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Perceptions of China and the Chinese People in the British Periodical and Newspaper Press, 1860-1900

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF William M. Stegemeyer, Jr. for
the Master of Arts in History presented November 6, 1992.

Title: Perceptions of China and the Chinese People in the
British Periodical and Newspaper Press, 1860-1900

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

Ann Weikel, Chair

Linda Walton

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Few historians have examined the portrayals of China by British writers during the nineteenth century. Although Britain lead all other western powers in the penetration, exploration and exploitation of the Chinese Empire during the nineteenth century, British perceptions of China, particularly during the critical final decades of the century, have only been presented as small parts of larger comprehensive surveys of western images of China. Historians agree that as a result of Britain's active role in China, British writers were the leading transmitters of

information about China to the West, especially after the formal 'opening' of China by treaty after 1860. However, no one has adequately addressed the question of what information was available to the British reading public during the period from 1860 to 1900. As source material for their conclusions about British perceptions of the Chinese, historians have relied exclusively on a small number of books about China published in the late nineteenth century. They have overlooked the tremendous amount of source material available in British magazines and newspapers from the late nineteenth century. The periodical and newspaper press was the leading source of information for nineteenth century British readers. Therefore, a complete examination of British perceptions of China requires some examination of this material.

A survey of more than 200 articles in British magazines and journals from the period 1860 to 1900, revealed three major themes in the presentation of China to the late nineteenth century reading public. Two of these themes, the alien and incomprehensible nature of China and China's refusal to modernize, have been discussed by other historians. While the books that they used as source material did reveal the negative aspects of these themes, the periodical press better demonstrates the relentlessly hostile presentation of information about China, the constant repetition of a narrow range of topics dealing with

China and further, the subtle shift of writers' attitudes against China on an issue such as modernization.

While the character of individual Chinese was not a major issue in the few books that historians of the period have examined, it emerged as a major theme in many articles published in the late nineteenth century. Finally, an examination of news reporting from China in the Times of London revealed the persistence of negative portrayals of China year after year. British hostility toward China was most clearly demonstrated through the course of regular Times coverage of events from China. The negative imagery remained consistent despite improving communications between Britain and China and despite the steadily increasing volume of information reaching Britain from China.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHINA AND THE CHINESE PEOPLE
IN THE BRITISH PERIODICAL AND NEWSPAPER PRESS,
1860-1900

by
WILLIAM M. STEGEMEYER, JR.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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in
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1992

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

The Members of the Committee approve the thesis of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the nineteenth century, British scholars, travellers, traders and missionaries produced many written descriptions of China and the Chinese people. While no one has produced a comprehensive study of British portrayals of China, some historians have used these writings in other histories of the period. However, their research has focused almost exclusively on a small number of books published during the late nineteenth century. With this focus on books, historians have overlooked the large number of British magazine and newspaper articles that dealt with China in this period. In fact, two outstanding works that included the subject of British perceptions of nineteenth century China, Raymond Dawson's The Chinese Chameleon: an Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization and Colin Mackerras' Western Images of China, contained no mention of the British periodical and newspaper press except for two cartoons from the magazine Punch.¹

¹Raymond Dawson, The Chinese Chameleon: an Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Colin Mackerras, Western Images of China (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989). The two cartoons are from the April 10, 1858 and December 22, 1860 issues of Punch, used simply as illustrations by

Both of these books were lengthy surveys that traced the history of Western European perceptions of China from the earliest recorded contacts up through the modern day. While both Dawson and Mackerras acknowledged the central role of British writers in shaping western views of China during the nineteenth century, neither author claimed to be presenting an exhaustive or even detailed account of works published about China in this period.² Dawson and Mackerras were interested in long term trends in the development of images of China in the West. Thus, for each period they covered, Dawson and Mackerras both cited what they saw as a few significant examples of writings on China.

While there is a large body of source material on China and the Chinese in nineteenth century British newspapers and magazines, it is scattered throughout a number of publications and it is often poorly indexed. Historians of broad trends in intellectual history such as Dawson and Mackerras would have a difficult time making use of such material without allocating an extraordinary amount of their research time in collecting and sifting through these articles. Therefore, books have proved to be more

Dawson at pages 133 and 151. They are mentioned briefly by Mackerras in the endnotes to his chapter on the nineteenth century at page 281.

²Dawson, 3, Mackerras, 43.

convenient sources for consolidated general historical surveys.

In Western Images of China, Mackerras cited examples of books published in Great Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century to illustrate the constant level of hostility toward China in that period. He compared The Middle Kingdom, written in the early 1850's by British missionary S. Wells Williams with A. H. Smith's Chinese Characteristics published in 1900.³ Mackerras saw almost no improvement or indication of increased sympathy or understanding in the later book despite nearly half a century of increasing access to Chinese society. Mackerras also attempted to broaden his discussion of British writers by describing two travel books, two accounts of embassies to China and two books on Chinese geography, all published during the course of the nineteenth century. In all of these works, Mackerras saw two constant themes of China's impenetrable strangeness and its hopeless and illogical resistance to change. In addition, Mackerras briefly discussed the role of British encyclopedia entries in

³S. Wells Williams, The Middle Kingdom, a Survey of the Geography, Government, Literature, Social Life, Arts, Religion, &c., of the Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants, 5th ed., (New York: John Wiley, 1851); A. H. Smith, Chinese Characteristics (Edinburgh and London; Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1900).

reenforcing popular stereotypes through their condescending descriptions of Chinese civilization.⁴

Mackerras' work provided an excellent introduction to western portrayals of China.⁵ Further, Mackerras raised issues in his survey that invited more detailed investigation by historians. For example, Western Images of China included examples of writings that shaped popular opinions. While Mackerras did not attempt to determine which books were most influential in forming western perceptions of China, he did try to provide a representative sampling of the types of books available to nineteenth century readers.

Because Mackerras used a very limited number of sources and did not deal with the newspaper and periodical press, his work suggested the need for further investigation of the material available to westerners in the various periods covered by his survey. Therefore, this paper will move beyond the work of Mackerras by examining articles about China published in British periodicals and in the Times of London from 1860 to 1900 in order to demonstrate the

⁴Mackerras, 59.

⁵Dawson's book was more a work of general interest history than a scholarly treatment of the subject of western images of China. Further, Dawson relied almost exclusively on a handful of works by missionary writers as source material for his chapter on portrayals of China in the nineteenth century. Therefore, The Chinese Chameleon is not as useful a starting point for a detailed investigation of British portrayals of China as Western Images of China.

remarkable consistency in the negative portrayal of China and to illustrate various negative themes in the presentation of information about China.

The late nineteenth century was a critical period in the history of western contacts with China. With the end of the 'Arrow' War of 1858-1860 (also known as the Second Opium War) China was first opened to widespread penetration by westerners.⁶ During the next few decades, hundreds of Britons and others moved throughout the interior of the country, with the highest level of missionary and imperialist activity occurring in the 1890's.⁷

This era of expanding travel and contact with China ended with the Boxer Uprising in 1900. The siege of the foreign legations in Peking and the murder of western missionaries in China captured world attention. The new image of a dangerous and resentful China forced western powers to suppress their rivalries and end the competition to "carve up the Chinese melon."⁸ After 1900, Britain moved away from the leading role in China that it had maintained

⁶For discussion of the Second Opium War and its aftermath see, John K. Fairbank and Kwang-Chin Liu, eds., The Cambridge History of China, v. 11, Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, part 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 147-165, and Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, The Rise of Modern China, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 196-220.

⁷Joseph W. Esherick, The Origins of the Boxer Uprising (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 91.

⁸Ibid., 311.

since the Opium War of 1839-1842 and British writers were no longer the leading sources of information about the Far East.⁹

Thus, the years from 1860 to 1900 formed a distinct era in the history of China and the West. The British were active and important participants in this period. Hundreds of different articles in a wide range of different publications provided a striking picture of the fear, contempt and frustration that many Britons experienced when they came into contact with China and the Chinese people.

Steadily falling prices for periodicals and rising literacy rates in Britain helped make the second half of the nineteenth century a great age of magazines and journals. There was a rising public interest in journals of all sorts with 630 different magazines in existence by 1873.¹⁰ Not only was there a wide range of specialized journals available, but individual publications such as the London Journal, had circulations of more than 500,000.¹¹ Periodical literature became the dominant source of

⁹Mackerras, 66-67.

¹⁰George Bornstein and Daniel Fader, British Periodicals of the 18th and 19th Centuries (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1972).

¹¹Louis James, "The Trouble with Betsy: Periodicals and the Common Reader in Mid-Nineteenth Century England," The Victorian Periodical Press, Samplings and Soundings (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 360.

entertainment and information for all literate Britons before the 1900's.¹²

While books about China may have been both popular and influential, the average British reader of any class, was much more likely to come into contact with information about China as it was presented in publications with total circulations in the millions and which cost as little as two or three pence. In addition, the hundreds of articles from 1860 to 1900 represented the opinions of many writers ranging from the anonymous to the prominent, including those cited by Dawson and Mackerras.

This paper will draw on three major types of publication, as well as the London Times, as sources for articles about China. First, the general family publications, such as Reynold's Miscellany, the London Journal, Bow Bells, and All the Year Round, were inexpensive weeklies aimed at lower class readers. For 2 pence or more, the reader purchased about 24,000 words on 24 double columned octavo pages. Such a magazine was likely to contain a complete story or part of a novel, a poem, a portion of a history or a biography, games, recipes, crafts, and short pieces "for wonder."¹³ Articles about China were

¹²John S. North, "Why Read Victorian Periodicals?" Victorian Periodicals: a Guide to Research, (New York: Modern Language Association of New York, 1978).

¹³Bornstein and Fader, 75.

generally included as part of the last category or they might form a lengthier account. Just because these publications were aimed at the working classes did not mean that their articles were always short or simplistic in content. Chamber's Journal, a better quality, cheap magazine, was well known for the amount of solid information on its large pages. Although it was too factual and abstruse for some readers, it enjoyed a large circulation.¹⁴

The second type of periodical was the lengthy general interest magazine aimed at adult readers. These publications included Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Temple Bar, Fraser's Magazine, and Cornhill Magazine. All were monthlies, more expensive than the weeklies, and contained about 130 closely printed, double-columned pages.¹⁵ Magazines in this category had circulations ranging from 20,000 to 50,000 each but their total readership may have been considerably greater. This type of periodical was the mainstay of the new subscription reading rooms and lending libraries that were becoming widespread after the mid-

¹⁴Louis Billington, "The Religious Periodical and the Newspaper Press, 1770-1870," The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986), 126.

¹⁵Bornstein and Fader, 80.

nineteenth century.¹⁶ Temple Bar, MacMillan's, and Cornhill Magazine were aimed more at women readers and thus had fewer political and religious discussions. They emphasized serialized fiction, travel and literary accounts. Argosy, Belgravia, and Murray's Magazine, while very similar in format to the other monthlies, were aimed at higher income readers and had smaller circulations.¹⁷

Finally, the third group included such sophisticated publications as Nineteenth Century, Contemporary Review, and Fortnightly Review. These journals were published either monthly or quarterly and often included very lengthy articles or devoted entire issues to essays on one subject. Although they were aimed at the general reader, these publications often featured detailed and learned discussions of politics, foreign affairs, and other controversial subjects. The 'high class' journals had monthly circulations of about 10,000, but like the general interest monthlies, their influence was probably greater than this number suggests, especially among the middle and upper classes.¹⁸

Journals such as the Nineteenth Century, unlike the inexpensive weeklies and the general interest magazines,

¹⁶Lucy Brown, Victorian News and Newspapers, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 107.

¹⁷Bornstein and Fader, 89.

¹⁸Brown, 108.

published mostly signed articles and thus were often forums for leading politicians and experts in other fields. The British periodical press had a long tradition of anonymity that only began to break down in the late nineteenth century. While historians have sometimes identified the authors of particular essays, hundreds of nineteenth century writers are virtually unknown. In fact, it has been estimated that 75% of all articles in monthlies and quarterlies published from 1824 through 1900 were either anonymous or pseudonymous (the percentage would be much higher if weekly publications and newspapers were included).¹⁹

Besides these various weekly, monthly and quarterly publications, this paper will consider coverage of China in the London Times. The Times, a daily newspaper first published in 1785, was by far the most influential and widely read authority on foreign affairs in Great Britain. Before the late 1880's, the Times was Britain's only national newspaper. From about 1850, the Times was distributed throughout the country by railroad and was sent to Britons around the world. With the spread of the telegraph, British provincial newspapers relied completely

¹⁹Mary Ruth Hiller, "The Identification of Authors: the Great Victorian Enigma," Victorian Periodicals: a Guide to Research. (New York: Modern Language Association of New York, 1978), 124.

on stories they took from the Times for foreign news coverage.²⁰

While the Times' circulation never exceeded 70,000 in this period, compared to rivals such as the Daily Telegraph with more than 200,000, the Times was considered the most reliable and most politically independent. Further, the Times was the only newspaper that attempted to maintain continuous coverage of news from throughout the world with a network of nearly permanent and anonymous correspondents. The Times was also more expensive than any other daily newspaper and at 16 pages, was twice as long as its rivals. Times feature stories on foreign affairs were often two or three columns long and were famous for their analysis of events. In contrast, other newspapers in the late nineteenth century, contained only single paragraphs of telegraphed foreign news.²¹ Thus, the Times resembled the monthly political journals in its depth of coverage of countries such as China. However, the Times stood alone in prestige and in frequency of coverage.

It is important to remember that those who wrote about China and the Chinese people in the Times and in other publications in the late nineteenth century, were part of a common intellectual tradition. Two writers who attempted to

²⁰Alan J. Lee, The Origins of the Popular Press in England, 1855-1914, (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 62.

²¹Brown, 52-53.

describe these traditions were Edward Said in Orientalism and Andrew L. March in The Idea of China: Myth and Theory in Geographic Thought.²²

In his book, Said argued that all western representations of the Orient in the nineteenth century were fundamentally inaccurate because the authors were not looking for truth. These western writers created and maintained an imaginary "orient" in place of real portrayals of the East. The orient was a collection of strange, incomprehensible societies. It was populated by sluggish, sensual races, who lived among the ruins of earlier, superior civilizations. Because of their inability to advance and their lack of interest in improvement, the peoples of the orient fell prey to savage despots.²³

According to Said, everyone who wrote about these societies contributed to the myth by refusing to seek accurate information and by drawing on earlier, fantastic accounts as primary source material. In Said's view, texts about the orient were not really intended to inform about actual events or customs in the East. Instead, they were intended to create "the very reality they described."²⁴

²²Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (New York: Random House, 1978); Andrew L. March, The Idea of China: Myth and Theory in Geographic Thought, (New York: Praeger, 1974).

²³Said, 38.

²⁴Ibid., 94.

The literature about the orient in the nineteenth century created a topos rather than images of functioning, real societies. According to Said, this topos consisted of a set of references and "congeries" of characteristics originating more in the imagination of the writer, than in fact.²⁵ Even though many writers claimed to be using personal contacts and perceptions, Said believed that western writers were simply giving a "personal twist to the academic styles of modern orientalism."²⁶

Said's main point was that orientalism was a means of justifying western interference and conquest in those cultures. He argued that the internal consistency of orientalist writings was strong proof of such political motives.²⁷ Thus, nineteenth century writers took the growing systematic knowledge about Asian societies, produced by increasing European contact and penetration and distorted it to lay the groundwork for western control and exploitation.²⁸

Although Said was referring specifically to the Middle East, other writers have extended his interpretation to literature produced about other Asian countries during the

²⁵Ibid., 177.

²⁶Ibid., 257.

²⁷Ibid., 3.

²⁸Ibid., 3.

nineteenth century. For example, B. 8J. Moore-Gilbert in Kipling and Orientalism found strong evidence of the orientalist approach in British writings about India and Mackerras argued that orientalism has led westerners to colonize knowledge about China.²⁹

March had a less political explanation for why Europeans have taken a particular approach to the portrayal of Asia in general and China in particular. While he would agree with Said that the image of Asia in nineteenth century European literature was very inaccurate, March traced this "myth of Asia" to over reliance on environmental determinism, rather than on a wish to break down and conquer.³⁰

March argued that for centuries, Western Europe saw Asia as isolated, inward-looking and hostile. When westerners began making extensive contacts with various societies in Asia during the late eighteenth century, new information was just incorporated into the preexisting myth. Scholars such as Turgot and Hegel updated the myth by citing specific characteristics of Asian societies to support old stereotypes.³¹ According to March, westerners believed that Asian societies were stagnant and strange because of

²⁹B. J. Moore-Gilbert, Kipling and Orientalism, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 4; Mackerras, 4.

³⁰March, 23.

³¹Ibid., 46.

geographic isolation. Deserts, mountains and vast distances shaped Asians in ways completely different than Western Europeans. China was seen as the most Asian country. Therefore it was the most isolated, alien and hostile place that westerners encountered. March argued that this vision of China as a huge, inward looking mass distorted all Western investigation and commentary throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³²

The perception that China was a barren and hostile physical environment shaped writers' images of the Chinese people as well. March claimed that European intellectuals were obsessed by the idea that the character of a people was strongly tied to the natural shape of the places where they lived.³³ Thus, the Chinese people, held back from full development in their vast, unchanging environment, lacked boldness, ingenuity and activity.³⁴

Both Said and March are helpful in the study of negative images in nineteenth century British publications. For example, Said would see the continuing emphasis on Chinese failure and ineptitude as an attempt to prove that

³²Ibid., 24.

³³Mackerras also uses March's analysis but only concerning twentieth century portrayals of China. March, on the other hand, sees environmental determinism a major theme in western interpretations of China during the last two hundred years. March, 62.

³⁴Ibid., 57-58.

China needed western management. In contrast, March would argue that writers in those articles were merely trying to confirm the age-old myth of China's 'stunted' civilization. According to this view, Chinese problems in adapting to nineteenth century western technology were the result of too many centuries isolation from fresh and dynamic forces. Since both of these theories appear applicable to the work of late nineteenth century writers and because both Said and March provide a useful intellectual context, the two theories will be discussed throughout this paper.

In Western Images of China, Mackerras noted the persistently negative and even hostile portrayal of China by British writers throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The incredible intensity and consistency of this phenomenon is really only apparent when one examines dozens of individual articles from the same period. This paper will discuss numerous examples of articles that reenforce such themes as China's impenetrable strangeness and its inexplicable (to the nineteenth century British point of view) resistance to change and progress. While these two topics were first mentioned by Mackerras, a survey of the large number of articles published in this period better illustrates the type of information available to the British reading public. Such a survey is especially useful in demonstrating the lack of diverse points of view in the late nineteenth century British periodical press.

Chapters II and III will deal with the themes of Chinese strangeness and resistance to change. Chapter II will focus on the large number of articles that portrayed China as completely incomprehensible and alien. Most of these writers based their conclusions on the most casual observations and demonstrated no real effort at comprehension.

Chapter III will describe the various accounts of China's resistance to change. This survey will be divided into two sections based on the major phases in British perceptions of Chinese progress. In the first phase, from the 1860's through the mid 1880's, writers generally viewed China optimistically. They believed that China was on the verge of a major breakthrough in its acceptance of modern technology. The telegraph, railroads, and modern weapons all seemed likely to lift China to the status of world power. While those observers were sometimes frustrated by the pace of change, most maintained a positive outlook. However, during the 1890's, writers became increasingly angry with the lack of progress in China. China lost wars and fell far behind Japan in industrialization. This group of articles represented a second, negative phase in the portrayal of Chinese modernization.

