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ENTANGLED EMPIRES:

THE FRENCH IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Entangled Empires: The French in China

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This dissertation examines attempts French to renew national prestige by establishing a lasting presence in the Pacific, with China at its fulcrum. Culturally informed readings of diplomatic, legal, religious and military archival materials, fiction, and published memoirs locate the foundations of the French presence in Asia within affect-driven encounters among the French and Chinese. Working at the interstices of cultural, social, gender and diplomatic history reveals how both French and Chinese subjects first embraced a partnership based on culture and sentiment to foster material, social, and diplomatic ties between their nations. However, the nascent French quest for global expansion quickly evolved into a drive for conquest.

This study begins by identifying the ideological catalysts behind imperial revitalization in the post-Napoleonic era, as French agents sought to unite the pieces of their empire through connections to global networks of trade, diplomacy, and exploration. In the 1840s, members of the French commercial mission cemented new and existing trade connections by fashioning personal relationships with their Chinese counterparts. French missionaries and diplomats alike cultivated an image of benevolent compassion to counter what they believed was an aggressive British imperial manhood. Meanwhile,

dueling stereotypes of Chinese nobility and decay mirrored French anxieties over their national future, and served as poles between which French individuals could attempt to articulate the revival of their national body by guiding, but not dominating, their Asian partner. However, intimate bonds could be profoundly unsettling. At the height of various Chinese rebellions in the 1850s, visions of a perilous zone of contact led to profound transformations in Franco-Chinese relations. The cultural weight of this shift appears most markedly in the Anglo-French Expedition of 1860, when the symbolic conquest and subsequent triumphal display of looted Chinese objects in Paris set the tone for an aggressive French occupation of other Asian territories, which continues to weigh on French national identity and foreign policy. As sacred Chinese space was penetrated and pillaged, the shared history of France and China was further entangled when objects conveying the authority of the Emperor were re-incorporated into French and British apparatuses of power through public display.

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DEDICATION

For my parents, Edward and Ellen Giblin

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INTRODUCTION

COMPASSION AND CONQUEST

In 1844, French diplomat Marie Melchior Joseph Théodose de Lagrené met with Qing statesman Qiying to sign the Treaty of Huangpu (or Whampoa), guaranteeing trading rights and extraterritoriality for French nationals in China.¹ Although their agreement followed a British military victory over the Qing, their correspondence reflected an intention to preserve and foster amicable relations between France and China. Lagrené tried to distance himself from his British counterparts by emphasizing his own nation's supposedly long record of "gracious overtures" to partnership with China. Qiying made certain that Lagrené understood that he was only a guest in China, but responded in kind: he assured Lagrené that China's friendship with France would last ten thousand years.² Yet less than two decades later, as French General Charles Cousin-Montauban and his army of occupation surveyed the ruins of the Yuánmíngyuán (Old Summer Palace) and gazed upon Beijing from atop its walls, one might have concluded that the "friendship" had been rather short-lived.

The idea of that friendship, however, is remarkably persistent in both French and Chinese historical memories. In 2004, French and Chinese diplomatic bodies launched the "Year of French Culture" in China. One hundred and sixty years after the two empires

¹ Where possible, I have used the current PRC preference of *pinyin*-style Romanization of Chinese words. For example, I have used the *pinyin* spelling of Macao, instead of the more widespread English spelling of Macau. However, in cases where the *pinyin* spelling might cause confusion, as in the Treaty of Huangpu (known much more commonly in the West as Whampoa), I have pointed to the older transliteration.

² Lagrené to Qiying (Ki-iñ), 22 August 1844; Qiying to Lagrené, received 28 August 1844. Marie-Melchior-Joseph-Théodose de Lagrené, *Recueil des Documents Diplomatiques Relatifs à la Légation Française en Chine, Traduits du Français en Chinois et du Chinois en Français par J.M. Callery, Secrétaire-Interprète de la Légation*. Macao, 1845 et 46, NUMM-6117086 or Tolbiac 8-LG2-307, Nos. 1 and 2, BnF.

signed the first treaty codifying their relationship, the Forbidden City hosted a laser light show in the colors of the French flag and a concert by electronic musician Jean Michel Jarre.³ The activities were the second in a two-year series, after a celebration of China in France in 2003. Meanwhile, French warships joined the People's Republic of China in naval drills in the Taiwan Strait. That display of water-borne might was accompanied by other militaristic displays performed with the cooperation of other nations.⁴ While the goal in this case was to intimidate, like the "Year of French Culture," it celebrated shared histories, and fostered the creation of new ones. The spectacle of the Year of French Culture in China 2003 and 2004 followed other events in the United States, Germany, Egypt, Mexico, Panama, and Belgium. The Franco-Chinese revels were intended as a sort of finale – according to the government of the People's Republic, the concerts and exhibitions formed the largest cultural exchange since the founding of the PRC, a "glorious occasion in the history of Sino-French [relations]." In 2012, the PRC celebrated a new milestone: it had signed "cultural agreements" with 143 different nations, and arranged for cultural exchanges involving more than thirty thousand individuals.⁵

The triumphal tone that underscored the drills of 2004, the celebrations of 2005, and the achievements of 2012 reflected China's delight in its role as a leader in global cultural diplomacy. It also cloaked – at least partly – tensions about its rise as a superpower. The government-sponsored celebrations revived an old narrative of Franco-Chinese friendship that dated to the earliest years of their official association. It was only the latest carefully manicured version of a relationship that had actually been much more

³ *Xinhua*, October 25, 2004.

⁴ "France joins China navy drills," CNN.com, March 19, 2004. Accessed September 2, 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/03/16/china.navy/>

⁵ China Factfile: Cultural Exchange, Gov.cn: Chinese Government's Official Web Portal. Accessed September 2, 2014. http://english.gov.cn/2006-02/08/content_182612.htm.

fraught. The theme of the Year of French Culture captured in succinct and telling fashion the relations that French and Chinese agents from viceroys to country missionaries had envisioned for their nations: “Romance and Renovation.”⁶

The Reconception of Imperial France – In China

Both romance and renovation recalled an earlier era in which both sides hoped to develop a positive relationship. For the French, a meaningful relationship with China was an early, crucial facet of their reconstruction of the imperial power attained under the first Napoleon. The late-nineteenth-century French intervention in and subsequent colonization of Annam, Cochinchine, and Tonkin were important components of what became known as French “high imperialism,” but the conquest was motivated in part by a more ambitious goal: to exert French influence in China. This dissertation examines French attempts to renew their nation’s global prestige by establishing a lasting, China-centered foothold in the Pacific in the years between two empires – the first under Napoleon Bonaparte, and the second under Jules Ferry in the eighteen seventies. Many in France believed that their nation’s global position was being eclipsed by an expanding British Empire, and that it could be recovered only by extending the French orbit into territories equal to Britain’s expansive domains. In many French minds, only China could compete with India in size, wealth, and exotic grandeur. The so-called Celestial Empire was therefore not just backdrop for the colonization of Southeast Asia and the Pacific. It was also to be the keystone of a global French empire, linking possessions from the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean through trade and religion.

⁶ Flyers and posters, French Consulate in Hong Kong, October of 2004. A French-themed reception hosted by the Macao Chamber of Commerce featured a ¼-scale Eiffel Tower.

This project describes the interactive processes by which French citizens attempted to carve out the beginnings of something resembling an empire in China. Moving the focus of French imperial designs northward, from Southeast Asia to the “Middle Kingdom,” (or, more precisely, the “central states,” *zhongguo*, the most important Chinese name for what English-speakers call “China”) reveals a set of processes by which French citizens were part of a conscious attempt to gain a foothold in Asia much earlier than their exploits in Indochina would suggest. After examining how intellectual rhetoric drew upon a China of the imagination that would inform calls for French intercession in the East, I investigate the means by which diverse groups of French men and women, including diplomats, tourists, sailors, and missionaries found themselves in China, and how daily interactions in the treaty ports were ordered by received knowledge even as they began to transform China in the French imaginary. However, attempts to establish a hierarchy of relationships eventually subverted the task, as diverse individuals produced conflicting reports of their interactions. As French agents moved from China’s coastal ports to its interior and onward to Beijing, inchoate desires for trade and partnership were gradually subsumed by aspirations of imperial expansion. Accounts of the French capacity to form mutually beneficial partnerships with the Chinese coexisted with antithetical claims of mere survival in an inherently hostile nation. Both narratives stoked pride in French potency. However, vulnerability tested the limits of French trust in their Chinese partners. The experience of danger contributed to a French sense of betrayal, and eventually raised questions about the viability the French project in China. French interests then became increasingly aligned with British ones. Multiple, even conflicting accounts initially attested to the solidity of the French presence

in China. However, the ambiguity of the French position but ultimately transformed their relationship with the Chinese from courtship to conquest, and conquest to remorse.

French actions in China before the nineteenth century were not always distinguishable from other European or Western activities. However, from the eighteenth forties to eighteenth seventies, the French were intent upon differentiating their projects from those of Britain, the United States, and European nations clamoring for a stake in Chinese trade, evangelization, and “modernization.” Although the representatives of various Western nation-empires did often act in tandem, their disagreements were often strong enough to overpower nominal solidarity based on perceived skin color or continental origin. As Lagrené had pointed out, his mission was part of a much longer trajectory of Franco-Chinese connections that dated to the sixteenth century. Even the commercial delegates from Lagrené’s mission, with their explicit goal of negotiating a commercial treaty with China, realized that they were merely seeking to codify and expand what was already an established (if often-interrupted) practice. Likewise, while the French cultivation of relationships with Chinese merchants, government officials, and diplomats sometimes involved a ride on the coattails of other Western nations’ successes, French representatives were also careful to distance themselves from unsavory imperialist behavior by invoking the language of national difference. Whether based on supposed dissimilarities in religious practice, socio-cultural tendencies, or commercial aims, the French couched their imperatives in terms of their exceptional and special status in relation to China – even after the French government threw in its lot with the British in the second Opium War of 1856-61. In spite of the fact that China’s interactions with France were in many ways connected to its dealings with other Western powers, the idea

of a Franco-Chinese friendship as a distinct and special one remained. Rather than acting as an antidote to national and imperial exploitation, friendship drew the French empire together, and brought other empires into its sphere.

Our story begins in 1840, when domestic calm mixed with global anxiety sparked French interest in reviving the Empire that had all but died out with the fall of the Old Regime and then Napoleon Bonaparte, with major colonial losses including Saint-Domingue and much of North America. British belligerence overseas, most acutely evident in its conflict with China over the opium trade, drew French eyes eastward. Our story ends in 1870, with simultaneous and major political in both France and China. In France, the Paris Commune and the Franco-Prussian War caused the Second Empire to collapse, and the eliminated the Bourbon imperial fantasy that had been reawakened in China. In China, rumors that French religious personnel were harming orphans led to public demonstrations and a reaction from a French official that led to a massacre of French residents in Tianjin. The result was the execution of several Chinese offenders and a formal apology from the Qing state to France. While the Sino-French relationship did not end there, its nature was profoundly transformed. Thereafter, French imperial dreams drifted increasingly toward Southeast Asia.

The Sino-French relationship had grown and contracted in fits and starts for several hundred years. In the eighteenth century, trade supplemented France's long religious intervention, with French ships picking up goods in Chinese ports, and French priests re-evangelizing parts of the interior. French opportunities in China increased during the first Opium War, when the British attacked China to force it to change its external policies, including the exclusion of opium. The Franco-Chinese presumed "partnership" began in

1844, with the arrival of the French commercial mission in Guangzhou. French agents, from career diplomats to artisans, bureaucrats, and adventurers, believed they had found allies in the Chinese traders who were as dependent on trade as they were. Overlapping with the traders were Chinese officials (known as Mandarins in the West) who oversaw and enabled French trading rights. They initially represented a source of stability, maintaining old trading relationships and promoting new ones. Later, they would sometimes be seen as an impediment to the realization of new European goals. Over the course of thirty years, the French imagined those they encountered in various ways, from civil to savage, and from submissive to deviant. The constantly shifting alliances among various Chinese, French, and other European figures placed national and imperial relationships in a state of perpetual metamorphosis.

In the eighteen fifties and sixties, French soldiers, adventurers, and women played more important and sometimes more independent roles in China as internal rebellions caused widespread unrest. They attempted to use cultural and geographical markers to distinguish friendly Chinese from hostile ones. They developed new types of links and antipathies that both ordered and subverted received knowledge about “the Chinese.” In every day life and in periods of crisis, they formed varied and contested friendships and partnerships with the Chinese. As French historical actors sought to unite the component pieces of a slowly reviving empire through connections to broader global networks of trade, diplomacy, and exploration, they cemented new and existing connections by fashioning relationships with their Chinese counterparts. However, they could find these intimate bonds profoundly unsettling. French men and women, along with other

Europeans, found the environment more perilous. As they moved into the interior of China, their interactions with Chinese subjects were profoundly transformed.

Reading the Relationship

British historian Julia Lovell describes the Sino-European wars of the mid-nineteenth century as a “national wound” that has yet to heal completely in China. In today’s Chinese narratives, Europeans with guns and drugs made a deliberate attempt to devastate China. In Britain, on the other hand, the wars “barely seem to register in public memory.”⁷ The wars seem to have left even less of an impression in today’s France. There is little in the way of a dominant narrative to correct, but what circulated in public discourse as late as 2005 echoes the rhetoric of the nineteenth century: that France, unsullied by the drug trade, was chiefly concerned with evangelization. British histories of Anglo-Chinese relations generally examine the Opium Wars. French accounts, with a few notable exceptions, do not. They look instead at broader connections defined by religion or material culture. There is a large body of work on the sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Jesuit presence in China, and the influence of Jesuit descriptions of China upon European trade and taste. Then the discussion largely leaps forward two hundred years to the French concessions of Shanghai, with a focus on cosmopolitan modernity, sexual economies, and cultural hybridity.⁸ Those features of the Franco-Chinese relationship are

⁷ Julia Lovell, “The Opium War: From Both Sides Now,” *History Today* 62, No. 6 (2012).

⁸ See Liam Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Andrew Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542-1742* (Edinburgh University Press, 1994); Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); R. Po-Chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City, 1552-1610* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010); Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984); Madeleine Jarry, *Chinoiserie: Chinese Influence on European Decorative Art, 17th and 18th Centuries* (New York: Vendome Press, 1981); Guy Brosselet, *Les Français de Shanghai, 1849-1949* (Paris: Belin, 1999).

important, but the scope and durability of the historiographical aporia of France, China, and the nineteenth century merit unpacking. In the historical imagination of many French historians (and historians of France), Britain was interested in accomplishing objectives in China: securing rights, asserting dominance, or establishing advantageous trade. France in this period was not acting as assertively, or as rationally, at least in the sense of nineteenth-century utilitarian thought, but it was also involved in an important relationship. The nineteenth-century French liaison with China was the prelude to France's future as a reconstituted and expanded empire.

Although some Sino-French relationships may have been constructed out of personal or national self-interest alone, many French historical actors expressed the particularity of their mission in China in the language of sentiment and mutual desire. They drew heavily from the Romantic ideals that featured prominently in French life at home, and used it to write their own history at home and abroad. Using the language of intense emotion brought with it a range of contingent feelings. Sentiments aroused in the Franco-Chinese encounter ranged from excitement and tenderness to fear, rage, betrayal, and sometimes crimes of passion. They often surfaced at different moments, but they could coincide, as when the destruction of the Yuánmíngyuán at French and British hands evoked simultaneous feelings of triumph and regret – sometimes even within the same observer. It is thus hardly coincidental that so many studies of the places inhabited by European imperial imaginations overlap with examinations of intimate relations among individuals. From Ann Stoler and Mrinalini Sinha to Ronald Hyam and Françoise Vergès, many of the pioneers of the now well-established New Imperial History saw the codes of

empire being drawn in and around sex, marriage, and the family.⁹ More recent work, including Matt Matsuda's *Empire of Love*, examines a broader range of intimacies, including those within religion, warfare and friendship. That body of scholarship illustrates intersecting histories of gender, affect, personal relationships, and empire.¹⁰

My project begins with those histories in mind. It focuses primarily upon the homosocial bonds fostered through contact – commercial, religious, diplomatic, and military, as well as the peculiar connections between captives and their captors. It also examines crucial moments of desire in moments of diplomacy, captivity, and conquest from South China to Beijing. Some of them involve physical contact, but many do not. Rather, they evoke in symbolic form the sexual (or sexualized) intimacies and anxieties that were prevalent in so many imperial encounters in the nineteenth century.

Passion and Pathos

According to theorist Sara Ahmed, passion and passivity are linked semantically; both share the Latin root for 'suffering,' and both therefore demonstrate a weakness on

⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1991); Frances Gouda and Julia Clancy-Smith, *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Matt K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also You-Sun Crystal Chung, "Across the Colonial Divide: Friendship in the British Empire, 1875-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2014); Haggis, J. and Allen, M., "Imperial emotions: affective communities of mission in British Protestant women's missionary publications c1880-1920" *Journal of Social History*, 41(3): 691-716; Katharina Stornig, "'Who is able to describe the feelings?' Travelling Nuns in Colonial Contexts, 1896-1918," and Claire Marynowar "'A nos sœurs indigènes... le meilleur de notre affection:'. Le militantisme socialiste féminin dans l'Oranie de l'entre-deux-guerres" (Papers presented at the international conference *Femmes et genre en contexte coloniale*, Paris, France, January 19-21, 2012).

the part of their feeling subject, who exists outside of reason and critical faculty.¹¹ While the idea of passivity was at work in much of what French observers might have called “softness,” it also accentuated a self-consciously constructed manner of differentiating a sympathetic Franco-Chinese relationship from onerous imperial competitors like Britain and Russia. Because French sentiment was framed both in opposition to competing European empires, French imperial masculinities (and femininities) were negotiated in moments of contact that could best be characterized as affect-driven encounters. In nineteenth-century China, French missionaries and diplomats alike cultivated a stance of benevolent compassion to counter what they believed was an aggressive, mercenary British global manhood. Their slowness to anger stood in contrast to British force, and their care for the spiritual and physical well being of the Chinese populace countered Anglo-American avarice in their willingness to despoil China of its treasure and poison its inhabitants with opium. Dueling stereotypes of Chinese might and weakness, nobility and decay not only served as a mirror for French anxieties about their own nation’s status, but also provided poles between which French actors could attempt to articulate the revival of their national-imperial body by guiding, but not dominating, their Asian partner. However, the potential semantic slippage of passion into pathos meant that policing the pan-imperial nexus became increasingly important during mid-century conflicts that endangered French historical actors as well as their Chinese associates.

Identifying sympathetic others required a certain level of mutual exposure, or vulnerability... but to paraphrase Ute Frévert’s rhetorical questions in *Emotions in*

¹¹ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. (New York: Routledge, 2004) 3.

History, what was the purpose of such a display of emotional availability?¹² What was China's stake in reciprocating? The bonds that French and Chinese agents fostered were almost certainly constructed out of the desire for financial gain, imperio-national grandeur, and sacred duty. However, more than anything else, good relations required likeness – and all of the previously listed personal and patriotic benefits were contingent upon finding it and exploiting it. The chapters that follow show whether/how representatives of the French and Chinese states found (or constructed) something recognizable in one another and used that perceived resemblance to build a mutually satisfying relationship. Culture was a necessary component of the multi-layered personal diplomacy (broadly construed). Diplomacy is therefore critical to understanding how two empires became willingly involved with one another, and how relations with other empires – especially Britain, complicated their entanglement. However, most diplomatic historians focus on state-level actors. Traditional diplomatic history ignores the role of culture in the aesthetic gestures and exchanges, materialized through objects, that worked within mid-level relationships to establish connections among nations. Examining diplomatic and cultural histories in conversation reveals intersecting, gendered ideas of French, European, and imperial identities. Culture was key to how the French understood their goals, how they approached their relationship with China, and how they fostered that relationship with individuals on the ground.

In the historiography of gender and empire, the idea of “friendship” often lacks a critical distance from what it attempts to describe. Whether in secular contexts, such as studies of friendship “across the colonial divide,” or sacred ones, as in work on women's

¹² Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History – Lost and Found*. The Natalie Zemon Davis Annual Lectures (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 7.

“affective communities of mission,” using friendship as an analytical tool tends to privileges warmth and compassion, while it willfully ignores less cozy tendencies like moral persuasion.¹³ Concepts of *affinity* or *likeness* seem better suited to discuss the set of relations contained in this dissertation. Those ideas are more capacious, and offer greater flexibility than the rigorous agreeability of “friendly” terms. The flexibility of the idea of likeness allowed alliances to be created, reworked, dismantled, and rebuilt, and it often worked in multiple and even contradictory ways. Mutual affection could be both evidence of and grounds for perceptions of likeness. Uncovering the positive inclinations of a partner might demonstrate a strong potential for an alliance, and expressions of willingness to form such an alliance might also serve as proof of the alliance’s viability – what Lucien Febvre described to “contagious” emotions.¹⁴ Discernment was essential to identifying mutual affection. Discernment was both dynamic and dangerous, as it embodied a key tension in nineteenth-century French thought between classical Enlightenment reason and Rousseauian-inspired sentiment. On one hand, discernment was contingent upon the French individual’s ability to observe, analyze, and categorize others according to their motives and personal characteristics. Yet it also relied heavily on feeling, a subjective touchstone that might be mediated by proximity, time, and historically unquantifiable intuition.

¹³ See You-Sun Crystal Chung, “Across the Colonial Divide: Friendship in the British Empire, 1875-1940” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2014); Haggis, J. and Allen, M., “Imperial emotions: affective communities of mission in British Protestant women’s missionary publications c1880-1920” *Journal of Social History*, 41(3): 691-716; Katharina Stornig, “‘Who is able to describe the feelings?’ Travelling Nuns in Colonial Contexts, 1896-1918,” and Claire Marynower “‘A nos sœurs indigènes... le meilleur de notre affection:’. Le militantisme socialiste féminin dans l’Oranie de l’entre-deux-guerres” (Papers presented at the international conference *Femmes et genre en contexte coloniale*, Paris, France, January 19-21, 2012).

¹⁴ Lucien Febvre, “Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past,” in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre*, ed. Peter Burke, trans. K. Folca (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 14.

There were many other aspects of potential affinity. Conversion, Christian practice, or a more nebulously defined spiritual aptitude could also be a sign of parity. Métier, finance, origin, gender, and social status – all could be taken as realms of likeness. However, the very flexibility of likeness rendered it highly unstable as a barometer for relationships. The bonds of love, or friendship, or a quasi-spiritual imperial consonance were always being tugged upon by other loyalties – commercial, religious, and racial, formed in a crucible of Gobinesque racism, liberal devotion to free trade, and imperial indignation. Close association with Chinese merchants in Guangzhou, for instance, might advance commercial relations, but in the emerging racial science of the eighteen fifties, it might also put the French participant in danger of personal decline – and by extension, cause national and racial degeneration.¹⁵ European insistence upon the opening of additional ports for trade might entail warfare, but at the same time, it would also have been understood as an intervention benefitting the Chinese populace. Commerce and interpersonal contact were entwined, whether trade was the goal, achieved through relationships, or the relationships were primary and were merely enhanced by exchange.¹⁶

French pressure for Christian conversion, invasion, and physical or symbolic punishment could likewise be justified as moves to uphold universal rights. Severe action

¹⁵ In racial theorist Alfred de Gobineau's conception, prolonged intercultural contact would cause racial decay, impairing European or Aryan superiority. See Martin Thomas, introduction to *The French Colonial Mind, Volume I: Mental Maps of Empire and Colonial Encounters* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), xiv.

¹⁶ Peter Perdue has shown how the Qing state used trade to “manage” new constituent peoples after conquest. Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 256-270. Trade might also enable closer national connections and thus obviate the need for or desirability of conquest, as in John Pocock's conception: exchange creates stable civil engagement by leveling the plane of relationships. In Pocock's model, underdeveloped commerce leads to master-slave relations, while commerce “teaches” rulers and subjects the “conventions” of governance, and “channels passion into opinion.” John G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 121. In the Chinese case, unequal treaties did little to achieve this idealized version of “free trade.”

against Asian states could be justified as benefitting the Chinese subjects of tyrannical regimes, as well as preserving European privilege and liberty. Violent actions, therefore, could also speak a broader language of friendship and tough love. Because likeness was abstract, it therefore contained a latent volatility. Its elasticity might permit French historical actors to act with compassionate abandon, but it also left room for a sudden, unexpected withdrawal of favor.

Following the Napoleonic Wars in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, there was little current information to catalyze any kind of coherent move toward the East. Then, as now, French accounts depicted China as a kind of Neverland – a place out of time, with emphasis on eternal mentalities and social tendencies rather than up-to-date analyses of geography, culture, economics, or politics. Much of what did circulate in France relied upon century-old accounts by members of the Society of Jesus. Firsthand knowledge from Jesuit eyewitnesses seemed to continue to wield authority long after the order was formally suppressed and Christianity banned under Chinese Emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong in the early eighteenth century.¹⁷ Reports that had influenced eighteenth-century French perceptions of China's supposed eternal might and splendor (or despotism) continued to circulate well into the nineteenth century. Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's 1736 historical geography of China, drawn from the Jesuit *Letters Edifying and Curious*, was re-issued often enough to appear almost current, and Jean-Baptiste

¹⁷ Most Jesuits left China after Qianlong's ban. However, a few, including Louis Antoine de Poirot, remained at court in a non-religious capacity, acting as translators, painters, and astronomers until Qianlong's death in 1799. James Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 97.

Grosier's 1788 description was re-published in the eighteen twenties.¹⁸ The breadth of Jesuit accounts – they had touched upon everything from ancient Chinese history to high Qing science – likely contributed to the French conception of China's timelessness.¹⁹

French belief in China's cultural stasis contrasted sharply with their awareness of the rapid flux in recent French history. Both visions contributed to the revival of French interest in China in the eighteen forties. During the first Opium War in 1840, accounts by intellectuals and expatriates alike insisted that influence in China was of tremendous importance to French global esteem. The China that they envisioned influencing was that of the high Qing as described by the Jesuits. It was that spectral China that would compete with another imaginary space, of India as a kind of British imperial utopia fashioned out of the more spectacular elements of a Mughal Empire that now seemed resurrected to promote global trade and British prosperity. Rescuing France from British expansion and rescuing China from British predations were twin goals, with the partnership preserving the dignity of the Chinese empire while intensifying the majesty of the French. With the end of the Jesuit order in the late eighteenth century, a new crop of French citizens somewhat haphazardly established relationships with Chinese from different levels of society. The daily interactions of diplomats, travelers, missionaries, and traders, which shaped and were shaped by fluctuating objectives, constituted an ill-defined yet critical basis for establishing a new French partnership with China. The relatively small numbers of people involved makes the entwined multiplicity of their

¹⁸ Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (Paris: Le Mercier & Boudet, 1735), Du Halde manuscript, A-2967, Université de Poitiers, Bibliothèque Universitaire Droit-Lettres, Fonds Ancien.

Jean-Baptiste Grosier, *De la Chine, ou description générale de cet empire, rédigée d'après les mémoires de la mission de Peking*, 1788 (reprint edition Paris: Pillet, 1818-1820).

¹⁹ Prominent examples include Philippe Couplet's *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, first published in Paris in 1687, and Joseph-Marie Amiot's *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences et les arts des Chinois*, 1776, and *Abrégé historique des principaux traits de la vie de Confucius, célèbre philosophe chinois*, 1788.

roles – state, religious, and commercial – all the more evident. Moreover, expatriates’ personal letters and memoirs circulated in metropolitan France. Their descriptions of China, born of everyday encounters, were sometimes ambivalent. The novel, diverse, and often complex visions of the Chinese that they disseminated were indicative not only of how French historical actors perceived others, but, in their attempts to construct a set of relations *different from those of other European powers*, also reveal an affect-based construction of an imperial French identity.

However, Franco-Chinese encounters in the mid-nineteenth century and the diversity of viewpoints that emerged from them have until recently received little scholarly attention. Although the Opium Wars are the subject of a large body of military and political histories, the social and cultural consequences of France’s stake in China have elicited relatively little academic attention. Much existing scholarly work flattens European and Chinese actors into monolithic groups and divides European perspectives on China into “Sinophilic” and “Sinophobic” camps, the latter emerging in the nineteenth century with the ebb of Enlightenment fascination with China.²⁰ Most scholars assert that by the nineteenth century, the admiring depictions of Chinese civilization that had been prevalent in Enlightenment writing had been largely subsumed by pejorative stereotypes.²¹ Michael Mann, in *China, 1860*, insisted that China’s interest to Europeans

²⁰ In *Western Images of China*, Colin Mackerras attributes this shift to the Qing decentralization, European boredom with *chinoiserie*, and the imperatives of colonial domination. Mackerras argues that the prevailing European power was able to control the formation of ideas about the Orient. Therefore, when the British became the ascendant power in the region, they guided the formation of new images of China, wresting control from the Sinophilic French. My goal is not to refute this claim, but to explore how the French perceived their role in China in the context of both competition with the British and competing discourses on Chinese civility. Colin Mackerras, ed. *Sinophiles and Sinophobes: Western Views of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²¹ Alex Hughes describes China’s “radical alterity” in the Western imagination. Alex Hughes, *France/China: Intercultural Imaginings*. (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2007). Likewise, Zhimin Bai argues that French and Chinese cultures stood in stark opposition to one another,

in the early nineteenth century was largely commercial.²² However, an overwhelming body of evidence from contemporary sources suggests that French – and perhaps British – aspirations in China extended well beyond opening ports for trade.

The idea of a “Great Divergence,” which holds that China declined in the nineteenth century at the very moment that the West rose to dominate the rest of the world, has inflected many past studies, causing them to flatten descriptions of Europeans and Chinese alike. In such narratives, all of the denizens of the West were nominally equal to one another in the face of a frail and vulnerable Celestial Empire, which could do little more than haunt the Euro-American power squadron about to blast through its gates.²³ Even Jonathan D. Spence, who provides perhaps the most nuanced picture, finds an essential trend of exoticism, rather than ambiguity, in French writing about Qing China.²⁴

Meanwhile, the question of whether it is accurate to consider the European presence in China as an imperial (or colonial) one is much debated. “Semicolonialism” is the most commonly accepted category for Western involvement in China, while Matsuda describes the French Pacific in terms of *points d'appui* and *points de relache*, a “waxing and waning set of locations” that “emanated from particular confluences of authority and

evident in the shock that French travelers expressed in their testimonies. Moreover, she writes, both contempt toward and admiration of certain Chinese customs referenced a vision of China as France’s perfect opposite in a “confrontation of two cultures, two traditions, radically different but equivalent.” Zhimin Bai, *Les Voyageurs français en Chine aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007), 13-14.

²² Michael Mann, *China 1860* (Salisbury: Russell, 1989).

²³ Kenneth Pomerantz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

²⁴ In *The Chan’s Great Continent: China in Western Minds*, Spence describes a “French exotic” that crystallized in the middle of the nineteenth century. In his view, it had four components: admiration for the Chinese aesthetic, awareness of treacherous Chinese sensuality, depictions of the Chinese as savage, and the belief that China was a “realm of melancholy.” Jonathan D. Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 146.

events, sites and moments.”²⁵ In spite of the French pretension to construct an ostensibly equal relationship with China in the 1840s, French goals included expanding trade and consolidating power over territorial possessions elsewhere in the world. Those aims fall into Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne’s characterization of empire as “webs of trade, knowledge, migration, military power, and political intervention that allowed certain communities to assert their influence... over other groups.” Burton and Ballantyne’s webs are formed on the basis of exchange, but they also rationalize domination, subordination, and exploitation.²⁶ However much some parties in Europe may have insisted otherwise, the dynamics of power between France and China in the early to mid-nineteenth century were not so imbalanced.²⁷ While French historian Bernard Brizay insists that the expeditions of the 1860s were explicitly imperialist, he argues that it was only through a stroke of luck that French and British troops were victorious.²⁸ Over the course of the wars, Chinese troops were able to capture French and British emissaries, some of whom they tortured with impunity. Militarily, the European powers possessed only a dubious technological advantage, and were severely outnumbered.²⁹ Even in Algeria, which was closer and less populous than China, French forces failed to subdue the indigenous population for several decades (or arguably

²⁵ Shumei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), and Matsuda, *Empire of Love*, 9.

²⁶ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, introduction to *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 3.

²⁷ China’s GNP in the early years of the nineteenth century was \$228 U.S. dollars, exceeding that of France (\$200) and England (\$150). See Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 173.

²⁸ Bernard Brizay, *Le Sac du Palais d’Eté, L’Expédition Anglo Française de Chine en 1860* (Paris: Rocher, 2003), 17.

²⁹ Linda Colley has also pointed to the relative military parity of Europeans and those they sought to conquer, and the European need to compensate for their inferiority in numbers. Linda Colley, *Captives* (NY: Pantheon Books, 2002), 11.

ever).³⁰ Brizay writes that French contemporaries saw the Chinese wars as tremendously important, not because the French were conquering exotic lands, but also because France's international reputation was at stake.³¹ Brizay's emphasis on instability and attendant personal and national risk provides a starting point from which to examine the meanings of French strength and vulnerability in China.

Ross Forman's literary study of China's influence on Victorian Britain dispenses with neat archetypes and with the debate over levels of colonialism. Instead, he offers the concept of entwined empires. That analytical representation can encompass the "informal empire" of business and diplomacy without imposing clear-cut hierarchies upon those relations.³² Forman's terminology is equally apt in describing French relations with China in the same period. The two empires were closely interwoven without being dependent upon one another. Strengthening and weakening partnerships and shifting nexuses of force and vulnerability superseded the presence or absence of direct administration in a pan-imperial imaginary of entanglement. Another model comes from sociologist George Steinmetz, whose work on German imperialism finds variation not only in German treatment of diverse peoples (specifically, among Samoans, Chinese, and African Ovaherero), but also in the governance of territories within those geographical spaces. He also argues that German depictions of their Chinese subjects were too diverse to be classified into any sort of national style.³³ While I depart from Steinmetz in his search for "determining structures" and in his redeployment of Bourdieu's theory of fields to posit a

³⁰ See Jennifer Sessions, *By Sword or Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

³¹ Brizay, *Le Sac du Palais d'Été*, 15.

³² Ross Forman, *China and the Victorian Imagination: Empires Entwined*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4-5.

³³ George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 5, 16.

rupture between colony and metropole, his conception of “multivocality” informs much of this project, as does his recognition that Sinophobia and Sinophilia coexisted in European discussions of the Chinese until at least the end of the nineteenth century.³⁴

Where Steinmetz makes a case for distinct colonial cultures, Samuel Thévoz’s work on Eurasian exploration links colony and metropole in a unified yet supple constellation of knowledge. Thévoz uses the theory of a common “culture of explorers” that spans metropolitan, imperial, and foreign territory to discuss exploration from the Swiss Alps to the Tibetan Himalaya. Constituted by common practices, learning, and an imaginary comprised of maps, stories, descriptions, and modes of interaction with local populations, that common culture linked each explorer with his predecessors. For Thévoz, the process of knowing relied upon learned or acquired knowledge (“*savoirs acquis*”) – the exchange of information with other knowers. That exchange shaped knowledge through both construction and selective exclusion. While the mainly European mountaineers arrived in Tibet with what Thévoz calls “preliminary cognitive baggage,” none of them made voyages alone. Their encounters (“happy or unfortunate”) with Tibetans provoked recurrent re-evaluations of preconceptions.³⁵

If we move out of the mountains and into the treaty ports, homes, and palaces of China, Thévoz’s constellation works equally well for French and Chinese relations.

³⁴ Steinmetz, 2. Steinmetz points to four “determining structures” or “causal mechanisms” that characterize German intervention overseas: “1. precolonial ethnographic discourses or representations, 2. competition among colonial officials for recognition of their superior ethnographic acuity, 3. colonizers’ cross-identification with imagos of the colonized, 4. Responses by the colonized, including resistance, collaboration, and everything in between. While I concur with aspects 1 and 2, part 3 is problematic in assuming a generalized imago for each region in question; in the Chinese case, Europeans interacted and identified with Chinese of various social strata who did not necessarily correspond to the imago of the Mandarin. Likewise, resistance and collaboration suggests diametric opposition between colonizer and colonized. I intend to argue that many Chinese were instrumental in shaping French ideas, and could not therefore have resisted or supported something in which they were deeply imbricated.

³⁵ Thévoz, *Un Horizon Infini*, 404.

French expatriates, travelers, soldiers and diplomats arrived with centuries' worth of received knowledge on China. However, their interactions with Chinese subjects continually altered what they knew, and that new knowledge was in turn amalgamated with persistent tropes as it circulated within European networks in Asia and around the world. Even when the crumbling partnership impeded the dynamism of the exchange, after the Second Opium War, engagement continued to have significant consequences.

In the history of relations between Western national empires and China, the Anglo-American presence is best documented. Work on the history of science and technology has perhaps been most adroit at capturing the dynamism of cultural exchange in the East.³⁶ The production of an international lifestyle in the treaty ports, particularly

³⁶ Daniel Asen's work on medicine and the body situates the idea of expertise within cultural intercourse, and Ruth Rogaski's study of treaty port hygiene examines how interacting Chinese and Western conceptions of health and bodily cleanliness informed public policy. See Daniel Asen, "The Only Options?: 'Experience' and 'Theory' in *Debates over Forensic Knowledge and Expertise in Early Twentieth-Century China*." Howard Chiang ed. *Historical Epistemology and the Making of Modern Chinese Medicine*. Manchester University Press (forthcoming, 2014), and "'Manchu Anatomy': Anatomical Knowledge and the Jesuits in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century China." *Social History of Medicine* 22.1 (2009), 23-44; Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

in Shanghai, has also been well studied.³⁷ Likewise, scholars have highlighted the rich cosmopolitanism of Chinese culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁸ However, relatively few historians of Europe have taken up the question of how such intertwined histories reverberated within Europe. The historiography of East-West connections in Europe is dominated by Chinoiserie and Japonisme, which – however inadvertently - doubles the Orientalist fantasy that created them.³⁹ They are oddly cut off from the melting-pot narrative of treaty port culture. If Jesuits were involved enough in discussions of Chinese medicine to have a bearing on its practice, it seems logical that the knowledge they encountered would have had some effect on their own thinking. Even the act of translating European knowledge would have had the effect of transforming it – in other words, the process of translating European knowledge is the very act that creates

³⁷ Eileen Scully, *Bargaining With the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844-1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Billy K. So and Ramon Hawley Myers, eds., *The Treaty Port Economy in Modern China: Empirical Studies of Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, China Research Monographs 65 (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2011); Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Wen-Hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: A Cultural History, 1843-1949*, Trans. Janet Lloyd (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Marie-Claire Bergère, *Shanghai: China's Gateway to Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009; First published as *Histoire de Shanghai*, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2002); Alexander Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai: The Aesthetics of Cultural Production* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007); Madeleine Y. Dong, "Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl," and Tani E. Barlow, "Buying In: Advertising and the Sexy Modern Girl Icon in the 1920s and 1930s," in Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 194-219 and 288-316, respectively.

³⁸ Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

³⁹ See Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1993); Stacey Sloboda, *Chinoiserie: Commerce and Critical Ornament in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2014); Lionel Lambourne, *Japonisme: Cultural Crossings Between Japan and the West* (London: Phaidon Press, 2005).

“European knowledge” as distinct from that of its interlocutor, the translator.⁴⁰ Work on China is guilty of the same kind of splitting. It is something of a foundational myth in the field that while Europe was preoccupied by China, China thought very little about Europe.⁴¹ The work of rescuing Chinese history from Eurocentrism, as scholars like Prasenjit Duara have done, is a valid and necessary project.⁴² However, the side effects of that program seem to harden national and regional boundaries retroactively. Parsing out “Chinese” trajectories from “French” or “British” ones imposes boundaries that cloak shared histories. Thus, de-colonizing Asian history often seems, however inadvertently, to mimic a colonial mania for imposing and managing difference. French history took place in China, Chinese history took place in France, and entangled histories unfolded in a global theater. This dissertation reflects my effort to elucidate shared and intertwined histories without attempting to untangle them.

Some scholars, who have examined European and Chinese histories from the perspective of intersectionality rather than rupture, have shown just how profoundly Europe’s loosely defined exterior contributed to the formation of its interior. Some very recent work demonstrates that intervention in China was a vital component of European imperio-national construction, and vice-versa. Stephen R. Platt’s study of the Taiping kingdom and Laura Hostetler’s examination of Qing colonial expansion both observe that

⁴⁰ Ann Stoler follows Edward Said’s examination of “taxonomic conventions of colonial knowledge” in her description of colonial discourses as the locus of production of European belonging and power. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 13.

⁴¹ Two seminal cultural histories on ethnic formation in the Qing period barely mention a relationship with the West. See Pamela Kyle Crossley, *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) and Stevan Harrell, Ed., *Cultural Encounters on China’s Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

⁴² Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

China's internal politics were shaped (at least in part) by more global issues.⁴³ Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins asserts that British self-fashioning at home and abroad relied heavily upon references to Chinese material and cultural features.⁴⁴ James L. Hevia also points to mutually-shaped identities as he argues that British embassies were received in China according to a complex but ordered understanding of China's place in the world, the Qing Emperor's role within it, and the function of guests from overseas. He demonstrates that the two groups fashioned and then deployed differing ideas on power, subjectivity, and empire.⁴⁵ This flows out of a broader effort by scholars to show how global interactions formed Europeans abroad.⁴⁶ The idea of Europeanness (or Frenchness, or Britishness) germinated within multidirectional imperial and colonial networks, and increasing numbers of scholars of Europe have expanded the scope of inquiry to focus upon social and cultural interactions outside of explicitly imperial possessions. Matsuda's *Empire of Love* laid key foundations for such study, as he considered a broadly construed French empire of the mind fashioned out of affective attachment and cultural transmission. Gordon T. Stewart's *Journey's to Empire* continues such work, linking the exploration of the Himalaya with British empire-building and the Enlightenment.⁴⁷ French imperial

⁴³ See Stephen R. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), and Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁴⁴ Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins, *A Taste for China: English Subjectivity and the Prehistory of Orientalism* (Global Asias (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9.

⁴⁵ Hevia, *Cherishing Men From Afar*.

⁴⁶ See Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, and "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule" in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas Dirks (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 322-3; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Herman Lebovics, *Imperialism and the Corruption of Democracies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Alice Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

⁴⁷ Gordon T. Stewart, *Journeys to Empire: Enlightenment, Imperialism, and the British Encounter with Tibet, 1774-1904* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

subjectivity, therefore, was conceived at least partially through (figurative) intercourse with China.

Lewis M. Chere's work on the Sino-French War of the 1883-85 argues that the late nineteenth century witnessed a "blossoming of European Imperialism," and a "great explosion" of Western power to the far reaches of the world. He writes, quite aptly, that empires interacted with one another in the context of the war, and events in one "helped determine" policy in the others.⁴⁸ China was therefore a key component both in the spread of European empire and in the imperial construction of European nations. However, those trends began far earlier than the eighteen eighties. European maritime contact with China had begun in 1513, with the Portuguese arrival in South China. The French presence certainly benefitted from the groundwork laid by the Portuguese. French missionaries often arrived in China on well-worn routes via Goa and Macao, and retreated to those enclaves in times of distress. Traders and diplomats inserted themselves into British trade systems and imperial structures with roots in India as well as in China, and thereby followed in the footsteps of the East India Company and Jardine Matheson. The networks in which they moved were not only of the explicitly imperial variety. Catherine de Bourboulon, née MacLeod, was born in Scotland, and lived in the United States and Mexico before marrying Alphonse de Bourboulon, the French plenipotentiary minister in China. Consul Charles de Montigny's stints in Greece and Southeast Asia bookended his experience in China. The members of the commercial mission of the early 1840s sailed through most of the French empire and parts of the British and Spanish Empires before reaching their destination of Macao. In short, the historical actors who

⁴⁸ Lewis M. Chere, *The Diplomacy of the Sino-French War (1883-1885): Global Complications of an Undeclared War*, Volume III: The West and The Wider World Series (Notre Dame, IN: Cross Cultural Publications, 1989), ii.

appear in this dissertation existed in a highly interconnected world. We should be aware, as they were, that they were maintaining rather than founding Franco-Chinese contacts. What they could not create, though, they did seek to re-invent. While they drew from existing possibilities, they would reenact them in new ways.

