with the French and Chinese high-ranking army men to finance and help China's reconstruction¹⁴⁵. Because if the occidentals were aware of the sulphurous political climate China was in during this period (considering they largely contributed to it), the European leaders did not have any interests to force the Chinese modernization. Constraining an already weakened government into a too quick and unpopular development would precipitate its end and could lead to another dynasty to take over the country. Such an event would be highly counterproductive and every treaty signed until now would be re-examined, all the war casualties would have been for nothing and once again the foreign interests would be menaced.

¹⁴⁵ DREW, Edward B. "Sir Robert Hart and His Life Work in China." *The Journal of Race Development*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1913, p.8. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29737977. Accessed 26 June 2020.

The best way for the West to keep its lucrative trade with the Middle Kingdom was to maintain the Qing dynasty, helping the country's reconstruction, give them new technologies to accelerate the process and form strong diplomatic and scientific bounds with China's aristocracy. Hart was the perfect man for that kind of job. His main default, according to the Europeans point of view, was that he was too impartial. Nothing surprising despite his origins because officially, he was working for the Chinese Empire to help it organize its country's development, reconstruction and diplomatic, economic strengthening¹⁴⁶. Surely compared to his predecessor, Hart could seem more favourable to the Chinese party. H. N. Lay's racialism and ego was, before Hart, the origin of one of the biggest fiasco of China's military fleet development. Lay did not understand that he was simply a foreign representative working for China, in his mind, he was representing the western interests, his own, by civilizing the Chinese barbarians. Asking for more and more privileges, then when Prince kung refused to yield to his fancies, he retired from the project and the new fleet was disbanded¹⁴⁷. Hart was the clear opposite, empathic and open minded, he often criticised western merchants habits regarding their Chinese collaborators, describing them as unjust and detrimental for his plans to forge strong and peaceful links with the locals. The foreign merchants were still relying on menaces and bribery¹⁴⁸ to manage their affairs with the Chinese traders or intermediaries, even with the imports of opium were legalized. Hart was also strongly against the opium trade, or at least opposed to the unequal taxes imposed on British goods compared to the Chinese. Not that the trade between Britain and China was not lucrative for the Middle Kingdom, exports and imports from China were constantly increasing by five percent every year since the Peking

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 10-11

¹⁴⁷ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. III, pp. 277-278, 2000

¹⁴⁸ DREW, Edward B. "Sir Robert Hart and His Life Work in China." *The Journal of Race Development*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1913, pp.9-10. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29737977

Convention¹⁴⁹, which is a good growth rate considering the British privileges. Indeed, Chinese imports from British India together with Great Britain represented ninety percent of the total exchanges. The British market was predominant in China, the other nations being relying on the Crown's representatives advises to manage their trade. But the other national powers involved in the Chinese markets were also very important during the negotiations as third parties or to represent a counterbalance in a debate. A good example of China using other western nations as third parties would be the Burlingame mission on the treaties revision in 1870. China, unaware of the British projects to continue on a slow but peaceful modernization, decided to call for the United States help to temper the possible European's greed. Even if this strategy was again based on setting the western barbarians against each other, using an Sino-American delegation was a very smart idea¹⁵⁰. Burlingame, the man who would be in charge of the negotiations, saw a great sign of Chinese good will to enter in the family of Nations, because it was the first time in International Relations history that China decided to send a diplomatic mission to the West by its own, following the western customs on that matter. Plus, choosing the United-States, one of the youngest countries in the World during this period, to represent China's interests side by side was a strong symbol from the oldest Empire in history. This realisation flattered Burlingame and the Americans, who welcomed the Chinese delegation with great pleasure. For China, the occasion was too good, as their diplomatic prestige would increase among the barbarians without sending proper ambassadors in foreign countries, a possibility still debated and mostly rejected by the Imperial scholars¹⁵¹. Burlingame even decided on his own, without consulting Peking advices, to sign a treaty of non-intervention that

¹⁴⁹ KELLER, LI, SHIUE, "CHINA'S FOREIGN TRADE: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PAST 150 YEARS", *The World Economy*, Wiley Blackwell, vol. 34, p. 15, 2010

¹⁵⁰ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. III, pp. 297-299, 2000

¹⁵¹ For more information about the imperial court's opinion on the Burlingame mission : BIGGERSTAFF, Knight. "The Official Chinese Attitude Toward the Burlingame Mission." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 41, no. 4, 1936, pp. 682-702. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1842607. Accessed 28 June 2020.

stipulated the right of residence, cult, travel and education in both countries for all their nationals. A very liberal based treaty that China was very proud of afterward, because if Burlingame did not warn the Chinese officials before acting, he did it in China's name. Followed by a journey through Europe, the Sino-American delegation did succeed in preventing any western forced intervention in China's path to modernization. The treaty revision in 1869 was then carried under China's interests and the Imperial representatives managed to setup a consulate in Hong Kong for the first time. Chinese officials were indeed leading their country, slowly for the Europeans but surely for the Manchus on its way to liberalisation and modernity while respecting the conservative ideology of the imperial gentry. The Chinese consulate of Hong Kong's objective was to regulate even more the opium trade on the continent by increasing the import taxes. The Chinese representatives recognized the inconvenient of the "most-favoured-nation" system in their exchanges with the West, so they used their new influences and knowledges to influence the treaty's terms. One of the Tsungli Yamen's plan was to subsequently make the opium imports decrease gradually by starting to produce opium in China. Unfortunately, the British traders were absolutely against the new Alcock Convention concerning the end of their tax privileges and the treaty's revision was never ratified, plunging the Chinese officials in disillusion and growing deep disappointments and mistrusts towards the foreigners. More than that, now the Chinese population and the provinces representatives had to cope with the Christian missionaries and converted Chinese. The situation became uncontrollable and anti-Christian riots emerged in Tientsin, with converted locals persecuted and foreign traders and officials menaced or attacked. The whole uprising escalated when an English diplomat was assassinated in 1875, pushing the British forces to intervene for another time and pacify the region. Even if it seems like the assassination was not linked to the anti-Christian contestations, the following Chefoo Agreement¹⁵² was made and gave more

¹⁵² NIELD, Robert. "Treaty Ports And Other Foreign Stations In China." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, vol. 50, 2010, p. 127. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23891203.

commercial concessions to Great Britain despite Hart's opposition further foreign advances in Chinese territories. Such treaty revisions and agreements would continue until the end of the nineteenth century. China at this time was in complete struggling, between the foreign aspirations and popular revolts and insecurity, the imperial government was slowly losing its control of the provinces to the profit of governors-generals. However, the global progresses of the Chinese politics and its capacities to willingly adapt to the new international world they decide to enter in was quite notable for a country so versed in conservatism and suffering from the gentry's disconnection. The Burlingame expedition was a great example of what China could accomplish to follow its objective of sovereignty. Sadly, the progressive fall of the Qing dynasty in the last decades of the nineteenth century had begun.

3. Inner insurgencies, the crumbling of Manchu's power.

a. The Taiping Rebellion.

Approach the question of the Manchu's government fall and their slow loss of power in China, especially when concentrating on the most important changes and administrative reforms, necessitate to discuss the Taiping uprising case. The rebellion and the following creation of the Heavenly Kingdom have marked Chinese history as one of its history's most brutal episode, even being referred nowadays in History books as the deadliest civil war in human kind's history. However, this conflict signified much more than only an horrifying amount of victims, this event is an important moment for Chinese memory and information's treatment, knowing that the Taiping Rebellion took place at the crossroad of the traditional transcription of events through the intellectuals pens in their diaries or memoirs called *biji*, and the introduction of a periodical press in China¹⁵³. The other influence the Taiping Rebellion had the Qing

¹⁵³ HUNTINGTON, Rania. "Chaos, Memory, and Genre: Anecdotal Recollections of the Taiping Rebellion." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, vol. 27, 2005, pp. 62–63. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30039102. Accessed 30 July 2020.

government was to reveal its cruel lack of military power and decisional efficiency at the time, when the first Opium War already stroke the country's finances and armies. This period, which lasted thirteen years between 1851 and 1864, truly took place in a transitional era for the Manchus, an era that was transcribed and commented as the epitome of chaos. But first, it is necessary to contextualise and provide a none exhaustive résumé of the all conflict, starting with a presentation of its main actor, Hung Xiuquan.

Born in a family of Hakka farmers nearby Canton, he had all the social characteristics to later become a strongly anti-Manchu activist. The Hakka or "guest people" were a population of emigrates who arrived from the central part of the country at the beginning of the twelfth century to flee northern barbarian's invasion. Culturally differentiated from the Han natives of southern China by their cloth, language and traditions, they settled in the provinces of Kuangtung and Kuangsi and were always treated with mistrust or hostility by the natives. The reason was that the Hakka were often wealthier than the southern population and more likely to own profitable enterprises in farming, mining or even occupying administrative posts. The animosity between the two population escalated during the nineteenth century when, after the occidental rampage in the region and the diffusion of foreign missionaries, the Hakka massively converted themselves to Christianity with powerful protestant influences¹⁵⁴. Hung Xiuquan's early career is highly representative of an average Hakka in the conflictual period opposing Great Britain and China. Before the first Opium War, in 1836, he travelled to Guangzhou to attempt the administration exams and met a protestant missionary who gave him a Bible translated in Chinese, adapted to fit the Confucian culture of the country so taking a bit of both cultures and changing the form of the original book to something comparable to the intellectuals memorials. The main issue being that he felt in depression after having failed his examinations

¹⁵⁴ For more details about the Hakka culture and its tumultuous surviving in China : SEITZ, Jonathan A. "Religious Dualism and the Problem of Dual Religious Identity." *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, vol. 35, 2015, pp. 49–55., www.jstor.org/stable/24801388. Accessed 30 July 2020.

multiple times, he then read this transformed Bible and experienced visions and hallucinations that made him believe that he was Jesus Christ's brother, chosen by God, or in his believes an old man with a golden beard and a black robe, to exterminate the demons that took power in China, so the Manchu's dynasty, and spread the true faith in his country, completing the opera of Confucius who sinned by his paganism. The years following those visions, Hung drafted the bases of his own appreciation of Christianity, meeting foreign missionaries for a better understanding of the Christian traditions and dogmas, getting baptized with his cousin who believed in Hung's visions and was his first follower. His cousin was soon followed by Hung's family and many other members of the Hakka's community, his cult now taking the name of the Association of God Worshipers. Hung's adepts soon counted thousands of men and women in 1850, and the movement was constantly gaining more popularity among the poorest farmers and Kwangsi's population suffering from the famines, bandit groups and generalized poverty that struck the region after the first Opium War. The God Worshipers credo was strongly against the ruling class, criticising corrupted officials oppressing the people and most of all, the pagan Qing who were adoring evil spirits. The whole rebellion broke out in November 1850, when God Worshipers working in the mines were abused by imperial troops, Hung's coronation as the new king of the *T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo*, the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace followed in 1851¹⁵⁵. The God Worshipers advance was quick and took out easily the imperial forces sent against them, not prepared and left weakened by the conflict against the Europeans. Their victories added more and more partisans and zealots to Hung's fanatics army, counting almost a million of men in 1853. In two years, they marched north, took control of a large territory spreading across the provinces of Kiangsi, Hunan, Hupeh, Honan, Anhwein, Chekiang, Fukien and Kwangtung. In March 1853, the God Worshipers besieged and occupied Nanking, making

¹⁵⁵ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. III, p.229, 2000

the city the capital of the Heavenly Kingdom¹⁵⁶. The next years saw further military raids in the Manchu's remaining territories, when the Taiping army charged straight to Peking and managed to reach Tientsin in 1855, on the brink of the second Opium War. To administer his kingdom, Hung, who knew he could not do it all by himself, named his closest collaborators kings, administrating the lands in his name. In terms of laws and institutions, Hung imagined a surprisingly new form of society led by equity and what could roughly be interpreted as a very intriguing form of communism¹⁵⁷. According to its believes, Hung thought that all human being were equal under Heaven and should enjoy God's creations on Earth. Therefor there were no hierarchy or differentiations between sexes or classes and every marks of individuality were erased to the profit of the community. The God Worshipers adopted a new calendar, formed an organised army system counting all the kingdom's inhabitants as soldiers, raising small armies of 10000 men and women ready to be mobilised under the order of an administrator. They also changed the examination system, now open to everybody, based on the Christian texts rather than the Confucian ones and the intellectual language was abandoned to use only the usual one. But Hung's most interesting reform was to abolish private property, creating a land system a bit similar to the future soviet kolkhozes. Lands were shared among families of farmers in a way that, if the farmers had children, the land could be split equally between them. However, the constant conflicts on the kingdom's borders and the fundamental differences of terrains, that would always favourite a family more than another settled on a land of lesser quality, refrained the project and condemned it to never be truly applied¹⁵⁸. And there lied the limits of

¹⁵⁶ PAULÈS, Xavier, "1839: La Chine sous le feu Anglais", in *1839-1860, Les guerres de l'Opium: Quand l'Angleterre et la France humiliaient la Chine*, L'Histoire, n°467, 01/2020, p.37

¹⁵⁷ KTE'PI, Bill. "Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864)." *Encyclopedia of Disaster Relief*. Eds. K. B. Penuel and Matt Statler. Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011. 665-666. *SAGE Knowledge*. doi: 10.4135/9781412994064.n274

¹⁵⁸ SHIH, Vincent Yu-Chung. "Interpretations of the Taiping Tien-Kuo by Noncommunist Chinese Writers." *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1951, pp. 252-253. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2049317. Accessed 30 June 2020.

the Heavenly Kingdom. The competences and expertise of its rulers were dangerously limited, as Hung himself sure followed an intellectual's instruction, but never was taught in the ways of politics or policies making, being clueless in all the matters regarding a country's administration. Hung was only relying on his infinite faith in his destiny and his charisma to make things work. His kings were the perfect example of this lack of judgement, as all of them were simple men with few instruction and between 1856 and 1857, Yang the East King tried to take over Hung after gaining almost as much power as him. Yang's putsch was aborted when the North King slaughtered him and his followers. The North King then turned on his fellow monarchs and was executed and Hung's Assistant King fled, fearing for his life. In one year, Hung had lost three of his five kings because of their personal greed or incompetence, leaving their charges to his two brothers who were even less skilled in government matters. The chaos raging in the Taiping ranks bought time for the Manchus to reform their army. However the imperial army, destroyed by the precedent conflicts, did not count enough trained men to surpass the rebels forces. The reinforcement came from the provincial governors and political elites, who were deeply harmed by the Taiping occupation of the Yangtze River shores, cutting them from maritime commerce. The 1850's were marked by the creation of the Xiang Army, entirely constituted of mobilized troops of volunteers. The Qing dynasty, conscious of its military and financial weakness, knew that an imperial army could not be raised only by the central government, so the Emperor appointed the governors-generals to form troops of their own. The Xiang Army was the initiative of a statesman, scholar and newly general Zeng Guofan, who created an entirely new military system based on proximity between the high-ranking officers and the low class soldiers. This rapprochement was made for the officers to create a strong bound with their troops and insure their loyalty where the imperial troops were generally trained with the fear of their Manchu general's wrath. The Xiang army then received a better training, was more skilled with a stronger moral and a better equipment thanks to the

governors wealth¹⁵⁹. Zeng's army was globally a huge success, with his loyal troops and better preparation, they managed to retake several cities and liberate provinces, not without some difficulties since the number of the Taiping's army was far superior to the imperial troops. The Xiang Army thus faced some defeats but remained victorious during the following years of the conflict. This can be majorly imputed to the lack of cohesion in the Taiping heads of State and the progressive mistrust that grown in the population against the God Worshipers cult. Parts of the middle class elites, highly conservatives and despising the Hakka's traditions, remained against Hung's new faith but did not opposed him directly, the movement's opposition to the Qing dynasty being largely enough to keep them in Hung's ranks. The same was for the various sects and rebel movements the God Worshipers associated with, as their grievances against the Manchus were stronger than their Confucian traditionalism¹⁶⁰ and Hung knew perfectly how to use those other sects and revolutionaries to serve his cause. The true opposition in the movement came from the people. Major famines stroke the population because of the lack of infrastructures needed to distribute food or basic supplies. Grain productivity went very low, so much that there was too much money for nothing to buy. The prices rose at catastrophic levels and the copper stocks went also into shortages, forcing the Heavenly Kingdom to adopt paper money, which was far less used and accepted by shopkeepers and traders. With the famine came diseases, which the Taiping authorities were also incapable of dealing with. Tired of the Taiping fanaticism and incompetence to properly govern their territories, this add to the king's exactions led by their greed and hunger for power, the occupied provinces population started to revolt and violently confront the rebel forces. His Heavenly Kingdom being torn apart from the inside by his treacherous kings and popular uprisings, Hung progressively locked himself in his mansion,

¹⁵⁹ YANG, D., The making of the modern state and quest for modernity. In W. Wu & M. W. Frazier *The sage handbook of contemporary china*, Vol. 2, p. 6, 2018. London: SAGE Publications Ltd doi: 10.4135/9781526436085.n2

¹⁶⁰ WELLER, Robert P. "Historians and Consciousness: The Modern Politics of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom." *Social Research*, vol. 54, no. 4, 1987, pp. 737-749. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40970481. Accessed 1 July 2020.

plagued by his paranoia. With the advances of the provinces army, the Heavenly Kingdom quickly started to decay and Hung's men, left alone, began to lost control of the Taiping territories.