Chapter IV will consist of a survey of the various articles relating to Chinese character. While Mackerras did not recognize this as a separate topic, the flawed character

of the 'typical' Chinese person was a common theme in magazine articles of the period. Writers discussing this subject tended to use brief contacts with individual Chinese as the basis for opinions about the entire race. Also, several articles about this lack of character were based on limited social explorations in communities of Chinese located outside of China, particularly in California and Australia.

Finally, Chapter V will describe portrayals of China in the Times of London. This portion of the paper will focus on three randomly chosen periods in the late nineteenth century in order to provide a sense of the different types of articles about China published in the Times and to show changes in the presentation of information about the Chinese.³⁵

The articles printed in 1866 and 1867 are discussed because the Times' coverage of China of was irregular and inconsistent during the 1860's. Separated from Britain by enormous distances and poor communications, China appeared infrequently in the pages of the Times. Articles in this period tended to emphasize news from British communities in China rather than from China itself. However, by 1879, communications were improved and the number of articles

³⁵A thorough discussion of the Times' coverage of events in China from 1860 to 1900 could form the basis of a separate thesis.

about China in the Times increased. The Times' news reporting on China in 1879 was typical of the newspaper's coverage throughout the 1870's and 1880's. In this period, news from China consisted mostly of long, hostile reports of political events written by the anonymous Times correspondent.

Also, Chapter V will survey the Times' coverage of China from 1892 to 1894. In this period, much more news was reported from China, but the articles themselves tended to be shorter and contain less analysis. Although these reports were less overtly hostile to China than those from earlier periods, the constant emphasis on violence and disorder continued to reenforce the late nineteenth century image of China as an irrational and chaotic place.

While this paper will attempt to show the image of China presented to the British reading public in the late nineteenth century, it is not a study of British public opinion in that period. As Lee Benson pointed out in his essay "An Approach to the Scientific Study of Past Public Opinion," a public opinion study really requires some attempt to connect public opinion in a given period with public or governmental policy.³⁶

³⁶Lee Benson, "An Approach to the Scientific Study of Past Public Opinion," Toward the Scientific Study of History, (Philadelphia: Longmans, 1972), 544.

This paper will not try to show any connection between the content of periodical literature and specific actions by the British Government or members of the British public. Such issues would require a much more lengthy and complex study than the present paper. Instead, this survey is an attempt to show what types of information were available to literate Britons during a few important decades of British contact with China. Rather than reflecting increased knowledge and understanding, contact between the British and the Chinese after the end of the Second Opium War only produced more hostility and frustration. The overwhelmingly negative character of articles published about China in this period is strong evidence of these emotions in the relations between these two countries.

CHAPTER II

ALIEN AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE CHINA

In 1884, All the Year Round contained an article summarizing the views of a Chinese official who had recently toured Europe. He complained about the western tendency to generalize about China based on isolated incidents and observations. He noted that this approach always produced a focus on the negative characteristics of China. He argued that Europeans were more interested in telling fantastic stories and selling books than searching for the truth.³⁷ The anonymous writer of this article ridiculed the official's claims and no other article in this period put forward a Chinese view of Western journalism.

A survey of more than 200 articles published in British periodicals from 1860 to 1900 demonstrates the truth of the Chinese traveller's observations. The writers of these articles constantly based sweeping conclusions about China on isolated examples. As a result, nearly every description of China from the period repeated and reenforced the same negative images. The vast majority of articles about China focused on a narrow range of topics

³⁷"A Chinese Colonel on China," All the Year Round, n.s., 34 (26 July 1884): 297.

demonstrating both the writers' limited access to information and disinterest in providing more than exotic entertainment.

Said and March would see these articles as evidence of a shared intellectual tradition among the writers. According to Said's theory, British writers came to China with the expectation of finding a country in chaos and in desperate need of British guidance and development. Instead of seeking out detailed knowledge about Chinese customs and culture, writers were satisfied with a few negative observations. In Said's view the writers' hostility might be explained by frustration over inefficiency and disorder in Chinese life.

Under March's approach, visitors would not expect to be able to penetrate the mysteries of China. Because China was the most remote nation from the British way of life, observers could only hope to catalog the ways in which China differed from the west. Thus, China was alien and inscrutable and the visitor expected to see that fact confirmed. Prolonged contact with such a stagnant, inbred society could not possibly be healthy. According to March's view, a real fear of China was at the heart of the negative portrayals.

Besides the intellectual preconceptions that limited writers' desires and abilities to collect accurate information about China and Chinese society, there was a

very strong sense in the articles that most British people in China were cut off from any real access to that country's people and culture. While a few writers recognized that they lacked accurate information because they lived in treaty port communities, most blamed the Chinese for preventing access. One writer argued that any inaccuracies were the fault of the Chinese for being "averse to giving the foreigner any truthful answers."³⁸ The few writers who tried to balance their conclusions still tended to blame the Chinese for being impossible to understand. One writer felt the nickname "celestials" was appropriate for the Chinese because they were so strange that "they might just as well be visitors from some other planetary body."³⁹ Another writer, after attempting at length to sort out the Chinese imperial succession, gave up by saying "like everything else Chinese, it is quite unique, very odd, and not a little inconvenient."⁴⁰

While a few writers might express the desire to "get inside the Chinaman's head" as every idea there was "a total negation of Western ideas," most were content to dismiss China as a topic for serious study and instead to pull out

³⁸"Marriage in China," Chamber's Journal, 4th ser., 10 (8 February 1873): 93.

³⁹"Chinese and Chaldees," Saturday Review, 50 (6 November 1880): 581.

⁴⁰"Chinese Succession," Spectator, 48 (20 March 1875): 359.

items of interest to the British reader.⁴¹ Thus, few articles looked very far beneath the surface of Chinese life. One writer expressed the basic viewpoint of his contemporaries when he stated that "China is politically dead, decrepit and corrupt and its views and actions are unimportant."⁴²

THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF CHINA

Late nineteenth century descriptions of China focused overwhelmingly on cities. When describing the Chinese city, writers emphasized negative, even shocking images. Some noted the bizarre atmosphere in the Chinese city. One writer stated that the first entrance into China "is enough to cause temporary aberration of the mind" and that "all the senses are suddenly attacked by such outrageous incongruities."⁴³ Even writers who were more intrigued than repelled by the atmosphere in China emphasized the unreal. This included an early visitor to Peking who recalled being stunned by the gaudy colors on the street and

⁴¹"A Day in Canton," Chamber's Journal, 4th ser., 4 (26 January 1867): 52.

⁴²Alexis Krausse, "The British Record in China," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 64 (1 September 1898): 353.

⁴³"Manners and Customs in China: Chinese Domestic Life," Temple Bar, 41 (April, 1874): 51.

clamorous noise.⁴⁴ Another admiring writer described city life in China as resembling "an immense fair" with a "constant flux and reflux of buyers and sellers."⁴⁵

When they provided details about the color and spectacle of Chinese streets, writers were critical and dismissive. The author of "A Chinese Matchmaker" claimed that lengthy wedding processions were just attempts by families to increase their status and that most were really made up of casual acquaintances and very distant relatives.⁴⁶ Another writer disapproved of the gaudy display in these processions and pointed out that despite the apparent grandeur, most of the bridal finery was rented and families were often bankrupted by overspending.⁴⁷ The author of "Sketches in China" dismissed funeral processions as mere empty display by noting that only the professional mourners looked sad and even they would pause "to make a sly remark with an unmistakable leer at any foreign devils watching."⁴⁸ Finally, in "Celestial Ceremonies," the

⁴⁴"The Chinese Capital, Peking," MacMillan's Magazine, 3 (January, 1861): 255.

⁴⁵"Theatricals in China," London Journal, 69 (18 January 1879): 35.

⁴⁶"A Chinese Matchmaker," Reynold's Miscellany, 34 (13 May 1865): 328.

⁴⁷"A Chinese Wedding," Chamber's Journal, 5th ser., 8 (14 March 1891): 172.

⁴⁸"Sketches in China," Fraser's Magazine, 68 (December, 1863): 704.

writer dismissed all of the ceremonies and processions that he observed on Chinese streets as "the dreariest absurdities."⁴⁹

For most writers, the strangeness that they emphasized was neither beautiful nor enjoyable. Instead, they constantly repeated the same complaints about China. The cities were filthy, crowded, disorganized, disease-ridden places lacking in all conveniences. The dirt and odor of China made a strong impression on the writers, even those who liked China. One traveller, who felt that the people of Peking were "the most wonderful in the world," also wrote that it was a pity that they were not cleaner. While this writer never specified what he thought was wonderful about the Chinese in Peking, he did list many unpleasant features of the city. At the end of his article, the writer concluded that the wisest travellers did not go to Peking at all.⁵⁰

Writers did not make the obvious comparison to conditions in urban slums in the West. Instead, they presented the situation as somehow unique to China. Writers blamed the Chinese for their "frowsy habits."⁵¹ This was

⁴⁹"Celestial Ceremonies," Chamber's Journal. 4th ser., 3 (20 October 1866): 668.

⁵⁰A. Henry Savage-Landor, "A Journey to the Sacred Mountain of Siao-Outai-Shan in China," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 56 (1 October 1894): 393.

⁵¹"The Chinese Capital, Peking," 255.

the case with one writer who argued that the Chinese did not care how they lived and that the "Chinaman's olfactory nerves are callous."⁵²

E. H. Parker described the prevalence of disease in the filthy Chinese city. Parker claimed that leprosy was very common and small pox was universal.⁵³ As was typical of writers in this period, Parker gave no evidence for his claims that nearly everyone in China was filled with disease. Instead, he preferred to focus on more colorful topics such as lepers at play, leper marriages and the sport involved in watching leper beggars try to pick up the coins Parker threw at them.⁵⁴

Writers found the insides of Chinese buildings just as unpleasant as the streets. In "Personal Reminiscences Touching Opium Smoking," an article that suggested that a majority of Chinese buildings were opium dens, the writer asserted that "nearly all Chinese interiors, with the exception of those of the small, rich minority, are grim, comfortless, and unfurnished to the last degree."⁵⁵ For

⁵²"The Chinese at Home," Chamber's Journal, 3rd ser., 15 (8 June 1861): 363.

⁵³E. H. Parker, "Lepers in China," Chamber's Journal, 5th ser., 13 (26 October 1896): 683; "Diet and Medicine in China," Cornhill Magazine, n.s., 2 (February, 1897): 181.

⁵⁴Parker, "Lepers in China," 684.

⁵⁵"Personal Reminiscences Touching Opium Smoking," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 159 (April, 1896): 573.

travellers wishing to stay in Chinese cities, the situation was especially unpleasant as inns were "dirty, uncomfortable, with rough dirt floors, walls covered with dust and filled with rude dirty furniture. The bed is a dirty platform and the only service provided is hot water."⁵⁶ In addition, inns in Peking "swarm with vicious scorpions and centipedes" and since "the Chinese have no fear of snakes, many live in the buildings."⁵⁷

Travel in town was awkward because there were no wheeled carriages and the streets were always crowded. Until the late 1880's, the most common method of transportation was the sedan chair. One writer described the experience of travelling in a palanquin (sedan) through Canton in the 1860's as akin to being "plunged into a phantasmagoria" with "hundreds of thousands of almond shaped eyes" staring at him.⁵⁸ Later, when rickshaws were introduced, travel in cities was easier but the foreigner had to deal with aggressive coolies who fought for each fare. One writer described the incredible difficulty he found in just walking around Chinese cities because

⁵⁶"A Chinese Inn," London Journal, 71 (5 June 1880): 367.

⁵⁷Parker, "Diet and Medicine in China," 181.

⁵⁸"A Day in Canton," 51.

inevitably some rickshaw coolie would follow, begging for the chance to pull him.⁵⁹

For the westerner, the Chinese city was a place of discomfort and nuisance. Large numbers of beggars, organized into guilds, constantly harassed those travelling in the streets. One writer described this phenomenon and also observed people "aspiring to be beggars" by tying off arms and legs with twine in order to cripple themselves. He believed that many died in the attempt.⁶⁰ Despite all of these awful conditions, Herbert Giles, one of the leading nineteenth century British experts on China, was able to recommend strolling through city streets as an amusement for Westerners "if they could behave themselves and resist the urge to kick coolies out of their path."⁶¹

Although writers spent considerable time describing the physical appearance of Chinese cities, they were not as interested in individual Chinese. If writers did notice the man in the street, they generally observed that all Chinese looked alike or made passing negative comments. The author

⁵⁹"Shanghai, From a Bedroom Window," All the Year Round, n.s., 1 (19 January 1889): 54.

⁶⁰Ibid., 56.

⁶¹Herbert Giles, "A Cremation in China," Cornhill Magazine, 39 (March, 1879): 335. Herbert A. Giles (1845-1935) was a member of the British diplomatic service in China from 1867 to 1892 and in 1897 became professor of Chinese at Cambridge University. Giles was best known for his Chinese grammars and dictionaries as well as for the Wade-Giles romanization system for the Chinese language.

of "Excursion to Peking, 1861," conceded that the Chinese "would be a handsome race if it were not for the villainous contracted forehead of the majority."⁶² Another writer was even less charitable when he stated that he thought that the Chinese were "demoniacal-looking wretches."⁶³

The Chinese pig-tail or queue was one physical feature that intrigued and annoyed British writers. Although the Chinese had only worn the queue since the Manchu conquest in the seventeenth century, most writers took the queue as evidence of the alien nature of the Chinese soul. In "The Chinese Barber," one writer described in detail the process of shaving the scalp up to the "sacred lock" and the combing, greasing, and plaiting of the "tail." He observed that the Chinese would feel dishonored without this queue and that they resented it being called a pig-tail.⁶⁴ Another writer noted the strangeness of human nature in China where men did not fear death but they dreaded the loss of their pig-tails.⁶⁵

⁶²"Excursion into Peking, 1861," St. James Magazine, 15 (March, 1868): 479.

⁶³"A Chinese Ascot," Cornhill Magazine, n.s., 5 (July, 1885): 74.

⁶⁴"The Chinese Barber," Chamber's Journal, 5th ser., 10 (19 August 1893): 528.

⁶⁵"The Chinese Puzzle," Chamber's Journal, 3rd ser., 20 (8 August 1863): 94.

Some even found the sight of queues disturbing. One writer stated that the Japanese looked better to him than the Chinese due to the absence of the pig-tail in Japan.⁶⁶ Another writer described how she left behind a wonderful servant in China because he would not cut off his queue. She felt that the sight of his pig-tail in England would be too distracting and it would make her conspicuous.⁶⁷

There is a remarkable consistency in these negative observations of China and the Chinese. Writers seemed incapable of maintaining a warm, light-hearted or appreciative attitude when describing their impressions and observations. Even the few writers who described pleasant sights outside of the major coastal and river ports always returned to ugly and chaotic images. In "Flowers in the Flowery Land," the writer discussed the Chinese love of plants and the quaint names farmers gave to their crops. This admiring account of Chinese rural life ended as the writer shifted to topics such as unsanitary burial techniques and descriptions of gaping coffins after a flood.⁶⁸

Despite the rural charm or the sense of peace and natural beauty in rural China, no writer was totally at ease

⁶⁶Shanghai, From a Bedroom Window," 57.

⁶⁷"Manners and Customs in China," 50.

⁶⁸"Flowers in the Flowery Land," All the Year Round, 34 (27 September 1884): 511.

with his surroundings and the dark side of China appeared in every article. T. G. Selby, in his "A Trip in the North of the Canton Province," contrasted the beauty of a remote, mountain bamboo forest "cool and dripping after the rain," with the appearance of the decayed corpse of a leper that he found there.⁶⁹ Another writer ended his pleasant account of travelling through rural China at night "surrounded by teeming millions while the land of the flowers slept in its inertia of centuries" with the disturbing image of awakening to find swarms of starving coolies around him.⁷⁰ Selby captured the dilemma in nineteenth century portrayals of China when he wrote, "one comes across such sickening and saddening sights in the midst of the most beautiful things in China. One can not be recklessly happy in heathen China."⁷¹

FAVORITE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Most of the writers for British journals and magazines did not demonstrate a great deal of background knowledge about China or familiarity with the Chinese language. As a result, these writers tended to focus on a few, easily

⁶⁹T. G. Selby, "A Trip in the North of the Canton Province," Methodist Magazine, 101 (November, 1878): 857.

⁷⁰C. W. Mason, "A Yangtze Holocaust," English Illustrated Magazine, 20 (January, 1899): 377.

⁷¹Selby, 858.

accessible topics such as Chinese theater, music, food, opium usage and crime. This small range of subject matter for articles about China provided British readers in the late nineteenth century with a very limited picture of the country and its people.

Chinese theater was an ideal subject for magazine writers. It paralleled a popular institution at home in Britain. It was open to the public, even foreigners. And, because it was very much a visual experience, it did not require language skills to observe it. Writers suggested that Chinese plays were a wonderful way to get to know modern Chinese customs, despite the fact that many plays were several hundred years old. Most writers believed that Chinese society never changed. One writer asserted that plays are very truthful representations of Chinese manners of the present day as these customs "are as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians."⁷²

Since most writers admitted that they could not understand the dialogue, their articles focused more on the physical setting and on the audience. While writers tended to disagree whether or not there were many permanent theaters in Chinese cities, all described the Chinese theater, as a very different structure than its British counterpart. Except for boxes, Chinese theaters had no

⁷²Robert K. Douglas, "The Chinese Drama," Contemporary Review, 37 (January, 1880): 126.

seats or partitions. Robert Douglas, in "The Chinese Drama," observed that since plays lasted all day, "the Chinese power of standing is only equaled by their power of unflagging enjoyment."⁷³ In fact, to some writers Chinese theater seemed more of an endurance test than a pleasant pastime. They emphasized the lack of scenery, the exaggerated mannerisms and the endless repetitions of action, "all things calculated to try an Englishman's patience."⁷⁴

In "Playgoing in China and Japan," Lewis Wingfield described the "outlandish audience, a throng of blue-cottoned coolies smoking, gesticulating and chattering" while a continuous series of plays was performed from dawn to midnight, without intermission.⁷⁵ Every company had 40 to 50 pieces memorized. Most plays were about the events of former dynasties. There were no women performers; however, there were men who trained themselves as women. One writer even claimed that these "stage women" bound their feet.⁷⁶

Some writers conceded that the acting was good. For example, one enthusiastically stated that the actors' "faces

⁷³Douglas, 125.

⁷⁴G. W. Lamplough, "In a Chinese Theatre." MacMillan's Magazine, 57 (November, 1887): 36.

⁷⁵Lewis Wingfield, "Playgoing in China and Japan," Murray's Magazine, 2 (July, 1887): 90.