CHAPTER 1

REKINDLING FRANCE, REKINDLING CHINA

On September 11, 1840, missionary Jean-Gabriel Perboyre was put to death in Wuchang, China. Perboyre had been born to farmers near Cahors, in southern France; he had traded his life in a humble mountain village in France for the Vincentian ministry in a humble mountain village in Hubei province in China. When anti-foreign feeling in the area erupted into outright hostility, however, his existence – and its end – took on extraordinary meaning. At first, Perboyre managed to elude the authorities who wished to arrest him. However, according to hagiographical accounts, his location was betrayed by a member of his Chinese congregation, in exchange for thirty taels of silver.¹ The sum recalled the thirty pieces of silver paid to Judas in return for his betrayal of Jesus Christ. It was the first of many parallels to the Christian crucifixion that Perboyre's French biographers would find. He was hunted "as Herod had pursued and persecuted as the child Jesus." He was interrogated several times, before different authorities. Like Christ, he remained mute in the face of questioning. His fellow missionary Évariste Huc, quoting from the gospel of Mark, commented, "he imitated our divine savior before the iniquitous judges of Jerusalem: *Jesus autem tacebat*" (Jesus kept silent).² After several months of torture, Perboyre was branded with four characters (calling to mind the letters *INRI* inscribed over Jesus on the cross): 傳邪教士 (*chuanxie jiaoshi*), or "propagator of false

¹ Bibliothèque Chrétienne et Morale, *Gabriel Perboyre, ou l'aventureux pèlerinage* (Limoges: Barbou Frères, Imprimeurs Libraires, 1853), 16, and and Évariste Huc, letter from Macao, 27 January 1841, in Jean-Baptiste Étienne, *Notice sur la vie et la mort de M. Jean-Gabriel Perboyre, prêtre de la congrégation de la mission de S.-Lazare, martyrisé en Chine le 11 septembre 1840* (Paris: Librairie d'Adrien Le Clere et Cie, 1842), 184.

² Huc, in Étienne, *Notice sur la vie et la mort de M. Jean-Gabriel Perboyre*, 190.

religion.”³ He was executed, like Christ, at the same time as with a number of common criminals. His knees were drawn up behind him and his arms tied upon a cross, in a posture that suggested both prayer and crucifixion.⁴ He was said to have remained that way from noon until three – the hour that Christ expired.⁵ He was put to death by Chinese hands; the hands of others, no less Chinese, saved his body, washed it, and buried it. Perboyre’s life had been modest, but his death reflected the destiny of the Catholic Church - and signaled profound changes in Sino-French relations.

The global import of Perboyre’s death reverberated acutely within his home village, near Cahors in rural France. In 1842 – two years after his Christ-like suffering and death - both his earthly parents and his spiritual brothers in the congregation of St. Vincent de Paul were still struggling to find meaning in their loss. China may have been physically distant from Paris, and further still from Cahors, but it was intimately connected to the daily realities of those who had known Perboyre. His mother, who had already relinquished an older son to a premature death in the missions ten years earlier, found her faith challenged with the loss of yet another of her children. Upon learning of Jean-Gabriel’s martyrdom, she recognized her inability to follow the selfless example of the first Christian mother. In anguish, she asked his former superior, Monsieur Etienne,

³ Huc, 194, and Anthony E. Clark, *Vincentian Footprints in China: The Lives, Deaths, and Legacies of François-Regis Cl  t, C.M., and Jean-Gabriel Perboyre, C.M.* Vincentian Heritage Journal 32.1 (Spring 2014): While Clark writes that Perboyre died on December 11, both the Vatican News Service and the Vincentian Center list his date of death as September 11, 1840. See Vincentian Center for Church and Society, “John Gabriel Perboyre,” Accessed January 16, 2015. <http://www.vincenter.org/node/125>. See also Vatican News Service, “John Gabriel Perboyre, 1802-1840,” accessed January 17, 2015. http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_19960602_perboyre_en.html.

⁴ Huc, 182-194, 202, 205.

⁵ Anthony E. Clark, *China’s Saints: Catholic Martyrdom during the Qing, 1644-1911* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2011), 164.

“why do I hesitate to sacrifice my son to God? Did the Holy Virgin not generously sacrifice her own for my salvation?”⁶

Madame Perboyre’s despair was a microcosm of the affective relationship of France to China in the nineteenth century. The bonds between nations mirrored those of their respective representatives in a relationship that called forth a range of emotions, from joy to rage, in highly sentimental language. Sometimes, the metaphor evoked star-crossed lovers. More often, and particularly at the beginning of their push for a greater French position in the East, French writers called to mind less fraught associations. They described France and China’s intimate connection through the bonds of friendship, familial love, or sacred duty. Monsieur Etienne and Madame Perboyre’s account combined the three. Their narrative reunited national revival with its religious twin, as Catholicism recovered its prominent role and Romantic feeling began to push aside reason in conceptions of French nationhood.

Tellingly, Perboyre’s loved ones did not use his execution as evidence of a rupture. Madame Perboyre’s grief was couched in terms of broader religious devotion, and more universal themes of love and loss. Likewise, while Etienne’s response to Madame Perboyre’s missive intended to console Jean-Gabriel’s loved ones, it also aimed to edify them. Etienne’s *Notice on the Life and death of Jean-Gabriel Perboyre* (*Notice sur la vie et la mort de M. Jean-Gabriel Perboyre*), a compilation of letters to and from Perboyre, recollections of those who had known him, and several accounts of his final hours, was an act of memory that portrayed the favorite son of Cahors as the next in a long line of Christian martyrs, a saint in practice if not yet in name.⁷ Monsieur Etienne’s

⁶ Etienne, *Notice sur la vie et la mort de M. Jean-Gabriel Perboyre*, 3.

⁷ Perboyre would be beatified in 1889, but was not canonized until 1996.

intended audience had been limited to the faithful around Perboyre's French hometown. However, his was not the only volume in circulation among the faithful of France; indeed, Perboyre was one of several young men from the provinces whose blood had flowed on Chinese soil. Yet few of the eulogies for those lost in the late eighteen thirties and early eighteen forties blamed the Chinese. Madame Perboyre, as quoted by Etienne, believed that the sacrifice she struggled to bear had been made to God, not to any nation. If the location of Perboyre's death mattered, it was less for reasons of assigning culpability and more about assuring the continued work of the Church. The choice of words was hardly coincidental. Catholic mission work from North America to Japan had celebrated, if not required, the blood of its most zealous workers. Martyrdom for the Church – and the hagiography that accompanied it – assured a continuing revitalization of the faithful at home. In that tradition, the role of the mission field was a pathway to sainthood, a necessary trial on the way to heavenly reward for the martyr and edification for those still on earth.⁸

At the same time – and particularly when Catholic sources are read in conversation with the many secular publications fixated upon France's alleged decline – French martyrs were in fact a casualty of *British* aggression. Perceptions of French vulnerability overseas were rooted in two connected beliefs: first, that post-Napoleonic France was foundering, and second, that the powers that had crippled France in the Concert of Europe since 1815 were continuing to administer punishing blows. The situation with China marked the nadir of these fears. China was the primary locus of French evangelization, but it also hosted entwined histories: sacred and secular, French

⁸ Clark, *China's Saints*, 179, and Alan Greer, "Colonial Saints: Gender, Race, and Hagiography in New France." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Volume LVII, No. 2. (April 2000), 323-348.

and Chinese. As Britain's first Opium War sowed anti-foreign sentiment, French troubles in China seemed to mirror France's imperiled place in the world. Britain's overtly imperialist actions (including importing the illegal commodity of opium, defying Chinese authorities' directives in their own land, and, ultimately, demanding trading privileges with the force of arms) had unleashed chaos in China, and jeopardized the position Europeans living there. For the devout and the worldly alike, no amount of French fervor or perseverance could mitigate the likely negative effects of Anglo-Saxon interference.

If Perboyre's narrative seemed to be taken directly out of the canon of Saints' Lives, in which the suffering of the individual re-enacted Christ's passion and instantiated God's glory on earth, it also flowed out of a more particularly Sinocentric genealogy in the French evangelical project. Perboyre was one of many French martyrs in Asia, but the timing made his death especially resonant. His arrest coincided with the outbreak of the first Opium War, as the strained relations with one European power put pressure on nationals of the others – particularly those precariously distant from the legally sanctioned Western settlements of Macao and Guangzhou. Martyrdom thus seemed to spring out of the rubble of Sino-British relations, so that faith was stirred into a heady mix of opium and gunpowder.

While the French religious presence in China had not quite returned to its pre-Revolutionary strength, there had been fairly lively French-led activity on the eve of the Opium War. The Foreign Missions Society (*Missions Étrangères*) had sent more than a dozen priests to minister to several thousand converts.⁹ That this early spurt of resurgence under a revived French monarchy contained a strongly Christian aspect is unsurprising,

⁹ Peter W. Fay, "The French Catholic Mission in China during the Opium War," *Modern Asian Studies*, 4.2 (1970), 118.

given the explicitly secularizing impulses of the preceding Republic. Missionaries would come into conflict with the secular state in the period of high empire later in the century.¹⁰ Yet in the eighteenth forties, as in earlier manifestations of French empire, imperial expansion was intertwined with religious imperatives, as diplomatic and commercial outgrowth depended upon inroads made by priests and Chinese catechists. In many cases, colonization and administration were established to manage and protect religious interests.¹¹ Later in the nineteenth century, secularizing tendencies that grew in intensity during the Second Empire would create some tension in the empire and at home, but Catholicism continued to underpin certain conceptions of French identity – especially in China.¹² However, as the British East India Company's determination to defend its Chinese market for opium sparked severe responses from the Qing state, and Sino-British tensions flared into warfare in 1839, news from the French mission field grew simultaneously grimmer and more glorious. Preceding Perboyre in martyrdom was Charles Cornay, a priest from Poitiers serving in Tonkin. (The location was not quite China, but the proximity evidently sufficed for the purposes of the Church.) In 1839, the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith* recounted his violent death, one of many in a spate of new persecutions in the East.¹³ His story was taken up by an abbot from his parish, Charles-Auguste Auber, who had previously written instructional works on Christian motherhood, meditations for communion, and a guide for the perfection of the

¹⁰ See J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹¹ Ji Li, "Measuring Catholic Faith in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Northeast China, in *In God's Empire: French Missionaries and the Modern World*, eds. Owen White and J.P. Daughton (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 174.

¹² Joseph F. Byrnes, *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

¹³ While Tonkin was outside of China's borders, it had only recently been attached to Cochinchina, and that two "levels" of people – Chinese and Annamite – lived there. It is therefore possible to discuss Tonkin in the context of the broader topic of martyrdom in China.

soul.¹⁴ Inspired by Cornay's "faith, courage, and suffering," Auber's heavily annotated poem "A Martyr: Or the Catholic Priesthood in China" ("*Un Martyr: ou le sacerdoce catholique à la Chine*") was both eulogy and didactic tool. Published by the educational arm of a Catholic press, it aimed to educate children to rise above human weakness, encouraging them to abandon the comfort of home for "the painful pleasure of working for the eternal salvation of unknown men, savages who become our brothers through the universal recognition that one God created all peoples."¹⁵ Auber's words, like Etienne's, elided Chinese and the unconverted throughout the world; however, the titles of their works left no doubt as to the provenance of the martyrdoms. China was thus both a special case and an archetype, a testing ground for French efforts in Asia and everywhere else. As such, China offered hope and called for faith amid escalating concern that France's role in the East was in danger. Cornay and Perboyre's Chinese persecutors could be interpreted as necessary agents in a divine drama. The deaths of the French missionaries were acts of faith and of unconditional love, which would, in theory, culminate in the conversion of the aggressors – with French missionaries at the forefront of the effort.

The affect-driven, religiously rigorous French imperial resurgence also borrowed selectively from other moments of perceived French strength. In the face of Britain's violent "defense" of its trading principles, Napoleonic ideals of honor also informed French interest in China. Those, too, were reconfigured and updated. As Michael J. Hughes has observed, Napoleonic France had located national prestige in the masculine

¹⁴ *Adolphe et Mélanie, ou de la perseverance après la 1ere communion* (Paris: Perisse Frères, 1841); *Les trois vocations* (Paris: Librairie Catholique et Classique de Perisse Frères, 1838); *Consolations du sanctuaire*. (Paris: Librairie Catholique et Classique de Perisse Frères, 1839).

¹⁵ Abbé Auber, *Un Martyr, ou le sacerdoce catholique de la Chine, poème en cinq chants, tire des Annales des missions étrangères* (Lyon and Paris: Librairie Catholique et Classique de Perisse Frères, 1839), II.

space of warfare, where the hallmarks of glory and honor were cultivated in the actions of soldiers fighting for their fatherland (*patrie*).¹⁶ French national pride in the 1840s embraced a kind of Napoleonic glory that remained defined in terms of the noble, innate heroism that Bonaparte had coaxed from his citizens. It also involved honor, in the upright conduct present in those who rose to protect their motherland. However, the discourses surrounding Britain's campaign in China resituated this post-Napoleonic revival *outside* of the warrior ethic. Rather than storming into far nations to "liberate" their subjects and cement French interests, French authors found *noblesse* and an alternate manliness in verbally defending China from the predations of warriors gone wrong. French pens, in other words, would be mightier than Britain's swords – morally, at least.¹⁷ Whether they portrayed China as a feminized victim of British rapine, a mighty empire taking a principled stand, or a corrupt nation in decline getting its just reward, French words contrasted sharply with British military actions. The result of the shift was no less gendered than its Napoleonic antecedent. Rather, French masculine restraint stood calmly at the vertex of two possible triangulations.¹⁸ In the first, it stood between brutish Britain and feminine China; in the second, it tempered two hyper-masculine entities fighting for primacy. While that triangulation would mutate drastically over following

¹⁶ Michael J. Hughes, "Making Frenchmen into Warriors: Martial Masculinity in Napoleonic France," in Christopher E. Forth and Bertrand Taithe, eds., *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 52-60.

¹⁷ This heroism of the word bears some resemblance to a later type of Victorian (British) manhood that James Eli Adams describes as an effort to claim intellectual labor as an "affirmation of masculine identity," even as it appeared very similar to ideals of feminine endeavors of "influence." However, the two cases diverge in the contextual aspect of the French observing Sino-British warfare, with its contingent imperial or colonial implications. See James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Manhood* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 1.

¹⁸ This idea borrows from Miranda Pollard's "triangle of masculinities" in Vichy France, with Paris, London, and Vichy occupying its vertices. "In the Name of the Father: Male Masculinities in Vichy France," in Forth and Taithe, *French Masculinities*, 142-50.

decades, the tripartite nature of its gender formation would continue to inform the French relationship with China late into the century.

Before the first Opium War called up new visions of honor, French priests had entered a calm and fairly bustling Chinese scene in the eighteen thirties. The denizens of a number of European nations conducted commerce with Chinese merchants and artisans in Macao and Guangzhou, and while they were confined to those cities, their presence was stable.¹⁹ Chinese historian Meng Yue argues that southern Chinese cities were part of the borderlands of the nineteenth century world system, as internal Qing workings shifted importance away from inland cities and toward coastal trading centers. However, in Meng's conception, true dynamism did not really emerge until late in the century, at the hands of those born into an ever more interconnected world in the late eighteen thirties and forties.²⁰

Even earlier in the century, however, the French in China were part of a wider network that spanned Asia, and even the entire world. In addition to the handful of priests in China, Tonkin, and Korea, there were French women missionaries in Oceania by the mid-eighteen forties.²¹ Meanwhile, the Qing dynasty was much more outward-looking than it is generally given credit for being. Aside from its frequent attempts at overland expansion, personages from the emperor down to Guangzhou clerks maintained relationships with priests acting as translators, astronomers, and painters, as well as Europeans trading silk, tea, and opium, even after the roles of the former were curtailed

¹⁹ See Peter Perdue, "Canton Trade," *MIT Visualizing Cultures*, 2009, accessed November 19, 2014, http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_03/cw_essay01.html.

²⁰ Meng Yue, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xvii, 4.

²¹ Agnès Brot and Guillemette de la Borie, *Héroïnes de Dieu: L'épopée des religieuses missionnaires au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 2011), 84-114.

and their presence officially forbidden – sometimes by European officials, sometimes by Chinese ones. Emperor Kangxi did not allow his French and Portuguese companions (Jean-François Gerbillon and Tomas Pereira) to preach, but he was happy to listen to them speak about science and culture. One French Jesuit, Jean Amiot, remained in China after his order was banned in 1773; he continued to serve as Qianlong's translator until he died in 1793.²²

However, the French presence in China had substantially diminished from the French Revolution until the commercial mission of 1843-44. One of Guangzhou's thirteen factories bore the name of the French, but there were few French present to run it.²³ The British presence in China was better established and firmly tied to its stake in India, both physically and in the imperial imagination. Ships of Britons bound for Macao and Guangzhou first stopped in Calcutta, while the private companies responsible for them acquired goods – like tea and opium – in one space and sold them in the other.²⁴ The East India Company, while named for its original base of operations, was deeply involved in China. French agents, on the other hand, moved in more shadowy circles; they appear far less frequently in the historical record. Patchy documentation shows a handful of French ships arriving in China between 1826 and 1831. In steadily increasing

²² Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 11.

²³ A British report claimed that British subjects occupied consular posts for nations like France and Prussia in the early nineteenth century. W.E. Cheong notes that commercial and diplomatic personnel often overlapped, with British East India and Jardine Matheson company officers serving as consuls for a variety of nations. See *First Report: Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee of the House of Commons Appointed to Enquire into the Present State of Affairs of the East India Company, and Into the Trade Between Great Britain, the East Indies, and China*, 8 March 1830 (London: Parbury, Leadenhall, and Co., 1830), 263, and W.E. Cheong, *Mandarins and Merchants: Jardine Matheson & Co., a China agency of the early nineteenth century*, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series (London and Malmö: Curzon Press, 1979), 12.

²⁴ Robert Blake, *Jardine Matheson: Traders of the Far East* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 16-18, and Cheong, *Mandarins and Merchants*, 62-71.

numbers, they exported cargo worth tens of thousands of dollars.²⁵ The actions of their crews are not recorded, but the labor required for sailing and trading would suggest some form of Franco-Chinese human contact.

French people at home had been avid consumers of Chinese products for several centuries, even when they were obtained somewhat indirectly through Dutch, Portuguese, and British brokers.²⁶ However, as Kenneth J. Banks has shown, a consistent French presence (even of state agents) did not necessarily generate a functioning empire.²⁷ Moreover, The mid-level historical actors – bureaucrats, adventurers, soldiers, traders – who would arrive in China in the eighteen forties were probably as invested in personal gain and profit as any of their English-speaking counterparts. Self-interest could coincide with national pride, but it is difficult to discern when true patriotism ceded to prescribed language in requests for government patronage or financing for their endeavors. Even priests, about whose activities we know somewhat more, articulated religious zeal with elements of Eurocentrism and French chauvinism. On the other hand, there was a necessary tension in narratives of martyrdom – it was an almost compulsory step in perpetuating Christianity. Martyrdom therefore advanced French religious goals even as

²⁵ There were two in 1826-27, three in 1828-29, four in 29-30, and five in 30-31. One of those five was able to carry 2,014 tons, and departed with a cargo worth twenty thousand US dollars. John MacGregor, *Commercial Statistics: A Digest of the Productive Resources, Commercial Legislation, Customs Tariffs, Navigation, Port, and Quarantine Laws, and Charges, Shipping, Imports and Exports, and the Monies, Weights, and Measures of All Nations*, Volume V (London, Whittaker and Co., 1850), 84.

²⁶ See Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008) and Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie*.

²⁷ Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire Across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006). Until the end of the eighteenth century, the Qing empire was expanding into Central Asia, countering Russian and British moves, and rather too powerful to be a target of imperial efforts. See Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Asia* (Harvard University Press, 2005; paperback edition 2010), 9, 133-161. In fact, many of the French agents – usually Jesuit priests – who had been present in China prior to the nineteenth century were in effect working for the Qing. Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 37.

it took Gallic lives in China. While religious publications emphasized the former, secular ones seized upon the latter.

Because martyrdom could be understood as a necessary means to advance French evangelism, the deaths of priests in the East were not necessarily cause for concern. However, the vulnerability of missionaries did combine with a more generalized unease over France's ambiguous position in a global web of empires to feed anxieties about French decline at home and abroad. The widespread conviction that the nation was not expanding as rapidly or as aggressively as Britain, Russia - or even the United States - sent Parisians into a tailspin of worry. Astrologers predicted that the world would end on January 6, 1840. When that day passed without incident, fear-mongers expended their energy on other problems. Every newspaper in Paris lamented that France was decaying. They screeched at British hegemony, and groaned over Russia's ascendancy. "The English are flogging France!" shrieked *La Gazette* in 1842.²⁸ The tribes of Central Asia were "almost all subdued by Saint Petersburg," moaned the *Journal des Débats*.²⁹ *Le Temps* grouched that Russia and England were despoiling Asia and India, while France had done nothing more than influence and then abandon Ancona and Antwerp.³⁰ Mimicking the daily news, the satirical paper *Le Siècle* included a section labeled "Exterior," with this very point in mind. The news contained little more than silly secrets, dull politicking, and warfare, in that order. The jest, however, was pronounced: fixated on

²⁸ *La Gazette de France: Journal des Principes Monarchiques et des Libertés Nationales*, Paris. Supplement, March 8, 1842

²⁹ *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, January 4, 1840. The pieces, likely written by Jean Lemoine, voiced uncertainty about Russia's capability to wage a "real" war with other Khanates, especially Khiva, and spoke derisively of its reliance on Kirghiz allies. Nonetheless, nearly an entire issue was devoted to the extension of the Russian empire in a vast, relatively unknown territory.

³⁰ *Le Temps*, January 12, 1840.

the three spheres, French politics was stuck in a cycle of competition and armed conflict that yielded no benefits.³¹

Rumors of an alliance between England and Russia that would leave France isolated caused *Le Commerce* to conclude that France no longer counted in European affairs: "business is arranged without her and despite her."³² The problem was not simply one of isolation in Europe. France in the 1840s was still reeling from the loss of most of its imperial possessions in the early part of the century. Lucrative Saint Domingue had revolted and declared its independence, and establishments on the Indian subcontinent had all but collapsed.³³ Napoleon's defeat had eliminated French claims to Egypt and most of Continental Europe. The conquest of Algeria that began in the eighteen thirties was an attempt to reverse the trend of French imperial recession, it was probably foremost on political minds in 1840.³⁴ Historian David Pinkney argues that the French decision to continue their conquest of Algeria was the beginning of an imperial re-awakening, in which a second French colonial empire would eventually surpass "the great empire of the Bourbon monarchy."³⁵ Alice Conklin concurs, noting that the conquest of Algiers "set in motion a policy of overseas expansion in Africa and Asia that would continue intermittently for the next 50 years, before climaxing in a burst of

³¹ *Le Siècle: Journal politique et littéraire*, January 1, 1841.

³² As translated from the original, which used *Angleterre* rather than *Grande Bretagne* or *le Royaume Unis*. The piece went on to explain that it was hardly surprising that no nation wanted France as an ally, as first Russia, then England had been "trompé" in the past. Now, "toute l'Europe l'abandonne." *Le Commerce: Journal politique et littéraire*, January 24, 1840, 1.

³³ The French holdings that had not already been subsumed by British Calcutta were destroyed by a hurricane in Yanaon, Orissa. In spite of British aid, recovery was not possible. *Le Commerce*, March 13, 1840. See also Siba Pada Sen, *The French in India, 1763-1816* (Calcutta, K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958).

³⁴ Recent scholarship stresses that the invasion was was more of an attempt to pacify the Barbary pirates and staunch perceived zealotic tendencies among Muslim North Africans than to establish a French colony. Nonetheless, the imperial overtones of the drive did lend a sense of purpose and ambition to French foreign policy.

³⁵ David H. Pinkney, *Decisive Years in France, 1840-1847* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986), 4.

imperialism at century's end." However, she asserts, "[if] the British gained their nineteenth-century empire in a fit of absent-mindedness, the French launched their second imperial career in a fit of desperation." In addition to alleviating the financial woes that had accompanied the loss of colonies like Saint-Domingue, the conquest of Algeria was meant to unite a demoralized nation.³⁶ However, the occupation was going badly and the Maghreb lacked the wealth, power, and cachet of Russian and British interests in Persia and India. As Russia moved further into Central Asia and British gunboats menaced the Chinese in Canton, the editor of the *Le Moniteur Parisien* was inclined to agree with his colleagues in the commercial press, crying,

Look at the two great powers of England and Russia! They are in Khiva, they are in China, [and] they have great armies as proof of their strength! And France, a power so restless and bellicose, who has such need of her sword, France does nothing! France remains inactive! No! No! It is impossible!³⁷

Impossible, perhaps, but the prospect was nonetheless troubling. The British dispute with China was a particularly sore subject because many believed that it posed a direct threat to an otherwise stable French missionary presence there. Of the two Eastern territories that *Le Moniteur* mentioned, China was by far the more familiar to French readers. French missionaries had maintained an insecure but relatively continuous presence there since 1685.³⁸ While China was not "theirs" in the way that they hoped

³⁶ Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and Its Empire Since 1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 16.

³⁷ *Le Moniteur Parisien*, 15 May 1840. The Khanate of Khiva (*Xiva*) was of interest to both Russia and Britain. Although Khiva was not conquered until 1873, the former launched an ill-fated expedition in 1839, while the latter sent envoys (under the pretext of sustaining trade) to offer strategic aid against Russia. See Svetlana Gorshenina, *Explorateurs en Asie Centrale: Voyageurs et Aventuriers de Marco Polo à Ella Maillart* (Geneva: Editions Olizane, 2003), 38 and Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 181.

³⁸ See Jonathan D. Spence, *To Change China: Western Advisers in China* (1969; reprint, New York and London: Penguin Books, 2002) and D. E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800*, Critical Issues in World and International History (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009).

Algeria would become, a leftover Enlightenment fascination with the Chinese gave it an air of cozy, if exotic, proximity. French subjects would have encountered stories of China at church, in the news, and at the theater. Voltaire's *The Orphan of China* was still performed into the 1830s; interest in the piece was likely revived by Stanislas Julien's translation of the original Chinese play, *The Orphan of Zhao*, in 1834, and by Antoine-Pierre-Louis Bazin (Ainé)'s compendium of Chinese theatrical works issued in 1838.³⁹ The Annals of the Propagation of the Faith published frequent updates on its activities in Asia, which were distributed after mass or read from the pulpit. The Catholic educational press also worked to assure that French readers were acquainted with France's distant counterpart. It had circulated heavily annotated accounts, like Auber's poem, that evoked Christ in discussing French death and rebirth, with brotherhood in faith triumphing over physical mortality. However, losing French priests to an increasingly dangerous mission field could not be dissociated from Britain's recent aggression. It seemed that commercial might and avenging British national honor were putting increasing pressure on the less worldly concern of faith. When Perboyre was put to death in Wuchang, just after war had broken out in earnest, his betrayal (by a Chinese convert) caused panic in Canton's European factories.⁴⁰ It was an acute example of how all Westerners might be treated if Britain continued to punish China for refusing its illicit, lucrative trade in opium. While evangelism was not on the official program of French overseas expansion, it was an important part of French national identity and a banner for its place in the world. The

³⁹ Leonard Cabell Pronko, *Theater East and West: Perspectives Toward a Total Theater* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967; reprint: 1974), 38.

⁴⁰ W. Travis Hanes III and Frank Sanello, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2002), 109.

prospect of losing access to China, mission field *par excellence*, was but another sign that France was being rendered impotent by its accidental association with the brutal British.

As tensions increased, the liberal newspaper *Le Temps*⁴¹ published a short story by one of its regularly featured writers, Marc Perrin. With the entire text appearing in one "feuilleton" - a Friday supplement often reserved for works of fiction – "*The Stolen Marriage*" ("*Le Vol au Mariage*") recounted a series of events that had allegedly taken place ten years before in a small town in the French countryside. One day, the wealthy and prominent Monsieur Rambert received an unexpected visitor, a young Scotsman by the name of Edouard Dudley. Rambert, never having had any dealings with the British, was about to turn him away when Madame Rambert, charmed by Dudley's perfect Parisian accent, invited the stranger to dinner. Yet before the trio could even engage in pleasantries, Dudley asked for the Rambert's daughter Stephanie's hand in marriage. "Sir, English women are the loveliest in the world," remarked Dudley, but he was unmoved by their beauty, and offended by their education. German women were too close to the English; Italians and Spaniards left him cold. Although Dudley had never before laid eyes on Stephanie, he was certain that he wanted to marry a French girl. Concluding that a well-brought up daughter must obey her father, he dismissed any possibility of Stephanie's refusal and left the Ramberts to discuss the matter, promising to return the next day.

Monsieur was sure that the man was crazy, but Madame, imagining a fairy-tale wedding ("just like *One Thousand and One Nights*"), was taken with the idea of marrying her daughter to such an elegant man. Monsieur thought that Dudley's income of 12,000

⁴¹ Not to be confused with the Republican newspaper of the same name, this daily ran from 1829 to 1842. See Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral and Fernand Terrou, eds. *Histoire générale de la presse française, Vol. 2 De 1815 à 1871* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1969).

pounds sterling had turned his wife's head. His daughter would surely have better sense. Yet when he father sent for Stephanie, a servant informed Monsieur that Mademoiselle was no longer in the house; she had been "taken away" by an Englishman. Madame imagined that her daughter had run off with the dashing young Briton, but Monsieur had doubts, knowing that "a girl who leaves the paternal home for a foreigner is lost."

Dudley returned the next morning and asked to speak to Monsieur Rambert alone. He revealed that the talk of marriage was merely a ruse; while they were speaking of the subject, two of his friends had kidnapped Stephanie. Dudley promised to return the girl with her virtue intact upon payment of a 30,000 francs ransom. Otherwise, he would keep her for eight days. Her reputation ruined, she would never again live respectably in her village. Monsieur counted out the thirty thousand.⁴²

"*The Stolen Marriage*" was concise but dramatic. Containing all the plot elements of a gothic novel in a single page, the story was unusual for the time in that it did not appear in serial form. However, it was in keeping with *Le Temps's* tendency to pack a punch with its fiction. For instance, headlines on the first Carlist war were accompanied by a story of ill-fated marriage in Spain, and a report on clerical immorality accompanied a debate on of religious intervention in civil society.⁴³ On January 7, "*The Stolen*" highlighted the day's political discussion: a treaty with Great Britain. Clearly allegorical, the story depicted France's fall from power on the international stage. Dudley, described interchangeably as English and Scottish, was a caricature of the British Empire, intent upon encroaching upon France's birthright as it purloined all the world's commerce. Stéphanie, whose very name conjured images of Catholic martyrdom, was a rendering of

⁴² *Le Temps*, January 7, 1840.

⁴³ *Le Temps*, January – May 1840.

Marianne, the heiress of imperial France, reduced by years of contraction into an ugly, small-town innocent who was powerless to shape her own destiny. Her parents represented France's political wings, one hobbled by indecision, the other with dreams of grandeur. Madame Rambert's allusion to *One Thousand and One Nights* would have sent frissons of dread down the reader's spine, for the very premise of that tale is the threat of death in the morning. Only the cleverest of princesses avoided that trap, and Stephanie was neither clever nor beautiful. Unseen and unvoiced, she was manipulated by powers beyond her grasp. Her father's money could buy her reputation – she did not want for offers of marriage – but the reader knew better. Conniving Dudley, aided by foolish Madame Rambert, had taken what he came for, demonstrating the weakness of the head of the family – and of France in Europe.⁴⁴

This narrative of decline was not limited to Perret's literary imagination. The concern extended to French capacity for internal renewal as well. Although the French population had increased by sixteen percent following Napoleon's fall, this growth lagged behind that of other European empires.⁴⁵ *Le Commerce*, loath to concede supremacy, wrote peevishly that France still possessed moral ascendancy: that is why every aristocracy in Europe was plotting against it.⁴⁶ An editorial published on January 9th declared that it was imperative to expedite a law to improve university education, particularly scientific and professional training. Asserting that the world's eyes were already on France – all regarded her as "*patrie des arts, des sciences et des idées grandes*

⁴⁴ Amy Wiese Forbes notes that "unmasking" was a device commonly employed by satirists to condemn the political culture and alleged moral turpitude of the July Monarchy. *The Satiric Decade: Satire and the Rise of Republicanism in France, 1830-1840* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. A division of Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2010), 127.

⁴⁵ Due to longevity. Dominique Barjot et al. *La France au XIX siècle, 1814-1914*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995), 52.

⁴⁶ "Revue Etrangère," *Le Commerce*, February 6, 1840.

et généreuses" – the anonymous author argued that complete superiority was attainable, but only if French students were given access to the "useful ideas" that Britain possessed, "better than us."⁴⁷ An ambitious transportation project was meant to "radiate throughout the capital," connecting the corners of France to Paris, and to the sea. But a torrent of problems, including frequent heavy rains, plagued construction of the canals and railroads.⁴⁸ It seemed that France was destined to play catch-up to Britain's technological achievements.

The prospect of waning French prestige did not only preoccupy journalists; it resonated at the highest levels of government and among businessmen, whose interests often overlapped with those of the state. On January 12, the *Journal des Débats* reported on terse proceedings from the Chamber of Deputies, the elected lower house of the French Parliament. A deputy from the Maguin family, which was involved in the sugar trade and whose anti-English sentiment was becoming notorious, imagined that recent British efforts to facilitate the flow of goods between Asia and the Mediterranean could only have sinister implications.⁴⁹ He found it implausible that Britain would be kept fully occupied with its plans in the Orient, no matter how vast. "Look around you," he cautioned; "you will find it in every corner of Europe." Britain was subverting French influence in Spain, plotting a treaty with the German-speaking states and Austria, and had

⁴⁷ *Le Temps*, January 9, 1840.

⁴⁸ *Le Temps*, January 6, 1840.

⁴⁹ I have found various references to this last name. The most likely candidate was a leftist deputy from the Rhone [See *Procès-verbaux des séances de la chambre des députés, Session de 1835, Tome 6e* (Paris: Imprimerie de A. Henry, 1835), 562]. Other references - which might describe the same man – describe court lawyer Joseph-Napoléon Maguin [see Armand Delloz, *Jurisprudence générale du Royaume, recueil périodique et critique, Année 1840* (Paris: Bureau de la jurisprudence générale du Royaume, 1840), 400] or a conservator at the Bibliothèque Royale [See the *Annuaire historique pour l'année 1841* (Paris: Jules Renard et Cie, Librairie de la Société de l'histoire de France, 1840), 54. The Maguin who spoke before the Chamber was important enough to be mentioned in Edmund Burke's *The Annual Register of World Events: A Review of the Year*, Volume 82 (London, Rivington, 1841), 182.

designs on French interests in Africa and the Americas. England was set on world domination – “one could say that, with her eyes fixed on every point of the globe... she will not cease her usurpation until she has made farmers or slaves of all peoples.” Russia seemed to be on the same path. Meanwhile, Maguin asserted, France was being humiliated in its own possessions. In Algeria, where “we let ourselves be surprised... by barbarians,” fifty thousand French troops had failed to quell an uprising of a mere fifteen thousand Arabs. The chamber, he concluded, did not have the strength necessary to defend the honor of France.⁵⁰

How was such strength to be summoned? French lust for expansion could prove a dangerous investment. After all, it had been Madame Rambert's hunger for aggrandizement that had really led to the downfall of her household. As Maguin had observed, it was not simply a matter of affirming French sovereignty in supposedly inferior territories. French growth must also hold off the ever-encroaching British and Russian empires; that would require strategic diplomacy, rather than outright competition. The *Journal des Débats* editorialized that any proposed alliance must be based on "conformity of interests" - chiefly, preventing any one power from acquiring superfluous power in vital zones (such as the Orient). French and British interests would therefore line up against Russia. While France and Britain might not always get along, “we can never get divorced,” wrote the editor.⁵¹ In other words, leveraging British strength against Russia would ultimately improve French power in the Mediterranean and beyond. But making an uneasy alliance that gave France access to the fruit of British labors seemed like a risky endeavor. In the upper house of Parliament, the Chamber of

⁵⁰ *Journal des Débats*, Report on January 11 proceedings of the *Chambre des Députés*, January 12, 1840.

⁵¹ *Journal des Débats*, January 9, 1840.

Peers, legitimist Marquis de Dreux-Breze argued against establishing such a coalition. The two nations were not commensurate, he contended; to assume otherwise would be “one of the greatest errors of liberalism.” By entering into a treaty with her competitor, France would be obliged to act against her own interests. Cooperation with Britain would require more effort than one intervention, even more than one war, because there could be no possibility of sharing territory. England would keep her current possessions and gain others, while France lost all around.⁵²

In responding to these fears, Deputy Alphonse de Lamartine aimed to play to nationalist sentiment without bowing to it. Lamartine was a devout Catholic who had begun his career in politics as a royalist in 1830. By 1840, his political views had evolved, and he sat as the deputy for Saone-et-Loire on the left of the Chamber. He vowed to uphold the principle of French influence in the world while burying the corpse of a never-sustainable French empire, and argued that France “of today” (the July monarchy) had but two objectives: “self-preservation and enlargement.” He feared that intervention overseas, particularly in inter-European attempts to dismantle the Ottoman Empire, undermined the first goal. France would be utterly drained by the effort. Of course, the desire for development was in France's nature. It was a national passion. However, passions could no longer be confused with rights. The glory and the spirit of the empire would remain alive, but it would not reappear under the same auspices. He paired French fortunes and universal wellbeing, declaring that his compatriots must envision a future not of capturing empires, but of allowing them to crumble under their

⁵² *Le Temps*, January 7, 1840.

own weight.⁵³ When nature took its course – specifically, when the Ottoman Empire fell – France would be in place to guide its former inhabitants toward what best suited them. Some would doubtless find Russian influence appealing; others would choose British or Austrian overlords. This would not, Lamartine insisted, be detrimental to French interests. Instead, France would find a place “as the rod of Europe and as a counterweight in the Orient.”⁵⁴

Lamartine's idea of a gently benevolent France initially gained little traction. *Le Temps*, while declaring its support for an alliance with Great Britain – the only intelligent move for France, whose navy could not hope to take on that of its neighbor – went on to criticize the terms of the proposed agreement, which positioned France as a mere continental power and acknowledged Britain's maritime prowess:

No. It is not to renounce our maritime dominance that we sit, with five hundred leagues of coastline, upon two seas; it is not to leave maritime exploration of the world to England that we possess Marseille, the most important port of the continent, or le Havre, the entrepot to the New World. If our colonial regime is not as vast as that of Great Britain, it is the fault of those who regarded our farthest possessions as onerous, and who allowed them to be taken away from us.⁵⁵

This fuming indignation reverberated in the halls of government. On January 22, right-leaning legitimist Ferdinand Béchard warned the Chamber of Deputies that the English were expecting the French army and navy to shrink in the near future. Naval Minister Guy-Victor Duperré sputtered that this was out of the question, but the following day, liberal deputy Adolphe Billault made the disquieting point that British

⁵³ Lamartine's ideas on the subject, and on the rightful self-determination of constituent peoples, had been strongly influenced by a trip through the territories of the Ottoman Empire in 1832-33. See Alphonse de Lamartine, *Voyage en Orient*, ed. Sophie Basch (Paris: Folio Classique/Gallimard, 2011).

⁵⁴ *Journal des Débats*, Report on January 11 proceedings of the Chambre des Députés, January 12, 1840.

⁵⁵ *Le Temps*, January 21, 1840.

maritime surveillance had already undermined French naval power; France had lost her dignity.⁵⁶

The Chamber spoke of war. French stock prices fell as construction began on long-awaited fortifications for Paris (lest its residents would be forced to put it to the torch in the event of an invasion, as the Russians had been during Napoleon's siege of Moscow).⁵⁷ France's relationship with the rest of Europe had become so attenuated that a Jewish immigrant was fined for causing panic with the contents of a letter from his brother-in-law in St. Petersburg, which testified that the Russians were marching on Paris.⁵⁸ *Le Commerce* assured its readers that war was not inevitable, but went on to describe the likelihood of a major rupture with Great Britain. It worried that Portugal,

⁵⁶ *La Gazette de France*, Supplement to January 22 and 23, 1840, 1. See also Adolphe Robert and Gaston Cougny, eds., *Dictionnaire des Parlementaires Français, 1789-1889* (Paris: Bourloton, 1889). Billaut referred to Britain's allegedly over-eager enforcement of the law of 8 March 1831, a policy conceived amid concerns of French expansion into West Africa designed to prohibit an anticipated revival of the traffic in African slaves, and permitted the seizure of ships found to be carrying them.⁵⁶ International competition always clouded the moral desirability of European cooperation in preventing the exploitation of Africans. Britain's lead role in policing the ban on the slave trade carried painful reminders of Napoleonic defeat, and by extension, the loss of French authority outside of its own borders. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the Royal Navy had made efforts to capture all French vessels, and the victors had imposed abolition of the slave trade upon an apathetic French public after the Congress of Vienna. Accusations of French violations could be used to justify continued sanctions against France, particularly with regard to her colonies. The question of the slave trade was bound up in other perceived attempts to put France at the mercy of other European powers, in a manner reminiscent of her diminished status after the Congress of Vienna. Representatives from Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, joined François Guizot, the French ambassador to Britain and a committed abolitionist, at a conference to establish a permanent pact to limit slavery in February of 1840. Yet almost immediately following the conference, the other four powers moved closer to one another, cutting off France. Austria, Prussia, and Russia signed a convention "for the pacification of the Levant," on July 15, pledging to give military aid to the Ottoman Sultan in his campaign to put down the rebellion of French-backed Pasha Mehmet Ali in Egypt. Britain, France was not party to the agreement, which demanded that its ally renounce his claims to Ottoman territory in exchange for recognition as ruler of Egypt and Acre. See James Edgar Swain, *The Struggle for the Control of the Mediterranean Prior to 1848: A Study in Anglo-French Relations*. (First published 1933. Reissued 1973, New York: Russell & Russell,) 111-112; Andrew Lambert, "Slavery, Free Trade and Naval Strategy, 1840-1860" in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975* (Brighton, UK and Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 65-66; Paul Michael Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 63, 73-86.

⁵⁷ Adolphe Thiers, *Rapport sur le projet de loi relatif aux fortifications de Paris, fait à la Chambre des Députés dans la séance du 13 janvier 1841* (Paris, Librairie d'Auguste Leneveu, 1841), 18. See also (liberal, Bonapartist) *Le Constitutionnel*, July 27, 1840, *Le National* (Thiers' mouthpiece), July 27, 1840, and Swain, 112-13.

⁵⁸ *Le Commerce*, October 5, 1840.

supposedly neutral, would take Britain's side, and listed the potential outcomes of an armed conflict. With “war fever [inflaming]” a “shocked and insulted Paris,” the Prime Minister, Adolphe Thiers, was disinclined to support British diplomatic manoeuvres.⁵⁹

In June of 1840, the *Moniteur Parisien* reported that Maréchal Clauzel, a veteran of the Napoleonic wars and former governor-general of Algeria, had all but proclaimed English supremacy when he testified before the Chamber of Deputies. England, he argued, knew how to support and fund colonies. If France wished to keep her possessions, particularly in Algeria, she must do the same.⁶⁰ Intellectuals and politicians were fixated on the loss of empire, English competition, and France’s global position. Indeed, the confluence was not coincidental. Whether it was viewed as harmful or glorious, Napoleon’s legacy haunted France. Nineteen years after his death, and after intense negotiations, the British government had agreed to return Bonaparte's remains to his home country in 1840. The press avidly followed every movement of the procession as his ashes made the lengthy journey from St. Helena to Paris. It became a part of the wider discussion of how the nation might come to terms with Napoleon's unfinished business as the public kept up with the former patriarch's whereabouts and les cendres were transferred from British to French hands. *Le Temps* wrote that the wishes of the people were satisfied when the French ambassador had demanded “glorious remains of this genius.” For *Le Temps*, the transfer was part of a much-needed royal spectacle, as King Louis Philippe “by national inspiration,” ordered the Prince de Joinville (who would become famous for his anti-British posturing) to St. Helena to bring the Emperor home. When the news reached Paris, the populace allegedly let out simultaneous cries of

⁵⁹ Kielstra, 204-205.

⁶⁰ *Le Moniteur Parisien*, 9 juin 1840.

grief and joy, moved by a keen love for “*la patrie*.” The return of France’s greatest hero would have a profound effect, as “each [citizen] would become more profoundly attached to the glory and the grandeur of France.”⁶¹

Napoleon’s posthumous homecoming was widely represented as a victory for France, as if the ghost of the man himself had bullied England into submission. Newspapers carried enormous ads for recently published histories of the Emperor, and the men who had accompanied Joinville capitalized on their newfound fame by publishing dramatic accounts of their journey.⁶² While the state had provided one million livres for the transfer of the remains and for construction of a magnificent tomb on the banks of the Seine (where Napoleon had wished to repose), playwright and politician Jean-Pons-Guillaume Viennet of the *Académie française* insisted that he ought to be buried alongside France’s monarchs at St. Denis, “as befits his station.”⁶³ There was an outburst of public mourning when the ashes finally reached Paris, and Napoleon was laid to rest under the dome of *Les Invalides*, a former military hospital that connected two glorious past reigns – that of the Emperor, and that of the Sun King, Louis XIV. Popular obsession with the deceased monarch suited royalist aims by legitimizing the Bourbon house. It also tapped into the hopes and anxieties that had informed French political life since 1815. The return from St. Helena removed French pride from its British captivity,

⁶¹ “De la translation des cendres de Napoléon,” *Le Temps*, May 13, 1840.