Despite the Qing's efforts to fight the rebellion and the crumble of Hung's power, the question about the intervention of the European power can be raised. Knowing that, at the same period, the second Opium War had the time to end in 1860, the Western forces obviously knew of the Taiping Rebellion. So what was Europe state of mind about this case ? The implication of the European military forces in the conflict occurred in its latest years, considering the end of the second Opium War, the signature of the Treaty of Tientsin and the Peking Convention. Especially on the British part, the intervention of a foreign power in the Chinese affairs were considered but, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to keep a neutral diplomatic approach regarding the Chinese government, no interventions were planned to avoid further conflicts. The other main reasons were that, after the fiasco of the Treaty's ratification and Emperor Hsien-feng's flight from Peking, the British envoys such as Lord Elgin were not considering the Manchus trustworthy or even capable to offer a profitable agreement if the British troop would come to help. Dealing with a weakened and submissive but unpredictable Qing dynasty made the British very circumspect regarding their position on the Taiping Rebellion¹⁶¹. They did not want to take the risk to lose men and funds in a war that was not Great Britain's matters without the insurance that the Chinese government would be grateful for it. In this period of incertitude, the British priority was to act as friendly as possible with Prince Kung who was in charge during the Emperor's exile, to be certain of the Qing government's honesty in the treaties ratification. Moreover, Elgin's brother, Bruce, who was the Minister plenipotentiary to China, was split about the Hung Xiuquan's movement. He heard some very positive opinions, including his own brother's, about the God Worshipers

¹⁶¹ GREGORY, John S. "British Intervention Against the Taiping Rebellion." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1959, pp. 13-14. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2943446. Accessed 1 July 2020.

management of Nanking. The thing is that Elgin did not consider both the imperial loyalists and the Taiping as allies or even fully trustworthy political entities, but he considered that Hung was a better leader for the Chinese population, or at least a more charismatic one. With the Taiping possibly offering a more peaceful atmosphere in China, perhaps it would be better to consider their eventual win over the Manchus and the instauration of a more calm and profitable climate for trade. Another advantage being that their leaders were Christians, which was a consequent factor in the words of Elgin¹⁶². However a doubt subsisted, as if the Taiping appeared to win, the whole treaties ratified with the Manchus would be to redo, and there was no certainty that the God Worshipers would agree so easily. Following the Crown's orders to stay neutral and protect the British citizens in China safe as their commercial interests, Bruce decide not to intervene and let both parties continue their fight while the British traders were exchanging with them at the same time. Of course the main actor with who the Crown was exchanging was the Qing government, but due to the Taiping being very close to cities and ports controlled by the British military forces. Following the case of Shanghai, the English forces concluded an agreement with the rebels to stay away from the city for a year, letting enough time for the British to decide what to do with them if they appeared to be victorious. The thing is that the British merchants were forced to treat with the Taiping, as they were controlling the country's access on the Yangtze River. However, the Manchu's officials and Chinese merchants, loyalists, were welcomed in the cities due to the exchanges they were doing with the British. The Treaty of Tientsin stated that no help should be given to the rebels and that was exactly what the British traders were doing, trading only basic goods to the rebels who were starting to lack food and supplies. If help there was, it was rather on the imperial side, as the treaty ports, protected by the foreign forces, were used by the Chinese army to gather and

¹⁶² GREGORY, John S. "British Intervention Against the Taiping Rebellion." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1959, p. 13. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2943446. Accessed 1 July 2020.

organise new assaults. That sort of indirect help was taken as a preferential treatment by Hung in Nanking, who then stated that he would attack Shanghai soon after having taken control of Ningpo. The British fleet did not intervene when the Taiping occupied Ningpo because, as a matter of fact, it was a test to see if they could make a better agreement with the rebels than the Qing. Hung's envoys displeasure and fanaticism, followed by the threat on Shanghai finished to convince the British that the Taiping could not be trusted and represented not only a menace for their trade interests, but also the perfect example of a chaotic and uncontrollable army of zealots. General Hope decided to defend the treaty ports and their direct surroundings before the order came from London and his act was in total contradiction to what the Minister of Foreign Affairs had advocated. Nevertheless, he thought that the Taiping would try to infiltrate the cities to start rebellions from inside, and Hope wanted to avoid any siege on one of the treaty ports that could demoralized the native population. In summer 1862, he led several actions of pacification around the menaced treaty ports with the agreement of London and the help of French and German forces. Again the goal here was not to help the Chinese army, but secured the ports where the British trade interests lied. Thus the Crown did not engaged as much forces than during the second Opium War, simply because the European armies did not planned to storm the country searching for the rebels but keep them at bay from the ports. From Peking, this concentration of foreign military forces were greeted with great uncertainty and wariness. The loyalists knew that ally with the foreigners would drastically help their cause and could quickly end the conflict, on the other hand, the perspective of a western army walking in China's inner territories was everything but appealing. Of course the Manchus did not expected the foreigners to give them troops and weapons for free, they would ask something in return and it would be new cities or ports to be open, something the Chinese statesmen wanted to avoid. With the accession to the throne of the new five years old Emperor Tongzhi in 1861, China was led by regents chosen by former Emperor Hsien-feng and the Empress dowager Cixi, an

authoritarian woman strongly opposed to further foreigners settlements in China. The possibility for China to accept the help offered by the Europeans came into consideration but only on a logistic matter. The occidentals could sell them weapons and warships, but not engage their troops in the conflict with the Chinese army to keep the relations between the two worlds strictly commercial.

Anti-Europeanism then continued to rise in the government spheres, supported by the imperial army leader Zeng Guofan, who rightly stated that China did not need any massive help from the foreigners. Zeng was right about the situation, his armies were cornering the rebel in Nanking and the city siege began in the early month of 1864. But even if the Europeans armies were not needed, voices continued to argue that their help, if not necessary or well received by the population or the gentry, would always be better on the imperial side than the rebel's. This statement was the one of Prince Kung, who knew how to treat with the occidentals and always praised the integration of their technologies and knowledges in the Chinese culture. However, Hung Xiuquan's death in June 1864 and the following fall of Nanking the same year put an end to the Taiping Rebellion and aborted any plan of Sino-European military cooperation. Prince Kung was only wrong on one point, the Europeans clearly understood that they had no interests with the rebels, now defeated and not trustworthy because of their sectarian behaviour anyway. Indeed, as stated by Bruce in various letters when the "should the Crown support any party in this conflict" was still discussed, the British Empire had far more reasons to help the Imperial government. For trading matters yes, but most importantly to insure stability in China and reinforce the Qing's power¹⁶³. Bruce had many objectives to improve Chinese administration, technology, army and politics, but the British aims toward successful cultural exchanges with the Qing Empire soon encountered difficulties. Obstacles which were always there but became greater with the rebellion that they did not see immediately but recognized to be enough of a

¹⁶³ GREGORY, John S. "British Intervention Against the Taiping Rebellion." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1959, pp.18-19. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2943446.

curb to their plans on reinforce the Manchus grasp on the country. The Taiping Rebellion represented a turning point in the Qing management of their empire. For the first time in their history, the Manchus relied on an army raised by the provincial governors. An army that was better trained with more finances and was dissolved shortly before the complete defeat of the Taiping, as the cost to maintain such a force could not be taken by the Empire. The other thing was that this army was not under the command of the Emperor but loyal Zeng Guofan, and represented a high risk for Peking who feared that those well trained soldier would be used against them. Of course the leaders of the Xiang Army, like Zeng, were amply rewarded for their services and were appointed governors-generals or imperial commissioners. They were again needed when other smaller uprisings followed the Taiping movement, such as the Nien and Moslem in Yunnan. Thieves and brigands for the first, ostracised population for the later as were the Hakka, their rebellions would last until 1873 but never reached the Taiping same level of menace¹⁶⁴. With the Taiping eliminated, the Europeans willing to work and exchange with China on a pacific on a very cooperative scale to insure their reign, the Manchus seemed to finally come back from a long barren spell. However the Taiping Rebellion had left its mark on the country and if the changes were progressive, they could not be stopped and would drastically modify Chinese policies and its positions regarding the other countries.

b. Corruption and power shifting.

Once the Second Opium War and the various uprisings across the country were suppressed, or contained enough not to be a direct threat to the Qing government, China went in a period

¹⁶⁴ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. II, pp. 253-256, 2000

described as a “restoration”¹⁶⁵. The Empire was in relative peace and reforms of the government’s administrations and institutions could be considered, more likely since the Europeans were now willing to share their knowledge in technological, political and economic matters. Obviously, there was no place for a complete European influence on the gentry. Many Chinese aristocrats and magistrates in Peking were still strongly opposed to any foreign presence inside the capital’s walls and, more than ever, the Qing dynasty needed to affirm its legitimacy. Because at the end of those conflict, the Manchus came out dramatically outmatched. They appeared incapable to stop the barbarians advances and were forced to sign treaties with them, they were then forced to rely on the provincial governors to raise their own army, which the Manchus dismantled after the war. In the last years of Hsien-feng’s reign (1850-1861), the country’s situation decayed rapidly, as he was overwhelmed with the Europeans arrival and the Taiping uprising ravaging the South. Before his death, he nominated his son, who was still only five years old, to be the next Emperor. Without further instructions, the closest powerful Emperor’s confidants quickly took control of the regency to cut the grass under Prince Kung and the two Empresses feet¹⁶⁶. After the Imperial Court had flee Peking and left Kung alone to treat with the foreigners, the Prince was seen as a suitable ruler for China, considering he parleyed with the Europeans and managed to end the war while keeping the Chinese interests in mind. The Empress dowager Cixi was one Hsien-feng’s concubine and mother of the new heir, according to Confucian tradition, she had to be part of the regency, or approve the future Emperor’s council. This coalition of self-proclaimed eight regents swiftly excluded Cixi and Kung and insured an institutional continuity with Hsien-feng’s reign. If Prince Kung took care of the country’s relations with the Europeans by founding and

¹⁶⁵ YEOPHANTONG, Pichamon. "Qing Dynasty (1644–1911): 1200 to 1900: East and Southeast Asia." *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, & Africa: An Encyclopedia*. Eds. Andrea L. StantonEdward Ramsamy and Peter J. Seybolt. Vol. 1, p.5. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012. III173-III175. *SAGE Knowledge*. Web.

¹⁶⁶ ROWE, William T., *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China, Cambridge and London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, Part. 8, pp.201-202, 2009

administrating the Tsungli Yamen, plus, was the main sympathizer of some westerners cultural elements progressive adaptation in the Chinese culture and governing, the other regents stuck to the former Emperor's ideas concerning China's guideline. However, with the governors-general gain in power during the conflict and the loss of control in Peking, the government was in need for a new and reformative regency. This is how the Empress dowager and Prince Kung decided to organise a coup d'état and take over the power in November 1861¹⁶⁷.

Unfortunately for the new government, if this sudden change of regency was approved by a majority of the population and was followed by the almost eradication of the rebel movements in the Empire, the biggest thorn Chinese side remained. The Europeans did not suffer from the Taiping nor, for the British at least, had the will to truly engaged in the conflict. This let them the place to strengthen their ruling position in the Treaty Ports, putting China in a « *semi-colonial context* »¹⁶⁸. The point explained by Tong in his article quoting James Hevia, is that if the Chinese government and its policies were independent of the Europeans, the occidentals way of life and, most importantly, their vision on the “non-civilised” States, including China, deeply influenced the Chinese vision of themselves in the world. The time when the Middle Empire was the centre of the World, spreading its knowledge and supremacy over the East Asian world was over, now the Chinese gentry began to see its own country through the prism of the international world. Thus, if the European colonising spirit and ideology entered the magistrates and the intellectuals mind to form a movement of reform inside the imperial court. China already adapted and adopted some traits of the modern occidental's diplomacy and etiquette and benefited from foreign experts like Hart to build a bridge between the Chinese culture and development and the occidental interests in trade and civilizing ideology. However most of the major changes in the Chinese policies came from China itself, answering to the

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*

¹⁶⁸ LAM, Tong. “Policing the Imperial Nation: Sovereignty, International Law, and the Civilizing Mission in Late Qing China.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2010, p. 884.

context the country was after decades of punctual armed conflicts. Now the Chinese officials understood that the tributary system was not reliable anymore or that the people needed a strong leadership or at least strong policing institutions to prevent further insurrections. To do so the old police system, separated in two parts, the *bukuai* and the *baojia* needed to be replaced¹⁶⁹. The first was an institutional militia used by the regional magistrates and the last was derived from the old Manchu system of banner armies, as the local elites would organise a surveillance and defence system with the population. Both appeared to be useless and outmatched during the Opium Wars and the Taiping Rebellion, which led to the Xiang Army creation and, followed by the reports of Chinese envoys in Japan, made clear that China had to renovate its institutions. Because beside the direct presence of the occidentals, China was also watching carefully for its Nippon neighbour who, after the American “black ships” incident, quickly developed its industry and reformed its police. A need for police reformation that grew higher with the occidental settlements in the country and legal privileges. Again, because foreign settlers and traders were not bounded to the Chinese laws since the signature of the Tientsin Treaty and only dependent on the taxes agreements stated in the Peking Agreement, they were largely advantaged compared to any Chinese citizen. Coupled with the Opium Wars and the massive depopulation of entire provinces during the Taiping Rebellion, the popular anger against the occidentals represented a trouble for the Empire’s inner peace. Also avoiding any incidents with the Europeans was the priority for the new government to install and prosper¹⁷⁰. But the occidentals, Japan or the population were not the only powerful actors Cixi’s government had to deal with. The gentry or at least the great majority of its provincial representatives remained to convince. The fate of the former regents after the *coup d’état* was still in the magistrates hands and from that, fear or respect but also anger and resentment could emerge. The power held by the upper class gentry did, in fact, not lie only in their land properties as explained by

