

II

FRAGMENTATION
AND REFORM

日中則是

CHINA'S CONFUCIAN-TRAINED scholars were aware of the moral and economic pressures on their society in the early nineteenth century. Drawing on the intellectual tradition in which they had been raised, they proposed administrative and educational reforms, warned about the rapidly rising population, and urged greater fairness in the distribution of wealth. Some also pointed to the social inequities separating men and women, and pleaded for greater sensitivity toward the status of women in daily life.

The spread of opium addiction posed a particularly complex social dilemma. Scholars, officials, and the emperor himself were torn over whether to legalize the drug or ban it absolutely. At the same time, massive British investments in the drug's manufacture and distribution, and the critical part that opium revenues played in Britain's international balance-of-payments strategy, made the opium trade a central facet of that nation's foreign policy. The Qing, believing the problem to be a domestic one, decided to ban the drug. The British responded with force of arms. Defeating the Qing, they imposed a treaty in 1842 that fundamentally altered the structure of Qing relations with foreign powers, and ended the long cycle of history in which China's rulers had imposed effective controls over all foreigners resident on their soil.

This new foreign presence in China coincided with—and doubtless contributed to—new waves of domestic turbulence. Uprisings against the Qing had been growing in frequency during the later eighteenth century. The widening social dislocations of the nineteenth century brought even greater unrest, until in mid-century four major rebellions erupted, at least two of which—the Taiping and Nian—had the potential to overthrow the dynasty. The Taiping was based on fundamentalist Christian and egalitarian principles that cut at the heart of Confucian and imperial values; the Nian introduced new patterns of mobile guerrilla warfare that threatened the prestige of the state's basic military

institutions. The other two rebellions, both led by Muslims, broke out in China's far southwest and northwest, and challenged the hold of the Qing over the non-Chinese peoples in its more inaccessible regions. Only an extraordinary series of military campaigns led by Confucian-trained scholars who put their loyalty to traditional Chinese values above all else, and were determined to perpetuate the prevailing social, educational, and family systems, enabled the Qing dynasty to survive.

The irony was that, in winning their great victories, Confucian statesmen were drawn to emulate and adopt certain elements of foreign military technology and international law that were ultimately to undermine the sanctity of the very values they endeavored to preserve. But initially such consequences could not be foreseen, and in the name of self-strengthening the Qing not only established new arsenals for arms manufacture and shipbuilding, they also set up schools to teach foreign languages, hired foreigners to collect customs dues on an equitable basis, tried to hire a small fleet of Western ships and seamen, and established the equivalent of a Foreign Ministry, the first such institution in China.

Relations between Chinese and foreigners remained strained, however. Antimissionary outbreaks in China were matched by anti-Chinese outrages in the United States, and the flow of Chinese immigrants was ultimately slashed back by a series of unilateral American restrictions. In both cases, misunderstandings of the other's culture and goals abounded, even though personal efforts made clear the possibilities for tenderness, compassion, and imaginative adaptation between the races.

By the late nineteenth century, despite the foreign pressures and domestic turbulence, it looked as if the Qing might construct a viable new synthesis. But the many achievements in the application of foreign technology to China's military and industrial needs were shattered by two defeats that the Chinese suffered in brief yet bitter wars—one with the French and one with the Japanese—that left much of China's vaunted "modern" navy at the bottom of the sea. When a burst of reforming zeal in 1898 was stillborn because of conservative opposition, the stage was set for the Boxer Uprising of 1900, in which a profound anti-Westernism led to widespread attacks on foreign missionaries and

their converts. The Boxers were suppressed by foreign force, but in their wake came the first signs of a growing anti-Manchu Chinese nationalism, expressed in newspaper articles and pamphlets, in economic boycotts, and in a flurry of insurrectionary activity aimed at undercutting the power of the Qing state from within.

The final attempt of the Qing to rally their dynastic forces was a potentially effective mix of political, military, and economic reform: there were experiments in constitutional government on Western models, efforts at rearming and reorganizing the army along Western lines, and a move to gain a stronger hold over China's economy by developing a centralized railway network. Yet the combination, instead of bringing stability, brought confrontations and new layers of misunderstanding. The constitutional assemblies established in each province provided a focus for criticisms of the Qing and for the emergence of local interests. The vision of a tough, modernized army under skilled Manchu direction could not but be threatening to Chinese nationalists dreaming of their own future independence from the Qing. And the government's attempts to centralize railways and use foreign loans to do so angered provincial investors and patriots alike. When these flames of dissent were skillfully fanned by radical leaders and their impatient followers, the Qing found its foundations seriously undermined.

Helpless in the face of a military mutiny that erupted in late 1911, the Manchus saw no choice by early 1912 but to abdicate their power and declare the Qing dynasty at an end. There remained a crucial vacuum at the center of the Chinese state and no specially talented leaders able to fill it, only various groupings with rival ideologies and claims. The legacy of dynastic collapse was not a confident new republic, but a period of civil war and intellectual disorder that, tragically for the Chinese people, was even harsher than the period that had followed the fall of the Ming 268 years before. Yet amid the confusion, the dreams for a strong China held out by statecraft thinkers, self-strengtheners, constitutional reformers, and revolutionaries were never wholly eclipsed. The constructive aspect of the last century of Qing rule was that the idea of China's greatness was not allowed to die.

The First Clash with the West

THE RESPONSE OF CHINA'S SCHOLARS



Even before the death of Emperor Qianlong in 1799, Confucian scholars were becoming aware of the severity of the problems confronting the dynasty, both domestic and foreign. From within the *kaozheng* tradition of evidential research new trends began to emerge. Several Chinese scholars began to plead with their fellows to pay more attention to current needs and administrative problems; others began to speculate boldly on China's future and to wonder if, in the Confucian tradition itself, elements encouraging change could not be found; yet others thought that the *kaozheng* school was growing sterile and formalistic, and they worked to develop a new political focus for their writings.

Still it remained dangerous for scholars even to hint at criticism of the ruling Qing. One scholar who learned this was Hong Liangji. A friend of many *kaozheng* scholars, a member of the *Four Treasures* compilation staff, and a tenacious examination taker who failed the top-level *jinsshi* exams four times before finally passing in 1790 at the age of forty-four, Hong spent three years as inspector of education in Guizhou province, which enabled him to add intimate knowledge of the distant southwest to his ongoing analysis of political factions in the capital. In a series of essays written in the 1790s, he discussed a number of problems facing China. One of these was unchecked population growth and the difficulties it would cause as it outraced China's productive capacity. Hong also addressed the growth of luxury in the cities, the spread of corruption in local government, and the problems attendant on the attempts to suppress the White Lotus and other rebels. These essays were not censored, but when, in 1799, Hong ventured

to criticize the policies of the just-deceased emperor Qianlong and his favorite Heshen, Hong was promptly sentenced to death on a charge of "extreme indecorum." Only the personal intervention of the new emperor Jiaqing (ruled 1799–1820)* commuted the sentence to exile in Ili, a barren settlement in China's far northwest.

As if conscious that Hong had true insights into the difficulties facing China, Emperor Jiaqing, who had been investigating the web of corruption surrounding Heshen and his clique, pardoned Hong altogether in 1800, and Hong returned to a life of scholarship and writing in Anhui. Hong died in 1809, but the kind of probing yet practical work for which he had become known was continued by many others. One of the best known was He Changling, who compiled a massive collection of documents on Qing statecraft. This was not just a theoretical work, but one that included the finest memorials of earlier and contemporary Qing administrators, and ranged widely over such fields as personnel evaluation, salaries, banditry, taxes, the *baojia* mutual security system, stipends for military bannermen, granaries and famine relief, salt monopolies, currency, folk religions, and flood control. The model for He's statecraft compendium was a collection produced in the late Ming by emulators of the Donglin Society activists. When the full edition of He's work appeared in 1827, many contemporaries read its descriptions with a real sense of urgency about a faltering dynasty.

He Changling was himself not just an exponent of statecraft thinking, but also an administrator of experience and insight. It is ironic that at just the same time that Hegel was discussing China's rejection of the sea, He Changling was trying to develop an elaborate plan to circumvent the decaying Grand Canal system by transporting government grain supplies from central and southern China to the north by sea. In 1826, on his advice, 4.5 million bushels of rice were shipped successfully in this way, on a fleet of over 1,500 junks. But He's plan was soon canceled, mainly in response to the vested interests of those who worked on the Grand Canal system. Had it been allowed to continue, the plan might have led to considerable growth of China's commercial ocean shipping.

Other scholars were seeking a theoretical justification for change. One of these was Gong Zizhen, born in 1792 to the family of a wealthy scholar-official in the beautiful Zhejiang city of Hangzhou. Initially Gong was in many ways a mainstream scholar of his time; he was involved in the training and scholarship needed for evidential research, and was drawn to the early commentaries and texts studied by advocates of the "Han Learning" school.

*Jiaqing technically began his reign in 1796 when his father abdicated; but, as we saw above, Qianlong did not relinquish power until he died in 1799.

But his critical feelings about Chinese society and government led him particularly to one set of documents, the Gongyang commentaries on the Confucian Classic *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. These commentaries were unlike most Chinese historical texts, which seemed to imply a cyclical view of history and thus to preclude any linear conception of "progress" in China, as European critics had pointed out. The Gongyang commentaries instead posited a genuine theory of historical development through a sequence of three ages: an age of chaos, an age of ascending peace, and a final period of universal peace.

Gong Zizhen was an emotionally complex and cantankerous man who in some ways echoed the behavior patterns of the early Qing "eccentrics": he paid no attention to dress or deportment, wrote wild calligraphy, confused with all social classes, gambled recklessly, and insulted his elders. Yet the range of his social commentary was even wider than Hong Liangji's had been. Not only did Gong attack official corruption, court rituals such as the kowtow, and the clichés of the state examination system, he also underlined the sense that China was currently in the lowest of the three epochs—the age of chaos—with his criticisms of the judicial system, the unequal distribution of wealth, foot-binding of women, opium smoking, and all trade with foreigners.

On the redistribution of wealth, Gong was eloquent. In some forgotten early period, he wrote, rulers and subjects had been like guests at a feast to which all have contributed and in which all share alike. But in the Shang and Zhou dynasties (some three thousand years ago), "it was as if people were sitting around a bowl of soup; the rulers filled a dish as their share, the ministers used a large spoon, the ordinary people a small one." Pursuing the metaphor, Gong pointed to the development of a Chinese society in which those with large and small spoons began to attack each other, while the ruler tried to appropriate the entire kettle. Not surprisingly, the kettle "often dried up or toppled over." Now the time had come once again to spoon things out fairly.

[For] when the wealthy vie with each other in splendor and display while the poor squeeze each other to death; when the poor do not enjoy a moment's rest while the rich are comfortable; when the poor lose more and more while the rich keep piling up treasures; when in some ever more extravagant desires awaken, and in others an ever more burning hatred; when some become more and more arrogant and overbearing in their conduct, and others ever more miserable and pitiful until gradually the most perverse and curious customs arise, bursting forth as though from a hundred springs and impossible to stop, all of this will finally congeal in an ominous vapor which will fill the space between heaven and earth with its darkness.¹

If scholars like Gong could move from an interest in evidential research via the study of the new texts to a blunt form of social criticism, others took a more indirect route. One of China's greatest satiric novels, *Flowers in the Mirror*, was written during the critical years between 1810 and 1820. Its author, Li Ruzhen, was a conventionally educated Confucian scholar from Peking whose first intellectual passion was for phonetics. But the crises of his times led Li to re-examine not only the world of philosophy and its relation to politics, but also the particularly sensitive question of the relationship between the sexes. In central sections of his novel, he presented a world in which all conventional gender roles were completely reversed. In a chapter entitled "Country of the Women," it is the man who must taste the life of humiliation, pain, and subjugation as he has his ears pierced with needles, endures the agony of binding his feet, and spends hours over his make-up to please his female lords. Although other Chinese writers had toyed with such ideas before, no one had pursued them as vigorously as Li, and surely few Qing men could have read of the travails of the merchant Lin without at least a shudder of sympathy for their pain-racked female contemporaries:

In due course, his feet lost much of their original shape. Blood and flesh were squeezed into a pulp and then little remained of his feet but dry bones and skin, shrunk, indeed, to a dainty size. Responding to daily anointing, his hair became shiny and smooth, and his body, after repeated ablutions of perfumed water, began to look very attractive indeed. His eyebrows were plucked to resemble a new moon. With blood-red lipstick, and powder adorning his face, and jade and pearl adorning his coiffure and ears, Merchant Lin assumed, at last, a not unappealing appearance.²

Li's sense of social dislocation must have been common among scholars living in Jiaqing's reign who found it difficult to pass the state examinations or to find a job. Despite the swelling numbers of educated men in early nineteenth-century China, the government still refused to increase examination quotas or enlarge the size of the bureaucracy. If these scholars had no private incomes, no interest in reform, no satiric power, and no great artistic talent, their lives took on a certain melancholy. One such man, Shen Fu, in a brief and poignant memoir written around 1807 when he was in his forties, gives a haunting picture of what it was like to be an educated Chinese without prospects at this time. Born in Suzhou in the middle of Qianlong's reign, Shen had drifted through a number of roles as part-time scholar, part-time merchant, part-time secretary. His memoirs, appropriately entitled *Six Records from a Floating Life*, show him wandering around

China in search of patrons, completely subordinate to his dictatorial father or the whims of various short-term employers.

Not that Shen's life was entirely somber. He saw something of the world on his business trips, even traveling as far south as Canton. He had a loving wife, his companion for twenty-three years until her death, with whom he shared aesthetic, sensual, and culinary joys. She was a good poet, imaginative and gentle, and did everything she could to stretch their small and erratic income. Shen's portrayal of their life together shows that it was indeed possible to have a close and affectionate marriage despite the rigorous views of the superiority of husband to wife—and the legal and philosophical justifications for that superiority—that had become part of the Confucian tradition. Ultimately, however, the couple were worn down by their poverty and his failures, though to the last Shen could not understand why fate did not allow them to be happier. "Why is it that there are sorrows and hardships in this life?" he asked. "Usually they are due to one's own fault, but this was not the case with me. I was fond of friendship, proud of keeping my word, and by nature frank and straightforward."³ But the society he was living in did not seem to reward those quiet, conventional virtues any more.