⁶² In the same edition as its editorial on Napoleon’s return, *Le Temps* ran a half-page ad for Laurent d’Ardèche’s *Histoire de l’Empereur Napoléon* (Paris: J.-J. Dubochet & Cie, 1839). *Le Commerce* printed daily articles on the trajectory of Napoleon’s remains, and the *Gazette de France*, while emphasizing the fall of Napoleon’s empire, also ran frequent updates on Joinville’s progress. Accounts of the return from St. Helena include Arthur Bertrand, *Lettres sur l’expédition de Sainte-Hélène en 1840* (Paris, Paulin, 1841), Felix Coquereau, *Souvenirs du voyage à Sainte-Hélène* (Paris, H.L. Delloye, 1841), and Emmanuel de Las Cases, *Journal écrit à bord de la frégate La Belle Poule* (Paris, H. Delloye, 1841). Philippe de Rohan-Chabot, attaché to the French embassy in London, also made his memoirs public. See Philippe de Rohan-Chabot, *Les Cinq Cercueils de l’Empereur, souvenirs inédits*, préface de René de Chambrun (Paris, France-Empire, 1985).

⁶³ Jean-Pons-Guillaume Viennet “La voix du tombeau,” *Le Temps*, May 26, 1840.

but it also demonstrated that a diplomatically strong France could assert its will – and win – without resorting to violence.

With Napoleon's impending return inspiring more confidence than bitterness, national leaders began discussing a more aggressive global presence to supplement Lamartine's vision of temperate guidance. In June of 1840, *Le Temps* reported the possibility of France serving as a conciliator in Britain and China's intensifying conflict over opium. With intimate knowledge of both nations, French mediators "must open negotiations that will permanently regulate the rights of Europeans in our relations with China."⁶⁴ While the project never came to fruition, it marked a shift in France's relationship to China.

In January of that year, the news from Calcutta had suggested that a complete rupture between Britain and China was "inevitable." *Le Temps* announced that commercial correspondence from China "gives us reason to believe that there is no hope of a peaceful settlement between the Chinese government and the English." A "bizarre" war, whose appeal and outcome were impossible to predict, was inescapable.⁶⁵ French commentators were initially unanimous in condemning the conflict. *La Patrie*, whose editor was a member of the Chamber of Deputies, echoed British MP William Gladstone by calling Britain's war in China "profoundly immoral."⁶⁶ *Le Commerce* remarked, "England can do nothing against China," and should probably concede.⁶⁷ *Le Temps* and *La Gazette* recommended a tome called *China, Opium, and the English* (*La Chine*,

⁶⁴ *Le Temps*, June 11, 1840.

⁶⁵ *Le Temps*, January 10 and 11, 1840.

⁶⁶ *La Patrie. Journal Quotidien, Politique, Commercial, et Littéraire*, Edition du Matin, November 15, 1841.

⁶⁷ *Le Commerce: Journal politique et littéraire*. Paris, January 1840.

L'Opium et les Anglais), which claimed that British demands were “trampling upon” the laws, morals and authority of the Chinese empire.⁶⁸

Much of the criticism leveled at Britain focused on its misguided pursuit of commercial gain over all else. *China, Opium, and the English* characterized Britain's presence in China as deceitful, brutal, and ignorant. The book argued that the British government used the pretense of ignorance to dissociate itself from the East India Company's less desirable behavior, as it had in South Asia. Showing utter disregard for the Chinese, it maintained, the British were simply taking advantage of the poor and miserable.⁶⁹ *Le Temps* implicitly contrasted Britain's financially successful but morally bankrupt approach with that of the Dutch, whose “wisdom and moderation earn it more and more the sympathies of the indigenous... the most solid basis for any power.”⁷⁰ When the *Standard* mistakenly announced that a French expedition was expected to join British forces in South China, *Le Commerce* remarked snidely that France was both too modest and too wise to follow Britain's example.⁷¹

As in many conflicts, British attempts at dominance – and some French support for them – elided the language of sexual and national conquest. As James McBride argues, in Freudian terms, the gun and the phallus mirror one another as tools of domination. Thus, even feminized national victims of war represent a kind of spectral threat that can only be fought and controlled through manly mastery – via the phallus/weapon. It also allows a conflation of “fun” and potential dominance, with guns

⁶⁸ M. Saurin, *La Chine, L'Opium et les Anglais. Documents historiques sur la campagne anglaise des indes orientales, sur le commerce de la Grande-Bretagne en Chine, et sur les causes et les événements qui ont amené la guerre entre les deux nations, Extraits des rapports officiels adressés au gouvernement anglais, des édits et actes du gouvernement chinois, et des publications de résidents anglais en Chine* (Paris. Librairie Encyclopédique de Roret/ Imprimerie de Fain et Thunot, 1840), xxxv.

⁶⁹ Saurin, *La Chine, L'Opium et les Anglais*, xxxv, xli, 107.

⁷⁰ *Le Temps*, undated, likely May 19, 1840.

⁷¹ *Le Commerce*, March 15, 1840.

conferring what McBride calls phallic “self-confidence,” and vice-versa.⁷² However, those theories of phallogentric masculine prowess do not account for other guises of masculinity. In contrast to British (brutish) domination, France’s metaphor of was French *amour*. Love, compassion and devotion were the provinces of woman, perhaps, but also of Christ. Thus, while French behavior could be read as the feminine half of a binary, that characterization is overly simplistic in Christian-imperial perspective. Instead, the intensity of sexualized British intervention is a kind of illegitimate manliness – rape, set against the more chaste French care. That distinction would be important in French business dealings in years to come, with many French agents going to great lengths to preserve a carefully cultivated aura of partnership between two empires.⁷³ It was doubly so for those continuing the aims of the missions. Etienne, for instance, noted that even at the height of Perboyre’s torture, he refused to answer the interrogator who demanded to know if he was a European. “He was silent, as if mute,” noted Etienne. *Christian* was the only identity to which Perboyre would respond.⁷⁴

Though French commentators had a vested interest in emphasizing British incompetence, they were not far off the mark. Harry Gelber suggests that imperialism was unpopular in England – empire was a problematic, expensive, and scarcely manageable jumble of possessions. However, trade was essential to British affluence and therefore had to be defended in order to “spread uplift, progress, and enterprise around the world.”⁷⁵ Yet however English minds might have clung to the promise of “God’s

⁷² James McBride, *War, Battering, and Other Sports: The Gulf Between American Men and Women*. Society/Religion/Society Series, edited by Roger S. Gottlieb (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1995), 56.

⁷³ See Chapter 2.

⁷⁴ Etienne, 188-190.

⁷⁵ Harry G. Gelber, *Opium, Soldiers and Evangelicals: Britain's 1840-42 War with China and its Aftermath* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 25, 27.

Diplomacy,"⁷⁶ writers in Paris began to question the sustainability of the commercial empire with British trade stymied on yet another front. While the crisis had arisen at least partially out of the Chinese emperor's desire to invigorate his rule, the British chose to escalate the conflict in order to rescue their national honor. Their representatives had been humiliated, bullied into bowing to Chinese demands and chastised by Chinese High Commissioner Lin Zexu for their "false ignorance" of Chinese law and custom.⁷⁷ Complying with Chinese demands to halt the trade of opium would have been another outrageous affront to Britain's esteem and economic interests.⁷⁸ Just two years earlier, a French blockade in Mexico had threatened British investments, and the "insult" of French removal of a Mexican pilot from a British merchant vessel had soured Anglo-French relations - again.⁷⁹ It is not surprising, then, that many in France viewed the British declaration of war as an act of desperation.

Although the wording of early French reports suggested that Britain and China were involved in a falling out between equals, news coverage became increasingly schizophrenic as the conflict wore on.⁸⁰ One day, England was involved in a foolhardy adventure against crack Chinese forces; the next, the Chinese were being soundly and easily beaten back. When *Le Temps* gave its readers an overview on the state of the Chinese army, complete with French transliterations of Chinese-language titles for subdivisions (*heon feow* was the rear guard, while *tso fou* referred to the left wing), it insisted that while China's soldiers were well disciplined, they were nonetheless

⁷⁶ Richard Cobden, cited in Gelber, 27-28.

⁷⁷ Glenn Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honor, 1833-1840* (Burlington: Ashgate Press, 2003), 65, 78, 91, 106.

⁷⁸ Gelber, 56.

⁷⁹ Melancon, 91

⁸⁰ Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China* (London: Picador/ Pan Macmillan, 2011), 11.

decidedly “effeminate.” While the Great Wall alone had once required a thousand soldiers, only important places had merited garrisons in recent years. The Chinese navy had not been expanded for 200 years, and “a single English warship could destroy China’s entire maritime force.”⁸¹ In February, the same paper wrote ecstatically about the Chinese emperor’s firm prohibition of British-imported vice,⁸² before adopting a tentative pro-British stance in April.⁸³ In May, *Le Temps* concluded that in spite of Chinese numbers – their army was rumored to number a million men – the country’s forces were proportionally “weak, “insufficient to defend a country, and completely ignorant of the art of war.” It went further. Continuing its feminization of Chinese men, *Le Temps*’s description of the Chinese mores claimed that only those with a “superficial” knowledge of China could believe that it was a sober, monotonous nation free of “dandies.” In reality, the correspondent contended, China had more than its share of “precious” men.⁸⁴

England had, figuratively at least, robbed both France and China of their virility. France, in reproduction and expansion, and China in the strength of its opium-addicted populace, as well as in the guise of its strained imperial force. Some writers, like Regnault, chose the company of misery, many publications sought to escape the dubious

⁸¹ *Le Temps*, January 23, 1840.

⁸² *Le Temps*, February 6, 1840.

⁸³ *Le Temps* re-printed the *Sun*’s opinion that Britain would quickly take possession of Formosa (“l’une des îles les plus salubres et les plus fertiles des côtes de la Chine”), and hold it hostage until the emperor conceded. It also reported on a case of two English captains and a merchant who had been given safe passage, but were then seized by customs officials and taken to Canton. The piece suggested that the English, who were acting reasonably and responding to Chinese requests (the captains had signed a “*certificat relatif à l’opium*”), were being punished for their very presence on Chinese soil. *Le Temps*, April 9, 1840. Some French reports may have been influenced by a negative public relations campaign in London. W. Travis Hanes III and Frank Sanello write that representatives from companies like Dent and Jardine Matheson, both heavily involved in trade with China, published pamphlets that embellished and fabricated stories about the harsh treatment of European residents by “bloodthirsty Chinese.” *The Opium Wars*, 54.

⁸⁴ “Souvenirs de la Chine,” *Le Temps*, May 25, 1840

distinction. As the war dragged on and changed course, some French writers danced in the limelight of the likely victors, and in the fashion of schoolyard bullies, cast enough stones at the soon-to-be-vanquished that few would remember that they had ever been friends. Some even mustered their best liberal accents to claim that a Chinese defeat would be in everyone's best interests. *La Gazette de France* initially depicted the English as ruffian destroyers of cosmopolitan Chinese knowledge when they ransacked the library of a "Mahommedan temple" near Canton, but – within the same article – conceded that Chinese officials' refusal to make peace would make China "a second Japan," forced to allow foreigners to enter freely.⁸⁵ The next day, the *Gazette* committed fully to its stance, and wrote of good news from China – in the midst of general panic in Ningpo, Qing troops had abandoned "Chin-Hoe" (Ching-hai), local officials fled, and the populace opened their gates to the English, writing "*Shun Min*" ("in submission") on the city walls.⁸⁶ Although it still bristled at Britain's attempts to dismantle French sovereignty, the *Gazette* decided that French and Chinese Christianity stood a better chance with British intervention, and declared itself in favor of the Christian-European cause in China.⁸⁷ The paper even published a special supplement on March 8th, crying joyously that the English expedition against the Chinese had "destroyed Voltaire's praise." It proved that the Chinese were the weakest of peoples, the editorialist insisted, so diminished by their polygamy, infanticide, and inertia that they could not resist invasion even with "innumerable" troops and advanced artillery. "Vile, corrupt, and backward in spirit," the writer claimed, the Chinese were not capable of learning in a

⁸⁵ *La Gazette*, March 5, 1842.

⁸⁶ *La Gazette*, March 6, 1842.

⁸⁷ *The Gazette* continued to write vociferously against British "attacks" on French rights at sea and in her colonies, but after March of 1842, took the part of the English in India and China. *La Gazette*, March 9, 1842.

month what a Frenchman could grasp in an hour.⁸⁸ *La Patrie*, in contrast, argued that both China's strength and weakness were being exaggerated. At the same time, the paper concluded that in the contest between Russia and Great Britain, the latter would almost certainly come out ahead, if only because they had encountered little resistance thus far.⁸⁹

The prospect of British militarism helping to secure a more solid position for France could therefore sometimes trump French concern for Chinese well-being. However, few French voices were convinced of British trustworthiness, and many worried that Britain's aggressive strategy was evidence of moral failing that would lead to an eventual downfall. If British tactics could further weaken the Chinese, they would also almost certainly cause England's own aspirations to founder. In a three-part series published in November of 1841, *La Patrie* described how opium traffic in China was causing monetary decline and impoverishment, while British "bandits" brutalized an entire race.⁹⁰ The third and final article described in lurid detail the sack of Ting-Hai by Her Majesty's drunken troops. As they attempted to capture the island of Chusan in July of 1840, these loathsome children of an absent mother had gone out of control, terrorizing the Chinese and burning villages: "...this is the noble mission that the English government has bestowed upon its squadrons." With the price of tea increasing, the East India Company struggling, and the goal of reopening the opium trade seeming unattainable, this war would be a moral and financial calamity for England.⁹¹ (The writer Honoré de Balzac also issued an oblique critique of the British project in his fictitious

⁸⁸ *La Gazette*, Supplement, March 8, 1842.

⁸⁹ *La Patrie. Journal Quotidien, Politique, Commercial, et Littéraire*, Edition du Matin, 15 November 1841.

⁹⁰ "De La Chine, Part II," *La Patrie*, November 21, 1841.

⁹¹ "De La Chine, Part III," *La Patrie*, November 30, 1841.

account of travels in China, writing that the war's real intent had been to find a tea-based replacement for French wine.⁹²)

Yearning for British defeat more than a mere expression of *schadenfreude*. French political commentators viewed British ascendancy as the direct cause of France's recent decline, and many asserted that the English had only attained their position through dishonorable tactics. Whether an eventual English collapse should be the natural consequence of over-extension, or punishment inflicted by her angry competitors, the only way for France to return to pre-eminence was to stand up to British perfidy. Lest moderation too closely resembled passivity, though, French writers opposed Britain's stance in China thus emphasized the intensity of their passion - both in love for their Chinese brethren, and hatred for their English foes.⁹³ In a book-length diatribe against British treachery, Elias Regnault was particularly vociferous in his condemnation. Regnault, who appears to have made a literary career of freelance inspections of European governmental practice, devoted nearly five hundred pages to the "criminal history" of the English government. He lamented the fact that France had not learned from the four hundred years that it had been at war with England; "divorce," the rupture France had suffered upon being excluded from the quadruple alliance, was the humiliating end to their "unnatural" union. France had been strong, he argued, with Napoleon at her helm, and she could benefit from resurrecting his Continental policies.

Dismantling Britain's world-devouring oligarchy would require drastic action. Hurling insult after insult at his cross-channel neighbors – "Odious feudal merchants!

⁹² Honoré de Balzac, *Voyage de Paris à Java, 1832, suivi d'une lettre de Tristram Nepos, d'une note d'Amédée Pichot et de la Chine et les Chinois, 1842*. Edition établie, préface et annotée par Patrick Maurus (First published 1832, 1842; reprint Arles: Actes Sud, 2006), 145.

⁹³ I refer here to Sara Ahmed's discussion of the single Latin root of both passion and passivity, and the danger of its slippage in affective relations, which appears in the Introduction of this manuscript.

Saxon pagans! Degenerate Normans!" – Regnault called for a pan-European crusade against the "pirates" who acted outside of the law to deprive every nation of its rights. He also gave a detailed account of British imperial atrocities in nearly every territory they had touched, including scorched-earth campaigns and religious persecution in Ireland, "vandalism" in India, torturing French prisoners of war, and a "reign of terror" in Canada.⁹⁴

Regnault distinguished between common British subjects and the "odious community of feudal merchants whose only principle is to pillage." (France, he wrote, always in support of oppressed peoples, could lead the English populace out of their defenseless state.) He condemned English merchants for flouting Chinese laws and "continuing their horrible commerce." Both the government and the East India Company were acting in bad faith. By forcing China to pay an indemnity, Regnault argued, Britain hoped to recover its losses in the opium trade. Merchants would profit, while English canons would leave China in "bloody ruins."

The book went on. It noted that when peace had finally arrived, the English had broken it, in spite of widespread claims that the armistice had been violated by petulant Chinese forces. According to Regnault, no one believed that the Chinese would have recommenced a war that "could only be fatal to them." Contrasting British malfeasance with the French Republic's love of liberty and equality, Regnault called for the "annihilation" of the "English oligarchy," a force of "disorder and unhappiness" that "troubled the security of nations" around the world by "sanctioning violence and depredation." He concluded his piece with a Shakespearean warning, hoping that all

⁹⁴ Elias-Georges-Soulange-Oliva Regnault, *Histoire criminelle du gouvernement anglais, depuis les premiers massacres de l'Irlande jusqu'à l'empoisonnement des Chinois*. (Paris: Pagnerre, Editeur/Imprimerie de Cardon, Troyes, 1841), 5-6, 8-9, 18-39, 100-125, 316, 365.

nations would come together to "condemn their common enemy, reciting the words... heard by Richard III: DESPAIR AND DIE."⁹⁵

Regnault's attempt to position Catholic France as a moral guide to counter Britain's mercenary ways was echoed elsewhere, albeit with varying ideas on how it might serve as such. *Le Commerce* had been arguing since the early years of the war that English arrogance was overinflated, and that France had been called to "exercise a moral influence upon the world, and to march the head of every social, intellectual, and political movement."⁹⁶ Meanwhile, Edouard Biot, a student of renowned Sinologist (and committed imperialist) Stanislas Julien, was dismissive of the idea that "spectators" (the French) would profit from English audacity in China.⁹⁷ Like the government ministers who doubted the utility of trailing after Britain's conquests, Biot believed that Britain was embarking on a war that could only lead to regret: citing Lord Jocelyn's *Leaves from a Soldier's Book*, he wrote that China was ill-prepared for war, and unworthy of an English enemy. Moreover, its superior numbers would make an occupation all but impossible. More importantly, very few relationships existed between Europeans and "the naturals." An absolute lack of knowledge of Chinese history and culture –including within in the academy! – rendered even false accounts of China acceptable to most European readers.⁹⁸

This was not to say, however, that all was lost. Rather, recognizing that China's

⁹⁵ Emphasis in original. Regnault, 194, 402, 407, 413-414, 440.

⁹⁶ *Le Commerce*, February 6, 1840.

⁹⁷ Nécrologie d'Édouard Biot, préparée par Jules Mohl et lue devant la Société asiatique de Paris le 3 juillet 1850, in Les Classiques des sciences sociales, online database, http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/chine_ancienne/B_autres_classiques/B_20_tchou_ki Annales/tchou_ki_bio.html (accessed November 4, 2012).

⁹⁸ Biot, Edouard. *The War in China, ou Récit de l'Expédition Anglaise en Chine, Depuis son origine, en avril 1840, jusqu'au traité de paix, conclu en août 1842, par Duncan McPherson, docteur médecin dans l'armée de Madras, attaché au service de sa hauteursse le Niram, et depuis a celui du 37e regiment de grenadiers, en Chine*. Extrait du *Journal des Savants* (Paris, Imprimerie Royal, Octobre 1844) 4-7; Robert Jocelyn, *Six months with the Chinese expedition, or Leaves from a Soldier's Note-book* (London, J. Murray, 1841).

"mystery" was wholly produced by European ignorance was meant to impel further study. Biot, a scientist, noted that China's supposed isolation was belied by such things as the importation of Buddhism, the study of India, and frequent borrowing, perhaps back and forth, from Hindu and Greek astronomy. Only by encouraging additional work on scientific and historical texts could French scholars tease out "native" and "foreign" elements. If French minds could not unlock the internal logic of the Chinese worldview, in which every layer of the past was sacred, they could at least come to a more complete understanding of its intricacies. The British - "like Herodotus on the Egyptians" - showed only naïve and puerile interest in the country.⁹⁹ French scholars, in contrast, could make Chinese genius intelligible – and useful – to France. Putting to use the knowledge garnered through many years of religious engagement would have the rather ironic outcome of shifting focus away from the missions, and toward more worldly ventures.

That China should have appeared as viable object of French interest might seem odd. After all, the British were there, and in significant numbers. Yet that presence seemed to be increasingly shaky. Although the crown was not officially involved in British commercial dealings in Asia, the government could not pretend to be unaffected by the East India Company's problems. Commissioner Lin's infamous letter to Victoria, Plenipotentiary and Superintendent of Trade Charles Elliot's humiliation in readily agreeing surrender twenty thousand chests of opium, and reports of English and Indian prisoners of war languishing in Chinese hands did not bode well for British interests.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, Britain's jewel was becoming ever more tarnished. In addition to the trouble

⁹⁹ Biot, *The War in China*, 3, 9-18.

¹⁰⁰ *Chinese Repository*, Vol. 8 (February 1840), pp. 497-503; reprinted in William H. McNeil and Mitsuko Iriye, eds., *Modern Asia and Africa*, Readings in World History Vol. 9, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 111-118; Edgar Holt, *The Opium Wars in China*. (London: Putnam, 1964), 81; Hanes and Sanello, *The Opium Wars*, 110.

in China, Queen Victoria's early reign was also punctuated by the Governor-General of India's decision to "save" Afghanistan by invading it.¹⁰¹ Parisian newspapers followed both conflicts closely. Almost daily translations of the latest news from British Calcutta appeared on the front pages of *Le Temps*, *Le Commerce*, and *La Gazette de France*, often followed by lengthy editorials on the history of Anglo-French relations and the current state of the British Empire. *La Gazette* announced that England was experiencing nothing short of a disaster, with officers killed, their wives imprisoned, and the sick and injured left behind in a shameful withdrawal from Kabul.¹⁰² All of this suggested to many French observers that the young Queen's empire was mismanaged and overextended.

At nearly the same time, a French crew aboard the *Artemise* had successfully circumnavigated the globe. In 1841, Admiral Laplace published an account of his voyage, which seemed to put the whole world at France's feet.¹⁰³ The endeavor found triumph in some quarters and criticism in others. It excited optimism for France's global future, but not in the way that the navigators might have anticipated. Although Laplace did manage to bring attention to the Pacific (in part by provoking a French military intervention in Hawai'i in 1839), some of the territory that he had visited was simply no longer a viable field for French expansion. For instance, with the Treaty of Waitangi signed in February of 1840, New Zealand was firmly out of French grasp by the time the *Artemise* returned home.

While French thinkers had couched their opposition to the Anglo-Chinese war in the language of fraternity and spiritual love, they seemed to envision future prospects

¹⁰¹ Byron Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*. (New York and London: Harper and Rowe, 1972), 5.

¹⁰² *La Gazette*, March 13, 1842.

¹⁰³ From 1837 to 1840. Cyrille Pierre Théodore Laplace, *Campagne de circumnavigation de la frégate l'Artemise pendant les années 1837, 1838, 1839, et 1840, sous le commandement de M. Laplace, capitaine de vaisseau, 1^{er} volume*. (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1841).

following in the footsteps of the English. Religion and spirituality at times virtually disappeared from the discussion, with focus placed instead upon exploration, commercial relations, and territorial acquisition. After Laplace's story was published, a long editorial in the New Year's Day edition of *La Gazette de France* claimed that voyages no longer excited European passions: the oceans had been sufficiently explored. That which remained to be discovered must lie, then, on land and in the interior. Of course, territory within nations was not as easily explored as the open seas, and one could not simply disembark wherever one pleased. With its long missionary tradition, France already had experience on the ground in places like China, but more needed to be done. Editor Hector Bossange's position as president of the Society for the Extinction of the Treaty and African Civilization may have explained his particular virulence in writing against cooperation with the British. He spoke sourly of French deference to Great Britain, and took it as a sign of the state's weak commitment improving French prospects overseas. He argued that leaving the greater part of the effort to Britain, and waiting passively for results, would put France at a tremendous disadvantage. Even in visits to French colonies like Senegal, he contended, the trail of the English could already be followed all the way to the Cape. "It is said that one finds their traces on every wave."¹⁰⁴

The problem, remarked Bossange, "consists today of discovering and opening great commercial outlets."¹⁰⁵ This was a problem, not a solution, because the French had established few such commercial networks, particularly in the new, exciting theater of the East. *Le Temps*, still conflicted over whether to support Peking or London in China's continuing war, remarked upon the "tenacity" of Chinese troops before concluding that

¹⁰⁴ *La Gazette de France*, January 1, 1842.

¹⁰⁵ *La Gazette de France*, January 1, 1842

the “advantages of European civilization” would ultimately overcome “the barbarism and softness of the peoples of India and China.” Unfortunately, there were relatively few French merchant ships to take advantage of the coming victory. If France had only followed the American example, forming a more intimate relationship with English authorities to benefit from the close British and Chinese merchant ties that were certain to be revived after the war, French commerce could have “realized substantial benefits.”¹⁰⁶ Although the emphasis on affective relationships that had colored early French antipathy toward British aggression in China would return - in 1844, when French agents actually sought such “benefits” on the ground in Guangzhou. Yet the possibility of an imperial reorganization following a British victory temporarily brought commercial avarice and imperial gain to the surface, and informed the theoretical discussion of new prospects for France in the later years of the war.

In April of 1842, two French vessels, the *Erigone* and the *Danaïde*, were sent to support the French establishment in Canton, and to protect French merchants from the “intrigues” of contraband opium trading.¹⁰⁷ Jack Beeching argues that this was the moment that the French effectively set themselves up as rivals to the British in China, with two hundred thousand “hostages” (Chinese Roman Catholics who would allegedly do the bidding of the French) to support them.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, cooperation with Britain could not be ruled out, as it might bring advantages to French agents. In July *La Patrie* reprinted an item from the *Gazette navale et militaire*, hoping to learn that “the British flag flies over Beijing,” and that the Emperor would give in to the “reasonable

¹⁰⁶ *Le Temps*, March 16, 1842.

¹⁰⁷ *Le Temps*, April 15, 1842.

¹⁰⁸ Captain Elliot, aware of the competition, invited the *Danaïde*’s Captain Rosamel to sail with him up the Pearl River. Jack Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 125.

conditions” that British troops demanded – conditions that could benefit other European nations.¹⁰⁹

By 1843, with British intervention suffocating French ambitions in the Americas, the Mediterranean, and Africa, the ambiguous desire for French revival was increasingly directed toward Asia. With a British treaty secured, French efforts to regain a prominent place in China returned to their affect-driven roots. Parisian intellectual institutions stacked with well-connected Catholic monarchists, such as the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* and Orientalist bodies like the *Société Orientale* and the *Société Asiatique* clamored ever more vocally clamoring Eastern-looking foreign policy. Their foremost members had ties both to the government and to religious organizations funding missionary work in Asia. In addition to artists and businessmen (such as the painter Auguste Borget, a Monsieur Potonié, president of the *Réunion Chino-parisienne*, and M. Durand, a trader in Canton), the *Société Orientale* counted military types like Lieutenant Charles Jaurès and General Desaix, monarchs (King Kamehameha III had been somewhat ironically made an honorary member), and bishops like Monseigneur de Forbin-Janson, the Archbishop of Nancy, among its members.

The *Société*’s mouthpiece, the *Revue de l’Orient*, was edited by Abel Hugo, elder brother of Victor. Founded in 1841 to to secure French superiority through study of the East, the *Revue de l’Orient* aimed to “explore the modern East and to facilitate its exploration, and to defend the interests of French and Christian populations in the Orient.” In case readers missed the point, they were informed that this goal was “truly patriotic.” In the 1843 edition, Hugo the Elder described the world’s great powers as

¹⁰⁹ *La Patrie*, July 21, 1842.

fundamentally divided along religious lines, with English Protestants and “schismatic” Russians opposed to France, Catholic in “population and principle.”¹¹⁰ The Orient, which had once civilized Europe, required “rekindling.” Hugo’s Orient stretched from the Levant to the Pacific, and included those nations influenced by the Near East – specifically, most of the Mediterranean basin – as well as East Africa, Arabia, and the islands of Oceania. With parts of Asia already under Russian and British domination, wrote Hugo, France must set out, occupy, and form alliances with those peoples inhabiting the rest. In order for France to attain victory over the others, she must “put on Oriental clothing;” only by casting off “a European mentality” and departing from received knowledge could France engage in a sound analysis of the East, and in so doing, surpass her rivals there.¹¹¹

The idea of symbiotic revival – improving French international prestige and renewing Asian civilization – often focused specifically on China. In this regard, Church, commercial, and strategic interests coincided. The Archbishop of Nancy had recently founded the Association of the Holy Childhood (*Oeuvre de la Sainte Enfance*), whose goal was to save abandoned Chinese babies with funds gathered from devout French children. The association brought China into the homes of Christians across France. It imagined France playing a key role in a future transformation of China by placing even those traditionally removed from political power – women and children – at the forefront of mission efforts.¹¹² The idea of positioning the French nation as both mother and father to these “new incarnations of Moses” appealed to Abel Hugo, whose editorial on the

¹¹⁰ A. Hugo, ed. *Revue de l’Orient. Bulletin de la société orientale*. Paris: Rignoux, 1843. Introduction, non-paginated; Membership registers from the sessions of June 2 and 30, 1843. 221, 343.

¹¹¹ A. Hugo, ed. *Revue de l’Orient*, 1-6.

¹¹² Henrietta Harrison, “A Penny for the Little Chinese”: The French Holy Childhood Association in China, 1843-1951. *The American Historical Review*, 113 No. 1 (February 2008), pp. 72-92.

matter imagined this intervention as a catalyst for French-inspired world redemption.¹¹³ Other members of the political establishment – not coincidentally often devout Catholics, like Alphonse de Lamartine – were of a similar mind. Lamartine had delivered what he called a "marvelous" discourse on abandoned children at the Hôtel de Ville under the auspices of the Society for Christian Morality (*Société de la morale chrétienne*). Citing grave abuses, in spite of an 1811 law providing hospices for unwanted children, he denounced the "frightful... murder in theory and in practice."¹¹⁴ Although Lamartine spoke of abandoned *French* babies, thanks to earlier missionary propaganda, China was infamous for such practices, and the connection between the fates of the children of both nations came together in a Catholic-inspired rescue plan to save world infantdom.

Abbé Voisin, director of the Foreign Mission Society (*Missions Etrangères*), was even more explicit. At a meeting of the *Société Orientale* on May 19, 1843, Voisin spoke to an audience that included Adolphe Barrot, Consul General of Manilla; the Abbé Langlois, superior of the *Missions Etrangères*; Paul Lavolée, director of foreign commerce at the Ministry of Agriculture; Monsieur Moreau de Joannes, a member of the Academy of Sciences and head of works at the Ministry of Commerce; and Monsieur Varagnat, a coordinator of shipping lines in the Levant, and amended Hugo's call for the French to take their places among the "masters of the world," by understanding the Orient, appealing to his audience to focus specifically on China. Lamenting how little Europeans knew about the land even after many centuries of contact, he described it as a "vast field open to the investigations of the *Société Orientale*." Interested French parties

¹¹³ A. Hugo, ed. *Revue de l'Orient*, 1843, 212-216.

¹¹⁴ April 30, 1838, "*Discours sur les enfants trouvés, Société de la morale chrétienne*," Letter 38-35, Lamartine à Aymon de Virieu, 25 Avril 1838, in Croisille, Christian, ed., avec la collaboration de Marie-Renée Morin. *Correspondance d'Alphonse de Lamartine* (1830-1867), Tome III: 1838-1841 (Paris: Editions Champion, 2001), 26.

would be particularly well positioned to conduct these investigations, the first step toward influence and even empire, because while the British had won a military victory, it was French priests who had contacts in the interior of the country.¹¹⁵ For instance, Évariste Huc, who had reported on Perboyre's death, traveled further into China in 1844, making his way into (and being expelled from) Tibet. Huc then spent several years in Guangzhou, where he compiled accounts of his travels, Chinese history, and Christianity in China for reports in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*.¹¹⁶ François Qiu, a Chinese priest who had spent time in France and who had contributed to Perboyre's memorial volume, changed his name after the war, and continued evangelization efforts in Zhejiang and Jiangxi provinces.¹¹⁷ The Catholic press confident that the future of France in China would have a religious nature, arguing that this third wave of Christian flowering would blossom on land made fertile by the blood of martyrs.¹¹⁸

Those whose ambitions were more pecuniary, however, saw no harm in following in Britain's wake. In series of reports to the public in 1842 and 1843, the Ministry of Commerce expressed optimism that the privileges that had been won by Britain would soon be extended to other nations. Noting that the French pavilion had already been accorded parity with Britain in its payments for navigation rights, the report punctuated a full list of the terms of the Treaty of Nanjing with the statement that it would only be a

¹¹⁵ Hugo, 1-2, 217-218.

¹¹⁶ Évariste Huc, *Souvenirs d'un voyage dans la Tartarie, le Thibet, et la Chine pendant les années 1844, 1845 et 1846* (Paris, A. LeClère & Co., 1850). See also Jacqueline Thevenet, *Le Lama d'Occident : de France en Tartarie et du Tibet en Chine, Evariste Huc, 1813-1860* (Paris: Seghers, 1989).

¹¹⁷ Joseph van den Brandt, *Les Lazaristes en Chine, 1697-1935: Notes bibliographiques* (Beijing: Imprimerie des Lazaristes Pei-T'ang, 1936), no. 84.

¹¹⁸ Félix Nève, *Etablissement et destruction de la première chrétienté dans la Chine* (Louvain: C.J. Fonteyn, Libraire, 1846), Extrait de *la Revue catholique*, Novembre et Décembre 1846. BnF-Tolbiac L1.40-MF2-24947.

matter of time before France was awarded identical opportunities.¹¹⁹ Even the *Société Orientale* was seduced by such prospects. In early June, the society's secretary, Monsieur Denis, announced that the French government was currently in negotiations with the Chinese. Promising to publish the results as soon as he learned of them, Denis promised further engagement – both religious and commercial – on the horizon.¹²⁰

Their hopes were realized in the early days of 1843, when the Chinese government extended “the benefits that England has obtained for its commerce by the treaty of August 29, 1842” in all ports open to foreigners.¹²¹ This was not to say that the British were entirely to thank for these developments. The reports emphasized that French representatives were hard at work in negotiations with Lin's replacement, Chinese Imperial Commissioner "Ke" (Qiyong, 耆英) to secure a separate treaty.¹²² Readers were made aware of the mutual expressions of adoration exchanged by French and Chinese trade representatives, and informed that Hong merchants had intervened on behalf of their French counterparts to increase the “harmonious state” of the two empires.¹²³ They got little in return for their efforts: a later report announced that the *Cohong* system would be dismantled.¹²⁴ The two missives are less contradictory than they appear. The first assured French business interests that they were welcome in China. However, the *Cohongs* were still profoundly associated with British commerce. Their merchants were distrusted by the Qing government due to their enthusiastic participation in the opium

¹¹⁹ France, Ministère d'Agriculture et du Commerce, *Annales du commerce extérieur*. Chine. Législation Commerciale (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1843. Legislation Commerciale, 1842: No. 1), 3.

¹²⁰ M. Denis, secretary, Séance 2 juin. A. Hugo, ed. *Revue de l'Orient. Bulletin de la société orientale*. Paris: Rignoux, 1843, 220.

¹²¹ *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Chine, Legislation Commerciale, No. 4, p. 1

¹²² *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Chine, Legislation Commerciale, No. 2 p. 5, 17-18; No. 4 p. 1.

¹²³ *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Chine, Legislation Commerciale, No. 2, 5, 17-18; No. 4, 1; No. 1, 3.

¹²⁴ "Proclamation of Ke-Ing, Commissaire Impérial, Ke-Kung, Gouverneur général de Canton, China, Vice-Gouverneur, and Wan, Collecteur des Douanes." *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Chine, Legislation Commerciale, No.5, p.6.

trade – Qiying's proclamation remarks that in spite of their valuable commercial knowledge, they had marked themselves by cheating his administration.¹²⁵ Breaking old commercial ties would enable new players to enter, establishing all on equal footing. More importantly, crushing the *Cohong* organization gave Chinese authorities a greater measure of control over commerce with Europeans, and sanction from imperial administrators afforded French traders legitimacy in their efforts. If the British insisted in dealing in contraband and poison, French business would conduct itself differently.

For many in France, interest in China initially related to this complex relationship with Britain, in which France was both ally and competitor. When following events in the East, newspapers like *La Gazette*, *le Commerce*, and *Le Moniteur* suggested a variety of possible outcomes, all of them Janus-headed. In one scenario, an unwieldy British Empire would be torn apart by its own ambitions, allowing the more perspicacious France to return to its status as a superpower. Alternately, a British defeat anywhere in the world could serve as the death knell of all Europe's aspirations, humiliating not only to Victoria's crown but to the entire white race.¹²⁶ As with Stéphanie, the Ramberts, and Dudley, the specter of British domination haunted French politics. Dudley's British guise may have spurred Madame Rambert to action, but Dudley was nothing more than a Frenchman seeking fortune. So would French actions be tied to competition with Britain in Europe and overseas. In a dialectical relationship that mirrored Perret's story, French imperial aims required the nation to go to bed with its enemy-cum-ally, even as it searched for room of its own. China was the apogee of this bizarre negotiation, a space

¹²⁵ *Annales*, Legislation Commerciale, No. 5 p. 6.

¹²⁶ *Le Moniteur Parisien* reported that in an address to Parliament, Queen Victoria had described China's decision to interrupt relations with her empire as affecting "à un si haut degré les intérêts de mes sujets et la dignité de ma couronne." *Le Moniteur Parisien*, 19 January 1840.

where, Frenchmen hoped, British businessmen would open the gates but then remain on the coasts, leaving the interior open to French penetration.

CHAPTER 2

AN AMICABLE DISPOSITION

In 1843, Jules Itier left France for Guangdong province. He accompanied the French trade delegation sent to arrange a Sino-French commercial treaty; as a customs inspector, he was tasked with examining the niceties of currency and tariffs in the port of Guangzhou. However, his real interests were elsewhere. Itier was also an amateur photographer, and he brought an early daguerrotype box with him to China. His desire to document what he saw led him to associate with Chinese artisans, professionals, and officials. Some shared his passion for the daguerreotype, while others were simply fascinated by the relatively new technology. By the time he left, he would have recorded images of some of the best-known Chinese figures in culture and diplomacy – but also their families, retainers, and the landscapes that surrounded them. Early in his sojourn, Itier met and photographed the painter Kwan Kiu Cheong (關喬昌) better known as Lamqua (林官). Lamqua, who claimed to have been trained by George Chinnery, created artworks that were instrumental in articulating an international merchant identity synthesized from both Western markers and Chinese signals of social status.¹ Itier was pleased and surprised when he received Lamqua's gift of a miniature self-portrait modeled on Itier's daguerreotype. He remarked that it was impossible "to go further in courtesy and good manners; people who possessed such traits, he wrote, had "the right to be considered civilized."² Itier also met a Chinese doctor he called Kum-chon, who actively sought the company of Europeans, and who had studied with American

¹ See Ian Pui Chu, "Crossing the Borders of a Merchant Class: Imaging and Representing Elite Status in the Portraits of the Hong Merchants of Canton" (Master's Thesis, University of British Columbia, 2008), 6.

² Jules Itier, *en Chine en 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846*, Vol. II (Paris: Dauvin et Fontaine, 1848), 74.

missionary Dr. Peter Parker.³ Kum-chon insisted that Itier demonstrate the daguerreotype “under his very eyes, that I take his portrait, and that I gild in gold and silver various metallic objects that he carried.” In return, Kum-chon offered to take Itier to the pleasure garden of his patron, Pan Shicheng (“*Paw-ssé-tchen*”), a technophile Mandarin who was close to Qiying. Itier could hardly refuse.⁴

Itier had an impressive first visit. He saw – and was prevented from photographing – a gaggle of young women who would enter legend as Pan Shicheng’s harem, as well as the magnificent grounds and palace of one of China’s wealthiest men. The visit assured his entry into a circle of other well-connected men like Huang Entong (“*Houan-n’gan-toun*”), who would become the provincial governor in 1845. He received the entire French legation at the Pan estate “with the grace of a *seigneur* of times past.” He pressed Itier’s hands with affection and placed him in the seat of honor at dinner – an unfortunate attempt at a European repast. Itier spoke warmly of “handsome Houan,” but described the fusion cooking as a “bastard child of the world’s two great cuisines.”⁵ Nonetheless, Itier would return to Pan’s mansion many times. He was charmed by Madame Li, Pan’s legitimate wife, whom he met surrounded by several concubines and numerous children, and spent days in their company. On one occasion, he brought his daguerreotype box, which excited the entire household. As he had done with Qiying and

³ Parker had been resident in China since 1834. He founded what would become the Canton Hospital, and unconventionally focused more on treatment than Christian conversion. He saw a number of prominent Chinese patients, including the Hoppon. See Edward V. Gulick, *Peter Parker and the Opening of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 41-55.

⁴ Itier, *Journal d’un Voyage en Chine en 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846*, Vol. II (Paris: Dauvin et Fontaine, 1848), 44-45, 36, 75, 79. Huang would become the object of popular wrath for his role in allowing British nationals to enter the city of Guangzhou. See Arthur W. Hummel, ed. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period, 1644-1912* (Washington: Library of Congress/United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 132, and J.Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998, reprinted 1999), 117.

⁵ Itier, *Journal* Vol. II, 41, 75

the members of the French embassy, Itier recorded the moment in a family portrait. (See Appendix, Figure 1) Madame Li was too shy to be photographed, but Pan's sister and children were successfully captured. (Itier remarked that Miss Pan was "an ugly girl," in spite of her heavy makeup.) Itier's efforts in the prolonged session were rewarded with an introduction to the literati of Canton.⁶ The daguerreotype box held more than images. It was a keepsake box of memories, relationships, and the fruits they bore, to be processed in mercury and gold.



Figure 1: Jules Itier, "Famille de Pon Tin Quoi," October 1844, daguerreotype, Musée Français de la Photographie, 76.3000.8.

Itier's photography was a key (if inadvertent) feature of French cultural and commercial diplomacy in the moments leading up to the signing of the Treaty of Huangpu. While his officially-sanctioned presence gave him access to some of the

⁶ Ibid., 80, 113-114. The photograph survives, and was exhibited in France in October, 2012. See caption above.

leading figures of Southern Chinese politics, acting outside of his official role allowed him to construct more personal bonds. His sessions with his subjects, in their homes, were based on common interest rather than simple diplomatic imperative, and they fostered a certain intimacy between the photographer and those whose images he captured. It was a microcosm of the larger partnership that French state actors sought to develop with China. Meanwhile, his act of documenting the people and places that the members of his mission encountered served as evidence that the nascent French project of reviving a close bi-imperial friendship could work.

Acting in partnership with local agents was hardly a new strategy. It could be argued that European imperial constellations functioned only with the participation of local associates.⁷ The approach had long been a fixture of Sino-Western trade; the term "comprador," coined in the context of South China's foreign factories, referred first to the Chinese servants and later to the brokers who handled European business in Guangzhou's factories. The officials with whom Europeans first transacted were called "Mandarin," from a Portuguese root word signifying "envoy."⁸ A decade earlier, the Qing regime's disbanding and restructuring of the Hong merchant societies who conducted trade with Europeans had attempted to break the back of an alternative political economy, implicitly recognizing the power of personal connections to Europeans seeking to do business in China – and to undermine state authority. Unlike missionaries, whose interests called for an ever-elusive but always promising transformation in Chinese society, traders had a greater interest in maintaining the status quo. That did not prevent the two groups from

⁷ See Simon Schaffer et al, *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820*. (Sagamore Beach, Mass.: Science History Publications, 2009).

⁸ "Chine: résumé des documens que la Direction du Commerce eétrieur possède sur la législation commercial de la Chine," F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

acting cooperatively. Merchants had established a presence in China in tandem with their spiritually-minded compatriots prior to the opening. Missionaries were known to arrive in China's interior on British boats carrying contraband opium, which provided convenience for the priests and a form of protection for the smugglers.⁹ The social stratification that troubled missionaries (of both the civilizing and religious varieties), however, was somewhat advantageous to traders, as it preserved the local merchant class with whom they did business. A relatively small number of merchants could interact with foreigners under the *cohong* system, in which pre-war trade was restricted to Canton.¹⁰ Because such a limited population of Chinese merchants had been authorized to engage in commerce with Europeans, relatively tight personal bonds existed between the two groups. When Jules Itier traveled through Canton years after it had been "opened" to more extensive foreign trade, he observed that the Hong continued their near-monopoly of commercial relations with Europeans.¹¹ Access to Chinese markets still required partnerships with Chinese merchants, and according to Auguste Haussmann, former head of the French legation in China, those merchants provided a gateway to all the products that Europeans desired – porcelain, silk, lacquer, tea, fans, bronzes, paintings, filigree and ivory.¹²

However, partnerships were not simply of practical concern. For French residents in China - the handful of priests who moved between Macao and China's interior

⁹ Kathleen L. Lodwick, "Late Qing China: Missionaries and Opium," in *Handbook of Christianity in China*, Vol. II, edited by Nicolas Standaert and R. G. Tiedemann (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2010), 354.