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 885-886

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.886

Franz Michael in his article “State and Society in Nineteenth century China”. Where the Chinese aristocracy was truly powerful, according to Michael, was their « *monopoly of management* »¹⁷¹. Zeng Guofan’s case represent the perfect example of how the upper gentry managed to become indispensable for their country by furnishing public services, financial help or by demonstrating particular ruling skills in their provinces. The majority of their wealth therefor did not come from their properties or their investments in foreign companies or Imperial politics, nor even their salary, but from the government’s compensations, presents and recognitions for their services. The total percentage of the gentry’s wealth in State’s rents reached an average of fifty percent, but that was the case for a very few privileged magistrates from the upper class, the ones who had passed the highest exams and so were seen as the most competent. In total, hardly ten percent of the gentry could be counted in those privileged ones, knowing that the total governments officials represented only two percent of the population¹⁷². This situation created an upper class that continued to dig the gap between the people and the ruling institution representatives. Representatives who split up in two after the creation of a new category of gentry, separated from Beijing officials by their authority gained in the aftermath of the Taiping uprising. This new class, which the government could not possibly replaced or directly control, took over the political ruling of their provinces, forming their own police and local administration. Thus, the imperial government had to constantly consult them to applied new policies or reforms. In terms of pure leadership, Peking clearly lost a major part of its grasp over the provinces but also was able to indirectly keep control of the country through those new independent governors-general. However, the modification of the balance of powers in China clearly gave the advantage to the lasts, as they were free to administer their territory as they will and have their own armed forces. It is interesting, in my opinion, how an endemic form of

¹⁷¹ MICHAEL, Franz. “State and Society in Nineteenth-Century China.” *World Politics*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1955, pp.425-427. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2009000.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, p. 426

decentralisation occurred in China, especially considering that it was also the case on the American continent during the same period. As the end of the American Civil War in 1865 signed the end of Washington's primacy on the federal states policies or the constitutional law of 1867 in Canada created the bases of the Canadian federal State¹⁷³, the destruction of the *T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo* marked the increase of the governors-general liberties and the Chinese administrative power's decentralisation. However, it must be made clear that, unlike Canadian and the United-States federalism, the power shifting occurring in China never was officially ratified by a law, an agreement or the result of the government's representatives or the people's vote. If the final results were similar, the whole process was different for each country and this is why China's late nineteenth century decentralisation should be qualified as a very specific case to avoid an occidental-centred interpretation of the subject. However another parallel can be drafted between the political and economic thoughts that shaped occidental federalism and the new Chinese gentry's interests in becoming more independent from Peking. From a liberalist and liberal point of view on decentralisation, it is interesting for a better competitiveness between the cities, states, provinces which would push the whole country towards innovation and progress by putting the central government apart from the local policy. In the case of China, if the governors-general interests were not driven by occidental liberalism, the wish for more political freedom to conduct modernization policies, have more commercial control when exchanging with the foreigners and creating local industries was definitely in their minds. Particularly true concerning the coastal provinces near the Treaty Ports which could see the occidentals modernity, the foreigners policies and state of mind influenced the Chinese

¹⁷³ ANDREW, Ives, « Néolibéralisme et Décentralisation dans les Etats Fédéraux », *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [Online], submitted 15/12/2008, URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/46313> (last consultation: 22/07/2020)

gentry, pushing them to stray from the Confucian traditions to embrace technological and commercial progress¹⁷⁴.

Another hot topic the Qing dynasty had been confronted since its beginning, was the elites corruption. The Manchus Emperors always tried to regulate the corruption of its representatives in the provinces and even in the imperial palace. The case of Ho-shen, the Emperor's bodyguard execution in 1799 has already been discussed, and if he gained the reputation to be the most corrupted official, or at least the richest, his actions represent the symptomatic example of the Qing government's policing of its own ranks. As a matter of statistics, corruption was not the main fault magistrates were punished for. Incompetence in wars, administration and leadership were far more judges and sanctioned by the imperial government than corruption that ranked seven out of eleven on the ladder of offences recognised by the Qing dynasty between 1796 and 1911, the first being laxity in the representatives work¹⁷⁵. In their study, Lau and Rance make the distinction between two types of corruption : the « *people-directed* » and the « *government-directed* ». The first is the sum of all embezzlement of funds from the population by the creation of false or excessive taxes or fees, an improper use of official police forces, the obtaining illegal funds through criminal's torture and lastly, allow landowners families to raise illegal fees. Those types of extortions were the most common kinds of corruption for what the government's officials were judged, representing almost 63 per cent of the total causes of imperial punishment. The second type of corruption was mostly public funds embezzlements from the military, the people's work or by stealing from the government's resources and even use the public building for illegal use like production of false currencies. Such behaviours were

¹⁷⁴ MICHAEL, Franz. "State and Society in Nineteenth-Century China." *World Politics*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1955, p.432. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2009000.

¹⁷⁵ LAU, Chong-chor, and RANCE P.L. Lee. "Bureaucratic Corruption in Nineteenth-Century China: Its Causes, Control, and Impact." *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 7, no. 1/2, 1979, p. 116, Table 1. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24490039. Last access 25/07/2020.

common among the low class officials such as county magistrates, who were less paid or not in Peking's good graces and thus, more willing to abuse from their status. Also, the central government's loss of power gave them more latitudes to conduct their forfeits. The provincial military men were also highly untrustworthy, used to abuse from their armed force against civilians and accepting bribes¹⁷⁶. Being mainly oriented against the local populations, such misbehaviours appeared to be the main cause of popular uprisings, like the Taiping. If the Qing government always tried to jugulate corruption by administrating severe punishments (dismissals, losses of proprieties and other financial penalties or even death penalties) depending on the status of the accused and the offence's degree, there were no signs of any progresses. As this issue became a true handicap for the Chinese government, once more reforms were necessary and some studies were made to find possible solution. Robert Hart managed to expose different problems relatives to the officials situations that would push them toward corruption. There were three major one linked to the very mechanics of the institutions, the first being the representatives salary. It appeared that lower class officials were barely paid enough to eat and due to the cost of the examinations or the purchase of an office, they were heavily indebted. The second reason was more of a social matter, as the government's officials were considered at the top of the social ladder, the most respectable and instructed people in the Empire, having, normally, passed a difficult examination on all the aspects of the Confucian teachings. The problem here was the social pressure caused by such a status. For a representative, being considered as a model of personal accomplishment and being incapable of nourishing his family because of his debts and poor salary, the temptation to earn easy money was high. Also, the anti-corruption system was playing a role in this. Paradoxically, it was causing other members in the counties offices to profit from the system. Indeed, representatives could not stay for too long in the same province or district (never in their native province) and

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.118, Table 3

were constantly changing offices, it was called the « *rule of avoidance and transfer* »¹⁷⁷. However, due to the massive population any official had under his jurisdiction, he needed clerks to make his job easier by taking care of the basic administrative matters. Those clerks were not falling under the rule of avoidance and transfer and would remain in the same office. In other words, what was trying to be avoided for the magistrates was happening for the clerks as they were forming networks with the population, learn from the terrain and charge illegal fees or embezzle funds. Actions that would eventually not be remarked on the long run. Also, because of their necessity for newly arrived officials, they were taking profits from them by creating silent agreements between both. Thus corruption could rise at all the offices levels, the official covering the clerks. The final problem, touching the whole local administration's system was its laws and their interpretation. The Chinese laws throughout the nineteenth century were not considered at the same level as the Occidentals were considering theirs. Confucian guidance on laws and the maintaining of order was mainly taught as depending on the own moral of an official. Which was logical considering the supposed intellectual superiority of the government's representatives. It created both an incomprehension from the people who had difficulties to follow a precise and rigid legislation and a dangerous freedom of interpretation for the magistrates who could play with that to suit their interests. Despite its attempts to punish and refrain corruption, the Qing government never managed to stop it, the rates of punishments or judgements never slowing down. At the contrary, unstable situation in the country tended to increase the officials duplicity, truly creating an institutionalised corruption in the States. It was at the basis of popular protests, the creation of secret societies and the explosion of rebellions. For Cixi's government, the need for a renewal of the State's institutions was needed. But not only because of the inner situation of China, mostly because the country had now entered the family of nations and was more than ever exchanging with the occidentals. Never China had

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.125

been this open to the World, and this status should be accompanied by modernization, or at list reforms, of the Chinese society. After the second Opium War and the instauration of the new regime, began what Chinese intellectuals called the Tongzhi Restoration¹⁷⁸. During this period of a bit more than ten years, China knew an era quite similar to the European industrial revolution. However, the question remained to know how the protectionist and traditionalist oldest Empire in the World would react and adapt its culture to this effervescence of knowledge, technologies and exchanges with so much different cultures.

¹⁷⁸ ROWE, William T., *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China, Cambridge and London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, Part. 2 to 10, pp.202, 2009

Part III

Attempts of renewal under Western influences.

The Empire of China, and therefore the Qing dynasty, always put a lot of importance on their international affairs. Since foreign peace signified also peace on the borders, in the mainland and, *a fortiori*, peace in the East Asian Sino-centred world. Because the Tongzhi government's goal remained, rebuild China's splendour as the righteous centre of the whole World. China never officially needed anyone before, and its system remained practically unchanged throughout the centuries despite the dynasties and the territorial wars. However, regarding the Qing's defeats against the occidentals, their yielding on the Treaty Ports and their incapacity to maintain order in a country ravaged by wars, rebellions and corruption without the gentry's help made clear that the Imperial government had to conduct some reforms. They already accepted the United-States proposition to integrate the family of nations with the Burlingame expedition and put clear commercial agreements with the Peking Convention. Moreover, now that Prince Kung, who was well known for his opened positions toward China's exchanges with the occidentals, and that the opium trade was slowly but surely being taking care of through legalization and taxes, China could cope easily with the West. Especially after the French and British help in the very last years of the Taiping Rebellion, what managed to accomplish the Chinese government was a great example of their capacities to secure the dynasty by insuring the traditional continuity. By not ally formally with the foreigners, China only counted on mercenaries to pilot their steamships and merchants to sell them weapons and ammunitions, thus only China could be seen as the conflict's winner, saving the great principle of government's virtue¹⁷⁹. The occidentals themselves were pleased to have broken their neutral positions on the rebellion to help a dynasty now willing to cooperate and share commercial interests.

¹⁷⁹ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I, p.160, 2011

1. Wake up from humiliation.

a. Maintaining China's sovereignty, the self-strengthening movement.

Now in a more peaceful situation, Cixi and Kung's government could think about new policies and projects to modernize the country and the State's institutions. The tributary system and isolationist politics were officially taken as obsolete and, with the support of Prince Kung, China oriented itself towards what made the success of the occidentals : better modern institutions, technological advances and cultural changes. However, the objectives of the Self-strengthening were not to adopt completely the occidental way of life and thinking, but choose the right elements of modernization for China to become a powerful nation again¹⁸⁰. One of the first propositions made under Kung's Board of International Relations was to create strict guidelines and regulations on trade with the occidentals. China and Great Britain's commercial and financial strategies were now colliding, helped by the creation of the Imperial Maritime Custom Service in 1854, but it gained a great efficiency with the nomination of Robert Hart as its General Inspector in 1863¹⁸¹. The Service was used by the Chinese government to end the foreign merchants impunity on the taxes regulations. Because when the right for extraterritoriality was declared for them following the first Opium War, occidental traders quickly argued that they were not anymore under the Chinese tax jurisdiction. The Peking Convention and the Tsungli Yamen had the goal to create an institutional entity that would insure of the proper taxes payment from the foreigners and the Chinese merchants. It is important to specify that it was the Tsungli Yamen which asked for Hart's nomination at the head of the Service. Not only because he was known to be a friendly ally of the Chinese government and a fervent admirer of the Chinese culture, but most of all because Kung knew that his country could not understand and progress on emulating the occidentals institutions and

¹⁸⁰ QU, Jason Zhensheng. "Self-Strengthening Movement of Late Qing China: an Intermediate Reform Doomed to Failure." *Asian Culture and History* 8, 2016, p. 150

¹⁸¹ CORDIER, Henri. "Les Douanes Impériales Maritimes Chinoises." *T'oung Pao*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1906, p. 522, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4525892. Lastly accessed 31/07/2020

functioning without the occidentals themselves. Another point was that, at the contrary of Chinese officials, Prince knew that Hart was incorruptible. In the very later years of the nineteenth century, China would use the Service to contract several loans with various European banks like the Honk Kong and Shanghai Bank or Chartered Bank for the British establishments, the National Bank für Deutschland with Germany, followed by other debts with France and Russia¹⁸². All those loans would not be amortised and reimbursed until the 1910's, but would finance the ambitious Chinese development projects in warships and weaponry researches. Indeed, and unfortunately for Prince Kung's visions on reforming the system, the Chinese and Manchu gentry were very unlikely to deeply change the traditional institutions and adopt foreign thinking and philosophy. From an intellectual point of view, the gentry was still mainly conservative, which is understandable considering the elite's privileges guaranteed by the traditional laws and principles¹⁸³. Following the idea that China did not need to reform its intellectual, cultural and scholastic basis, the self-strengthening movement then followed the only objectives of the ruling class in the late nineteenth century : make China a powerful country again. In terms of economy, China was already the centre of the global exchanges, the Imperial Maritime Custom Service was the element that would prevent major financial outflows like seen at the beginning of the opium crisis and politically, China allowed European embassies in Beijing, sent envoys and scholars to study in Europe and even openly accepted occidental help during the last civil war. And there was the problem, the only thing China still did not have was a strong military power. The Taiping Rebellion and the employment of foreign weapons, steamships and mercenaries proved to be very efficient. However, the Qing wanted a modern army of their own for the country to defend itself without foreign help. Also, still humiliated by the Opium Wars outcomes and the concessions accorded to the occidentals, the conservative

¹⁸² CORDIER, Henri. "Les Douanes Impériales Maritimes Chinoises." *T'oung Pao*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1906, p. 523-524.

¹⁸³ QU, Jason Zhensheng. "Self-Strengthening Movement of Late Qing China: an Intermediate Reform Doomed to Failure." *Asian Culture and History* 8, 2016, p. 150

gentry saw in the army's modernization a way to repel the westerners. The opening of China to the western manners, economy and industrialisation was therefore motivated by China's desire for independence. Great arsenals were then modernized to allow the construction of the new Chinese fleet, Euro-American engineers were employed and foreign instructors were commissioned to train troops and officers in the occidental way. Unfortunately for the Qing's government plans, they lacked the funds. Sure China borrowed capitals from European countries banks but maintaining such policies of industrialisation requested more and the State did not have that much money. The provincial governors however, appeared to be a great financial ally but once again, the question of their competences to take care of the projects entered in the equation. The problem with the gentry desire to modernize the army but not touch the global institutions and the representatives formation simply moved the already existing problems from the traditional system to the industrial reforms. According to scholars like David Pong, one of the weak points of the self-strengthening movement was the government's choice not to change the local taxation system¹⁸⁴. Because of the population's impoverishment following decades of wars and inner conflicts, the Chinese State then lacked of public funds and had to rely majorly on the governors-generals. Using the Foochow Navy Yard as an example, Pong's demonstration shows that the self-strengthening movement's failure was due both a cruel lack of technological knowledge and the flaws of the Chinese public funds accounting traditions. Even if the yard indeed completed the expected objectives of building warships and form teams of engineers and sailors, being therefore considered as a successful example of the Chinese road to industrial liberalism, the path itself was by far more of a fiasco than expected¹⁸⁵. According to Pong's expertise, the good point of the self-strengthening

¹⁸⁴ ELMAN, Benjamin A. "Naval Warfare and the Refraction of China's Self-Strengthening Reforms into Scientific and Technological Failure, 1865-1895." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2004, p. 288. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3876516. Lastly accessed 31/07/2020.