⁷⁶"The Theatre in China," Cornhill Magazine, 9 (March, 1864): 297.

assume such a fine expression as one would not look for on the flat yellow visages of mongols."⁷⁷ Despite some appreciation for one aspect of the Chinese theater, writers were almost unanimous in criticizing the content of the plays. This was the case with George Adams in "The Chinese Drama," who complained that romance was mostly absent as "convention had crushed those amorous longings."⁷⁸ Writers also argued that Chinese historical plays lacked action and focused too heavily on moralizing. While Charles Lamplough, in his article "In a Chinese Theatre," did think Chinese plays could be entertaining if one concentrated on keeping track of the characters, most articles depicted Chinese drama as crude, infantile, and basically incomprehensible to Europeans.⁷⁹

If British writers tended to be condescending towards Chinese theater, they were totally hostile to Chinese music. Of all subjects dealt with by these articles, music inspired more hostility than anything but footbinding, and comparatively few even mentioned that subject. The author of "Curiosities of Canton" described Chinese musical

⁷⁷Wingfield, 93.

⁷⁸George Adams, "The Chinese Drama," Nineteenth Century, 37 (March, 1895): 509.

⁷⁹Lamplough, 40.

instruments as "instruments of torture."⁸⁰ Other writers seemed to stretch their imaginations trying to come up with phrases to express their contempt for those sounds. One writer reacted in a typical fashion when he exclaimed "oh! if those musicians were as merciful as strong!"⁸¹ Another writer in "A Chinese Orchestra" devoted an entire article to the subject and attacked Chinese music, instrument by instrument. The anonymous author wrote of "reeds, only fit to be heard in a nightmare" and of "unidentifiable instruments that are basically wooden boxes tortured by heavy mallets." His summary description of Chinese music was that it sounded "like a street row combined with six screaming children, a boiler factory and a riveting works."⁸²

Chinese cuisine was another subject that British writers described with dismay. Everything about the Chinese meal was disturbing. One writer was even upset with the order of a Chinese dinner with dessert, fruit and nuts, first and soup coming last.⁸³ The author of "A Chinese Menu," faced a more serious problem because he found that

⁸⁰"Curiosities of Canton," Chamber's Journal, 4th ser., 7 (9 July 1870): 443.

⁸¹Wingfield, 93.

⁸²"A Chinese Orchestra," Bow Bells Magazine, 42 (8 April 1885): 379.

⁸³Manners and Customs in China," 52.

"the majority of dishes are more or less repugnant... and often so nasty that consideration for feelings of the host is of no avail when called upon to eat them." Among the worst dishes described by this anonymous writer were dog hams, mule flesh and black cats' eyes.⁸⁴ Another writer claimed to have been fed "worms of all kinds, entrails and lichens."⁸⁵ Even a writer who described the Chinese art of food preparation and presentation added color to his article with a largely irrelevant discussion of rumors that rats were consumed in China.⁸⁶

Cures founded in superstition as well as strange ingredients made Chinese medicine a favorite subject. One writer described China as "the happy-hunting ground of the patent-medicine man" because the Chinese believed in the most ridiculous cures and most exotic elements in their medicines.⁸⁷ The author of "Strange Medicines" listed various ingredients including toad's paws, wolves' eyes, human skin and fat, and "other medicaments still more horrible." This writer gave readers a detailed account of

⁸⁴"A Chinese Menu," Chamber's Journal, 5th ser., 11 (22 December 1894): 802.

⁸⁵"From Cambodia to China, Part II," Chamber's Journal, 4th ser., 9 (21 December 1872): 805.

⁸⁶"Chinese Cookery," Temple Bar, 93 (September, 1891): 112.

⁸⁷"Advertising in China," Cornhill Magazine, n.s., 17 (September, 1891): 263.

Chinese physicians mashing up scorpions and digging up decayed animal carcasses for use in their cures.⁸⁸

Most of these writers noted the comparison between modern Chinese and medieval European practices. The Chinese were considered worse because they continued to use superstitious remedies even when presented with the benefits of modern medicine.⁸⁹

Writers were particularly critical of what they saw as the dishonesty in Chinese medicine. "Chinese Dentistry" was an excellent example of this point of view. The writer argued that Chinese dentists took advantage of the myth that toothaches were caused by worms in the teeth. He claimed that these dentists mixed small worms with the patient's blood when performing dental work and then scooped them out prove that the tooth was cured of worm infestation.⁹⁰

While articles about music and medical quackery portrayed the Chinese as a foolish and uncouth people, other topics helped create a picture of a degraded and chaotic nation. According to March's theory, bad theater and disgusting meals were merely proof that the Chinese idea of pleasure was completely removed from that of the British and

⁸⁸"Strange Medicines," Nineteenth Century, 21 (June, 1887): 903.

⁸⁹Parker, "Diet and Medicine in China," 178.

⁹⁰"Chinese Dentistry," Chamber's Journal, 4th ser., 15 (2 November 1878): 703.

thus incomprehensible. Magazine subjects such as opium and crime indicated that the Chinese were so debauched and their government institutions were so decrepit that China needed western intervention. This second type of article provides evidence of orientalist motives and preconceptions among British writers in this period.

By the late nineteenth century, opium smoking was a widespread and easily observed practice among the Chinese. Writers mentioned it frequently, although mostly they just noted it as a typical Chinese activity, like eating rice. Those writers who discussed the subject at length tended to represent one of the two sides in the debate over opium importation into China. Some claimed to have observed no ill effects in China from opium smoking and that many Chinese who used opium simply wore "expressions of celestial contentment."⁹¹

The author of "Personal Reminiscences Touching Opium Smoking" asserted that not only did opium not do any harm but it actually benefitted many in China. According to the writer of the article, a Chinaman had told him that only the smarter Chinese smoke it. The writer himself had observed numerous high officials and successful businessmen who used opium to relax and "clear their minds."⁹² In "The Interior

⁹¹"A Day in Canton," 50.

⁹²"Personal Reminiscences Touching Opium Smoking," 570.

of China," a writer even suggested that Chinese were immune to the stronger effects of the drug, because they consume vast amounts of tea, a stimulant, from birth and that the Chinese had a racial immunity because they had consumed opium extensively back "when our forefathers had no liquor stronger than mead."⁹³

Despite these confident assurances about the opium "problem," some writers disagreed. They argued that opium was leading to the degradation and rapid decline of the Chinese and their empire. One writer claimed that opium smoking was a terrible plague and that the poorest beggar would rather smoke than eat. He described incidents where Chinese came up to travellers "to ask for a remedy against the temptation, to which they daily succumbed, cursing it."⁹⁴ In "The Opium Trade," F. W. Chesson attacked the British role in the importation of a drug that had reduced the Chinese to "sensual imbeciles and paupers."⁹⁵

Although crime and punishment in China did not provide as much emotional debate in British articles as opium, it presented a graphic demonstration of how distant China was from the "civilized" world. Writers depicted China as a

⁹³"The Interior of China," Saturday Review, 13 (5 April 1862): 382

⁹⁴"From Cambodia to China," 805.

⁹⁵F. W. Chesson, "The Opium Trade," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 10 (1 September 1870): 354.

country overrun with crime and disorder and as a place where the most savage solutions were attempted. At the same time, the Chinese were shown to be incompetent in both committing crime and in punishing it.

Chinese criminals were described in almost comical terms. For example, one writer described how Chinese burglars drugged their victims by using sleeping powder blown into houses. The writer then told how burglars were still generally caught because they disturbed neighbors with their noise.⁹⁶ Gangs of highwaymen were supposed to run away at the sight of one European armed with a pistol. The author of "Chinese Highwayman" asserted that this fact proved that Chinese criminals were "pragmatic" rather than brave.⁹⁷ Another writer argued that while there were probably more criminals in China than elsewhere, they were too "slippery" to capture and too afraid of violence to be much of a threat.⁹⁸

Such claims were contradicted by stories of Chinese pirates, who were known for their cruelty. However, even the pirates were depicted as less than competent. One writer described a group of pirates who attempted to seize

⁹⁶"Chinese Burglars," London Journal, 76 (23 September 1882): 180.

⁹⁷"Chinese Highwaymen," Reynold's Miscellany, 31 (31 October 1863): 294.

⁹⁸"Chinese Police," Cornhill Magazine, 3 (February, 1861): 160.

a boat's cargo. The crew resisted, and the pirates burned the entire boat, getting nothing. The author maintained that this sort of senseless destruction was common.⁹⁹

The Chinese legal system was described as corrupt, inefficient and cruel. In "Chinese Police," one writer claimed that the basic principle of Chinese law was the exact opposite of English law. The writer seemed oblivious to problems in the British legal system when he angrily asserted that, "the Chinese give light penalties for the high and erudite criminal and harsh ones for the poor and untaught sinner."¹⁰⁰ Another writer argued that the system was so corrupt that honest magistrates were in danger of their lives. He also claimed that "in the total absence of rules of evidence, the chance of obtaining justice in Chinese courts is infinitely small."¹⁰¹

Writers were fascinated with Chinese court procedure, with its alien rules and its use of torture. The author of "The Detection of Crime in China" described defendants terrorized into confessions as they were forced to kneel on chains or hang by their thumbs¹⁰² R. S. Gundry began his

⁹⁹Selby, 858.

¹⁰⁰"Chinese Police," 158.

¹⁰¹Edward Parker, "The Life of a Chinese Mandarin," Cornhill Magazine, n.s., 4 (March, 1898): 383.

¹⁰²"The Detection of Crime in China," Chamber's Journal, 5th ser., 5 (17 November 1888): 735.

article, "Judicial Torture in China," promising to discuss Chinese legal theory seriously and respectfully. However, like other writers, the bulk of his discussion involved second-hand accounts of torture incidents including "walls spattered with victims' blood" and "bones laid bare" by whipping.¹⁰³

After each lurid example, Gundry paused to point out that such things were extremely rare and should not bias the reader against Chinese justice.¹⁰⁴ Another writer also tried to qualify his criticisms of China but was forced to conclude that Chinese punishments and their legal system as a whole demonstrated "the extraordinary indifference to human life which characterizes both this callous people and their ruthless governors" and "that the Chinese are cruel is one of those axioms that need no proof."¹⁰⁵

The portrayal of the Chinese criminal justice system in British articles provides an outstanding example of the orientalist point of view. As Said noted in descriptions of Middle Eastern societies, descriptions of Chinese trials and punishments clearly indicated the need for western institutions. Every example in the articles suggested that

¹⁰³R. S. Gundry, "Judicial Torture in China," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 53 (1 March 1890): 410.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 415.

¹⁰⁵Professor Douglas, "Crime in Cathay," English Illustrated Magazine, 17 (May, 1897): 143.

some outside force would be required to transform the uncivilized Chinese legal system. Since the Chinese always tended toward corruption and cruelty, western intervention would naturally be necessary to achieve the reconstruction and reform of in China.

THE SCHOLARLY APPROACH

A small group of articles in this period did attempt to describe more complex aspects of Chinese civilization and culture. Articles discussing Chinese literature, philosophy, and religion were usually produced by writers with some knowledge of the Chinese language and who had more than the average amount of familiarity with Chinese history. These articles still tended to emphasize the illogical and the incomprehensible nature of China and Chinese thought. Some of these writers took the approach that China had declined in comparison to its glorious past. They admired certain aspects of Chinese civilization but saw little to respect in late nineteenth century China. Both Dawson and Mackerras noted this antiquarian approach and Said argued that it was one of the most important ways that western scholars could rationalize intervention in countries with complex civilizations.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶Dawson, 138; Mackerras, 52; Said, 40.

Although some writers were favorably disposed toward Chinese civilization, they were careful to distinguish between China's remarkable past and its wretched present. The author of "Chinese Gentlemen and Virtuosos" asserted that the Chinaman of his day had no eye for beauty. While he could spot the artistry of his ancestors, the modern Chinese did not possess that quality. Instead, he was a passionless collector of the past.¹⁰⁷ Another writer singled out architecture and sculpture as areas where Chinese skills had declined or where Chinese refusal to move forward had crushed out any true artistic spirit.¹⁰⁸ This argument is the kind of evidence that March used to show the writers' fascination with China's geographic isolation.

Literature and calligraphy were other aspects of Chinese civilization that suffered from this 'stagnation'. British writers in this period were particularly frustrated with the Chinese system of writing. In his article, "Confucius," John Bowring, a well known China scholar, attacked the system of characters as being too "stiff and unbending" to represent modern thought.¹⁰⁹ Another writer

¹⁰⁷"Chinese Gentlemen and Virtuosos," Temple Bar, 104 (March, 1894): 419.

¹⁰⁸"Sketches in China," 705.

¹⁰⁹Sir John Bowring, "Confucius," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 3 (1 May 1868): 541. Sir John Bowring (1792-1872), was British Consul at Canton from 1847 to 1854 and Governor of Hong Kong from 1854 to 1859. As the senior British official in China in 1858, it was his decision take a hard

described Chinese writing as "very picturesque but not practical." He complained that Chinese scholars had to practice a lifetime to master it and then all they did was write elegant quotations.¹¹⁰ The author of "The Language and Literature of China" criticized the Chinese for excessive pride in their system of characters, "making it hopeless to try to introduce an easier mode of writing."¹¹¹ Finally, one writer characterized the Chinese writing system as a "degenerated form of hieroglyphics" and he asserted that the Chinese did not even invent it and had completely lost all the original meanings.¹¹²

As in the case of the written language, writers were critical of the inflexibility of Chinese literature and its reliance on old forms. In "A Chinese Novel," the writer praised the beauty and elegance of a fifteenth century Chinese novel, but complained that the Chinese seemed to stand still in literature. He argued that while Chinese literature was certainly superior to the English in the

line against the Chinese Government in the dispute over the lorcha "Arrow" thus precipitating the series of conflicts later known as the Second Opium War. Bowring was also a well known translator of poetry from several languages, including Chinese.

¹¹⁰"Chinese Writing and Printing," Chamber's Journal, 4th ser., 10 (22 March 1873): 191.

¹¹¹"The Language and Literature of China," Saturday Review, 40 (4 December 1875): 727.

¹¹²"Chinese and Chaldees," 582.

fifteenth century, the Chinese had not gone in new directions.¹¹³ In another, similar article, David Wedderburn regretted that the Chinese educational system prevented the growth of literature by its slavish attention to the modes of the past.¹¹⁴

Not all writers admired Chinese literature, not even the Chinese "classics." Some found Chinese literature incomprehensible. In a discussion of poetry, one writer admitted that he had yet to find a Chinese poem that "will bear perusal from beginning to end" or that will even sustain interest throughout.¹¹⁵ Another complained that the Chinese "seemed incapable of introducing either eloquence or passion into their writings."¹¹⁶

These writers did not believe that the problem was merely style or education. They blamed it on the sluggish nature of the Chinese mind. Thus, the author of "Chinese Stories" asserted that the Chinese would always fail as

¹¹³"A Chinese Novel," Saturday Review, 16 (28 November 1863): 703.

¹¹⁴David Wedderburn, "Two Fair Cousins, a Chinese Romance," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 24 (1 October 1878): 506.

¹¹⁵W. H. Medhurst, "Chinese Poetry," MacMillan's Magazine, 39 (February, 1879): 352.

¹¹⁶Douglas, "The Chinese Drama," 129.

story-tellers because their imagination was "too disjointed to enable them to weave a consistent story."¹¹⁷

Some writers apparently spent considerable time studying Chinese philosophy and developed a great appreciation for Chinese thought, especially as expressed by Confucianism. For example, John Bowring, wrote a lengthy article praising the beauty, simplicity and wisdom in Confucius' teachings. Bowring ended his article by affirming an old Chinese proverb, "Great!, Great!, Great! is Confucius."¹¹⁸

Bowring was critical of how the modern Chinese rigidly followed Confucian teachings and kept out all other knowledge and he was very hostile toward competing Chinese philosophies. Bowring singled out Lao-tze, "a sour and cynical spirit" whose teachings had merged "into gross idolatrous rites... and necromancy."¹¹⁹ Another writer praised the "beneficent instructions and grand moralizing" of Confucius. In contrast to Bowring, he praised the original philosophy of Lao-Tze and Chinese Buddhism but

¹¹⁷"Chinese Stories," Saturday Review, 49 (27 March 1880): 417.

¹¹⁸Bowring, 546.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 544-545.

mourned the degeneration of both religions in nineteenth century China.¹²⁰

As in the case of literature, not all writers respected earlier, classic forms of Chinese philosophy. One writer attacked the Confucian classics as "a dreary waste of cold formalism."¹²¹ The author of "The Chinese Classics" disparaged Confucianism by asserting that some of Confucius' teachings about ceremonies and divination were "eminently absurd." He was also disturbed by the fact that most westerners who wrote about Chinese literature and philosophy were missionaries. He criticized those missionary sinologues who praised Chinese philosophers, rather than pointing out the obvious errors.¹²² Another missionary writer blamed the sterile teachings of Confucius for failing to satisfy the natural cravings of the Chinese people for objects of worship.¹²³

Most writers did not treat Chinese religion seriously. George Curzon, in "The Cloister in Cathay," expressed the typical opinion that the Chinese as a whole had little interest in religion and therefore superstition rather than

¹²⁰Justus Dolittle, "Social Life of the Chinese," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 4 (1 September 1868): 344.

¹²¹"The Language and Literature of China," 721.

¹²²"The Chinese Classics," British Quarterly Review, 45 (1 January 1867): 48.

¹²³"The Chinese Puzzle," 95.

piety predominated.¹²⁴ One writer claimed that this situation was due to the low level of intellectual and spiritual development among most Chinese. He pointed to ancestor worship in China as an example of the most primitive species of religious thought.¹²⁵

A few writers did get upset about the state of Chinese religion, as in the case of one missionary writer who stated that Chinese heathenism was "revolting and despicable, only superior to religions practicing human sacrifice."¹²⁶ However, most writers were like A. C. Lyall, who took a more light hearted approach. He wrote about such subjects as the typical Chinese fear of being sketched and the Chinese terror of rubberbands, which they were certain possessed magical powers.¹²⁷

Just as in the case of casual observers of China, writers who displayed some knowledge of Chinese civilization and culture maintained a persistently negative attitude toward late nineteenth century China. Despite an appreciation for certain achievements of the distant past,

¹²⁴George N. Curzon, "The Cloister in Cathay," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 43 (1 June 1888): 752.

¹²⁵R. S. Gundry, "Ancestor Worship in China," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 57 (1 February, 1895): 225.

¹²⁶"Celestial Ceremonies," 667.

¹²⁷A. C. Lyall, "The Relations of Religion to Asiatic States: China," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 31 (1 January 1882): 151.

western scholars portrayed China as a sick society, unable to improve itself.

CHAPTER III

RESISTANCE TO MODERNIZATION

Although they found China to be a weird and irrational place, some late nineteenth century writers also saw China as a tremendous challenge. While British missionaries led the way in attempting to save millions of Chinese souls, many British magazine writers focused on the economic development of China. To these writers, China was a problem to be solved. After the British and French victory over China in the Second Opium War in 1860, a number of writers were very optimistic about the progress of modernization in China. They believed that such a process was inevitable because China was now completely open and exposed to Western ideas and technology. In several articles, writers pointed to small but hopeful signs that China would become a 'modern' nation.

Writers used military progress and railroad development as barometers of Chinese advancement. In the 1860's and 1870's, their articles chronicled the stages of Chinese acceptance of western ideas. Most of these writers were certain that China would make progress, especially in certain industries and branches of government simply because of obvious self-interest. Once a transportation system or

a modern military organization was established, widespread modernization would soon follow. Writers pointed to the presence of Western advisors in the Chinese government and military as the first stage in the creation of a new China. If this was not enough, model (British) communities at Shanghai and Hong Kong would continue to provide examples of Western superiority that even the backward Chinese could not ignore.