CHINA'S POLITICAL RESPONSE

Apart from some British sparring to make sure Macao did not fall into French hands, China enjoyed a respite from foreign pressure during Jiaqing's reign. But the reason for this was not, as many Manchus and Chinese must have believed if they thought about the problem at all, because King George III had been awed into submission after receiving Emperor Qianlong's complacent edict of 1793. Rather, the explanation lay in the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, which left the British and French few resources for an expansive policy in east Asia at a time when no other enemies of China were powerful. When there was a similar situation a century later during the First World War of 1914–1918, Japan was able to exploit the absence of Westerners to develop its own territorial ambitions in China; but in the early nineteenth century, Japan's Tokugawa rulers were still pursuing a policy of isolation and had no interest in putting pressures on the Chinese.

Within a year of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, however, the British East India Company dispatched another embassy to China under the leadership of William Pitt, Lord Amherst. The Amherst mission, which like Lord Macartney's sought expanded trading privileges, additional open harbors, and diplomatic residence in China, was received with considerable

rudeness by the Qing. Amherst, exhausted by the long journey and by Chinese insistence that he perform the kowtow, was hurried into attending an imperial audience before he had had a day's rest in Peking. When he requested more time to prepare, he was first threatened and then humiliatingly expelled from China.

Although this episode was used by the British to show that the Qing were unwilling to deal rationally with foreigners, in fact the political complexities of relations with the West were slowly becoming apparent to Qing officials. One indication of this was the growing importance that began to attach to Canton and to the officials who governed the Guangxi-Guangdong region. The sums of money circulating in the southeast because of the opium trade and the stockpiling of silks and teas for export in turn brought heightened official corruption and a rise in state revenues from transit dues and from taxation of legitimate foreign trade. The Cohong merchants were forced to make immense "donations" to the court and to local officials in order to assure continued imperial favor. Their base of security was always frail, and many of them ran up enormous debts by buying on credit from Western firms, or went bankrupt altogether, to be replaced by new—often reluctant—nominees. It is likely that the Cohong system lasted as long as it did because of the establishment of a mutual guarantee system known as the "Consuo fund," into which each major Hong merchant paid 10 percent of his trading profits, to be used as a cushion in times of emergency. Initially a secret shared only by the merchants, the fund was publicly supported by the Qing after 1780 with a 3 percent surcharge on foreign imports. By 1810, payments to the Qing government out of the Consuo fund reached a level of around 1 million taels a year.

As Canton became a major financial center, scholars were attracted there and academies began to proliferate. Ruan Yuan, the influential governor-general of the region from 1817 to 1826, founded the Xuehai Tang, the name literally meaning "Sea-of-Learning Hall." The academy became a famous center of scholarship, producing among other works a history of the Canton region. Ruan had earlier published a study on the important mathematicians of the Qing dynasty, among whom he included thirty-seven European missionaries who had lived in China and written treatises there; as this work circulated, it stimulated some interest in Western scientific accomplishments. Ruan Yuan also took a hard line against the opium trade. In one show of strength in 1821, he rounded up a number of opium dealers in Macao and tried to stop opium smoking in Canton.

The taking of a hard or soft line on the problem of opium addiction now became a central issue in China's foreign affairs and domestic economy. Moreover the controversy began to affect the formation of factions and

alliances within the metropolitan and the provincial bureaucracy. Jiaqing's successor, Emperor Daoguang, who reigned from 1821 to 1850, seems to have been a well-meaning but ineffective man, anxious to shore up imperial prestige that had been weakened since the Heshen episode in Qianlong's reign and never successfully restored by Jiaqing. The strict prohibitions that Jiaqing had imposed on opium dealing in 1800 and 1813 had not been effective, and Daoguang now sought a more successful alternative.

By 1825, Daoguang was aware from censors' reports that so much Chinese silver was going to pay for Western opium that the national economy was being damaged. Although this phenomenon was still mainly restricted to the southeast coastal regions of China, its effects were being felt far inland. A scarcity of silver meant that its price rose in relation to copper; since peasants used copper currency in their everyday transactions but still had to pay their taxes to the state in silver, a rise in the value of silver meant that the peasants were in fact paying steadily higher taxes, and that unrest was sure to follow. The situation worsened in 1834 when the British Parliament ended the East India Company's monopoly of trade with Asia. The action threw open the China trade to all comers, with a predictable rise in opium sales and in the numbers of foreign traders from elsewhere in Europe and from the United States. The crisis for China was exacerbated by a worldwide silver shortage that caused foreigners to use specie less frequently when buying Chinese goods.⁴ In the 1820s, about 2 million taels of silver were flowing out of China each year; by the early 1830s, the annual figure was 9 million taels. A string of 1,000 copper cash had been roughly equivalent to 1 tael of silver in Qianlong's reign; in Shandong province, 1,500 copper cash was needed per tael in Jiaqing's reign, and 2,700 in Daoguang's.

The 1834 arrival in Canton of Lord Napier, the British government's first superintendent of trade in China following the end of the East India Company monopoly, led to new confrontations. Napier refused to conduct relations through the Cohong merchants, but wished to deal directly with the governor-general of the region. After the Qing pointed out to him that "the great ministers of the Celestial Empire are not permitted to have private intercourse by letter with outside barbarians,"⁵ Napier forced his fleet up the Bogue to Canton; only his death from malarial fever prevented the outbreak of serious fighting. Opium imports meanwhile continued to rise, passing 30,000 chests in 1835 and 40,000 in 1838.

In 1836 the emperor Daoguang asked his senior officials to advise him on the opium issue. The advice was split. Those who advocated legalization of the opium trade pointed out that it would end the corruption and black-mailing of officials and bring in a steady revenue through tariffs. It would also allow domestically grown Chinese opium—believed to be of better

quality than Indian opium and cheaper to market—gradually to squeeze out that of the foreigners. Many officials, however, considered this view pernicious. They argued that foreigners were cruel and greedy, and that the Chinese did not need opium, domestic or foreign. They thought the prohibitions made by Emperor Jiaqing, far from being abandoned, should be pursued with even greater rigor.

In 1838, after evaluating the evidence, Emperor Daoguang made his decision. The opium trade must be stopped. To enforce this decree he chose a Fujian scholar-official of fifty-four named Lin Zexu, and ordered Lin to proceed to Canton as a specially appointed imperial commissioner to end the practice of the opium trade. On paper, the choice was a fine one. Lin was a *jinsu* degree holder of 1811 who had served in the Hanlin Academy—the prestigious government center for Confucian studies in Peking—and in a wide range of posts in Yunnan, Jiangsu, Shaanxi, and Shandong provinces. As governor-general of Hubei and Hunan, he had launched vigorous campaigns against opium smokers. One of his confidants was the outspoken scholar Gong Zizhen, who wrote in a letter to Lin that he believed all smokers of opium should be strangled, while pushers and producers should be beheaded. When Lin reached Canton in early March 1839, he took as his base not the Xuehai academy, which Ruan Yuan's successors had made a center for debating the merits of opium legalization, but a rival academy whose members were in favor of harsh repression of the opium trade.

To stamp out opium, Commissioner Lin (as the English came to call him) tried to mobilize all the traditional forces and values of the Confucian state. In public proclamations, he emphasized the health dangers of opium consumption and ordered all smokers to hand over their opium and pipes to double-staff within two months. Educational officials were ordered to double-check whether any degree holders were opium smokers; all those who smoked were to be punished, and the rest were to be organized into five-man mutual-responsibility teams—like miniature *baojia* units—pledged to guarantee that no one in the group would smoke. In an ingenious adaptation of the traditional examination system, Lin summoned over 600 local students to a special assembly. There, in addition to being asked conventional questions on the Confucian classics, they were asked to name—anonously, if they so chose—the major opium distributors and to suggest means of stopping their trade. Similar groups were formed among military and naval personnel. Lin also mobilized the local Confucian gentry, who formed an expanded version of the *baojia* system to spot addicts in the community. By mid-May 1839, over 1,600 Chinese had been arrested and about 35,000 pounds of opium and 43,000 opium pipes had been confiscated; in the fol-

lowing two months, Lin's forces seized a further 15,000 pounds of the drug and another 27,500 pipes.

With the foreigners, Lin used a similar combination of reason, moral suasion, and coercion, and we know from numerous statements of his that he did not wish his policies to lead to armed conflict. He moved first against the Chinese Cohong merchants, interviewing them personally in March. Lin scolded them for posting false bonds in which they stated that certain prominent British merchants—such as William Jardine and James Innes—were not opium traders, when everyone knew they were. He ordered the merchants to pass on a command to the foreigners to hand over the thousands of chests of opium they had stored in the hulks at Lintin Island and elsewhere, and to sign pledges that they would cease all further trade in opium. Foreign residents in Canton were also told to state in writing the number of weapons they owned. Lin did not wish to move rashly against foreign ships with the weak navy at his disposal, but felt he could bring enough pressure to bear on the local foreign community to force them to yield. He did not offer compensation for the opium they were to hand over.

Lin also tried to reason with the foreigners, urging them to stick to their legitimate trade in tea, silk, and rhubarb (he believed this last to be essential to the health of foreigners) and to desist from harming the Chinese people. The Guangxi-Guangdong governor-general, with whom Lin cooperated closely, had already optimistically told the Westerners that “the smokers have all quit the habit and the dealers have dispersed. There is no more demand for the drug and henceforth no profit can be derived from the traffic.” In a carefully phrased letter to Queen Victoria, Lin tried to appeal to her moral sense of responsibility. “We have heard that in your honorable nation, too,” wrote Lin, “the people are not permitted to smoke the drug, and that offenders in this particular expose themselves to sure punishment. . . . In order to remove the source of the evil thoroughly, would it not be better to prohibit its sale and manufacture rather than merely prohibit its consumption?”¹⁶ Opium in fact was *not* prohibited in Britain and was taken—often in the form of laudanum—by several well-known figures, Samuel Taylor Coleridge among them. Many Englishmen regarded opium as less harmful than alcohol, and Lin's moral exhortations fell on deaf ears.

Although they were begged to yield by the panic-stricken Hong merchants, the foreign traders first explained that they handled opium on consignment for others and so were not empowered to hand it over, and then offered to give up a token 1,000 chests. Lin, furious, ordered the arrest of Lancelot Dent, one of the leading British opium traders. When the foreign community refused to yield up Dent for trial, on March 24, 1839, Lin

ordered the Hoppo to stop foreign trade completely. All Chinese staff and servants were ordered to leave foreign employ; and the 350 foreigners in Canton, including the senior British official, Superintendent Elliot, were blockaded in their factories. Although food and water were available to the foreigners, and some extra goods and messages were smuggled in, it was a nerve-racking time for them, made worse by the din of gongs and horns that Chinese troops kept up throughout the nights. After six weeks, when the foreigners had agreed to give up over 20,000 chests of opium and Commissioner Lin had taken delivery, the blockade was lifted and all but sixteen foreigners were allowed to leave.

Lin had carefully supervised the transfer of the foreign opium to Chinese hands, even living on a boat in April and May to be near the action and to prevent cheating and theft. He was now faced with the remarkable challenge of destroying close to 3 million pounds of raw opium. His solution was to order the digging of three huge trenches, 7 feet deep and 150 feet long. Thereafter, five hundred laborers, supervised by sixty officials, broke up the large balls of raw opium and mixed them with water, salt, and lime until the opium dissolved. Then, as large crowds of Chinese and foreigners looked on, the murky mixture was flushed out into a neighboring creek, and so reached the sea.

In a special prayer to the spirit of the Southern Sea, "you who wash away all stains and cleanse all impurities," Lin brooded over the fact that "poison has been allowed to creep in unchecked till at last barbarian smoke fills the market." He apologized to the spirit for filling its domain with this noxious mixture and, he wrote in his diary, advised it "to tell the creatures of the water to move away for a time, to avoid being contaminated." As to the foreigners who had lived through the blockade and now watched the solemn proceedings, Lin wrote in a memorial to Emperor Daoguang, they "do not dare show any disrespect, and indeed I should judge from their attitudes that they have the decency to feel heartily ashamed."⁷

BRITAIN'S MILITARY RESPONSE

Commissioner Lin Zexu and Emperor Daoguang were conscientious, hard-working men who had fully internalized the Confucian structures of hierarchy and control. They seem to have believed that the citizens of Canton and the foreign traders there had simple, childlike natures that would respond to firm guidance and statements of moral principles set out in simple, clear terms. The reality was unfortunately more complex, as plenty of their contemporaries saw. Even before the opium had been washed out

to sea, one Chinese official had dared to point out that Lin had not really solved the opium problem, just one of its immediate manifestations. And a British opium trader, reflecting on his experiences during the blockade, noted dryly to a friend that the blockade "is even fortunate as adding to the account for which we have to claim redress."⁸

The buildup toward war between China and Britain was now gaining momentum. Some of the broader causes have been noted already: the social dislocations that began to appear in the Qing world, the spread of addiction, the growth of a hard-line mentality toward foreigners, foreign refusal to accept Chinese legal norms, changes in international trade structures, and the ending of Western intellectuals' admiration for China. Other elements were more precisely tied to the background of Lin's negotiations and had ramifications that he did not understand. One of these was the fact that the foreign dealers, having followed the Qing debates at court between 1836 and 1838, had grown convinced that opium consumption was about to be legalized in China. As a result, they had stockpiled large amounts and had placed additional orders with Indian growers. When the tough prohibitions of 1838 began to take effect, the market diminished and dealers found themselves dangerously oversupplied.