¹⁰ Jean Chesneaux, Marianne Bastid, and Marie-Claire Bergère, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution* trans. Anne Destenay (New York: Random House, 1976), 49-50.

¹¹ Itier, 33.

¹² Auguste Haussmann, *L'Insurrection en Chine: Résumé Historique d l'Insurrection et des Événements qui ont eu lieu dans ce pays depuis le commencement de la guerre de l'Opium jusqu'en 1857* (Paris: Gustav Barba, 1858), 17. Itier concurred, insinuating that European empires were being built on the foundation of Chinese commodities: "*Les Chinois fabriquent aussi des chapeaux blancs fort légers à l'usage des Européens et qu'on exporte en grande quantité au Bengale.*" *Journal d'un voyage en Chine*, 18.

provinces, the members of the commercial mission in and around Guangzhou, the diplomats who followed in their wake in Guangzhou and then Shanghai - the desire to develop friendly social attachments also held several layers of discursive value. First of all, it linked metropolitan imperatives to penetrate Asian spheres of trade and power with everyday relationships on the ground. Second, it exemplified French claims to be the compassionate counterweight to the mercenary, commercial British Empire. Whether as ancient friends or refreshing newcomers, members of the French delegation were insistent that they not be the target of the kind of popular antipathy that the British had provoked - "one of the finest hatreds imaginable."¹³ When French representatives like the consul Comte de Ratti-Menton arrived in China, they went by way of Macao, not Hong Kong, to avoid sailing into the "shadow of the British pavilion."¹⁴ Third, and probably most importantly, it inserted the French into Chinese physical and historical space, enabling them to take positions previously occupied by the British, Dutch, and Portuguese in Asia. French delegates' correspondence with the Foreign Ministry often included clippings from English and Portuguese newspapers, leases from Hong Kong and Macao, and official Chinese and colonial declarations – all necessary intelligence for fostering French trade.¹⁵ Yet the lessons of the Cohong had shown them that a lasting presence demanded more than facts and figures. Relationships would be fundamental in securing a separate treaty for France, and then moving beyond its commercial terms. Personal interactions rendered possible new types of alliances and antipathies capable of both ordering and subverting received knowledge about the Chinese.

¹³ Lefebvre de Becour (Consul at Canton) to Guizot, 25 September 1846, 25CP/2, Chine 1844-1847, 108, AMAE.

¹⁴ Callery (translator) to Desages (Director of la Direction Politique, Paris), 26 March 1847, 25CP/2 Chine, 1844-1847, No. 159-60, AMAE.

¹⁵ Correspondence of Lefebvre and Forth-Rouen, 25CP/2, Chine, 1844-1847, AMAE.

For the French in the 1840s, knowing and entering China entailed forming relationships with people, through which they obtained access to knowledge and texts to be relayed to others at home and abroad. The vast majority of French nationals who went to China in any capacity sought to further their mission by establishing bonds with Chinese counterparts (in prestige, authority, or *métier*) of their own sex; for the most part, powerful French men interacted with powerful Chinese men.¹⁶ They were both situated within and a constitutive element of a regime of knowledge that included social status, proto-ethnic identities, global trade networks, monetary systems, and layers of information gleaned from other nations, other empires, and other epochs, deployed to form a vast, fluctuating and mutable nexus of intelligibility.¹⁷ Trade and relationships were symbiotic: the desire for expanding commerce enabled relationships to form, while relationships advanced French commercial interests. However, both imperatives were not always at work in equal measure, which could lead to significant fluctuations in Franco-Chinese cooperation and Anglo-French competition.

¹⁶ While a sizeable and valuable body scholarship on the French presence in Asia has focused on heteronormative sexual contact and familial arrangements of white French men and "local" women, male homosocial relationships have not yet garnered the same level of attention that they have elicited in other fields (namely, in studies of the British Empire). For French affective relationships in empire, see Ann Laura Stoler, Matt Matsuda, Julia Clancy Smith, and Penny Edwards. For British masculinities, see Mrinalini Sinha, John Tosh. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Although I draw upon James Scott's concept of legibility here, I also depart from it in focusing on overlapping personal and bureaucratic aims, with an emphasis on the former. The French actors I describe here were heavily invested in and dependent upon local knowledge, much more than they were interested in bringing a Western world view to China. Of course, their interpretation and redeployment of locally-garnered information may have imposed a certain European order (which would become more intense later in the decade, as in the attempt to institute a new monetary system, discussed at the end of this chapter); the difference, which is never absolute, seems to lie within the relative extent of French (as opposed to Chinese) administration in treaty ports and, later, concessions, as once a stable presence had been established, agents could turn to domestication of the space they inhabited. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.

In some ways, the French commercial mission to China was a highly masculinist endeavor. From collecting "facts" to engaging socially, diplomatically, and (later) militarily with specific Chinese bodies, the mission bore some resemblance to a broadly-construed "European" masculinity.¹⁸ Yet in other ways, it was a manifestation of a particularly French imperial masculinity, located in the interstices of post-Napoleonic vulnerability and Christian empathy, and constructed at least partially in opposition to Anglo-American vigor. On 5 September 1843, Comte de Ratti-Menton, Consul of France in Guangzhou, wrote to the Imperial High Commissioner requesting "participation in the same privileges that other nations enjoy in the Celestial Empire." The French translation of Qiying's reply strongly suggested that Chinese mirrors reflected France's carefully constructed self-image: it had "maintained peaceful and friendly relations with China for more than three centuries, without the slightest protest or bloodshed." The Emperor had already shown his benevolence to the rapacious foreigners [the British] clamoring for a share of his "inexhaustible" bounty; French merchants, who had conducted themselves more reasonably, would of course be shown the same consideration. "No other country could be as favored." Most importantly, the representatives of France would be treated with "the greatest courtesy," and placed "on equal footing" with those of England.¹⁹ If this did not place French interests above those of all others, it at least guaranteed that their comparatively weak presence would not keep them out of burgeoning trade. Peace and patience had achieved at least as much as gunboats, commercially speaking, and far more, as far as national honor was concerned.

¹⁸ Forth Taithe's edited volume is an important contribution to the study of French masculinity, but it deals exclusively with the metropole. *French Masculinities*.

¹⁹ Ratti-Menton (Consul at Canton) to Qiying, September 5, 1843; Letter from Qiying and Qigong (President of the Ministry of War) to Ratti-Menton, September 10, 1843, *Annales du commerce extérieur, Chine-1843*, Législation Commerciale, No.3, 4-LC5-138(AS), 1843/04-1863/03 (N1-15), 7, 8, BnF.

The mission to cement a renewed French presence in China was at least partially state-directed, but its work on the ground was comprised of many individual endeavors – from conception to completion. Before King Louis-Philippe sent his ships across the world to seek a Franco-Chinese fortune, a gentleman named Charles de Montigny wrote a polite letter to the Foreign Ministry requesting a position as Vice Consul “in Canton, or any other point.”²⁰ Montigny was the scion of a Bonapartist family that had fallen on hard times. He had been looking for work for several months, and wrote dozens of letters to the Foreign Ministry begging for a diplomatic post somewhere with potential – somewhere like China. With that country’s ports beginning to open to foreigners following the British victory in the First Opium War, Montigny could envision his destiny unfolding there. He had been employed by the *Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies* for ten years, assigned to the rather menial task of handling consular expenses, and he balked at the prospect of a lifetime of such toil. In 1842, he commissioned a letter of recommendation from a well-connected acquaintance. When he failed to receive a response after many attempts, he wrote directly to the Foreign Minister, Guizot, and proposed an investigative study of China, “the richest, most populous, and most industrious corner of the world.”²¹

Montigny was a relentless self-promoter. His lack of success did not deter him, and he believed strongly that his proposed intervention in Chinese trade would advance his career while restoring his nation to a position of international prominence. Although a virtual Anglo-American monopoly meant that Chinese products and commerce remained

²⁰ M. de Las Cases to the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 28 October 1842, 2982 Montigny, Louis Charles Nicolas de, Archives de Ministère des Affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (hereafter, AMAE).

²¹ Montigny to Guizot (Secrétaire d’État, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères), October 1842, No.12, 2982 Montigny, AMAE.

largely closed to France, Montigny argued that the realignment of interests certain to follow China's war with Britain presented a "moment of accessibility" for France.²² Montigny suggested that a mission be sent with four goals in mind: a thorough study of Chinese products and industry, an examination of which French imports stood the best chance of success according to the needs of the Chinese market, careful research into existing British and American operations, and analysis of the outcome of British military endeavors.

Montigny volunteered to lead the project. His experience as a cavalry officer in Greece had acquainted him with warfare, and his experience at the Ministry of the Navy (*Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies*) gave him a familiarity with both financial and diplomatic affairs.²³ Evidently not satisfied with his unrealized ambitions, he also advocated sending an active agent outside of Canton, perhaps to Ningbo. As he was fluent in English, the only foreign tongue in use in China, he naturally recommended himself for the job.²⁴ When he learned that his idea for a commercial mission had been taken seriously, but would embark under the direction of Lagrené, he insisted that he be attached to the delegation, claiming that Lagrené himself supported the idea. He enclosed a treatise titled "Of the benefits for France of its Trade with China" (*Des avantages qu'offre la France pour son Commerce avec la China*).²⁵ His pleas evidently found a sympathetic ear, because Montigny soon joined the commercial mission.

²² Montigny's assertion was not exactly true. Earlier in the century, the British East India Company had maintained a monopoly on trade in raw silks, and managed much of the tea trade. After it abandoned the monopoly, most of the trade fell into the hands of trading houses like Jardine Matheson prior to the first Anglo-Chinese war. There was no French equivalent operating in China. Cheong, 166.

²³ Montigny to Guizot (Secrétaire d'État, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères), October 1842, No. 12, 2982 Montigny, AMAE.

²⁴ Montigny to Guizot, 18 January 1843, No. 17, 2982 Montigny, AMAE.

²⁵ Montigny to Guizot, undated, No. 18, 2982 Montigny, AMAE.

Officials at the French Ministry of Commerce believed that the terms of the recently signed Treaty of Nanjing would “profoundly change commercial relations between China and the great commercial nations.” However, some of those who would likely be involved in the French trade with China worried that France was ill-equipped to be counted among them.²⁶ One provincial trader interested in expanding his business worried that his country was too tentative in its overseas transactions, and in a letter to the Ministry of Commerce, insisted that the government take the initiative in commissioning and exporting high-quality products if France was to catch up to other “modern peoples” and their “surfeit of activity.”²⁷ The Ministry itself admitted that the China trade had long been dominated by British and American agents, and that its own exchanges were “inconsiderable.”²⁸ Indeed, prior to the mission’s arrival, there were very few French bodies on the ground. In the early 1840s, there was only one non-religious French resident listed in the directory of foreigners living in China.²⁹ However, the Chinese government had extended the rights that England had obtained for itself “to all nations, without distinction.”³⁰

²⁶ France, Ministère du commerce – *Annales du commerce extérieur*, publiées par le département de l’Intérieur, de l’Agriculture, et du commerce. Chine et Indochine (Faits commerciaux – Nos 1 à 9) Avril 1843 à octobre 1845 (Paris: Imprimerie et librairie administratives de Paul Dupont, 1852). Faits commerciaux, No.1 (Ministère de l’Agriculture et du commerce, 3e série des avis divers, No.31) Avril 1843, 4-LC5-138 (AT), 1843/04-1845/10 (N1-9), 1, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF).

²⁷ Copy, M. Dagneaux to Ministère du Commerce, 16 December 1842, F/12/6341 Chine, Archives Nationales-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine (hereafter AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine).

²⁸ *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Avril 1843, 4-LC5-138 (AT), 1843/04-1845/10 (N1-9), 5, BnF.

²⁹ Aimé Rivoire, chancellor of the French consulate. As it contained an alphabetical list of foreigners with their place of residence – not their nation of origin – the Directory had the effect of amalgamating foreign and European into a single body of people. Most were British and American, with a handful of Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese. Interestingly, Parsees were included in the list. List of foreign residents in Canton, Macao, Hong Kong, Amoy, Fuchau, Ningpo, and Shanghai (copied from the *Chinese Repository*), 25CP/2, Chine, 1844-1847, No. 38, AMAE.

³⁰ *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Législation Commerciale, No. 4, 4-LC5-138 (AS), 1843/04-1863/03 (N1-15), 1-2, BnF.

For French nationals to be part of the endeavor, the Lieutenant de Vaisseau Coupvent Derbois pointed out in a report of March, 1843, to the *Ministère de la Marine*, France would need to develop its trade presence across Oceania. Derbois' vision incorporated newly acquired territory in the Pacific that produced pearls, nacre, tortoiseshell, and sandalwood, all of which were "absolutely essential" for the Chinese. Focusing the growth of new colonies around furnishing those objects would integrate it into a circular trade that spanned the globe and rivaled Britain's and Spain's vast networks. Wine and "fashion items" would be shipped out from France's southern ports to Peru and Chile, where they would be exchanged for a cargo of copper. After hypothetical traders stopped at the Marquesas to sell what they could, they would continue to China to unload their pearls and copper, which, Derbois believed, "would comprise a favorable shipment" for the Chinese trade. It was pure speculation. But according to Derbois, acting without delay would give his countrymen every chance of success.³¹

Guizot, France's foreign minister, was a proponent of such expansion, but was hesitant to publish what were likely incomplete and erroneous numbers on the China trade. He had also been warned by the French consul in Manila that Chinese manufacturers demonstrated a talent for imitation, with the possibility of "beating" France at its own production of its most celebrated luxury commodities. That would bring ruin to French industry, endangering French merchants, and compromising Guizot's

³¹ A. Coupvent Derbois (Lieutenant de Vaisseau) to Ministre de la Marine, excerpt of "*Relation entre la France et la Chine*," 15 March 1843, F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

Ministry. Before committing to large-scale commercial intervention in the East, he proposed sending agents to carry out further investigation.³²

Guizot's concerns and Debois' exhortations are demonstrative of the overlapping, sometimes tangled, sometimes disconnected, and often contradictory nature of French involvement in China, and in the Pacific more broadly. On one hand, as several decades of scholarship on French empire have demonstrated, European actors (especially traders) operated autonomously in their interactions with the rest of the world, with empires forming haphazardly as states intervened only when things went awry for their nationals. This was certainly true, to a degree, in China. On the other hand, China's ties (commercial and otherwise) with Euro-American powers in the 1840s rested explicitly on state intercession. From warfare to treaty negotiations, commercial missions to tariff agreements, states were heavily involved in carving out, maintaining, and managing inter-imperial connections, while individuals did the work of fashioning personal relationships on the ground that would cement these bonds.

A Global Web

The relationship to be constructed was never conceived as a bilateral one. As Derbois's vision can attest, many interested French parties imagined the future of Franco-Chinese relations within a nexus of Pacific empires. The Chinese imperial formation counted among them.³³ In 1842, a letter from Canton's Chinese merchants to the King of

³² Guizot to Ministre du Commerce, 20 June 1843, F/12/6341 Chine no. 3234, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

³³ Pär Cassel points out that China's active role in establishing the treaty port system has been long established in historical writing, with John King Fairbank having demonstrated nearly fifty years ago that the system provided a strategy for managing Westerners, and Joseph Fletcher arguing that granting extraterritoriality was a method of accommodation rooted in trade with Muslim Central Asia. Both Fairbank and Fletcher imply that China acted as an *imperial* state or polyglot empire by arranging Westerners into what Fairbank calls the "Chinese World Order." Pär Cassel, "Excavating

France contained “the formal expression of the desire that the Chinese Government has to witness the extension of French commerce to the same degree as the great harmony that governs relations between the two empires.” Meanwhile, its annotated translation discussed two world powers who would be in a constant cycle of cooperation and competition with France - England and the United States. The French pavilion in China would be assimilated with those of its sometimes friendly Anglo-American rivals for payment of the *cum-sha* – the most considerable right of navigation accorded to foreigners. Moreover, its author remarked, French commerce would soon reap the benefits “to be derived from new provisions that England is on track to obtain in China... as a result of the treaty, signed August 26, 1842, between it and the Celestial Empire.”³⁴ Moreover, because there were so few French citizens on the ground, agents were forced to operate in reference to existing colonial constellations. They relied heavily upon British, Dutch, and Portuguese knowledge. Translators meticulously copied correspondence between British envoys like Sir John Davis, Viscount Palmerston, and Henry Pottinger, and followed cycles of commerce and conviviality based in the Portuguese possession of Macao, and British Hong Kong.³⁵ Portuguese and English served as lingua franca among Europeans in the port cities - somewhat to the consternation of the French.³⁶

Extraterritoriality: the “Judicial Sub-Prefect” as a Prototype for the Mixed Court in Shanghai,” *Late Imperial China* Vol. 24, No. 2 (December 2003), 156; John K. Fairbank, “The Early Treaty System in the Chinese World Order,” in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1968), 258; Joseph Fletcher, “The Heyday of the Ch’ing Order in Mongolia, Sinkiang and Tibet,” in *Cambridge History of China: Late Ch’ing, 1800-1911*, Part I, ed. Denis C. Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), vol. 10, 377.

³⁴ *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Chine, Législation Commerciale, No.1, 1843, 3e série des Avis Divers, No. 32, 4-LC5-138 (AS). 1843/04-1863/03 (N1-15), 3, BnF.

³⁵ See F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

³⁶ Even before the delegation arrived in China, Lagrené had recommended that the unilingual Rivoire was suffering “in a city where nobody speaks French,” and recommended that he be replaced by an English-

Thus, the commercial mission developed several major aspirations that did not necessarily correspond to Montigny's Sinocentric objectives. It was conceived as much as a commercial world tour as it was an investigation of China, to meet King Louis Philippe's objectives of extending and consolidating production "rightful to the interests of French commerce." With a newly signed convention with Tahiti and recent gains ranging from the countries of Indochina to the Marquises in Polynesia, nurturing relations in the Pacific seemed to require French agents to search for "every piece of information that can illuminate trade, shipowners, and manufacturers on the state of commerce in China and the surrounding countries who trade more and more actively with it." The mission was also concerned with Spanish, English, and Dutch possessions in entrepôts like Manila, Singapore, and Java, along with Sumatra, Padang, Banca, Borneo, Siam, the Celebes, and Japan. It was through these intermediary zones that the majority of commerce operated.³⁷

With projected stops in Lisbon, Gorée and Ascension islands off the coast of West Africa, the Cape of Good Hope, the Bourbon islands (today Réunion and Mauritius), Java, Manila, and finally, China, the mission's visits were to combine practical considerations - quick progress and taking on of provisions – with a brief education in global trade and empire. In Gorée/Senegal, the delegates would see the first depot for

speaker like Montigny. Lagrené to Guizot, 10 July 1844, PA-98/8, AMAE. Dozens of letters from the 1840s were written in Portuguese, including many translations of British correspondence by British translators (like John and Thomas Taylor Meadows) meant for French eyes. Among others: *Etat des relations de l'Angleterre avec Canton, ou expose des consequences de la mauvaise politique de nos trois derniers Plenipotentiaires en Chine, Canton, 6 avril 1847, Consulat Anglais, par ordre of Johnstone; (Published in Canton, 13 jan. 1848) Aviso dos Principaes da Cidade e aldeas de Cantao ao public; Avise public em que se manifta a nossa humilte opiniao sobre a par e admirade que deve? as Chinos manter para com as estrangeiros e sobre a nustra tranquillidade em que ambos devens sempre viver.* (Trans. T. T. Meadows), 513PO/A/2 Pekin, Ambassade, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (hereafter, CADN).

³⁷ *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Chine et Indochine (Faits commerciaux – Nos 1 à 9) Avril 1843 à octobre 1845. Faits commerciaux, No.1 (Ministère de l'Agriculture et du commerce, 3e série des avis divers, No.31) Avril 1843, 4-LC5-138 (AT). 1843/04-1845/10 (N1-9), 2, BnF.

gum (or rubber), and a center that connected India and the French metropole in the cotton trade. The Cape would allow them to witness the center of British power in Africa, while Mauritius was to provide a lesson on the effects of imported coolie labor from India, and its uses in the English sugar industry. (The members could also determine whether the former French colony had maintained a taste for products and relations that could be beneficial to “our pavilion.”) Bourbon was an up-and-coming territory that the Ministry imagined would develop into a crucial commercial hub in the Indian world. In case of difficulties in navigation or inadequate supplies, the expedition could stop at a recent French acquisition, Mayotte, with its potential for important links between Bourbon, Suez, India, and China.³⁸

On the return trip, the mission might visit ports like Aden, Muscat, and Bombay, with the goal of eventually establishing direct relations. They also intended to set up ties among the British *comptoir* in Singapore, Spanish Manilla, and a set of islands that the Dutch had recently ceded along the coast of Cambodia. Carving out a route from India to China, the French mission could unite the component pieces of its slowly reviving empire with broader networks of global trade. Alternate routes for the return envisioned connecting Australia and “our pavilions” in Polynesia, then stopping in Peru or Chile “where our exchanges are progressing,” the Antilles (with long-standing French businesses), Brazil, and Guyana, both “worthy of investigation.”³⁹ In their circumnavigation, it was as though they were threading a string through each of their

³⁸ Direction du Commerce extérieur, Bureau des Faits commerciaux, “Mission en Chine: Note au Ministre sur l’itinéraire projeté du Vapeur l’Archimède,” Navigation française, Monumens généraux de 1820 à 1842, VIII, PA-98/15, AMAE.

³⁹ Ibid.

possessions, real and coveted, to be cinched into an imperial bag of treasure. China was to be woven into an existing web of commerce, culture, and political power.

With all this talk of wonder and possibility, it was as though France had only just discovered China – but that was patently not the case. In fact, the effort to “re-establish” Franco-Chinese relations tended to focus on an ostensible golden age in the more distant past, and it swept more recent interventions seemed under the rug of collective memory. Less than a decade before the mission arrived, Guangzhou’s foreign residents had organized a General Chamber of Commerce. The multi-national effort aimed to make the city’s merchants more competitive, as “the utility of chambers of commerce is generally recognized, and there are very few commercial cities of any importance, in all parts of the world, who are deprived of them.” While the French presence within the body was minimal – the consul, M. Gernaert, was its only representative – a French member of the steering body was guaranteed.⁴⁰ A French factory was in operation (on and off) prior to the opening, along with a small diplomatic presence. Yet post-Opium War French correspondence still insisted that China was an unknown entity, and aimed to acquaint readers (government ministers and interested professionals) with the modalities of trade and life in South China. An 1842 report by the Direction du Commerce Extérieur assumed an almost complete lack of knowledge on the part of its readers when it

⁴⁰ The Chamber’s organization seems to have followed the Canton system, with admission fees fixed at 50 piastres for each house of commerce. However, individual merchants could also join, for a 30 piaster admission fee and a 15 piaster annual subscription fee. The proceedings stipulated that the directing committee should contain representatives from each nation present: five English, three Americans, two Parsis, one Dutch, one French, and one from each other nation. Foreign consuls, British agents of Her Majesty, and the *Compagnie des Indes* were considered honorary members. Excerpt of *Canton Brefs*, 14 January 1837. 1836, “Establishment of a *Chambre Generale de Commerce* a Canton,” (mentioned in the *Moniteur* le 12 sept. 1837), translated from the *Canton Register*, 29 November 1836; “Resolutions taken by committee of the majority of foreign residents of Canton, 28 November 1836, at the hotel of Mssrs. Stanford and Marks. Mr. Lindsay president, Mr. Boyd secretary,” F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

described at length the history of the Canton system.⁴¹ Although it mentioned in a snarky aside that French ships had “preceded those of England to the coasts of China,” the rest of the text was devoted to the more typical transmission of knowledge to the uninitiated: a very basic understanding of trade in the port, including lists of the names of existing factories and their Chinese translations, the ranks of Chinese officials, and the usual litany of the Chinese monetary system, weights and measures.⁴² The report also contained a summary of all the documents that the Ministry of Commerce possessed concerning the China trade. It attempted to demonstrate continuity, with 1842 serving to transform rather than create a system of interaction that had been in place for decades. Beginning with Emperor Kangxi’s opening of the country to foreigners, the report claimed that French sailors had established a presence in 1520, only four years after the Portuguese arrival in Macao. That would give the French more than a hundred-year head start on England, which had no arrivals until 1635. This reference to the legitimizing chronicle of Franco-Chinese interactions was followed by a focus on institutions that had just been made all but irrelevant by the treaty terms. It described how a law enacted in 1831 prohibited spending winter in Canton (foreigners must go to Macao), and required foreigners to leave as soon as business was finished for the season. It noted that European women were strictly prohibited from entering Chinese space. It recounted the Hong merchants’ role in

⁴¹ For a good history of the Canton system and European factories, see Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990), 120.

⁴² E-ho-hong (“Justice and Harmony”); Holland’s Tsein-e Hong (“Collective Justice”); England’s Sao-o-hong (“Peace”), the Fung-tai Hong (“Great and Rich”), operated by Parsis; the Lung-shun Hong (“Glorious Prosperity”), formerly run by the English; the Swedish Swy-hong, without a translation; Austria’s Na-ying Hong (“Double Eagle”); Paou-shun Hong (“Precious and Prosperous”); Kwan-yuen Hong (“Great Fountain”), of the United States; Kwang-yuen Hong (“Of Ten Thousand Springs”), operated by the Hong merchants; the French Kieou-hang Hong (the less creatively named “*Comptoir public*”); Spain’s Yan-tse Hong (“Of the Corner”), and finally, Denmark’s Tong-seng Hong (“Heart of the Orient”). “*Résumé des documens que la Direction du Commerce Extérieur possède sur la législation commercial de la Chine,*” 1842, F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

managing foreign transactions: terrain could not belong to non-Chinese, so those who wished to rent habitations needed to go through intermediaries. It listed several means of regulation: imperial code, imperial edict, orders by provincial and local authorities, and popular custom, all hostile to “free and amicable relations with the foreigners, or, as the Chinese call them, *fan-kwei*.” Including this outdated information was not necessarily at odds with the report’s stated goal - to acquaint the Ministry with recent changes (chiefly, the opening of four new ports, which would essentially replicate the Canton system, as well as changes in tariffs, equalized rights of entry, departure, and access to the interior). However, it rested on a creative fiction in which things were known but obscure and evoked simultaneously the antiquity and originality of the French presence.⁴³ Ancient history had been friendly, but recent history was troublesome for foreigners. Understanding the modalities of the system – even those about to disappear – lent a sense of hope in the new system of relations about to be established.

When the French commercial delegation departed from Brest in 1843, it was charged with a special mission, “sent by the King’s government to explore the countries of the Far East.” Two ships, the *Syrène* and the *Archimède*, sailed out. The *Archimède* would be left in India, while the *Syrène* would be joined by auxiliaries and continue eastward to explore the coast of China. On board were Plenipotentiary Lagrené, First Secretary Théophile de Ferrière Vayer, Second Secretary Vicomte Bernard d’Harcourt, attachés Montigny, Marey-Monge, Delahante, Xavier Raymond, Count Charles de la Guiche, and MacDonald Duke of Tarente, plus Jules Itier, a customs inspector, Dr. Yvan, a professor of Medicine, and M. Renard, M. Rondeau, and Augste Haussmann,

⁴³ “*Résumé des documens que la Direction du Commerce Extérieur possède sur la législation commercial de la Chine*,” 1842, F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

representatives from trade councils specializing in manufacture, woolens, and cotton cloth, respectively. They had considerable means at their disposal; “without giving too militant an appearance” to the mission, whose principle was to “create amicable relations with peoples who barely recognize the name of France,” the *Syrène* carried fifty canons, and the *Archimède*, 220 horses.⁴⁴ Members of the mission were given government subventions of at least 300 francs per month, and at the request of Ministry of Commerce, had access to a 66,000-franc line of credit for expenses.⁴⁵ They were representatives of the king, and by extension, of the French nation overseas – the Empire.

There was a fundamental paradox in this government-led initiative to foster free-market liberalism. The matter was evidently deliberated in France, as an article destined for the *Journal des Débats* asked, rhetorically, whether the government was indeed at liberty to launch its mission to China. The author, Raymond, was part of the delegation, and he concluded that “France was not free to abstain.” The state must intervene, he argued, for France to join other nations in an egalitarian regime of rights. Just as bands of adventurous Americans had forged their national existence in the deserts of the West, Raymond wrote, France was compelled to act in China if there was to be any hope of achieving equality with Britain.⁴⁶ Thus, French trade in China was to be developed by a delegation commanded by the king and sponsored by the state, with stipends paid by the Ministry of Commerce. They acted with the authority of official agents, and both their

⁴⁴ M. Raymond to the *Journal des débats*, undated, 1845, PA-98/16, 52, AMAE.

⁴⁵ Ministre du Commerce Direction du commerce extérieur to Ambassador Lagrené, August 1844, F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine. Lagrené seems to have complained that the sum was insufficient; the Ministry released a supplementary credit of 12,000 francs, and wrote that regretfully, the near totality of its credit was already promised to the consul of Zanzibar. Montigny also asked for a raise from his current 500 francs per month, noting that he was nearly penniless, with a wife and children to support. He was awarded 1200 francs. Monigny to Ministre du Commerce. le 25 November 1843; Report of the Ministère du Commerce, August 1844, F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

⁴⁶ Raymond to the *Journal des débats*, PA-98/16, 52, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

credibility and their mission rested upon the premise that they were great men who worked for a great empire, and that they were going to make it even greater. However, they would do this not through domination, but through a critical engagement with Chinese individuals and institutions.

“Ten Thousand Years of Intensifying Friendship”

The personal relationships upon which the French presence depended began at the top of the social ladder. When Lagrené’s delegation arrived in Canton, it received “gracious accommodation” by the Viceroy of Guangdong, Commissioner Qiying (耆英), a Manchu of the imperial Aisin Gioro lineage. He quickly promised that France would obtain formal recognition of the same advantages enjoyed by Great Britain.⁴⁷ The rapport between high-level diplomats like Qiying and Lagrené, acting on behalf of their respective imperial-national bodies, set the scene for future interactions among their compatriots. A few years before, the tempestuous liaison of British Superintendent Charles Elliot and Qiying’s predecessor Lin Zexu (林則徐) had prefigured the first Anglo-Chinese war. Qiying and Lagrené would have a more complex relationship. It was friendlier (or at least more tactful) on the surface, but it was marked by behind-the-scenes suspicion, and a decorous but pronounced pushback on the part of the Imperial Commissioner.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Navigation française, Monumens généraux de 1820 a 1842, *Direction du Commerce Extérieur, Bureau des Faits commerciaux. Premières negociations du Consul du Roi en Chine avec le Gouvernement Chinois*, PA-98/15, XII, AMAE.

⁴⁸ For biographical information on Qiying (also rendered Chi Ying, Keying, and Kiyeng, Kei-yeng, and Ki-in in various source material) and his conflicted relationship with Westerners, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese* 130-4, 904-5.

Shortly after his arrival on March 15, 1844, Lagrené remarked upon the “amicable dispositions” of the Chinese authorities, and expressed the hope that the Imperial Commissioner would be pleased by his presence, so that their “two powerful empires” might profit from establishing reciprocal relations. Qiying responded in kind, addressing Lagrené as “Your Noble Grandeur” and extolling the virtues of his French homeland and countrymen. He claimed to have experienced “joy and unspeakable satisfaction” when he had learned “with pleasure” that the French commercial mission had arrived from across the seas. He praised the work of those Frenchmen already in his acquaintance, such as Admiral Cécille and Consul Ratti-Menton, who had all fashioned intimate relationships with high Chinese authorities, “without the slightest subject of disagreement.” Citing their long, shared history, “since the time of the Ming dynasty to the present... in harmony with China,” Qiying wrote that he wished for ten thousand years of intensifying friendship between his empire and Lagrené’s.⁴⁹

However, when it came time to fix the date of a face-to-face meeting to hammer out the terms under which French commerce would be conducted, Qiying stalled. He explained that his position required him to take part in the fasts, purifications, and sacrifices that “differ in no way from the worship that your noble empire offers to the Supreme God.” Lagrené’s choice of the first day of the next month (according to the Chinese lunar calendar) was impossible, as Qiying would be unable to return home in time for the sacrifices of Confucius on the third, sacrifices to the “patron spirits of the

⁴⁹ Lagrené to Qiying (Ki-iñ), 22 August 1844; Qiying to Lagrené, received 28 August 1844. Lagrené, Marie-Melchior-Joseph-Théodore de (1800-1862), *Recueil des Documents Diplomatiques Relatifs à la Légation Française en Chine, Traduits du Français en Chinois et du Chinois en Français par J.M. Callery, Secrétaire-Interprète de la Légation*. Macao, 1845 et 46, NUMM-6117086 or Tolbiac 8-LG2-307, Nos. 1 and 2, BnF.

Empire” on the fourth, and the important autumnal sacrifices on the eighth of the month. Shortly thereafter, on the tenth, he would be required to go with all of the other magistrates to prostrate himself at temple for the Emperor's birthday: "it is one of our greatest ceremonies, and I do not dare neglect it." Then, somewhat extraordinarily, ten thousand scholars would converge upon Canton to take the imperial examination. As Qiying was to be in charge of its administration, he would be unable to set out until the students left, on the sixteenth. He did not anticipate arriving in Macao until the nineteenth. He excused himself by appealing to his counterpart's sense of duty: "I know that Your Noble Grandeur is pressed with the desire that we meet, in order to freely express his good sentiments; but so many obligations have arisen to interrupt our conversation!"⁵⁰

The delay would not greatly affect the future of Franco-Chinese ties. Qiying stated as much in his letter to Lagrené, writing that “our intercourse will be frequent, and not unsettled by a gap of ten days.”⁵¹ British forces had extracted their treaty by hammering the Chinese coast with gunboats, but the French agents were merely riding uncomfortably on their coattails. While they might benefit from the British action, they were negotiating under the tricolor, not the Union Jack. Qiying's tactics were not less than a reminder that he would not be at France's beck and call. He would negotiate as an equal.

Lagrené tacitly accepted those terms, replying that he would not dream of asking Qiying to neglect his official obligations. After all, it was but the start of a long friendship; in spite of Lagrené's eagerness to commence face-to-face discussions, the

⁵⁰ Qiying to Lagrené, received 9 September, *Recueil des Documents Diplomatiques*, NUMM-6117086 or Tolbiac 8-LG2-307, No. 4, BnF.

⁵¹ Ibid.

delay was ultimately immaterial. He added that he would not count on Qiying's presence in Macao until the 22nd, as he would not want a hasty voyage to add to the discomforts of travel. He promised also to pray for heaven to protect him on his trip.⁵² In response, Qiying further underscored his position, placing France and China on even ground - and emphasizing who governed that ground. "As in your great kingdom," he wrote, "we generally hold religion in high regard," playing shrewdly to the general French self-perception as a spiritual, rather than solely commercial, European power. Furthermore, he continued, "your kingdom respects religion and the rites, and Your Noble Grandeur understands perfectly the responsibilities of a senior official." He then prompted Lagrené to remember on whose turf he stood. As Lagrené had crossed the seas in order to arrive upon the distant shores of the Orient "speaking the language of sincerity, fostering peace and establishing harmonious relations between these two kingdoms for ten thousand years" – all honorable intentions, he noted – Qiying felt duty-bound to travel promptly to Macao, "to have the pleasure of seeing your noble face, and to show you, *as master of this place*, my best intentions."⁵³ While couched in terms of mutual admiration, the role of each was clearly defined. Qiying was the master of his domain. Lagrené was but a visitor, an emissary of the nation with whom China would engage, but who wielded only the power of a guest. Both men followed up by sending one another orders from their sovereigns.⁵⁴

⁵² Lagrené to Qiying, Ibid., 11 September 1844, *Recueil des Documents Diplomatiques*, NUMM-6117086 or Tolbiac 8-LG2-307, No. 5.

⁵³ Ibid, Qiying to Lagrené, received 17 September, No. 6. *Recueil des Documents Diplomatiques*, NUMM-6117086 or Tolbiac 8-LG2-307. My emphasis.

⁵⁴ Lagrené sent Qiying his "lettre de créance," signed by Louis-Philippe and Guizot, the very same day that he received a copy of Qiying's orders from the Imperial government and his seal of "Grand Commissaire Impérial," putting him in charge of all port affairs. Ibid., Qiying to Lagrené, received 6 October 1844, No. 8; Lagrené to Qiying, 6 October 1844, *Recueil des Documents Diplomatiques*, NUMM-6117086 or Tolbiac 8-LG2-307, No. 9.

After several meetings, and in spite of their translator Joseph-Marie Callery's "astute" efforts, Qiying feared that he and Lagrené did not understand one another completely. In October, he wrote an unusually personal letter signaling his frustration with the state of their relationship. While he acknowledged that two hundred years of good relations between France and China were evidence that Lagrené's mission must be one of peace and friendship (and "could not be compared at any level with the machinations of England or America!"), he was concerned that French demands for reform, however justifiable, were setting China apart as a less than equal partner in the commercial pact. What made France great, he argued, was that it "allied friendship with good friends," and asked nothing of other nations. Then, in a turnabout of the very language of intractability that many Europeans employed in their discussions of the need for engagement with China, Qiying wielded the specter of stagnation to shield his people from increased interference. He wrote that given the character of his country's inhabitants and the "customs that have existed for several thousand years," China could "never truly be assimilated by any of the kingdoms of the West." He signed his name in "Tartare" (Manchu) – Aisin Gioro Keying.⁵⁵

Qiying and Lagrené's correspondence demonstrates the important role that inter-imperial homo-social bonds based on social status played in re-establishing Franco-Chinese relations in the eighteen forties, and in maintaining them in the following decades. Lagrené and Qiying's fairly amicable epistolary connection would be replicated by Montigny and his counterpart Ye *Taotai* (Intendant Ye) in Shanghai.⁵⁶ It also set a

⁵⁵ Ibid., Qiying to Lagrené, 7 October 1844, *Recueil des Documents Diplomatiques*, NUMM-6117086 or Tolbiac 8-LG2-307, No. 10.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 3.

precedent for relationships on the ground that extended beyond the Canton merchant association known as the Cohong.

In the case of the French mission to China, aside from obvious intersections of sex and class or social status, international, interracial homo-social bonding was legitimized by the weight of discursively equal political entities. As Qiying had pointed out, both France and China were great empires, and it was as representatives of those empires that he and Lagrené interacted. While diplomatic relations were heavily governed by established etiquette, relying on ritual, tradition, and translation was counterbalanced by particular instances of what their authors imagined as “authentic” behavior, such as Qiying’s “special letter,” Jules Itier’s convivial evening at Pan Shicheng’s mansion, or the shyness of Pan’s wife, Madame Li. Those transgressions were key, because they lent an aura of innovation to the personal relationships that served as microcosms of (supra)national ones. A willingness to accept novelty, and especially to foster it, was taken as a sign of suitable virility, standing out both from the discursively feminized torpor of “traditional” China and Bourbon France and from Britain’s hyper-potent spirit of conquest. Even the tiniest of these acts were read as significant of character, as when Qiying signed his “special letter” with his name in Manchu, lending a genuine air to his sentiments as he stepped outside his title and into his “true” identity while maintaining the legitimacy of his position as a trusted agent of the Qing court.

Discerning difference among China’s peoples was a key aspect of managing inter-imperial relationships, but in many ways, those differences were produced by that very context. Though the descriptive categories that Europeans deployed were taken from the geographical and proto-ethnic origins of the people they described, descriptors like

“Cantonese” and “Tartar” (Manchu) came to refer to a broader constellation of attributes imbricated in social status, employment, and cross-cultural connections.⁵⁷ Although the hallmarks of Qing masculinity would take on very different overtones for British and French observers during the wars of 1856-1860, in the early treaty years, many Western commentators saw an ideal type capable of balancing decisive action with tempered reason. Samuel Wells Williams, a missionary and editor of the *Chinese Repository* who would later become *chargé d'affaires* of the American Legation in Beijing, remarked that while Qiying was not as renowned as his predecessor, Lin Zexu, “the Manchu has shown himself superior to the [Han] Chinese in conducting the business committed to his care.”⁵⁸ Qiying had presented himself as a Manchu, descended from his ruling dynasty’s founder. The attributes supposedly connected to his ethno-nation, however, grew out of his dealings with the West.⁵⁹

In the early nineteenth century, the mostly Han Chinese population of Canton (including its *faubourgs*) was estimated at 1,236,000, compared to only a handful of Europeans.⁶⁰ Though the presence of Westerners was extremely small, Chinese association with them seems to have carried heavy cultural weight. In spite of the convivial atmosphere in the lofty circles frequented by Lagrené, Itier, and Montigny,

⁵⁷ The Manchu-Chinese divide was at least partly a self-conscious manipulation with roots in China’s internal imperial machinations. Pamela Kyle Crossley argues that cultural and institutional plurality rests upon historical constructions that she calls “constituencies,” rather than “peoples” or “ethnicities,” constituted by cumulative written histories, rituals, cultural geographies, educative and sumptuary prescriptions, legitimized by voluntary subordination to and service of the Qing empire. Pamela Kyle Crossley, “Pluralité impériale et identités subjectives dans la Chine des Qing” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, No. 3, Numéro spécial “Empires” (May-June 2008), 597-8.

⁵⁸ Samuel Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Education, Social Life, Arts, Religion, etc. of the Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants* (New York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1848), 363.

⁵⁹ I prefer Crossley’s concept of “constituency,” but use ethnicity and nation here to convey the attitudes of the Westerners who described Qing actors in such terms.

⁶⁰ “Chine: resume des documens que la Direction du Commerce Extérieur possède sur la législation commercial de la Chine,” F/12/6341 Chine, 5, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

several layers of authority prevented free association between ordinary Chinese and foreigners. Imperial, provincial and local ordinances positioned the *fan-kwei* as “rivals, enemies who must be defied.” The British diplomat John Robert Morrison, whose commercial guide to China preceded the Treaty of Nanjing, had cautioned his readers that foreigners must try to understand the less-than-welcoming conduct of the average Chinese subject, which was based on “personal obligations imposed by the law... not within their individual dispositions.” For many years, it had been forbidden to aid foreigners except in the most extreme situations (in which case they were to be given bread and the means to return to their country of origin, effectively removing their blight). Moreover, in addition to risking imprisonment, exile, and death, Chinese who contravened the law risked compromising their personal fortune, their social status, and their family.⁶¹ Thus, according to the report, popular custom and official legislation conspired to prevent intercultural bonds from being formed.

Of course, relationships developed nonetheless. Financial gain or outright indifference could mitigate the strictest of prohibitions. However transgressive they might have been, the practices that arose in Sino-Western interaction came to inform official and unofficial categories of people – a sort of relational ontology. Officials had long been involved with outsiders; Qiying and Pan Shicheng were but the latest in a long line. According to the narrative disseminated by the French Ministry of Commerce, prior to 1719, commerce in Canton had been transacted with money borrowed from Mandarins, whose title in European languages combined their imperial function with a

⁶¹ John Robert Morrison, *A Chinese Guide: Consisting of a Collection of Details and Regulations Respecting Foreign Trade With China, Sailing Directions, Tables, Etc.* (Macao, By Author, 1834), paraphrased in “Chine: résumé des documens que la Direction du Commerce Extérieur possède sur la législation commercial de la Chine,” F/12/6341 Chine, 2, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

European descriptor (from the Portuguese *mandar*, to send; in other words, the emperor's envoys).⁶² This practice was inconvenient, and the wholesale fraternizing of merchants was difficult for the Qing regime to regulate, so the emperor named an official commercial representative, known as the Hoppo (revenue commissioner).⁶³ Authority for all transactions with Westerners was delegated to a corporation of Chinese merchants, the Cohong. In principle, no mandarin was then permitted to engage in commerce. In fact, the restrictions weakened in practice. Pan Shicheng was one prominent example of an official whose public role overlapped with his family's private trading house.