However, this belief in the natural course of Chinese progress soon gave way to frustration. First, China did not rapidly adopt technology or 'open up' its economic system to widespread trade with the West. Writers were particularly annoyed that China did not experience any sort of railroad boom in this period. In fact, the long ban on construction, followed by the painfully slow emergence of railroads, became a persistent theme among late nineteenth century British writers.

During the 1880's and especially in the 1890's, various articles explored the "China Problem." Writers offered numerous solutions. As time passed, fewer urged gentle persuasion and more advocated military force and direct rule by western nations. While some suggested that a new government could break through all resistance to change, most writers at the end of the century, believed that the mass of the Chinese people needed firm, European direction in order to make any progress.

According to Said's view, these later articles only made western goals more explicit. The earlier, more 'optimistic' phase of writing about Chinese modernization was merely one type of orientalism. Writers created an imaginary China, a fertile and welcoming environment, just waiting for the seed of western civilization. In their articles, they looked for evidence to support this myth. When business dealings with China proved disappointing and the Chinese actually resisted the gift of modernization, some writers looked for evidence to support new myths that blamed Chinese government and called for more direct western intervention.

Said detected this aggressive variety of orientalism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British writings about Egypt. Said cited the works of Lord Cromer, unofficial British viceroy of the British protectorate Egypt from 1882 to 1907, as an outstanding example of orientalist writing aimed at convincing the British reading public of the need for military occupation and colonial rule.¹²⁸ Similarly, articles about the failure of Chinese modernization in the 1890's appeared to fit under Said's view of a British imperialist agenda.

Some writers took a slightly different approach. They claimed that the Chinese were really incapable of dealing

¹²⁸Said, 35.

with sustained progress or of even adapting to Western civilization under any circumstances. These writers argued that the Chinese adopted modern technology only when forced and only when westerners were there to run it for them. Thus, the moment western pressure ended and skilled advisers were withdrawn, China would regress. These articles suggested that the Chinese were so intellectually inferior that it would be a waste to trust them with modern ideas and inventions. This type of article illustrated the March approach where China was seen as too insular to readily accept ideas from outside of its natural frontiers. The apparent optimism of the 1860's and 1870's could be explained as a belief that western ideas could act as a catalyst, immediately stirring up China's stagnant intellectual waters.

Also, under the March approach, western hostility in the late nineteenth century could be explained as a shift to the theory that China was too large and it had been geographically isolated for too long for western ideas to filter throughout the society within an reasonable amount of time. Therefore, a forced restructuring of Chinese government and society was the only hope for substantial progress.

Writers in this period were also increasingly critical of the rate of China's modernization in comparison to Japan. Like China, Japan was 'opened' to Western contact during the

1860's. However, Japan adopted Western methods quickly and was making substantial and visible progress even by the 1870's. As Japan adopted more technology and left China far behind, writers had nothing but praise for such reforms as the abolition of feudalism. Even though most writers did not take Japan very seriously as a military power, they did have considerable respect for the pace of Japanese change. Writers saw Japan as the successful model of a previously uncivilized country flowering under western tutelage. In contrast, China increasingly seemed to be a nuisance and a detriment to world order. By the end of the century, with Japan's defeat of China and the escalating European scramble for concessions, the Chinese were generally viewed as inscrutable, immoral and hopeless.

EARLY OPTIMISM

In 1860, as the Second Opium War entered its final stages and western powers began securing concessions from China that seemed to assure a new era in the spread of commerce and technology, the Saturday Review published a series of articles that pointed out the numerous exciting possibilities available to the British in the Far East. In "The Chinese War," the writer claimed that even though the fighting was hardly over and the peace not completely negotiated, trade with China was booming. Thus, as soon as more settled conditions returned, Britain was remarkably

well positioned to serve the needs of several hundred million new customers.¹²⁹ This theme of China's endless potential dominated the thoughts of many British writers in this period. Later in the century, when most gave up on the Chinese government and abandoned any hope for steady Chinese progress, writers continued to be tempted by the thought of millions of Chinese hungry for the products of British industry.

While writers in the 1860's recognized that there were problems involved in doing business with China, they believed that it would be easy to impose modernization on a defeated Chinese government. For example, in "The Objects of a Successful Chinese War," the writer acknowledged that in the past the Chinese government had been uniformly hostile to Europeans. Still, he argued that a firm, well designed program of modernization and trade could be imposed on the Chinese. In fact this writer felt that uncontrolled activity by both businessmen and missionaries in China was the most important threat in the postwar period. While China was now wide open for new ideas and expanded commercial activity, eager Englishmen might push too hard and produce more violence.¹³⁰

¹²⁹"The Chinese War," Saturday Review, 10 (17 November 1860): 611.

¹³⁰"The Objects of a Successful Chinese War," Saturday Review, 9 (7 January 1860): 5.

In "Lessons in China," another optimistic view of the China situation, the writer asserted that not only were all obstacles now removed, but Britain and other European powers would have to deal more carefully with the Chinese in the future. The writer argued that the Chinese were on the brink of a great age of industrialization and modernization. Both Opium Wars had only made China stronger and more open to new technology. As evidence of China's increasing power, the writer pointed to the increase in European casualties during the Second Opium War compared to the First. He argued that this situation was the result of the Chinese ability to copy the most modern weapons. Since China could imitate the best of European technology, it was in Britain's best interest to manage and profit by the rapid development of China that was certain to occur in the next few years. Otherwise, the writer warned, "the tartars may again overrun the world."¹³¹

"Progress in China," published in 1863, continued this argument that China was on the brink of tremendous development. The writer claimed that the mass of the Chinese population, despite two wars, liked and admired the British. This writer also described the "thousands" of Chinese ready and eager to advance farther in civilization

¹³¹"Lessons in China," Saturday Review, 10 (10 November 1860): 574.

than any other Asians.¹³² In an 1872 article, "The Chinese Arsenals and Armaments," another writer found a similar spirit of excitement and activity in China but he thought it had emerged only recently. He traced the Chinese hunger for modernization to their recent victories over internal disorder, not to wars with foreign powers.¹³³

Finally, a great advocate of British imperialism, Charles Wentworth Dilke, described the atmosphere of progress and innovation that he observed in China during his visit there in 1876.¹³⁴ He argued that China was just about to follow the European example and completely modernize. Therefore, Dilke believed that the Chinese would soon become an integral part of the British Imperial network of trade and commercial relations.¹³⁵

Dilke, like other writers who were optimistic about China's future modernization, believed that China would learn by observing the benefits of western technology and management techniques. Dilke was particularly proud of the

¹³²"Progress in China," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 93 (January, 1863): 50.

¹³³"The Chinese Arsenals and Armaments," Cornhill Magazine, 26 (December, 1872): 695.

¹³⁴Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke (1843-1911) was a radical imperialist and author of Greater Britain (London: 1868), a work that described Britain's mission in colonizing the world.

¹³⁵Charles Wentworth Dilke, "English Influence in China: an Additional Chapter to 'Greater Britain.'" MacMillan's Magazine, 34 (October, 1876): 560.

British administration of Hong Kong. He argued that once the Chinese became familiar with British municipal government, they would cast off their own antiquated system. Dilke was so confident about the ability of the Chinese to imitate what they observed that he predicted that the British could only expect a few years of dominance in any area of trade or manufacture before the Chinese first reached the same level and then exceeded it.¹³⁶

While other writers were not as enthusiastic about Chinese abilities, some felt that China could not ignore the many positive examples provided by the British. They asserted that the mere presence of Western technology in China would eventually alter all national habits of thought. For example, exposure to railroads would force the Chinese to imagine practical uses for them. Also, once this thought process started, the Chinese would naturally begin exploring and developing their natural resources. Thus, there would be no stopping the spread of progressive thought.¹³⁷

In "Telegraphic Communication with China," another writer described how the introduction of one European innovation might soon completely transform China. This writer claimed that once a telegraph system was introduced into China, all internal disorder would be resolved since

¹³⁶Ibid., 566.

¹³⁷"The Chinese Arsenals and Armaments," 703.

the Chinese government could respond to any crisis immediately. With this tight control over events throughout the country, the government could then implement a central economic policy. Eventually, and with the guidance of friendly European advisors, the government could use the telegraph to transmit directions on modernization and reform as well as to closely supervise the entire process.¹³⁸

While writers tempered their optimism by describing China's continuing hesitancy to adopt western technology and institutions, they argued that modernization was inevitable because of the intensely practical nature of the Chinese. In "Posting and Post Offices in China," the writer had to admit that the Chinese seemed completely oblivious to travel discomforts and they put little value on the speed of travel and transport. Nevertheless, the writer argued that Chinese businessmen would immediately see that they could make more money by using faster means of transport. Consequently, their own natural greed would prove things to the Chinese that they might otherwise refuse to believe. Unlike Dilke, this writer believed that the Chinese would never be able to run their own railway or steamship lines.¹³⁹ According to

¹³⁸"Telegraphic Communication with China," Chamber's Journal, 3rd ser., 18 (1 November 1862): 287.

¹³⁹"Posting and Post Offices in China," Cornhill Magazine, 38 (July, 1878): 102.

this view, the Chinese would have to accept perpetual European supervision along with any modern technology.

Sir Rutherford Alcock was another writer who emphasized the positive power of Chinese self-interest and common sense.¹⁴⁰ Alcock had long experience as a British diplomat in China and certainly expressed post-1860 British government policy toward China when he asserted that change in China should and would come gradually. In "The Future of Eastern Asia," he claimed that such advances as railroads, telegraphs, and mining could not be imposed on the Chinese and that there was no need to do so. Based on his personal contact with various Chinese, Alcock argued that the Chinese were both careful and cautious. He believed that if the Chinese were provided with a good example they would naturally follow it. Alcock expected that ultimately, due to this policy of caution, China might become more thoroughly modernized than any other non-European country.¹⁴¹

Even though this faith in the Chinese ability to modernize gradually declined, British writers continued to

¹⁴⁰Sir Rutherford Alcock (1809-1897) was British Consul in various Chinese cities from 1844 to 1858. He also served as Minister to China from 1865 to 1871. Due to his diplomatic service in Japan and Siam as well as China, Alcock was considered one of Britain's leading experts on the Far East during the late nineteenth century.

¹⁴¹Sir Rutherford Alcock, "The Future of Eastern Asia," MacMillan's Magazine, 30 (September, 1874): 447.

see their settlements in China as irresistible examples of appropriate behavior and beacons of civilization. R. S. Gundry, in his 1889 article "Progress in China," persisted in the assertion that the municipal governments of Shanghai and Hong Kong were the best missionaries for Western thought in China. He described their street lights, sanitation, telephones, water works, and parks as "shining examples" of the European way of life.¹⁴²

In this period of optimism, not all writers believed that China would learn rapidly just by observing the West. Cyprian Bridge, in "The Revival of the Warlike Power of China," proposed that more European advisors were necessary if China was to continue making progress. Although he saw improvements in Chinese military technology, Bridge did not believe that the Chinese would keep changing unless they were pushed. Bridge asserted that, due to their "unreasoning and uninquiring preference for everything that is old," the Chinese would always accept only the minimum of innovation. Thus, unless Westerners were present to urge them on, the Chinese shipyards and armories would remain at one level and technology would never spread to society as a whole.¹⁴³

¹⁴²R. S. Gundry, "Progress in China," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 52 (1 October 1889): 472.

¹⁴³Cyprian A. Bridge, "The Revival of the Warlike Power of China," Fraser's Magazine, n.s., 19 (June, 1879): 779.

Another writer also advocated putting pressure on the Chinese. In "The Present Condition of China," an anonymous "resident" argued that the Chinese at all levels had to be constantly coerced. This writer thought that it was especially important to force the distribution of accurate information about the West in China. If left on its own, the Chinese Government would encourage the myth that China was the center of the world and the most powerful nation. Such propaganda would naturally prevent the mass of the Chinese population from pursuing western technology. Despite this appeal for constant pressure on China, this writer did not abandon the belief in providing a positive example for the Chinese. In fact, this writer also advocated a major western program of assistance to China in flood control and famine relief. He believed that these efforts should focus on demonstrating the superiority of modern methods before any profitmaking ventures were introduced.¹⁴⁴

Walter H. Medhurst, a British official in China throughout much of this period and an outspoken critic of the Chinese people, was an opponent of the optimistic, gradualist approach to Chinese development and

¹⁴⁴"The Present Condition of China [by a Resident]," Fraser's Magazine, n.s., 2 (November, 1870): 566-567.

modernization.¹⁴⁵ In his 1879 article "The Future of China," Medhurst attacked the idea that the Chinese would ever modernize. He believed that the Chinese were so hopelessly anti-progressive and sluggish that it was a waste of time to try to instruct them. Medhurst argued that the only way that China would improve was for it to be conquered by a foreign power. Such a power could provide a "lion-hearted, capable and progressive government." Further, the Chinese people would be happier with "discreet and paternal care." Medhurst also attacked Bridge's faith in foreign advisors and their ability to make lasting change in China. According to Medhurst, all progress in China was due to the direct actions of foreigners and the minute those people left or were removed, everything that they had accomplished would be swept away.¹⁴⁶

Both Alcock and Dilke criticized Medhurst in their articles. Alcock identified Medhurst as the leader of those Britons who saw no good in the Chinese.¹⁴⁷ Dilke's attack was even more significant considering his expansionist view

¹⁴⁵Sir Walter H. Medhurst (1822-1885), the son of British missionary, was born in China. Due to his language skills he entered the British diplomatic service in China at age 18. He served as Consul in various Chinese cities beginning in 1854, most notably in Shanghai from 1871 to 1877.

¹⁴⁶Walter H. Medhurst, "The Future of China," Contemporary Review, 36 (September, 1879): 5-6.

¹⁴⁷Alcock, 447.

of the British Empire. Dilke used Medhurst as an example of the wrong approach to China. According to Dilke, Medhurst's contempt for the Chinese Government produced much unnecessary hostility and often hindered development.¹⁴⁸ Notwithstanding Medhurst's unremitting hostility toward China's potential for modernization, most articles up through the early 1880's expressed some hope that China would rapidly adopt Western ideas.

A subset of optimistic articles attempted to depict the Chinese attitude toward postwar change. "A Chinese Commissioner's Foreign Tour," was a translation of a report written by the "elderly official Pin-ch'un" during his 1866 journey through France and England. The anonymous translator claimed that the report was important not just for the "quaint representation of familiar sights" but for its insight into the mind of someone from the "farthest and darkest extremity of Asia." This article portrayed a Chinese person overwhelmingly in favor of modernization. Pin Ch'un expressed tremendous admiration for Western efficiency and cleanliness. He was particularly amazed by street lighting in Paris and by the numerous displays of

¹⁴⁸In 1876, British businessmen built a short railroad line from Shanghai to the docks at Woosung, the first in China. Within a few months Chinese officials purchased the line and dismantled it, much to the outrage of many Europeans. Dilke claimed that Medhurst created a confrontation by lying to the Chinese, promising that no railroad would be built. Dilke, "English Influence in China," 562.

technology visible even on London's streets, including railways and steam pumps. Pin was also impressed by law enforcement both in London and in British-influenced Egypt.¹⁴⁹

Another discussion of favorable attitudes, "Foreign Relations of China, by a Chinese," written by an anonymous Chinese who had lived in London for two years. Rather than focusing on individual western inventions, this author discussed Chinese modernization in general. This writer, claimed that it was both essential and inevitable that the Chinese reform their government and accept all assistance offered by European countries. Like the anonymous writer of "The Present Condition of China," he saw China's belief that it was the center of the world as the main obstacle to change. This Chinese writer advocated a policy of understanding and patience on the part of western powers. Also, unlike any of the British writers, he discussed the opium trade and Chinese public opinion as a factor in the speed and success of modernization. He argued that the bad feelings about opium in China were a major but not insurmountable obstacle to modernization.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹"A Chinese Commissioner's Foreign Tour," Cornhill Magazine, 31 (May, 1870): 584.

¹⁵⁰"Foreign Relations of China, by a Chinese," Fraser's Magazine, n.s., 15 (March, 1877): 367.

Although Medhurst was the most distinguished critic, other writers presented a negative view of Chinese attitudes in their articles. In "What the Chinese Think of Us," another anonymous, but this time non-Chinese, writer argued that Western civilization in general would never appeal to the Chinese because of its emphasis on violence and warfare. According to this writer, Britain and the other European powers made a mistake in emphasizing military technology first since Chinese civilization did not value military achievement. As a result, the Chinese would most likely continue to reject all Western innovation.¹⁵¹

"Chinese Statesmen and State Papers," was even more negative in focusing on the inexplicable and irrational behavior of Chinese officials. The article described how Chung-how, formerly a leading official advocate of reform, became involved in a massacre of foreigners at Tientsin in 1870. The writer pointed out that Chung-how took the lead in moving for modernization by planning the first rail line of any kind in China. He personally supervised the laying of rails in a coal mine. He further impressed Europeans through his management of a modern armory in Tientsin. However, the writer claimed that the same man was also the

¹⁵¹"What the Chinese Think of Us," Once A Week, 4th ser., 3 (22 January 1876): 250.

guiding force behind the murder of French nuns and consular officials.¹⁵²

This behavior, combined with other less extreme examples of apparent Chinese duplicity, led the writer to conclude that Chinese hostility ran deeper than any westerner could imagine. The writer further asserted that even the most educated and influential Chinese lacked any appreciation for "the benefits of the western nations' arts and sciences." The author did not see any sign that this would change in the next several years.¹⁵³

Finally, "Diary of Liu Ta-Jen's Mission to England," the antithesis of Pin-Ch'un's account, presented a hostile and sinister view of Chinese opinion. Liu Ta-Jen attacked all aspects of modern technology in the British Empire. He argued that the British used telegraphs and railroads solely as instruments of control and conquest. He also claimed that no one really benefitted from modern machinery because it encouraged greed and impiety. The basic message of Liu's report was that the Chinese should resist all Western influence at any cost and throw off any innovations at the earliest opportunity.¹⁵⁴ According to F. S. A. Bourne the

¹⁵²"Chinese Statesmen and State Papers," Fraser's Magazine, n.s., 3 (March, 1871): 329.

¹⁵³"Chinese Statesmen and State Papers, 342.

¹⁵⁴Liu Ta-Jen, "Diary of Liu Ta-Jen's Mission to England," Trans., F. S. A. Bourne, Nineteenth Century, 8 (October, 1880): 620.

translator of the "Diary," Liu's outlook was typical of the literati class that controlled Chinese government. Thus, this article represented more than just an example of Chinese perversity and stubbornness, it was also an attack on the optimistic view of China.

DISAPPOINTING RESULTS

A survey of articles relating to China's military power and its railway development reveals a gradual increase in frustration and a recognition that earlier, optimistic evaluations of Chinese progress had been premature. "Colonel Gordon's Exploits in China" described how one British officer was able to shape a few thousand Chinese troops into an efficient fighting force that helped defeat the large and dangerous Taiping Rebellion. The writer of this article concluded that because the Chinese were so adaptable they would soon develop a large and modern army comparable to those in many European countries. At the same time, he did note that there were limits to what the Chinese could accomplish on their own and that they would always require British or other foreign officers to keep things together.¹⁵⁵

This basically positive tone continued in the previously mentioned article by Cyprian Bridge and in "The

¹⁵⁵"Colonel Gordon's Exploits in China," Cornhill Magazine, 10 (November, 1864): 638.