A second contributing factor was that the new British post of superintendent of foreign trade in China was held by a deputy of the British crown, not by an employee of the East India Company. If the Chinese crossed the superintendent, they would be insulting the British nation rather than a business corporation, a distinction they did not fully see. The superintendent, in turn, lacked clear legal powers over the British traders and had no control over nationals from other European nations or from the United States. He could, however, call directly on the aid of British armed forces and the Royal Navy in times of serious trouble.

The third element in the picture on the British side was a crucial combination of these previous two: British opium dealers, suffering from a glut of the unsold drug, had handed their supply over to Charles Elliot, Napier's successor as the superintendent of foreign trade, and Elliot, in turn, had handed it over to Lin Zexu. Thus, far from being properly "ashamed" as their opium drifted out to sea, the merchants could anticipate putting pressure on the British government to make sure that they got financial recompense.

The unfolding events in China were monitored as closely in England as time and distance allowed. In the early summer of 1839, Elliot had sent messages to London asking for assistance, and the foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston, initially unsympathetic to British merchants who would not abide by Chinese laws, now swung in their favor. As Palmerston wrote in

a letter addressed to "The Minister of the Emperor of China," he had heard "with extreme surprise" that Chinese officers had "committed violent outrages against the British Residents at Canton, who were living peaceably in that city, trusting to the good faith of the Chinese Government." Although the queen did not condone opium selling, she "cannot permit that her subjects residing abroad be treated with violence, and be exposed to insult and injustice."⁹

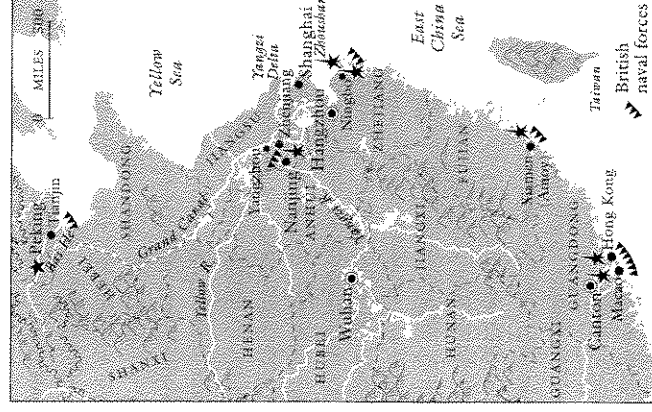
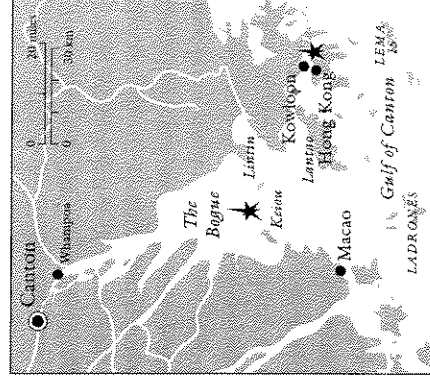
After news of the blockade and opium seizures reached England, China trade interests and chambers of commerce in the larger manufacturing areas launched intensive lobbying efforts to pressure Parliament into taking retaliatory action. The wealthy opium merchant William Jardine even traveled back to England from China to add his voice to the chorus, and to ensure that the moral objections to the opium traffic being raised by various Protestant missionary societies did not gain too wide an influence. China merchants had raised \$20,000 for his lobbying expenses, and he was promised more if necessary, "as the magnitude of the object can well bear any amount of expense that may be considered necessary or desirable." He was also told "to secure, at a high price, the services of some leading newspaper to advocate the cause." Parliament did not, however, declare war on China. It merely authorized the dispatch of a fleet and the mobilization of further troops in India in order to obtain "satisfaction and reparation" and, if necessary, to "hold in custody the ships of the Chinese and their cargoes."¹⁰ The total force, under the command of Charles Elliot's cousin, Admiral George Elliot, consisted of 16 warships carrying 540 guns, 4 newly designed armed steamers, 28 transports, and 4,000 troops, along with 3,000 tons of coal for the steamers and 16,000 gallons of rum for the men.

Lin Zexu, meanwhile, continued his cleansing of Guangdong province. Arrests and investigations of addicts and dealers went on apace, with opium now commanding "famine prices" of up to \$3,000 a chest instead of the usual \$500. When the British merchants refused to sign bonds pledging that they would not indulge in any opium traffic under penalty of Chinese law, Lin had them ousted from Macao as they had been from Canton. It was in response to this expulsion order that Charles Elliot inaugurated a new phase in east Asian history by settling his group on the almost deserted rocky island of Hong Kong. Trade in Canton by no means came to a standstill, since the Americans especially were delighted to profit from the new opportunity to operate as middlemen for the British. The American vice-consul Warren Delano let his countrymen sign bonds promising not to violate Chinese regulations. As one American merchant explained, "We Yankees had no Queen to guarantee our losses"; and even if the Chinese closed other ports of access, he would continue "retreating step by step, but buying and

selling just as long as I found parties to operate with."¹¹

But even as the trade continued, Lin was fortifying the waterways into Canton, buying new cannon for the forts and immense chains to block the channel, and commencing the training and drilling of his forces. The British who had retreated to Hong Kong were harried by the local Chinese, who poisoned many wells and refused to sell the foreigners food. Armed clashes between British and Chinese war junks in Hong Kong harbor and in the Bogue outside Canton occurred in September and October 1839, with casualties on both sides. Chinese ships were sunk, and the possibilities of further negotiation faded. In a surprising gesture for Qing officials usually so wary of popular manifestations, Lin even encouraged mobilization of local "braves" against the British, who had grown even more unpopular since a group of drunken seamen had killed a Chinese villager on Kowloon, across from Hong Kong island, and Elliot had refused to hand the accused over to the Chinese courts. "Assemble yourselves together for consideration," ran one proclamation; "Purchase arms and weapons; join together the stoutest of your villagers and thus be prepared to defend yourselves."¹²

The full British fleet under George Elliot arrived off Canton in June 1840. To Lin's chagrin they did not try to storm his new defenses, but



THE OPIUM WAR,
1839-1842

contented themselves with leaving four ships to blockade the entrance to the harbor and sailing north with the bulk of their force. In July, the British blockaded Ningbo with two ships and seized the main town on the island of Zhoushan (Chusan) off the Zhejiang coast, from which they could intercept sea traffic to the Yangzi delta region. Leaving a garrison force on Zhoushan with a missionary-interpreter standing in for the Qing magistrate who had committed suicide, the fleet sailed on unopposed to the mouth of the Bai He (White River), near the Dagu forts that guarded the approaches to the city of Tianjin. Here, in August and September 1840, serious negotiations began with Qishan, the governor-general of the region, a senior Manchurian, and a grand secretary trusted by Emperor Daoguang. Qishan persuaded the British to leave north China and return to Canton to complete the negotiations, for which he was lavishly praised by the emperor and the named governor-general of Guangxi and Guangdong, Lin Zexu, who had been named to that post earlier in the year, was now dismissed for his inadequate policies and banished to Ili.

In January 1841 Qishan reached an agreement with the British in which he ceded up Hong Kong, agreed to pay \$6 million* in indemnities, allowed the British direct official contacts with the Qing state, and promised to reopen the Canton trade to them within ten days. This so enraged Daoguang when he heard of it that he ordered Qishan dismissed and executed, a sentence later commuted to banishment.

Lord Palmerston was equally furious with Charles Elliot for not exacting better terms from the Chinese. In a blistering private letter of April 1841, he dismissed Elliot and refused to ratify the agreement, scolding the former superintendent of foreign trade: "You have disobeyed and neglected your instructions; you have deliberately abstained from employing, as you might have done, the force placed at your disposal; and you have without any sufficient necessity accepted terms which fall far short of those which you were instructed to obtain." Palmerston was especially angry that Elliot had given up Zhoushan, had not insisted on repayment for the opium destroyed, and had merely gotten modified rights over Hong Kong, "a barren island with hardly a house upon it." A new plenipotentiary, Sir Henry Pottinger, was named to deal with China. In his final instructions to Pottinger, Palmerston insisted that the new agreement must be with the emperor himself. "Her Majesty's Government cannot allow that, in a transaction between Great Britain and China, the unreasonable practice of the Chinese should supersede the reasonable practice of all the rest of mankind."¹³

*The Mexican silver dollar was now so widely circulated that it was accepted as standard silver currency in China. The Chinese themselves used silver ingots, not coins.

With these new instructions, Pottinger reached China in August 1841 to find the situation even more volatile. There had been renewed fighting in the countryside around Canton, much of it by aroused bands of Chinese militia under local gentry leaders, and British troops had been killed and wounded. The British had responded by destroying the Bogue forts, sinking Chinese junks, razing part of the waterfront, and occupying sections of Canton. Although the British occupying troops subsequently withdrew from the city after Canton officials had paid them \$6 million, there was no agreement about whether this sum was a "ransom" to save the city from sack, a response to the sum named in Elliot's earlier convention with Qishan, or recompense for the opium destroyed two years before.

In late August 1841, Pottinger proceeded north with the British fleet, seizing Xiamen (Amoy) and Ningbo, and recapturing Zhoushan. When reinforcements reached him from India in late spring 1842, he launched a campaign to force Qing capitulation by cutting China's main river and canal communications routes. The British captured Shanghai in June and took Zhenjiang in July, even though the Manchus fought with savage desperation. Scores of Qing officers committed suicide with their families when defeat was certain. The traffic on the Grand Canal and lower Yangzi was now blocked. Pottinger, ignoring Qing requests for a parley, pushed on to the great city and former Ming dynasty capital of Nanjing, taking up attack positions outside the walls on August 5. The Qing quickly sued for peace, and on August 29 the terms of the Treaty of Nanjing, translated into Chinese, were signed by the Manchu commissioners and the governor-general of Liangjiang.* Daoguang accepted the treaty in September, and Queen Victoria ratified it at the end of December.

Before turning to the precise stipulations of this treaty and its supplements, it is worth re-emphasizing that in military terms the Opium War of 1839–1842 marked an important historical moment. It was not only the most decisive reversal the Manchus had ever received, it also saw innovations in Western military technology and tactics. The emergence of the steam-driven vessel as a considerable force in naval battles was perhaps the most important of these, as shown by the campaign record of the British ship *Nemesis*. The *Nemesis* was an uncoppered paddle-wheel iron ship that used sails in favorable winds and six boilers fired by wood or coal for making seven to eight knots even in heavy seas. Drawing only five feet, the ship could operate in shallow coastal waters in virtually any wind or tidal condition. In the Canton Bogue campaigns, the *Nemesis* roamed the shallows firing grapeshot, heavy shells, and explosive rockets, grappling and towing junks, ferrying troops,

*The name of the administrative unit comprising the three provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, and Jiangxi.

and towing the sailing vessels on calm days. In the Shanghai campaign, the ship towed the men-of-war with their heavy guns into firing range on the city and served as a transport that could unload the British directly onto the docks. Well before the war's end, new steamers of similar design were being sent to China's waters; if the British could only keep enough fuel stockpiled, they had discovered a formidable supplement to their powers.

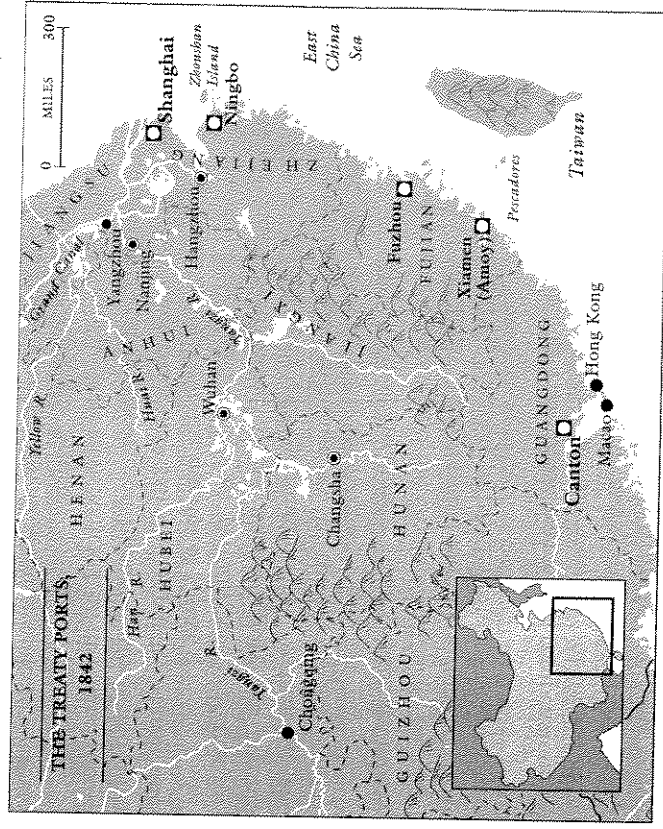
The Qing, however, were not merely passive targets of Western technology and fire power. While still in Canton, Commissioner Lin had deputed a special task force of scholars to furnish him with all the information they could on Western nations, culled mainly from foreign publications in Canton and Singapore. He had also asked an American missionary to translate some brief passages of international law for him. Moreover, as the British proceeded with their campaigns in 1842, they found much evidence of the speed with which the Qing officials were trying to respond to the West's new technology. In Xiamen, for instance, they found a nearly completed replica of a British two-decker man-of-war with thirty guns; it was almost ready to sail, and work on several other similar vessels was well under way. In Wusong, they discovered five new Chinese paddle-wheel boats armed with newly cast brass guns. In Shanghai, they seized sixteen new, beautifully made eighteen-pound ship's guns, perfect in detail down to the sights cast on the barrels and the pierced vents for flintlocks. All were mounted on sturdy wooden trucks with iron axles.¹⁴ At least some people in China had clearly found the barbarian challenge to be a stimulus as well as an outrage.