¹⁸⁵ PONG, David. "Keeping the Foochow Navy Yard Afloat: Government Finance and China's Early Modern Defence Industry, 1866-75." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1987, pp. 121. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/312684. 31/07/2020.

movement was its own demise, namely its development objectives. The idea as great and following a spiteful, yet legitimate, anti-imperialist ideal of elevating China at the same hard power level as the Occident. However, Chinese officials had no idea of the cost in politics and actual finances of such a project. Indeed, start an industrial revolution asked for more than traditional popular taxation and the government's resource mobilization. The case of the Foochow Navy Yard is a good example of how Chinese governors-general could understand the new economic priorities of modernization and what they implied in terms of return on investments. Because the Qing government just asked for them to conduct the projects, being incapable of financing it entirely. The governors however still had to convince the Qing representatives that their enterprises would be fruitful not only militarily, but also as an economical stimulant. It is necessary to remember that, during this period, the only modern ships were the foreigner's and Chinese traders had to rent them and hire the crew, or still count on sampans or other traditional boats to ship their goods. A modern fleet signified also faster and bigger commerce cargos and a better protection against coastal piracy, so the government allowed finances, expecting a great return on investment¹⁸⁶ even if the majority of the funds were falling on the governor's back. Funds that Tso Tsung-T'ang, in charge of the Foochow Navy Yard's construction and commissioning, managed to find. Unfortunately this is when the gap between reality and Chinese expectations appeared, under the form of overspendings. In the Chinese public funding system, budget overspending did not happened due to the fact that the State gave a specific amount of finances especially made for the policy application. The problem there, was that Tso did not took in account the price of the tools and patents slips necessary to build the navy yard's equipment, which made him pick in the credits intended for the yard's commissioning. Some accounts were then slowly emptied before the project even started. Despite those mistakes, Tso did well and managed to finance the yard and keep the

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pp.123-124

construction afloat by a precise budget organisation that, if it suffered from many miscalculations, allowed the capital to be redistributed in case of supply shortages or workforce slow-down. So the ships were built, the yard was working and the two French officers were training the new sailors and engineers. But again, Tso forgot the cost of the maintenance and the global spending of the Foochow Navy Yard would have exceeded its revenues if the taxes on opium shipment duties would not have been transferred to counterbalance this new cost. The reason why the yard and its brand new steamships quickly became a financial drain was that the entire project, even if it was sustained by imperial statesmen, was rightly considered as Tso and his associate's project. Therefore, it could enter in concurrence with other ports and arsenals sustained by other governors-generals who started their own navy yards and other coastal provinces were still too skittish on the project. Thus, no one wanted to use the Foochow ships and they stayed in the yard, the maintenance cost kept on rising and built a very high deficit that even the full employment of Foochow's fleet in the defence of Taiwan against Japanese incursions in 1874 could not match the financial outflows of the yard's spending and maintenance¹⁸⁷. Some attempts were made to counterbalance the new ships unproductivity by the construction of several cargo ships and the foundation of the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company in 1872 under the general and diplomat Li Hung-chang's proposition. The goal of a State's financed commercial steamships company was to increase the government's leadership on the commercial affairs and assure incomes to the imperial throne. At the same time, Hung-chang suggested to dismantle the old coastal army to liberate some funds and allow the new fleet to take its place¹⁸⁸. The idea was good, but it was already too late, the total cost of the yard was too high, the imperial court's patience had its limits and the ravages of corruption had also struck the Chinese navy yards, cutting in an already scarce capital. The very bad returns on the Chinese built steamships from Chinese traders, sailors and European

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, pp.133-134

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 133

officers finished to definitely discourage the most unlikely provinces and the self-strengthening movement detractors at the imperial palace gained even more power. If the conservatives point of view appeared to have been right, it was clearly not the case. In fact, it was the Chinese traditional public financing system that provoked the decay of the project by not taking account of inflation, maintenance and growth capital redistribution, only allowing short term budget planning. The Qing government asked too much while giving too little, not giving the willing governors-generals the tools they needed for their far too ambitious projects. Corruption, incompetence and ridiculous returns on investments finished to put down the Chinese expectations for a fully functioning and powerful naval force¹⁸⁹. The failures and flaws of the traditional Chinese system reached all the few improvements planned by the self-strengthening movement. The Chinese troop reformation project new quite the same fate as the navy but not really or the same reasons. As studied before, the Qing government witnessed the greater efficiency of occidental commandment and troops organisation during the Taiping Rebellion. The idea came out to employ Europeans instructors to train new officers and reform the army. A great example of what became another fiasco, was the Feng-Huang-Shan camp where foreign officers and Chinese officials collaborated, mostly for the worst¹⁹⁰. During the 1860's and 1870's period, Occident and China were following a cooperative policy. The first seeing the commercial and political interests of China's integration to the « civilised world » customs and the later for the global progresses the occidental could offer them to strengthen their position in East Asia. The Manchu and Han military high ranked officers' feeling on the army's reform was mitigated at best, hostile at worst. Their first concerns about such changes were about the loss of their privileges and the closer watch the State could have on their corruption affairs and

¹⁸⁹ ELMAN, Benjamin A. "Naval Warfare and the Refraction of China's Self-Strengthening Reforms into Scientific and Technological Failure, 1865-1895." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2004, p. 301. *JSTOR*.

¹⁹⁰ SMITH, Richard J. "Foreign-Training and China's Self-Strengthening: The Case of Feng-Huang-Shan, 1864—1873." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1976, p. 215. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/311806. Lastly accessed 31/07/2020.

embezzlements. What the occidentals were proposing was inapplicable for a traditional Confucian based society like China was. To be precise, the officers were part of the highest class in the country, being diametrically opposed to the basic troops from the lower classes. Thus, the occidental training based on modern approach of the military hierarchy was breaking this gap between both as occidental officer were rather chosen on their merits than on an essentialist belief that depicted them as fundamentally better. Forming foreign trained officers would have asked for an intermediary class that did not existed in the Chinese system, and the already existing military gentry saw that as a treason for their traditions¹⁹¹. This illustrates perfectly the clash between the modern liberal imperialism and the traditional empire that the previous conflicts had shown. Another factor was the global hostility the Chinese had for the occidentals and the infiltration of their customs in the Chinese society. The case of the Treaty Ports defence by foreign military forces was eloquent, and the fear of a foreign forces growing stronger inside the frontier laid the foundations of military reformation. But once more, if the idea was good on paper, the gentry conservatism refrained the reform's possibilities. Not only the occidentals officers were paid more than the Chinese, but they also had the tendency to considered themselves as superior to their Chinese homologues, fostering a dangerous complex of inferiority in the imperial officers. The complex grew to become a clear rejection of the foreign customs, the army becoming hostile to any form of foreign training or influence that could bring troubles and treason in its ranks. The fear of Europeans secretly taking over the army by influencing the troops and creating a new type of officer also brought defiance and mistrust in at the Imperial Court, sabotaging the project¹⁹². After the Japanese attack of Taiwan in 1874 and the Russian territorial advances in East Asia towards the ocean after the Tientsin Treaty, China felt threaten by its close neighbours. Li Hung-chang, who was a devote to China's defence, but he was far more concerned about Japanese expansionism than the Russian case, as

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 216-217

¹⁹² *Ibid*, p. 220-222.

his efforts to constitute a functioning Chinese war fleet attested. Li's concerns about coastal defence had already reached the imperial council when Japan took over the Kingdom of Ryukyu and transformed it in the Ryukyu Domain in 1872. Adding to the Japanese progresses in East Asia, France had its own colonialist attitude towards Vietnam, another tributary State¹⁹³. Ryukyu and Vietnam were among the few last tributary States to China, thus the last remains of China's traditional international politics were threatened, and this, the Chinese and Manchu gentry agreed that their fears about the foreigners were real : the Occidentals and the Japanese wanted to destroy the Chinese Empire. The Empire of Japan and France, following their imperialist ideology, were planning to take over the tributary States by force while the British were influencing the army and swiftly gaining more control in the Treaty Ports than the Imperial government. The self-strengthening movement, according to the Chinese contemporary scholars like Immanuel Hsü or Jason Qu, dramatically suffered from the lack of coordination between the Chinese State and the leaders of the movement. The fact that this momentum toward modernization by westernization was not an official policy followed by the government but rather the product of a few reformists had a disastrous impact on the project's longevity¹⁹⁴. Tso Tsung-T'ang and Li Hung-chang were following the same objective but did not have the same approach of Chinese modernization. When one was convinced that the future of Chinese military superiority was lying on the building of a modern and powerful fleet, the other remained faithful to the traditional Manchu and Han belief that China's first enemy were the nomad tribes from the North-West. The struggle between coastal and inner frontier defence slowed down the decision process and split the financial resources in two when it could have been gave to one. Unfortunately for the Chinese fleet, the Imperial Court was in favour of the inner frontier defence, allowing too little funds to the naval projects like we saw with the

¹⁹³ FAIRBANK, J.K., *La grande révolution Chinoise : 1800-1989*, Flammarion, Part. I, pp. 164-165, 2011

¹⁹⁴ QU, Jason Zhensheng. "Self-Strengthening Movement of Late Qing China: an Intermediate Reform Doomed to Failure." *Asian Culture and History* 8, 2016, p.152.

example of the Foochow Navy Yard's financial struggle¹⁹⁵. Also the xenophobic thoughts of the gentry against the occidentals was characterised by a strong rejects of any westernization of the traditional institutions like the army or the education system. Some students were sent in Europe by the Tsungli Yamen, but again such decisions were not the government's act¹⁹⁶. Thus, as traditionalism remained the great norm at the Imperial Court, the State kept on following its ancestral teachings. The victory over the Dungan Rebellion in 1877 and the reconquest of Sinkiang by Tso gave hope to the Court, but they were proven wrong when the Franco-Chinese war and the first Sino-Japanese war broke out respectively in 1884 and 1895. Li Hung-chang was appointed to negotiate with the occidentals on both conflicts to obtain their help and arbitration. Li, who had the Court's sympathy for his political conservatism, did not changed the Chinese diplomatic approach of using the barbarians against each other's, but the occidentals were now adapted to that kind of manoeuvres and the only help China got from the occident was from Robert Hart, who negotiated an under-the-counter deal with France for peace. In the case of the conflict with a modernized Japan, the conflict was conducted following the western international laws, thus living China alone. If the Chinese war fleet was larger and better equipped, the cruel lack of a centralised commandment and the poor training of its officers precipitated the defeat of the Qing dynasty. The annihilation of the fleet and the humiliation following the ratification of new Treaty Ports with Japan, a country considered as an under-developed vassal by China for a long time was now bringing the Manchus to their knees. The Empire of Japan also obtained the creation of a consular police force to protect its envoys, aware of the troubles such a presence could create with the local police and

¹⁹⁵ HSÜ, Immanuel C. Y. "The Great Policy Debate in China, 1874: Maritime Defense Vs. Frontier Defense." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 25, 1964, pp. 227-228. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2718343. Accessed 01/08/2020.

¹⁹⁶ QU, Jason Zhensheng. "Self-Strengthening Movement of Late Qing China: an Intermediate Reform Doomed to Failure." *Asian Culture and History* 8, 2016, pp.151-152.

population¹⁹⁷. The demise of the Chinese elites was complete and the situation finally became even worse than at the beginning of the self-strengthening movement. But as it was shown in this part, this was the result of the Chinese government inconsistency, lack of leadership, stubbornness to follow its traditions and xenophobia. However, saying that the self-strengthening movement did not produce anything good would be wrong. As the changes initiated by the few pioneers of China's road to modernization at least impacted the country enough to make a thousands of years old Empire to reconsider some of its principles. The Imperial Maritime Custom Service reshaped the public funding system and democratized the need for capitalisation and the search for profits in the government's politics, paving the way for banks and private entrepreneurs in the future. However, the profit-oriented enterprises, if managed sometimes by private merchants or former compradores, the direction remained in the hands of the Qing government and the official gentry. Aware of the favouritism and corruption of the elites in command, private investors were not interested in the government's companies and the favour system made any type of competition useless, since the most favoured would immediately gain a monopoly on trade¹⁹⁸. The military program allowed occidental technologies and thinking to penetrate the Chinese society and the functioning of its institutions. Finally, the defeat against Japan began to open the eyes of the gentry on their country's disastrous lateness compared to its closest neighbours. The small attempts to reform the schooling system was about to bring new intellectuals, familiarised with the occidental manners and philosophy¹⁹⁹. More details about the outputs of those defeats will be discussed later in the paper, however it is clear that they deeply influenced the Chinese gentry and be at the bases of

¹⁹⁷ ESSELSTROM, E., A Disputed Presence in Late Qing and Early Republican China. In *Crossing Empire's Edge: Foreign Ministry Police and Japanese Expansionism in Northeast Asia*, pp. 39-64, 2009. HONOLULU: University of Hawai'i Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctt6wr0v1.6

¹⁹⁸ MOLL-MURATA, Christine. *State and Crafts in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)*. Amsterdam University Press, 2018, pp.201-202. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv6hp2q9.

¹⁹⁹ BAI, Limin. "Education and Nationalism in Late Imperial China." *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood Studies*. Ed. Daniel Thomas Cook. Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, Inc., 2020. pp.705-706. *SAGE Knowledge*. Web. 8 May. 2020, doi: 10.4135/9781529714388.n255.

the later rising of strong nationalist ideas and deeper reforms of the scholar institutions in the country.

b. The new intellectuals, between, conservatism, reformism and revolutionists.

First of all, a question that has not been yet eluded in this work needs to be answered. Was the self-strengthening movement and the previous diplomatic demarches conduct by China to enter the international relations of its time motivated by liberal thoughts ? Furthermore, were the commercial agreements of the Treaty Ports, the Beijing Convention and the consequent reforms of the tax system originated from a liberalist enlightenment ? The answer is a no. Those evolutions of Chinese inner and international policies were, as it was depicted in this work, the fruit of the Qing dynasty's desire of adaptation to conserve its power. It was more of a way to content the western barbarians by playing by their rules to have some peace. The previous example of Qing diplomacy is a great example of how the ruling class considered the occidental uses. Another important point is that, at the contrary of Europe or the United-States, the culture did not organically produced intellectuals who could theorise classical liberalism. There is a consensus on liberalism as born in occident, after the Enlightenment, the fall of feudalism followed by the Industrial Revolution. Most of all because all the major thinkers of liberalism were European, Voltaire, Locke, Adam Smith, etc. are popularly the most influential thinkers of classical liberalism. However this statement has often been reevaluated regarding global History studies' propensity to be highly Western-centred. Were there other countries that could have experienced liberalism before Europe but never bothered labelling their policies as « liberal » ? The scholar Evan Osborne especially studied the case of ancient China to answer this question. Following his logic, a thousand years old empire such as the Middle Kingdom, traversed by hundreds of rulers and policies, could have experienced liberalism²⁰⁰. In his article,

²⁰⁰ OSBORNE, Evan. "China's First Liberal." *The Independent Review*, vol. 16, no. 4, p. 533, 2012