Present Condition of China." Both of these writers used advances in military technology as their main examples of Chinese modernization. For example, Bridge pointed to the construction of modern warships and dockyards as evidence that western technology was penetrating the Chinese consciousness.¹⁵⁶ In "The Present Condition of China," the writer, while noting the problem of China's "basically lazy and worthless commanders," did see the adoption of modern weapons as one bright spot in the struggle to force China into the industrial age.¹⁵⁷

By the 1880's, some writers began describing the this process of military modernization as a failure. In "The Chinese Army," one writer seriously questioned the fighting ability of these newly trained and equipped Chinese forces. He argued that, despite years of Western-style training and the purchase and manufacture of many expensive European weapons, the Chinese had no sense of modern military tactics or organization. The writer also claimed that, although troops were forced to train with rifles, they always used bows, arrows and pikes when given a choice. He further pointed out that Chinese military publications continued to focus on ancient and outdated battle tactics. In his conclusion, the writer found no evidence that any

¹⁵⁶Bridge, 786.

¹⁵⁷"The Present Condition of China," 566.

appreciation for modernization had taken hold anywhere in China.¹⁵⁸

In the 1890's, after a short and disastrous war with France and in a period of escalating tension with the newly armed Japan, other articles used the deployment of military technology as an example of China's decay rather than as a sign of progress. In "The Balance of Power in Eastern Asia," published in 1893, the writer argued that weapons introduced from the West had been completely misused by the Chinese. The writer further asserted that the Chinese in general were guilty of "grotesque ineptitude in military matters." He not only believed that the Chinese government was incapable of any strategy but that the Chinese people simply could not adapt to a military way of life. The writer pointed to the neglect of artillery and warships, corruption at every level and lapses in military training and discipline wherever foreign advisors were not in complete control.¹⁵⁹

After China's rapid defeat in the Sino-Japanese War during 1894, articles such as "The Collapse of China at Sea" and "China's Reputation Bubble" focused on more than just Chinese corruption or unwillingness to adapt to world

¹⁵⁸"The Chinese Army," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 135 (May, 1884): 664.

¹⁵⁹"The Balance of Power in Eastern Asia," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 154 (September, 1893): 403,

conditions. Instead, these articles emphasized the basic inability of Chinese to cope with all aspects of modernization.¹⁶⁰ While even the angry writer of "The Balance of Power in Eastern Asia" expressed some hope that the Chinese might learn from their mistakes or be spurred on by international humiliation, S. Eardly Wilmot and Henry Knollys both argued that there was no future in working with the Chinese. Eardly-Wilmot saw no reason to help replace the modern Chinese fleet that had been easily destroyed by the Japanese and Knollys did not think it was worthwhile for advisors to "drive themselves crazy" trying to force construction of each new modern fortification.¹⁶¹

Railroads were another key measure of progress that British writers anxiously observed in the late nineteenth century. While in 1870 one writer predicted that China was on the brink of a railroad construction boom, J.N. Jordon, in his 1886 article "Modern China," sadly reported that there was still no railroad operating anywhere in China. According to Charles S. Addis in "Railways in China," China was a particularly tempting market for railroad construction not only because the construction boom was over in Britain and India, but also because China was a "land of vast

¹⁶⁰S. Eardly-Wilmot, "The Collapse of China at Sea," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 57 (1 January 1895): 87-100; Henry Knollys, "China's Reputation Bubble," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 156 (November, 1894): 714-726.

¹⁶¹Eardly-Wilmot, 100; Knollys, 720.

distances and few engineering obstacles." In addition, China was very appealing because its huge population seemed so ready to serve as customers. Addis, like other writers of this period, believed that railroad construction was in the best interest of the Chinese.¹⁶² He viewed railroads as synonymous with progress and civilization. Thus, until China committed to some sort of railroad network, it could never be modernized.

Because there was a small railroad construction project underway in China by 1889, Addis was optimistic about China's future. He believed that like India, a China with a railroad system would become immune to famine and civil war. Also, as in the case of India, China would also make progress toward developing a universal language, a uniform system of coinage and most importantly, a modern system for telling time. Finally, Addis believed that railroads could eventually accomplish a "sensible modification of the Chinese character."¹⁶³

Despite Addis' optimism, the writer of "The Balance of Power in Eastern Asia," reported in 1893 that China had made "dead slow progress" in railway construction and that only a few miles of the rail line constructed were actually in operation. This writer claimed that, due to local

¹⁶²Charles S. Addis, "Railways in China," Contemporary Review, 55 (May, 1889): 742.

¹⁶³Addis, 749-750.

resistance and native superstition, each bridge and every mile of track constructed produced a new battle. As an example, he described the failure of a Manchurian rail project where a major line was financed, planned and surveyed but had to be discontinued because the railway would pass within twenty miles of some imperial tombs. According to the writer, the worst part of this failure to modernize was that fortunetellers made the final decision to block construction.¹⁶⁴

In his 1899 article "Railway Enterprises in China," Benjamin Taylor was able to report that the Peking-Tientsin railway was finally open. Despite this small success, Taylor acknowledged that European engineers, contractors and railmakers had to continue to "glow with anticipation." over Chinese rail prospects since there was still so little real progress. Although he was hopeful that railroads would be built, Taylor did not believe that China was on the verge of rapid modernization. In fact, Taylor saw railroads more as an avenue for European investment rather than a way for China to improve. Since he did not believe that the Chinese government could protect or manage railroads, Taylor argued that they should be European run projects designed to meet the needs of Western firms in China. Taylor cited the example of the badly run Peking-Tientsin railway as proof

¹⁶⁴ "The Balance of Power in Eastern Asia," 406.

that the Chinese could not handle new technology could not receive any benefit from it.¹⁶⁵

While observing China's disappointing military and railway development, many writers could not resist making comparisons with the outstanding record of modernization in neighboring Japan. First 'opened' to Western contact in the late 1850's, Japan at first was forced to accept a system of treaty ports and extraterritoriality similar to that imposed on China. However, following a change of government in 1868, Japan began accepting and adapting Western technology very quickly. Already, by the 1870's Japan seemed to eclipse China in economic development and was also emerging as a military power. At first, writers such as Sir Rutherford Alcock and Charles Dilke pointed to Japan's social, economic and military reforms as hopeful signs for future progress in China. Both men argued that a smaller country could naturally make sweeping changes faster and that eventually China's larger population and greater natural resources would put her ahead of Japan.¹⁶⁶

Notwithstanding the generally high level of confidence in China during the 1870's, some writers were more impressed by the amazing pace of westernization in Japan. One writer

¹⁶⁵Benjamin Taylor, "Railway Enterprises in China," Chamber's Journal, 6th ser., 2 (1 April 1899): 282.

¹⁶⁶Alcock, 444; Dilke, "English Influence in China," 560.

in the Saturday Review claimed that the Japanese were far ahead in military technology since they possessed ironclad ships and large field guns while the Chinese still had none. He noted that the Japanese already had many native engineers and manufactured most of their own weapons. This writer attributed the Japanese success to their willingness to acknowledge their inferiority to Europeans.¹⁶⁷ Another writer praised Japan for establishing a world class postal service under its own control, while the Chinese were so far unsuccessful even with foreign assistance. According to this writer, although the Japanese post office was only six years old it was already handling more than 22,000,000 ordinary letters each year.¹⁶⁸ Thus by 1879, even the sinologue Herbert Giles had to admit that Japan, which used to be regarded as "a harebrained little state that would soon be taken over by a European country" was already the regional power in Asia.¹⁶⁹

Although Charles Addis tried to defend China's slow railroad development by mentioning the fact that the first Japanese railroad did not open until 1880, he also had to admit that since then the Japanese had made considerable

¹⁶⁷"China and Japan," Saturday Review, 38 (29 August 1874): 265.

¹⁶⁸"Posting and Post Offices in China," 102.

¹⁶⁹Herbert Giles, "Present State of Affairs in China," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 32 (1 September 1879): 370.

progress. The equally pro-Chinese R.S. Gundry sadly compared China's 85 miles of largely inoperative railway with Japan's busy and growing 1,000 miles of track.¹⁷⁰ After the 1880's, Japanese superiority was so obvious and wide ranging that few writers bothered with comparisons to China unless they were discussing the events of the Sino-Japanese War.

Just because British writers respected Japanese achievements did not mean that they actually liked the Japanese or considered them equals. Dilke thought that the Japanese had even worse characters than the Chinese and he believed that they would never play much of a role in the Pacific region.¹⁷¹ Henry Knollys, who liked the Japanese more than the Chinese, still thought that, at best, Japan was only a "European system in miniature." He further argued that "a Jap will remain a Jap no matter how you dress him up" and if the government of Japan relaxed its discipline, all Japanese would "revert to coolies."¹⁷²

During the 1890's most articles about the development of China focused on what Britain could salvage and how the British could compete with such aggressors as Russia and Germany. In articles such as "Murders in China" and "Li

¹⁷⁰Gundry, 490.

¹⁷¹Dilke, "English Influence in China," 560.

¹⁷²Knollys, 722.

Hung Chang," writers proposed that the British Government take direct control of the Chinese military and administer it in such a way as to maintain British trade supremacy as well as Chinese independence.¹⁷³ Other writers such as A. Michie in "The Chinese Oyster," F. E. Younghusband in "England's Destiny in China," and E. T. C. Werner in "The China Problem and its Solution," urged the British government to join in an organized partition of China similar to the recent territorial settlements in Africa.¹⁷⁴

Younghusband and Michie both thought that the only hope for progress in China was for the British to take over direct rule of one section of the country. Younghusband compared China to India and argued that although India enjoyed many benefits from British rule, it, as well as any British-controlled region of China, would always have to be governed by Britons or other Europeans.¹⁷⁵ In contrast, Werner and the anonymous writer of "The White Man's Burden in China" argued that the British should rule indirectly through native officials. Werner was afraid that direct

¹⁷³"Murders in China," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 154 (October, 1893): 596; Demetrius Boulger, "Li Hung Chang," Contemporary Review, 70 (July, 1896): 27.

¹⁷⁴A. Michie, "The Chinese Oyster," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 161 (February, 1897): 280; F. E. Younghusband, "England's Destiny in China," Contemporary Review, 74 (October, 1898): 471; E. T. C. Werner, "The China Problem and its Solution," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 57 (1 April 1895): 582.

¹⁷⁵Younghusband, 459.

rule would lead to racial mixing and large numbers of dangerous half-castes.¹⁷⁶ In "The White Man's Burden in China," the writer raised the issue of secret societies claiming that these organizations made the Chinese ungovernable and therefore the British should let the Chinese deal with their own sly and sinister people at the local level.¹⁷⁷

At least one Chinese wrote in response to these increasingly aggressive evaluations of Britain's policy alternatives. Exiled Chinese opposition leader and future president of China, Sun Yat Sen attempted to bolster confidence in the ability of the Chinese people to create a modern state on their own. In his article, "China's Present and Future: the Reform Party's Plea for British Benevolent Neutrality," Sun criticized the whole range of attempts to modernize China since the 1860's. He claimed that no European innovation introduced during the past thirty years had really helped the Chinese. Sun compared the argument that the introduction of railroads, telegraphs, and European organization would automatically enlighten China to a suggestion that "cannibals would be converted to

¹⁷⁶Werner, 583.

¹⁷⁷"The White Man's Burden in China," Contemporary Review, 76 (September, 1899): 325.

vegetarianism by the introduction of silver forks and Sheffield cutlery."¹⁷⁸

Sun believed that the Chinese government was completely to blame for China's failure to modernize. He described Chinese enthusiasm for innovation and new technology and their frustration with reactionary Manchu officials who denied the public access to this new knowledge. Sun argued that, if the British would quit supporting the Chinese Government, it would soon fall and a new era of development and partnership with the British Empire would begin.¹⁷⁹

Sun's article, though eloquent, was an isolated event in a forty year series of essays about Chinese failure and ineptitude. Even though writings about Chinese modernization were fairly optimistic as a whole during the 1860's and 1870's, an orientalist approach to the "China Question" gradually emerged as China failed to meet British expectations. By the end of the nineteenth century, most writers agreed that China would only improve if it accepted some broad form of Western European management.

¹⁷⁸Sun Yat Sen and Edwin Collins, "China's Present and Future: the Reform Party's Plea for British Benevolent Neutrality," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 61 (1 March 1897): 438.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., 440.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHINESE CHARACTER

Writers not only believed that China was a strange and incomprehensible country, they also saw the Chinese people as, at best, puzzling and at worst, seriously and irredeemably flawed in morals. Although many writers commented on Chinese character, relatively few provided any serious discussion of the issue. Most were content to dismiss the Chinese people with a few general comments. Some of the English travellers and missionaries used descriptions of encounters with Chinese as a basis for character judgments. Almost without exception, these descriptions were humorous accounts of the failings or eccentricities of servants. A few were accounts of contact with other Chinese but again, these were either condescending or emphasized Chinese villainy.

Besides this limited number of attempts to portray individual Chinese people, several writers discussed the issue of character in articles about Chinese living abroad. As several articles pointed out, the late nineteenth century was a great period for Chinese immigration. Thousands of Chinese laborers or "coolies" settled in the United States, in Latin America and in various British colonies. British

writers seemed fascinated by the activities of Chinese transplanted to more 'civilized' countries. While their articles frequently addressed questions of Chinese morality, most writers based their conclusions on rumor and on brief excursions into Chinese communities. The articles are occasionally sympathetic but even the most favorable accounts contained harsh evaluations of the Chinese or lurid hints of unacceptable and dangerous behavior.

Although articles about Chinese character, particularly those dealing with immigration, often tried to deal with serious social and political issues, most really emphasized fear and suspicion of Chinese people. Thus, they reenforced the negative image of China and bolstered the orientalist argument that Eastern peoples required careful supervision and protection from their own base instincts.

Such articles also confirmed the belief in geographic determinism that March described. According to this view, centuries of isolation from more 'vigorous' outside influences had in some way weakened the Chinese people morally and made them behave in ways completely different from Western Europeans.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS OF CHARACTER

The true nature of the Chinese people was an issue that both intrigued and troubled late nineteenth century essayists. These writers, even the ones most sympathetic to

China, believed that Great Britain and the other European powers enjoyed supremacy in the world largely due to their strength of character. Consequently, strange and different cultures might be understood by comparing their morals and ethics to those of a country such as Great Britain. According to Edward Said's portrait of late nineteenth century scholarship, writers looked for typically oriental character traits among the Chinese. Once they found them, writers interpreted all aspects of China and Chinese civilization according to negative characteristics. In other words, everything unusual or threatening about China could be dealt with through a basic understanding of Chinese moral and intellectual inferiority.

This intellectual approach explains why virtually every article about China contained a statement about Chinese character strengths and weaknesses. By including such information and describing how China fit in a British or Western European world, the writer reassured and in one sense oriented the reader. For example, "Missionaries in China" asserted that China was "a morally rotten body...where virtues are not practiced."¹⁸⁰

This situation was of course far different in the British Empire where virtues were generally cherished. Therefore, although the rest of the article dealt mainly

¹⁸⁰"Missionaries in China," MacMillan's Magazine, 73 (November, 1895): 11.

with the structure of mission organizations, the reader had an immediate sense that the world of the missionary was much worse than any place in Britain.

An article on economic development such as F.E. Younghusband's "England's Destiny in China" provided a less obvious example of this intellectual approach. In the course of his discussion, Younghusband argued that although the Chinese were often industrious and thrifty, they lacked "public spirit and public morality."¹⁸¹ Even though Younghusband did not illustrate this statement with any particular examples, the reader immediately understood that unlike the British, the Chinese did not aspire to serve his community or his nation and if he reached a position of authority he could not be relied upon to serve in the public interest. This public spirit and morality was considered an essential element of the British character. If the Chinese lacked it, the situation in their country was certainly very serious.

In order to quickly familiarize their readers with the China situation, writers included various other sweeping statements depending on the subject matter of the article. "A Cruise on the Yangtze Kyang," an account of an 1866 expedition to reopen river trade in China, mentioned the "insatiable avarice" of the Chinese as a major obstacle to

¹⁸¹Younghusband, 464.

regular commercial activity.¹⁸² Another article, describing the suppression of piracy in China, characterized British activities as "discipline, race and civilization" versus "fierceness and greed."¹⁸³

Another essay on a particular aspect of Chinese life included the moral observation that the Chinese were only full-grown children. However, this writer went into more detail in asserting that unfortunately the Chinese only demonstrated the negative attributes of a child's character, such as instinctive cruelty, silliness, love of senseless display, self conceit and an incapacity to understand the beauties of nature. Further, he argued that the Chinese lacked such positive childlike traits as grace and generosity.¹⁸⁴ The implication here was that the Chinese were inferior, even to British children who at least had positive traits that could be cultivated.

Finally, still another writer, in "Ennui and the Opium Pipe: a Chinese View," attempted to explain a typically Chinese characteristic, susceptibility to opium addiction. This article proposed the idea that this weakness developed because of the general emptiness of the Chinese lifestyle.

¹⁸²"A Cruise on the Yangtze Kyang," St. James Magazine, 14 (September, 1867): 229.

¹⁸³"Chinese Pirates," Cornhill Magazine, 2 (October, 1860): 435.

¹⁸⁴"Celestial Ceremonies," 667.

Thus, the Chinese man, with no exercise, papers, books, music, wife (in the sympathetic sense), dogs, shooting, billiards, fireside, or easy chair, never developed a character or way of life resistant to drug addiction.¹⁸⁵

THE CHARACTER OF INDIVIDUAL CHINESE

While most articles tended to include some broad statement about Chinese character, few writers included lengthy discussions about this unhappy subject or even specific examples to demonstrate these flaws. In fact, most articles contained very little information about firsthand contact with individual Chinese. If a writer did have dealings with Chinese people, such limited or isolated contacts were generally cited as sufficient evidence for broad moral indictments of the Chinese race.

One example of this type of reasoning is found in "China's Reputation Bubble." In this article, writer Henry Knollys stated that the Chinese lacked any sense of shame or courage. He based this conclusion on an experience with an angry crowd. Knollys was on horseback when he was surrounded by group of enraged Chinese men. When they approached too closely, Knollys simply raised his riding

¹⁸⁵"Ennui and the Opium Pipe: a Chinese View," Temple Bar Magazine, 102 (August, 1894): 507.

crop and the crowd melted away. In his view, the Chinese had shamefully retreated before an unarmed Englishman.¹⁸⁶

Knollys then used this example of 'cowardice' as the basis for a discussion of the position of Britons in China. He argued that in any confrontation, all an isolated Englishman had to do was act "with cheap swagger" and the Chinese would immediately back down. Knollys then went further to suggest that this information might serve as the basis for a British defense policy in China.¹⁸⁷ Because he had determined that there was no real danger for Europeans living in isolated communities, Knollys suggested that Britain station a handful of soldiers at highly visible locations throughout China and allow natural Chinese cowardice do the rest.¹⁸⁸

Most writers preferred to use humorous examples of contacts with individual Chinese to illustrate racial failings. In these stories of dealings with servants, writers could provide reassuring examples of racial and cultural superiority. In addition, some travellers probably

¹⁸⁶Knollys, 716.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 717.