THE NEW TREATY SYSTEM

The Treaty of Nanjing was signed on August 29, 1842, aboard Her Majesty's ship *Cornwallis* moored in the Yangzi River, and ratified in Hong Kong ten months later after formal approval by Queen Victoria and Emperor Daoguang. It was the most important treaty settlement in China's modern history. The treaty contained twelve main articles that cumulatively had significant ramifications for China's ideas of commerce and society:

Article 1. Stipulated peace and friendship between Britain and China, and "full security and protection for their persons and property within the dominions of the other."

Article 2. Determined the opening of five Chinese cities—Canton, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo, and Shanghai—to residence by British subjects and their families "for the purpose of carrying on their mercantile pursuits,



without molestation or restraint." It also permitted the establishment of consulates in each of those cities.

Article 3. "The Island of Hong Kong to be possessed in perpetuity" by Victoria and her successors, and ruled as they "shall see fit."

Article 4. Payment of \$6 million by the Qing "as the value of the opium which was delivered up in Canton."

Article 5. Abolition of the Canton Cohong monopoly system and permission at the five above-named ports for British merchants "to carry on their mercantile transactions with whatever persons they please." The Qing were to pay \$3 million in settlement of outstanding Cohong debts.

Article 6. Payment to the British of a further \$12 million "on account of the expenses incurred" in the recent fighting, minus any sums already received "as ransom for cities and towns in China" since August 1, 1841.

Article 7. The \$21 million stipulated in Articles 4 through 6 were to be paid in four installments before the end of 1845, with a 5 percent interest charge per annum on late payments.

Article 8. Immediate release of any prisoners who were British subjects, whether Indian or European.

Article 9. An unconditional amnesty for all Chinese subjects who had resided with, dealt with, or served the British.

Article 10. At the five treaty ports listed in Article 2, all merchants should pay "a fair and regular Tariff of Export and Import Customs and other Dues." Once those fees were paid, only fair and stipulated transit dues should be paid on goods conveyed to the interior of China.

Article 11. Instead of terminology such as "petition" or "beg" that foreigners had previously been forced to use, nonderogatory and nonsubordinate terms of address such as "communication," "statement," and "declaration" were to be used in future official correspondence between Britain and China.

Article 12. On receiving the first installment of the indemnity money, British forces would leave Nanjing and the Grand Canal, and "no longer molest or stop the trade of China." Troops would continue to hold Zhoushan until all money was paid and the "opening [of] the Ports to British merchants be completed."¹⁵

Apart from the stipulation of a \$6 million payment as compensation for the opium destroyed in 1839, the narcotic was nowhere mentioned in the treaty, nor was it discussed in the supplementary tariff treaty of 1843, which fixed the rates for tea, silk, cotton, woolens, ivory, metals, and spirits. Opium was again ignored in the complicated procedures agreed to for conducting, supervising, and protecting foreign trade in the five ports. In private talks with the chief Manchu negotiator Qiying, Pottinger mentioned the British hope that the Qing would allow a legalized opium on a barter basis—to end the outflow of silver. When Qiying replied that he dared not raise the question, Pottinger said that he, too, had been ordered not to press the matter.

The clauses of the Treaty of Nanjing and its supplements were studied carefully by other powers. In 1843, President John Tyler acted on behalf of the United States and its considerable China-trade interests by dispatching Caleb Cushing—a congressman from coastal Massachusetts, where many of America's wealthiest China merchants lived—to China as minister plenipotentiary. Arriving at Macao in February 1844, Cushing at once began negotiations with Qiying, who had been promoted to governor-general of Guangxi and Guangdong. Despite tensions caused by the death of a Chinese who had tried to assault a group of Americans (the jurisdictional issue raised brought back unhappy memories of the *Emily* and *Terranova*), Qiying and Cushing moved rapidly to the signing of a treaty between the two countries, called the Treaty of Wanghia after the small village near Macao where it was concluded.

The American treaty followed the same lines as the British, but was much

longer and had a number of important additions. Article 17, for instance, was of great potential importance to American Protestant missionaries eager to work in China, for it gave Americans in the five treaty ports rights to hire sites for the construction of "hospitals, churches, and cemeteries." Article 18 ended a long-standing attempt by Chinese rulers to prevent foreigners from learning the Chinese language fluently; it allowed United States citizens "to employ scholars and people of any part of China . . . to teach any of the languages of the Empire." The jurisdictional question was settled by the statement in Article 21 that Americans committing crimes in China could be tried and punished only by the consuls or other duly empowered American officials "according to the laws of the United States." Rejecting Britain's evasions, Article 33 stated that any Americans "who shall trade in opium or any other contraband" would be "dealt with" by the Chinese, without being entitled to protection from the United States government. Finally, Article 34 stated that in matters of "commerce and navigation," the treaty should be reviewed in twelve years' time.¹⁶

In October 1844, the French followed with their own treaty, modeled closely on the American agreement. Their main additions were to stipulate that if, in times of trouble, no French consul were present, French nationals might appeal to the consuls of any friendly power; and to re-emphasize the principle of extraterritoriality—the right to be judged by one's own national law in criminal cases on Chinese soil—with even greater force than had Caleb Cushing. Yielding to French pressure, Qiying obtained an imperial rescript granting full toleration to the Catholics and reversing Yongzheng's edicts against missionaries; in a supplementary proclamation of 1845, Qiying extended the same rights to Protestants.

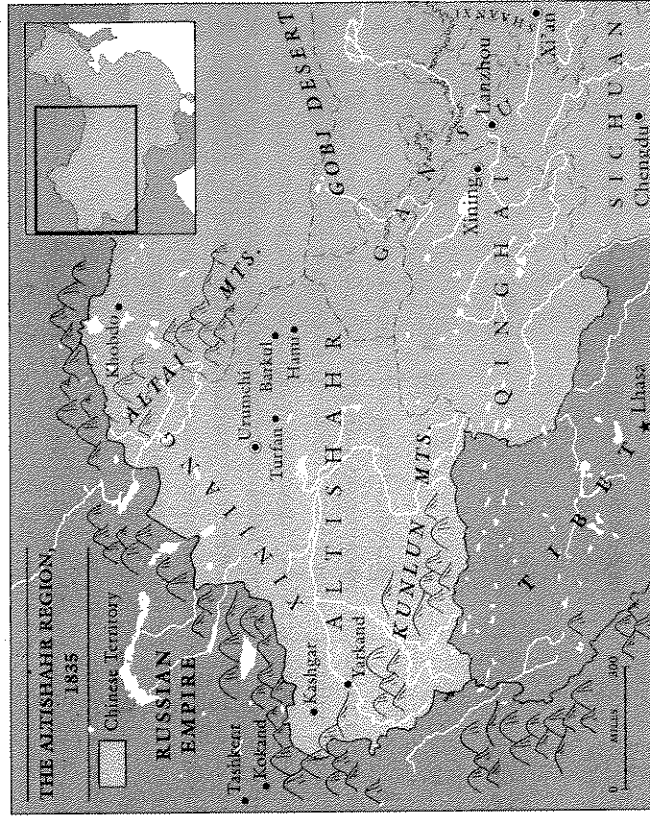
So within six years of Lin Zexu's appointment as imperial commissioner, the Qing, instead of defending their integrity against all comers, had lost control of vital elements of China's commercial, social, and foreign policies. A host of other nations followed where Britain, the United States, and France had shown the way. The British did not have to worry about these other negotiations, because any new concessions offered up by the Chinese came also to them. In an ingenious article—number 8—to their own supplementary treaty of 1843, they had stipulated a "most-favored nation" clause: "Should the Emperor hereafter, from any cause whatever, be pleased to grant additional privileges or immunities to any of the subjects or citizens of such foreign countries, the same privileges or immunities will be extended to and enjoyed by British subjects." The Qing had agreed to this clause in the belief that it would limit foreign pressures. But in fact this clause prevented the Qing from forming alliances or playing off one foreign power against another, seriously hampering China's foreign-policy initiatives.

Surprisingly, however, the short-term commercial results of the Opium War turned out to be disappointing for the British and most other foreign merchants. Although the five treaty port cities had been carefully chosen, trade at Fuzhou and Ningbo grew so slowly that there was talk of trying to swap them for other cities with better prospects. By 1850 only nineteen adult foreigners were living in Ningbo; at Fuzhou the total was ten, of whom seven were missionaries. Prospects were not much better in Xiamen, where trade had traditionally been conducted with Taiwan or the Philippines and was difficult to integrate with European or American needs. Only traffic in human labor brought some prosperity when British ships began to transport coolie laborers to work in the sugar plantations of Cuba.

Canton had held the promise of enormous profits once the Cohong monopoly was abolished and trade was thrown open to all, but so strong was the local antipathy to the British and other foreigners that the Westerners found it impossible to establish residence and to conduct business or open their consulates in the city. The 1840s and early 1850s were marked by constant rioting and a bitter cycle of anti-British attacks by rural militias and urban mobs that were met by British reprisals and reciprocal atrocities. The Qing court condoned the anti-British violence since it could not afford to alienate Cantonese sensibilities any further.

Of the five new treaty ports, only Shanghai became a boom town when extensive "concession" areas of marshy and largely uninhabited countryside were made available for British, French, and other foreign settlements. By 1850, with the land drained and the river banks shored up, there were over one hundred merchants in residence there, supported by consular staffs, five physicians, and seventeen missionaries, many of whom were married. Whereas 44 foreign ships had entered the port in 1844, the number for 1849 was 133, and by 1855 it was 437. The silk trade expanded prodigiously, reaching a value of over \$20 million by the mid-1850s. Opium, still illegal, was coming in at a rate of at least 20,000 chests a year.

The Qing attitude to the new treaty-port structure was ambiguous. Qiying's view, shared by many at court, was that the Westerners' prior motivation was commercial greed and that they could probably be stalled on most other demands if their trade kept moving. In their confidence about this and their feeling that even concessions such as extraterritoriality were insignificant, both Qiying and his emperor were probably drawing on the only near precedent they possessed—namely, the Qing handling of foreign policy in central Asia during the 1830s. In 1835, for example, the Qing had allowed the aggressive khanate of Kokand the right to station a political resident in Kashgar and commercial residents in Yarkand and other key trading cities. This political resident had both consular and judicial powers



over other foreigners in the Altishahr region, and the right to collect customs dues on goods that other foreigners brought into the area. Furthermore, the Qing agreed that Muslims would pay only half the rate paid by non-Muslims in tariffs (2½ percent instead of 5 percent) and that goods exported to Kokand from Altishahr were to be tax-free. The Qing apparently found that making such concessions, far from being an abandonment of sovereignty, was in fact a cheap and simple way of solving the Kokand khans' endless, bellicose demands for further trading privileges. Several of the senior Qing officials who took part in these negotiations—or were heroes of the wars that preceded them—were posted to the southeast coast in the late 1830s or early 1840s, suggesting that the Qing were indeed seeking continuities in policy making between China's far western and its southeastern frontiers.¹⁷

As he might have done with unruly potentates in central Asia, Qiying continued to woo Sir Henry Pottinger well after the Nanjing treaty and its supplements had been signed: he bestowed the status of honorary adoption on Pottinger's son, exchanged keepsakes (including pictures of their wives), fed sugarplums with his own hands into the astonished plenipotentiary's mouth, and created a new word—*yin-di-mi-te* in Chinese—to express his

insistence that Pottinger was his “intimate” friend. But to the emperor Daoguang, Qiyong confided that this was his personal way of “subduing and conciliating” the British. He was not going to “fight with them over empty names”; instead, he would “pass over these small matters and achieve our larger scheme.”¹⁸ The trouble with this analysis was that to the British and other foreign powers, the hard-won treaty stipulations were far from being “empty names.” They were the very stuff of international and commercial life. The fact that neither Qiyong nor his emperor could accept this is, with hindsight, not surprising. For to the Manchus the “larger scheme” was now nothing less than the survival of the Qing dynasty itself. To those holding power in China, the mounting pressures of domestic discontent made all problems of foreign policy appear, indeed, peripheral.

The Crisis Within

CHAPTER 8

SOCIAL DISLOCATION NORTH AND SOUTH



The damaging defeats inflicted on China by the British during the first half of the nineteenth century were part cause and part consequence of China's own growing domestic instability. Many of the elements of that instability have been discussed above: the growing population that put new pressures on the land, the outflow of silver, the difficulty the educated elite found in gaining official employment, the mounting incidences of opium addiction, the waning abilities of the regular banner armies, the demoralization in the bureaucracy caused by Heshen and his faction, the wide-scale suffering that accompanied the spread and eventual suppression of the White Lotus rebellion.

Other abuses, already apparent in the late eighteenth century, became more serious in the early nineteenth century. The enormous bureaucracies that allegedly managed the Yellow River dike works and the Grand Canal grew ineffective, swelling their own ranks with sinecure appointments and using for their own private purposes the government money allotted to them. The consequent silting up of stretches of the Grand Canal, and the failure to regulate water levels on the Yellow and Huai rivers at the points where they were crossed by the Grand Canal, crucially weakened the system of government rice transport from the south. That disruption, in turn, led to trouble with the workers along the canal who pulled the government barges for a living; many of these workers now banded into their own secret associations, both to protect their jobs and to tyrannize the local farming communities among whom they lived.

The massive government system of salt distribution also became ineffective. Salt sales were, in theory, a government monopoly in which the Qing supervised salt production, either by seashore evaporation or from inland brine wells and salt mines, and then sold the produce to a small group of licensed merchants, each of whom transported the salt for sale to certain designated areas. By the early nineteenth century, inefficiencies and corruption in this system had led to a phenomenal rise in salt smuggling, which threatened to wreck the complex system. These economic and organizational problems spurred the growth of competing factions within the post-Heshen bureaucracy, as vested interests contended for profits and sought to recruit supporters into their own ranks. Many senior officials began to form their own bureaucratic subnetworks of clients and assistants, whose salaries they paid by further exploiting their own public sources of income.