Osborne take the singular example of the philosopher Mozi, who lived in the fifth century B.C., and had the particularity to be a fervent criticiser of the traditional Confucian teachings. Unlike Confucianism, he argued that the intellectuals should not rely on their only wisdom to get food or shelter, but should be aware of every one's work and production. At some point, Mozi placed private wealth and production as the centre of human exchanges. Interestingly, Mozi also thought about a far ancestor of Hobbes state of nature when he describes "Ancient times" as an era when each individual had its own moral, making life in an ordered society impossible. It was only when men decided to uniformly found a moral code of conduct and saw that they were more productive that civilised society began. Here, the similarities with Hobbes' *Leviathan* can be seen in this universal moral code. In both Hobbes and Mozi ideas, man is violent and undisciplined by nature but can achieve greater good and productivity by being united and righteous. Mozi's theories on righteousness also concerned the ruling class, and this is where the Western and the Eastern vision of society split up. Indeed, where the occidental liberalism place the individuals at the centre of the wealth production with few interventions from the State, from a Chinese point of view (common to both Confucianists and Mohists) the State is at the very base of the peoples' life, providing them protection and prosperous policies in exchanges of taxations. We find here the fundamentals of the Chinese feudal hierarchy with the Tien at the top of all things, followed by the Emperor, the gentry and the common people. This particularity of the Chinese society will be of a great importance later on this paper, as it will shape the intellectuals vision. Interestingly, Mozi's positions on who he calls the "sage kings", and especially their acts and decisions toward the people can be also found in Rousseau's *Du Contrat Social*. Mozi's opinions on war particularly, is very close to what Rousseau called a "fair war", as Mozi point out the difference between ruling by force or by righteousness. Ruling by force and praise wars of conquests (a term that can also be found in Rousseau's work) is an

unjust and brutal, close to man's state of nature. Both are reflecting on the right use of force against another State or kingdom, and both show morality or laws in conflicts as very important for the "innocents", the common people of the conquered land and of your own. Both again, make the difference between what Mozi call a war of conquest and a war of punishment²⁰¹, saying that, if another country or kingdom is considered to be ruled by a despot, the righteous leader is in his right to intervene to save the oppressed population²⁰². These similitudes are understandable even if they were made in separated periods and different polities, because both were wrote in a context of vast political changes and questioning about the right way to govern. Where Mozi strays from Rousseau is with his utilitarian vision of the people's production. Going on a war of conquest, he considered, was a terrible loss of capitals, a waste of men and therefor a waste of workforce. War of conquest were impoverishing the people, paving the way for rebellion, when defensive wars and war of punishment were legitimates and could forge the unity of a kingdom. And there lies the key concept of Mozi's ruling system theory : meritocracy. According to him, to maintain order in a country, its ruler and subjects needed to be led by rational thoughts, the ruler being the one who is the most righteous and reasonable. This idea to maintain peace and prosperity by reason through an enlightened figure of authority is another liberal principle that has already been discussed earlier in the work about John Stuart Mill's philosophy on bringing out the best of each individual through democracy. Since Mozi probably never heard of democracy, he replaced it with the "rightful ruler". A reasonable leader who will know how to provide security, and economic growth through inner exchanges and trade with other kingdoms. Again these principles are very similar to Adam Smith ideas in his *Wealth of Nations*, especially the fourth book "Of Systems of political Economy". Certainly, Mozi cannot be described as a liberal thinker, since the very concept of liberalism was occidental, but it is interesting to be aware that similar concerns on the same topics already existed in China far

²⁰¹ MOZI, "Condemning Offensive Warfare II," in *The Mozi*, 18.2, p. 173

²⁰² ROUSSEAU, J.-J., *Du Contrat Social, ou Principes du Droit Politique*, Vol.1, Chap 4, pp. 194-201

before they were questioned in Europe. To link Mozi's teaching with the Qing's dynasty scholastic and institutional evolution in the late nineteenth century, it is needed to point out the resemblances between the political context of Mozi's writings and the Qing search for sovereignty stabilisation in a period of reforms. The Chinese scholars' interpretation of the classical occidental liberalist thinkers had a lot in common with Mozi's vision of the Chinese society and if Confucianism was the norm among the Chinese intellectuals, their adaptation of the modern occidental teaching to the Chinese institutions appeared to have the same particularities that in Mozi's. And this was partially due to the common traits between Mohism and Confucianism : social hierarchy. The impact on China's economy in the late nineteenth century was concentrated on one level, which characterised the official gentry's eager to modify or deeply reform this hierarchy. This was the progressive creation of private enterprises and industries without the government's influence. Private capitalisation and competition between investors and traders were made impossible by the favour system and the inferior position of merchants in the Chinese society. The Hongs and the Canton Trade system were a good example of it, since the hongs were private merchants employed by the government to administer trade with the foreigners. However the only way for them to be truly profitable was to accept bribes and smuggling. The new industries and institutions created during the self-strengthening movement had the same functioning and it was not a surprise that the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company's second manager was a former compradore for Jardine and Matheson Company²⁰³. Beside its own representatives, the Manchus only accepted private actors that already knew the system. This is mainly why, after the disaster that the Sino-Japanese war has been, that Chinese intellectuals began to question the very principles of Confucianism as adapted to the modern World order. The scholar spectrum of Confucianism then could be split in two between the radical reformist, who were arguing that only a

²⁰³ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. III, p. 285, 2000

fundamental change in the traditions and the implementation of a large scale westernization of the State's institutions could safeguard China against extra-national threats, and the conservatives, who were in favour of a slow and controlled modernization that could preserve the Confucian roots of the Chinese culture. The Japanese example served as a trigger for a new interest in occidental thinking and theories. An interest which became possible and was encouraged by Chinese scholars who studied in Europe and brought back new concepts with them. One of the most well-known is Yan Fu (1854-1921), who became famous for his translations of occidental texts including fiction, manifests of science and technology but also, and his most important work here, his translations of the classic liberal literature in the last decade of the nineteenth century, including Adam Smith, Montesquieu, Mill or Darwin.

He also produced his own works depicting his opinion on China's incapacity to cope with occidental and Japanese imperialism. Yan Fu's translation opera was debated as if it was truly revolutionary for his era or not. Moreover, his work had the particularity to be addressed to every scholars who desired study the occidental theories. Yan Fu's method was to make the foreign text as accessible as possible for Chinese intellectuals non familiar to the occidental culture. Thus, he chose not to translate literally, but rather adapt the text to the traditional Chinese form that was commonly used for memorials²⁰⁴. Indeed, when, in occident, the writing was vernacular and understandable by everyone, in China, the tradition wanted the scientific literature to be written in prose and metaphors. Yan Fu's translations and essays were mostly a way for him to show his concerns about the actual situation of China during his time. Most importantly, after his studies in Europe, he wanted to show to the elite how the adaptation of western principles to the Chinese society and scholarship could benefit to the country. In some sort, he wanted to open the gentry's eyes on an issue they did not even wanted to discuss in the first place and provoked the failure of the self-strengthening movement and China's

²⁰⁴ HUANG, Max Ko-wu, *The meaning of Freedom : Yan Fu and the Origins of Chinese Liberalism*, The Chinese University Press, Part. III, pp. 116-117, 2008-

defeat against Japan. Therefore, using the traditional form of writing for his essays was a clever move. Also, he tended to modify some of the references made by occidental thinkers to adapt them with Chinese folklore. Yan was criticised for such choices by some of his peers and colleagues. There was an issue in 1897, when he wanted to publish his translation of Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* where his knowledge of the English language was questioned as he erased some important part of Huxley's discuss, like the "Ethics" in the title that was absent of the Chinese translation²⁰⁵. Yan Fu was also a pioneer in the introduction of social Darwinism in China. Something understandable because it was perfectly, according to him, illustrating the need for China to evolve and adapt its ancestral traditions to fit this new modern world. However, picking the precise informations Yan thought were more fitting the Chinese political context of his time caused his work to be criticised as none accurate and served his own vision despite the original work and their authors' believes. This concern about Yan Fu's accuracy is the perfect representation of a paradox exposed by contemporary scholars, knowing if the Chinese liberal thinkers, in favour of a deep westernization of China, really understood occidental liberal thoughts and its funding principles. The idea according to which, Eastern and Western culture were far too different to be efficiently merged in a working system was strong in the intellectual world, even in Europe, where an English poem said : "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet."²⁰⁶. An interesting thing about this poem is that posterity kept this first verse of the poem, the following lines tend to say the contrary. However the fact that only the first verse was remembered shows that debates about the possibility for the both worlds to collide in harmony also reached the Occident. The partisans of the westernization in East Asia generally used a particular formula to qualify the difference between the two culture but how they should be assembled according to their own countries'

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.13

²⁰⁶ KIPLING, R., *The Ballad of East and West*, 1889

culture. In Japan, it was “Eastern ethics, Western technology” from Sakuma Shōzan to illustrate the Japanese industrialization, this ideal of keeping the traditional values while using the occidental science was later retook in China by the reformist official Chang Chih-tung with his formula : “Chinese learning as essence, Western learning for practical use”²⁰⁷. Yan Fu was from the intellectuals who did not think about keeping the Chinese traditional essence and only use the westerners’ technology to regain influence in East Asia. For him, the imperial government’s measures on modernization were the representation of what Adam Smith called mercantilist policies. In his translation of “The Wealth of nations”, he pointed out that the self-strengthening movement failed because of the State’s intervention in the economy development of the country. The Imperial authorities intervened in China’s development by supporting some activities more than others, and blocked the way for organic growth and wealth creation that would have been possible with more *laissez-faire* and freedom for the private entrepreneurs²⁰⁸. Sur thing, Yan’s error or misinterpretation here was to believe that Adam Smith’s theories were still the main guideline in occidental economic policies in the nineteen century, when, in two hundred years, liberalism evolved and Smith was already considered as from the classic school of liberalism. However, it was pertinent in the case of China because it can be said that Chinese policies were indeed two hundred year late. Thus, starting from Adam Smith was pedagogically correct to swiftly move the Chinese elites towards the acceptance of modernization. Such thinking is described by Thomas Metzger as accommodative, meaning that the intellectual relying on it will have consciousness of the cultural gap between his country and the ideology that he is trying to implement in its institutions. Therefore, the accommodative thinker will try to maintain a status quo and gradually incorporate moderate reforms to insure a peaceful transition. In the case of Yan, his choices of translation and the way he adapted the original

²⁰⁷ FUNG, Edmund S.K., *The intellectual foundations of Chinese modernity, Cultural and political thought in the Republican Era*, Cambridge University Press, Part. I, p. 31-32, 2010

²⁰⁸ BOROKH, Olga, “Adam Smith in Imperial China: Translation and Cultural Adaption”, *Oeconomia*, 2-4, 2012, pp. 414-415.

intentions of the occidental authors to fit the Chinese way of thinking and culture are an example of accommodative thinking²⁰⁹. The accommodative thinkers of the late Qing dynasty, considered as the less radical reformists of the Chinese intellectuals, were discussing the best improvement path for China with the transformative thinkers. The transformative thinking can be separated in different scales since its main doctrine, the *tianguo* or heavenly kingdom, is an ideal and egalitarian society where wealth is reached through global enlightenment. For the transformative thinkers, any scientific texts, archives or any other doctrines identified as absolute truth should be used to enhanced the Chinese society to repel the occidental imperialism. Even if China had to adopt occidental doctrines to do so. Transformative thinkers in the last years of the Chinese Empire would tend to be revolutionaries and judge the old regime as unfitted for the radical reforms a westernization of the country would ask²¹⁰. Those thinkers did not encountered success immediately, as the listened intellectuals were rather the accommodative ones, like Yan Fu or Liang Qichao, whose ideas on a Chinese citizenship will be discussed later in this work. Also, liberal thinking in China was still a topic introduced by intellectuals, for intellectuals. The country's ruling class had no plan on developing what could be really called liberal reforms of the government's institutions. Yet, occidental liberalism was just becoming an object of debates among the scholars who would eventually influence the ruling class with later memorials to the Imperial Palace²¹¹. China was trying to gain some weight in the international balance of powers, and the Japanese example of westernization could be applied to the Confucian teachings. A thesis that was highly defended by sinologists like William Theodore de Bary, whose works on Neo-Confucianism and its link with liberalism defended the idea of an endemic liberal thinking in China from imperial scholars during the

²⁰⁹ HUANG, Max Ko-wu, *The meaning of Freedom : Yan Fu and the Origins of Chinese Liberalism*, The Chinese University Press, Part. I, pp. 40-41, 2008

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.40

²¹¹ JENCO, Leigh K., "Chinese Liberalism", in BEVIR, Mark, (ed.) *Encyclopedia of political theory*, SAGE Publications, London, UK, 2010, p. 164.

Sung and the late Ming dynasty. According to de Bary, this endemic liberalism can be found in times of political crisis in China, when scholars tend to discuss on despotism and the right of the people and the intellectuals to protest actively against imperial exactions. In other terms, these scholars (de Bary uses the example of Huang Tsung-his or Ku Yen-wu from the seventeenth century) who were well-known Confucian theorists, openly discussed the right of the people to contest imperial oppression and ask for institutional reforms²¹². For de Bary, when thinking about the beginning of liberalism in China and its first liberal thinkers, it is necessary to avoid ethnocentrism. As stated before with Osborne statements on Mozi, liberalism is generally believed to be a philosophy born in occident, however de Bary makes clear that a difference should be made between the European-American conception of liberal thoughts and its East Asia equivalent. By considering only the first, it would signify that liberal reforms would not have been pursued by China without Western help. De Bary thought that occidental theories on politics and economy did play a role in China's modernization and reformation in the late nineteenth century, but there always has been criticsers and reformists in the Confucian school²¹³. Regarding the fact that the idea of an adaptation to the traditional thinking of occidental liberalism was seen as possible by Yan Fu and his peers, de Bary's statement seems legitimate and it is true that some similarities can be found in both. These similarities are based on the core Confucian doctrine of harmony. Harmony, as exposed in the first part of this work, can and must be achieved through self-cultivation of every individuals. Self-cultivation brings virtue, a better comprehension of the social environment and therefor, contribute to peace in the country. Now, according to John Stuart Mill's idea of an enlightened society, individual freedom is at the core of self-development which brings again virtue, knowledge and moral that will elevate society trough the common action of an enlightened community. The individual is

²¹² de BARY, *The trouble with Confucianism*, The Tanner lectures on Human values, 1996, pp.159-161.

²¹³ COHEN, Paul, *The Quest for Liberalism in the Chinese Past: Stepping Stone to a Cosmopolitan World or the Last Stand of Western Parochialism?: A Review of 'The Liberal Tradition in China*, *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1985, pp. 307-308. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1399159.

morally elevated because he is free to cultivate himself. However, if self-cultivation and the ultimate goal for a better society are similar in both thinking, the very base of liberalism that is individual liberty is far different according to a Confucian interpretation. Mill saw the differences between individuals as the core of liberty, they all have their originality, their own wishes, private interests and space, their own behaviour and thinking and these traits were seen by Mill like an engine for global progress. To simplify, for him, the very idea of liberty relied in every individual's freedom to express their own identity regarding the others. Such an idea cannot be found in Confucianism, since the most elevated state of mind an individual can achieve is to become a sage. The sage is not characterized by his identity as a different individual, but rather by his knowledge of the Confucian doctrines that allowed him to overcome his ego. The idea of an individual freedom, separated from the group, was very difficult, even almost impossible for Yan Fu, who was a strong Confucian follower. For Yan, individualism was not a positive characteristic, he made a confusion between the individual construction regarding society and the individual blending inside the collective²¹⁴. Again, Yan decided to modify the occidental author's original statement to better fit his own ideology about China's modernization. Himself admitted that placing the individual at the top of the social conception of the World would not be suitable for the Chinese case due to its cultural background where the group had always been more important than the self. Moreover, individual freedom also supposed individual rights, another basic principles of the liberal thinking but incompatible with the obligations the Confucian sage have towards society²¹⁵. This misconception of liberty is still the base of a debate among the scientific community to know if the so called pioneers of liberalism in China were indeed true liberal, or at least if they really understood its principles. The argument here is that since scholars like Yan did not understand the importance of the

²¹⁴ HUANG, Max Ko-wu, *The meaning of Freedom : Yan Fu and the Origins of Chinese Liberalism*, The Chinese University Press, Part. III, pp.142-143 , 2008

²¹⁵ FENG, LI, OSBORNE, "Classical liberalism in China: Some history and prospects", in *Economical Journal Watch*, Vol.14, n°2, p.227, 2017

individual and private freedom, they could not be qualified of “true” liberals according to the texts they were relying on. However, if Yan’s translations were not one hundred percent accurate and were more serving his theories on the path China should take, the simple fact that he introduced the Chinese scholar world with the occidental liberal theories made him a crucial influencer of the future generation²¹⁶. This makes de Bary’s, thesis very accurate again and is greatly synthesised by Jerome Grieder as the difference between occidental liberalism in China and what can be qualified as Chinese liberalism, the former influencing more than causing the later²¹⁷. An influence that would finally, and indirectly touch the Chinese government, as statesmen from both spectrum of the reformist movement began to acknowledge the Imperial Court of their ideas to reinforce China. Like the intellectuals, a clear difference between the reformist can be found in the government. Namely the conservative reformists and the radicals, again symptomatic of the gap between accommodative and transformative thinking. Interestingly, both sides had a deep influence on the Emperor Tongzhi and the Imperial Court. Of course, conservative thinkers like Weng T’ung-ho or Chang Chih-tung (mentioned earlier) remained very close to the Empress dowager Cixi, known for her strong conservative position and her officious control of the power in Beijing. Their ideas, if they still placed the Confucian teaching at the centre of their theories and reforms, were although focusing on reforming the education system to go further than just simply use occidental technologies and learn from foreigners, but start to properly study the western customs and science to understand it and assimilate it to the Chinese culture. Chang Chih-tung was the most talented one to use Confucian doctrine in his advantage, as he stated that the way towards wisdom also passed through adaptation and learning from others. Chang also pointed out that reforms were at the

²¹⁶ FUNG, Edmund S. K. "Were Chinese Liberals Liberal? Reflections on the Understanding of Liberalism in Modern China" *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 4, 2008, pp. 559. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40377628.