Membership in the Cohong was an expensive privilege. Each member was required to pay twenty thousand piastres to the Hoppo, and additional sums (between between one and forty thousand piastres) to other officials. Aside from exile or execution, members were unable to quit the Cohong. The body straddled public and private spheres, as well as Chinese and European ones. The Qing state used this liminality to its advantage, putting the Cohong to work as a de-facto surveillance machine.⁶⁴ Even after the organization had been officially disbanded, the great merchant families assisted Qiying in his cautious scrutiny of the Europeans in his city. Pan Shicheng, for one, had been tasked with keeping tabs on members of the French mission; hosting Europeans at his country estate was part of Qiying's security apparatus.⁶⁵ Moreover, each month the

⁶² *Chine: resume des documens que la Direction du Commerce Exterieur possede sur la legislation commercial de la Chine*, F/12/6341 Chine, 2, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

⁶³ The French commercial documents took note of the fact that the Hoppo was always a Manchu. Ibid., 3. In another layer of relational constituency, according to Cheong, the Hoppo belonged to the *boyi* class, which traditionally engaged in Imperial service. Cheong also points out that the Hoppo was equal in rank to the Viceroy of the two Guangs, the Governor of Guangdong, and the Manchu General of Guangzhou (Canton). Cheong, 15.

⁶⁴ *Chine: resume des documens...*, F/12/6341 Chine, 2, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

⁶⁵ John King Fairbank. *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854*. Volume I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 183, 191-2.

Chinese trading houses were required to present to Qiying a list of all those in the employ of foreigners. There were heavy penalties for undeclared work with Westerners.⁶⁶

Intercultural association – with each “culture” in fact formed in the moment of interaction – and the policing thereof contributed to new categories of people in and around the treaty ports, based on both work for foreigners and association with them. Coolies (*sha-wan*), who served as guards, porters, and water carriers, were often employed illegally, with bribes paid for police to turn a blind eye. They were allowed to enter the European quarter of Guangzhou to work, but were forbidden to sleep there. Compradors (from the Portuguese “to buy,” or *mai-pan* in Chinese), who ran factories, managed shipping operations, and directed European households, along with linguists, were the true intermediaries. They were employed full-time, paid handsomely, and had the right to resign. They also had the closest contact with Europeans. The French delegation’s report praised them as “active, intelligent, devoted men who are indispensable to commerce,” and expressed particular confidence in the men who were attached to the great trading houses and factories.⁶⁷

Therefore, while social hierarchies regulated some of the connections established between French and Chinese agents, particularly among elites, the very act of forming a relationship could also order social status, particularly for the less privileged. The word “comprador,” for instance, which would become so closely associated with local elites in service of imperial regimes, bore a connotation of service, but not necessarily inequality, before its use was extended across empires. This was true of Europeans, as well: the

⁶⁶ *Chine: resume des documents...*, F/12/6341 Chine, 2, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

⁶⁷ *Chine: resume des documents que la Direction du Commerce Extérieur possède sur la législation commerciale de la Chine*, F/12/6341 Chine, 2, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

positions of French translators like Callery depended upon a personal history of contact with Chinese people, culture, and customs.

Taste and Color

The classic narrative of Western commerce with China tells us that while China had much to offer the outside world, the outside world had little other than silver and religion to offer in return. That narrative is a something of a myth, informed by fears of a draining treasury during the opium crisis (and, no doubt, by current trade imbalances). It was true that European manufacturers supplied few of the foreign products sold in China. Instead, as in the examples of Indian Opium and cotton, they tended to come from Britain's imperial territories. Moreover, the Chinese could supply a much greater quantity of trade goods than they would demand. However, the French agents of the commercial delegation sought to change that. They were at least as interested in what they could import to the somewhat fabled "the greatest market in the world" as in what they could export from China. They followed in the lead of the British, American, and Dutch brokers who had preceded them by importing the products of their colonial spheres, but also imagined China as a future market for goods manufactured in the metropole.⁶⁸ The Ministry's archives contain an extract from an English-language magazine from 1843, informing readers that recently-acquired Hong Kong was "destined perhaps to unite in amicable intercourse the three hundred and sixty millions of the hitherto isolated though certainly not uncivilized Chinese with the most active and enterprising inhabitants of

⁶⁸ Copy, Dagneaux to Ministère du Commerce, 16 December 1842, F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

what we are accustomed to call the civilized world.”⁶⁹ By implication, superior European industry would furnish the populous but deprived East with the bounty of Paris, London, and Rome, an outflow with greater potential than attempting to sell Chinoiserie to the much smaller market at home. The Ministry ordered porcelain samples from Chantilly and commissioned cloth pieces from the firms of Bertèche, Bonjean, and Chesnon to test the market, promising that their wares would sell.⁷⁰ Early reports from French agents in China offered assurances that Chinese merchants were “unanimous” in favoring French products to English or American ones.⁷¹

However, the trade was more lucrative for nearby colonial spheres than for distant European capitals. In 1837-38, “intermediaries” from British Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras exported 99 million francs worth of goods to China - excluding contraband like opium! The merchandise that they imported from China was worth only half that. Agents in Singapore sold eight million francs to China, and bought from China goods worth only six million at the height of the war in 1840. In 1839, Java’s share of exports to China was nearly five million, while it spent less than one million on imports from China. (Manila, with a larger resident Chinese population, was somewhat different: it imported goods worth 3.3 million francs in 1841, and exported 2.1 million.)⁷² While Europeans at home and in the colonies were initially interested in little other than tea, silk, and porcelain,

⁶⁹ Excerpt from *The Penny Magazine*, Hong Kong, 24 December 1842, received with British Packet, 27 May 1843, F/12/6341 Chine British Packet, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

⁷⁰ They evidently kept to the former half of the agreement, displaying the wares to Cantonese merchants, but needed to be reminded of the latter part of the bargain. Bougon and Chalot to M. E. Castet, Ministère du Commerce, 20 July and 8 August 1842; J.B. Arnould-Senart (merchant from Reims), to Ministère du Commerce, 18 September 1843, F/12/6341, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

⁷¹ Natalis Rondot to the Ministre Plénipotentiaire, 4 January 1845, PA-98/16, AMAE.

⁷² It is worth noting that a variety of actors were at work even within each of these colonial poles. Trade in Manila, for instance, involved merchants from England, the United States, Spain, China, the “Indes Orientales,” Australia (listed separately from the rest of the British empire), and France. *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Chine, 1843, 4-LC5-138 (AT) 1843/04-1845/10 (N1-9) 6, 17, BnF.

Chinese consumers sought a wide variety of products from around the world. Early Ministry of Commerce reports, citing the *London Gazette* and Dutch commercial legislation, catalogued a multitude of commodities successfully imported into China. Gold and silver were at the top of the list, but “unicorn” (narwhal) horns from the North Atlantic, betel nuts and Mother of Pearl from Africa and the South Pacific, European honey, *horlogerie*, wool, Indian cotton, American ginseng, and “*dents de phoque*,” a medicinal plant grown in Canada, birds’ nests, pepper, salt peter, and *rose maloes* (an Anglo-Malay term for liquid amber, used in Chinese medicine), glass, wine, and beer were also highly desired.⁷³ Prior to the war, four-fifths of the transactions in Guangzhou were in British hands; their central role in forcibly opening new ports for trade, coupled with the accessibility of hubs in Malaya and India positioned them to continue this dominance. French experts were well aware of their disadvantage, but they aimed to alter the (dis)proportions by identifying which products that could be furnished by French possessions might interest Chinese buyers. French territories around the globe could furnish most of those items, and were in proximity to those they could not source directly.

Acquisitions *from* China were hardly immaterial. Tens of thousands of cloth items were destined for London alone in 1843, not counting the large quantities of tea that were always sought for tables across the British Empire.⁷⁴ However, the possibility of selling the vast potential produce of France and its colonies to the substantial Chinese market

⁷³ France Ministère du Commerce, *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Chine-1843, “Tarif des droits sur le commerce étranger avec la Chine,” 4-LC5-138(AS), 1843/04-1863/03 (N1-15), 11-16, BnF. For a definition of *rose maloes*, see Edward Balfour, *The Cyclopaedia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia, Commercial, Industrial, and Scientific Products of the Mineral, Vegetable, and Animal Kingdoms, Useful Arts and Manufactures*, Volume III, Third Edition. (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1885), 442.

⁷⁴ France, Ministère du Commerce, *Annales du Commerce Extérieur*, Chine, 1843, Annex No. 17, 4-LC5-138 (AT), 1843/04-1845/10 (N1-9), 119-121, BnF.

was generally considered a better bet than relying on the relatively meager pockets of the French bourgeoisie, whose fluctuating fascination with Chinese luxury goods could not be counted upon to trump their access to Lyonnais silk and local wine. The members of the delegation began to change that paradigm. After seeing the household furnishings of Hong merchants and mandarins, several delegates and their wives went shopping for objects to add to their personal collections. They were particularly fond of lamps in old porcelain; they cost twelve dollars, and were difficult to find in pairs. Madame de Lagrené took a fancy to a small collapsible box, and with Renard's help, negotiated the seller down to the low price of eight dollars.⁷⁵ Jules Itier admired the delicacy of Chinese products and praised the quality of their pigment manufacture, even "without the benefit of chemical science." He went so far as to present Chinese ceramic samples to the royal factory in Sèvres, "so that we might determine their composition and perfect this industry in France."⁷⁶

Securing a long-term market remained the primary goal of the sometimes uneasy Franco-Chinese friendship. The technocrats in Parisian offices who attempted to channel profits through the conduits their brethren had established on the ground were chiefly concerned with what would sell, and how, and why. One Chamber of Commerce report announced that because the Chinese were creatures of habit, they could never be forced to adopt European customs or goods. Europeans wishing to break into the market were therefore compelled to manufacture goods to Chinese specifications. The Chinese had recognized that centuries before, with the famous Jingdezhen kilns supplying large quantities of blue-and-white ceramics featuring European figures, animals, and scenery

⁷⁵ Renard to Lagrene, August 1845, PA-98/16, AMAE.

⁷⁶ Jules Itier, *Journal*, Volume II, 18-19, 65. However, Itier qualified his approval with an observation that a fine Chinese silkscreen portrait was inferior to those produced in Lyon, 55.

for export. The color scheme, which was borrowed from Persia, delighted European buyers, but it was simpler than the more colorful pieces produced for the Chinese court.⁷⁷ Merchant networks also actively marketed different types of pottery in different regions.⁷⁸ Recognizing the benefits of tailoring production to local tastes might allow French merchants to benefit from their latecomer status, as they could replicate items that had already been successfully sold in the Chinese market. For instance, the report noted, Russian salesmen had had some success with wool blankets, particularly those in white, red, and dark blue bearing “bold designs and arabesques.” The Chamber had called for samples of articles likely to sell in China to accompany its trade delegation, which would research “true, accurate and prompt information on the tastes and habits of the people ... on the preferences they may grant to certain of our products” from the ports of the Chinese coast to India, Singapore, Java, Padang, and the Philippines. Such information was crucial, and had to be first collected and studied by various interested parties. That group included government bodies as well as France’s Chambers of Commerce, its merchants, and its ship owners, lest French agents hastily set out on “adventuresome expeditions that could gravely compromise our hopes for the future.”⁷⁹ Thus, in addition to the mission’s goal of establishing friendly relations, a significant component of their task involved collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on established trade in China. But even this “fact”-based endeavor was heavily contingent upon the discernment

⁷⁷ Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat*, 63-70.

⁷⁸ Dillon, Michael, “Transport and Marketing in the Development of the Jingdezhen Porcelain Industry during the Ming and Qing Dynasties,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1992, 278-290.

⁷⁹ *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Chine et Indochine (Faits commerciaux – Nos 1 à 9) Avril 1843 à octobre 1845, No.1 (Ministère de l’Agriculture et du commerce, 3e série des avis divers, No.31), 4-LC5-138 (AT), 1843/04-1845/10 (N1-9), 16, BnF.

of the delegates, as it entailed borrowing tactics from earlier imperial efforts, with a heavy reliance on personal contacts and local knowledge.

Although the report by the Chamber of Commerce fell back on less-than-flattering stereotypes of Oriental inscrutability, its characterization contained a tacit acceptance of Chinese consumers as active, savvy agents. Commercial mission delegate Natalis Rondot believed strongly that previous attempts to market quality European cloth had been disappointing (cargoes of it had to be sold at a loss) because manufacturers had too often neglected to take local tastes, habits, and preferences into account. Rondot saw these previous failures as opportunities for future success, with better-prepared French *négociants* able to avoid the pitfalls that had hampered previous European efforts. French manufacturers in Sedan, Beauvais, Reims, Amiens, and Roubaix had sent cloth samples that were already the envy of other nations, Rondot wrote, and they could “fight victoriously” on the Chinese market if they anticipated Chinese consumers’ desires. In addition to quality – generally assured in French manufacturing – Rondot encouraged an assiduous attention to color. Surprisingly, the Cantonese merchants he interviewed had shown little interest in the red cloth that had been supplied in high volume. Blue and purple, he noted, were virtually the only colors of cloth in demand in Canton. In fact, all people from all social classes wore blue almost to the exclusion of all other colors.

For those who wished to see the types of cloth and gradations of color that had been sent to China, the full catalog of samples and swatches were available at the Ministry of Commerce.⁸⁰ However, as the published version of the report was intended

⁸⁰ “Observations préliminaires,” France, Ministère du commerce, *Annales du commerce extérieur*, publiées par le département de l’Intérieur, de l’Agriculture, et du commerce. Chine et Indochine, Faits commerciaux, No.10. Mars et Avril 1846. Published 1852. First published as “Documens sur le Commerce Extérieur No.

for an audience who did not have immediate access to the samples in question, and dealing with rather abstract notions without an absolute value, Rondot resorted to lengthy descriptions that, like monetary values, placed hue and tone within a nexus of global and imperial knowledge. Among the many nuances of violet, for instance, Chinese buyers “only ask for a purplish violet, rich and rather dark,” similar to the English iris. There was a greater variety in preferences for various saturations of blue. Canton merchants favored saturated hues, but they disliked the dark royal blue samples furnished by several French houses, judging them too murky. However, sample Number 4, a “fine, pretty velvety purple,” was highly sought after. According to one merchant, “given one hundred pieces of diverse blues, he would require sixty of this here.” Unfortunately, Rondot remarked, most Chinese deemed French blues to be pale and greyish, lacking the “pretty, vaguely violet gleam” of those produced in England.⁸¹ (In its own report, Rouen’s Chamber of Commerce identified substandard French indigo cultivation as a possible source of the problem. However, they admitted, Europeans still knew next to nothing about preferred Chinese methods of dyeing and printing textiles. “Evidently, much remains to be studied in these two important industries.”⁸²)

Violet-purple – or pansy (*pensée*), Rondot elucidated – was also fashionable, worn in two styles of Chinese garments (*ma-qua* and *tai-qua*), and mandated by the *lai-po* (Council of Rites) for small boys. It was created in a complex dyeing process, which Rondot elaborated in his report. Starting “with a base of bright indigo, (*d’un pied d’indigo clair*), a solution of alum and bitartrate of potash, and a dip in a bath of

319, *Pièces et Documents relatifs au commerce avec La Chine et l’Inde* (Paris, Imprimerie Administrative de Paul Dupont, 1846), 4-LC5-138 (AT), 1846/03-04 (N10), 2, BnF.

⁸¹ Natalis Rondot, “Du Commerce des Draps et Autres Tissus de Laine en Chine,” 5 July 1845, *Ibid.*, 3, 11.

⁸² Mission Commerciale en Chine, “Observations de la Chambre de Commerce de Rouen” (Rouen: A. Perron, 1844), 21 October 1843-1844, VP-26217, 13, BnF.

cochineal and bitartrate.” The cloth had to be removed before a “red element” began to dominate; the resulting color would be violet, not pansy. However, dipping the dyed cloth in a solution of tin (*étain*), as recommended by one English merchant, would have an attractive brightening effect.⁸³ Given that textiles were foremost among the products that France hoped to export, deficiencies in their industrial technique were particularly worrisome.

Shortcomings in French dying techniques led the Cantonese merchants to reject several other groupings outright. Rondot complained that the Chinese possessed a “taste... extremely difficult to satisfy.” They found French scarlet too brownish and dull, and the green too close to blue. They said that they wanted gray, but turned up their noses at nearly all of the samples. Brown was impossible, as the residents of Guangzhou never deigned to wear it. The mission had had high hopes for white; as the color of mourning, they believed it would sell well for funerary uses. But Rondot advised against sending more than a few pieces, as no merchant had expressed interest in ordering more. They admired the “well-developed dark black... with no reflection of grayness” produced in Sedan, but as black was associated with “crime and vice,” Rondot could not see how the cloth would be employed. Crimson was well known in China, but its use was currently somewhat limited – it was only worn on the first day of the lunar New Year, and then only by small children. Even the noble yellow found no favor. It was supposedly the dominant shade of the Chinese wardrobe, and French manufacturers had all but exhausted their supply of the tint to furnish a large quantity of the cloth to drape over

⁸³ Rondot, “Du Commerce des Draps,” 13.

their fantasies of the Orient. Sadly, Rondot quipped, Qiying's belt was the only article he had yet witnessed in the color.⁸⁴

On the other hand, "Spanish stripes" were popular. This lightweight cloth with radiating dark bands had earned (Indo-)British and Americans more than 4 million francs (540,000 taels) in 1843.⁸⁵ But any old stripe would not do. Chinese merchants, who called it by the English name "middling cloth," would only buy sheets of it, between nineteen and twenty-one yards long. They were similarly exigent in the width of the colored bands. Cantonese customers desired them to be just over fourteen and half inches apart, while those in Macao favored slightly closer striping.⁸⁶

To further aid his compatriots, Rondot included a table of colors, their names in English and Chinese (rendered in fairly intelligible Cantonese phonetics), and their relative desirability on the Canton market, as described by the merchants. Highly valued *violet pourpré pensée*, they would learn, was "*po-tsing*" in Cantonese. Yellow ("*wong*") was highly esteemed, but generally not in demand. There was no market for crimson ("*in-chi*") or white ("*pak*" or "*chat-lam*").⁸⁷ These multiple references to color (a signifier with unstable meanings) attempted to keep semiotic slippage in check. Descriptions of component dyes and manufacturing processes, French, English, and Chinese names, physical swatches, and familiar images – all attempted to solidify the delegate's observations, and to classify them within a French regime of knowledge. Moreover, finding the "right" colors for French commerce in China was not solely a subjective

⁸⁴ Ibid., 13-15.

⁸⁵ Ministère du commerce, *Annales du commerce extérieur*, Faits commerciaux, No.10, Mars et Avril 1846, 4-LC5-138 (AT), 1846/03-04 (N10), 4, BnF.

⁸⁶ Rondot, "Du Commerce des draps, 8-9.

⁸⁷ Rondot, "Assortiment des Couleurs (I)," in "Du Commerce des draps," 10 The table described which cloth samples each merchant had found desirable for the Canton market. Each varied slightly, but tended to favor blue and purple.

undertaking. It was also a powerful economic driver, with connections to the French silk, fashion, and chemical industries. Yet the process of translating shades and names also fomented a new order, as the symbols that represented an idea without a fixed meaning existed in reference to one another, in conversation, mirroring the innovative poly-cultural discussion of Rondot, five Cantonese merchants, and the myriad other actors surrounding them in the cloth trade.

Rondot's reliance on personal contacts for his market surveys carried certain risks. As removed any aura of scientific control that government bodies would have liked to exert over their data, and placed it in the hands of another type of expert – those who had experience on the ground. For example, one estimate of the potential value of items to be acquired in Asia and sold in French Oceania was based on numbers supplied by an unnamed “commercial voyager” who had experience in the area. The informant believed Polynesia, New Zealand, and the “Sandwich islands” (Hawai'i) would purchase 262,675 francs worth of Indian cotton, Chinese silk, umbrellas, perfumes, glass, furniture, and comestibles. French ships could currently supply only a fraction of that. They comprised only three of the sixty-three that had sailed into Tahiti in the first half of 1841. However, the report was prefaced by a qualifying statement on the Département's “reservations” at publishing information that, while appearing to have “every guarantee of exactitude,” was not “official in character.”⁸⁸ Later, the members of the *Mission commerciale* were even more acutely dependent upon the wisdom of their Chinese colleagues, and frequently recorded the names of their collaborators in testimonies of their findings. Natalis Rondot published the names of five merchants – Tshann-Tsheng, Punchong

⁸⁸ *Annales du Commerce Extérieur*, Chine, 1843, Commerce Extérieur, Chine et Indo-Chine, Annex No. 19, 4-LC5-138 (AT), 1843/04-1845/10 (N1-9), 127-132, BnF.

[almost certainly Pan Shicheng], You-long, Sang-Tchong, and Atchunn - who had furnished the intelligence contained in his report.

At least one of the informants, Pan Shicheng, was the very person whom Jules Itier had photographed. He was thus already a close associate of the French agents operating in Guangzhou. The French relationship with Pan most acutely demonstrated how diplomacy, commerce, and personal relations intersected. Pan had a foot in both official and commercial camps. As an assistant and counselor to the Imperial Commissioner Qiying, he had served as a deputy in the treaty negotiations of the early eighteen forties, and had even hosted several of them at his estate.⁸⁹ He was also a descendant of one of the original *Cohong* merchants, Pan Chencheng (also known as Puankhequa).

Pan Shicheng was a cosmopolitan figure, variously characterized as an innovator, Westernizer, collector, profligate *bon-vivant*, and spy. He was allegedly the richest man in China, and was said to have spent ten thousand dollars a day on entertainment for his friends on the occasion of his or his mother's marriage.⁹⁰ He owned the building housing the French factory, and as a friend of the envoy Lagrené, had suggested adding a clause to the Treaty of Huangpu to protect the building of houses of Christian worship.⁹¹ John King Fairbank describes him as a master at "barbarian soothing;" due to his acquaintances with foreign merchants, Qiying had assigned him to keep an eye on the

⁸⁹ Pan Shicheng (潘仕成) is the pinyin rendering of the name. It appears variously as Paw-ssé-tchen, Pan-Tseu-Tchen, and Pwan-sze-shing in contemporary accounts. Like many of the *hong* merchants, he was often known among Europeans by his pseudonym, Pontinqua.

⁹⁰ Osmond Tiffany, Jr. *The Canton Chinese, or The American's Sojourn in the Celestial Empire*. (Boston and Cambridge: James Munroe and Company, 1849), 164-8.

⁹¹ "Address of Hon. Peter Parker, M.D." Yale University Divinity School, *The SemiCentennial Anniversary of the Divinity School of Yale College, May 15th and 16th, 1872*. (New Haven: Press of Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor, 1872.), [103-106], 105. See Edward H. Hume, "Peter Parker and the Introduction of Anesthesia into China" in *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 1:4 (1946:Oct.) p.674. 671. Along with several other commentators, Parker mentions that he had treated Pan Shicheng's parents.

Euro-American community.⁹² A visit to Pan Shicheng's house and gardens outside of Guangzhou, known in Anglo-Cantonese pidgin as Seamount Sin Koon (海山仙馆), seems to have been *de rigeur* for Western visitors, and remained so through the Second Opium War, when it fell into ruin after looting by French officers. Agents of every foreign power went there to see and to be seen, and so French prestige had required that the members of the commercial delegation court Pan's favor even after they had secured a separate treaty in 1844. His gardens were always open to visitors, and were among the few places in Guangzhou proper where Westerners could stroll at their leisure. Lieutenant Francis William Bennett went every Sunday to picnic and occasionally smoke with the owner.⁹³ George Wingrove Cooke stopped there during a lengthy walk through Guangzhou, and praised its "pretty flowers, cool stone seats, and every preparation for summer indolence."⁹⁴ American lawyer and abolitionist Richard Henry Dana described the garden, the most opulent he had seen in China, as "luxury itself."⁹⁵ English writer Albert Smith was less impressed when he visited with a party of men in September of 1858, as it was "all rotten and neglected, and tumbling to pieces."⁹⁶ However, Scottish missionary James Legge went with his second wife Hannah well after it had fallen into ruin, and it was still listed as an "object of interest" for tourists 1901.⁹⁷ At Pan's estate,

⁹² John King Fairbank. *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, 183, 191-2; Gulick. *Peter Parker and the Opening of China*, 118.

⁹³ Francis William Bennett, *Leaves from My Log, A Naval Officer's Recollections of Personal Adventures in Various Parts of the World*. (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1869), 26.

⁹⁴ George Wingrove Cooke. *China: Being "The Times" Special Correspondence from China in the Years 1857-1858* (First published London: G. Routledge & Co., 1858. Reprint Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1972), 371.

⁹⁵ Charles Francis Adams, *Richard Henry Dana: A Biography, Volume II* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891), 198.

⁹⁶ Albert Smith, *To China and Back, Being a Diary Kept, Out and Home* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1859), 42.

⁹⁷ Extract from a letter written by Mrs. Legge, in Helen Edith Legge, *James Legge, Missionary and Scholar*. (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1905), 128-9; E. A. Reynolds-Ball, F.R.G.S., "China of the

Westerners from a number of countries came into contact with one another, and with the Chinese members of his household, such as the girls that Itier had so wanted to capture with his daguerreotype box.

Itier's official, personal, and professional network also included individuals whose knowledge could help him with his own passion of photography. After his meeting the painter Lamqua, he visited Chinese artisans in their workshops. With the aid of an interpreter, he learned how certain minerals could be mixed with gelatin and water to create vivid colors for paint. He also watched the industrial production of tints, which moved mechanically through the process of being dipped in two types of sulphur and mercury. He also witnessed laborers creating vermilion dye, moving the muddy mixture out of large cauldrons and forming it into large dried tablets. Although the workers were rather laconic, he reported his brief technical conversation in his journal, which would be published back in France.⁹⁸

Citing their contact with local experts demonstrated French familiarity with local norms and personalities. In naming their correspondents, French delegates both confirmed their solid position in the Chinese trading sphere and their ability to form (relatively) substantive relationships with their Chinese counterparts. On the other hand,

Globe-trotter," in *Chambers's Journal*, Vol. 78 Part 37, edited by William and Robert Chambers, (January 1, 1901), 119. Mrs. Legge notes that the house had been abandoned after French officers had "despoiled" the women of the household of their clothing and jewelry.

The gardens are also mentioned in Edward Dorr Griffin Prime, *Around the World: Sketches of Travel Through Many Lands and Over Many Seas*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1874), 152; The *Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* mentions that Pan Shi-cheng had published a collection of works that included Euclid. Vol. 6-7. (Shanghai: The "Celestial Empire" Office, 1869), 150.

According to the Guangzhou city government, the remains of Pan Shicheng's estate were incorporated into Liwan Lake Park (荔湾湖公园).

http://www.guangzhou.gov.cn/node_2230/node_437/node_440/node_622/2005-07/112052641959041.shtml

Accessed February 5, 2013.

⁹⁸ Itier, 19-21.

the Ministry of Commerce was well aware that all of its intelligence was coming from individuals with uncertain agendas. Even when it was filtered through French reporters, it does not seem to have been considered to be as reliable as long-term observation by well-established European colonial eyes. Thus, Rondot's claims in his color chart needed to be verified by five different men, and corroborated by the Dutch head of Batavia-based Reynvaan and Company. Likewise, Rondot's observations on dyeing practices were affirmed by an unnamed British trader.⁹⁹

The conversation among delegates and officials in Paris, and their imagined business-oriented readers incorporated the mid-nineteenth century mania for collecting and categorizing. They displayed a rather masculine obsession with "facts," which continued a process of French knowledge acquisition in the Asian textile industry with the hope, finally, of getting it right.¹⁰⁰ However, it was also a dialogic process, involving unnamed local informants with knowledge that stretched beyond China and among empires, to Manila, Java, Singapore, and the rest of the world. Acquiring that knowledge both required and facilitated interpersonal relations: inviting Chinese merchants to look at samples, speaking with artisans, and observing their dyeing processes. The thread of communication then extended to France and beyond, as the information was published and read by a business-oriented public. The data showed the great wealth that could be

⁹⁹ Rondot, "Du Commerce des Draps," 10, 13.

¹⁰⁰ The Rocque manuscript did similar work in the Indian textile industry in 1678, with anonymous eyewitnesses providing information on block printing. See Paul R. Schwartz, *Printing on Cotton at Ahmedabad, India in 1678* (Ahmedabad: Calico Museum of Textiles, 1969), and Amelia Peck, ed., *Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500-1800* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013), 134. Garnering that kind of knowledge was part of a tradition of imperial information-gathering that spanned centuries and empires. However, the commercial delegates presented their knowledge as novel. The impetus to master dying techniques was not necessarily more pressing than at other moments, but it must have seemed so in the years following China's opening to trade with the West. For gendered Western nineteenth-century powers of observation and fact obsession, see Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998; Harvard University Press, 2000), 133.

generated by the China trade, but the numbers – which products sold well, which did not, and which empires’ denizens had been most successful in figuring it out - was meant to underscore how Chinese preferences dictated the market. Most interestingly, investigators like Rondot insisted that French manufacturers and traders must adapt their wares and tactics to local tastes. In showing them how to do so, they aimed to change French habits – not to create demand in the Chinese market by imposing European ideals upon a subordinate population of buyers.¹⁰¹

French agents’ interest in China could not be isolated from their broader desire to re-connect with global trade routes (both maritime and overland), and vice versa. The Ministry of Commerce noted that when merchandise like tea, silk, and porcelain made its way from China to Bengal, it was likely to pass through Lhasa on one of two direct land routes from Beijing. Upper class Tibetans, he reported, dressed in a *mélange* of European draps, Chinese satin, Cochinchinese silk, and Indian *kinhab* (a heavy paisley brocade). Meanwhile, several prominent families from Kashmir conducted a significant trade between Tibet and their place of origin. Significant numbers of Tibetan manufactured items also reached the various nations of *Indostan* through intermediary countries, linking princely states, British spheres of influence, Muslim Central Asia, and Euro-indigenous colonial networks in Southeast Asia. The growing French flirtation with the constituent nations of what would become its future Indochinese possessions also brought Tonkin and Cochinchina into the discussion. China was “the most favored nation” in Tonkin, where its denizens were in command of virtually all the foreign commerce in the area. Cochinchina, meanwhile, had attracted Chinese attention for its plentiful agricultural

¹⁰¹ Contrary to the arguments of Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995) and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

territory, which furnished its northern neighbor with rice and salt.¹⁰² Collecting enough information about China to enter into productive commerce thus required a multi-pronged understanding of its neighboring nations, imperial constellations, and vassal states. In essence, every interaction between France and China would be situated in a nexus of global formations.

The delegates shared with sponsoring institutions the information that they collected, particularly the Ministries of Commerce and of Foreign Affairs. Montigny summarized his findings in a manual for French businessmen, ever convinced of his own importance to the French mission.¹⁰³ (As other official and semi-official correspondence had done, Montigny's guide drew heavily upon existing British knowledge. When Laplace, the Minister of Finance, read it, he commented that it was but a mediocre translation of John Morrison's 1834 *Chinese Commercial Guide*.¹⁰⁴) A British inter-consular report containing tables of exchange rates among Rupees, Piastres (in Peru, Mexico, Bolivia, and Chile), Chinese and French units that had appeared in the Hong Kong Gazette was translated and sent to the Director of Foreign Commerce (*Commerce Extérieur*). It was quickly followed by another translation of British Governor John Francis Davis' decree establishing a standardized system of weights and measures, assuring that those employed in the ports corresponded to units in use in both the UK and China, with lists kept at the Colonial Treasury in Victoria, in order to prevent fraud. The lists were composed of Chinese weights and measures, each with its representative

¹⁰² Translations of Davis and quotations from Fortia d'Urbain. France, Ministère du commerce, *Annales du commerce extérieur*, (Faits commerciaux – Nos 1 à 9) Avril 1843 à octobre 1845, 4-LC5-138 (AT), 1843/04-1845/10 (N1-9), 148-152, BnF.

¹⁰³ Charles de Montigny, *Manuel du négociant français en Chine, ou Commerce de la Chine considéré au point de vue français* (Paris: Imprimerie de Paul Dupont, 1846).

¹⁰⁴ Laplace (Minister of Finance) to the Ministère du Commerce, 19 October 1846, F/12/6341, Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

Chinese character, Romanized transliteration, English term (if applicable, such as the Mace), and type of use (e.g., by carpenters or masons), followed by standard English measures. (Though it was not supplied, the French list must have required further mental translation from English measures like yards and pints.) It legitimated and codified certain measures – as other sources have pointed out, quantities could vary by region and time period – and imposed a penalty for interfering with, damaging, or destroying models kept as examples.¹⁰⁵

Interestingly, the British lists did not attempt to forcibly impose equivalents – for instance, there was no discussion of how many *tsin* (mace) composed a pound – but rather, attempted to make commercial agents acquainted with both sets of standards. French examinations of the system, on the other hand, showed some consternation at the fluctuating values and lack of firm correspondence. A report by M. Hedde remarked that unlike the French, who have sought to standardize measures to the greatest extent possible, the Chinese (like most nations) had difficulty in finding “an invariable base in their weights and measures.” He noted that the base unit for everything was a *wong tchung* (a certain number of grains) – but this unit varied according to whether it was composed of grains of millet or of rice, whether those grains were counted vertically or horizontally, and how heavy each might be. While Heddé acknowledged a point of mutual comprehension (that the decimal system used by French was invented in China “twenty-four centuries before our era”), his charts showing “vulgar” and official

¹⁰⁵ Richard Woosnam, by order of Henry Pottinger, (Plenipotentiary Minister of SMB), to Henry Gribble (Manager of the British Consulate in Amoy), 4 Decembre 1843, published in the *Hong Kong Gazette*, 7 december 1843; “Ordonnance de John Fancis Davis (Governor of the Colony of Hong Kong) à l’effet d’établir des étalons de poids et mesures et d’empêcher l’usage de ceux ou celles qui peuvent être fausses ou défectueuses,” 30 December 1844, translated from the *Friend of China* and *Hong Kong Gazette*, 1 January 1845, F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

denominations, equivalents in French (franc), dollars, grams, lists of weights and lengths customary in various territories (a unit in Chusan being different from unit with the same name in Amoy or Macao) and discrepancies in various western texts (according to Morrison, according to the *Chinese Repository*, according to the merchants of Amoy, and so on) pointed to a certain amount of chaos within China and among trading nations.¹⁰⁶

The delegates' report to Lagrené, which was forwarded to Paris, concurred. It concluded that with the picul, tael, and dollar all in use in Chinese commerce, French agents should adopt the picul. Its value in Canton was consistently an easy to calculate 133 1/3 English pounds, although its real worth was currently three fifths of a percent weaker. Moreover, the value of the dollar fluctuated between two bases: one determined by the Hoppo, fixed at 3 taels 1 mace, and 8 candarins of silver for 5 "*dollars coupés*",¹⁰⁷ and the other determined by London's exchange rates for China, in paper money, presently 4 shillings 4 pence per dollar, and 25.25 French francs per pound sterling. They also needed to account for the ordinary relationship between the tael and the dollar on the Canton market: 717 taels for 1000 dollars. The delegates believed it would be best if their countrymen simply followed accepted practice in their entry into the trade.¹⁰⁸ Thus, even as members of the French commercial mission attempted to buttress their understanding of Chinese commerce, the determination not to fail made them proceed cautiously,

¹⁰⁶ Excerpt of a report from Hedde to the Ministre de l'Agriculture et du Commerce, August 1846, F/12/6341, Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

¹⁰⁷ "Cut money." This was actually a circular piece cut out of the center of a round dollar coin. It was worth about one twelfth of a dollar, and was commonly used in American, Spanish, and British trade in the Caribbean in the mid-nineteenth century. See Francis Gedney Clarke, *The American Ship-Master's Guide and Commercial Assistant* (Boston: Allen and Co. Publishers, 1838), 229.

¹⁰⁸ Excerpt of a report on exports from Canton, addressed to M. de Lagrené by the commercial delegation, 23 August 1845, Extrait d'un rapport sur les exportations de Canton, adresse le 23 aout 1845, F/12/6341, Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

relying enough on existing knowledge that they ultimately undermined their goal of creating a distinct French genre of trade.

A Deeper Intervention

As the French trading presence was established, the use of Chinese titles for French representatives became a matter of concern. In 1846, the translator Joseph-Marie Callery wrote to the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris to ask for a definitive decision on the degree of importance it would accord its representative in Guangzhou. If France "wants to maintain herself on the same footing as England and the United States," he queried, "before whom will our representative be accredited?" The ministry, Callery insisted, must send a resident plenipotentiary minister. This would give him the credibility of British figures like Charles Elliot and Henry Pottinger.¹⁰⁹ Guizot's subsequent recommendations in a report to the king echoed Callery, noting that the presence of a diplomatic agent would both assure respect for the treaty and enable France to take a broader hand in other affairs, namely ensuring that "our nationals, our missionaries, and our merchants" enjoyed the benefits to which they were entitled. A simple commercial agent, he insisted, could only "be considered as equals" of very lower-ranking Chinese authorities. This would compel the French agents to engage in a profoundly demeaning system of interaction whereby they offered reports to high functionaires, and received responses in the form of declarations. This would be doubly inconvenient, wrote Guizot, because it would "debase the character" of French agents, and render their actions "inefficient." As the United States and Great Britain had sent

¹⁰⁹ Report by Callery to M. Le Comte De Lambert (Director of the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères), 27 November 1846, 25CP/2, 132, AMAE.

“*Koun-che*” (likely *guanshi*, stewards or diplomatic envoys), France should follow their lead; sending another type of recognized official, a “*kin-chau*” (imperial commissioner) would unnecessarily seem to set France above others.¹¹⁰ While this was not initially an issue of attaining a position within an internal system – it involved multiple points of signification in relation both to Chinese authorities and deputies from other empires – attempting to make roles, ranks, and translations coincide left it entangled in French linguistics, as well as Chinese ones. Lagrené and his successor, Forth-Rouen, operated as imperial commissioners (*commissaires impériaux*), but did not have formally equivalent titles in Chinese.¹¹¹

Setting up a de-facto high-ranking diplomatic presence in China coyly attempted to move the French beyond the simple commercial relations set out in the treaty of 1844. However, as French officials insisted upon their parity with other nations, they used already-established benchmarks of success, temporarily forgetting the need for a separate and novel French path in China. The intense drive to expand French trade magnified the effect. Competition with the British notwithstanding, a significant portion of the French interest in China was to increase French commercial activity in concert with its imperial possessions. Therefore, French diplomatic and commercial agents were often willing to engage in mutual action with the British and with representatives of other nations when they believed that it would improve their economic outlook. In 1849, Forth-Rouen and his staff acted in concert with the British in proposing a new form of money. The innovation would reimagine Chinese coinage, with the goal of facilitating commerce by enabling easy repayment of large debts, both among Chinese merchants and in

¹¹⁰ Guizot, Rapport au Roi, 16 January 1847, 25CP/2, 138-141, AMAE.

¹¹¹ Lefebvre to the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, 26 January 1847, 25CP/2 Chine, 1844-1847, 146, AMAE.

transactions with foreigners. At the time, the *sapèque* (Chinese cash) was the most common type of coinage in China, and is today familiar to those who have perused the antique markets of Hong Kong. It was composed of 16 parts copper and 4 parts lead, and a square hole pierced in the middle allowed the bearer to run a string through and carry multiple coins. However, the value of each coin was only one one-thousandth of a silver tael, making larger transactions all but impossible without carrying many thousands of coins. M. Forth-Rouen, acting as chargé d'affaires of France in China, wrote that because “so small a coin” was impractical for payment of large sums, and because paper money was unknown (and distrusted) in China, a new coinage combining the aesthetics of the cash with the multiple denominations found in European coinage could serve the Chinese population well.¹¹²

As with goods produced in Europe for the Chinese market, these Frenchmen endeavored cater to Chinese taste. Forth-Rouen’s report pointed out that the new coinage was still based on ancient Chinese practice. Little would change in the appearance of the new sapeque. To court Chinese acceptance, new coins would be struck in silver at a dedicated mint in Beijing. The resulting coinage combined the principles of two supposedly distinct, yet highly interrelated monetary systems. Creating such a hybrid coinage claimed to reconcile “traditional” Chinese exigencies with “practical” European expertise. Striking coins in denominations of ten and fifty aimed to rationalize debt repayment and gave European agents control over the minting process. It also represented the potential for direct European intervention into intra-Chinese commerce, as Chinese generally accommodated foreigners by transacting business in European currency.

¹¹² Forth Rouen to M. le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 21 May 1849 F/12/6341 Chine, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

Continued integration did not, however, lead to the commercial success that Lagrené and his delegates had envisioned. On the eve of the ten-year anniversary of the Treaty of Huangpu, Auguste Heurtier, a delegate of the Ministry of Commerce in the Seas of China and Japan, took stock of French interests. He reported that while recent modifications had simplified customs duties and further opened Chinese ports to foreign trade, “regrettably, the nation who has taken the least part is France.” This may have been because individual business interests did not possess sufficient capital, or because, in spite of ten years spent gathering data, there was *still* a “lack of local knowledge necessary for our traders to exploit.” He proposed more careful study of the country, just as Lagrené’s mission had done – evidently for naught.¹¹³

Lagrené’s team was nonetheless rewarded for their role in securing and maintaining a stable French presence in China. Their mission had been plagued by rumors of constant infighting, false reports, and personal enrichment.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, several of its members successfully cultivated close relationships with key Chinese actors like Pan Shicheng, and were thus able to foster the expansion of trade with which they had been charged. Many of the delegates achieved the kind of personal glory that they had sought for themselves, if not for their nation. Callery was honored with the title of

¹¹³ Auguste Heurtier, “Commerce avec la Chine spécialement au point de vue des intérêts français. Extrait d’un Rapport adressé, le 20 août 1854, à M. le Ministre de l’agriculture, du commerce et des travaux publics,” in France, Ministère du commerce, *Annales du commerce extérieur publiées par le département de l’agriculture, du commerce et des travaux publics*. (3e série des avis divers) Chine et Indo-Chine, Février 1855 à Juillet 1867. (Paris: Librairie Administrative de Paul Dupont, 1868), Faits commerciaux, No.21/No.805, 4-LC5-138 (AT), 1855/02-1867/07, 3, BnF.

¹¹⁴ In a report to the Plenipotentiary Minister, Rondot complained that delegates were making separate, conflicting reports to different authorities, and that the entire team operated without supervision or accountability. He claimed that Heddé was ill-disposed toward him, and that Renard was the only common ally. Rondot to M. le Ministre Plenipotentiaire, 4 January 1845, PA-98/16, AMAE.

Royal Interpreter (*Interprète Royal*).¹¹⁵ Montigny received the position he had so desired. Named consul general and sent to Shanghai, he gained a reputation for being a hard-nosed diplomat, but quietly perpetuated the softer mission that his compatriots had envisioned by maintaining a cordial and relatively casual correspondence with his Chinese counterpart, Ye.¹¹⁶ All but Itier were awarded the *Legion d'Honneur*; even his work was eventually recognized when the Ministry of Finance intervened on his behalf (he was named an officer of the *Ordre royal de la legion d'honneur*, a rank above his secretary, who had already been declared a *chevalier*).¹¹⁷ He went on to become Customs Director of Marseille, and as a member of the learned societies that had called upon Frenchmen to look to the East, published a travelogue and several treatises on Chinese agriculture and industry. One of his proposals recommended planting native Chinese species in France and Algeria, as if to unite the pieces of the imagined empire's terrains within its very soil.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Callery to M. Guizot, Macao, 9 November 1844, 25CP/2, Chine, 20-21, AMAE.

¹¹⁶ See Chapter 3.

¹¹⁷ On 10 December, the Direction commerciale reported that he had been elevated to Officer of the *Ordre royal de la Legion d'honneur*. Laplace (Finance Minister, Direction du Personnel et de l'Inspection generale, Legion d'honneur) to le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 17 September 1846. Personnel 1ère série, 2135 Itier, Jules, AMAE.

¹¹⁸ See the following, all authored by Itier: *De la Naturalisation en France et en Algérie de plusieurs plantes textiles originaires de la Chine et de l'application des procédés chinois à la préparation des filasses* (Montpellier : impr. de P. Grollier, 1851); *De la Chine considérée au point de vue du débouché qu'elle peut offrir à l'industrie viticole* (Montpellier : Pierre grollier, 1849); *Du Sorgho sucré (Holcus saccharatus) kaoliën de la province de Kwang-Tong, Chine* (Montpellier : Typ. P. Grollier, 1857).

