



China Resists Outside Influence

MAIN IDEA

CULTURAL INTERACTION

Western economic pressure forced China to open to foreign trade and influence.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

China has become an increasingly important member of the global community.

TERMS & NAMES

- Opium War
- extraterritorial rights
- Taiping Rebellion
- sphere of influence
- Open Door Policy
- Boxer Rebellion

SETTING THE STAGE Out of pride in their ancient culture, the Chinese looked down on all foreigners. In 1793, however, the Qing emperor agreed to receive an ambassador from England. The Englishman brought gifts of the West’s most advanced technology—clocks, globes, musical instruments, and even a hot-air balloon. The emperor was not impressed. In a letter to England’s King George III, he stated that the Chinese already had everything they needed. They were not interested in the “strange objects” and gadgets that the West was offering them.

China and the West

China was able to reject these offers from the West because it was largely self-sufficient. The basis of this self-sufficiency was China’s healthy agricultural economy. During the 11th century, China had acquired a quick-growing strain of rice from Southeast Asia. By the time of the Qing Dynasty, the rice was being grown throughout the southern part of the country. Around the same time, the 17th and 18th centuries, Spanish and Portuguese traders brought maize, sweet potatoes, and peanuts from the Americas. These crops helped China increase the productivity of its land and more effectively feed its huge population.

China also had extensive mining and manufacturing industries. Rich salt, tin, silver, and iron mines produced great quantities of ore. The mines provided work for tens of thousands of people. The Chinese also produced beautiful silks, high-quality cottons, and fine porcelain.

The Tea-Opium Connection Because of their self-sufficiency, the Chinese had little interest in trading with the West. For decades, the only place they would allow foreigners to do business was at the southern port of Guangzhou (gwahng•joh). And the balance of trade at Guangzhou was clearly in China’s favor. This means that China earned much more for its exports than it spent on imports.

European merchants were determined to find a product the Chinese would buy in large quantities. Eventually they found one—opium. Opium is a habit-forming narcotic made from the poppy plant. Chinese doctors had been using it to relieve pain for hundreds of years. In the late 18th century, however, British merchants smuggled opium into China for nonmedical use. It took a few decades for opium smoking to catch on, but by 1835, as many as 12 million Chinese people were addicted to the drug.

TAKING NOTES

Identifying Problems

Use a chart to identify the internal and external problems faced by China in the 1800s and early 1900s.

China's Problems	
Internal	External

War Breaks Out This growing supply of opium caused great problems for China. The Qing emperor was angry about the situation. In 1839, one of his highest advisers wrote a letter to England’s Queen Victoria about the problem:

PRIMARY SOURCE

By what right do they [British merchants] . . . use the poisonous drug to injure the Chinese people? . . . I have heard that the smoking of opium is very strictly forbidden by your country; that is because the harm caused by opium is clearly understood. Since it is not permitted to do harm to your own country, then even less should you let it be passed on to the harm of other countries.

LIN ZEXU, quoted in *China’s Response to the West*

The pleas went unanswered, and Britain refused to stop trading opium. The result was an open clash between the British and the Chinese—the **Opium War** of 1839. The battles took place mostly at sea. China’s outdated ships were no match for Britain’s steam-powered gunboats. As a result, the Chinese suffered a humiliating defeat. In 1842, they signed a peace treaty, the Treaty of Nanjing. **A**

This treaty gave Britain the island of Hong Kong. After signing another treaty in 1844, U.S. and other foreign citizens also gained **extraterritorial rights**. Under these rights, foreigners were not subject to Chinese law at Guangzhou and four other Chinese ports. Many Chinese greatly resented the foreigners and the bustling trade in opium they conducted.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Issues

A What conflicting British and Chinese positions led to the Opium War?

Growing Internal Problems

Foreigners were not the greatest of China’s problems in the mid-19th century, however. The country’s own population provided an overwhelming challenge. The number of Chinese grew to 430 million by 1850, a 30 percent gain in only 60 years. Yet, in the same period of time, food production barely increased. As a result, hunger was widespread, even in good years. Many people became discouraged, and opium addiction rose steadily. As their problems mounted, the Chinese began to rebel against the Qing Dynasty.

Connect to Today

Special Economic Zones

Today, as in the late 1800s, the Chinese government limits foreign economic activity to particular areas of the country. Most of these areas, called special economic zones (SEZs), are located on the coast and waterways of southeastern China. Established in the late 1970s, the SEZs are designed to attract, but also control, foreign investment.

One of the most successful SEZs is Shanghai (pictured at right). By the late 1990s, dozens of foreign companies—including IBM of the United States, Hitachi of Japan, Siemens of Germany, and Unilever of Great Britain—had invested about \$21 billion in the building and operating of factories, stores, and other businesses. This investment had a huge impact on the economy of Shanghai. Throughout the 1990s, it grew by more than 10 percent each year.



The Taiping Rebellion During the late 1830s, Hong Xiuquan (hung shee•oo•choo•ahn), a young man from Guangdong province in southern China, began recruiting followers to help him build a “Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace.” In this kingdom, all Chinese people would share China’s vast wealth and no one would live in poverty. Hong’s movement was called the **Taiping Rebellion**, from the Chinese word *taiping*, meaning “great peace.”

By the 1850s, Hong had organized a massive peasant army of some one million people. Over time, the Taiping army took control of large areas of southeastern China. Then, in 1853, Hong captured the city of Nanjing and declared it his capital. Hong soon withdrew from everyday life and left family members and his trusted lieutenants in charge of the government of his kingdom.

The leaders of the Taiping government, however, constantly feuded among themselves. Also, Qing imperial troops and British and French forces all launched attacks against the Taiping. By 1864, this combination of internal fighting and outside assaults had brought down the Taiping government. But China paid a terrible price. At least 20 million—and possibly twice that many—people died in the rebellion. **B**



▲ A Taiping force surrounds and destroys an enemy village.