¹⁸⁸A. Henry Savage-Landor in "A Journey to the Sacred Mountain of Siao-Outai-Shan in China," also suggested the forceful approach in dealing with dishonest Chinese. Savage-Landor pointed to his success in dealing with a greedy priest who attempted to overcharge for a night's shelter in a temple. Savage-Landor held a gun to the priest's face and the dispute was resolved. Savage-Landor, 407.

had their only direct contact with Chinese people through the master-servant relationship. Once again relying on Said's theory, it is not surprising that most writers were satisfied to look only close at hand for evidence to bolster their preexisting intellectual conceptions of China and the Far East.

Mrs. Henry Clarence Paget's "Travels in China" is an extreme example of this reliance on contact with servants to draw major conclusions. Mrs Paget wrote a lengthy and detailed narrative of her travels through North China. In this account of temples, pagodas, rivers and uncomfortable inns, Mrs. Paget only mentioned encountering one Chinese person. This was her 'boy,' whom she never named or described physically. Although her 'boy' was a "perfect treasure" because he could cook a meal anywhere, Mrs Paget found him to be a complete nuisance because like all Chinese he had an uncontrolled, childish curiosity and always wanted to know what she was going to wear.¹⁸⁹

First time travellers to China such as Mrs. Paget were not the only ones who used servants' behavior as conclusive evidence of national weaknesses. Edward Parker, author of previously cited articles on Chinese culture, pointed to the his own servant trouble as a major example of inherent Chinese dishonesty. According to Parker, his servants never

¹⁸⁹Mrs. Henry Clarence Paget, "Travels in China," Cornhill Magazine, n.s., 7 (September, 1899): 354.

directly asked for leave or for a holiday. Instead, they always told him elaborate and contradictory stories of family illnesses. Since these stories became almost comically false over a period of time, Parker argued that the only reason for them was that Chinese people were incapable of telling the truth.¹⁹⁰

Another writer pointed to the behavior of his servant as evidence of this strange and persistent lack of honesty among the Chinese race. In "The Story of Hsu Fa-To," Julian Croskey described his servant's serious efforts to master the game wei-ch'i, also known as Chinese chess. According to Croskey, Hsu Fa-To spent every free moment over a period of years learning game strategies. However, just when Hsu was close to defeating a mandarin in a grueling tournament, he apparently cheated and later committed suicide. Croskey asserted that this inexplicable behavior (Hsu claimed that he moved a piece while sleepwalking) was evidence of Chinese inability to pursue honest activity for any length of time.¹⁹¹

Other descriptions of servant misdeeds were intended to be more humorous. However, they also demonstrated basic Chinese deficiencies. In one article, the writer described

¹⁹⁰E. H. Parker, "Chinese Humbug," Contemporary Review, 70 (December, 1896): 883.

¹⁹¹Julian Croskey, "The Story of Hsu Fa-To," English Illustrated Magazine, 12 (January, 1900): 330.

her servant's eagerness to take a new wife simply because the bride could be purchased at a great bargain. She presented this episode to show the never-ending greed of the Chinese as well as their casual attitude toward the institution of matrimony. In the same article, the writer described the unfortunate experience of an English friend who once accidentally put brandy in the sherry decanter in the presence of a Chinese servant. From that time forward, the servant always served brandy with the soup, no matter how often the friend scolded, explained or begged. The writer argued that this episode demonstrated the basic Chinese inability to improve or discover the purpose of whatever task they are assigned. She explained that while they were basically intelligent and industrious, these flawed Chinese servants required constant supervision.¹⁹²

Finally, in "Chinese Cooks," a writer argued that her servant, who sold off cookware for a profit and drew another salary from a neighbor, accurately represented the entire population of China. Based on her experience with this cook, this writer attempted to define the British approach to working with and conquering the Chinese character. She stated that a housewife must control the Chinese servant, always allowing a certain fixed amount of cheating and a restricted level of dirt. In this manner, over time,

¹⁹²"Manners and Customs in China," 58.

Chinese weaknesses would be controlled, but never eliminated.¹⁹³ The implication of this plan is of course that due to inborn weaknesses of character, the Chinese could never improve beyond a certain point nor really become civilized.

A few writers did attempt to describe individual Chinese in some detail. In one such article, "Ching-ki-Fu and the Crisis," the writer described his progress in teaching an intelligent and well educated twenty-three year old Chinese student about British government. Most of the article described the writer's attempts to make the student understand the meaning of the recent resignation of Randolph Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer and the ensuing parliamentary crisis in England. Unfortunately, the student could not get beyond the literal meaning of Churchill's political 'suicide.' Even worse, according to the writer, the student insisted that the crisis could be resolved by some beheadings and banishments. As a result of this fruitless discussion, the writer concluded that the Chinese were incapable of understanding the balance and fairness inherent in a democratic government and that tyranny was the governmental system best suited to the Chinese mind.¹⁹⁴ In

¹⁹³"Chinese Cooks," Chamber's Journal, 6th ser., 3 (20 October 1900): 738.

¹⁹⁴"Ching-ki-Fu and the Crisis," MacMillan's Magazine, 55 (February, 1887): 295.

"A Chinese Speculation," Frank Hepburn described his dealings with a shipowner named Sin-lin-tsi. While the writer claimed that this was a true story, his description of Sin-lin-tsi is more reminiscent of such twentieth century fictional villains as Fu Manchu. Sin-lin-tsi, as depicted by Hepburn, combined many of the worst character traits associated with the Chinese. These characteristics included his "typically Chinese delight in cruelty" and his greed in attempting to rob his own passengers and steal his ship's cargo. In the end, the clever Britisher Hepburn, along with a few stalwart, white crew members, outwitted and defeated the evil Chinese shipowner and his fellow pirates.¹⁹⁵ Thus, during this narrative, the aptly named 'Sin' emerged as little more than a stereotyped villain.

THE CHINESE LIVING ABROAD

All the articles cited up to this point have dealt with observations about Chinese living in China proper. However, the most intense discussion and analysis of Chinese character occurred in articles describing immigration. There were several reasons why writers focused on Chinese living abroad. First, the Chinese could be observed more conveniently and safely when they were settled in condensed communities in countries under direct European or American

¹⁹⁵Frank Hepburn, "A Chinese Speculation," Chamber's Journal, 4th ser., 13 (1 January 1876): 11.

control. Thus, it is not surprising that the travellers and nonexperts who wrote many of the articles and who lacked language skills, felt more comfortable touring Chinese ghettos and mining camps instead of venturing out from isolated European settlements into the vast, alien and sometimes hostile Chinese nation.

Another reason for interest in Chinese immigrants was that sociological explorations were becoming especially common in this period. For example, writers such as Henry Mayhew in London Labour and London Poor (1861) and Andrew Mearns in The Bitter Cry of Outcast London (1883) explored conditions among Britain's urban poor. According to Peter Keating in the introduction to his anthology of social exploration, Into Unknown England, 1866-1913, the late nineteenth century was the first great age of the investigation of the structure of society.¹⁹⁶ These social explorers felt that despite tremendous progress during the century in recording and analyzing discoveries throughout the world, Europeans still knew very little about the operation of groups within their own societies. They asserted that westerners were given more information about life in Africa and India than about conditions in their own

¹⁹⁶Peter Keating, ed., Into Unknown England, 1866-1913: Selections from the Social Explorers, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976): 19.

countries.¹⁹⁷ At about this same time, other writers felt a need to find out about the groups of Chinese who were living in more civilized societies. Unlike Mayhew and Mearns, these writers drew different conclusions about the causes of problems in the groups of people they studied.

A third reason why British writers addressed questions about the Chinese abroad was that this immigration was an important political issue. The recruitment and transport of Chinese labor, known as the 'coolie trade,' became an international scandal. Living conditions and mortality rates were so terrible that the situation was sometimes compared to the slave trade.¹⁹⁸ Also, during the 1880's, attempts to prohibit further Chinese immigration to the United States and Australia attracted British attention. As a result of interest in these political issues, writers investigated conditions among the Chinese living abroad.

While most writers treated Chinese immigration as a local issue to be resolved by individual governments, a few articles such as "Chinese in Australia" and "The Chinese as Colonists," attempted to show that general Chinese character

¹⁹⁷Ibid., 14.

¹⁹⁸"Chinese Emigration," Chamber's Journal, 3rd ser., 16 (6 July 1861): 11.

traits made this mass migration one battle in a greater struggle between Western and Eastern civilizations.¹⁹⁹

In "The Chinese as Colonists," William Medhurst asserted that large numbers of Chinese could undermine the level of morality and civilization of any country into which they were introduced. According to Medhurst, despite the many positive qualities of the Chinese, moral failings often made these immigrants "vicious and obnoxious members of society." Medhurst believed that all immigration had to be carefully regulated and the Chinese constantly supervised. Because their "mental architecture" would never allow them to be integrated into their host society, Chinese immigrants should always be dealt with as a subject people possessing abnormal characteristics.²⁰⁰

The anonymous writer of "Chinese in Australia" described the theory that colonial governments in Australia used to justify their passage of legislation preventing further Chinese immigration. These governments argued that since the 1850's, the barriers surrounding the Chinese Empire had been destroyed. As a result thousands of Chinese poured out of their homeland into areas dominated by Western civilization. While these Chinese provided useful labor,

¹⁹⁹"Chinese in Australia," Quarterly Review, 167 (July, 1888): 163; W. Medhurst, "The Chinese as Colonists," Nineteenth Century, 4 (September, 1878): 523.

²⁰⁰Medhurst, "The Chinese as Colonists," 524.

they were morally inferior to whites. Thus, this "yellow river" threatened to check the progress of the "white river" of civilization and Christianity that was currently dominant in America and in the British Empire. Therefore, Australians had to protect themselves.²⁰¹

When the author of the article presented the views of the opponents of this protective legislation, he did not mention of any attempt to defend Chinese character. Instead, opponents argued that the numbers of Chinese were comparatively small compared to the total population, that the Chinese government opposed this immigration and that most Chinese laborers went abroad looking to earn money in order to improve their standing when they returned home.²⁰² Apparently, every one involved in the issue accepted the fact that the Chinese brought with them certain negative character traits. Therefore, the question was whether the colonies could continue to supervise and manage increasing numbers of Chinese.

Most writers did not discuss larger issues such as the impact of Chinese on Western Civilization. Instead they described the behavior of Chinese in specific locations. These articles usually either talked about the impact of immigrants in a country as a whole or they took the form of

²⁰¹"Chinese in Australia," 164.

²⁰²Ibid., 168.

first-hand accounts of explorations of Chinese immigrant communities.

W.A. Pickering's "The Chinese in the Straits of Malacca" portrayed the negative effect of the Chinese on the British colonies of Singapore and Penang. Pickering, an employee of the colonial government, asserted that the Chinese tendency toward conspiracy and membership in secret societies led to constant violence and served to undermine all government and order.²⁰³ He concluded his arguments by returning to the old solution for dealing with Chinese immigrants. Pickering suggested that the Chinese were morally incapable of functioning under enlightened treatment. However, if the Chinese were rigidly supervised and periodically treated with severity they could be an asset.²⁰⁴

In "Mr. St. John's Borneo," Spenser St. John described a similar situation in Sarawak where large numbers of immigrants settled and soon displayed their "two most marked characteristics, excessive industry, and a disposition to be troublesome." According to St. John, this second trait caused the Chinese to rebel when the government attempted to tax opium imports and break up secret societies in 1858. As a result, British officials as well as native inhabitants

²⁰³W. A. Pickering, "The Chinese in the Straits of Malacca," Fraser's Magazine, n.s., 14 (October, 1876): 440.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 443.

were forced to exterminate most of the Chinese in Borneo. St. John felt that the Chinese suffered "justly" and that this was unfortunately the type of example necessary for European governments to control and make use of Chinese labor.²⁰⁵

Besides the basic problem of governing the Chinese immigrants, the author of "The Chinese in the Colonies," saw constant problems resulting from the Chinese refusal to "rise to the superior level of their new surroundings." This writer asserted that Chinese insistence on living an "Asian way of life" everywhere they settled made it impossible to establish sanitary regulations or safe housing rules.²⁰⁶ However, "The Chinese in the Colonies" was unusual because it advocated the expulsion of all Chinese from British territories. While most writers recognized that the Chinese were deeply flawed, few would have agreed with a statement so completely damning as "the Chinaman is an uncivilized animal...and an impossible colonist."²⁰⁷

An entertaining as well as informative way for magazine writers to present discussions of immigrants was to give accounts of travels through Chinese communities either in

²⁰⁵Spenser St. John, "Mr. St. John's Borneo," North British Review, 37 (October, 1862): 207.

²⁰⁶"The Chinese in the Colonies," Chamber's Journal, 5th ser., 5 (21 July 1888): 448.

²⁰⁷Ibid., 450.

Australia or the United States. Thus, the British public not only got to read about "Life in London Alleys" and "Tramping with Tramps," but also a number of articles such as "China Town in San Francisco," "My Chinese Neighbors", and "Celestials Under the Stars and Stripes." appeared in British publications.²⁰⁸ Although both types of articles presented shocking revelations about living conditions, in other ways they were very different. The social explorers of England saw themselves as participants in a cause. They wanted to improve conditions for the poor by drawing public attention to urgent problems and by pressuring government into legislating changes.²⁰⁹ Further, the social explorer generally spent days disguised as one of the poor, eating and sleeping as the poor did. According to Keating, the use of disguise not only provided the explorers with a special glamour that made them seem more professional to the general reader, it also helped establish a sense of identification between the poor and the readers. No longer were slum dwellers just pitiful figures to be kept at a distance.²¹⁰ Further, most social explorers sympathized with the people

²⁰⁸"Chinatown in San Francisco," Cornhill Magazine, n.s., 7 (July, 1886): 53-60; "My Chinese Neighbors," Argosy, 2 (July, 1866): 157-164; Joseph Hatton, "Celestials Under the Stars and Stripes," Belgravia, 32 (April, 1877): 221-228.

²⁰⁹Keating, 19.

²¹⁰Ibid., 17.

they described. They did not see the poor as primarily responsible for their miserable condition.²¹¹

In contrast, the Chinatown explorer was more of a casual observer. Except for J. A. Langford who visited several Chinese communities for his article "John Chinaman in Australia and the West," most of these writers only spent a few hours among the Chinese.²¹² Also, besides not even attempting a disguise, most writers went into Chinese areas with police escort. Finally and most importantly, the writers did not sympathize with the Chinese. Even though they did not like to see honest Chinese persecuted, most writers believed that the Chinese created their own problems.

A typical example of this type of article was "In China Town," by Iza Duffus Hardy. Hardy, who was on a trip through California, felt it was her duty as an Englishwoman to investigate and confirm the stories she had heard about Chinese living among whites. Like other writers she was taken on a tour of Chinatown after dark by a member of the San Francisco Police Force. Although she had looked over the area during daylight, Hardy was told that the only way

²¹¹Ibid., 24.

²¹²J. A. Langford, "John Chinaman in Australia and the West," Gentleman's Magazine, n.s., 17 (September, 1876): 320-335.

to get a true picture of the Chinese was to see them at night.²¹³

During the course of the evening, Hardy was taken through several opium dens, where she observed the many degraded and debauched inhabitants and reflected on the basic Chinese weakness for the drug. She also visited several shops, restaurants and gambling halls. Hardy noted that the Chinese seemed to prefer living in crowded, filthy and noisy surroundings.²¹⁴ Even though she observed no hostility from the Chinese she encountered, Hardy felt continually menaced by the "childlike" faces that observed her. She was certain they were calling her a "white devil" whenever they spoke in their strange language. Hardy stated that it was common knowledge that Chinese had a particular hatred for white women because there was a prophecy that China would be destroyed by such a woman.²¹⁵

Hardy, like other Chinatown explorers, was intrigued by what she saw as the particularly degraded condition of women living among the Chinese. When she visited a brothel and spoke with some teenaged Chinese prostitutes, Hardy was

²¹³Iza Duffus Hardy, "In China Town," Belgravia, 43 (December, 1880): 217.

²¹⁴Writers often noted the difference between the cleanliness of shops and restaurants catering to white customers and the squalor of those patronized exclusively by Chinese. This was taken as an indication of Chinese resistance to civilization except when money was involved.

²¹⁵Hardy, 218.

appalled that they did not seem unhappy in their lives. She concluded that they lived such low lives that they were incapable of shame.²¹⁶ J. Langford maintained that the "impudent" slave girls of San Francisco were more "distressing and unendurable" than anything else he had ever encountered in a Chinese community or even in the slums of London, New York or Liverpool.²¹⁷

In his article, Joseph Hatton claimed that of 4,000 Chinese women in San Francisco in 1877, 3,900 were prostitutes.²¹⁸ Like Hardy, he also devoted considerable attention to the 'shocking' moral atmosphere in Chinese communities. Although he did not interview any prostitutes, Hardy was certain that the nine to one ratio of Chinese men to women was absolute proof that the Chinese were a menace to the morals of the community.²¹⁹

Hardy and others were also troubled by the presence of white women in Chinese communities. Hardy did encounter an Englishwoman married to a wealthy Chinese merchant but she was able to reassure her readers that the woman was not a

²¹⁶Ibid., 220.

²¹⁷Langford, 329.

²¹⁸Hatton, 221.

²¹⁹For most writers the fact that the Chinese did not bring their wives with them was proof enough of a dangerous moral situation.

lady and such unions were very, very rare.²²⁰ The angry, anonymous writer of "The Chinese in the Colonies" claimed that any white women or girls living in Chinese immigrant communities were seduced there and held captive by opium. However, he assured his readers that only the most thoroughly corrupted of these women would reject Western civilization by adopting a Chinese style of dress.²²¹

While descriptions of Chinese immigrant communities provided numerous examples of Chinese moral inferiority to the English and most other Europeans, most writers were willing to acknowledge that the Chinese were superior to some other groups. A few, such as Langford, praised their almost incredible persistence and stamina.²²² Another writer, in "The New Chinese Immigration," argued that the Chinese were superior to the Irish because they did not drink or get involved in politics. He also mocked Irish fears that the Chinese would steal their women. The writer even asserted that intermarriage with the Chinese might improve the Irish race.²²³ Likewise, A. R. MacMahon, in

²²⁰Hardy, 225.

²²¹"The Chinese in the Colonies," 451.

²²²Although there is often an undercurrent of fear in such observations and a suggestion that the Chinese were not quite human. For example, Langford used the term "yellow ants" on page 324 of his article to describe the Chinese at work in the goldfields.

²²³"The New Chinese Immigration," Saturday Review, 28 (31 July 1869): 145.

"Cathay and the Golden Chersonese." proposed that large numbers of Chinese be imported into Burma in order to increase the energy and intelligence of the Burmese race.²²⁴

Despite such efforts to place the Chinese near the top of the scale of inferior races, the Chinese character was generally portrayed in an overwhelmingly negative fashion in late nineteenth century articles. This was not just the result of assertions that the Chinese were less intelligent or had defective morals; instead this conclusion is based on the sense of menace the articles created about the Chinese. The body of this information about China suggested that the Chinese somehow threatened Western Europeans. While few writers argued that the Chinese were actively plotting against the West, many hinted repeatedly that there was a great deal lacking in the Chinese character. Such flaws could not be overlooked because the Chinese were too intelligent, too ambitious and most of all too numerous. Chinese traits and characteristics could not be significantly altered. They could only be managed.