CHAPTER 3

THE CRUCIBLE OF CONFINEMENT

In 1860, Catherine de Bourboulon was trapped in the poorly-guarded foreign concessions of Shanghai as Taiping rebel forces advanced on the city. She had embraced what she called her wifely duty and accompanied her husband, French Minister Plenipotentiary Alphonse de Bourboulon, to China to support his work. However, as he was traveling on diplomatic business, she found herself alone and unprotected. Although foreigners were not the target of this particular conflict, Madame de Bourboulon was afraid. She wrote of her “inexpressible terror” after witnessing a shattered Chinese mother die with her youngest child before help could arrive. As a devout Catholic woman, she prayed for deliverance. She would emerge unscathed from Shanghai, but she fell victim to a mysterious tropical illness during her return journey to France. She died shortly after reaching Europe’s shores.¹

The rest of Madame de Bourboulon’s sojourn in China contrasts sharply with her diary entries from Shanghai and her untimely death. When she first arrived in 1857, she had entered the southern port of Guangzhou dressed as a man. The daughter of a noble Scottish family, Bourboulon (née Catherine Fanny MacLeod) had come of age in the United States and Mexico before embarking for Asia. She was known as an adventuresome cross-dressing, cigar-smoking spitfire, entertaining (and sometimes shocking) French expeditionary forces troops with her free-wheeling antics and crude

¹ Catherine de Bourboulon, Journal Entry, August 18, 1860, in Achille Poussielgue, ed. *Voyage en Chine et en Mongolie de M. de Bourboulon Ministre de France et de Madame de Bourboulon, 1860-1861*. (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie, 1866), 9-10. 8-O2N-173 or NUMM-204945 (Gallica Online Database, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k204945j>, accessed January 10, 2011), Bibliothèque nationale de France.

language. In Guangzhou, her masculine disguise was meant to divert attention from the white woman's presence among allegedly hostile natives following a succession of bombardments by French and British forces. However, the French admiral charged with her protection subsequently arranged for her to ride through the Chinese section of the recently opened city, a triumphal entry that at first seemed to position Bourboulon as a conquering hybrid of two nations: Britain, from birth, and France, by adoption.

Transformed from Britannia-Marianne into Napoleon, she possessed full access to the city and was unmolested by its inhabitants. She would go on to follow Alphonse to the North, where she was widely held to be the first European woman to enter Beijing.²

However, such public displays of vigor shielded an internal vulnerability. That discrepancy contained evident gendered divisions that were replicated in other instances of French endurance. Yet Bourboulon's seemingly divergent personae, one fierce and the other delicate, cannot be separated from her dual nationalities. In her period of captivity within the walls of Shanghai and her death of imperial causes, as in her performances of sang-froid, was a tempered French version of the extremes of feminine exposure and blazing masculinity that would appear frequently in French renderings of its rival in China: the British Empire.

In the eighteen fifties, the specter of violence became the focal point of French imperial ambitions forced to confront myriad dangers – both real and imagined – in China. French residents comprised a mere handful of the foreigners living in China, and due in part to their self-conscious fashioning as friendly equals, they were heavily dependent upon personal connections with their Chinese counterparts. In the midst of two

² Poussielgue, *Voyage en Chine*, ii, xi, xii.

wars over the opium trade, the Taiping rebellion, and conflicted notions of Chinese or European superiority, such close relationships were a source of both comfort and of anxiety, often expressed in tales of Europeans in bondage. Catherine and Alphonse de Bourboulon's edited memoirs, later published in an edited volume, were part of a burgeoning European literary genre of expatriate accounts of danger and survival in China that tied individual fortunes to imperial aims.

After the Treaty of Huangpu formalized trading relations between France and China in 1844, French agents had, for a time, worked to stabilize their position in the treaty ports. They courted important traders and officials, attempted to improve the quality and desirability of their imports for the Chinese market, and in 1849, established a permanent diplomatic post in Shanghai. Yet inner mountains and rivers described by nearly four centuries of their missionary countrymen still beckoned. Not content with their initial penetration of China's ports, French agents embarked on more transgressive ventures into China's interior in the eighteen fifties. The European concessions, safe and familiar for all of their exotic flair, could not compete with the fascinating pull of labyrinthine Chinese cities, and then of the still unconverted, alien center – the true Middle Kingdom.

In spite of its contingent hazards, French visitors to China were obsessed with entering the country's interior in violation of the terms of the treaties that confined Europeans to five treaty ports. Admiral Edmond Jurien de la Gravière described how his acquaintances would embark upon almost daily "promenades" into the countryside, advancing "up to eight or ten leagues into the countryside" before sunset compelled them

to return to the city.³ They apparently took more pleasure in the infraction than they did in the scenery. Travel writer J.J.E. Roy described the treaty ports as a mere “sample” (échantillon”) of China, implying that the first experience of China there was intoxicating but insufficient.⁴ For French expatriates, truly understanding China required more extensive travels.

In contrast to their portrayals of the Americas or the Pacific, the French had never envisioned China as virgin territory; it was teeming with people, smells, and sounds. Knowledge of all of those things was essential to the French venture. If they truly were better suited to win Chinese hearts and minds, a commercial presence in a few coastal cities would never allow them to satisfy that desire. They were not sailing up the river with gunboats, as the British liked to do, and they were not going boldly where no French men had gone before. In their minds, their presence was authorized by centuries' worth of their compatriots' religious missionary efforts. But as French bodies moved within areas legally forbidden to them, they simultaneously subverted Chinese authority and exposed themselves to it. In both narrative and in practice, this strategy's weight was in its dialectic. As philosopher Henri Lefebvre has asserted, conceptions of space are inseparable from knowledge production.⁵ Topography and discursive construction overlapped: a sense of mystery (and its corollary, danger) increased as one moved out through the blurred rings that radiated from the core of European territory at the periphery of China.

³ Edmond Jurien de la Gravière, *Voyage en Chine pendant les années 1847-1848-1849-1850 par le vice-amiral Jurien de la Gravière* (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1864), 256-7.

⁴ Just-Jean-Etienne Roy, *Un Français en Chine pendant les années 1850-1856* (Tours: A. Mame et Cie, 1858), 28, 33.

⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.

French movement out of the treaty ports and into contested interior spaces thus marked a moment of transition in Franco-Chinese relations. Peripatetic narratives of the eighteen fifties maintained French reliance on affective relationships with Chinese individuals, but endangerment and safety introduced new tensions into the paradigm. The insistence on mutual esteem that had marked trading ties shifted to incorporate suspicion and, most importantly, discernment. The ability to differentiate between likely friends and enemies borrowed from the overlapping regimes of social hierarchies that emerged in interactions between Europeans and Chinese in the treaty ports, but lent it a more affective overtone: both sentiment and pragmatism were infused with intuition to permit French subjects to survive and to thrive in less orderly circumstances. The transformation also extended into intra-European relations. French responses to risk were unplanned and improvised. They sometimes necessitated intensified alliances with other Europeans. However, the continued imperative of securing a stronger relationship with China also led to amplifications of national differences, which allowed French agents to emphasize their own proficiency in managing the pressures of life in China.

Captivity

When the Portuguese governor of Macao was found beheaded just outside of Barrier Gate in 1849, it was a highly symbolic coincidence that the oldest European colonial power in Asia had lost its local leader at the point designated to manage the flow of Westerners into China proper. Residents and diplomats were disquieted, but without leads on the perpetrator, it seemed as though it was the governor's wayward move across

the boundary itself that had led to his grisly death.⁶ The treaties of the 1840s had guaranteed foreigners access to five ports. Although it was never officially ceded to Portugal, Macao was generally considered to be European *terra firma*. China's interior, however, remained officially off limits. French adventurers of all types were determined to get in, and to get out in better shape than the Portuguese governor.

The best examples of French citizens capable of discernment were those whose cultural competence had placed them in close contact with a variety of Chinese people, and who had survived hardship and endangerment, including captivity. Captivity stories accompanied increasing French transgression into the interior of China. No European political body was able to guarantee the safety of its nationals in places where they were not supposed to be. A sizeable body of scholarly work on captivity narratives in the better-known American context has pointed to the function of gender and racial or ethnic difference, as prolonged forced interaction between natives and newcomers served as a testing ground for colonial relationships. Pauline Turner describes early American captivity narratives as a process of domestication that privileged the ideological consistency of suppressing savagery to forge a nascent "American Self."⁷ June Namias contends that both gender and ethnic distinction fostered an identity based on difference for the predominantly female captives living among Indians.⁸ However, some recent

⁶ Dispatch from Victoria, to Imperial High Commissioner Seu, 23 August 1849, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes: (hereafter CADN), Pekin Serie D 277. . The source does not enlighten us as to which side of the barrier gate the late governor perished. Established as a Portuguese trading post in the sixteenth century, Macao was the oldest European colony in China; expatriate depictions sometimes cast it as a safe haven in which Europeans are firmly established, but more often, Macao and its Portuguese inhabitants seem to represent somewhat backward foils to the French, the British, and their newer settlements.

⁷ Pauline Turner, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of American Captivity Narratives* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 1-3.

⁸ June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 17.

feminist scholarship has disputed the idea that captivity narratives were purely oppositional. Tara Fitzpatrick notes that the female-centered narratives presented an ideological contrast to the archetype of brawny white men conquering an unknown wilderness.⁹ June Namias nuances her analysis by allowing that in order to survive prolonged contact, European Americans had to accept (or at least tolerate) difference and contemplate methods of dealing with other cultures that confronted both gender and cultural hierarchies.¹⁰ As Lynn Hunt has observed in her work on eroticism, women in nineteenth century Europe represented a material connection between men, a "point of triangulation or exchange that enabled men to relate to one another."¹¹ If we take Hunt's point a bit less literally, with captives (who were often women) as the point of triangulation, incarcerated figures can be understood as brokers between empires. While those taken captive in China were not merely objects of exchange, their detention was a site of contact between France and China, China and Britain, and Britain and France. As Linda Colley has found in the British case, the bodies of captives "mark out the changing boundaries over time of Britain's imperial aggression, and the frontiers of its inhabitants' fears, insecurities, and deficiencies," while the non-Europeans with whom they interacted "sometimes proved able to resist and punish them, and even find their own uses for them."¹² Although the Franco-Chinese manifestations of captivity narratives often articulated visions of racial tension, with European women at the mercy of Chinese men,

⁹ Tara Fitzpatrick, "The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of The Puritan Captivity Narrative," *American Literary History* 3.1 (1991): 1-26.

¹⁰ Namias, *White Captives*, 11, 47-8.

¹¹ Introduction, Lynn Hunt, ed. *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

¹² Colley, *Captives*, 12.

they also portrayed stark differences among individuals, and between French and British capacities to discern friend from foe among their Chinese interlocutors.

Significant numbers of men were taken prisoner, and their alleged ill-treatment at the hands of their Chinese guards provoked battles, led to acts of revenge, and inspired tragic songs and poetry.¹³ However, in the French language, the most widely disseminated of these stories involved women, with British and French nationals emerging very differently from their internment. One of the most celebrated was Fanny Loviot's *A Lady's Captivity among Chinese Pirates*. It was a perhaps fictionalized account of a young French woman's kidnapping by pirates off the South China coast, which appeared in print at the very moment that Catherine de Bourboulon found herself trapped in Shanghai's foreign legation.¹⁴ The book appeared in both English and French (as *Les Pirates Chinois*), and was reprinted in multiple editions. Loviot may not in fact have existed – while numerous reports of piracy and kidnapping can be found in the archives, the European diplomats of South China mention neither Fanny Loviot nor her dramatic rescue. Scholarly work on Loviot, such as Françoise Lapeyre's *Le roman des voyageuses françaises (1800-1900)*, relies on the text itself to establish claims about Loviot's life; there is no known documentation that would suggest that the work was a

¹³ The 1860 sack of the Yuánmíngyuán was justified by contemporaries as a response to the torture and death of twenty members of a British convoy. Calls for retaliation followed the beheading of two Irish prisoners of war during the same conflict; the perfidy of their captors and their bravery in the face of death fed patriotic poetry and song in Britain and, to a lesser extent, in France.

¹⁴ Loviot, Fanny. *Les Pirates Chinois: Ma Captivité dans les mers de la Chine*. Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1860. The book first appeared in English, due to Americans' familiarity with and perceived interest in captivity narratives, damsels in distress, and the supposedly exotic Orient. See Margarette Lincoln's Introduction to Fanny Loviot, *A Lady's Captivity Among Chinese Pirates*. (First published London: Geo. Routledge & Co, 1858. Reprint, Greenwich, London: The National Maritime Museum, 2008). Not coincidentally, the French edition appeared the year that the Anglo-French expedition set out for Beijing.

memoir rather than a novel.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the narrative of Loviot's captivity remains of interest to the historian. Like Bourboulon's *Voyages, A Lady's Captivity Among Chinese Pirates* circulated distinct conceptions of French femininity and dual tropes of Chinese civility and brutality. Most importantly, it linked one woman's ordeal with French goals in China.

Loviot's story began in Le Havre, as she and her sister set out for San Francisco, "on commercial matters."¹⁶ After a journey around Cape Horn, she set up in California. Like the missionaries who preceded her in China, she remarked upon the evidence that she saw of earlier interactions between Native Americans and Europeans, such as the co-existence of commerce and religion at Mission Dolores.¹⁷ In San Francisco, Loviot made her first acquaintance with Chinese emigrants, and after an unsuccessful stint (perhaps as a sex worker) in mining country, she traveled to China on a whim, in the company of a new acquaintance, Madame Nelson. Loviot's discernment first came to light during her trans-Pacific voyage. She recounted that Nelson fell ill during their time on the Pacific. Companions compelled the sick woman to take a dose of medicine, but she refused further treatment after she was told that the remedy had come from Chinese doctors. She died shortly thereafter, delirious and crying "The Chinese! Oh, the Chinese!" Fanny, on the contrary, suggested that Nelson might have survived had she consented to Chinese

¹⁵ Françoise Lapeyre, *Le roman des voyageuses françaises, 1800-1900* (Paris: Payot, 2007). The preface to a recent reprint of *A Lady's Captivity Among Chinese Pirates*, written by Margarette Lincoln of Britain's National Maritime Museum, includes additional but uncited information about Loviot's background and rescue; further research might yield new information.

¹⁶ Loviot, *A Lady's Captivity*, 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

ministrations at the outset of her illness. She concluded that Nelson had perished as a result of her unreasonable fear of Eastern medicine.¹⁸

After taking in the sights, sounds, and smells of Hong Kong and Guangzhou, Loviot boarded the Caldera, a Chilean-registered ship piloted by a British man, Captain Rooney. While still in sight of land, the ship endured a tempest that left Loviot in "an agony of terror." Captain Rooney, too, was quietly terrified, recalling an earlier misfortune in which his ship was taken by Indian pirates, and his crew killed in front of him.¹⁹ Before the Caldera could return to Hong Kong for repairs, it was boarded in the night by "those terrible pirates [who] scour the Chinese seas, and are so famous for their cruelties." Loviot dissuaded Captain Rooney from shooting one of the hundred or so pirates, fearing that "the death of one man... might incline our enemies to a wholesale massacre." Instead, Rooney offered them his weapon, and Loviot threw herself at their feet. She offered her wrists to be bound, closed her eyes, and, like so many captive women before her, anticipated death "with entire resignation."²⁰

Death did not come. A fellow passenger, a Chinese merchant from San Francisco named Than Sing, whispered comforting words to Loviot, and then acted as interpreter between a relatively reasonable pirate captain and the Western captives. According to *A Lady's Captivity*, Loviot's survival depended upon the goodwill of these two very dissimilar Chinese men. Finding an ally in Than-Sing and discerning sympathy in the pirate's countenance, Loviot engaged in what Patricia Seed has described as a hallmark of early French colonialism, searching for "signs of assent" in the appearance of native

¹⁸ Loviot, *Les Pirates Chinois*, 67. This account appears in truncated form in the English version of the book, and does not mention Mrs. Nelson's anti-Chinese raving. *A Lady's Captivity*, 52.

¹⁹ Almost certainly a reference to Britain's troubles in India in 1857. Loviot, *A Lady's Captivity*, 67.

²⁰ Loviot, *A Lady's Captivity*, 67-74.

peoples.²¹ Than-Sing was clearly a “native:” he represented a typical Chinese man with “features... of the type common to his nation.” He was also a merchant who traded opium. However, Loviot noted, his “good nature was expressed in every line of his countenance, and his smile was kindness itself.” Loviot was also favorably impressed by Than-Sing’s lifestyle. He had, Loviot says, “only one wife,” apparently in contrast to the archetypical Chinese keeper of concubines. Like a respectable European man, he loved his family, including his daughters. Moreover, he had connections in California, where Loviot had lived for some time before her misadventures in China. Than-Sing’s propensity to benevolence was proven in his numerous interventions on Loviot’s behalf. Loviot also found a surprising gentleness in the captain of the pirate ship. She described the captain as ugly, but his ugliness was “individual,” that is, as a European might be considered unattractive – he was not merely a specimen of his race. Loviot remarked, “the chief, unlike his men, had something not wholly disagreeable in his countenance,” and his face “always preserved a somewhat pleasant character.” While the pirates themselves harassed and taunted Loviot, their leader kept her apart from them and assured her of her safety.²²

The affective appraisals were mutual. When Loviot noticed that the pirates had abandoned their “native ferocity” toward her, Than-Sing replied: “They like you now... they like you, because your face and eyes are gentle.”²³ Simultaneously valorizing intuitive responses to physical manifestations of character and divorcing phenotype from moral disposition, Loviot’s characterization shows that intuitive French could determine

²¹ Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 70.

²² Loviot, *A Lady’s Captivity*, 63, 108-124.

²³ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

who among the Chinese was “friendly.” Their promise as partners was further indicated in cultural competence (evidenced by speaking European languages, and shedding “decadent” Chinese customs like polygamy) combined with a willingness to come to the aid of endangered French citizens.²⁴ Than Sing's liminal identity placed him in a position to negotiate with the pirates. Yet it was his keenness to do so that marked him as truly different from his and Loviot's captors. Than-Sing's readiness to protect French welfare proved that, in spite of daunting opposition, Europeans were not universally unwelcome in China.

The category of “pirate” was employed with great fluidity, both adding to French disquiet and serving as a coping mechanism against it. When French ships were plundered in 1857 and 1859, the “pirates” involved were in fact coolies revolting against their European supervisors.²⁵ Their (mis)apprehension was echoed in expatriate narratives. Fanny Loviot breathlessly associated anti-British insurrections around Guangzhou with a concurrent proliferation of pirate attacks; fearing both, she had hastened to depart for Hong Kong.²⁶ The French Consul in Shanghai also spoke of pirates and rebels in the same breath; both groups put French lives and livelihoods in jeopardy.²⁷ Loose application of the term, on the other hand, also offered French officials a means by which they might attempt to regulate their unruly neighbors. The Chinese were asked to pay reparations for the “pillage of a ship, as well as for the captivity and poor treatment

²⁴ In one of the final scenes of Loviot's book, her British rescuers nearly took Than-Sing for a pirate because they failed to look beyond his dress. Loviot then reversed their roles, defending him from the menacing sailors. *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁵ Unsigned letter to L'Amiral Hamelieu, Macao, May 20, 1857; “Depositions des homes de l'Anais” 1859, Pékin Série D, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN).

²⁶ Loviot, *A Lady's Captivity*, 79.

²⁷ Letter from Consul Edan to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 November, 1860, Shaghai, CADN.

that our sailors have suffered.”²⁸ The perpetrators were brought before French justice in the second incident. Meanwhile, whether panicked at the thought of lurking pirates or simply desiring to exert control over local shipping, the Consul directed Chinese authorities to assure that their ships carried proper papers. Vessels that failed to comply would face fire from European navies.²⁹

In addition to loss of life and property that pirates threatened, French expatriates feared being captured by ships that could easily vanish into the South China Sea. As in such scenarios throughout the globe (with the Barbary pirates still very much alive in French memory), kidnapping was alarming because it positioned Europeans not as the agents of penetration, but as helpless victims – both the pirate ship and the pirates themselves penetrated European space and bodies. Their victimization was gendered, both in the literal danger to male and female bodies and in the metaphorical instability of the French nation, positioned outside of China and at the mercy of its most disorderly denizens. In the eighteenth century, fears of pirates sodomizing male captives had occupied the European popular and literary imagination. Yet Linda Colley points to a conceptual shift that occurred around 1750, as later captivity narratives moved dramatically toward the female voice, with a focus on heterosexual rape and lust.³⁰ One finds similar tropes in the Chinese case. While both men and women who were kidnapped were at the mercy of their captors, only women confronted sexual danger; Loviot feared for her virtue from the moment that the pirates discovered her sex. At first she had believed that her womanhood afforded her different treatment from that of other

²⁸ Unsigned letter to L'Amiral Hamelin, Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies, Macao, May 20, 1857; Letter from Jules Collier to A. Vaucher, French Vice Consul in Hong Kong, and Mr. James Fair, in Amoy, December 11, 1857, Pékin Série A 11, CADN.

²⁹ Letter from Edan to Tao-tai, 15 October 1861, Shanghai, CADN.

³⁰ Colley, *Captives*, 116-7.

prisoners and was relieved that the pirates “seemed to have a certain regard for women.” However, after one of the pirate crew attempted to escape from the ship with Loviot in tow, her thoughts turned to sexual danger. She disguised herself as a man, in clothing borrowed from Captain Rooney, whose bravado faded quickly as he was being separated from the other prisoners to be taken as a hostage to Macao. It became apparent that Loviot's ruse had failed when the men began to stare at her figure. She resolved to throw herself into the sea rather than submit to their “brutalities.”³¹

It has become a commonplace in scholarship on empire to observe that the bodies of white women demarcated the European community; Ann Stoler, among others, has remarked that maintaining white women's honor underpinned real and symbolic European hegemony. Sexual transgression was thus an insult to “European, white, and colonial rule.”³² In Loviot's case, however, the paradigm is ambiguous, and subverts typical colonial and gendered structures. In the absence of white men, Loviot represented the dominant character, particularly in her cross-dressing. Further complicating the typography, the patriarchal protector in her story was a relatively passive Chinese man, and the pirates were depicted as savages in part because they transgressed Chinese as well as European codes. Written before colonial archetypes had become solidified, Loviot's account might be considered an allegorical representation of an undefined France, simultaneously threatened and aided by Chinese encounters.³³ The allegory might extend further, in ways that are sometimes contradictory. France was never more than a

³¹ Loviot, *Les Pirates Chinois*, 114-121.

³² Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 34.

³³ Linda Colley, discussing the case of Fiorentina Sale during Britain's Afghan captivity crisis in the 1840s, argues that a female narrator permits discussions of European weakness in ways not possible for supposedly virile conquerors – her gender excused her defeat, “while passages of self-sacrifice and courage appeared all the more impressive from a member of the weaker sex.” Colley, *Captives*, 369. This is an apt observation, but it ignores the potential for subversive reworkings of the gender order.

junior partner in Franco-British expeditions, but the nation's glory depended upon success in China. Loviot's courage in the face of danger might be read as a French claim to supremacy. In donning the British captain's clothing in the moment before his disappearance, Fanny was in effect also assuming his masculinity.

Of course, like France, Loviot could not act alone. Her survival among the pirates was highly dependent upon Than Sing's intervention, and she called him her "good genius."³⁴ With his composure and quick-witted negotiations with the pirates, he was able to save the Europeans aboard the ship on numerous occasions. As Loviot's protector, he permitted her to remain in a role coded as feminine; his asexuality, meanwhile, removed him as a threat to her virtue. It was only after it had become apparent that Loviot and Than Sing were capable of enduring on their own terms, by calmly and carefully manipulating their pirate captors, that colonizing masculinity reappeared. The British captain made up for his earlier cowardice, and returned with guns blazing to vanquish the pirates and rescue the damsel in distress.³⁵ France and Britain were again partners; the good Chinese were rewarded, the bad defeated, and gender norms were restored once Fanny returned to her family in France.

Loviot's story contains a confluence of incarceration, looming mistreatment, and European vulnerability. Yet Loviot did not succumb to the disreputable men who held her, due in large part to her ability to distinguish friend from foe. If overcoming the tribulations of captivity formed solid Frenchwomen, French discernment also informed the experience of captivity itself. *A Lady's Captivity* offered a striking example of the

³⁴ Loviot, *A Lady's Captivity*, 79.

³⁵ Than Sing's dual cultural competency makes him a rather problematic character. His Western attributes need not, however, efface his Chineseness; it is, in fact, his liminality that permits him to navigate both European and Chinese spaces, and come to Fanny's assistance.

possibility of forming productive relationships with certain types of Chinese by examining individual motivations. While the account may be read as a tale of European moral triumph over the corrupt elements of the Chinese population, it is also a lesson in the benefits of recognizing differences among them.

The specter of pirates cast a long shadow in Chinese history. The presence of nearly-autonomous pirate kingdoms had precipitated such cataclysmic Qing policies as forcibly moving the coastal population inland in the seventeenth century³⁶. Pirates' lively activity continued to stoke Qing anxieties well into the nineteenth century.³⁷ The captivity genre had also made earlier appearances, with white womanhood under threat nearly as soon as white manhood had arrived with force during the First Opium War. In its earlier manifestations, though, its victims were British, and they had lacked Loviot's perspicacity. At the height of the First Opium War, public attention throughout the British Empire was captivated by the story of Mrs. Anne Noble, the pregnant wife of a British sea captain, who was taken prisoner in September of 1840 after her ship capsized in quicksand en route to the British-held island of Chusan. Captain Noble and much of the crew drowned, along with the Nobles' five-month-old baby. When Anne Noble and her fellow survivors reached shore, they were apprehended by local officials, then chained and marched, in the rain, to Ningbo. Mrs. Noble was dressed in Chinese clothes, interrogated about her origins, and declared (in spite of her protests to the contrary) to be a relative of Queen Victoria. The Lieutenant Governor of Zhejiang province allegedly

³⁶ R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644-1796* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 310.

³⁷ See Wensheng Wang, *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates: Crisis and Reform in the Qing Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

wanted to send "the sister of the Barbarian Queen" to Beijing to be "cut into ten thousand pieces."³⁸

In a letter to an unnamed friend written from Ningbo prison, Noble claimed that she had been "betrayed" by the Chinese who had first given shelter to the shipwrecked party. Evoking the Iroquois gauntlet, she described being beaten, then led through narrow streets to the "savage cries" of throngs of onlookers. Someone snatched her wedding ring from her finger, symbolically severing her connection to her dead husband. She then faced further "savage threats." She was commanded to read texts in Chinese, which she could not do. She was taken to meet the local Mandarin's wife and daughters, who treated her "as an object of scorn," and exposed to "the public gaze of numberless spectators... derided and taunted by all around us." She was then separated from her fellow captives, placed in a cage, "just such as we should think a proper place to confine a wild beast in," with a chain around her neck attached to its cover. She was carried this way from "city to city, to suffer insults from the rabble." As her predecessors in the hands of foreign men had done, Anne Noble consigned her fate to God, writing, "in body, I was now very weak... but my spirit was strong in the Lord."³⁹

British Superintendent Elliott was appalled when he learned of Noble's captivity, and he went immediately to Ningbo to secure her release. While he was initially unsuccessful, Noble's treatment improved thereafter, and she was released in late

³⁸ Editor's introductory remarks, in *A letter by Anne Noble describing her sufferings at the hands of the Chinese after the wreck of the Kite*. Macao, March 23rd, 1841. 8°, 10057.cc.32, British Library. The letter itself is dated February 19, 1841; its introductory remarks indicate that it was published in Macao on March 23, 1841. Although the letter indicates that it was written in Ningbo Prison, it describes Noble's release, which took place in Chusan.

³⁹ Noble, *A Letter*, n.p, 10057.cc.32, British Library.

February.⁴⁰ A letter from Noble to an unnamed friend, supposedly written from Ningbo prison, was quickly published in Macao, and her account also appeared in the Chinese Repository. Noble had become so famous that her passage home was arranged with funds raised by public subscription.⁴¹

Anne Noble had not been alone in her captivity. John Lee Scott, a sailor aboard the *Kite*, published his own account of the ordeal, complete with illustrations of his cages and torments.⁴² Nor was this the only incident of its kind: British diplomatic efforts to rescue the *Kite* captives also focused on Peter Anstruther, an officer kidnapped while surveying Chusan. While Noble and Anstruther were ultimately released, other prisoners did not fare as well. Several of the *Kite* captives died in prison.⁴³ At the end of the war, as the British re-entered Chusan, they found a cage containing the severed heads of two British seamen and their Chinese associates. Their tormentor, too, ended badly; he committed suicide, first by trying to drown himself in a ritual pool in Yuyao, where Anne Noble had been displayed to jeering crowds, and finally by ingesting a fatal dose of opium.⁴⁴ However, it was the story of a British *woman* in distress that would captivate

⁴⁰ Hanes and Sanello, 112.

Haussmann observed that Noble's release coincided with the end of the First Opium War, but as that was not resolved until 1842, it is more likely that she was handed over following British victories in Guangzhou and Ningbo in January of 1841.

⁴¹ "Summary of Intelligence," *Bengal Catholic Herald*, Calcutta, October 16, 1841.

⁴² John Lee Scott, *Narrative of a Recent Imprisonment in China After the Wreck of the Kite*. London: W.H. Dalton, 1842.

⁴³ "The Loss of the Kite," *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, May 11, 1841. Originally published in the *Singapore Free Press*, February 25, 1841.

⁴⁴ Captain Stead, the mate of the *Lyra* (an opium clipper), comprador Bu Dingbang, and another man arrested for helping the British. Liam D'Arcy-Brown, *Chusan: the Opium Wars & the forgotten story of Britain's first Chinese island*. (Kenilworth, UK: Brandram, 2012), 147. See also Pottinger to Palmerston, October 2, 1841 and 2/10/1841 and November 16, 1841, FO17/54(92) and FO17/54(200), National Archives, Kew.

French audiences for the better part of two decades. It was Anne Noble's story, not her companions', which appeared in the French press, published in a geographical journal.⁴⁵

Noble's story would be revived when tensions reignited in the 1850s. She appeared as a cautionary tale in an account by Auguste Haussmann, the former chancellor of the French legation in China. Haussmann's *La Chine* aimed to foster a better understanding of the motives behind clashes among Chinese Imperial troops, Taiping insurgents, and allied Franco-British forces. Arguing that violence was a response to British aggression rather than a cultural proclivity, Haussmann hoped to soothe the tensions that threatened to shatter the partnerships that he and his countrymen had worked for nearly twenty years to build and to maintain. Of course, a focus on British failings gave Haussmann's work a distinctly jingoistic cast, and Anne Noble's captivity followed an oblique reference to the recent Indian Mutiny. Haussmann claimed to have seen her unfortunate caged parade for the entertainment of a "menacing and cruel" crowd; a lurid illustration by artist Auguste Borget accompanied the narrative.⁴⁶

Movement and Virility

Having heard that Chinese men of any wealth kept multiple women, and those in power were said to have "harems" throughout China, several commentators imagined that these included European women – but in rather unexpected manifestations. The captive, in one case, was not quite human. Robert-Héristel Gestin, a doctor aboard the vessel that

⁴⁵ "Naufrage du brick le Kite sur les côtes de la Chine, et relation de la captivité de son équipage et de ses passagers, écrits par Mme Anne Noble" (Traduit de l'anglais), in *Nouvelles Annales des Voyages et des sciences géographiques*. Tome 33 (Paris: Imprimerie de Fain et Thunot/ Librairie de la Société de Géographie et de la Société Royale des Antiquaires du Nord, 1841), 32.

⁴⁶ Haussmann, 9. Borget's sketches of Chinese life had also appeared in a Emile Forgues's travelogue-cum-novel *La Chine Ouverte*, and inspired his friend Honoré de Balzac's *La Chine et les Chinois*.

had brought French delegates to China, recounted one such meeting with the uncanny upon a visit to the Chinese official Pan Shicheng's country house. That the house was also several miles upriver from the European factories on Shamian Island, requiring a boat ride through winding canals past Guangzhou's Chinese quarter, certainly added to its allure.

A guide to China's treaty ports noted that Pan's garden was always open to foreigners, and "well worth visiting."⁴⁷ While it was enclosed – and therefore secure for both explorer and occupant – it was also accessible. While many of the visitors were playing the same game – keeping Pan close for personal and national gain – access to the more private chambers of his house were reserved for a select few. According to Gestin, Pan Shicheng's intelligence and commercial knowledge made him "well beloved of the French" Pan's fascination with French technology and glasswork made the feeling mutual.⁴⁸ Gestin was thus invited to explore freely on Pan's estate. As he wandered through the gardens, containing acres of ponds, plants, and pavilions, Gestin caught a brief glimpse of a group of giggling girls before they vanished behind the wall of a building. Noticing that its doors were open, Gestin ventured inside. Its deepest recesses were hidden behind a green curtain. Alone in the room, he began to peel the curtain back before stopping in surprise and horror. A young Englishwoman, "with blue eyes and a rosy complexion," smiled silently at him from behind the drape. She was clothed only in a thin robe. Upon further investigation, Gestin was shocked to discover that Pan

⁴⁷ Nicholas Belfield Dennys, William Frederick Mayers, and Charles King, *The Treaty Ports of China and Japan*. (London: Trubner and Co., and Hong Kong: A. Shortrede and Co., 1867), 147.

⁴⁸ Robert-Héristel Gestin, *Le Traité d'amitié et de commerce avec la Chine en 1844 et l'expédition de Basilan*. (Paris: Editions de la Nouvelle Revue, 1906), 8. See Theodore Parker, *Genealogy and biographical notes of John Parker of Lexington and his descendants: showing his earlier ancestry in America from Dea. Thomas Parker of Reading, Mass., from 1635 to 1893*. (Salem, MA: Higginson Book Co., 1893), 301.

Shicheng's "charming young woman" was actually "a doll of natural human proportions."⁴⁹ She was not quite captive – but she looked like one.

Another observer, Jules Itier, corroborated the story. A customs inspector and amateur photographer, Itier's daguerreotypes were reportedly the first taken in China; his subjects included Pan Shicheng and his mansion.⁵⁰ Itier, too, claimed to have encountered a group of giggling girls. He attempted to use his daguerretype box to keep them in his presence, but they dispersed too quickly for him to capture their image. Itier's description of the head of their household, whom he called *Paw-ssé-tchen*, suggested a jovial despot. Fond of women, he had eleven wives and numerous "elegant young women" in his household. He kept exotic pets (including a 20-foot boa), had multiple properties (one of which was leased out as the French factory), and a manservant who had studied with Western doctors. He also kept a "museum" of European curiosities, including a steam engine, prisms, models of ships, and a magic lantern. According to Itier, after Pan had met a "flower of Scotland, a delicious blonde with great blue eyes," he ordered one of those, too, offering 30,000 francs in return for a big, beautiful blonde. Unable to procure one, he had created himself a life-size model, with blue eyes, an aquiline nose, and an English complexion. Itier remarked that Pan Shicheng had breathed life into "this wretched Galatea," referencing a Greek myth about a statue of a goddess that was

⁴⁹ Gestin, *Le Traité d'amitié et de commerce avec la Chine*, 15-16.

⁵⁰ Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh, *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still Images in Historical Narratives*. Brill China Studies. (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2012), 7. See also Jules Alphonse Eugène Itier, *La maison de campagne de Pan-ssé-tchen, October 1844 Principal corps de logis de la maison de campagne de Pan Tsen Chen, grand mandarin de 1ère classe bouton rouge, plume de paon, au-dessus de Canton*, November 1844, daguerreotypes, Musée français de la photographie, 76.3000.9 and 76.3000.25, and China Network Television (English), "Earliest photos of China exhibited in Beijing," December 21, 2012. <http://english.cntv.cn/program/culturexpress/20121221/101661.shtml> Video accessed online, January 17, 2013.

animated by a man's desire.⁵¹ This simulacrum of a European woman would be yet another treasure for his menagerie, a place where he could contain the forces that were attempting to contain his nation. However, unlike the other objects there, the inanimate doppelganger of a European woman shocked the French men who saw it. Gestin believed that the doll was "an appetizer, which served as a prelude" to the real European woman who might someday be kept there.⁵²

The accounts positioned the French as both privileged guests of the Chinese and key observers of treaty port politics. The Frenchmen's aptitude for catching stolen glimpses of Chinese women reverberated in their ability to locate and to gaze upon captive British femininity, while the constrained circumstances of the British women contrasted vividly with the Frenchmen's acuity and freedom of movement. According to Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, the convergence of spatiality, movement, and embodiment is central to understanding imperial structures of power: managing the unruly intimacies of "*mobile*" imperial subjects was both purpose and function of imperial authority.⁵³ Whether in barely-colonial places like China or those with well-established imperial administrations, establishing authority over colonial subjects was an elusive goal. Colonial systems attempted to govern the bodies of colonized and colonizer alike, but it was the bodies of the subaltern that drew the most attention, with their power to "capture and elude" the gaze of white observers.⁵⁴ While their schema of controlling colonizer and subjugated colonial is somewhat reductive, it ultimately exposes the underlying anxieties of the architects of empire. Because the states of liberty and

⁵¹ Itier, *Journal d'un voyage en Chine*, 44-45.

⁵² Gestin, 16.

⁵³ Introduction, Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds. *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 5.

⁵⁴ Ballantyne and Burton, eds, *Moving Subjects*, 8-10.

captivity are mutually constituted, however, to gaze upon – to have one’s gaze “captured” – exposed the subject to subjugation by the very object he desired. Europeans perceived confinement in treaty ports, cages, and ships as evidence that the danger to their persons and to their project was not simply posed by internecine conflict or rebels in the countryside. Limits on their movement were profoundly linked to limits of their prowess.

Because unfettered mobility was assumed to be the province of white imperial masculinity, negotiating it was essential to the French. As both France and Britain envisioned expanding their presence in China, whoever could successfully penetrate the interior would be considered capable of nascent hegemony. Limits on European mobility, conversely, could be read as signs of continuing Chinese power. Along with caged prisoners and missionaries on the *cangue*, the Scottish doll represented the limits of European mobility. However, Gestin and Itier’s focus upon captive, inanimate British femininity effectively rearticulated the problem into one of national rather than racial virility. As the title of Burton and Ballantyne’s book suggests, their moving *subject* is conscious, with agency, desire, or action. The British doll-woman had none of that. She could not move and could not wish to. As Anthony Ferguson theorizes, it is the simultaneous verisimilitude and "mute subjugation" of the doll that make her desirable; removed from reality, she can exist only as an object of desire.⁵⁵

However, further analysis reveals other potential layers of meaning in the inert Scotswoman. First, while life-like toy figures had a long history, their mass production in the form of a bourgeois European woman had only recently begun. These early dolls were most often in the form of a mature woman, and associated with the place of their

⁵⁵ Anthony Ferguson, *The Sex Doll: A History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010), 5.

manufacture: France. Mistaking a life-size doll for a woman was a trope that appeared frequently in contemporary artistic production; Juliette Peers remarks that aside from evident visual cues, the doll's "limited intellect, passivity, [and] frivolity" intentionally denoted the feminine. Peers also remarks that fashion dolls became almost obligatory accessories in upper class European homes.⁵⁶ Given Pan Shicheng's business associations and purported Europhilic interests, it is possible that his doll was meant to display the status that a man of his means would have in Europe. However, in signaling the doll's physiognomic difference from its owner – her blue eyes, blonde hair, and porcelain skin – and emphasizing its surrogate status, Itier and Gestin divulged a latent discomfort at the prospect of Pan Shicheng's future physical access to a real white woman. For all of the differences that they imagined between dynamic French actors and their obtuse or impassive British counterparts, their perceptions of European physical alterity from the Chinese also generated a sense of common whiteness, with all Western bodies equally subject to the embodied experience of captivity.

Fanny Loviot's narrative was similarly discomfited, as it depicted the lot of *all* women in China in terms of feminine, restricted space. European writings on China almost universally mentioned the seclusion of Chinese women of class, observing that the bound feet of these "lovely girls with an air of fantasy" effectively chained them to the domestic hearth.⁵⁷ Just as Chinese women remained at home or confined to curtained sedan chairs, however, the movements of Europeans, and especially of European women, were tightly controlled. Jules Itier had noted that the American factory was separated from the Pearl River by an enclosed garden. It was the only place for women to get fresh

⁵⁶ Juliette Peers, *The Fashion Doll from Bébé Jumeau to Barbie*. (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), 9, 41-5, 51.

⁵⁷ Gravière, *Voyage en Chine*, 280-281.

air, "as they cannot traverse the streets freely."⁵⁸ Loviot described a monotonous daily routine for South China's foreign women, with physical confinement enforced upon all classes in ways that it would not have been in Europe or the United States. They were "without any type of pleasure, no public sphere, nothing but an interiorized life. Carriages, dances, sights, gatherings..." there were none. Unable to go out walking, some women resorted to brief boat excursions – a type of confinement in and of itself.⁵⁹

Loviot did not elaborate on the rationale behind making islands of these women, but diplomatic sources explain that they were kept apart to avoid offending Chinese mores, as well as to preserve them from the eyes of the Chinese populace.⁶⁰ Practice, however, ultimately subverted intention: whether or not they "went native," most European writers imagined that women who remained in the Orient faced the same fate as their Chinese equivalents. Loviot's ordeal had fashioned her European identity; returning to home and family immediately afterward, she could retain her French character. Others were not so lucky. In another case, a French woman who had dared to marry a Chinese man discovered that her spouse, a Christian, had another wife in Macao. Miss Liègois, having anticipated the hardships of a hybrid marriage, was devastated to find herself in the position of the concubine. She petitioned the French Foreign Ministry to investigate her husband's bigamy, and therefore expedite her divorce.⁶¹ Even

⁵⁸ Itier, *Journal*, 11.

⁵⁹ Loviot, *Les Pirates Chinois*, 73.

⁶⁰ Correspondence from shortly after the establishment of Guangzhou as a Treaty Port proposed building enclosed bridges between the various foreign factories to prevent Euro-American "females" from walking about and exposing themselves to the Chinese populace, "which is at total variance with ideas of decorum and propriety amongst the better orders of Chinese, and which...subjected them to the hootings and insulting indecencies of the rabble." Sir Henry Pottinger to the Earl of Aberdeen, Macao, December 20, 1842, L/PARL/2/92, India Record Office, China Papers, British Library.

⁶¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Versailles, to M. Dillon, Vice-Consul of France in Macao. 21 February 1872, CADN.

Catherine de Bourboulon, whose powerful march through Guangzhou and to Beijing should have exempted her from these restraints, seems to have been affected by her time in Asia. In her more public guise, she would inspire French forces at the front. She would later undertake a journey from China to Russia, every bit the interpid reporter and explorer.⁶² At home, on the other hand, she was given to fits of temper, and began to torture one of her servants. The maid fled the house and sought refuge in Hong Kong's *Asile de la Sainte Enfance*. The house for abandoned Chinese children fostered the homeless French girl until she could be repatriated at the French Legation's expense.⁶³

From Martyrdom to Murder

While nations experienced danger metaphorically through specific individuals, the widespread and intense rebellions that shook the Qing dynasty in the eighteen fifties potentially threatened wider swathes of China's European population. This added source of trouble began to catalyze a reconfiguration of Sino-French and Franco-European relations, showing emerging tensions between religious and secular manifestations of the French presence. Imperiled missionaries were old hat. However, the fact that those missionaries were among a larger set of imperiled French people, including diplomats, traders, and travelers, some of them women led to a perspective very different from the one that had informed martyrdom earlier in the century. In the mid-eighteen fifties,

⁶² Bourboulon, *L'Asie cavalière: De Shang-hai à Moscou, 1860-1862*, ed. Achille Poussielgue (Paris: Editions Phébus, 1991). First published as "Relation de voyage de Shang-hai à Moscou, par Pékin, la Mongolie et la Russie asiatique, rédigée d'après les notes de M. de Bourboulon ... et de Mme de Bourboulon," *Le Tour du monde*, vols. ix-xi, 1864-65, Reprint edition Paris: Phébus libretto, 2008.

⁶³ The *Asile's* head mother, Sister Louise, contacted the French ambassador, Baron Gros, who secured a passport and transport funds for D'Amiens. CADN, Pékin Série A, 12 bis, Hong Kong, Soeur Louise to M. le Baron Gros, April 17, 1858; Pékin Série A 11, Letter from A. E. Vaucher, Vice Consul of France in Hong Kong, to Count de Kleczkowski, Secretary of the Legation of France in Macao, April 17, 1858; September 1858, Liste des personnes don't les passeports ont été visés au Vice Consulat de France à Hong Kong.

French officials believed that they and their compatriots faced murder rather than happy martyrdom. If affect-driven discernment could work well in relationships with key individuals, applying it to whole armies in the complexity of simultaneous internal rebellions and conflict with the Qing state was a daunting prospect.

As rebel forces gathered strength under the banner of a heterodox form of Christianity, troubling reports emerged from the China's mission fields, reminding French Catholics that their national and religious foothold was far from secure. Monsignor Danicourt, Apostolic Vicar of Zhejiang and Jiangxi, wrote of "savage hordes" who had massacred one hundred thousand men, women, and children in a Jiangxi village. "After the slaughter, they eat the human flesh, and they are frequently seen carrying human entrails on their shoulders, as if they were coming from the butcher's." While the rebels prayed at meals, no Catholic had encountered prayers like theirs.⁶⁴

It was understood that the men were Taiping rebels.

⁶⁴ E.J. Danicourt, *Vie de Mgr. Danicourt de la Congrégation de la Mission, évêque d'Antiphelles, vicaire apostolique de Tche-kiang et du Kiang-sy* (Paris, Librairie Poussielgue Frères, 1889), 322-4. [In Prescott Clarke and JS Gregory, eds, *Western Reports on the Taiping: A Selection of Documents*. (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1982), 177.]