During these same years of the early nineteenth century, there was also a great increase in local paramilitary or formally organized militia units led by local scholars or landlords who sought to protect their communities from marauding groups, whether of White Lotus rebels, of the jobless and the desperate, or of coastal or riverine pirates. In other areas, local leaders formed secret societies to spread esoteric religious doctrines and to defend themselves when the state proved incapable.

In much of China, one can say, private interests were encroaching on formerly governmental spheres, and the imperial system seemed incapable of reasserting its former powers. Emperor Jiaqing, who ruled China from 1799 to 1820, relied on rhetoric more than specific policies to cleanse his empire. His pleas for frugality on the part of his bureaucracy were poignant but did little to cut costs. And even though Heshen's cronies were effectively purged, other courtiers emerged and formed their own factions. Jiaqing and his son Daoguang (reigned 1821–1850) both promoted senior ministers who presented a purist view of the fundamental Confucian virtues, even if those ministers had nothing substantive to say about the many problems—domestic and foreign—that plagued the dynasty. By the end of Daoguang's reign, a series of popular uprisings began that were to last for twenty-three years and were almost to bring about the fall of the Qing dynasty.

But just as those uprisings must be seen in the context of China's foreign-policy crises, so must they be seen as the culminating stage in a pattern of protest that began with the White Lotus and continued through less dramatic but still significant crises in both north and south China. One such early nineteenth-century uprising in the north was led by Lin Qing in 1813. Lin was born in 1770, and his early life suggests a case study of the rootlessness endemic to that portion of Qing society that hovered just above the urban poverty line. The son of a clerk in Peking, Lin Qing, who had learned

to read and write, took an apprenticeship in an herbal-medicine shop, but he worked at this trade for only a short period before being fired and becoming a night watchman. When his father died, Lin managed to get himself appointed clerk in his father's place; thereupon he embezzled some Grand Canal repair funds stored in his new office and used the money to open a tea shop. Gambling away the shop's profits, he moved north to Manchuria, where he held a construction job for a time. Still restless, he traveled south across China to Suzhou, where he worked first as attendant to a local grain official, then on the junior staff of a magistrate's office. He returned north, earning money as a coolie pulling grain boats up the Grand Canal. Back home near Peking, he ran a business selling songbirds.

Now equipped with some knowledge of the world, Lin Qing joined a religious sect that drew its beliefs from millenarian Buddhism, and he learned a number of mystical slogans. "Every day at dawn we pay respects to the sun and recite the sacred words," he told one of his early followers, a waiter at a local inn. "By doing this we can escape the dangers of fire, flood, and war, and if there should come a time of calamity and disorder, then we can use this opportunity to plan and organize the Great Undertaking."¹ Lin was able to inspire confidence in hundreds of local villagers and—more surprisingly—in a number of poverty-stricken Chinese bannermen and bondservants as well as eunuchs in Peking palace service. "He was very convincing," his nephew later told Qing officials. "He said that making contributions was the same as sowing seeds for future blessings and that in the future such gifts would be multiplied tenfold. So people believed and gave him money. I never saw him give any back."² Some of the promises were dramatic: 100 copper cash given to Lin brought a promise of 100 *mou* of land in the future, when the sect would triumph (100 *mou*, around 16 acres, represented a munificent estate to any poor north China peasant).

Growing more grandiose as he allied with other powerful leaders, Lin began to term himself the future Buddha, or Maitreya, sent by the Eternal Mother to prepare his followers to survive the catastrophes of the coming *kaiyuan*, the new great cycle of human history. Rhymes recited by his followers seemed to suggest that an anti-Manchu element was also becoming stronger: "We wait only for the northern region to be returned to a Han emperor! Then all-that-is will again be under a single line."³ By 1813, Lin Qing had laid plans to move on Peking and kill Emperor Jiaqing.

At this point the plot began to unravel: officials were warned of trouble by a suspicious lower degree holder from Shandong and by two fathers worried about their sons' involvement in the illegal sect. Arrests of some sectarians, interrogations under torture, and a number of sporadic but bitter clashes followed during that summer; late in 1813, the planned attack on

the palace was launched by a handful of Lin's disciples, but it was a disastrous failure. Oddly fatalistic, Lin Qing stayed at home in his village during his "uprising," and it was there that local police officials arrested him. Emperor Jiaqing was so curious about this unknown man who had sought to kill him that he summoned him to a private interrogation. Lin refused to give any further explanations and was executed by slicing. His severed head was displayed in Henan as a warning to his followers who were still holding out in rebellion there.

Lin Qing's life and rebellion are well documented because the action was so near Peking and the emperor himself was a target. But Lin's casual accumulation of followers and money, the generalized grievances, and the broad religious claims were typical of many other such groups formed in north China over subsequent decades. These groups constituted a kind of latent potential for rebellion, but one that could often stay on peaceful, semilegal tracks if not galvanized by a particularly effective leader or a natural disaster of unusual proportions.

In south China there was also a simmering discontent, but its focus was different. Here the dominant force was the Triads, also called the Heaven and Earth Society, comprising groups with their own blood oaths, religious rituals, and brotherhoods. The Triads developed in Taiwan and Fujian in the later eighteenth century—though they were to claim much earlier origins once their power grew—and then gathered strength in Guangdong and Guangxi. Many early Triad members seem to have been sailors on ocean junks or on the myriad river craft of the interlacing southern waterways; others were poor city dwellers. They often engaged in criminal activities—extortion, robbery, and kidnappings—all the while protecting themselves through society members in the magistrates' own yamens (offices). By the 1830s, Triad lodges were also attracting numerous peasant recruits, perhaps because in south China, where powerful lineages often controlled entire villages, the Triads offered an alternative form of protection and an organizational focus to those living on the edge of destitution. Women were often recruited into Triad ranks, as they were into the White Lotus, giving them a prestige and function in society otherwise largely denied to them. According to some accounts, women who joined Triad lodges in advance of their husbands might claim precedence within the household over their own spouses. Others were members without their husbands' knowledge.

The Triads also claimed it as their cause to oust the Qing and restore the Ming. Their anti-Manchu stance was probably fueled by the inability of the Qing to control the foreigners in Canton, and the repeated occupations of that city by foreign troops. These pressures in turn made it hard for the court to mobilize for drastic action against potential rebels among its own

people. And since the more dangerous rebel groups tended to assemble in rugged, hard-to-control border regions such as that between Guangxi and Guangdong, local officials could not easily coordinate their suppression activities.

The Triad lodges, and their affiliates and contacts in the local bureaucracy, enhanced their power through involvement in local militia organizations. Lin Zexu had encouraged the formation of such groups to defend Canton against the British, just as gentry in the late Ming had done to protect their bases against peasant rebels or Manchus. The Canton militia groups became complicated mixtures of gentry leaders, local thugs, bona fide peasant volunteers, members of other martial-arts organizations, and groups of men from common trades. In May 1841, such a mélange of forces had confronted a British patrol outside Canton at the village of Sanyuanli. Armed with spears and hoes—some even with guns—they had forced the British to retreat, killing one British soldier and wounding fifteen others. The Chinese made the encounter a symbol for the possibility of a united resistance to foreign pressures.

For the Qing state, as for the Ming, such assemblages were a two-edged sword. Some gentry developed regular, well-organized militia groups that could effectively keep order in the countryside or patrol the city; other groups saw militiamen melt away, perhaps with arms and some rudimentary training, to return to their original bandit gangs or bring new skills to their Triad comrades. The groups of irregulars gradually grew after 1842 as the Treaty of Nanjing began to have its effect, swelling the trade of Shanghai and drawing resources away from the intransigent region of Canton. Out-of-work boatmen and coolies, poverty-stricken artisans, destitute peasants—all swelled the groups of disaffected who sought some kind of mooring in baffling times.

Emperor Daoguang tried to think this through when responding to the xenophobic attacks on the British in the Canton region, which reached a pinnacle during 1848: "The only important thing is to appease the people's emotions. If the people's loyalties are not lost, then the foreign bandits can be handled."⁴ The trouble was that appeasing popular violence was a dangerous gamble for the Qing.

THE TAIPING

In the immense upheaval known as the Taiping Uprising, which ravaged much of China between 1850 and 1864, we see many elements similar to those just mentioned: the restlessness and religious self-identification of a

man like Lin Qing, the underlying social discord in the southeast, the growing strength and variety of secret society organizations among the poor, and the dislocation caused by the British and the Opium trade. But at the same time, it was one individual's personal life story and state of mind that gave the movement its particular shape. This was Hong Xiuquan, one of those who in this period had such a difficult time trying to push their way onto the lowest rung of the ladder of Qing gentility. Hong was born in 1814, the fourth of five children in a hard-working rural family of Guangdong. His parents were from the Hakka minority (the so-called "guest peoples" who had migrated southward from central China), and they sacrificed to get Hong a decent education that would win him a place in the local elite. But even though he passed the initial examinations permitting him to qualify for the licentiate's *shengyuan* degree, in the early 1830s he failed at his first two attempts to obtain the degree, which would have given him the right to wear the scholars' robes, to be exempt from physical punishment, and to receive a small stipend from the state.

For any ambitious young Chinese, such failure was humiliating, but for Hong it seems to have been unusually so. He took solace only in the chance to travel and study in Canton itself. In 1836 Hong was just about to enter the examination hall yet again in pursuit of the elusive degree when a Chinese Protestant evangelist pressed a collection of translated passages from the Bible called "Good Words for Exhorting the Age" into Hong's hands. Such a moment was possible, and such tracts were available, because of many new historical circumstances that were to distinguish Hong's uprising from all those that had come before. Western Protestant missionaries—mainly British and American—had been working since the early 1800s to translate the entire Bible into Chinese, and had printed numerous copies, which they distributed while traveling up the coast and in the interior. They and their Chinese converts also tried to distill the message of the scriptures into simple tracts like the "Good Words," which reached even more readers.

Hong Xiuquan neither studied the tracts nor threw them away. Instead he seems to have glanced at them quickly and then kept them at home. He initially made no connection between these tracts and a strange dream and delirium he experienced after a third examination failure in 1837. In those visions, Hong conversed with a bearded, golden-haired man who gave him a sword, and a younger man who instructed him on how to slay evil spirits and whom Hong addressed as "Elder Brother." For six years after his visions, Hong worked as a village schoolteacher, and tried once again to pass the examinations. But after he failed the *shengyuan* examinations for the fourth time, he opened the Christian tracts and read them fully. In a sudden shock of realization, Hong saw that the two men in his vision must

have been the God and Jesus of the tracts, and that therefore he, Hong, must also be the Son of God, younger brother to Jesus Christ.

Like Lin Qing in north China thirty years before, Hong was able to persuade people of his spiritual powers through a charismatic manner and a strong religious conviction. But unlike Lin, Hong did not work secretly through a network of local sectarian cells. Instead he began to preach his message publicly, baptize converts, and openly destroy Confucian and ancestral shrines. Although these activities prompted local anger, which caused Hong to flee his village temporarily for Guangxi, they did not provoke the local authorities, and he continued to teach. In 1847 he returned to Canton and studied the Bible with Isaacher Roberts, an American southern Baptist. Late that year Hong left Canton and joined a close friend, one of his first converts, who had formed a Society of God Worshipers in the rugged area of eastern Guangxi province called Thistle Mountain.

In this isolated region—far from a county seat—Hong's movement spread, drawing converts from Hakkas and from mountain tribesmen. By 1849 he had attracted around 10,000 followers. Perhaps influenced by members of Triad organizations who joined him, Hong's ideology came to embrace both the creation of a new Christian community and the destruction of the Manchus, against whose wickedness and deceit he cried out in moving and powerful terms. When one recalls Lu Liuliang's posthumous fate after daring to attack the ruling dynasty with much milder language, Hong's courage and recklessness can be appreciated. But for Hong, the ruling dynasty represented a special challenge: to him the Manchus were demons fighting against the true God, a God whose purity and presence had existed in China until the forces of Confucian belief swayed the Chinese away from the true path of righteousness.

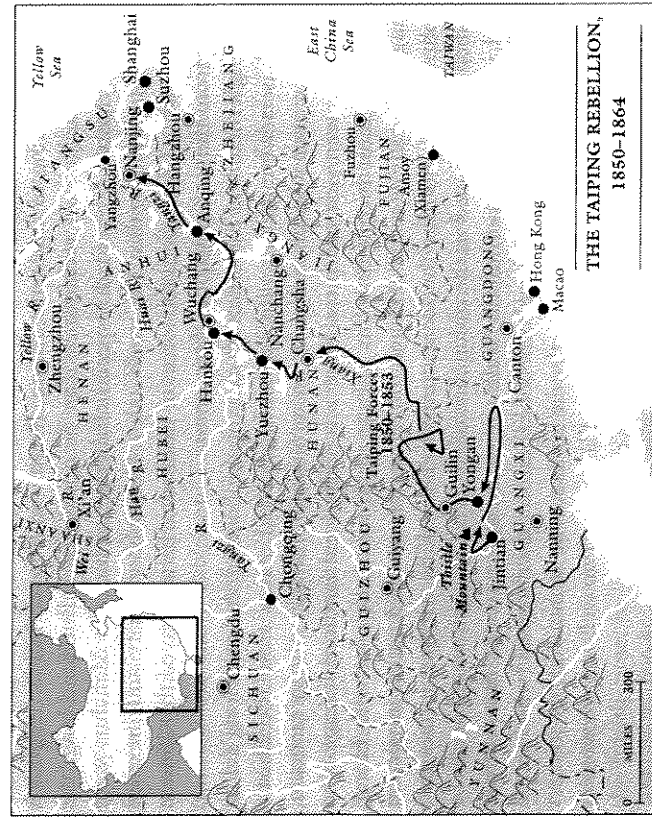
Hong's rhetorical passion drew a devoted following. Among Hong's closest advisers were an illiterate, orphaned charcoal maker from the Thistle Mountain area who proved to be an intuitively brilliant military tactician, and a nineteen-year-old member of a wealthy local landlord lineage who persuaded most members of his lineage to throw in their lot with Hong, bringing an estimated 100,000 taels into Hong's treasury. Another important group of converts was the local miners whose skills with explosives and tunneling, developed in the mountains of eastern Guangxi, were later to be used in the demolition of city walls. With the miners came many others who contributed a variety of forms of expertise: pawnbrokers (who ran the treasury), legal clerks (who developed bureaucratic structures), ex-soldiers of the Qing forces or local militias, as well as at least two well-known women bandit leaders and several gangs of river pirates.