²¹⁷ GRIEDER, J., *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution 1917-1937*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970, Part IV, p.344.

core of the dynasties' surviving²¹⁸. As talented they were in trying to have the Emperor's hear, Weng and Chang were opposed in a fierce conflict for influence. A quarrel that will allow young scholars with more radical ideas to have access to the Emperor. K'ang Yu-wei was one of the most influential radical reformists in China at the turn of the century. Known to be a prodigy and unorthodox scholar, his main texts focused on the renewal of Confucianism through the rediscovery and reinterpretation of the traditional texts. K'ang was a great supporter of reforms and saw them a natural event for Chinese dynasties. He wrote several memorials, he urged the Emperor to adopt the modernization reforms of Japan for Chinese institutions, especially reforming the schooling system to form new scholars apt to lead the reforms properly and modify the relationship with the provinces to create a sort of federal state, allowing the governors-general to apply the reforms under their jurisdiction²¹⁹. Among his followers was Liang Qichao, who was also a strong believer of a complete redesign of the traditional institutions using western knowledge on politics and economy. In 1898 K'ang managed to spark Emperor Guangxu's curiosity by convincing him that only a structural modernization would save his throne and was appointed at the headquarter of the Tsungli Yamen, where him and his followers would start the Hundred-Days reform movement.

²¹⁸ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. IV, pp. 358-361, 2000

²¹⁹ POKORA, Timoteus. "The Concept of Progress in Confucianism Some Observations on the Utopia of K'ang Yu-Wei and Its Historical Presuppositions." *East and West*, vol. 17, no. 3/4, 1967, pp. 302–305. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29755173.

2. The fall of the Qing.

a. The Hundred-Days reform and the Empress dowager reign.

With K'ang's support and ideas, the young Emperor quickly published an edict to launch large scale reforms of the Chinese school, craftsmanship, industry, army and communication. K'ang's emphasis on the fact that China was at the brink of collapsing under Occidental and Japanese imperialism had been justified by the 1897 signing of new Treaty Port concessions with Germany. This new treaties contained a rental agreement with the German Empire, expanding the foreign influence in the Shandong Province. With the recent installation of the Japanese consulate in Beijing, the foreign presence in almost every ports of the country added to the failure of the self-strengthening movement due to a lack of management and concrete reforms, the Emperor believed K'ang Yu-wei. The Emperor's edict, however, did not only announced the beginning of the upcoming modernization reforms, but was rather a disclaimer for both sides of the reformists spectrum at the Court. K'ang and Guangxu knew that the radical reforms would raise discontentment and protests from the conservatives, still in large majority at the Imperial Palace. The Emperor wanted to make clear, following K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Qichao's advises, that the reforms would not go against the way of the sage and was for the greater good of Chinese sovereignty. The fact that the Empress dowager Cixi, seen as the leader of the conservative reformists, had retired in the summer Palace and remained far enough from the power surely helped the radicals to take place at the centre of the country's modernization programme. Also, with the enlightened and official support of the Emperor, their plans seemed achievable. The reforms quickly launched by other imperial edicts, concentrated on the simplification and the enhancement of the bureaucracy's efficiency. K'ang ideology on the schooling system and the examination program and traditions took form with the suppression

of the eight-legged essays, compulsory for the civil service examination²²⁰. The radicals were highly supportive of a wide opening of the administration's examination to the greatest possible number of people. The suppression of the right-legged essays, maybe one of the most contested reforms by the conservatives, was a mean to fill up the gap between the gentry and the common people, showing a less elitist administration. This illustrated K'ang ideal of a social and philosophical rewriting of the traditional ethics of the Confucian teaching. He planned to achieve a more egalitarian society, based on the people's skills and active participation in the country's affairs²²¹. If K'ang's ideas were seen as too radical and dangerous for the cultural integrity of China, it is fair to recognize that the Hundred-Days reforms and the radical reformist managed to accomplish what the previous Chinese modernizers never did. For Despite the complains of the Court and the strong anti-occidental ideology roaming the country, they put China in front of its flaws and lateness regarding its neighbours. More than that, they made the imperial power being directly and actively responsible of the reform programme, conferring a new leadership to the government²²². Now the Emperor, or to be more precise, K'ang Yu-wei, Liang Qichao and Chang Chih-tung in the Emperor's name, was financing and supervising a complete restructuration of China. Beginning with the foundation of an imperial university in Peking and the creation of curriculums specialised in the study of occidental culture. Also the examination programme was also reorganised to questioned the student about is interpretation of the country's current situation and actuality rather than their understanding and verbatim repetition of the Confucian classics. Further reforms would also plan compulsory abroad travels for graduating students. It is obvious that the radicals' personal hatred toward the traditional

²²⁰LUKE S. K. Kwong. "Chinese Politics at the Crossroads: Reflections on the Hundred Days Reform of 1898." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2000, pp. 667-668. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/313144. (latest consultation : 03/08/2020)

²²¹FUNG, Edmund S.K., *The intellectual foundations of Chinese modernity, Cultural and political thought in the Republican Era*, Cambridge University Press, Part. I, p. 29, 2010

²²²THOMPSON, Roger R. *The China Quarterly*, no. 176, 2003, p. 1112. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20059092.

customs of the administration could be seen in their reform plan. It definitely appeared in K'ang projects to gradually replace the Six Boards and the Grand Council at the profit of new ministerial cabinets²²³. It is useful to know that Chinese scholars and representatives were perfectly aware of the occidental country's political functioning since Lin Zexu's studies on foreign laws and culture, however K'ang was the first to ask the possibility of Chinese ministry's creation. He's reform also counted the separation of powers, or at least the judiciary power that would become independent from the government and a special infrastructure was also created to gather reform propositions from private citizens. Because K'ang was indeed thinking about importing the occidental principle of citizenship in China. On the long term, the radicals provided to create a Chinese Parliament and a national assembly that would discuss of a constitution. K'ang and his followers, with the Emperor's help and dynamism, clearly wanted China to become a constitutional monarchy following the British model. Such reforms would have completely erased the Grand Council from the decisional power and the Six Boards would have become obsolete. However, if K'ang despised what he considered as retrograde and corrupted institutions, the Boards and the Council still had to validate and write down the imperial decrees. This is why the reforms were submitted in a very short time, forty to fifty edicts between June and September 1898²²⁴ concerning all the fields possible. The government was more implied in the provinces' policies of modernization. In the continuity of the polarised decision to develop telegraph, railways and industries, the government was directly massively investing in those projects. K'ang institutional reforms were also made to facilitate the creation of budgets and legislations to regulate industrialisation, agriculture but also commerce with foreign traders and countries. Productivity, competitiveness, research and technological

²²³ ROWE, William T., *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China, Cambridge and London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, Part. 9, pp.242-243, 2009

²²⁴ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. IV, pp. 373-375, 2000

development were encouraged with the creation of rewards like brevets and favours. Those prizes were bestowed to skilled workers, entrepreneurs or inventors, some sort of best worker's awards to summarize²²⁵. Another technical and communication enhancement was the creation of an imperial related newspaper based in Shanghai. Despite K'ang's swiftness to propose new reforms and managing their almost immediate application in the provinces, the reformists encountered an expected but virulent opposition from councillors, governors-general and representatives who saw the reforms as a destruction of the Confucian traditions, a serious danger for their privileges and were repulsed by anything related to the occidental culture, fearing for the Chinese culture being supplanted. Some tried to reason the Emperor, believing in a less precipitated and more progressive way to pass the reforms. Others, at the centre of the legislative and executive power, clearly expressed their oppositions by preventing new reforms memorials to reach the Emperor, modifying his edicts or even simply chose not to applicate the Emperor's will. Guangxu, who already proved himself to be a man of action, craving for quick results from his magistrates, was then known for his anger outbursts against poorly motivated government officials. A clear example of Guangxu's propensity to severely punish his magistrates were the fate of the grand councillor Weng Tonghe, who was fired from all his posts in the imperial administration for having suggested a slowdown in the reforms. Later the governors-general of Guangdong, Guangxi and Liangjiang were publically admonished in an Emperor's memorial because they openly disobeyed his decrees on the provinces development. The most surprising and shocking punishment was the fall in disgrace of all six presidents of the Boards of Rites, who were the principal criticizers of K'ang reforms of the educational system, as they were in charge of the examination programme and the right following of the Confucian traditions in among the scholars and the representatives. Already weakened by the progressive disuse of the tributary system, the Board of Rites would have certainly been the

²²⁵ MOLL-MURATA, Christine. *State and Crafts in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)*. Amsterdam University Press, 2018, p.98.

first that K'ang would have dismantled, but its presidents reluctance to properly publish the Emperor's edicts precipitated their fall. However, Guangxu's choleric behaviour quickly rose protests at the Imperial Court, since the Emperor seemed incapable of controlling himself and was destroying the traditional institutions by deposing the objectors. With the grudge of the representatives grown also the defiance regarding K'ang Yu-wei's commitment to truly save the dynasty. Rumours soon began to spread among the conservatives that he secretly planned to dethrone the Emperor and end the dynasty to the profit of the foreigners. Unfortunately for the vast modernization project that the Hundred-Days reform had become, rumours about its principal instigator and the Emperor's wrath were not the only obstacles. As specified before, K'ang had planned to replace all the institutions holding the decisional power in the country, those institutions then had to accept and participate to their own destruction, which included also all a long list of privileges and wealth. This added to the fact that the Emperor was maybe the power's representative in Beijing at this time, but it is essential to remember who was the true official leader of China. Since the beginning of the Tongzhi Restoration in 1861, the Empress dowager Cixi was the recognized regent, and her retiring in the summer palace due to illness maybe leaved the field free for Guangxu, but Cixi was still the head of State²²⁶. Such a dichotomy in the executive was translated by a deep sense of misunderstanding, passivity or opposition among the gentry. De facto, the Emperor had the power to conduct his reforms, but should not the Empress dowager be advised first ? The common belief about the deliquescence of the Hundred-Days reform was that Cixi, as the merciless and strong conservative woman she was, organised a *coup d'état* against his imperial nephew. She then savagely ended the reform movement with the help of vile conservatives, hunted down K'ang sympathizers and ordered the execution of those who had not fled to Japan. If the described events were indeed stained by blood and would be followed by a disastrous event, deteriorating the Empress dowager's

²²⁶ LUKE S. K. Kwong, "Chinese Politics at the Crossroads: Reflections on the Hundred Days Reform of 1898." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2000, pp. 673-674. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/313144.

image for the occidentals, it is very important to observe that those critics and description majorly came from K'ang Yu-wei's later writings and descriptions of Cixi. The Empress monstrous figure was his detractor's and enemies' doing, truncated depictions which can be debunked when analysing the Empress's initial opinions toward the reforms and who were the magistrates advising her. Cixi herself was not hostile at all to reforms. She was even in charge of the country when the self-strengthening began and was totally agreeing with China's need to modernize. Proved to be a huge admirer of western technology, she went against the traditionalist's point of view on western craft's importation, then initiated the creation of the Chinese telegraph and the building of railways. She was also the one who decided to send Chinese students abroad to study in Europe. Another point in favour of Cixi's rehabilitation, was that during her retirement at the Summer Palace, she was aware of his nephew's edicts and reforms and did not oppose immediately. She even cautioned some of them like the suppression of the eight-legged essays, something she already tried to do during the self-strengthening movement²²⁷. The Empress deciding to go against her nephew and taking part in the Coup of September 1898 was mostly the doing of conservative conspirators, opposed to the reforms and judging the Empress as the legitimate ruler of the country. It was an imperial censor, Yang Chongyi, who contacted Cixi to alert her of the Emperor's behaviour against Chinese traditional values, his violent outburst and, most of all, the rumours of treason concerning him and his reformist advisors. K'ang Yu-wei, Yang stated, was plotting to destroy the Qing dynasty from within with Guangxu's help, serving the interests of Japan, whose representative, Ito Hirobumi, had been received recently. He also associated K'ang with a figure of the revolutionary opposition, who play a decisive role in the next decade, the secretary of the anti-Qing Revive China Society, Sun Yat-sen, currently exiled in Japan. Deeply shocked by

²²⁷ BLACK, Kimberly, "The Empress Dowager's Role in the Reforms of 1898" in *Emory Endeavors in History Volume 5: The Age of Gunpowder - An Era of Technological, Tactical, Strategic, and Leadership Innovations*, 2013, pp. 188-189.

Yang's revelations, Cixi hastily returned to the Forbidden City, confronted her nephew and ordered K'ang Yu-wei's arrest and his execution with Liang Qichao, Chang Chih-tung and all the other radical leaders²²⁸. The reformers, and especially K'ang, were expecting such a move from the conservatives. During the 103 days of the reforms movement, the gap between his followers and the imperial gentry increased with the conservatives animosity and refusal to validate and applicate the reforms. This is why K'ang believed in the Emperor's eager to assert his authority and tried to pass a maximum of reforms as possible. The situation evolving to a breakpoint, both parties were ready for to take action. K'ang was the first to move his pawns, when he managed to invite Yuan Shikai, an officer of occidental formation, highly supportive of the reforms, and make the Emperor name him general and appointed him to fight bandits in the Henan Province. K'ang's true scheme was to bring a good number of elite troops near the Forbidden City to protect the Emperor, and himself. The rumours of K'ang's conspiracy with the foreigners reached a critical point when seven British warships approached the bay near Peking after a visit of Timothy Richard, a British missionary, favourable to a Chinese constitutional monarchy²²⁹. The conservative versus the radical reformists was then clearly not a contentious about their ideological disagreement anymore, but rather which group would ensure its grasp over the imperial power. Both parties had their own idea of how should the country's future should be shape. From a complete reshape of its traditional customs and way of thinking, some even theorising a Chinese revolution, to the conservation of Confucian scholar traditions, fearing that their disappearance would menace the social peace. Behind the Guangxu and Cixi's different leaderships lied elaborated political plots. An inner conflict which was won by the conservatives, with the help of Yuan Shikai, who revealed a plan to assassinate

²²⁸ LUKE S. K. Kwong. "Chinese Politics at the Crossroads: Reflections on the Hundred Days Reform of 1898." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2000, pp. 675. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/313144.