MAIN IDEA

Recognizing Effects

B What were the results of the Taiping Rebellion?

Foreign Influence Grows

The Taiping Rebellion and several other smaller uprisings put tremendous internal pressure on the Chinese government. And, despite the Treaty of Nanjing, external pressure from foreign powers was increasing. At the Qing court, stormy debates raged about how best to deal with these issues. Some government leaders called for reforms patterned on Western ways. Others, however, clung to traditional ways and accepted change very reluctantly.

Resistance to Change During the last half of the 19th century, one person was in command at the Qing imperial palace. The Dowager Empress Cixi (tsoo•shee) held the reins of power in China from 1862 until 1908 with only one brief gap. Although she was committed to traditional values, the Dowager Empress did support certain reforms. In the 1860s, for example, she backed the self-strengthening movement. This program aimed to update China’s educational system, diplomatic service, and military. Under this program, China set up factories to manufacture steam-powered gunboats, rifles, and ammunition. The self-strengthening movement had mixed results, however.

Other Nations Step In Other countries were well aware of China’s continuing problems. Throughout the late 19th century, many foreign nations took advantage of the situation and attacked China. Treaty negotiations after each conflict gave these nations increasing control over China’s economy. Many of Europe’s major powers and Japan gained a strong foothold in China. This foothold, or **sphere of influence**, was an area in which the foreign nation controlled trade and investment. (See the map on page 808.)

The United States was a long-time trading partner with China. Americans worried that other nations would soon divide China into formal colonies and shut out American traders. To prevent this occurrence, in 1899 the United States declared

Vocabulary

A *dowager* is a widow who holds a title or property from her deceased husband.



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Human-Environment Interaction** Which countries had spheres of influence in China?
- Location** What foreign power shown on the map had access to inland China? What geographic feature made this possible?

the **Open Door Policy**. This proposed that China’s “doors” be open to merchants of all nations. Britain and the other European nations agreed. The policy thus protected both U.S. trading rights in China, and China’s freedom from colonization. But the country was still at the mercy of foreign powers.

An Upsurge in Chinese Nationalism

Humiliated by their loss of power, many Chinese pressed for strong reforms. Among those demanding change was China’s young emperor, Guangxu (gwahnng•shoo). In June 1898, Guangxu introduced measures to modernize China. These measures called for reorganizing China’s educational system, strengthening the economy, modernizing the military, and streamlining the government.

Most Qing officials saw these innovations as threats to their power. They reacted with alarm, calling the Dowager Empress back to the imperial court. On her return, she acted with great speed. She placed Guangxu under arrest and took control of the government. She then reversed his reforms. Guangxu’s efforts brought about no change whatsoever. The Chinese people’s frustration with their situation continued to grow.

The Boxer Rebellion This widespread frustration finally erupted into violence. Poor peasants and workers resented the special privileges granted to foreigners. They also resented Chinese Christians, who had adopted a foreign faith. To demonstrate their discontent, they formed a secret organization called the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists. They soon came to be known as the Boxers. Their campaign against the Dowager Empress’s rule and foreigner privilege was called the **Boxer Rebellion**.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Causes

C Why did the Boxer Rebellion fail?

In the spring of 1900, the Boxers descended on Beijing. Shouting “Death to the foreign devils,” the Boxers surrounded the European section of the city. They kept it under siege for several months. The Dowager Empress expressed support for the Boxers but did not back her words with military aid. In August, a multinational force of 19,000 troops marched on Beijing and quickly defeated the Boxers. **C**

Despite the failure of the Boxer Rebellion, a strong sense of nationalism had emerged in China. The Chinese people realized that their country must resist more foreign intervention. Even more important, they felt that the government must become responsive to their needs.

The Beginnings of Reform At this point, even the Qing court realized that China needed to make profound changes to survive. In 1905, the Dowager Empress sent a select group of Chinese officials on a world tour to study the operation of different governments. The group traveled to Japan, the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Italy. On their return in the spring of 1906, the officials recommended that China restructure its government. They based their suggestions on the constitutional monarchy of Japan. The empress accepted this recommendation and began making reforms. Although she convened a national assembly within a year, change was slow. In 1908, the court announced that it would establish a full constitutional government by 1917.

However, the turmoil in China did not end with these progressive steps. China experienced unrest for the next four decades as it continued to face internal and external threats. China’s neighbor Japan also faced pressure from the West during this time. But it responded to this influence in a much different way.



▲ A gang of Boxers attacks Chinese Christians.

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Opium War
- extraterritorial rights
- Taiping Rebellion
- sphere of influence
- Open Door Policy
- Boxer Rebellion

USING YOUR NOTES

2. Which created the most trouble for China, internal problems or external problems? Why?

Internal	External

MAIN IDEAS

3. Why did the Chinese have little interest in trading with the West?
4. What internal problems did China face prior to the Taiping Rebellion?
5. Why did Emperor Guangxu’s efforts at reform and modernization fail?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **ANALYZING MOTIVES** Why do you think European powers established spheres of influence in China rather than colonies, as they did in Africa and other parts of Asia?
7. **MAKING INFERENCES** What importance did spheres of influence have for China?
8. **COMPARING AND CONTRASTING** What were the similarities and differences between the Taiping Rebellion and the Boxer Rebellion?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **CULTURAL INTERACTION** Write a **dialogue** between two of Dowager Empress Cixi’s advisers—one arguing for continued isolation, the other for openness to foreign influence and trade.

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY INTERNET ACTIVITY

Use the Internet to find information on special economic zones in China. Use your findings to create an **annotated map** showing the location of these zones.

INTERNET KEYWORDS

special economic zones, SEZs