By 1850 Hong's recruits and converts had passed the 20,000 mark. His

movement was now sufficiently organized to drill troops, manufacture arms, and assemble military tables of organization; it could enforce rigorous instructions against corruption, sensuality, and opium smoking, conduct ceremonies of Christian worship, pool all money and valuables in a central treasury, convince its men to abandon their queues and wear their flowing hair long, and segregate the women—mothers, wives, daughters—into a separate camp run by female officers. Through these actions, the God worshippers finally attracted enough notice to be singled out from the scores of other bandit groups that roamed different parts of China.

In December 1850, Qing government forces sent to oust Hong from the Thistle Mountain area were badly defeated, and their Manchu commander killed. On January 11, 1851, Hong Xiuquan assembled his God worshippers and declared himself the Heavenly King of the Taiping Tianguo, "Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace" (commonly abbreviated to Taiping). Forced out of their base by larger government armies, the Taiping campaigned on the Guangxi-Guangdong border until autumn 1851, when they swung north and seized the city of Yongnan along with great stores of cash, food, and new recruits, who swelled their numbers to 60,000 or more.

Guiding their destinies now by a newly created Christian solar calendar



with a seven-day week (although an initial error in calculation caused the Taiping "Sunday" in fact to fall on the Christian Saturday), the Taiping advanced again in the spring of 1852. They attacked the Guangxi capital of Guilin, which they failed to capture despite the heroic exploits of their new regiments of Hakka women, who fought with exemplary courage. (Used to the life of hard farming in the mountains, the Hakka women had never bound their feet as other Chinese females did.) In the summer they crossed into Hunan, but were frustrated in their two-month attempt to take Changsha. Here the Taiping proclamations became more fiery in an attempt to win fresh recruits: "Can the Chinese still consider themselves men? Ever since the Manchus poisoned China, the flame of oppression has risen up to heaven, the poison of corruption has defiled the emperor's throne, the offensive odor has spread over the four seas, and the influence of demons has distressed the empire while the Chinese with bowed heads and dejected spirits willingly became subjects and servants."⁵⁵

A breakthrough came in December 1852, when almost unopposed the Taiping army entered Yuezhou on the east side of Dongting Lake. Yuezhou was a wealthy, long-settled town, unlike the poorer areas through which the Taiping had hitherto ranged, and here they seized vast amounts of booty, 5,000 boats, and stockpiles of arms and gunpowder. (Some of the guns had been abandoned there by Wu Sangui after the failure of his Three Feudatories rebellion almost two centuries before, but were still serviceable.) Thereafter an incredible string of successes followed: Hankou fell in December and Wuchang in January 1853, bringing Hong a further large fleet of boats and 1.6 million taels from the provincial treasury. Anqing fell almost without opposition in February 1853, bringing 300,000 taels more, 100 large cannon, and huge stores of food. In March the great center of Nanjing, defended by only a small force, its walls undermined by explosive charges, its center bombarded by artillery, its streets infiltrated by Taiping soldiers disguised as Buddhist or Daoist priests, fell to the rebels.

Nanjing's Manchu population of some 40,000, of whom about 5,000 were combat troops, retreated into the city's inner citadel, but were overwhelmed by the charges of wave after wave of Taiping troops. All Manchus who did not die in the battle—men, women, and children—were rounded up and systematically killed by burning, stabbing, or drowning. It was Hong's way of showing that the devils would be driven from the face of China. At the end of March, wearing a crown and an embroidered dragon robe, Hong was carried into the city in a golden palanquin on the backs of sixteen men, and took up residence in a former Ming dynasty imperial palace.

The Taiping ruled their Nanjing-based Heavenly Kingdom for eleven years (1853–1864) under the formal authority of Hong Xiuquan as Heavenly

King. The policies of the Taiping remained, on paper and often in practice, startlingly radical. One facet of their rule was an asceticism that required segregation of the sexes and absolute bans on opium smoking, prostitution, dancing, and drinking of alcohol. Money was held in a common treasury, theoretically to be shared by all; and since the Taiping had acquired more than 18 million taels along their route of march and within Nanjing itself, their prosperity seemed assured. Examinations were reinstituted, based now on Chinese translations of the Bible and on the transcribed versions of Hong Xiuquan's religious revelations and literary works. Women, organized into special residential and administrative units, were allowed to hold supervisory offices in the bureaucracy and to sit for their own special examinations.

Most remarkable was the Taiping land law, which, linked to a local system of military recruitment, constituted perhaps the most utopian, comprehensive, and authoritarian scheme for human organization ever seen in China up to that time. All land was to be divided among all families of the Taiping and their supporters according to family size, with men and women receiving equal shares. After keeping the produce they needed for their own sustenance, each family would place the rest in great common granaries. Every twenty-five families were supervised by a "sergeant" who kept records of production, adjudicated squabbles, oversaw education of the young in the Bible and Taiping doctrines, and held Christian services every Sabbath. The sergeants selected men from the families under their care for service with local military units. Men selected for service were subject to rigid drill and training, taught to use signals, weapons, and booby traps, and succored in combat by medical squads for the wounded and the sick. From their Nanjing base, huge armies foraged forth, either to extend the Taiping dominions to the east and north or to bring fresh supplies and recruits back to sustain the garrison armies. The results would surely be, ran a Taiping proclamation, "that nowhere will inequality exist, and no one not be well fed and clothed."⁶

Yet for all their military and ideological passion, and their utopian dreams of perfect governance, the Taiping failed to overthrow the Qing and were ultimately eliminated, with terrible slaughter. Why did the Taiping not succeed, after achieving so many triumphs with such speed in the name of such a utopian ideology?

One reason was the failure of Taiping collective leadership. From the original brotherhood, Hong Xiuquan had gone on to name some key Taiping followers as "kings," who ruled jointly under his supervision. But two of the most talented leaders were killed in the campaigns of 1852, and the most brilliant survivors—especially Yang Xiuqing and Shi Dakai, who had

been among Hong's earliest followers during the Thistle Mountain days—ultimately lost faith in him. Yang, who had arrogated enormous powers to himself, was assassinated in a murderous palace coup in 1856—on Hong's orders. Shi, who lived up to his early promise and became the Taiping's greatest general, left Nanjing the same year, after his wife and mother were killed by feuding Taiping generals. He tried to set up an independent kingdom in Sichuan but was trapped and killed there by Qing troops in 1863.

Shorn of his most talented advisers, Hong faltered as a leader once he had won a measure of power. He demonstrated a dangerous inefficiency and lack of clear goals. Just as in Wuchang he had missed a chance to strike north to Peking, so did he fail to push the initiative after his seizure of Nanjing. Instead he withdrew into a palace world of sensual pleasures and religious mysticism, surrounding himself with concubines and perusing the Bible for all references to himself and his "mission," which he found underlined everywhere from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation. He failed to exploit the potentially popular issue of an anti-Manchu crusade and squandered his reputation as a serious religious leader.

Hong's failure to appeal to anti-Manchu sentiment was symptomatic of the Taiping's isolation, even when they were holding power in Nanjing. If they had maintained the city as a thriving metropolitan center, and had Hong enshrined himself there on a firm base of popular support, the Taiping might have been unbeatable. But the Chinese residents of Nanjing found the Taiping occupiers—many of whom were Hakkas, with their strange dress and accents, and their large-footed women—as bizarre as any foreigners or Manchus. The residents resented the Taiping for their alterations of economic life, their attempt to establish a common treasury and regulate markets, their segregation of the civil population by sex and occupation, and their attempt to enforce a strict code of conduct. Passive resistance to the Taiping was endemic, and flight, spying, and defections to the Qing common.⁷ Dorgon's more flexible policies in the early Qing, by contrast, had been far more successful in winning general popular acceptance.

Beyond Nanjing, the Taiping failed in the countryside, where their dreams of a common treasury for all believers and an equitable system of landholding remained largely unrealized. Even though they controlled large areas of Jiangsu, Anhui, and Zhejiang for years, and areas farther north and west intermittently, they lacked the commitment or personnel to push through their dramatic land reforms, and ended up as yet another tax-collection agency on the backs of a despondent peasantry. Their constant need for food and supplies to maintain their huge armies meant that Taiping foraging squads scoured the country for hundreds of miles. These logistical

demands, when coupled with the constant fighting with Qing forces—who also needed food and lodging—left huge areas of what had once been China's most prosperous region as barren wastes.

The Taiping failed as well to coordinate their uprising with two other upheavals occurring at the same time: the revolt of the Nian to the north and the Red Turbans to the south. Had some kind of concerted action been arranged—as the anti-Ming rebels Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong had tried to do with other bandit leaders in the 1630s—the Qing could not have survived, especially when suffering a series of damaging blows from the Western powers at the same time. But Taiping asceticism and the extreme nature of their religious claims made constructive alliance with other rebels difficult.

Nor did the Taiping manage to enlist Western sympathy in their cause. Foreigners, especially missionaries, had been initially excited by the prospect of a Christian revolutionary force that promised social reforms and the defeat of the moribund and intransigent Manchus. But the eccentricities of Hong Xiuquan's Christianity eventually became apparent to the missionaries, and traders came to fear the Taiping's zealous hatred of opium. Finally, the Western powers decided to back the Qing in order to prevent a Taiping seizure of Shanghai, which might threaten the West's newly won treaty gains. With members of Triad secret societies controlling the Chinese areas of the city from 1853 to early 1855, a Taiping seizure seemed likely. In the closing years of the rebellion, a foreign-officered mercenary army supported by steam-driven, shallow-draft gunboats fought alongside Qing forces against the Taiping. This was the so-called "Ever-Victorious Army," led first by the American adventurer from Massachusetts, Frederick Townsend Ward, and after his death by the deeply religious British artillery officer, Charles "Chinese" Gordon.

The Qing cause was also bolstered by the loyalty, tenacity, and courage of senior Chinese officials who fought on against the Taiping even though the regular Manchu-led banner armies seemed unable to defeat the enemy. These Confucian-educated scholars were alarmed by the Taiping threat to their ancestral homes and distraught at the Taiping's use of Christianity to attack the whole structure of Chinese values. The greatest of these leaders was the Hunanese official Zeng Guofan, who had first raised local troops to defend his own estates when he was on mourning leave from the court in 1852. Zeng went on with his brothers to raise and equip an efficient and honestly administered army of tough Hunanese peasant conscripts officered by local Confucian gentry. Given the weakness of the Qing banner forces in the region and the proven ineptitude of the local bureaucrats in maintaining militia forces, Zeng's troops formed a crucial addition to the state's

defensive resources. Named the Xiang Army, after the river that cuts through Hunan, this army became one of the Taiping's deadliest enemies and played a critical part in the eventual recapture of Nanjing.

The formation of the Xiang Army suggests more broadly the surprising flexibility and effectiveness of local forces in resisting the Taiping. Failing to attract many gentry to their cause, the Taiping encountered opposition all over central and eastern China from the hundreds of local militia forces organized by the gentry to defend their homes and fields. Accepted as essential by the Qing even if they seemed to underline the ineffectiveness of the state, these militia brought new levels of power to the gentry landlords. When the *likin* tax—a supplement on the transit dues—was permitted so that these militia leaders could finance their military ventures, it enabled them to continue their success in the long war of attrition. The Taiping found it harder and harder to obtain supplies or new recruits as whole communities solidified in resistance against them.

The fatal inflexibility of Hong's regime is evident in the failure of a bold attempt by the Taiping to alter and "Westernize" their rule. The author of this venture was Hong Ren'gan, a younger relation of Hong Xiuquan who had also studied with missionaries in Canton and been a member of the first God worshippers. During the early years of the Taiping rebellion, Hong Ren'gan lived and worked in Hong Kong, and became familiar with Britain's colonial government there. Finally in 1859 he made his way overland to Nanjing, disguised as a physician, and was enthusiastically received by the Heavenly King, who named him prime minister. Hong Ren'gan prepared an elaborate document entitled "A New Treatise on Aids to Administration," which he presented to the Heavenly King in late 1859. His program called for the development of legal and banking systems in the Taiping domains; the construction of highways, railways, and steam-driven freight ships; the introduction of a postal service; the publication of newspapers; and the abandonment of geomancy and infanticide. Hong Xiuquan endorsed all these proposals as "correct," except for those suggesting the spread of information through newspapers, on which he noted: "It will not be too late to carry out this proposal after the remnant demons are annihilated."⁸ But in the event, no concrete steps were taken to initiate these reforms. And once Hong Ren'gan's attempt to develop a new grand strategy to regain the upper Yangzi for the Taiping failed, and a massive counter-attack he ordered against Suzhou and Hangzhou was beaten back, the last elements of popular support for the Taiping were dashed.