Les rebelles.

Figure 2: Auguste Borget, *Les Rebelles*, 1858, in Haussmann, 73.

The Taiping insurgency had begun five years earlier. It drew upon Christian and apocalyptic imagery, and aimed, in Jonathan Spence's words, to "make things new."⁶⁵ It was not of Western invention, but Spence argues that the West brought in an "aura" of change, including Christianity, that shaped the insurrection against the Qing imperial government. Stephen R. Platt argues that because the Qing Empire was both connected to the rest of the world through trade and entangled in France's and Britain's wars for empire, European intervention before, during, and after cannot be disconnected from the Taiping insurgency.⁶⁶ The rebellion had been on the European radar for several years. At first, as they had during the first Opium War, French commentators like Plenipotentiary Minister Alphonse de Bourboulon maintained that their superior knowledge of the Chinese mind would illuminate an as yet unclear situation, "the understanding of which is

⁶⁵ Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), xxvii.

⁶⁶ Stephen R. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), xxi.

vital to so many interests.” Yet the discord also brought out the a latent French civilizing mission that had long been simmering in the Catholic evangelizing project, but whose strident language had been buried politely in the language of partnership during attempts to assert French difference in relations with China in the eighteen forties. Alphonse de Bourboulon also wrote that the Taiping leaders, possessed of a “moral force which gives them great superiority over their adversaries,” might accomplish “a complete transformation, at once religious, social and political,” in line with French aspirations for the country.⁶⁷

Évariste Huc, a Lazarist missionary, also welcomed the rebellion as a harbinger of greater change. Although he expressed dismay at the “supposed” Christianity of the Taiping rebels, whose syncretic religious underpinnings did not prevent assaults on Chinese and European alike, Huc assured his readers that “the whole of the Chinese nation would finally decide to embrace Christianity,” noting the long-standing (if partial and contradictory) success in diffusing Christianity into Taiping ideology, in Chinese Muslims’ belief in the unity of God, and in the supposedly widespread reading of Christian texts among the literate.⁶⁸

French concern over China’s Christian deliverance likely reflected tumult in the metropole. With France’s return to an ostensibly Catholic-friendly monarchy in 1852, French clergy imagined the threat to their Church moving from anti-clericalism at home to anti-Christian enemies abroad, and particularly in the Orient. Stories like those of Mgr. Danicourt demonstrated the failure of Christian missionaries to communicate their message to potential Chinese converts. To Danicourt's audience, the Taiping banquet was

⁶⁷ Report by A. de Bourboulon, Archives des Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance Politique de Chine, t. 144, ff. 325-6. [In Clarke and Gregory, *Western Reports on the Taiping*, 90.]

⁶⁸ Évariste Huc, *L'Empire Chinois: Souvenirs* (Paris: Librairie de Gaume Frères, 1860), vii-viii.

clearly an unholy reimagining of the Eucharist, and their prayers called upon a god that had never been worshipped in France. In spite of Huc's optimism, a renewed wave of anti-Christian persecutions in China in the midst of the Taiping civil war underscored French missionaries' precarious position there. An 1853 Catholic educational publication on the history of French missions had remarked upon the dialectic element of evangelization in China. There was a "singular contrast" between "the benevolence with which missionaries are tolerated at the [Imperial] court in Beijing" and the cruel treatment of Christians in the provinces, "where professing the Catholic faith is pursued as a crime of high treason" by those who remained loyal to the Qing.⁶⁹ The book, meant for schoolchildren, contextualized contemporary religious persecution in China within a longer history of Christian toil and martyrdom. Rather than stressing failure, however, its illustrations of naked Indians and of priests burned at the stake and eaten by cannibals in the Americas situated the Chinese missions within a genealogy of hazardous but productive mission work. The bloodiest mission fields in the Americas had, after all, eventually won high numbers of converts.

For missionaries, imitation of their predecessors provided a template for the conversion and transformation of continents, and they consciously created a link between tradition and a hallowed future. The renewed persecutions of the mid-1850s positioned French Catholic missionaries as a modern-day vanguard in a line that stretched from the first Jesuit missionaries in China in the sixteenth century. In 1853, Jean Perboyre (whose 1840 martyrdom in China had shaken small-town France) was one of thirty saints and missionaries included in a multi-volume collection of Christians whose acts had made

⁶⁹ Missions Générales, *Histoire de Missions: Histoires curieuses et édifiantes, d'après les lettres édifiantes des missionnaires. Missions d'Asie Mineure, du Japon, d'Arménie, de Chine, et d'Amérique* (Paris: Imprimerie de J. Claye et Cie, 1853), 36.

them citizens of "the Celestial Zion."⁷⁰ The following year, as prayers for the mutual military and missionary success "throughout the Orient" echoed from pulpits throughout France, an instructional tome made the case for sainthood for Bishop Gabriel Dufresse. Beheaded in 1815, as one of sixty-six Chinese and European "servants of God" who had died for their faith in China, he had been declared "Venerable" by Pope Gregory XVI, officially putting him on the path to sainthood.⁷¹ They had taken up the cross of Francis Xavier and Matteo Ricci, and their spiritual sons would carry on in the name of God and country.⁷²

In 1856, China gave France another martyr in the form of Auguste Chapdelaine. His life had seemed to follow the ebb and flow of the French Empire, and his death was as intertwined with internal Chinese politics as it was with international concerns. He was born in Normandy on January 6, 1814, as Napoleon's first reign was coming to an end. He went to seminary in Coutances, and was ordained in 1843, while French agents were negotiating their own commercial treaty with China. He left for the missions in 1851, as civil war began to destabilize China's interior. The civil war forced him to remain for two years in Hong Kong, unable to "penetrate" the interior.⁷³ After trouble with brigands and crooked customs agents, he arrived in Yaoshan, Guangxi province on the feast of St.

Francis Xavier (December 3rd). According to hagiographical works published in Paris

⁷⁰ Bibliothèque Chrétienne et Morale, *Gabriel Perboyre*, 141.

⁷¹ Abbé Rousseau, *Notice sur la vie de Gabriel-Taurin Dufresse* (Thiers: Imprimerie de Cuissac, 1854).

⁷² The extent to which national and religious imperatives overlapped is the subject of some scholarly disagreement. While J.P. Daughton's influential work argues that missionaries often came into conflict with secular colonial authorities, I tend to agree with respected scholars of China like John King Fairbank, who argue that missionaries assisted in and were aided by imperial expansion in Asia. See Daughton, *An Empire Divided*; Introduction to *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John King Fairbank. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

⁷³ L'abbé de Bouclon, *Vie d'Auguste Chaptelaine, Prêtre du diocèse de Coutances, de la congrégation des Missions étrangères, Martyrisé en Chine, le 4 mars 1856, avec deux autres chrétiens* (Paris, Imp. Bailly, D'Ivry, & Cie, 1856), 30.

following his execution, he was denounced only ten days later. The local mandarin let him go after verifying that he was not one of the recent "disruptive elements" who had "roused the people and given birth to this large [Taiping] revolution" under the "pointless pretext of preaching."⁷⁴ He came to be aided by two Chinese converts, Laurent Pé-Mou, a recent convert, and Agnès Tsaou-Kong, the orphaned daughter of a Christian doctor. Laurent and Agnès would join Chapdelaine in his trials, which arose again after the shunned pagan wife of a new convert filed a complaint to her father and to the mandarin about her husband's reproaches. They believed that this false new religion was offensive to their ancestors, and to the divinities that protected the Celestial Empire. With neighboring provinces in "all-out revolt," the mandarin decided not to wait for a tribunal to convene. He sent his militia to Yaoshan.

One of Chapdelaine's biographers says simply that Laurent was beheaded; another has him arriving with a cortege of Christians to demand the release of their leader.⁷⁵ In any case, he died with Chapdelaine. Meanwhile, Agnès was questioned about the nature of her relationship with Chapdelaine, and her interrogators were nonplussed with her indignant insistence that priests were virgins. Given the choice between apostasy and death, she chose the same fate as her "master" – the "cage of torment." After one hundred blows on the cheek and three hundred on the back with a leather whip, they were made to kneel on iron chains, then suspended by the head with their legs just touching the ground.[See figure 3.2] Agnès died after four days. Chapdelaine was beaten again. His

⁷⁴ Bouclon 47-8

⁷⁵ Bouclon, 73; L'abbé Zéphyrin Guillemin, évêque de Cybistra. *Relation du martyre de M. Auguste Chapdelaine, missionnaire apostolique de la congrégation des Missions étrangères* (Paris: Librairie d'Etienne Giraud/ Imprimerie de P.A. Bourdier et Cie, 1858).

refusal to cry out was taken as a sign of witchcraft, and onlookers threw the blood of a dog at his battered body. He expired two days later.⁷⁶

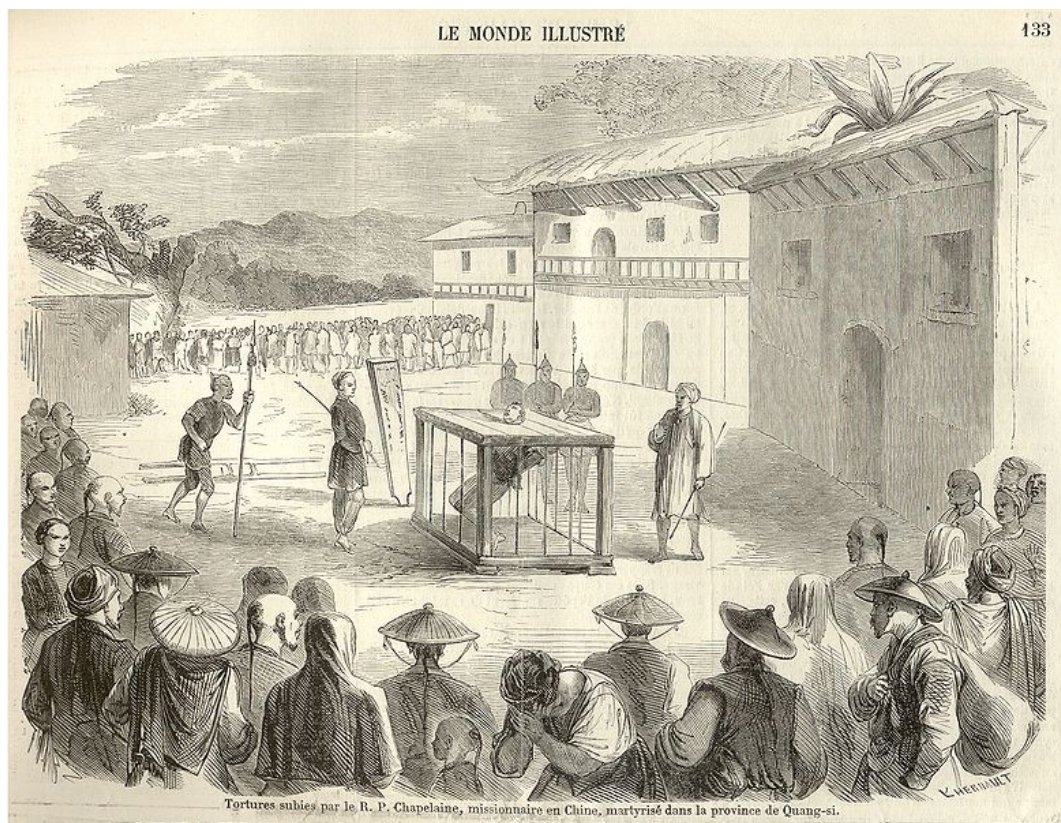


Figure 3: “Tortures subies par le R.P. Chapdelaine, missionnaire en Chine, martyrisé dans la province de Quang-si,” *Le Monde Illustré*, February 27, 1858, 133. Gallica/BnF, NUMP-

The churchmen charged with memorializing Chapdelaine hoped that this martyrdom would both renew French faith and move Chinese hearts. However, their

⁷⁶ Bouclon, 75, 81; Guillemin, 3, 7-8, 10. Bouclon lists Chapdelaine's date of death as March 4th, but the more commonly accepted date is February 29, 1856.

treatment of the episode extended beyond the trials of the priest himself. Agnès, whose very name evoked the sacrificial lamb that Christ himself had embodied, became a new incarnation of the Virgin Mother. She was eulogized as "the benevolent instructor of the poor, the mother of orphans, the support of all those who suffer, and the consoler of all tears."⁷⁷ Guillemin extolled her "soft, modest" virtue, and praised her for being "always content with her lot... she wanted nothing more than to win souls for God and to guide them to the path of salvation. Thus she prepared herself... to become a heroine of the faith, and to fight the fight of the Lord."⁷⁸ Laurent was also commended for his faith and steadfast loyalty. In addition to the poignant lesson that their hallowed deaths provided to believers, the figures of Chapdelaine, Agnès, and Laurent operated on a symbolic level. Priest, catechist and convert illustrated the triple nature of God, while "China, lately closed to the efforts of the Catholic Apostolate, has been returned to it; it will be for the third time that Christianity retakes possession of a land many times watered by the sweat of its learned workers and fertilized by the blood of its martyrs."⁷⁹ The sacred number three seemed to give weight to this third wave of evangelization, echoed in the name of the Catholic sovereign, Napoleon III, and coinciding with the third manifestation of French empire.⁸⁰

The chaste love and harmonious relationships within this Sinicized trinity served as further evidence of the ascendant nature of the French and Catholic mission in China, even as it shook the foundations of the commercial and diplomatic establishment. On one hand, the martyrdoms were evidence of extreme endangerment. On the other, the deaths

⁷⁷ Bouclon, 1, 64-5.

⁷⁸ Guillemin, 13.

⁷⁹ Nève, *Etablissement et destruction de la première chrétienté dans la Chine*.

⁸⁰ The overseas empire of the Bourbons, plus two Bonapartist revivals.

of priests allowed those in France to envision further involvement in China.

Evangelization called upon a combination of jingoism and faith to encourage French congregations' continued support – both moral and financial – for the Chinese missions. According to Church literature, French priests worked in concert with a multitude of Laurents and Angèses to advocate for the poor, the orphaned, and the weak, unlike the British Protestant "Bible missionary," who put domination before service and believed his work was done when his bibles were distributed. With the "blood of martyrs having preceded" these "vigorous soldier[s] of the faith," the Catholic mission might extend to all the corners of Asia.⁸¹ Emphasizing the dangers faced by missionaries and their converts even as they elaborated their potential success required a delicate balance of exoticism and familiarity; the sermons, catechisms and circulars intended for parishioners throughout France thus translated unfamiliar personages and cultural practices into familiar imagery, with public execution evoking Christ on the cross and Chinese converts positioned as the Virgin, Eve, Judas, or Mary Magdalene. This tactic, deliberate or not, had a dual effect. First, by casting French priests and their young, usually female converts in the molds of recognizable figures rendered the stories intelligible to their Christian, European audience. Second, it connected on a spiritual level the missionaries, their flock, and all of their predecessors in Christian history, down to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ himself, and therefore allowed China to be written into the genealogy of the Catholic Church.

In many ways, experiencing the crucible of the Chinese interior was a sacral re-enactment of empire. Its conversions, captives, and martyrdoms evoked almost two

⁸¹ Bouclon, 89-91.

millennia of Church history, and borrowed heavily from the most vivid and arguably most fruitful set of colonial encounters – North America. Taking a page from the priests and settlers who had found Indian contact and frontier crossing so compelling in New France and British North America, French agents used recognizable narrative forms to shape descriptions of their encounters. While it did convey information in a way that was meaningful both to the authors and to their audience, this tactic did not make the interactions static or reduce them to imperial tropes. Mimicry of the conversion of the New World was not merely a re-application of supposedly proven methods, or a poignant reminder of better times in the life of the French Empire. It was a catalytic call and response, a magic mirror that used memory to fuel new and dynamic action. That it was highly teleological also allowed it to fit neatly into both the Christian and the Revolutionary eschatologies that were part of France's past, and were meant to define its future.

For the devout, Chapdelaine's physical restraint and death were requisite steps for the greater glory of Christianity. However, for French diplomats, Chapdelaine's death both destabilized and authorized a continued French presence in China. In a moment that brought together religion, fears of piracy, and problems of European unity, the Qing seizure of a British ship (the *Arrow*) in 1856 quickly escalated into a fight over broader treaty obligations. French forces had at first attempted to remain neutral as the British crew of the *Arrow* was accused of piracy, but Chapdelaine's death persuaded them avenge their martyred son by joining the British in their bombardment of Chinese cities. The Arrow War, bleeding into the Second Opium War, seemed to further endanger the

Europeans who were caught at its edges, contrary to its objectives of securing a more stable position for the West in China.

The outbreak of war saw Sino-European relationships disintegrate rapidly. In 1857, rumors circulated that a Chinese baker was plotting to eliminate Canton's European population by poisoning their bread. His alleged attempt at ethnic cleansing could not be proven, but he disappeared shortly thereafter. Consular officials feared that he might have been a victim of vigilante violence; they were more concerned, however, that the story might cause panic in the European concessions.⁸² The story seems to have started downriver. *The History of the Laws and Courts of Hong Kong* describes a case in which Cheong Alum, owner of the *Esing*, the largest bakery in the colony, was accused of baking ten pounds of arsenic-infused bread and delivering it to Western customers on January 15, 1857. He was apprehended after fleeing to Macao, and tried and acquitted in criminal court. However, a number of prominent figures, including Hong Kong's governor John Bowring and all of his family, had suffered intensely after eating the bread. They brought a civil case against Cheong, who had violated common law by selling "unwholesomeable" bread. Cheong was re-arrested as a "suspicious person," but escaped to avoid paying a \$1,010 fine.⁸³

Fears of poisoned bread were but one example of deteriorating relations between European and Chinese, rebels and imperial loyalists alike. After a British bombardment

⁸² Extra to the *Hong Kong Register*, 15 January 1857.

⁸³ James William Norton-Kyshe, *The history of the laws and courts of Hongkong: tracing consular jurisdiction in China and Japan and including parliamentary debates, and the rise, progress, and successive changes in the various public institutions of the colony from the earliest period to the present time, Volume 1* (London: T. Fisher Unwin and HK: Noronha and Co., 1898), 423-4, 434, 440-42. In his correspondence from 1857-1858, George Wingrove Cooke insisted that the bread had not been poisoned; sceptics simply needed to eat half a pound to "terminate all discussion. George Wingrove Cooke. *China: Being "The Times" Special Correspondence from China in the Years 1857-1858* (First published London: G. Routledge & Co., 1858. Reprint Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1972), 55.

of Canton in 1857, newspapers reported that some kind Chinese had come to the aid of an injured British officer; the writer exhorted his compatriots to remember the good of the Chinese populace. Yet the following day, according to the *Hong Kong Register*, Chinese were looting the factories and dismembering the corpses of Europeans who had been felled by friendly fire. An editorial that accompanied the piece asserted that the European powers must consider themselves at war “not only with the Mandarins, but with the people of China.”⁸⁴

Rebel attacks also continued, and approached ever more closely to European residences in China's coastal cities. The Taiping rebellion operated concurrently with several other insurrections, including the Miao and Nian uprisings, clan wars in Guangdong province, and *Tiandihui* (Triad) insurrections. While the various rebellions had distinct goals, their anti-Qing overtones brought together participants with common cause. The intricacy and fluidity of rebel loyalties may have been lost on most Westerners, but the their threat to stability was not. The dread that they provoked seemed to further fracture carefully cultivated treaty port alliances. In Canton, journalist George Wingrove Cooke reported that Howqua, the most recent in a long line of Hong merchants, had pleaded with Ye Ming-chen (葉名琛), Viceroy of Guangzhou and Guangxi, to yield to the rebels. Cook did not specify which ones. Ye refused. According to Cooke, Canton's residents believed Ye was deliberately bringing the rebels' wrath upon their heads because "Yeh's [sic] first wife and all her kin were murdered by the Cantonese, and that in long past days he vowed to be revenged by the destruction of their city – a fiction by no means improbable so far as the murder is concerned, for the

⁸⁴ The *Hong Kong Register*, 16 January 1857.

Cantonese would murder anyone."⁸⁵ British commentators had little love for Ye. Cooke called him an "inert force" who symbolized "old, obese China."⁸⁶ He was known for "exceptionally severe," even counterproductive means of dealing with restive elements in his provinces, including the summary execution of the families of suspected rebels. Even a hundred years later, historian Douglas Hurd dismissed him as a "fat sour... man with a taste for astrology."⁸⁷

Multiple threats and fluctuating, uncertain alliances sometimes made for strange compromises. Foreign ships were forbidden from exporting Chinese workers, and Europeans required special permission to enter Canton (Guangzhou).⁸⁸ The Arrow War's battles with the French and the British had all but destroyed the Qing Imperial fleet, but Canton's residents could hear the sound of approaching Taiping artillery. Cooke was in favor of a European military push; he worried that if European forces didn't take the city, the rebels would, and "we shall then have no one to fight with and no one to treat with." However, after such a hypothetical action, Cooke advocated propping up the "Tartar dynasty" in return for the commercial rights it guaranteed to Europeans. Divisions among Western nations could trump the European-Qing-Rebel triangulation. "We must occupy Canton at once," Cooke insisted, "... before the French and Americans come to further complicate the situation."⁸⁹ Meanwhile, Auguste Haussmann, the former Chancellor of

⁸⁵ Cooke, *China: Being "The Times" Special Correspondence*, 50-1.

⁸⁶ Cooke, vi and 50-1. The Howqua mentioned by Cooke was a descendant and namesake of Wu Bingjian (伍秉鑑), head of the famous Howqua merchant house, who died in 1843.

⁸⁷ Douglas Hurd, *The Arrow War: An Anglo-Chinese Confusion 1856-1860* (London: Collins, 1967), 17-8.

⁸⁸ CADN, Pékin Série A 11: Letter from A. R. Johnston, Acting Vice Consul for France, to Alphonse de Bourboulon, French Plenipotentiary Minister for France in China, Amoy, January 28, 1858, containing "Regulations for the Entry of Foreigners into the City of Canton." 12 bis: Macao, Letter from M. de Bourboulon to M. de Montigny, consul in Shanghai, January 19, 1858.

⁸⁹ Cooke, 51-2.

the French Legation in China, wondered whether cooperation with the Taiping insurgents might have been more favorable to European interests.⁹⁰

At the same time, the upheaval led many of the French and British in China to regroup along racial lines, and to see their Chinese counterparts in terms of ethnic division. It was probably not surprising when British forces captured the much-maligned Ye Ming-chen and imprisoned him at Fort William, Calcutta, where he would die within a year. However, the downfall of Qiying, the Manchu general who had overseen the treaty negotiations of the 1840s, was an unexpected and particularly acute symptom of the growing ethno-racial divide. Qiying had occupied a special status in Western eyes: the French and British officials who had negotiated with him in the 1840s saw him as an astute diplomat. He was also willing to overlook minor divisions and ignore small missteps in etiquette in order to preserve bonds among nations. In one anecdote that circulated among Westerners in the mid-eighteen fifties, Qiying had been "uncomfortable" when he was obligated to meet the wives of the British and French plenipotentiary ministers in 1844. However, he was charming in their presence, and they were "delighted" to meet him.⁹¹ Because they trusted him, French and British agents specifically requested that he be sent to hammer out the terms of a new treaty in Tianjin in 1858. Once he arrived, however, he was not welcomed. The European allies claimed to have found a damning document among Ye Ming-chen's papers, which allegedly showed Qiying's anti-Western sentiments. He tried to prove himself worthy of their confidence, and gave in to their demands for legations in Beijing, unrestricted navigation, and religious liberty. In doing so, however, Qiying ignored his orders from the Qing court. He

⁹⁰ Haussmann, 1.

⁹¹ According to George Wingrove Cooke, who claims to be quoting from a memorial sent to the Qing Emperor. Cooke, xiv.

fled the city, but was apprehended. Charged with disobedience, he was ordered to commit suicide.⁹² Qiying and Ye had adopted very different strategies in dealing with the West. Yet both statesmen met similar fates in attempting to negotiate uneasy relationships to different and fluctuating poles of European and Qing authority. Their quiet captivity between polarizing worlds aligned the two men, and presaged their physical internment, ignominious exile, and death.

As Chinese and Western partnerships fell apart, the war helped to cement the shaky Anglo-French alliance that had emerged during the Crimean War. When the allies used the ongoing Taiping rebellion as a "window of opportunity" to attack a distracted Qing Empire, the British command under Lord Elgin attempted to make the French "participate as belligerents," if only to sidestep complaints about British domination and trade monopolies. A French ship was chosen as the location for representatives from France, Britain, Russia, and the United States to meet as they launched an expedition to take the Dagu forts at the mouth of the Bai River near Beijing in 1858.⁹³

Partnership, Continued and Interrupted

In spite of the sometimes tragic retrenchment in the late eighteen fifties, there was still some elasticity in individual relationships. French narratives tended to focus broadly on danger and survival; at times, this could flatten all Chinese into a single category ("dangerous"), but at others, it demanded greater flexibility in distinguishing friend from foe. Even after the troubled conclusion to the relationship among Ye Mingchen, Qiying, and the Western powers, French diplomats again fostered amicable

⁹² Hummel, 130-4, 904-5.

⁹³ Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 26-7.

relations with particular Chinese authorities. Monsieur de Montigny, the Consul General at Shanghai, and Ye Concun, *Taotai* (Superintendent) of Hangzhou, carried on a notably cordial correspondence. Though their interactions took place primarily within the bounds of diplomatic ritual, their correspondence was marked by a relative absence of ceremonial language, and the warmth with which Montigny conducted his business with Ye was markedly different from the heat of his dealings with the previous *Taotai*, Gong, in the 1840s and early 1850s.⁹⁴ Writing to the *Taotai* to express his pleasure at the signing of the Treaty of Tianjin in 1858, Montigny echoed Qiying's missives when expressed his wish for "ten thousand years of peace and friendship" in an idiom more Chinese than French.⁹⁵ The Consul General emphasized his goodwill with the gift of a case of French wine and cake. The *Taotai* responded with a relatively informal note of thanks, and sent Montigny a selection of local products. Ye noted that he looked forward to chatting with Montigny at their next meeting.⁹⁶

Ye and Montigny's warm exchanges might seem impossible in light of Raphael Israeli's depictions of hard-nosed French consuls waging a war of words which, combined with French and British military might, crushed Qing resistance to European demands in China.⁹⁷ However, Ye and Montigny shared social positions and common goals: during the period of their correspondence, Montigny was facing the specter of attacks by the Taiping forces who were approaching Shanghai, and who would ultimately

⁹⁴ Bergère, *Shanghai*, 11-12.

⁹⁵ Letter from Consul de Montigny to the Honorable Taotai of Hangchow, January 1859 (?), CADN.

⁹⁶ Undated letters between Consul de Montigny and Yé Concun, Taotai de Hung-tchéou-fou (possibly early 1859), Pékin Série A 12, CADN.

⁹⁷ Israeli, Raphael. "Diplomacy of Contempt: The French Consuls and the Mandarins in Nineteenth-Century China," *Modern Asian Studies*, 26.2 (1992).

surround the city.⁹⁸ In contrast, Ye occupied a legitimate position of authority, and thanks to the Tianjin treaty, one that was officially (if only temporarily) friendly to Europeans. He thus represented stability and continuity. As his government was threatened by the Taiping, he was also a likely French ally in that fight. The genial relationship between Montigny and Superintendant Ye also indicates that the two men simply enjoyed one another's company. For the Frenchman, who was for several years his nation's sole, lonely representative in Shanghai, Ye was a mirror in whom he saw his own refinement, taste, and wavering courage reflected. Although their nations had been at war before 1858 and would be again almost immediately, the men found common ground during the brief interlude of peace.

Although Montigny is most often portrayed as a tenacious defender of French interests, letters to his superiors reveal that his support of the French position in China was hardly fearless. While his vulnerability is almost entirely absent from the historical record, peace was simply not a normal state of affairs in Montigny's Shanghai, and he began to buckle under the strain.⁹⁹ In June, he received alarming reports from nearby Ningbo. Rebels were demanding that the city pay a ransom "under penalty of attack."¹⁰⁰ He began to complain often about his and his wife's ill health, and he became frantic when Taiping rebel troops surrounded his city and threatened to overrun the foreign concessions, whose European residents already feared anti-imperial reprisals from their long-term Chinese neighbors and from a restive populace outside the city. It was not only

⁹⁸ Letter from Montigny to Bourboulon, June 5, 1858, CADN.

The picture that emerges from his personal and diplomatic correspondence stands in stark contrast to Marie-Claude Bergère's depiction of Montigny as a conquering hero, 12-14.

⁹⁹ Bergère; Raphael Israeli, "Diplomacy of Contempt: The French Consuls and the Mandarins in Nineteenth-Century China," *Modern Asian Studies*, 26.2 (1992).

¹⁰⁰ CADN: Pékin Série A 12 bis, Shanghai, Letter from Montigny to M. de Bourboulon, June 5, 1858.

for the safety of his flock that Montigny feared. Alone in his office, he wrote, and with only a secretary at his disposal, he would not be able to withstand an attack; moreover, he was not well. He dreaded death. He begged to be transferred home.¹⁰¹

Montigny seems to have returned to France to calm his nerves and preserve his marriage. His wife died only three days' journey from China. He was quietly replaced with an acting consul during his absence, but returned to China several years later, and served there and in Tianjin until his death in 1868.¹⁰² Montigny's troubles were never made public, and his private apprehension about France's future in Asia stands in stark contrast to his outward reputation as a stern negotiator. Such personal vulnerability behind an outward show of strength suggested the duality of the martyr, whose personal weakness ultimately bolstered the potency of his faith and caused him to stand tall for nation. Nonetheless, French endurance was tested.

A sense of impending danger could work well to advance French claims to superiority over the British in dealings with the Chinese. Confronting and overcoming threats, including arrest, kidnapping, illness, and even (metaphysically) death through personal perspicacity and savvy manipulation of knowledge, relationships, and situations both tested and strengthened French resolve. However, competition ultimately yielded to cooperation when treaties, concessions, and a common sense of peril demanded it. The tensions that emerged out of conflict and endangerment generated drastic realignments in alliances among the French, the Chinese, and the British. In a sense, danger had both

¹⁰¹ CADN: Shanghai Série C4, Letters from Montigny to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1859.

¹⁰² No. 92, Paris 20 Nov. 1859, Montigny to Walewski, M. le Ministre aff et. No. 92, Paris 20 Nov. 1859, Montigny to Walewski, M. le Ministre aff et. Personnel 1re serie, 2982 Montigny, Louis Charles Nicolas de AMAE-La Courneuve.

divided and united France and Britain. The success of an ill-defined French presence in China required that French men and women be removed from the menaces faced by supposedly inept British interlopers, but the same project demanded that the Chinese be cast as different enough to require intervention, ultimately bringing together wary European opponents. In other ways, though, imagined threats to white bodies also produced a dialectic signification of the absence of danger – peril did not necessarily lead to death or harm. The perpetually unconsummated relationship between French women and Chinese men thus stood in for the ambiguous position of the Western powers in China. Europeans were desired, but not possessed, threatened, but not harmed, allowing some historical actors to call for peaceful relations with key Chinese figures even as they used the specter of Chinese danger to advocate for ever more militaristic intervention in the country.

The Treaty of Tianjin had failed to resolve French and British complaints. In 1859, the two nations resumed their war against the Qing. Rebel groups also continued their battles. The disorder again allowed unity on some fronts even as conflict proceeded in others. In 1859, when Catherine de Bourboulon found herself in Shanghai in during a rebel attack on the Chinese quarter (rather than the foreign concessions), she made a sharp distinction between the local militias that were supported by French and British men, and the "savage [Taiping] enemies" attacking them. In spite of the masculine guise that she had assumed during her entry into Guangzhou a few years earlier, she assumed a more traditionally feminine persona as she described the siege, emphasizing her devout Catholicism. She stressed her womanly empathy with the mother and child whose deaths she witnessed, and she condemned those who believed that a Taiping kingdom would

usher in reforms and a Christian renaissance.¹⁰³ Then, she joined her husband and the Anglo-French expeditionary troops occupying Beijing, surveying the city from atop its walls.¹⁰⁴ In fact, this soft core and tough exterior might be considered the hallmark of French tenacity in China. It offered an alternative to the extremes of feminine exposure and blazing masculinity seen in French caricatures of the British Empire: it was meant to be a supple form of engagement that permitted gentle guidance, adaptability, and acceptance while retaining the fortitude and vigor necessary for enduring a battleground. However, in 1860, with Fanny Loviot's newly-published book dedicated to the success of the Anglo-French expeditionary forces in penetrating "this mysterious Oriental empire," and with Catherine de Bourboulon rallying the troops atop the walls of an occupied Beijing, the milder form of engagement looked distinctly endangered.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Poussielgue, *Voyage en Chine*, 9, 10.

¹⁰⁴ Bourboulon, *L'Asie cavalière* 92.

¹⁰⁵ Loviot, *Les Pirates Chinois*, 2.

CHAPTER 4

RITES OF VIOLENCE

In October of 1860, a joint French and British expedition laid waste to the Chinese Emperor's Old Summer Palace, also known as the Yuánmíngyuán, or Gardens of Perfect Brightness. Then they occupied the capital, Beijing. As the Yuánmíngyuán smoldered, French soldiers sat upon the city walls chatting with Chinese camp followers.¹ Although diplomatic negotiations had stalled, Antoine Fauchery, a correspondent for the *Moniteur Universel*, wrote that "in the market and in the field, relations between our troops and the Chinese" were better than ever due to the talent for assimilation "proper to our race."² It was not rare, he remarked, to hear soldiers speaking "the language of Confucius" to ask for their daily necessities, while their female Chinese "adorers" responded in the language of the barracks.³ These friendly interactions, Fauchery surmised, were evidence of the "moral perfection" of French and British troops in China. Their quarrel had not been with the populace, but with their Manchu government; the women of Beijing, it seemed, understood them perfectly.

¹ As I will also discuss the proposed destruction of other imperial palaces – another, which also bears the title of Summer, and the one now known as the Forbidden City – I will use the Chinese designation for clarity. The Chinese names for each palace are quite different. The Yuánmíngyuán (圆明园) is distinct from the somewhat older nearby Yíhéyuán (颐和园, Summer Palace, or Gardens of Nurtured Harmony). I will follow contemporary sources in referring to Forbidden City within Beijing as the Imperial Palace.

² This was in spite of military directives to the contrary. One pre-expedition report remarked upon the prevalence of cutaneous and venereal disease in China, and recommended both vaccinating and isolating the troops from the local populace, particularly in large population centers like Shanghai. 682 AP/2 Dossier 2, *Mémoire sur l'Expédition combinée contre la Chine*, by Capt. De Vaisseau Bourgeois, pp.20-21. AN-Paris.

³ Penny Edwards uses the term "skin dictionaries" to describe the conflated sexual and social knowledge that such relationships granted to new colonizers. "Womanizing Indochina: Fiction, Nation, and Cohabitation in Colonial Cambodia, 1890-1930" in Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds. *Domesticating the Empire*, 117.

Stationing allied troops among the populace was thus profitable from several points of view. The money that they infused into the local economy reassured a disquieted local population that "excellents rapports" were possible with the occupying forces. The "energetic" additions to France's Chinese vocabulary might serve to open the "celestial vault" to French eyes, but more importantly, the two nations would learn to understand one another without resorting to fisticuffs. If that should fail, of course, a short stay together would permit diverse French and English corps to build a rapport, responding tactically as one on the battlefield. In any case, opined Fauchery, the occupation wouldn't last long.⁴

Fauchery's story differed markedly from previous accounts of the French in China in its focus on relationships between European soldiers and Chinese women. Since the first French Jesuits had appeared at the Qing court, and more pointedly, since the treaties of the early 1840s had paved the way for a more profound French commercial, diplomatic, and religious presence, both prescriptive and descriptive narratives of Franco-Chinese bonds had emphasized the promise of homo-social ties between men. European women often appeared as metaphors for their respective nations' imperial fates, and Chinese women entered the story as points of triangulation: their bound feet and domestic confinement made them convenient representations of national submission. Some, like the convert Agnès, stood in for an entire nation of potential believers. Yet most were silent observers, and even the most adventurous French chroniclers of Chinese life made

⁴ Antoine Fauchery, "Lettres de Chine" in *Le Moniteur Universel, Journal officiel de l'Empire Français*. October 16, 1860. BNF Tolbiac MICR D-71 1860/09 - 1860/12.

much more of their illicit sightings of sequestered women than they did actual contact with them.⁵

The allies' friendly association with Chinese women was a symptom of the cataclysmic reordering of masculinities brought about by the Second Opium War. Eighteen sixty was a turning point for Sino-European relations, but not for obvious reasons. It wasn't because battles were won decisively. They weren't. Nor was it because European troops occupied the capital, or won Kowloon, or secured a new treaty, although all of those things were important. The campaign of 1860 and its crowning moments, including the sacking of the Yuánmíngyuán, were usually chaotic and often embarrassing. Even the obvious outcome of this last phase of the Opium Wars – another unequal treaty to add to the list - would come to haunt Chinese pride more intensely spectral form, when eighty years later, it was summoned by the prophets of modern revolution.⁶ Rather, the magnitude of 1860 was contained in its figurative triumph. Burning the Yuánmíngyuán, occupying Beijing, and promptly removing Anglo-French expeditionary forces stopped short of defeating the Chinese Empire. The expedition nonetheless accomplished a distinctly metaphysical form of subjugation.

As the latest installment of the Opium Wars, the Anglo-French expedition of eighteen sixty had been launched as a military mission to regulate an unruly but nominally equal partner. However, it was soon transformed into an attempt to render China subordinate to European will, and it would end as a symbolic conquest. Its effects transcended treaties. When French General Montauban and his British allies dismantled the Yuánmíngyuán and contemplated doing the same to the Imperial Palace, they were

⁵ See Chapter 3.

⁶ Dong Wang, *China's Unequal Treaties: Narrating National History* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 80.

engaging in what Natalie Zemon Davis calls rites of violence.⁷ Their targets were not accidental, but carefully (if unconsciously) chosen emblems of the relationship they were attempting to redefine. In pulling down the stones upon which Europeans and Chinese had established their relationship, they could allegorically amend their shared history. In the endeavor to manage these points of contact, significant Chinese spaces and the artifacts that they contained would become fetishistic objects whose fates were echoed in the lives of those connected to them.

Britain and France launched the expedition of 1860 as a punitive measure. Diplomats from both nations believed that the Qing government was resisting obligations it had agreed to enforce when it signed the Treaty of Tianjin in 1858, including a legalized opium trade, foreigners' right to travel in China's interior, and the establishment of foreign legations in Beijing. After diplomacy had failed to resolve the dispute, the expedition was meant to be a mission of speed and precision. British and French naval and army forces were to act in concert to get close enough to the capital to pressure the Qing government into meeting European demands for expanded privileges and protections. Then, they were to move out before the harsh winter could decimate their numbers. General Cousin-Montauban received orders for his troops to first pass the point "where the steps of the Ambassadors had recently stopped," and then to "take a solid, threatening position toward the capital," advancing if necessary toward Tianjin, a major city between the sea and Beijing. Once the allied troops were "masters of this city," the presence of foreign troops so close to the imperial capital would likely force the hand of

⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past and Present*, 59.1, (1973), 51-91.

the Chinese government, and they would sue for peace under the conditions that the French and British wished to "impose upon them."⁸

The persistent and lofty ideas about restoring French honor that had colored earlier engagements were magnified in this mission. Montauban rallied his troops by proclaiming that they were called by Napoleon III and by France itself to undertake a "faraway and glorious expedition," carrying their nation's flag where even "immortal Rome" had not taken its legions. Yet in contrast to the competitive wariness that had informed previous enterprises, this campaign commenced with full cooperation between French and British units – in theory, at least. In language that was likely more prescriptive than genuine, French forces were reminded that the union of the two nations would serve as a "guarantee of victory," as the alliance of their peoples was "a pledge of peace for the world."⁹

However, things went badly. Public opinion in France quickly soured on the China campaign after revelations of poor conditions on board ships transporting French troops, and petty internal fights between the army and the navy shook morale.¹⁰ That rivalry was mirrored in Franco-British relations. In spite of public attempts to reconcile, each of the two parties was unconvinced of its ally's reliability. General James Hope Grant, the British commander, spoke of his French counterpart Charles Cousin-Montauban's conduct as "absurdly French," and worried that the Gallic contingent would not be ready in time.¹¹ On October sixth – the very day that the Yuánmíngyuán was first

⁸ AN, 682 AP/1, Dossier 3, B6 Letter from Maréchal de France, Ministre de la Guerre, Cabinet du Ministre, to Montauban. Paris, December 15, 1859.

⁹ General Cousin de Montauban, *Ordre du Jour*, 19 November 1859, 682 AP/3, Cahier 1, 3.16, Archives Nationales-Paris.

¹⁰ Capt. De Fregate, Durand St. Armand to Montauban, 30 March 1861, 682 AP/2, Dossier 2 F"3, AN-Paris.

¹¹ Hope Grant to Herbert, May 20, 1860. Hope Grant Papers, British Library, 52414, Nos. 41 and 43.

occupied by Montauban and his men – Aylie Langle, another of *Le Monde Illustré's* China correspondents, offered “evidence” (mostly hearsay) that some unscrupulous British agents from India were selling arms to China. The weaponry had been seized after the Indian Mutiny, and were sold out of country to prevent them from falling back into rebel hands. The nearest, most lucrative market was China. According to Langle, this “immense and curious contraband” placed British-made rifles (repaired, if need be, by entrepreneurial Americans) into the hands of Qing infantrymen. Langle alleged that Victoria’s troops had “more than once found fusils and canons in the hands of the vanquished, upon which ‘on y soit qui mal y pense’ was written.” It was an Anglo-Norman motto used by a number of British regiments in China. The Mandarins, Langle wrote, must have been laughing at the barbarians, who so readily offered “the means to defeat themselves.”¹²

Then, in April of 1860, with French and British troops already on Chinese soil, the French and British plenipotentiary ministers Bourboulon and Bruce had issued an ultimatum demanding that Beijing apologize formally for attacking the Europeans occupying forts at Taku (Dàgū). They also sought an indemnity to cover the costs that China had “imposed” upon the allies. If China should not accept these stipulations within thirty days, Paris and London would inflict a “well-merited chastisement.”¹³

When the Qing government ignored the ultimatum, the expeditionary forces made their way toward Beijing. After engagements at Pei Ho (Bái Hé), which ended inconclusively, the French and British forces sent a small group inland to negotiate a

¹² Aylie Langle, “Correspondance de Chine,” 12 August 1860, in *Le Monde Illustré*, 6 October 1860. BnF Tolbiac MICROFILM M-8000.

¹³ AN-Paris, 682 AP/1, Dossier 3, B18. Letter from Maréchal de France, Ministre de la Guerre, Secrétaire d'Etat de la Guerre to Son Excellence le Baron Gros, April 1860 (n.d.)

settlement. The French members of the party that set out on September 17 included mission leader colonel Foullon de Grandchamps, Captain of the Chiefs of Staff Chanoine, Caïd Osman (Lieutenant of the Spahi troops), as well as bookkeepers, interpreters, the embassy secretary Bastard, the head of the scientific mission. The British sent Lieutenant-Colonel Walker, Lieutenant Anderson, nineteen Indian horsemen, a journalist for the *Times*, a political attaché, and Consul Harry Parkes.¹⁴ When the men failed to return, it became clear that they had been taken as hostages. Hope Grant had worried about the possibility of such an event; he wrote to Montauban in August to warn him that the safety of their messengers would be endangered if they continued to attack the Chinese during periods of truce.¹⁵ Their incarceration became a rallying cry for a more aggressive engagement with the Qing, and stoked calls for an act of retribution that fit the crime. Both their captivity and their rescue would be inextricably linked to the destruction of the most important site of Manchu power in China – the Yuánmíngyuán.

French historian Bernard Brizay goes so far as to argue that until the sacking of the Yuánmíngyuán, the “sinister affair of the hostages” was the defining feature of the war. It removed the conflict from a wholly military realm and re-situated it as a human drama. The suffering, torture, and death of English and French representatives – ostensibly violating the laws of war – transfixed their contemporaries at home, and Brizay writes that if other chance events had not turned the allies’ luck around, the “tragic

¹⁴ In this chapter, I use both the old English transliteration (e.g. Pei Ho) and current pinyin rendering (e.g. Bái Hé) of place names for the sake of clarity. Many scholarly works employ the more familiar English version, while scholars of China will recognize the contemporary transliteration.

According to the Baron de Bazancourt, Napoleon III’s official historian. César Lecat Bazancourt, *Les expéditions de Chine et de Cochinchine d’après les Documents officiels* (Paris: Amyot, 1862), 193-4.