²²⁹ WONG, Young-Tsu. Revisionism Reconsidered: Kang Youwei and the Reform Movement of 1898. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1992, pp. 534-535. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2057948. (Last access: 04/08/2020).

some of the Empress dowager's sympathizers and circumvent Cixi from the throne. The radical's plot revealed, the Empress dowager ordered K'ang and all his associates to be captured, the first managed to take refuge at the British consulate in Shanghai and flee the country. Liang Qichao and other reformists fled to Japan and six sympathizers were arrested and promptly executed. However, if the radicals had been stopped, the Hundred-Days reform ended in blood and the Emperor was directly involved in the plot. Cixi tried to make Guangxu abdicate and avoid a scandal for the Qing, but the Emperor was finally set in house arrest in the Forbidden City's palace. A theory for the Emperor finally not being deposed for his association in the anti-Empress plot, uses the fact that the six reformists were executed without judgement, probably to avoid any official mention of Guangxu's implication²³⁰. With the end of the Hundred-Days reform movement and its supporters dispersed or exiled in foreign countries, the Empress and the conservatives took control of China. However, K'ang's movement's influence on the Chinese society remained an example of a possible society's reformation. His ideas survived with his followers and the apparent success of his reforms shown the flaws within the Chinese administration and gentry, unwilling to abandon their privileges. China's dependence on Occidental teachings for reformation was also raised and countered by the strong anti-imperialism and xenophobic thoughts of the elite. The involvement of Great-Britain and Japan in the K'ang's actions and possibly in the plot against Cixi definitely justified the strong anti-foreign policies the conservatives were craving for. With the return of the Empress dowager as the official ruler of China, the Emperor conserving some of his privileges as a consultant imprisoned in his own palace, relationships with the Occident and Japan would quickly deteriorate to a critical level. However, as it was stated before, the Empress was not hostile to reforms and understood the need for China to modernize or rise a sufficient force to fight back foreign threats. The means Cixi would decide to employ in this regard would officially mark

²³⁰ *Ibid*, pp.538-539.

the end of K'ang and Guangxu's effort to create cooperative if not friendly relationship with the Occident and the Meiji Emperor. Another ideology started to rise within both sides of the Chinese political spectrum. Alimented by China's defeats against his foes and the import of occidental theories like social Darwinism, Chinese nationalism began to be theorise and started to seduce famous scholars.

b. Chinese nationalism, the Boxer uprising and the seeds of revolution.

The general state in which the Empress dowager found China when she retook the power after the coup represented all the previous tries for modernization's failures. Certainly, Chinese economy had grown, institutions were on their way to be reshaped and modernized and the industry was growing. However, the same problem remained since the first Opium War, a problem that the Hundred-Days reform movement, the past self-strengthening movement and the Treaty Ports exacerbated during decades. This issue was the foreign overwhelming presence in the country. The last agreements with the German Empire and Japan left China under the almost complete mercy of foreign countries. The dissensions between the conservatives and the reformists also pointed out this fact, since the first were more in favour of keeping strong relations with Russia, when the former chose to rely on the leading figure of modernization in Europe and East Asia : Great Britain and Japan. The conservatives choice to strengthen China's relations with Russia is understandable, since the two country had a longer story of relationship. But it represented also the already mentioned conflict against choosing terrestrial or coastal defence. Should China protect its inner land frontiers like it always did in the past, and because its enemies always have been more likely to come from here, plus, this idea was following the traditional teachings, deeply anchored in the past. The conservatives, with Empress Cixi, managed to abort the institutional reforms initiated by K'ang and Emperor Guangxu, rehabilitating the former administration, renouncing to the idea of a constitutional monarchy,

but, on Cixi's command, keep the universities and provincial schools built during the Hundred-Days reform. Because despite the believes of traditional thinkings, K'ang Yu-wei was certainly right about one thing, China desperately needed to protect itself from all its imperialist enemies she tried to cope with and repel for too much time. The Qing dynasty was on the brink of collapsing and the government had to find a way to prevent such tragedy, since its enemies were now more than ever and, according to the conservatives, plotted with the reformists to dethrone the dynasty. If their opinion was widely caricatural, they were not completely wrong since the occidental powers' oppositions were reflecting the Chinese duality. Opinions on the survival of the Qing dynasty was now more a question of optimized profits than international stability among European countries, the United-States and Russia. The one fear the occidental market had was that China could eventually close its exchanges with them. An eventuality that became dangerously possible after the Empress coup. For Great-Britain especially, the from the integrity of China depended their commercial and political agreements. Therefore, since Emperor Guangxu was not leading the country anymore and the western sympathizers reformists were hunted down and executed, the "open door" policy initiated by the second Opium War was endangered. Of course each countries were more eager to protect their own agreements with China and extend their commercial influence in the coastal provinces. The case of Great Britain proposing an agreement with Germany and the United-States, under the initiative of the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury. Salisbury was himself following the Secretary of State for colonies' plan, which was to prevent any Russian advances in the northern coastal provinces in Manchuria, since Russia made very clear with the building of Port Arthur in 1897 that they had military and economic interests in the Liaotung Peninsula, which they planned to annex²³¹. The Port Arthur incident was an answer from Russia to Chinese fears about German expansionism in the northern provinces. China called Russia for military help but the

²³¹ JOSEPH, Philip, *Foreign Diplomacy in China, 1894-1900*, London, 1928, Routledge Library, 1st Edition, pp. 222-225, 2018.

Tsar's troops remained and occupied the whole peninsula, beginning the construction of a railway. Both Germany and Great Britain were strongly against Russia's expansionism in a region so close to Beijing, more than that, from Port Arthur, the Russian army had a direct access to the bay. The problem with Salisbury's projects of alliance with Germany, was that the Kaiser had no interests in the safeguard of the "open door" policy in China, where any actor could trade anywhere in the Treaty Ports. Germany counted on its Chinese properties in the Shandong Province to assert its colonial presence in East Asia²³². Foreigners were then in conflict of interest since no one wanted to be trading with China on an equal level with their rivals on the East Asian market. To add to the general discord, Japan becoming an important actor of the East Asian race for territorial control soon created conflicts with Russia, since Japanese visions on Korea were threatened by Russian occupation of northern East Asia. It appears that the Chinese diplomatic strategy of coping with the barbarians to play them off against each other was finally successful. Unfortunately, it was too successful and now, both Western and Eastern powers were arguing to know who should have the biggest piece of China. Xenophobic thoughts then escalated to another level among the Chinese gentry and within the population in answer to the strong feeling of China being humiliated by foreign powers. Such feeling brought life to two sort of Chinese nationalism in the elite. The first was the official, the one from the conservatives and the Empress dowager, oriented against the occidental barbarians who threatened China's righteous supremacy over the Asian world. The traditional opposition which was at the base of the Chinese Empire's unification, something that Lin, Wu and Tang described as a "*proto-nationalism*"²³³. This form did not theorised China as a nation, but as a cultural and territorial entity seen as the epitome of civilisation, placing the fight against barbaric threats from the outside his first enemy. With the country now surrounded by enemies,

²³² Ibid, pp.334-335.

²³³ LIN, Feng-Tsan, et al. "China: Ancien Régime, Revolution and After." *The SAGE Handbook of Political Sociology: Two Volume Set*. William Outhwaite and Stephen Turner. Vol. 2. 55 City Road: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2018. p.1134. *SAGE Knowledge*.

this “*proto-nationalism*” was stronger than ever among the traditional scholars. The military and technological progresses of the last decades also alimeted the urgent feeling to oppose the imperialist foreigners. For that, the Qing dynasty needed a new type of state police. The provincial militia system having proven its incapacity to respond to menaces efficiently and the modern police idea initiated by the Hundred-Days reform being abandoned, it was not surprising that the Empress dowager choice to defend China would rely on the Righteous and Harmonious Fists society (*I-ho ch'üan*), also named Boxers by the foreigners for their practice of martial arts. Like most of the secret societies in China, the Boxers were originally against the Qing dynasty, the anti-foreign spirit had always been there in their ideology, the Boxers being considered as Chinese nativists. This nativism was drove against the Manchus and any none Han population in a first time, their grudge went exclusively against the occidentals and the Chinese imperial figures who help them settled in China. To understand why this seditious movement evolved in such a way, many factors need to be considered, the first one being religious conflicts. Indeed, considering that the first Europeans to enter in the country and exchange with the population were the missionaries and, according to the Tientsin Treaties, they were granted the right to wander in the inner territory to preach their religion, the first threat to ancestral traditions manifested through them. The Boxers agreed that Christianity was a plot from the foreigners to corrupt the Chinese traditions and caused social conflicts. It is true that the Chinese converted to Christianity were often protected by the missionaries, causing a feeling of deep inequality from the Hans, like it was shown previously in the case of the Hakka population. Thus, for the Boxers, any type of foreign culture and philosophy was considered as a danger for the Confucian traditions. China also knew a hard period for farmers and peasants, with massive floods of the Yellow River which destroyed villages and fields, provoking large scale famines. The popular accusation for this phenomenon went against the new western technologies of railways and mining. In other words, for the Boxers, the occidentals and the

reformists under Guangxu were destroying the country and its ancestral values²³⁴. A vital information to understand why the Boxers were so much opposed to the occidentals can be explained in the Province they were from. Concentrated in Shandong, an already poor Province with few landowners and highly dependent of the commerce on the Yellow River, its floods and the trading monopole of the occidental companies put the population in poverty. The German concession on the Province sparked off violent actions from the population joining the Boxer movement. Those actions took the form of western infrastructures sabotage and assassinations of foreign missionaries and Chinese converts following 1897²³⁵. During the following years and after the 1898 coup, the Boxers' actions against any kind of western representation or culture became increasingly violent as their fame grew up in northern China. The interest and legitimacy of the movement was discussed in Peking. A large group of scholars were sharing the popular hatred for occidentals and view the Boxers as a true force of opposition to foreign imperialism and considered using them to oppose the barbarians. In 1900, when the Boxer movement was regularly conducting terrorist attacks on railways, telegraphs and killing foreigners, the Empress, with the suggestion of her conservative advisors, proclaimed that the movement had to be tolerated by the provinces' governors-general. The situation became out of control during summer 1900, when the Boxers reached Beijing and launched an attack on the British, Japanese and German legations, killing the Japanese chancellor and the German ambassador, turning the capital into a slaughterhouse. Groups of Boxers were roaming the city, murdering foreigners and their Chinese allies, burning buildings and fanatically destroying any foreign artefact²³⁶. The worst, for the remaining foreigners barracked in the city, was that they had the confirmation of the Chinese government implication in the massacre. Indeed, the 21st

²³⁴ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. IV, pp. 388-390, 2000

²³⁵ ROWE, William T., *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China, Cambridge and London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, Part. 9, pp.243-244, 2009

²³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 244-245.

of June, the Empress dowager issued an edict to officially declare war to the imperialist powers, transforming the Boxers into an official military force under the command of imperial officers²³⁷. The situation was irremediably chaotic, as foreigners were trying to flee the city or call for help from their respective countries, now aware of the extent of the situation. Cixi was let down by governors-general who refused to capture and surrender foreigners to the Boxers, they explicitly ignored Peking's memorials and eventually even offer shelter to foreign refugees²³⁸. The foreign response to this event was as quick and violent than it was organized. Under the initiative of the United-States and Japanese's representatives, almost all the great powers of the era formed a coalition against China, the first of its kind in the modern era²³⁹. By initiating the conflict, China managed to bring all its enemies together to cooper against the Boxer Uprising. The military answer counted several warships with 18000 Japanese, American, British, French, Russian, German and Italian soldiers on board, ready to liberate Peking from the Empress dowager's evil grasp save China's political integrity, with everyone's commercial and territorial interests in the process. The shared believes after the uprising were that the foreign response to the war declaration was essentially to save China, guarantee its inner and international peace, also save the open door policy which included friendly exchanges with the Middle Kingdom and the equality of trade for every international actors. This statement was proclaimed by American Secretary of State John Milton Hay, known for having arbitrated the open door negotiations with other western countries²⁴⁰. It was made clear that the Empress dowager and her conservative administration had to be put down and the Emperor rehabilitated.

²³⁷ HSÜ, Immanuel C.Y., *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Sixth ed., Part. IV, p. 395, 2000

²³⁸ "Three Prime Causes of the Boxer Uprising." in *The Advocate of Peace (1894-1920)*, vol. 63, no. 5, 1901, pp. 103-104. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25751769. Accessed 5 Aug. 2020.

²³⁹ OTSUKA, Umio. "COALITION COORDINATION DURING THE BOXER REBELLION: How Twenty-Seven «Councils of Senior Naval Commanders» Contributed to the Conduct of Operations" in *Naval War College Review*, vol. 71, no. 4, 2018, pp. 111-112. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26607092. Accessed 5 Aug. 2020.

²⁴⁰ O'DARE, David D. "THE OPEN DOOR: Its History and Conflict with Spheres of Interest" in the *Advocate of Peace through Justice*, vol. 84, no. 7, 1922, p. 263. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20660053. Accessed 6 Aug. 2020.

Guangxu's sequestration and the 1898's coup already dropped mistrust among the occidental nations about the Empress, but now China and the West entered in war again. A short war yet, because the Boxer army, improperly equipped to oppose a regular army, war torn apart by the coalition's troops which marched on Tientsin and proceeded to the capital. Besieged and outmatched, the Imperial forces could not count on the Boxers' help and were defeated. Cixi and the government then fled the city, leaving a handful of representatives to negotiate peace, like it has been done for the second Opium War. The dissident governors-general choice not to follow the Empress' orders at least saved the Centre and the South of China from the occidental army, comforting the foreign powers that the issue came from Beijing and the Empress. The following agreement was signed in September 1901, known as the Boxer Protocol, stated the leader of the Boxers and their most important allies in the government's administration to be executed or to commit suicide, public memorials to the Chinese and foreign victims of the movement and a consequent financial compensation²⁴¹. In total, fourteen nations asked for war indemnities, putting the country's finances to its knees, the Boxer Indemnities final cost being evaluated to 67,5 million pounds. To be sure that China could pay its debt under the forty years stated by the agreements, the Board of Customs and the Tsungli Yamen were placed under total foreign control. The Chinese imports, taxes revenues and almost all its economy, relied on foreign management²⁴². To prevent any further violence outbursts, foreign troops would station in the North, near the capital, as a protection for their compatriots and Chinese sympathizers but also as a dissuasive force, the most present being the Japanese army, practically occupying Manchuria. With this umpteenth defeat, the Chinese gentry and the Empress dowager came to finally understand how much China needed a vast and efficient modernization movement.

²⁴¹ ROWE, William T., *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China, Cambridge and London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, Part. 9, pp.243-244, 2009

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 245.

²⁴² GOETZMANN, William N., UKHOV, Andrey and ZHU, Ning, "China and the World Financial Markets 1870-1930: Modern Lessons from Historical Globalization" (English Version) in *Yale ICF Working Paper*, No. 00-62, 16/10/2001, p.11. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=289139>

Former member of the Hundred-Days movement were recalled to conduct reform plans even greater than the previous initiated by K'ang Yu-wei. Chang Chih-tung was appointed in 1902 to draft a new education system. Under his direction, new schools and pedagogies were created, the former school program were re-examined, modified and counted more modern studies. Chang modified the scholar approach on China, he was convinced that future intellectuals had to be educated with the objective to elevate their country at the rank of a great international power. In 1905, to be coherent with this new educational system, the Emperor actively acted for the abolishment of the imperial examinations and his indications were followed the same year²⁴³. Later in 1907, the Empress dowager started the premises of reforms towards the women's liberation by publishing an edict saying that women's education was now compulsory in the country and managed the creation of several girl schools in the country. The formation of female teachers began in 1905 when the first female students of the Qing dynasty were sent to Japan and the United-States²⁴⁴. With the complete re-shape of its education, China entered in a new, and more modern phase of nationalism. Deeply influenced by Liang Qichao's work on defining the Chinese identity as a nation. Liang Qichao based the major part of his reformist ideas on social Darwinism. According to this theory, only the powerful nations, quick enough to adapt in the modern competition between international powers, can survive without being destroyed or annexed by stronger ones. In Liang's opinion, the occidental nations succeeded through imperialism because they believed in a strong nationalism that could bound the people together and carry them on the way to progress. However, to achieve such a thing in China, Liang stated that they needed to "renew the people" like it was written in the *Great Learning*,

²⁴³ BAI, Limin. "Education and Nationalism in Late Imperial China." *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood Studies*. Ed. Daniel Thomas Cook. Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks,: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2020. p.707. *SAGE Knowledge*.