As Zeng Guofan complacently told the Qing emperor, "Now when the people hear of the rebels, pain and regret pierce their hearts, men as well as women flee, and kitchen fires no longer burn. The tillers do not have

harvests of a single grain, and one after another they abandon their occupations. When the rebels travel through a territory without people, it is like fish trying to swim in a place without water." Yet when the end came in July 1864, after Hong Xiuquan's death—either by suicide or from illness, it was never made clear—and Qing troops stormed into Nanjing, Zeng wrote to the emperor in some awe: "Not one of the 100,000 rebels in Nanjing surrendered themselves when the city was taken but in many cases gathered together and burned themselves and passed away without repentance. Such a formidable band of rebels has been rarely known from ancient times to the present."⁹

FOREIGN PRESSURES

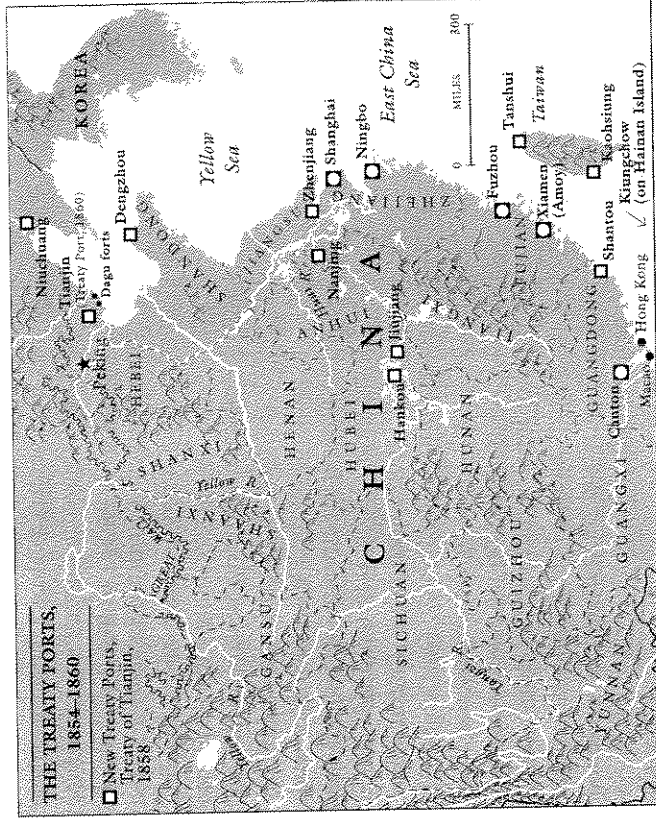
One of many factors that helped the Qing overthrow the Taiping was the assistance of foreigners in the early 1860s, whether in the form of customs duties collected through the foreign-managed Shanghai Inspectorate of Customs or in the form of the Ever-Victorious Army, led in the field by Western officers. The reasons for that support had mainly to do with international affairs, in which, once again, the primary actors were the British. Disappointed at the results of the Nanjing treaty and frustrated by continued Qing intransigence, the British reacted with scant sympathy when the Qing were threatened by the spread of the Taiping rebellion. Instead the British made the highly legalistic decision to apply the most-favored-nation clause to the American treaty of 1844, which had stipulated that that treaty be renegotiated in twelve years. By applying that renewal stipulation to their own Nanjing treaty of 1842, British authorities forced the Chinese to renegotiate in 1854.

The British foreign secretary saw the speciousness of this argument, writing to the governor of Hong Kong that "the Chinese Authorities may perhaps and with some degree of plausibility object that the circumstances of the time are unsuitable for the commencement of such a work."¹⁰ But he nevertheless suggested that the Qing be presented with the following formidable list of requests: access for the British to the entire interior of China or, failing that, to all of coastal Zhejiang and the lower Yangtze up to Nanjing; legalization of the opium trade; cancellation of internal transit duties on foreign imports; suppression of piracy; regulation of Chinese labor emigration; residence in Peking for a British ambassador; and reliance on the English version rather than the Chinese in all disputed interpretations of the revised treaty.

Despite some caution because of their involvement in the Crimean War

against Russia, the British moved jointly with the Americans and French to press for treaty revision, which the beleaguered Qing continued to oppose. The British finally took advantage of an allegedly illegal Qing search of a ship formerly of Hong Kong registry, the *Arrow*, to recommence military actions at Canton in late 1856. After some delays in getting reinforcements—the Indian mutiny was now raging, and the idea of a war in east Asia was not popular with the British people—the British seized Canton in December 1857 and exiled the consistently hostile governor-general of the region to Calcutta. Sailing north in a near repeat of the 1840 campaign, they took the strategic Dagu forts in May 1858 and threatened to seize Tianjin. In June, with the way to Peking now open to the British forces, the Qing capitulated and agreed to sign a new treaty. By the terms of the most-favored-nation clause, all British gains would also be shared by the other major foreign powers.

This "Treaty of Tianjin" of 1858 imposed extraordinarily strict terms on China. A British ambassador was henceforth to reside in Peking, accompanied by family and staff, and housed in a fitting residence. The open preaching of Christianity was protected. Travel anywhere inside China was permitted to those with valid passports, and within thirty miles of treaty



ports without passports. Once the rebellions currently raging in China were suppressed, trade was to be allowed up the Yangzi as far as Hankou, and four new Yangzi treaty ports (Hankou, Jiujiang, Nanjing, and Zhenjiang) would be opened. An additional six treaty ports were to be opened immediately: one in Manchuria, one in Shandong, two on Taiwan, one in Guangdong, and one on Hainan Island in the far south.

The Tianjin treaty also stipulated that all further interior transit taxes on foreign imports be dropped upon payment of a flat fee of 2.5 percent. Standard weights and measures would be employed at all ports and customs-houses. Official communications were to be in English. The character for *barbarian* (*yi*) must no longer be used in Chinese documents describing the British. And British ships hunting pirates would be free to enter any Chinese port. A supplementary clause accompanying the various commercial agreements stated explicitly: "Opium will henceforth pay thirty taels per picul [approximately 130 pounds] Import Duty. The importer will sell it only at the port. It will be carried into the interior by Chinese only, and only as Chinese property; the foreign trader will not be allowed to accompany it." This condition was imposed despite the prohibition in the Chinese penal code on the sale and consumption of opium. Virtually the only British concession was to pull back from Tianjin and return the Dagu forts to Qing control.

The British evidently expected China's rulers to abandon the struggle at this point, but the Qing would not, and showed no intention of following the treaty clause that permitted foreign ambassadors to live in Peking. In June 1859, to enforce the new treaty terms, the British once more attacked the Dagu forts, now strengthened and reinforced by Qing troops. Fighting was heavy and the British were beaten back, even though the American naval commodore Josiah Tatnall, despite his country's declared neutrality, came to the aid of wounded British Admiral Hope with the ringing cry "Blood is thicker than water."¹¹ Repulsed from the Dagu forts, the British sent a team of negotiators to Peking by a different route in 1860, but they were arrested by the Qing and some were executed. Determined now to teach the Qing a lesson they could not ignore, Lord Elgin, Britain's chief treaty negotiator, ordered his troops to march on Peking. On October 18, 1860, following Elgin's orders, the British burnt to the ground the Yuan Ming Yuan—the exquisite summer palace in the Peking suburbs built for Qianlong's pleasure using the plans of Jesuit architects. The British, however, spared the Forbidden City palaces within Peking, calculating that destruction of those hallowed buildings would be a disgrace so profound that the Qing dynasty would inevitably fall.

The emperor had already fled the city for Manchuria and named his

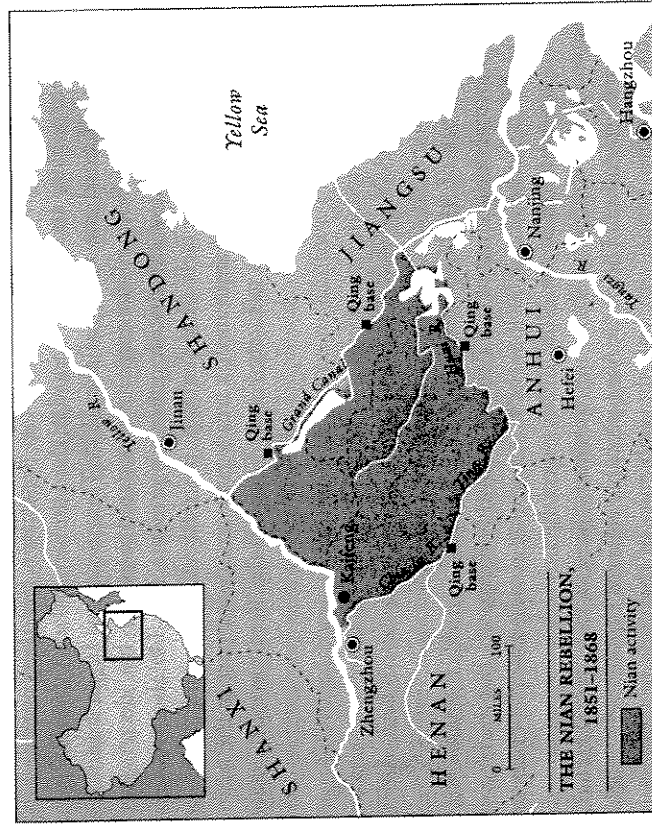
younger brother, Prince Gong, to act as negotiator. But there was nothing left to negotiate, and on the very day the summer palace burned, Prince Gong reaffirmed the terms of the 1858 Tianjin treaty. In an additional "Convention of Peking," the emperor was stated to express his "deep regret" at the harassment of the British queen's representatives. He also promised a further 8 million taels in indemnity, permitted Chinese emigration on British ships, made Tianjin itself a treaty port, and ceded part of the mainland Kowloon peninsula to Hong Kong. Thus did the "treaty system" reach its fruition.

THE NIAN REBELLION

The outbreak of the Nian rebellion is usually dated to 1851, the same year as the formal declaration of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. But the origins of the Nian can be traced back to the 1790s among roving groups of bandits who operated north of the Huai River, especially in the border-region area that comprised southwest Shandong, northwest Jiangsu, east-central Henan, and northern Anhui. The name *Nian* probably referred simply to the rebels' status as mobile bands, although the ambiguity of the term in Chinese is such that it can also refer to the martial disguises they sometimes adopted, or to the twisted paper torches by whose light they robbed houses at night.

Unlike the Taiping, the Nian had no clear-cut religious affiliation, political ideology, strategic goals, or unified leadership. Yet for the first fifty years of the nineteenth century, they steadily grew in numbers and strength. Some Nian had connections with White Lotus groups, Eight Trigrams followers, or Triad societies, while others were connected with the smugglers who made money by evading the government monopoly on salt sales. But most were poor peasants or ex-peasants struggling to survive in a bleak environment of worked-out soil, harsh winters, and unstable river systems subject to appalling floods. The prevalence of female infanticide in the area also meant that there was a profound imbalance in the region's sex ratios. As many as 20 percent of the men were unable to find wives and start families, making of them a rootless and volatile group capable of swinging into action with a raiding party at any time. The settled local communities tried to guarantee some security by establishing small protective militias, walled villages, and crop-watching associations, but the Nian nevertheless launched raids to seize crops from nearby villages, to rob the transport vehicles of government salt merchants, to kidnap wealthy landlords for ransom, or even to attack a local jail where a fellow Nian gang member was being held.

After 1851, when serious floods in northern Jiangsu brought fresh hard-



ship, affiliation with Nian groups rose dramatically, and the Qing officially took note of them as rebels. In 1855, two years after the Taiping seized Nanjing, the Yellow River climaxed a long series of floods by breaking out of its main restraining dikes east of Kaifeng and carving a new channel into the gulf north of the Shandong peninsula; the ensuing misery brought ever more recruits to the Nian gangs. At the same time, Nian organization tightened: in 1852 leaders of eighteen separate Nian groups had proclaimed as their head Zhang Luoxing, a northern Anhui landlord who had supported sheep stealers and had run the local salt smugglers' protection racket. In 1856 Zhang was elected "Lord of the Alliance," with the honorific title "Great Han Prince with the Heavenly Mandate." The Nian forces organized themselves into five main banners, named for different colors, each of which grouped together rebels of common surnames from neighboring communities.

The veteran forces of Nian warriors may only have numbered 30,000 to 50,000 troops, but their effect was disproportionate to their size. Many of them were cavalymen, many had firearms, and they could cut at will across the lines of communication between the Qing capital of Peking and the government forces besieging Nanjing. By developing strongly walled or

moated communities, often armed with cannon, in the area north of the river Huai, they established dozens of secure bases to which their troops could retire after their forays across the countryside. Other villages and market towns also fortified themselves to keep the rebels *out*, so that much of the area north of the Huai became crisscrossed with defensive communities. Sometimes "peace treaties" were signed between defensive villages and neighboring Nian fortresses in which each agreed not to attack the other. In other cases, stipends in cash or opium were paid as "protection money."

The extent of rural misery in the region cannot be assessed precisely, but it must have been great. In one proclamation, Zhang Luoxing explained that the local people made their lives worse by fleeing the Nian. "Wherever our troops go, you grab your treasures and run away in terror. Ruffians then take advantage of the situation to plunder freely. Left unattended, your houses are burned to the ground and nothing is left standing when you return. Although your actions are intended to protect, in reality they bring nothing but disaster."¹² Although the Nian leaders issued numerous proclamations banning looting and rape, these had little effect on the rank and file. For them it was common practice to scavenge for vegetables and roots in deserted farms, hunt down wild animals, kidnap members of rich families, and seize local trade convoys. Sometimes on their return to their home base, the Nian sold cheaply the food they had looted elsewhere, to increase their popularity locally.

Although Zhang Luoxing was killed in combat, other able Nian leaders soon emerged to replace him. They developed an intensely successful form of guerrilla strategy in which Nian forces would retreat steadily from the Qing troops until those troops were tired and forced by terrain into smaller and smaller units. The Nian, regrouping, would then attack these scattered units with an overwhelming force of long-speared infantry and sword-bearing cavalry. Often the Nian conducted a grim scorched-earth policy, luring Qing forces into areas where all the crops had been rooted up, houses and boats burned, and wells filled with stones.

The Qing court's response was to appoint Zeng Guofan, hailed as a great victor after the fall of Nanjing, as supreme commander of military affairs for Nian suppression. But Zeng could not finish off the Nian, despite a careful plan that involved the formation of four provincial military bases—one each in the provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, Henan, and Shandong, and each on a major river or canal to assist in moving supplies. The plan also entailed the digging of canals and trenches to curb the mobility of the Nian cavalry, and a systematic attempt to win local villages back to Qing allegiance by means of conciliatory policies and the selection of new headmen.