²²⁴A. R. MacMahon, "Cathay and the Golden Chersonese," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 141 (February, 1887): 232.

CHAPTER V

CHINA IN THE TIMES OF LONDON

While magazine and journal articles were an important and increasingly popular source of information for the British reading public during the late nineteenth century, the Times of London was generally considered the authority on foreign countries.²²⁵ Also, whereas a weekly or monthly periodical might only contain one or two articles about China in a given year or even none at all, the Times covered China continuously from 1860 through 1900.

Throughout this period, the Times maintained one occasional and anonymous correspondent in the Far East. The Times' foreign correspondents were older men who had lived in their reporting areas for several years. They had numerous local contacts and on average, remained with the paper longer than other employees. It was only towards the end of the century, that the Times and other newspapers began replacing this type of individual with professional journalists.²²⁶

²²⁵Laurel Brake, "The Old Journalism and the New: Forms of Cultural Production in London in the 1880's," Papers for the Millions: the New Journalism in Britain, 1850 to 1914 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 74.

²²⁶Brown, Victorian News and Newspapers, 210-211.

The Times prided itself on the extent of its foreign news coverage and spent large amounts of money in order to provide this information. Once the trans-oceanic telegraphic cables were established during the 1870's, news reporting, particularly from India and the Far East, became extremely expensive.²²⁷

The costs of news gathering and the nature of the reporters themselves help explain the shape and content of news about China published in the Times' during the late nineteenth century. The frequency of news from China as well as its content gradually changed throughout this period. There were three distinct phases in the Times' coverage of China from 1860 to 1900. This chapter will survey articles from each of these phases. Articles from 1866-67, 1879 and 1892-94 illustrate the gradual development of Times' coverage and at the same time provide a representative sampling of the types of stories printed about China.

For instance, in the 1860's, with no international telegraph and no short shipping route through the Suez Canal, stories from China were often two months old before they reached London. Further, the Times' correspondent or correspondents in China were operating in a country that had only started opening to foreigners a few years before.

²²⁷Ibid., 233.

Thus, with only limited access to both the capital and the interior of the country, China news focused on the concerns of the relatively small British merchant communities in the Treaty Ports. The news items reported from China reflected the interests of those communities.

Since China was so far away, the Times' correspondents did not send in reports regularly unless there was a crisis. This irregular flow of information was supplemented by news items picked up from other publications or from newly arrived ships. Because of the relatively small number of news stories from China in the Times during each year of the 1860's, articles from two typical years, 1866 and 1867, are discussed in this survey.

In the 1870's and 1880's correspondents reported more regularly. Even though telegraphic service was established, almost all news was still sent by ship. The Suez Canal did allow for regular mail service and reduced the travel time for news to six or seven weeks.²²⁸ Besides single paragraph telegraphic bulletins reporting major events, most news from China appeared in correspondents's reports. These articles tended to be one or two columns in length. They were detailed and written in a casual "letter from China" style. 1879 was a typical year, in terms of number and length of news stories printed, in this second phase of late

²²⁸Ibid., 233.

nineteenth century Times' reporting from China. As in other years during the 1870's and 1880's, China was presented to British readers in 1879 mostly through the eyes of the Times' correspondent.

One reason for the changing shape of the Times' articles in the late nineteenth century was that before 1891, the paper never made any effort to edit or alter reports from abroad. Until then, foreign news was printed in the form in which it arrived. The Times began supervising and sometimes tampering with correspondents' work in the 1890's after the creation of a foreign department.²²⁹

By the 1890's, with faster and cheaper communications, along with increasing international interest, the Times' coverage expanded and the individual articles became shorter, usually a half column or less and they appeared more frequently. Also, articles no longer contained analysis by the correspondents. Instead, reports from China were written in a more objective style and thus became more like modern newspaper articles. Because of the large number of news stories about China in the Times in this third phase, this chapter surveys three shorter periods during the years 1892 to 1894. These articles illustrate Times' coverage during anti-missionary riots, during a typical,

²²⁹Ibid., 240.

uneventful summer and finally at the start of the Sino-Japanese War.

The Times' reporting of news from China suffered from all of the same limitations as magazine articles. Even though the Times regularly followed events in China and sometimes provided analysis, the coverage as a whole only reenforced negative images. In each of the three phases, China appeared to be bereft of reason, order and character.

1866-1867

In the 1860's, the Times published two main categories of articles about China. The largest number of such news items dealt with financial and shipping reports. Each week the Times reported on sailings from England for China, as well as the status of ships in transit. Also, each week the Times noted the market prices for such commodities as tea, opium and textiles. Periodically, the Times printed feature articles of less than one column in length that included predictions of market conditions and various other trade statistics. Thus, China was frequently mentioned in the pages of the Times. However, these articles did not provide any picture of China or the Chinese people. This type of article continued to be published in the Times throughout the late nineteenth century and beyond but will not be discussed further in this paper.

The second broad category of articles, those that actually reported news from China, included fewer than twenty items each for 1866 and 1867. These items were the only discussions of events in China aside from some one line bulletins announcing the appointment or dismissal of leading Chinese officials or brief announcements of new trade regulations.

During the course of 1866, the Times published seven reports of at least one column in length from its correspondent in China. These reports, along with one three column travel account, were the only lengthy discussions of China throughout the year. Five of the reports were printed in the Times from May through July and the last two in November and December. The small number of items from China during 1866 confirms the sense that reporting was very limited and that it was irregular. Further, since all news items, except short bulletins, were dated six to eight weeks earlier than the date of their publication in the Times, they were far from current.

In 1867, there were only four such lengthy reports throughout the entire year but summaries of Chinese news events were printed occasionally throughout the year. These summaries were never longer than 1/4 of a column. Although there were fewer reports from China in 1867 than in 1866, the appearance of news summaries provided more regular

coverage. By the end of the decade, the Times was publishing news about China nearly every month.

During the first four months of 1866, the Times did not include any report from its correspondent in China. Instead, there were a few brief bulletins about events in China. On January 1st, the paper printed a notice, taken from the French periodical, Le Nord, that announced the opening of a new overland mail route to China via St. Petersburg in Russia.²³⁰ On both February 19th and March 13th, the Times printed bulletins reporting recent attacks on British vessels by Chinese pirates. The February 19th notice related how the captain and crew of the bark 'Bentinek' first met their "savage foes" and attempted to "sell their lives dearly" before the pirates overwhelmed them, killing two crew members and burning the ship. In the March bulletin, Chinese officials were accused of conspiring with pirates in the destruction of the ship 'Aboena' from Hong Kong.²³¹ On March 26, the Times printed an announcement that the Nyenfei rebellion threatened foreign residents in China.²³² In the April 2nd issue of the Times, Alexander Wilson described his journey through North

²³⁰Times (London), 1 January, 1866, p. 9, col. d.

²³¹Times, 19 February, 1866, p. 12, col. d; Times, 13 March, 1866, p. 10, col. c.

²³²Times, 26 March, 1866, p. 12, col. a.

China. In this article, he noted the barrenness of the country and the decrepit state of public works.²³³

On May 1st, there was a report from the Times' "own correspondent." This two column article was filled with various items mostly relating to the vicinity of Shanghai. For example, the correspondent devoted almost a third of the report to the activities of the local Chinese viceroy. This official had retained the core of a British trained force originally organized to fight the recently defeated Taiping Rebellion. According to the correspondent, the viceroy was spending a great deal of money training and equipping more men. The reporter considered such activity on the part of a Chinese as strange behavior. Since no Chinese ever did anything to improve the country, the reporter believed that the viceroy was really building some sort of private force. The correspondent also noted the movement of Nien-fei (spelling varied) rebels upriver and reported rumors that the anti-foreign party in Peking was gaining strength. The last third of the article dealt with affairs in Japan.²³⁴

The next correspondent report, dated April 9th from Shanghai, was published on June 5th. It focused on problems experienced by merchants in the Shanghai foreign settlements. The reporter accused the Chinese of sabotaging

²³³Times, 2 April, 1866, p. 6, col. b.

²³⁴Times, 1 May, 1866, p. 6, col. c.

trade by over-taxing all Chinese citizens connected with foreigners. He complained at length about the large number of vacant houses and shops in the foreign concessions. He asserted that the vacancies existed because the prospective Chinese tenants could not afford both the rent and the special taxes. The correspondent claimed that the unnamed British consul refused to do anything about this Chinese "espionage." The correspondent regretted that whenever they were confronted with such issues, British officials maintained a policy of nonintervention in native taxation.²³⁵

The article also described a dispute over who owned the sediment accretions to the Shanghai waterfront or "Bund." Here, the writer also chided unnamed British government officials for siding with the Chinese. He pointed out the example of the French, who did whatever they wanted in their settlements and although "they were generally hated, they accomplished more than the half-bullied and half-put upon British." In addition to these complaints, the article included rumors of rebellion in Chinese Turkestan, a humorous discussion of the competition between Hong Kong and Shanghai to become the destination for regular mail service from California and a comparison between the slow,

²³⁵Times, 5 June, 1866, p. 6, col. a.

untrainable Chinese soldier and clever and potentially dangerous Japanese.²³⁶

Later correspondent reports, during 1866, focused on such topics as the British "madness" for sports in the Chinese settlements, obstacles in the tea and silk trades, Chinese tax cheating, and the Chinese propensity for piracy. None of the articles dealt much with national Chinese politics or the relations between the Chinese Government and Great Britain. There was never any attempt to describe China in any detail or to analyze the operation of Chinese government or society. While the writer did continue to mention reports of rebellion, he apologized for being wearisome to his readers by dealing with "the usual Chinese situation." In his article, published in the August 27th issue of the Times, the correspondent quickly passed over reports of Chinese internal disorders and spent most of the article discussing how inferior local Chinese military men were to Europeans.²³⁷

The Times had even less detailed coverage of China in 1867. Of the fourteen items about China, only a few were longer than a paragraph. Besides the correspondent reports, there were four short summaries of major events in China and Japan. These were sent by mail from Hong Kong via the

²³⁶Ibid., p. 6, col. a.

²³⁷Times, 27 August, 1866, p. 6, col. a.

Austrian port of Trieste and reached London in about seven weeks. In the first of the news summaries which appeared in the February 25th issue of the Times, the correspondent observed that rebels in China were still active, the Yangtze river was low, making navigation dangerous and there had been large fires in several major Chinese cities. Other bits of news in the same paragraph included a scandal that had arisen in the port of Foochow because a mandarin had had a scholar flogged and mention of the excitement in Shanghai due to the attempt of some robbers to steal a horse from the British minister to China.²³⁸ All of these conditions or events were related in single sentences, with no explanation or analysis. In addition, except for continued references to various rebellions, none of these stories was ever mentioned again in the Times.

The correspondent's reports continued to emphasize opinions and activities in the European settlements. Two of the four were completely devoted to the complaints of British merchants. The May 30th article mostly described the frustration of the British in Shanghai with their government's refusal to press China for railroad development. The August 15th letter was a long list of disappointments suffered by various treaty port groups.²³⁹

²³⁸Times, 25 February, 1867, p. 12, col. b.

²³⁹Times, 30 May, 1867, p. 5, col. c; Times, 15 August, 1867, p. 10, col. d.

Of the other two reports, one was a two-column discussion of the future of the city of Ningpo as a trading center and the other article dealt with the desire of the Europeans in China to move beyond trade into the actual development of the countries' resources.²⁴⁰

During the rest of the year, the Times' readers saw brief announcements of drought in China, improving sanitary conditions in Shanghai, a shortage of ship tonnage in Chinese ports and Britain's victory in the international boat race at Shanghai. Thus, in Britain's most important source of foreign news, China appeared as little more than a very distant, annoying backwater. Except for the occasional reference to a war or natural disaster, the Times' correspondent or correspondents were more interested in acting as spokesmen for the British mercantile community than in describing China. In 1867, China must have seemed incredibly far away and irrelevant to those reading the Times.

Even more than in the magazine and journal articles, Times' coverage of China in the 1860's fits Said's description of orientalism. The Times' portrayal emphasized the image of China as a dark and turbulent country. In the correspondent's reports, the foreign communities in the treaty ports are seen as islands of sanity and efficiency.

²⁴⁰Times, 11 July, 1867, p. 5, col. c; Times, 28 November, 1867, p. 8, col. c.

The reports also put forward the position that direct British authority in China needed to be extended if anything useful was to be obtained or extracted from the Chinese.

1879

The Times' reporting of events in China during 1879 was considerably different from that in the 1866-1867 period. The news stories covered a broader range of subjects and actually attempted to give a sense of what was occurring throughout China not just the Treaty Ports. This increase in coverage seemed to indicate both an improvement in communications among foreign communities within China as well as greater foreign penetration of the interior of the country.

The correspondent's reports were still the main type of article published in the Times. However, unlike the 1860's, these articles appeared more frequently, included news from different parts of the country and followed up on earlier stories. As in the case of earlier reports, the Times coverage of China still tended to be overwhelmingly negative. Also, except for a few short articles and bulletins picked up from other sources, readers of the Times were mostly receiving the six week old opinions of one foreign correspondent.

The first report from China, in the January 31st issue of the Times, was certainly more colorful than any that

appeared during 1866 or 1867. The correspondent devoted much of his article to the recent (October, 1878) attack on the Church of England mission at Foochow. Although a short telegraphic bulletin in the Times reported the incident on October 31, 1878, this article was the first detailed account in the Times.²⁴¹ According to the correspondent, a mob of angry Chinese invaded the mission compound and burned some of the buildings while the missionaries and their families narrowly escaped out the back. While he described the event as an outrage, the correspondent did note that the Catholics seemed to be having greater success in China due to their policy of compromise. He then concluded his discussion with the exciting news that while the Americans were fading out of the China trade, the British were definitely holding their own, despite competition from other countries.²⁴²

Even in this one article, there was a visible change in style and an attempt to interest a broader range of readers than in the 1860's articles. Instead of a list of Shanghai merchant complaints, this report provided an exciting human interest item as well as a brief but serious analysis of

²⁴¹Times, 31 October, 1878, p. 5, col. b.

²⁴²The correspondent cited a comparison of trade figures from 1872 where the British and Americans had 77.96% and 6.46% of the China trade respectively, and 1877 where the comparable figures were 74.39% and 1.49%. Times, 31 January, 1879, p. 3, col. b.

missionary practices. Throughout 1879, the correspondent reports reflected this attempt to combine interesting items about China with discussions of broader issues in Sino-British relations. Also, these sharply worded reports, filled with criticism for the behavior of various groups in China illustrate how dependant Times' readers were on the opinions of one person. Virtually all news about China was presented with the comments and interpretation of the Times' correspondent.

In the April 5th report, the correspondent described a "typically ridiculous" Chinese government proposal to establish cotton textile mills. He claimed that the government intended to tax the products of these domestic mills as heavily as the imports. The Chinese argued that naturally superior native workmanship would make the products more appealing to the domestic market even though they cost the same as the imported cloth. The correspondent thought that this assertion of native quality was comical and pointed to a humorous anecdote about Chinese behavior to prove his point. He described the "fiasco" that occurred when the Chinese tried to maintain regular mail service overland from Peking to Shanghai. Instead of proving a success, the result was ludicrous when the wrong donkeys started being sent out with mislabeled bags of mail.²⁴³

²⁴³Times, 5 April, 1879, p. 4, col. e.

The Correspondent continued the story of the damaged Foochow mission in his May 14th report. He discussed the slow progress of negotiations for reparations and the agreement of all parties, even the Chinese Government, to a settlement of the issues by a British court. As in the previous articles, he also included a humorous account of Chinese amazement whenever they encountered European justice with its reliance on advocacy rather than torture.²⁴⁴

In his three column report in the June 13th issue of the Times, the correspondent outlined in detail the Chinese government's "bizarre" approach to official corruption. According to him, the practice of selling the insignia of office, buttons and peacock feathers, had become so widespread that offices for their sale were opened in every major Chinese city. Further, the insignia themselves were frequently used for the payment of interest on loans and they were handed out lavishly to wealthy individuals who participated in famine relief.²⁴⁵

The reporter next told the story of an official, Chang-Chu-Sheng, who first proposed a reform of this system to the central government. The Board of Revenue acted on his complaint. They took away the right to sell offices from all provincial governments. However, the result was

²⁴⁴Times, 14 May, 1879, p. 5, col. e.

²⁴⁵Times, 13 June, 1879, p. 4, col. a.

corruption on a massive scale since all sales became concentrated in the hands of the officers of the Board of Revenue in Peking. Chang-Chu-Sheng was 'rewarded' by being appointed governor of Kweichow province, a remote, impoverished place that formerly derived most of its income from the sale of offices.²⁴⁶

The correspondent combined this grim story with his account of the response of Chinese famine victims to the relief sent by British charitable organizations. While he noted that "gratitude was an alien concept to the Chinese," he did notice a change in the people in areas where the relief was distributed. The reporter claimed that he was not "grinned at, hooted at, or yelled at," in Shansi province as he had been in Honan where no aid was sent. He argued that the Chinese could not grasp the idea of disinterested charity and they could not believe that there was such a truly virtuous people (the British) in the world.²⁴⁷

The Times' correspondent also used the actions of officials to illustrate strange aspects of Chinese character. For instance, in his report, published on July 26th, he described the curious petition of Kuo Sung-tao. Kuo, former Chinese minister to Britain, asked the emperor

²⁴⁶Ibid., p. 4, col. a.

²⁴⁷Ibid., p. 4, col. a.

for permission to retire to his native place. In his memorial to the throne, Kuo claimed that his health was severely damaged by his stay in London because he feared for his life every day of the two years he spent there. Kuo also argued that the treatments prescribed by British doctors kept him from making any progress in his recovery. The correspondent also noted that, as was typical of these memorials, Kuo described his illness with a "most graphic and amusing minuteness."²⁴⁸

In two reports published on the 6th and 18th of August, the correspondent directed most of his attention to the devious and often incomprehensible behavior of Chinese officials. In his August 6th article, he attacked a Chinese Government plan to improve waterways. These plans were put forward by Shen Pao-Chen, a high-ranking official that the reporter characterized as "the anti-railway king of China." Shen advocated improving water transport in order to thwart the foreigners. Although he did not mention any specific problems with the government plan, the correspondent did declare that they were "as unintelligent and unskillful as one would expect from a body of officials who have pronounced a railway system to be a curse to China." He

²⁴⁸Times, 26 July, 1879, p. 5, col. d.

further argued that the Chinese should get English "brains" to do the work.²⁴⁹

In the last part of the article, the reporter related an account of the enthronement of the re-embodiment of the Dalai Lama in Tibet. As nominal ruler of Tibet, the Chinese emperor sent several high ranking representatives to receive the homage of the newly crowned four year-old boy.