²⁴⁴ CHANG, Jung, *L'impératrice Cixi: La concubine qui fit entrer la Chine dans la modernité*, JC Lattès, Chap. 6, p. 373, 2015.

one of the great Confucian classics²⁴⁵. Liang Qichao was deeply convinced that China had to evolve into a nation-state after his discover of occidental authors work on the question during his exile in Japan. There, he studied the work of the Swiss jurist and politician Johan Caspar Bluntschli and was interested in his book *German Political Science for the Educated Public*, translated in Japanese. From Bluntschli's work, Liang published his theory on nationalism, which he differentiated in two parts, the "greater nationalism" and the "lesser nationalism". The first was referencing all the groups or ethnicities present within the Chinese Empire borders in comparison of all the others outside, and the last referred to the specific Han population, considered as the «proper» Chinese. He thus concluded two things. The first was that "greater nationalism" signified that all the people under the Chinese nation, defined as a political and territorial entity, were part of it. The second was that only the Hans represented the Chinese nation despite all the other populations living within its borders. Liang Qichao's choice went to the "greater nationalism" which fitted better, according to him, what really China represented. He justified the fact that all those different ethnicities were part of the Chinese nation because of its "assimilative power". For him, the Han ethnicity was part of the superior one, made to assimilate the weakest around her and form a nation-state²⁴⁶. But if he identified the Chinese nation, he still had to identifies his citizens. Again, he based his observation on the occidental world and compared it to his. In his nationalist vision of China explained in *Explicating the meaning of New Citizens*, citizens were defined as sharing "common race, common language, common religion and common customs"²⁴⁷, a vision of the nation that looks a lot like the nineteenth century German definition. For Liang, this similarity served to maintain peace

²⁴⁵ LEE, Theresa Man Ling. "LIANG QICHAO AND THE MEANING OF CITIZENSHIP: THEN AND NOW." *History of Political Thought*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2007, p. 311. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26222453. Accessed 7 Aug. 2020.

²⁴⁶ SCHNEIDER, Julia C. "Missionizing, Civilizing, and Nationizing: Linked Concepts of Compelled Change." *Religion and Nationalism in Chinese Societies*, edited by Cheng-tian Kuo, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2017, pp. 91-95. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1zkjzkd.7.

²⁴⁷ LIANG, "Explicating the meaning of New Citizen" in *Ximmin shuo*, pp. 5-6.

between the citizens and the national-state while it also represented the idea of right. Still taking ideas from the German school, Liang cited Rodolf von Jhering to expose his opinion on the Chinese right. For him, the right originates from the desire of the individuals to be stronger than the others. However, he also stated that an individual who has a right and knows what it is, will also be aware of his obligations regarding the other citizens and the nation, something that Chinese people did not have. According to Liang, occidentals would willingly pay taxes or enrol in the army in exchange of counterparts : rights and freedom, the Chinese at the contrary, would reject such obligations. This shows again that Liang Qichao did not completely understood the liberal concept of inalienable right. From the classic liberal point of view, rights are not a counterpart for obligations towards the nation, but are art of the essential freedom of each individuals. Something intriguing since he was in favour of basic liberal principles like equality and abolition of privileges, freedom of cult, freedom of work (against slavery) or self-determination²⁴⁸. Liang's theories on nationalism based on his interpretation of liberal occidental thinkers deeply influenced the newly reformed scholar world in China. To survive and prosper, the country needed to be unified under a patriotic impulse and the people's education to modern institutions like individual rights and freedom. Surprisingly, it was the Empress dowager who was the first to elevate the mentalities and somehow work to unify the ethnicities in China. One of her first edict in 1902, when she came back to Peking, was to abolish the interdiction for the Hans and the Manchu to marry and socialize with each other. By putting an end to the segregation between the two, Cixi began to destroyed one of the most traditional social barrier of her dynasty but shown that the project of a united China may be possible²⁴⁹. The political reforms towards this benefited from an unexpected momentum when, in 1905, the Japanese army defeated Russia. The conflict was almost entirely conducted

²⁴⁸ LEE, Theresa Man Ling. "LIANG QICHAO AND THE MEANING OF CITIZENSHIP: THEN AND NOW." *History of Political Thought*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2007, pp.313-314. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26222453.

²⁴⁹ CHANG, Jung, *L'impératrice Cixi: La concubine qui fit entrer la Chine dans la modernité*, JC Lattès, Chap. 6, p. 371, 2015.

on Chinese territory and, for the first time with the Treaty of Portsmouth, a none-occidental nation defeated a western power. This event had a tremendous impact on the whole world of international relations, but it worked as an epiphany for the Empress dowager who now saw constitutional reforms as a mean, first to strengthen her country against foreign attacks on the diplomatic field, secondly like the pillar the dying Qing dynasty needed to oppose the anti-Manchu movement which advocated the need of a revolution and the overthrow of the imperial rulers for China to prosper²⁵⁰. A project of constitutional reform was then announced in 1906 and launched in 1908 for a trying period of nine years. Unfortunately for the reform, the large majority of Manchus in the Beijing consultative assembly caused the outputs of the subjects debated being highly unbalanced. Once again, the gentry became a brake for the reforms and the project aborted. After the Boxer uprising, the Qing legitimacy was at its lowest. Revolutionary movements became more and more popular among the governors-general and the new scholars, believing that modernization reforms could only be achieved by getting rid of the Manchu elite and founding a Republic based on a democratic regime. With the death of Cixi and the Emperor a day later in November 1908, the power shifted in the hands of the Manchu Princes. Prince Chun took care of the very young Emperor Puyi's regency and continued to sustain the reform towards a constitutional monarchy. However, when his proposal for a new cabinet was published in May 1911, the Manchu were still in high majority and shown that the imperial court wanted to keep control of the executive power²⁵¹. Another scandal occurred in the very same month, when the regent proclaimed another edict concerning the country's railways nationalisation. But if they were nationalists, why then being against such a project ? The problem here was that all the Chinese railways were under foreign control because of the Boxer Indemnities. Private Chinese investors and entrepreneurs then decided to build

²⁵⁰ YANG, D., The making of the modern state and quest for modernity. In W. Wu & M. W. Frazier *The sage handbook of contemporary china*, Vol. 2, p. 9, 2018, London: SAGE Publications.

²⁵¹ YANG, D., "The making of the modern state and quest for modernity". In W. Wu & M. W. Frazier *The sage handbook of contemporary china*, Vol. 2, p.9, 2018, London: SAGE Publications

their own railways in the Centre and the South, to concurrence the foreign monopole, very powerful in the North. Unfortunately, the imperial government contracted debts with European countries and Japan to finance its reform policies and modernization. Foreign powers already took control of the national railways a decade before, now the private actors saw that their railways' nationalization was a mean for the government to later cede them to the foreigners²⁵². Infuriated by the Qing's unwillingness to finalise China's transition to modernity, the revolutionaries and the reformists decided to merge and a military rebellion took place in Wuchang six month later the 11th of October. The military took control of the city, then Wuhan and Hanyang. A civil war broke out between the Imperial government and the revolutionaries based in central China. The revolutionaries were believing in another, yet quiet similar nationalism than reformist thinkers like Liang Qichao. For them, the Qing dynasty was incompatible with the very principle of modernization. To progress, China had to abandon its imperial roots and entirely adopt the occidental way of thinking and culture. However, it was not the first time the revolutionaries tried to overthrow the government, they already tried eleven times and the ten first all failed. The eleventh coup did not succeed because of a better preparation or even thanks to the help of several figure of the revolutionary movement like Sun Yat-sen, but rather thanks to the point of no return the Chinese government was. With no real authority figure at the head of the country and with the sudden declaration of independence of almost all the Provinces, it was easy for a the revolutionaries, organised, with powerful leader figures, popular fame and a clear political programme, to take action²⁵³. Another precious help the revolutionaries had was the support of the expatriated Chinese in foreign countries. Especially in America, this Chinese investors diaspora played a crucial role a financial support for the revolutionary movement. Previously rejected and rejecting the imperial obstruction to private entrepreneurs, the conservative posture the government took during the Boxer uprising

²⁵² CHESNEAU, Jean, *Sun Yat-sen*, ed. Complexe, Chap. 5, p. 112, 1982.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 109.

caused them to side with the rising revolutionaries. More than that, sustain the Revolution could also grant them a political backing from the new government in China, since their plans for an economic reform based on a capital growth through competition and State supported entrepreneurship, could be highly beneficial²⁵⁴. Led in the movement by the former military officer Li Yuan-hung and Sun Yat-sen, who came back in China from the United-States, where he was in exile, the revolutionaries dethroned the Qing, ending two millennia of imperial traditions and elected Sun President of the first Republic of China²⁵⁵. Initially, the Republic's government was based in Nanking, and if the foreign powers saw this revolution from a very unpleasant perspective, their opinion quickly changed. At first, the overthrow of the Qing dynasty seemed like a second Taiping Rebellion, and signified political and economic chaos. Indeed, with the country split in two, nor the Imperial loyalists, nor the new Republic could manage to pay the loans for the whole country. Secondly, to who the foreign diplomats should now address ? Those question found their answer in the Qing government's yielding, and the adoption of a Republican regime for China with Sun Yat-sen transmitting his presidential post to general Yuan Shikai in 1912. The man who largely contributed to the end of the Hundred-Days reform and skilfully became a figure of leadership and consensus among the revolutionaries and the loyalists, represented by the provisory National Assembly in Peking. Yuan's nomination as head of State was also a relief for the occidentals, who saw in him the return to political order and consistency in China²⁵⁶. The Emperor's abdication followed, with the right for the imperial family to stay in the Forbidden City. Regarding their occidental references in the matter, the Chinese Revolution of 1911 was a rather peaceful one. The western liberal democratic model followed by Sun Yat-sen could finally be applied to China with the

²⁵⁴ ARRIGHI, Giovanni, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the twenty-first century*, ed. Verso, Part. IV, pp. 348-349, 2007.

²⁵⁵ CARTIER, Michel, *La Chine et l'Occident : cinq siècles d'Histoire*, ed. Odile Jacob, p.111, 2015

²⁵⁶ REID, Gilbert. "Autocracies and Revolutions in China" in *The Journal of International Relations*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1919, pp.199-200, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29738346. Accessed 8 Aug. 2020.

promulgation of a provisory Constitution on March 11 in 1912. This Constitution had a lot in common with the one of the United-States. In it were promulgated civil rights and liberties, the legislative power was transferred to a provisory Senate during the time which a Parliament should be elected and the executive power would lie in the President's hands who could name public and military officials²⁵⁷. The first Chinese Constitution can be seen as the concretisation of the Chinese liberal thinkers' work to drive China towards modernity, its first articles being that "The Republic of China is composed of the Chinese People" and "The sovereignty of the Chinese Republic is vested in the people."²⁵⁸. It drafted the first official definition of the Chinese citizenship, civil rights and was a clear cut with the traditional and conservative past of China, so abhorred by the reformists and the revolutionaries. In the same time as the Constitution, Sun Yat-sen created the first Chinese party, the Kuomintang or the Chinese Nationalist Party, an evocative name regarding the new government's path. China yet needed to unify itself as a democratic nation-state.

²⁵⁷ CHESNEAU, Jean, *Sun Yat-sen*, ed. Complexe, Chap. 5, p. 127, 1982.

²⁵⁸ "The Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China." in *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 149, 1912. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2212590. Accessed 8 Aug. 2020.

Conclusion :

Among the many sub-subjects gravitating around the introduction of the liberal and liberalist theories in China during the late Qing period, the most important is certainly the political context in which the dynasty was during the nineteenth century. Relying on a strong protectionist international policy, China found itself surrounded by other nations reinforced by the Industrial Revolution. This period in Occident brought new ideas, new policies, new economic principles. China was soon the centre of a race for economic growth among the European powers and refused to develop as the occidentals did. This opposition between the liberal imperialist powers of the Occident and the Confucian tradition of thousand years old Empire characterised the cultural clash that occurred during the European colonisation of Asia. The two Opium Wars were the perfect example of it, with the occidental countries willing to trade more freely with China which was the first marketplace of the nineteen century, relying on the opium trade to exchange with a country that needed nothing from them except silver. In the conflict that occurred to match the occidental commercial demands, China was dramatically outmatched and chose to cope with the one they qualified as barbarians. However, it has been shown in this work that the common opinion, stating that the awakening of China to modernization and westernisation was the result of the sole occidental presence and influence in China, is far from being true. China did not wait for the Occident to see reformist thinkers and figures emerge from its intelligentsia. When the Opium Wars broke out and put China under the grasp of foreign economic interests, the Qing dynasty was already decaying, gangrened by an institutional corruption amputating the country's finances. The lower classes were experiencing misery, unemployment and natural catastrophes, building up a strong base for the further rebellions and swelling the ranks of the large network of secret societies. China needed reforms, and the occidentals brought the ideological tools that would be used by the Chinese reformists and revolutionaries. The first example of such use of the western knowledge is

Commissioner Lin Zexu's use of the European International Law to context the treatment inflicted to China. The occurrence of scholars like Mozi or the movement of the modern texts followed by K'ang Yu-wei in China also prove that, even if the Occident did not have indirectly introduce the liberal and liberalist theories in China, such reformists thoughts would have emerged anyway. The Occident did not forced the Chinese liberal thinkers to embrace their theories, those thinkers used what they knew and interpreted from the liberal literature. The influence of Confucianism and the bridge that Chinese thinkers like Liang Qichao, K'ang Yu-wei, or Yan Fu in his translation and adaptations of occidental books, built between liberalism and the Chinese traditional concept of self-cultivation perfectly illustrated that. If the liberal ideas sustained the modernisation program in the last years of imperial China, it was by necessity. K'ang's efforts to sustain the Emperor with the foundation of a constitutional monarchy, Yan Fu's re-interpretation of liberty and Liang Qichao's theorisation of the Chinese nationalism all expressed the urge for their country to change, to adapt to this new world and finally stand in front of the foreign powers that defeated and occupied China. There is a close link between social Darwinism theories' success among both the reformists and the conservatives at the end of the century. China, to avoid extinction, had to become a great power, forge its identity as a nation and develop its economy and found a new legitimate government. The fact that the Chinese interpretation of liberal and liberalist theories does not give the same importance to individualism and were still attached to economic and political interventionism from the State on the market does not make them "false" liberals or signified they did not understood what classical liberalism was. China's past humiliation and decay, coupled with an easier access to foreign knowledge, gave them opportunity to interpret their country's situation through the prism of occidental works on the question, John Stuart Mill, the German school's nationalism or Japanese influence. From Howqua's private investments in the American railways during the Canton system, the Chinese entrepreneurs emigrating abroad, the

humiliation of the Unequal Treaties, the Taiping Rebellion forcing the government to modernize its arsenal and military, to the Hundred Days reforms and the draft of the provisory Constitution of 1912, China adapted and assimilated the western liberal theories into its own culture. The introduction of liberal theories in China and the creation of Chinese liberalism paved the way for a deep mutation of the Chinese society.

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