The strategy failed in part because the governors of the four provinces could not cooperate fully, and because Zeng had disbanded many of his best Xiang Army troops after the fall of Nanjing. Accordingly he was dependent on troops from the army of his protégé Li Hongzhang, who had been appointed governor-general of Liangjiang (i.e., the provinces of Jiangsu, Jiangxi, and Anhui). While Li Hongzhang was able to supply Zeng with a steady revenue for the troops, who were recruited from Anhui province and named the Huai Army after the river that cuts through the north of the province, the troops did not give their full loyalty to Zeng. The court thereupon switched the offices of the two men, making Li commander of the campaign and Zeng governor-general of Liangjiang.

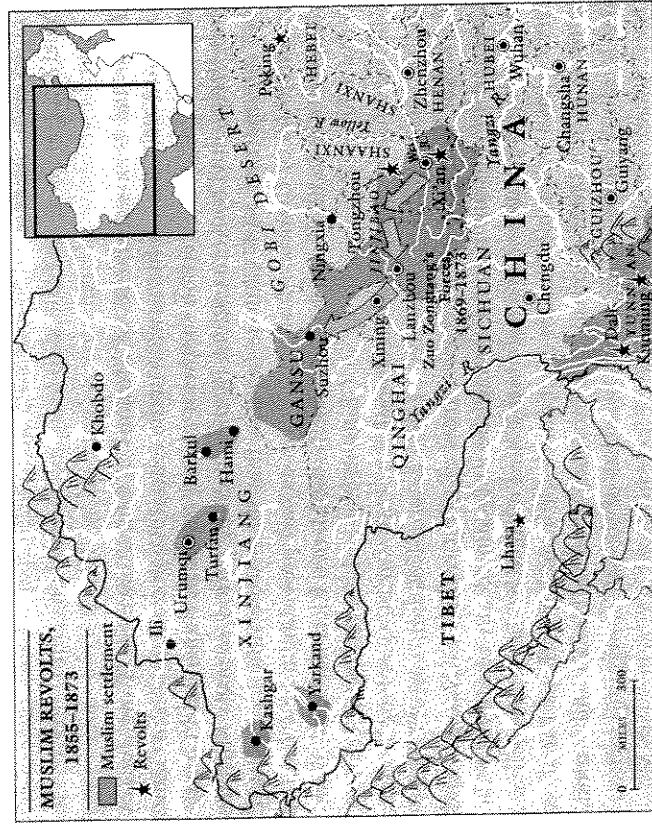
These switches emphasized the complexity of the new political world that was emerging in China as more power devolved on local regional commanders. Li Hongzhang owed his political career to Zeng, who had recruited him for his own semiprivate bureaucracy while Li was still a young man. Li and Zeng not only had complicated, interlocking careers, they ran their own military systems. Still, Li Hongzhang initially had as hard a time suppressing the Nian as had Zeng Guofan. The Nian forces seemed always to elude him, breaking across the defensive barriers, even roaming as far afield in the northwest as Shaanxi province, where they entered the cities of Xi'an and Yan'an. "Our troops had to run after them," as Li put it, "while they moved as freely as mercury."¹³ But a slow, steady war of attrition brought the collapse of the now divided Nian forces by 1868. Li's armies were well paid by Chinese standards and generally loyal to him and their personal commanders. They used rifles and artillery they had purchased from the foreigners, and began the systematic use of gunboats on the northern waterways. Foreign armored ships—two of them aptly named the *Con-fucius* and the *Plato*—patrolled the coastal waters off Shandong to prevent a Nian breakaway that might threaten foreign trade, now flourishing under the terms of the Tianjin treaty and the Convention of Peking.

In August 1868, after heavy fighting brought final Qing victories in Shandong and the execution of the cornered Nian survivors, the court offered sacrifices of thanks to heaven in the temple of their ancestors and the temple of the god of war. Li Hongzhang was ennobled and given the honorific title of Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent. Like Zeng Guofan, who had been named to the highest possible honorific rank after recapturing Nanjing, Li Hongzhang had consolidated his career on the backs of defeated rebels. Zeng died in 1872 and hence did not have much time to enjoy his fame and prestige, but Li Hongzhang was granted a long life. For the next thirty-three years he was to be one of the most powerful officials in China.

MUSLIM REVOLTS

There had been settlements of Muslims in China since the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–907), both at the termini of the central Asian trade routes in Gansu and Shaanxi, and in certain southeast coastal towns of Fujian and Guangdong frequented by Arab traders. By the late Ming period, so many Muslims had intermarried with Chinese families that there were now large settled communities of Chinese Muslims (known as *hui*) providing a new level of complexity to local administration. The Jesuit Matteo Ricci noted the number of Chinese Muslims living in China in the early seventeenth century. Chinese Muslims had launched several uprisings during Qianlong's reign; and the jihads (holy wars) declared by the khans of Kokand, west of Chinese Turkistan, had kept the outermost areas of Qing control in Kashgar and Yarkand in constant turmoil during the early nineteenth century. In the more settled agricultural areas of north China ravaged by the Nian rebellion, there were also sizable Muslim communities, containing perhaps 1 million or more of the faithful: prosperous mosques stood in Henan and Anhui, and Muslims controlled their own branches of the salt-smuggling rackets. Discriminatory legislation protected Chinese involved in violence with Muslims, and religious riots and feuds were commonplace.

But the areas of greatest Muslim concentration, besides Gansu-Shaanxi, were in China's southwest, particularly the province of Yunnan. The Muslim settlements here dated back to the time of the Mongol conquest of China in the thirteenth century, and friction with other Chinese settlers pushing into the region had been endemic. It was in Yunnan in 1855, as the Taiping strengthened their hold on Nanjing and the Nian began to organize their grand alliance, that a third major rebellion erupted against the Qing. The triggers for this rebellion were the heavy land taxes and extra levies imposed by Peking on the Yunnanese Muslims, whose plight was exacerbated by disputes over the gold and silver mines that gave the province much of its scarce wealth. The Chinese, having exhausted their own mines, tried to oust the Muslims from theirs. Violence and rioting led to a large-scale Chinese attack on the Muslims, who fought back, seizing the important city of Dali in the west of the province and besieging Kunming, the capital. Kunming was in rebel Muslim hands only for a brief period in 1863 before being recaptured by the Qing. In Dali, however, the Muslim rebel Du Wenxiu, taking the name "Sultan Suleiman," created a new state named *Pingnan guo*, "Kingdom of the Pacified South," his variation of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's title.



The Qing officials in the area were inept, and the terrain made campaigning difficult, especially after fighting by Miao tribesmen, religious sectarians, and Muslims spread to the mountainous border area where Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou provinces meet. But the Qing managed to turn the tide by splitting the Muslim forces and rewarding the turncoats, developing local defense groups, and relying on a handful of talented local Chinese generals. In 1873 Dali fell after heavy fighting, and Du Wenxiu, failing in his attempt at suicide, was captured and executed.

Difficulties of terrain and the huge distances involved made it difficult for the Yunnan Muslims to coordinate their struggle with another Muslim rebellion that broke out far to the north—in Shaanxi and Gansu. This rebellion, commencing in 1862, had been encouraged by Taiping generals trying to deflect the Qing from their siege of Nanjing, and Nian troops marched to the region in the mid-1860s to see if some anti-Qing alliance could be forged. Several areas of Gansu and southern Shaanxi province had sizable Muslim populations, many of them followers of the “New Teachings” derived from the central Asian mystical school of Sufism. The Qing had attempted to ban these New Teachings following a series of Muslim uprisings between 1781 and 1783, but had only deepened local bitterness.

The northwest Muslim revolt of 1862, however, seems to have arisen from local tensions between Chinese and Muslims rather than from any particular religious or anti-Qing focus. A volatile situation of rioting and harassment was intensified by the Taiping foray into the area. Following the pattern now long established in east and north China, the local population responded to the threat by forming militia units to defend their homes; in doing so, it was natural for Muslim militia groups to form in some areas and Chinese ones in others. Since most banner troops had been drafted away to fight the Taiping and the Nian, and since many of the local garrison Green Standard troops were themselves Muslim, Qing authority in the region was weak, leaving the situation ripe for trouble. The revolt began with a tiny incident—a quarrel between a group of Muslims and a Chinese merchant over the price of some bamboo poles. Arguments led to blows, Chinese crowds gathered and, with gentry leadership, attacked and burned Muslim villages along the Wei River, killing innocent Muslim families. The Muslims in turn formed armed bands, retaliated against the Chinese (and against their coreligionists who refused to take up arms), and in late June besieged the two most prosperous cities in southern Shaanxi—Tongzhou and Xi’an.

The Qing forces in the area were initially plagued with inadequate leadership, but even when more efficient generals were appointed, their troops suffered from low morale, disease, and wages constantly in arrears. There were many desertions. Although Qing troops were able to hold Xi’an and Tongzhou, they lost control of much of the surrounding countryside. And when, in late 1862, Qing forces began to achieve some victories, the Muslims simply retreated west into Gansu, where they formed new armed bands whose rallying cry was that the Qing were planning to exterminate all Muslims in China.

The few banner garrisons, based mainly in Ningxia and Lanzhou, were powerless to pacify the rebels, and the only hope of the Qing seemed to be to spread dissension *within* the Muslim ranks. As a senior Manchu official pointed out to the court in words that seemed to justify a Muslim fear of total extermination: “Among the Muslims, there are certainly evil ones, but doubtless there are also numerous peaceful, law-abiding people. If we decide to destroy them all, we are driving the good ones to join the rebels, and create for ourselves an awesome, endless job of killing the Muslims.” The overall problem was complex, he added, since in Gansu, “with a few rare exceptions, there are Muslims living in every city; [and] in the army, there are proportionately even more Muslims than Chinese among the rank and file.” A murky sequence of negotiations, pitched battles, trickery, false surrenders, and reprisals followed throughout 1863 and 1864, while the only advice the Qing court offered its officials was to “talk softly to them and be

ready for any incident."¹⁴ By 1866 gunpowder supplies had run out, rice was too expensive to buy, and even local wheat prices were scores of times their usual level. There was no fuel, and horses died for lack of fodder. Soldiers lived on "soup" of diluted flour, and many civilians starved or committed suicide.

In desperation, the Qing court turned to a scholar who had emerged as one of the most effective anti-Taiping leaders—Zuo Zongtang. Like Zeng Guofan, Zuo was born and raised in Hunan province. In 1830, when he was eighteen, his father died, and he spent some time studying with the powerful official and statescraft scholar He Changling; but although he was a conscientious scholar, Zuo failed the senior-level *jinsi* examinations three times in the 1830s and decided never to try for them again. Instead he worked as a tutor, studied geography and the history of China's western regions, and trained himself to be a successful experimental farmer, specializing in tea and silk production. During the Taiping uprising, he emerged as a talented military leader, fighting first in his native Hunan—where he raised, trained, and equipped his own volunteer army of five thousand men in emulation of Zeng Guofan's Xiang Army—and subsequently in Anhui, Zhejiang, and Fujian. As well as being a good general, Zuo proved to be an expert in the rehabilitation of reconquered areas, encouraging agriculture, grain storage, education, cotton growing, and the building of ships. In September 1866 Zuo was named governor-general of Shaanxi and Gansu, and ordered to suppress the Muslim uprisings there. He reached Shaanxi in the summer of 1867, only to be deflected by counterorders that he join the fight against the Nian, which he did with distinction. He finally settled in the Shaanxi capital of Xi'an in November 1868 to plan his campaign.

Zuo approached the task of defeating the northwest Muslims, which had baffled his predecessors, with a practical and patient mind. He took advantage of his own studies of the western regions of China and benefited, too, from talks he had had long before with Commissioner Lin Zexu after Lin's return from post-Opium War exile in Ili. But of greatest benefit to Zuo, besides his experiences as army commander and practical farmer, were the long discussions and the exchanges of letters he had with a local scholar who had served as Lin Zexu's secretary and had long lived in Shaanxi. This man told Zuo Zongtang: "You must take your time. Advance only when you have plenty of food and well-trained soldiers. You may just as well plan your campaign on a three-year basis. . . . Once you are ready to strike, hit the meanest Muslim leader hard. Deal with him firmly, without mercy. When the others become quite frightened by the punishment he receives, then you can accept their surrender."¹⁵

From Zuo's subsequent actions, we can tell that he fastened on Ma Hualong as that "meanest Muslim leader" who had to be broken first. Ma had established a powerful base in the region of Jinjibao, south of Ningxia, protected by a network of ditches and over five hundred forts. Ma was revered as a leading exponent of the New Teachings and regarded by many of his followers as an incarnation of the holy spirit, equal in power to the prophet Muhammad himself. Accordingly, the Muslims fought with devoted tenacity. Even after Zuo had assembled and supplied adequate troops, the siege of Jinjibao took sixteen months and cost Zuo the life of his finest commander. Only when the Muslim defenders had been reduced to eating grasses, then hides, and finally the bodies of dead comrades did Ma Hualong surrender in March 1871. He and his family were executed by slicing; more than eighty of his "officials" were also killed; and thousands of Muslim merchants, women, and children were transported to other cities or exiled to northern Manchuria. Settlement in Jinjibao was forbidden to all Muslims.

Thereafter the campaign moved inexorably to its conclusion. Zuo was now subsidized with money that he persuaded the court to divert from other provinces to himself, by substantial loans he floated with foreign traders or with the customs service, and with soldiers' rations and horses' fodder supplied by the military farms he had insisted on founding. He marched his forces westward along the well-traveled caravan trade route to Lanzhou, where he established an arsenal and planted more crops to feed his armies. Still refusing the court's order that he hurry, Zuo prepared with meticulous calm for the final assault on the northwest Gansu city of Suzhou, which he took in November 1873, killing most of the defenders and burning large areas within the walls. Although some of the Muslim rebels fled even farther west to Hami and would take years more to conquer, the provinces of China proper were now pacified. For the first time since 1850, China could once again, with the ambiguous exception of the treaty ports, be considered unified under Qing rule.