According to the correspondent, this event showed that Chinese officials were always willing to lend themselves to any such superstition or "tomfoolery" in order to get what they wanted.²⁵⁰

The August 18th report described palace intrigue in Peking. The correspondent related details of a recent scandal where the suicide note of an official revealed that the two empresses dowager had conspired to alter the imperial succession. According to this note, when Emperor Tung-chih died in 1875, leaving no heir, the two empresses had a child of the same generation as the deceased emperor adopted as the heir. The reporter stated that this revelation was extremely disturbing to the Chinese sense of propriety. He claimed that acceptance of this flagrant

²⁴⁹Times, 6 August, 1879, p. 10, col. b.

²⁵⁰Ibid., p. 10, col. b.

breach of tradition by most officials demonstrated their absolute ruthlessness.²⁵¹

In his September 11th report, the correspondent interrupted his series of withering attacks on Chinese officialdom by catching his readers up on the events surrounding the attack on the Foochow mission. He reported the surprising fact that the British court had found in favor of the local Chinese officials in their claim that the missionaries should have vacated the site before the riot. Although he did not justify the actions of the Chinese mob, the reporter had to admit that the incident was mostly the result of the missionaries' "intemperate zeal and enterprise, unaccompanied by discretion."

In the Foochow case, the court found that the missionaries had originally rented land from the city that was part of a Taoist temple complex. The missionaries were required to pay part of the rent directly to the Taoist priests in order to fund their ceremonies. The missionaries refused to pay the priests this part of the rent and they further insulted the Taoists by building several structures on the land without any regard to principles of geomancy. The city asked that the mission vacate the land and when the

²⁵¹Times, 18 August, 1879, p. 11, col. a.

missionaries refused, a riot followed.²⁵² Although the correspondent agreed that the missionaries were wrong, and he mentioned that the local British press was angrily denouncing them, he still felt that the whole problem was due to the Chinese inability to comprehend land law and draw up reasonable agreements.²⁵³

The correspondent continued his criticism of the Chinese Government and their efforts at reform in his September 13th report. He discussed Chinese claims that they were going to assemble their entire fleet in a major display of power in order to impress the Japanese. He argued that the Chinese were incapable of either bringing all of their fleet together or working as a single unit on any project. The correspondent predicted that the Shanghai and Foochow naval commands would sabotage each other and steal each other's supplies. Also, he claimed that since their various guns required completely different types of ammunition, a joint maneuver would be a supply nightmare, even if the Chinese could intellectually handle the logistics. Meanwhile, the Board of War in Peking would be

²⁵²The mission society responded to this article in an irate letter to the editor. They claimed that the whole thing was a Chinese conspiracy. Times, 20 September, 1879, p. 8, col. a.

²⁵³Times, 11 September, 1879, p. 8, col.a.

no help as it continued to live in a world of "crazy war-junks and stinkpots."²⁵⁴

Continuing his pattern of cataloging what he saw as the ridiculous behaviors of the Chinese government, the correspondent reported the publication of an Imperial decree announcing the "startling" discovery of a perpetual motion machine. He described the plans for this invention as filled with mysterious specifications including cogged wheels, movements of the planets and the constellations of the zodiac. All of these elements were "inextricably jumbled together." The reporter thought that it was wonderfully ironic that the great railway opponent, Shen Pao-Chen, was forced by enemies in the central government to subsidize the construction of a massive prototype of this machine.²⁵⁵

At the end of the September 13th report, the correspondent included his harshest attack yet on the Chinese Government. He described the recent sentencing of the children of a rebel leader as "an act of vindictive barbarity... which exceeds in horror anything that has ever been heard or read of in modern times." He reported that the surviving children and grandchildren of the defeated rebel leader Yakoob Beg had been convicted under China's

²⁵⁴Times, 13 September, 1879, p. 4, col. f.

²⁵⁵Ibid., p. 4, col. f.

harsh treason laws. Therefore, these boys aged 14, 10, and 6 were sentenced to be castrated and sent to Turkestan to be eunuch slaves of the army. The correspondent cited this case as absolute proof that foreigners could never rely on Chinese justice, nor could they accept claims that the Chinese were civilized.²⁵⁶

The final report from China for 1879, in the October 21st issue of the Times, continued criticism of the Chinese Government although not nearly as harshly as the previous article. The correspondent argued that the Chinese created problems with Japan by insisting on maintaining unnecessary and antiquated territorial claims. He concluded with a warning that clever Chinese merchants, in cooperation with a group of Bombay Jews, were slowly driving the British out of the opium trade.

Thus, the Times completed its 1879 coverage of the news from China. The leading source of information for middle and upper class Britons carried on, through its China correspondent, an almost uninterrupted attack on the Chinese

²⁵⁶The correspondent reported in his January 20th, 1880 article that the boys had been pardoned. He noted an article in the Times could stir up tremendous international opinion and even sway the rigid Chinese Government. In fact, at least three angry letters to the editor were printed in response to his article. Each of these letters condemned the proposed punishment and denounced Chinese barbarity in general. Times, 20 January, 1880, p. 9, col. f; Times, 16 September, 1879, p. 9, col. f; Times, 18 September, 1879, p. 10, col. b; Times, 4 October, 1879, p. 5, col. f.

Government. As a result, it is difficult to imagine that any regular reader of the Times could have maintained a positive or even neutral picture of China in this period.

1892-1894

In 1879, the anonymous China correspondent dominated news reporting with his multi-column letters from the Far East. However, by the 1890's, news reporting from China changed again. Although China was already connected with London by telegraph by the 1870's, most news arrived by mail until the 1890's. Apparently, either the transmission costs were lower or there was greater demand for fresh news from China, because by 1892, all of the most important events appeared in the Times in reports of at least two or three paragraphs in length rather than in single line bulletins.

One explanation for the change was that China was much more the focus of British foreign policy. Therefore, political developments in China were regularly and continuously reported. This interest in China produced a comparatively large volume of stories. For instance, during the first six weeks of 1892, the Times published more articles about China than were included in all of 1866 or 1879.

There were two main types of articles printed in the Times during the 1890's. The first was the telegraphed

report. These were generally two or three paragraphs long, describing some important news item first reported in China the day before. The second type of article was the mail report, taking a month to six weeks to arrive in London. Although this form of news report existed both in the 1860's and 1870's, it tended to be longer in the 1890's and it appeared more frequently. Also, long, detailed feature articles appeared occasionally but they were on specific subjects and written in an objective style. The old reports from correspondents, filled with gossip about events in China, were gone. News reports in the 1890's more closely resembled modern international wire service reports. British readers lost much of the analysis of issues but instead were able to watch events in China unfold day by day.

Because of the great volume of news stories about China in the Times during the 1890's and because of the rapidly changing political situation, a survey of three specific time periods in the early 1890's is more practical for purposes of this paper than any attempt to analyze all of the articles from a single year. Thus, articles from the first six weeks of 1892 illustrated the Times' news reporting during a period of internal crisis in China. Reports from the summer of 1893 showed Times' news gathering during a generally uneventful period. Finally, a sampling of bulletins from late July through late August 1894

depicted the increasingly sophisticated reporting that took place during the start of the Sino-Japanese war.

The Times' 1892 China coverage began on January 6th with a telegraphic report that there was an extensive rebellion underway in North China under the leadership of a bandit chief, Li Hung. The article reported that he recruited his forces from ex-soldiers and that the first imperial troops sent against him were starting to desert. A second report was published on January 11th. It confirmed that the situation in the North was very serious and the rebels were well prepared to meet the Imperial army.²⁵⁷

On January 13th, the Times published a story from the North China Herald about Chinese hostility toward the smells Europeans carried with them. The Chinese reportedly could not stand to remain in the same room with "foreign devils" and that this was the reason for Chinese aloofness and resistance to foreign contacts. This article was presented as a humorous explanation for the increasing anti-foreign agitation in China. The reporter thought that the explanation was comical considering how bad the Chinese smelled.²⁵⁸

Mail reports from China printed on January 13th, 20th and 23rd all added to a growing sense of crisis. Each

²⁵⁷Times, 6 January, 1892, p. 6, col. a; Times, 11 January, 1892, p. 5, col. d.

²⁵⁸Times, 13 January, 1892, p. 4, col. f.

listed several examples of anti-foreign sentiment and internal rebellion. For example, the report of the 13th mentioned the joint protest by foreign consuls in China to a viceroy in South-Central China about the spread of anti-foreign publications. The consuls cited the extremely offensive "Death to the Devil's Religion," a harsh attack on Christianity. Hundreds of thousands of copies of this pamphlet were being distributed throughout Southern China. The report noted large numbers of anti-foreign placards in the capital of Hunan Province and it mentioned a revolt of tribesmen on China's Southern border.²⁵⁹

Reports on the 20th and 22nd of January included news of missionaries stirring up trouble by trying to move into the interior of Southern China, a massacre of 700 native Christians in Mongolia and the harassment of a Canadian mission by swarms of beggars hired by local officials. On January 26th, the Times reprinted a Reuter's story, "The Recent Disturbances in China," which described the kidnapping and subsequent release of a British missionary in northern China. The writer of this article did note that the northern rebels did not seem to be interested in politics, just loot.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹Times, 13 January, 1892, p. 12, col. b.

²⁶⁰Times, 26 January, 1892, p. 6, col. b.

A February 1st telegraphic report stated that there was serious anti-foreign agitation in North and Central China. It described a specific incident where a Chinese general provoked a British gunboat by having all of his artillery aimed at the vessel during military maneuvers. On the same day, the Times printed a mail report that indicated that anti-foreign activity was spreading rapidly during the previous month. It also reported that "noxious placards" were appearing as far south as Canton.²⁶¹

The last mail report from China printed in February indicated a continuing crisis with such items as the alleged trespass of Chinese officials into Hong Kong and rumors that the Chinese were about to dismiss all Europeans from the customs service.²⁶² Thus, during the first few weeks of 1892, a series of newspaper articles helped create a sense of emergency about China. Even though this particular crisis dissipated during the next few months, a series of such crises during the 1890's which culminated with the Boxer Uprising of 1900 helped establish an image of China as completely chaotic and helpless.

With no immediate crisis to report, articles during the Summer of 1893 focused on China's development. One report published on June 8th, mentioned that the Chinese Government

²⁶¹Times, 1 February, 1892, p. 5, col. f; Times, 1 February, 1892, p. 14, col. c.

²⁶²Times, 9 February, 1892, p. 4, col. f.

had accepted a British proposal for a national post office, the telegraph was being extended into Chinese Turkestan, and the government was planning to reform the distribution of honors to officials. Another article on June 22nd, reported that part of the Summer Palace, destroyed by Anglo-French forces in 1861, was rebuilt and the Emperor was spending the hot months there. It also reported that in order to avoid Western demands that South-Central China be opened, the Chinese Government was offering to allow the construction of up to thirty miles of railway from Shanghai.²⁶³

On July 4th, the Times printed a three line bulletin that two Swedish missionaries had been murdered in Central China. This was followed by two paragraphs on July 10th, confirming the murder and describing the attempts of Swedish officials to recover the bodies.²⁶⁴ This event showed that even during a lull in news reporting, China was still a dangerous place. However, these two murders did not build into any crisis and there was no further mention of them in the Times.

Coverage of China during the Summer of 1893 concluded with three feature articles, each describing a specific topic. The first, "One Obstacle to Railway Development in

²⁶³Times, 8 June, 1893, p. 13, col. e; Times, 22 June, 1893, p. 14, col. e.

²⁶⁴Times, 4 July, 1893, p. 5, col. a; Times, 10 July, 1893, p. 5, col. a.

China," told the familiar story of irrational native resistance to railroad construction in Manchuria. A local general got geomancers to allege that a railroad project would break the vertebrae of the dragon which encircled the holy city of Mukden. The general proposed an alternate, impractical route. However, the danger to the dragon's pulse suddenly disappeared when the directors of the project launched an appeal to the emperor.²⁶⁵

The last two articles were detailed descriptions of manufacturing. While "The Manufacture of Soy and Beancurd in China," was a straightforward account of Chinese technology, "The Manufacture of Portland Cement in China," was an attack on Chinese intelligence and initiative. In the "Cement" article, the writer argued that it was nearly impossible to introduce modernization to China because of the "ignorance and slovenliness" of the Chinese.²⁶⁶ This final article of the summer showed that even when China was not being depicted as a violent and chaotic place, it was still hopelessly inefficient, except in areas administered by Europeans.

²⁶⁵"One Obstacle to Railway Development in China," Times, 5 August, 1893, p. 9, col. f.

²⁶⁶"The Manufacture of Soy and Beancurd in China," Times, 12 August, 1893, p. 9, col. f.; "The Manufacture of Portland Cement in China," Times, 29 August, 1893, p. 7, col. f.

One of the most damaging events in terms of China's international prestige was her defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5. Even in the first bulletin announcing the commencement of hostilities, events seemed to go badly for China. An article published July 28, 1894 reported that fighting had already started with a Japanese attack on Chinese troop transports. The attack had been so successful that it was feared that all 10,000 Chinese troops on the transports were lost.²⁶⁷

During the month of August, the Times carried numerous reports from China on the progress of the war, often as many as twelve separate bulletins would be printed on a single page in the order in which they arrived. Some reported on the strange passivity of Chinese army and navy forces in and around Treaty Ports. Others described the divisions and lack of direction among Chinese officials in Peking or they related the desperate efforts of the Chinese government to obtain weapons and war loans from European powers. For example, the reports in the August 13th issue of the Times described the aggressive tactics of the Japanese fleet and compared them to the passivity of the Chinese navy. On August 17th, the Times reported that the Chinese emperor was following all war news closely, the Chinese government was deeply divided over how to pursue the war, loan negotiations

²⁶⁷Times, 28 July, 1894, p. 5, col. a.

in England and France were unsuccessful and finally, the Chinese Navy seemed to have disappeared from the seas.²⁶⁸

By August 27th, China had undergone 30 days of the most complete scrutiny ever presented in the Times. Each day during this period, the Times printed numerous discussions about China. Even though the war was not yet a rout, all of the reports revealed a disastrously weak China. Also, despite the obvious weakness of the Japanese claims of provocation, the Times reports showed an unwilling admiration for Japanese efficiency, strength and preparedness.²⁶⁹

Thus, as the level of reporting about China reached its peak, the Times continued its constant theme of impatience with China and the Chinese people. In the 1860's, this annoyance was directed toward the continuing limitations on trade in the Treaty Ports. By the late 1870's, the Times articles focused this anger on the Chinese central government. Finally, in the 1890's, China as a whole was portrayed as a directionless and sick. While there were some magazine and journal articles that saw hope for China, the Times nearly always took the opposite position.

²⁶⁸Times, 13 August, 1894, p. 3, col. a; Times, 17 August, 1894, p 3, col. a.

²⁶⁹Times, 27 August, 1894, p. 3, col. a.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

No historian has produced a detailed and comprehensive study of British portrayals of China during the nineteenth century. Two groundbreaking surveys of the entire history of the images of China in the West, The Chinese Chameleon by Raymond Dawson and Western Images of China by Colin Mackerras provided a useful but necessarily limited treatment of this subject. While Dawson and Mackerras recognized the central role of British authors in transmitting information about China to the West during the nineteenth century, that period was only one of several that both writers examined in their attempts to trace the changing image of China from antiquity to the late twentieth century.

Mackerras made a more serious attempt to sample the types of works produced by British writers, especially those from the second half of the nineteenth century. He analyzed the work of some important authors from the period and he isolated two themes from those writings. Mackerras argued that nineteenth century portrayals of China always emphasized either the strange and incomprehensible nature of the country and its people or the Chinese resistance to

change and modernization. He believed that those two rigid forms for presenting information helped explain the persistently negative image of China throughout the nineteenth century.

Mackerras did not use the British periodical and newspaper press even though such publications were arguably the leading sources of information for literate people in Britain. An examination of the periodical and newspaper press would not only provide a more complete picture of the types of information available to the British reading public in the second half of the nineteenth century, but also, a survey of articles from that period would develop and expand on themes introduced by Mackerras.

Numerous articles in British magazines and journals, especially those from 1860 to 1900, described the alien and unpleasant characteristics of China. Mackerras noted this same theme in the small number of books that he examined from the period. However, while the authors he cited were all in some sense experts on China, many articles in the periodical press were written by people who displayed little knowledge or appreciation of Chinese civilization or culture.²⁷⁰ Their access to China was limited in many ways

²⁷⁰In his chapter on nineteenth century portrayals of China, Mackerras cited S. Wells Williams, A. H. Smith, Thomas Taylor Meadows, Robert Fortune, George Ernest Morrison, and Isabella L. Bird Bishop, all British writers who spent considerable amounts of time in China and who travelled in different regions. Mackerras, 43-65.

and as a result, such writers tended to focus on a few weird, colorful and easily observable features of Chinese life. Dozens of articles transmitted this negative information year after year to the British reading public in the nineteenth century. Thus, writers constantly reenforced a chaotic image of China filled with noise, dirt and decay.

Magazine and journal articles from the late nineteenth century also presented a more complex picture of the theme of China's resistance to modernization. Articles published in the British periodical press often dealt with China's refusal to adopt new ideas, especially Western technological innovations. Unlike Mackerras' sources, magazine and journal articles revealed two distinct phases in the presentation of this issue to the reading public. The first, optimistic phase lasted from the 1860's to the early 1880's. These articles argued that the Chinese would be forced to accept modern ideas. Although writers in this period always expressed frustration with Chinese resistance to change, they were certain that China would ultimately modernize. Such positive expectations completely disappeared by the 1890's. Writers in the second phase were angry and disappointed with Chinese conservatism.

Articles published in the British periodical press over a forty year period demonstrated, even more clearly than Mackerras' sources, the persistence and intensity of negative perceptions of China in the West. The impatient

and condescending tone of earlier articles changed to overt hostility towards all things Chinese by the end of the nineteenth century. Further, none of the articles on the subject of modernization published over four decades ever attempted to understand or to analyze the Chinese point of view.

Articles in British magazines and journals also dealt with the character of individual Chinese people. This was not a theme that emerged in Mackerras' work but the constant repetition of negative Chinese character traits was a striking feature of the periodical press. Writers often used isolated contacts with individual Chinese people as the basis for sweeping indictments of perceived racial failings. Many articles were based on explorations of Chinese communities in the United States or in British colonies. For those writers, a few hours spent in a Chinatown were sufficient evidence to condemn all Chinese for immorality and perversity.

Mackerras was most interested in the evolution of the image of China over long periods of time. An equally valid approach to the issue of Western perceptions of China would be to trace the persistence of the negative image of China during a specific era, such as the years from 1860 to 1900. The Times of London, as the single most important source of information about foreign countries for literate Britons in the nineteenth century, was an outstanding example of the

relentlessly negative presentation of China to the British reading public. While the amount of coverage and the types of news items changed considerably during the last decades of the century, the Times' hostile attitude toward China remained the same.

Andrew March and Edward Said both help in understanding the consistently negative presentation of information about China. March and Said have presented different theories about the shared intellectual viewpoints of those people who described Asia during the nineteenth century. March's geographic determinism and Said's theory that knowledge about nonwestern societies had been somehow "colonized" offered possible explanations for limitations and prejudices in the work of nineteenth century British writers.

Even a brief examination of the theories of Said and March indicated the need for further exploration of newspaper and periodical sources from the late nineteenth century as well as other periods in the history of contact between China and Great Britain. Further, discussions of British portrayals of China have raised the issue of how such images differed from contemporary descriptions of Japan, India or other areas of extensive British contacts.

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