¹⁵ Hope Grant to Montauban, August 18, 1860, Hope-Grant Papers. British Library, 52414, No. 67.

and cruel” facets of the narrative would have better preserved 1860 in the French collective memory.¹⁶

Everyone agreed that things had gotten a bit out of control. The problem of the hostages was rapidly transforming the nature of the Franco-Chinese relationship. The bid to recover the hostages brought allied troops ever closer to Beijing, and after several skirmishes, Elgin and his French counterpart, Baron Gros, received a message and flag of truce from the Emperor’s brother, Prince Gong, assuring them that their people were safe, but that they would not be released until the allies removed themselves from the sites they occupied around the Peiho. When Elgin decided to march on Beijing, the Emperor’s brother Prince Gong threatened “the instant massacre of the prisoners.”¹⁷ The allies moved in anyway, and (in spite of Montauban’s wish to approach from the south), directed themselves toward the northern Manchu section of the city, as they “wished to molest the Chinese as little as possible.”¹⁸ Prince Gong’s involvement made the hostage-taking appear to be a specifically Manchu act, one that both reified and reconfigured a system of identities that had connected French and Chinese in previous decades. It divided Chinese from Manchu more rigidly in French minds, and it pushed the French ever closer to the British. The competitors-cum-allies joined in a unified fight to protect literal European bodies and a figurative European body politic from Manchu-Mongol ruthlessness – conveniently ignoring that the threats to the captives were the direct result of their own intrusions. The newly reordered set of relationships were no less affect-driven, but the amity that had characterized earlier Franco-Chinese bonds was reserved

¹⁶ Brizay, 15.

¹⁷ Henry Knollys, ed., *Incidents in the China war of 1860, compiled from the private journals of General Sir Hope Grant* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1875), 118-9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

for the Chinese masses. French relations with the ruling Manchus became characterized by active fear, followed by loathing and retribution. However, old calls to maintain French difference with regard to China persisted in spite of the deepening divisions, and they contributed to a messy collection of narratives about what happened next.

At some point, members of the Anglo-French expedition breached the walls of the Yuánmíngyuán. However, the events that ensued were adapted, revised, and subjected to such extensive narrative flourish that the sacking began to stand out from the campaign that had spawned it. At the end of it all, as white soldiers flirted with Beijing's women atop the city walls, Montauban put up his feet in the house of a wealthy Chinese merchant who was "happy to have his house occupied" by French respecters of private property.¹⁹ Stolen silk-wrapped heirlooms made their way quietly across the seas. The Summer Palace was in ruins. It was first pillaged and then, several days later, burned to the ground. There were at least four versions of how it had gotten that way. Each represented a slightly different vision of the French relationship to the British, the Chinese, and the Manchu-led Qing state.

The first version was cloaked in smoke and shadow. The official story, as set down by Napoleon III's court historian the Count de Bazancourt, described an eerie encounter. The flames were an accident, with uncertain boy soldiers and spectral brigands dancing uncertainly through a labyrinth of walls and darkness. In this account, the French army came upon the palace as it moved blindly through Beijing's northern suburbs, cloaked in dusky half-light. The allied forces were in Beijing's northern suburbs to secure the release of their captive men. Someone glimpsed a few archers disappear behind the gates, and imagined that the Manchu army was lurking inside. The column of French

¹⁹ 12 October 1860, Notes for Montauban's memoirs, Montauban 682 AP/4, 5th Cahier, No.1, AN-Paris.

forces advanced carefully across paths cut through towering slabs of granite and bordered by menacing trees before coming to a magnificent bridge. When they came to the palace, they found it empty. Then shots rang out, and the shadows of a hundred Chinese blocked the Europeans' passage. They vanished as quickly as they had appeared. Only in the morning did they tour the grounds and realize what a marvelous space they had entered. Montauban placed sentinels around the palaces, and assured that nothing was touched before Grant could arrive. Then, they divided the spoils among the allied armies. When the Yuánmíngyuán burned, it was the "Chinese themselves" who had set the fire.²⁰

The second version aimed to deflect Qing criticism for the allies' role in sacking the palace. According to French minister-in-command Baron Jean-Baptiste Gros, allied troops had been present in the palace gardens, but they were not responsible for their destruction. In this story, it was Prince Gong's fault for failing to release the prisoners. He had made it necessary for Anglo-French forces to march toward Beijing. His deeds had put foreigners in the vicinity of the Yuánmíngyuán. It was also his regime's fault, for failing to control the bandits that roamed the countryside. They had come to ravage a village of their own compatriots. They had entered the palace, sacked it, and burned it. French and British soldiers had to fire upon them before they could destroy their own patrimony. In the heat of battle, rescuing the palace from its Chinese attackers had entailed taking it from the Emperor. Therefore, allied soldiers were permitted to share its spoils, "in conformity with the rights of war." The arms that they took had fallen into their hands. They had pillaged nothing.²¹

²⁰ Bazancourt, 266-277.

²¹ Jean-Baptiste Gros to Prince Gong, 15 Octobre 1860, Montauban Papers, 682 AP/1 à 4, Dossier4, C19, Archives Nationales-Paris.

In the third version of the story, according to General Montauban, only Britain was guilty. General Grant had insisted to Montauban that the “Tartar army” was hiding in the Yuánmíngyuán. Grant had proposed that spot as a meeting point for the allied armies. When the French army got lost in the dark and closed-in streets of the unknown suburbs north of Beijing, the peasants they encountered assured them that Grant had been right, and offered to show them the way to the palace. They were joined by two British regiments who were equally off course. Members of the two forces thus marched in together.²² Then, in spite of French efforts to convince him of the danger and futility of action against the dynasty’s sacred spaces, Lord Elgin had plunged headlong into the punishing blow. Elgin’s violent temperament could not be contained.²³ Happily, Montauban had refused to participate. He had redeemed the virtue of his nation in the eyes of Europeans, and more importantly, of the Chinese.²⁴

In all of those stories, French troops were mere bystanders. The British version of the story all but denounced them as liars. General Hope Grant’s journals contended that he and Montauban had agreed on the fifth of October to “make for the Summer Palace,” where they would find the Emperor or his high-ranking officials. English troops marched first, as it was their turn; they went to the right in pursuit of a group of “Tartar cavalry.” He believed that Montauban would be on course, to his left. However, when his troops became too fatigued to continue, the French forces were nowhere to be found. The Yuánmíngyuán was to be their final destination, but, Hope Grant stressed, the French were to follow him. Instead, when the French forces lost their way, they proceeded directly to the palace, where the British Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General found

²² Bazancourt, 265-6.

²³ Bazancourt, 295.

²⁴ Gros to Montauban, 18 October 1860, Montauban Papers, 682 AP/4, C28b, AN-Paris.

them the next day. When Hope Grant and Elgin met Montauban there, they found the French “encamped near the entrance of the Great Audience Hall... it was pitiful to see the way in which everything was being robbed.” Only one room was left unmolested, where Montauban had “reserved” its contents for equal division among the two allied nations.²⁵

In contrast to Montauban’s own reports, Hope Grant contended that Montauban had told him that he met little resistance at the palace gates. His officers forced their way inside and found that the Emperor and his “grandees” had already gone. They had taken nothing with them.²⁶ There were no “bandits” in this version of the story, only rapacious Frenchmen. With the British on site, though, they agreed that the remaining property – gold and silver, silks, and jade furnishings - would be divided and sold at auction, with the proceeds given to the men and officers. (The proceeds brought in – 26,000 pounds – allowed each soldier to take home four pounds, with a third set aside for distribution among the officers.)²⁷

Objects that conferred power were treated rather differently. Two gold and jade “staves of office,” which Montauban had found, would be presented to Queen Victoria and the Emperor Napoleon. Hope Grant bid for, and won, a jade and ruby necklace that had been presented to the Emperor by a Tartar chief, and his men bought him the gold jug

²⁵ Knollys, *Incidents*, 125-9. During the 1874 investigation into the looting, Hope Grant again insisted that Montauban was lying about not having touched the contents of the palace: “Upon arriving at the spot we found the French had been in possession some time, and had secured the most precious articles.” See Knollys, 220. His assertion was corroborated by Major-General Foley’s testimony in the *Times*, stating “I cannot agree that the palace was not sacked... I saw a woeful difference in the appearance of the wonderfully magnificent collections... at 6 a.m. on the 7th October, and that which presented itself upon our return to the palace after breakfast about 11:30 a.m.” The *Times*, March 14, 1874.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

“from which the Emperor of China used to pour rose-water upon his delicate hands.”²⁸

They would have to wait several days for the palace to give up another of its prizes, when the mandarin Hang-ki begged to be allowed inside. The governor of the palace had been his close friend; the man had taken his own life in disgrace after the European’s entry. In tears, Han-ki he ensconced himself beside one of the many lakes in the complex and waited for the body of his friend to rise from the waters. It would not emerge for days.²⁹

Upon their return to camp, Elgin, Hope Grant, and Montauban were greeted by a letter from Prince Gong. The prisoners would be released the next day. Of the original twenty or so hostages, only eight Sikhs and one Frenchmen had survived.³⁰ The Allied commanders then threatened to blast through Beijing’s city walls unless the Qing offered peace. Prince Gong thus relinquished the Anding gate, and the allies mounted walls “broader than those of Babylon.”³¹

The allied forces recovered the remains of the dead hostages, reduced to bones and bits of cloth. After emotional funeral services, Elgin decided that “in consequence of the murder of the greater number of our captured countrymen... it was necessary that the Tartar Emperor should be visited with some severe punishment and signal mark of retribution... and we therefore decided to burn his splendid Summer Palace to the ground.”³² As Bazancourt’s account further explained, Grant had contended that the site was where the hostages had been treated without humanity. It needed to be destroyed to save Britain’s honor, as if burning the site would exorcise the evil that had been committed there. On the morning of October 18th, they set it ablaze. After its red glow

²⁸ Ibid., 129, 194.

²⁹ Knollys, 195.

³⁰ Ibid., 133.

³¹ Ibid. 198-9.

³² Ibid., 202.

reached to the horizon, and its smoky plumes sought the heavens, nothing was left. That void, Bazancourt wrote, was the most durable mark of British vengeance.³³

Prince Gong did not believe any of them. In a letter to Montauban, he asked, broken-hearted, why the soldiers of a “civilized empire, subject to discipline,” had pillaged and burned the palace of the Emperor. Gong had done as they asked and intervened to release the allied prisoners. In return, he received threats, insults, and foreigners occupying his capital. The Europeans who had devised the plan, he wrote, claimed not to know how any of it had come about.³⁴

The violence enacted upon the Yuánmíngyuán was not just an incident in the expedition; it was the singular episode that defined it. Everyone involved knew that almost as soon as it had happened, and their frantic efforts to manipulate the story made it an even more potent emblem of the conflict, of its perpetrators’ character, and of the future position of French in China. Montauban would change his story several times: while he initially seemed pleased with the outcome, his subsequent letters to Gros and to Paris frantically excused his insubordination, while his memoirs eliminated his delight at the palace’s interior and emphasized Grant’s role in the forced entry. The notes for Montauban’s memoirs, compiled (and altered) from his correspondence during the campaign, described being hot on the trail of the twelve thousand cavaliers who, Chinese peasants said, were in a “village” near Beijing – the Yuánmíngyuán. He and Grant had decided to destroy those troops before setting up camp in Beijing, in order to “remove the Chinese government’s last hope of defense.” The details of their entry are deliberately vague, but Montauban did illustrate verbally what he saw inside. The Yuánmíngyuán sat

³³ Bazancourt 302-3.

³⁴ Gong to Gros, 12 October 1860, 682 AP/1, Dossier 4, C16, AN-Paris.

beside an immense lake, and connected to a nearby village by a bridge. Montauban crossed it, he wrote, and marched down a wide avenue bordered by great trees and the homes of its governor and his employees, which led to the palace. It was only as he began to organize a bivouac for his troops that he recognized where he was: in the palace that might conceal “tartar troops.” He sent two companies of infantry inside. Shots were fired, with several men struck. They attempted to explore the interior but were met with a profound silence. They scaled the interior walls with scaffolding and met the “Tartars” inside. Though they were armed with arrows, guns, and pikes, they fled over the last wall into the countryside.

In the morning, with the palace evacuated of its Manchu guards, Montauban and his men discovered the incredible luxury of their surroundings. This part of the account, from Montauban’s notes, contradicts itself. Although “perfect order” allegedly reigned as the palace was voided of its contents, the notes also attest to chaos erupting as the “rapacious” Sikh and Arab soldiers joined the Chinese coolies in “rendering impossible the surveillance” established over the spoils to be divided.³⁵ When the English commanders arrived, they agreed to divide the riches equally. Montauban let Elgin have the first choice, as “an act of gallantry on the part of France.” The first object was a baton of green jade. They then found a similar object, and set it aside for the French emperor.³⁶

While the riches of the Yuánmíngyuán certainly had a high market value, the allied forces were also invested in the symbolic value of what they were taking. Montauban wrote that the jade batons destined for the French and British monarchs were “held in high esteem by the Chinese.” When the troops found jeweled collars formed of

³⁵ This racial division also differed markedly from Montauban’s published memoirs, which described the relative penury of Sikhs employed as domestics, not soldiers. Montauban, *L’Expédition de Chine*, 206.

³⁶ Montauban Papers, AN-Paris. 682 AP/3, 347. This division is omitted from the published memoirs.

jade and pearls, he wrote that the Emperor had intended them as gifts to his favored officials, and “I never believed they would have any commercial worth.” The expedition’s commissioner took them home as souvenirs for his wife and daughters. After large quantities of silver were divided among the men, the army “spontaneously” decided to send all the rest of the loot to the Empress, Eugenie, who had placed the expedition under her patronage. They would be sent quickly to Europe, wrapped in the silks that hundreds of Chinese manufacturers had given in homage to their Emperor, discovered untouched in the storerooms of the palace. Montauban insisted that while they took the Emperor’s wealth, they had not stolen his knowledge. Others were responsible for that. Another palace, “whose pillage” Montauban “deplore[d],” contained the archives of China, including tableaux “in colors so sharp as to jump off the canvas” that recounted the entire history of China. They were destroyed nearly in totality by “Chinese pillards.”³⁷

Public opinion quickly concluded that the army played a prominent role in the sacking – as early as December, illustrations in Parisian newspapers showed soldiers in European dress walking out of the gardens with loot in tow. Chinese bystanders observed them with detached interest.³⁸ Yet Montauban claimed that his forces were already well on their way toward Peking when “a quantity of... misérables” from among the populace entered the gardens of the palace through the “breeches in the walls.” Once behind the walls, they sacked houses and took away huge bags of precious objects. The remaining allied army waited for them at exits, and took away what they were stealing – the army,

³⁷Montauban Papers, 682 AP/3, 4th Cahier, 353, AN-Paris.

³⁸ Godefroy Durand, *L'Illustration*, 22 December 1860. MIT, Visualizing Cultures, The Garden of Perfect Brightness, http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/garden_perfect_brightness_03/ymy3_essay02.html. Accessed 3 December, 2014.

Montauban vowed, was in no way responsible for removing those items from the interior of the palace. What the *pillards* did succeed in stealing, they sold for a pittance on the markets of Beijing. The allied nations, moreover, had never set a fire. Some buildings had burned and communicated the fire to others. Like the unfortunate Mary Magdalene, the villagers who appeared conveniently just beforehand seemed to bear the blame. Only later, Montauban wrote, would the English "complete the destruction" of the other palaces.³⁹

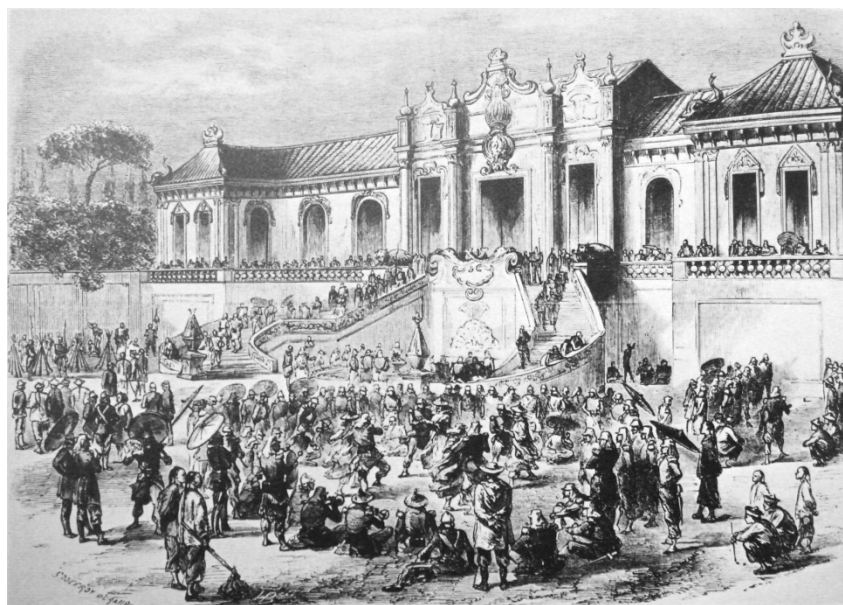


Figure 4: Godefroy Durand, *L'Illustration*, 22 December 1860.

Even if the looting at the Yuánmíngyuán was accidental, pillaging China's imperial treasures had been all but written into plans for the mission. It was one of the earliest details to be discussed in negotiations over how the Franco-British partnership would operate on the ground in China, with each nation's sovereign expressing concern

³⁹ Notes for Montauban's memoirs, AN-Paris, Montauban 682 AP/3, 4e cahier 341,355.

over how Chinese “booty” would be divided among supposed equals. Would the “prizes” of the campaign belong in common to the forces of the two nations, or to the subjects of each country? In March – well before the expeditionary forces had even left Hong Kong – representatives from the respective Ministries of War determined that when goods were taken in common by naval forces of both nations, the commanding officer in charge of the action would bring the articles to his “pavilion,” where another officer would oversee a just distribution. If a cruiser of either nation received assistance from the other nation in “intimidating the enemy,” jurisdiction belonged to the captor. If a prize was taken by either nation while acting in full concert with the other, they were to divide the spoils between the government and the men involved in the action, according to the laws of the respective nations, and according to the needs of each government. Prisoners would be subject to the laws of the nation who had taken them. In case of “contentious questions,” a commission comprised of one English and one French delegate would choose two arbiters to settle definitively what belonged to whom. Cruisers would then quickly deliver the trophies of war to European metropolises.⁴⁰

The very deliberate nature of the looting comes across in several of the accounts, even those that protested most vociferously to the contrary. Bazancourt described how the ninth of October was set as moving day: bivouacs were a “strange and curious sight,” laden with golden cloth, lavish silks, objects of art, and bronzes. Some were torn, others broken nearly in half. Squatting soldiers stared in amazement at the riches, while local Chinese, attracted by “misery or cupidity,” offered their services as movers.⁴¹

⁴⁰ LS Chouvenel and Lord Crowley to the Ministère de Guerre, 10 March 1860, Dossier 3, B16, 682 AP/1, AN-Paris.

⁴¹ Bazancourt, 276-77.



Figure 5: Image from Armand Lucy, *Souvenirs de voyage: lettres intimes sur la campagne de Chine en 1860* (Marseille: J. Barile, 1861), 113.

After the walls were broken down, and buildings were dismantled, the Emperor was released from the space that confined him and brown and white soldiers went in to take his place. Things began to unravel, however. The magnitude of the act settled uneasily upon the minds that had ordered it. Exerting control over the story – who was involved, and how, and why - mirrored attempts to assert authority over the Qing empire's sacred spaces and objects. Thus, as the story became ever more unwieldy and contested, so did impressions of the action itself.

Gros sent a pair of furious missives to each of the allied commanders. In Montauban's letter, Gros lamented the loss of what he had believed to be an imminent

peace. He had planned to send the French expeditionary forces home. Instead, they were acting as “mistresses of Beijing.” The emperor had fled to his ancestral homeland; if he should be overthrown, Montauban’s simple “lack of consideration” would be the cause of “the most complete anarchy.” Winter was coming, and everyone knew that the little occupation would end with it. It was clear that the expeditionary forces could not “take possession of China, or establish ourselves here.” As if to remove himself from responsibility, Gros asked rhetorically what would become of the China campaign, and under whose authority Montauban would act.⁴²

Even Maurice d’Irisson, who served as a translator for the expeditionary forces, prefaced his account of the sacking with the shameful observation that France had “played... a role of a dupe” in the campaign. If they had not been betrayed, they had certainly been fooled by the English, for they were not allies, but lackeys. The British, he wrote, had wished to diminish them in the eyes of the Chinese by “making us pass for mercenaries.” Napoleon III had offered his troops to Victoria for this purpose. With the ghost of his disgraced predecessor in his mind, he had given his troops over to another imperial mission; rather than reviving a dead empire, though, it further tarnished French honor.⁴³

Elgin, who seemed desperate to continue the family tradition of carrying off other people’s treasures, next set his sights on the Imperial Palace. Gros blanched at the idea.

He wrote that if Montauban wanted to take part in such destruction, he would have

⁴² Maréchal Min. de la Guerre to Montauban, 8 Décembre 1860, Montauban Papers, 682 AP/3, B31, AN-Paris.

⁴³ Maurice d’Irisson, Comte d’Hérison, *La destruction du Palais d’été: Journal d’un interprète en Chine, Pékin 1860*. (Paris: Editions France-Empire Monde, 2012. First published as *Journal d’un interprète en Chine*, Paris : Paul Ollendorff, 1886), 45-6. D’Irisson’s view was controversial, and his work was seized by the state when it was published in 1883. It was almost certainly colored by the 1874 investigation regarding the royal estate following Napoleon III’s fall, in which Montauban, among others, was made to testify about alleged inconsistencies in the division of spoils during the expedition. See Knollys, 214.

nothing more to say to him. Destruction of the Imperial Palace, as proposed by Elgin, should only be considered as a last resort. As for the demolition of the Yuánmíngyuán, he commented, "it repugnates me." He would not speak of it to Prince Gong, and if Montauban wanted to take part, he would have nothing to say to him, either. "The Palace," he wrote, "was a theater of horrors for which we must beg for forgiveness."⁴⁴

What happened inside the Yuánmíngyuán was not a case of triumphant victors humiliating the vanquished, but of Europeans fulfilling their role as "barbarians," sacking the Rome of the East. The victory had not been assured; uncertainty had reigned until the very moment of allied success.⁴⁵ Their entry into the sanctum sanctorum of the Manchu rulers of China was thus an orgy of symbolic violence.

Montauban's unsanctioned actions may have rattled his superiors, but they proved startlingly effective. Although he was secretly chastised by his superiors, he also believed strongly in the merit of his own mission. The set of writings that he collected for his memoirs included notes of thanks from priests in the mission field and letters of praise from the Chinese Christian students from the College of St. Ignatius at Li Ka Wei. They reminded Montauban (and the future readers of his memoirs) that his mission to punish the Qing had, in fact, preserved another relationship – the Christian one, whose goal was the salvation of the Chinese people. Yet even there, the emphasis was less on sympathy or compassion than on paternal protection. The students sent a panegyric poem that they had composed, in which Montauban appeared as the noble rescuer of the weak:

*Refrain: Celebrate, oh celebrate the sweetest of days!
A hero of France
Wishes in his goodwill
Come back to us.*

⁴⁴ Gros to Elgin, 17 oct. 1860, Montauban Papers, 682 AP/4, C23

⁴⁵ Brizay.

*It seems, in his glory,
He has forgotten his victory!
He comes! When he returns
Li Ka Wei will sing: oh, what a joyous day!*

The poem went on to hail Montauban as the protector of the poor. His noble French heart had opened the way for Chinese Christian worship, and the students of Li Ka Wei prayed fervently that God would always protect Montauban and his nation.⁴⁶

Monsieur Lemaitre, the school's headmaster, described Montauban as a "hero, whose life was a litany of holy desires." He had "always done what Heaven had wished of him," and Lemaitre was touched by the fact that Montauban had always held the good of the missions in highest regard. "For us," he wrote, "we have long lived happily in this place of peace; yet when trouble has come, we have been the object of your tender solicitude." However, he asserted, he had recently heard of trouble to the West; many of the students' families were still in danger from rebel activity.⁴⁷ For Lemaitre, France's work was not done; Montauban and his forces could yet have a hand in the greater pacification of all of China. His pleas were echoed by Monsieur Delaplace, the bishop of Andrieu and Vice Apostle of Zhèjiāng, whose missive to Montauban detailed children kidnapped, people killed, houses pillaged, and villages sacked by "*tchang-mao*" (cháng máo) – long-haired rebels. He hoped that France would continue to work in this country: "religion, humanity, and commerce require it!" Delaplace included a sketch for the new church that he hoped to build, a hybrid of Chinese and European design. A project of synthetic domestication, it would include three doors, in the style of European cathedrals, but it would follow Chinese norms, with several courtyards and vestibules leading to a

⁴⁶ Letters from Li Ka Wei to Montauban, H6, H'6; Anonymous student of Li Ka Wei to Montauban, H'5, 682 AP/2, AN-Paris.

⁴⁷ M. Lemaitre To Montauban, 16 January 1861, H'4, 682 AP/2, AN-Paris.

great room, a third court containing a brazier for incense, and a round door leading to a garden.⁴⁸ The foundering of the Franco-Qing alliance seemed to have resuscitated the syncretic Franco-Chinese Christian relationship.

Montauban was officially rewarded as well. He received the Grande Croix of Pope Pius IX almost immediately after he returned to France, as an acknowledgment of his service to the Church in safeguarding China's missions.⁴⁹ Napoleon III gave him the title of Comte de Palikao, citing his role in the unlikely defeat of Qing army while greatly outnumbered, and awarded him a stipend of 60,000 francs per year.⁵⁰ The Maréchal who wrote to notify Montauban of the conditions of his next mission observed that while he might elect to simply reinforce troops in Saigon and deblockade the city, it seemed "more rational" for him to go directly to Hué and "act there as he had acted in Peking."⁵¹ The canon of les Invalides saluted the news of a brilliant success that Franco-British expeditionary forces had just obtained in China, and the *Moniteur Universel* – official newspaper of the French Second Empire – reported that "the emotion felt in Paris penetrated immediately into the farthest reaches of France." Reprinting General Montauban's letter to the Maréchal of France, the lead story recounted how allied troops had chased the "Tartars" from their position at the mouth of the Pei Ho. In spite of difficult terrain (the British found themselves on more stable land) and uncertain weather,

⁴⁸ Delaplace, C.M. Eveque d'Andrieu, V. Ap. Du Tche-Kiang to Montauban, 11 April 1861, Dossier 3 H12, 682 AP/2, AN-Paris.

⁴⁹ Montauban 682 AP/4, 6e cahier, 130, AN-Paris.

⁵⁰ AN-Paris C/II/191 Corps Législatif 3e Bureau, Session of February 22, 1862 (discussing regular payment of this stipend).

⁵¹ Ministère de la Guerre, Cabinet 24 to Montauban, February 24 1861, 682 AP/1, Dossier 3, B39, AN-Paris.

the allies prevailed with superior troops and artillery. As France prepared to celebrate the "solennité nationale" of August 15th, the Qing army fled in disarray.⁵²

That it was the *Qing* army, filled with Manchu ("Tartar") soldiers, was important. To divide the Manchu Qing state from its supposedly different, innocent subjects was another goal of the expedition. It was unvoiced, but always evident. The groundwork for this discursive effort had been laid in the 1840s, as rank, place of origin, and linguistic differences informed interactions among Qing officials, Europeans, and Chinese of various backgrounds.⁵³ British descriptions of the first "expedition against China" habitually named their foe as the "Tartars" – Manchus – who sought to impede their good relations with Chinese merchants and consumers. A writer for the *Nouvelles Annales des Voyages* had posited that the "Tartars" cared little whether their subjugated Chinese endured greater suffering, and therefore would not hesitate to engage their cavalry with the British, no matter the outcome.⁵⁴ Lord Jocelyn commented that he was rather surprised when, upon reading a summons stating that his army was acting only against their rulers, he was met with a hostile reaction. The people, it seemed, "hated the invading barbarians more bitterly than their Tartar rulers; and their clenched hands and anxious faces proved to us how false was the idea that we were come amongst a people who only waited for the standard of the foreigner to throw off a detested and tyrant yoke."⁵⁵ Earlier French accounts had used the proto-ethnic divide to position Qing officials as likely friends, to compete with existing Anglo-Chinese commercial relationships. During the Second Opium War, while both French and British agents built

⁵² *Le Moniteur Universel. Journal officiel de l'Empire français*. November 5, 1860

⁵³ See Chapter 2.

⁵⁴ Henri Ternaux-Compans, *La Position des Anglais aux Indes, et de l'Expédition Contre la Chine* (Extrait des *Nouvelles Annales des Voyages*, octobre 1840). (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1840), 19.

⁵⁵ Jocelyn, *Six Months with the Chinese Expedition*, 51.

their commentaries upon that early foundation of intra-Chinese alterity, French commentators turned it inside-out to transform their Manchu-Qing associates from partners to pathologized aggressors.

Unsurprisingly, given their objectives, the divide-and-conquer mentality was most evident in military and diplomatic circles. General Antoine Lucien Blondel regularly referred to the “Tartar army” in his account of the expedition, borrowing language from Lord Jocelyn’s widely-circulated account of the first war.⁵⁶ (Jocelyn remarked that there was “little political connection... between the different provinces.” The Mandarins with whom he spoke seemed to underscore perceived ethno-geographic divisions, arguing that the British were justified in “chastising Lin and his Canton colleagues,” but that the “Imperial person” ought to have been left alone, along with “those provinces... which had taken no share in the business.” He had also heard of the “hatred and dislike of the natives in China to their Tartar rulers” before he ever left India. When he and the Plenipotentiary, Captain Elliot, were treated to a show of swordplay during a meeting with Keshen, he observed that the elite “Tartar body-guard,” descended from the same tribe as the sovereign, easily distinguished from the “wretched class” of northern Chinese whom he had encountered upon the Pei Ho.)⁵⁷ British General James Hope Grant was somewhat more perspicacious in his use of the term, and distinguished “Tartar” cavalymen from the rest of the Chinese army, which he called by the name they used for themselves: “Braves.”⁵⁸ British plenipotentiary James Bruce, Lord Elgin’s reports from

⁵⁶ Antoine Lucien Blondel, *Relation de l’Expédition de Chine en 1860* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900), 125, 128, 138.

⁵⁷ Jocelyn, 51, 114-16.

⁵⁸ The term “brave” has multiple significations. In English, it would have called to mind the indigenous warriors of North America. In Chinese, however, several possible sources of origin for the translation might have been “han” (the same as the golden-age dynasty, and ethnonym for the Chinese nation), or “ying” (ironically, the same character used in England (ying guo). Knollys, 53-4. In his personal

the captured forts in Pei-tang, observe that the “Tartars” had more strength in numbers than he would have supposed. Pointedly, those cavalymen bore little resemblance to the “coolies” that his own nation’s army employed to carry provisions.⁵⁹

Those classifications took on additional meaning within the Anglo-French ranks. Cantonese “coolies” from the South joined Indian Sikhs and North African spahis in the allied forces.⁶⁰ Unlike the South Asian and African soldiers, Chinese men were largely confined to roles as porters and scouts. Yet they seemed to experience a disproportionate number of casualties in the conflict. Blondel described how so many coolie porters had been hit by musket fire that many of those still standing refused to move forward, compelling the unit’s engineers to carry their own shells.⁶¹ The British had difficulty recruiting porters for the Chinese Coolie Corps (CCC) for this very reason; although they insisted that the men would not be used in battle, they were drilled and assigned ranks like lance-corporal, corporal, and sergeant, mimicking enlisted men. Rumor circulated that they were to be used as shields, and the army purportedly engaged the basest elements of Hong Kong society.⁶² Knollys reports that Hope Grant believed the twenty-five hundred coolies that his army employed were “for the most part atrocious villains.”

correspondence, Hope Grant wrote that the most important objective of his forces near Beijing would be to “act against the hordes of Tartar Cavalry of which the Chinese army is principally composed.” 1 Feb. 1860 to Lugard, Hope Grant Papers, British Library, 52414, No.7.

⁵⁹ James Bruce, *Letters and Journals of James, Eighth Earl of Elgin, Governor of Jamaica, Governor-General of Canada, Envoy to China Viceroy of India*, ed. Theodore Walrond (Lexington, KY: Alex Struik, 2012. First published London: Arthur Stanley, 1872), 417-8.

⁶⁰ For the creation of “martial races” in the British Empire, and their use in imperial campaigns, see Heather Streets, *Martial Races : The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

⁶¹ Blondel, *Relation de l’Expédition de Chine en 1860*, 104.

⁶² Mann, *China, 1860*, 18-19.

He reported that they so terrorized the townsfolk near their encampment that one family committed suicide, and another strangled its teenaged daughters.⁶³

The CCC was nonetheless useful to Hope Grant and his associates, both physically and discursively. Although the CCC porters were doubtless victims of racist Anglo-French machinations, moved to the front to serve as cannon fodder, the Europeans writing about their anonymous service readily cast them as another group of victims of Manchu perfidy. Their victimhood was evident everywhere. When they assisted French marines in constructing a bridge across the Pei-ho using scaling-ladders, they were compelled to stand in neck-deep water to support the apparatus; “though some of them were shot down they never flinched in the least.”⁶⁴ Although their service for foreign armies presaged their deaths, they fought gallantly for the Europeans, while bullets from their own countrymen mowed them down. The “poor Chinese” inside the fort fared similarly; while they fought “with great bravery,” their own fortifications, with high walls, ditches, and bamboo pikes, prevented their escape. They were incarcerated by the state for whom they fought, and by the Europeans against whom they fought. Several men who attempted to flee were impaled on the stakes, and many others were killed in the gunfight.⁶⁵ They were not described as Tartars.

Likewise, the “native” troops – Sikhs and spahis – that the allies employed in their colonial conflicts allowed French and British commentators to project imperially-internal difference onto their Manchu adversaries. At one particularly worrying moment of the battle for Pei-ho, a British brigade had been nearly surrounded by four thousand “Tartar cavalry,” who attacked in the “gallant style” expected of “Eastern horsemen.”

⁶³ Knollys, *Incidents in the China War of 1860*, 56-7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 88.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

The column was saved by its Sikh soldiers; according to Hope Grant (via Knollys), the Sikhs “understood this style of warfare,” and drove the Manchus away.⁶⁶ One martial race understood the other.

Even the topographical contours of battle rested upon supposed ethnic divisions. Peichili (Běi Zhǐlì), where Anglo-French troops met the Manchus in battle, was at the northernmost end of China proper. Across its border were Inner Mongolia and, a bit further, Manchuria, the ancestral territories of China’s nomadic dynasties. A highly visible barrier - the Great Wall - lent a certain amount of solidity to the more legendary aspects of this division. Its undeniable materiality had overshadowed centuries of warfare and political maneuvering, and it had even played a small role in the first of the Opium Wars, when Robert Jocelyn and his squadron left their conference with Governor-General Keshen (Qíshàn) to explore the shores of “Tartary, where the *Chinese Wall* meets the sea.”⁶⁷ In 1860, the physical barrier acted metaphysically in its hold on both the Qing and the European imagination, as though its placement could penetrate and separate Manchu and Han bloodlines. Prince Gong had a replica built in miniature in the gardens of his Beijing estate – a reminder of his ancient homeland, and a slice of “Tartary” in the heart of the Chinese capital.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁷ Jocelyn, 117.



Figure 6: Replica of the Great Wall's Shānhǎi Pass. Gōng Wángfǔ Museum, Beijing. Author's Collection.

The emperor would seek shelter behind it following the sacking of his refuges near Beijing, and Anglo-French commanders took it both gleefully and fearfully as an abandonment of China.⁶⁸

Producing contrast between Manchu and Chinese was not confined to the conflict, or even to official circles. Writers and travelers joined diplomats and military men in their descriptions of an acute disparity between the two groups, signaling the extent to which martial and civilian cultures were intertwined. Catherine de Bourboulon remarked that the Manchus, “barbarians from the north,” eschewed the “grandiose pageantry of Asian despotism,” and had allowed some of the more magnificent features of Beijing to fall into ruin.⁶⁹ *Le Monde Illustré*'s correspondent Mac Vernoll, known for his depictions of peoples the world over, described the Manchu-Chinese divide as the result of multifarious pressures.⁷⁰ In a vignette of the Xianfeng Emperor written in the aftermath

⁶⁸ Ministère de la Guerre, Cabinet du Ministre to General Montauban, 8 December 1860, AN-Paris Montauban 682 AP/1, B31 .

⁶⁹ Bourboulon, 109.

⁷⁰ Mac Vernoll bio.

of the war, Mac Vernoll laid blame for “the Chinese people’s ills” at the feet of the dynasty, while excusing Xianfeng himself from all but contributing to “attenuating circumstances.” According to Mac Vernoll, the fourth son of Daoguang inherited the war that his father had started with the English. It had all but destroyed the “prestige” of his nation’s armies and forced China to pay a crippling indemnity. Moreover, anti-Manchu insurrections in the South had positioned the Qing as a foreign “Tartar” dynasty. Its incessant, perpetually incomplete attempts to consolidate its control over “legitimate Tang descendants” left the regime’s imperial power “paralyzed from within.” At the same time, Qing forces were battling a “Chinese Mahomet,” [the Panthay or Du Wenxiu Rebellion of Muslims in Yunnan], and Taiping forces poised to take Beijing after they captured Nanjing. In response, wrote Mac Vernoll, Xianfeng decapitated his losing generals, declared victory, and gave himself to pleasure and poetry.⁷¹

Mac Vernoll’s passage would seem to suggest that the dynasty had gone soft, crumbling under the simultaneous pressure from Europe and from China’s internal diversity. However, the author went on to describe Xianfeng’s transformation in his palace. Though the Emperor was only of medium stature, an “elegant” man of thirty, Mac Vernoll believed that the height of his forehead, the pronounced “obliqueness” of his eyes, and his arched brows were evidence of an intrinsically imperious character. He would prove this by adopting severe morals and a strict physical regimen to counteract the “softness” around him. This “passion for violent exercise” led him to his wife, the current Empress, “a Tartar princess who lacks the cuteness or feeble grace of Chinese

⁷¹ Xianfeng’s infirmity was a fairly common trope in European writing. Knollys’s version of Hope Grant’s journals also asserts that the Emperor of China had “worn out his intellects and brought on paralysis, which deprived him of the use of his legs, by debauchery” by the age of 32. Knollys, 37.

women.” He sought her counsel, and “loved to share with her his taste in horsemanship and war games.”⁷²

However, Xianfeng’s seclusion from his subjects mirrored a more widespread Manchu seclusion. F. D. Irénée Veret, Mac Vernoll’s colleague at *Le Monde Illustré*, observed that Beijing’s Imperial Palace was not the only place forbidden to Chinese subjects; the “ville tartare” that it bisected was equally off-limits to non-Manchus, as “Tartars and Chinese never mix.”⁷³ Catherine de Bourboulon’s travelogue-style account of her visit to Beijing was likewise subdivided into chapters on the “ville tartare” and the “ville chinoise.”⁷⁴ [This was not a flight of fancy on Veret’s part. The *bāqí* (Eight Banner system) that ordered Qing military life was organized by ethnicity (Manchu, Han, and Mongol), and subsequently by banner color. The latter was at least partially responsible for settlement patterns, as Manchu tradition associated color with direction. The prestigious yellow banners, which tended to contain the descendants of the Manchu conquerors, were placed in the north of Beijing, while the blue banners (of the lowest rank) were in the south.]⁷⁵ Montauban believed that this separation was a hallmark of Asia’s nomadic dynasties: like the Mongols (or Mughals) and the Turks, the Manchus viewed themselves as a conquering race; their power depended upon their ability to assume the administrative functions of the states they succeeded while keeping themselves apart from the peoples over whom they ruled.⁷⁶

⁷² Mac Vernoll, *Le Monde Illustré*, 2 February, 1861. Tolbiac MICROFILM M-8000

⁷³ F. D. Irénée Veret, “Pékin et les Chinois,” *Le Monde Illustré*, 28 Janvier 1860. Tolbiac MICROFILM M-8000

⁷⁴ Bourboulon, 86-135.

⁷⁵ Edward J.M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 24.

⁷⁶ Charles-Guillaume-Marie-Appoline-Antoine Cousin de Montauban, Cte de Palikao, *L'Expédition de Chine, d'après la correspondance confidentielle du G^{al} Cousin de Montauban, comte de Palikao*, publiée

The women of each group, Veret remarked, were keen markers of this social separation. While wealthy Manchu women paraded around the city dressed sumptuously, in bright colors, Chinese women seldom went out, “because of their useless feet.”⁷⁷ Veret had little love for either “race.” He interrupted a description of the “immense bazaar” of Beijing’s frenetic street life to quip that “the Chinese is an eminent salesman, if not an outright thief.” However, it was the Manchus, with the emperor at their head, who were keeping a stranglehold on the nation. Veret alleged that he and his friends were able to visit both the city and its suburbs – “everything, really” – without trouble. Even a brief excursion required the Emperor’s authorization, however, “even to take the waters a few leagues from here, in the mountains.” Permission came at a cost, as “the sovereign habitually charges for the right to circulate in his empire,” so that even modest voyages “were always lucrative for His Majesty’s treasury.” While this came to little in the grand scheme of things, it was proof of how “shady” the government was in its transactions with the foreigners, for whom it had nothing but horror and disdain. Moreover, Veret wrote, in his travels in the countryside, he found military colonies everywhere; China was “governed, guarded, and bastioned by a formidable network of these stations.”⁷⁸ It was as though the state could only maintain power over its non-Manchu denizens through the bald display of force.

Another anonymous reporter, claiming to be a French student visiting China, had a more Foucauldian impression of Manchu authority. He noticed, with some surprise, that crowds quickly parted for a mandarin when they saw the parasol that he carried as a sign

par le Comte d'Hérison, Interprète-secrétaire particulier du général de Montauban. (Paris, C. Plon et Cie, 1883), Introduction, iii. BnF-Gallica NUMM- 5814945/ Tolbiac 8- LH4- 4777.

⁷⁷ F. D. Irénée Veret, "Pékin et les Chinois," *Le Monde Illustré*, 28 Janvier 1860. BnF-Tolbiac MICROFILM M-8000.

⁷⁸ F. D. Irénée Veret, "Pékin et les Chinois (suite et fin)," *Le Monde Illustré*, 12 May 1860.

of his rank.⁷⁹ No force was used; it was not needed, as movement at the sight of the parasol testified to a more deeply internalized discipline separating the ruling regime from its subjects. The student did not mention the official provenance, but his status as a man of letters associated him with the Qing state; his authority was derived from that connection, and it was the reason that the populace would not mingle.

In addition to power, sumptuary distinctions, and enforced settlement patterns, Europeans began to note differences in Manchu and Chinese physical characteristics. Their descriptions used the vocabulary of nineteenth-century ethnography, but they also reflected changing imperatives in French relationships with Han and Manchu Chinese. Georges de Kéroulée, an attaché to Gros' embassy, described seeing increasing numbers of "Tartar types" as he moved toward Beijing. Although their difference from the Chinese was nearly imperceptible to the untrained eye, after he had spent months in the vicinity of "Pe-tche-li" (Běi Zhǐlǐ), he claimed to be able to distinguish the "fine, straight nose, solemn eyes, [and] protruding cheekbones" of the Manchu countenance. The Chinese, he declared, possessed rounder heads, paler skin, and flatter noses. Physiognomic divergence was read – or invented – affectively. While the Chinese possessed a jovial, "roly-poly effeminacy," the Manchus' tended to stare at Europeans, or to follow them with "malevolent expressions" as they passed through. Like ants, he wrote, their children crowded around him, their eyes "devouring our barbarian beards."⁸⁰

As MacVernoll and Kéroulée's comments show, alleged dissimilarities between Manchu and Chinese were articulated in gendered terms. Malevolence was evidence of the kind of hyper-masculine savagery that the Manchu elite had displayed during the

⁷⁹ *Le Monde Illustré*, 28 Avril 1860.

⁸⁰ Georges de Kéroulée, *Souvenirs de l'Expedition de Chine: Un Voyage à Pékin* (Paris: P. Brunet, 1861), 14.

hostage crisis of 1860. The alleged effeminacy of the Chinese rendered them as passive subjects, and thus more suitable for French protection. France (and Britain, though French sources tend to be rather silent about that troubled alliance) thus positioned itself as the suitably masculine mediator in China's internal ethno-gender regimes as well as in broader global ones, buttressing Chinese frailty, and, in essence, fighting fire with fire as it marshaled the "martial races" of European empires to temper Manchu bellicosity.

While French and British observers wished to define "Chinese" and "Tartar" into highly differentiated camps, the distinctions often grew muddy in practice. The "types" overlapped and melted into one another, aided by linguistic slippage as "Chinese," "Manchu," and "Imperial troops" were used almost interchangeably. General Blondel's account of the battle at Pei-Ho (Bái Hé) moved easily between descriptions of the fort's "Tartar defenders" and the "Chinese" hoisting their flag. He spoke of the "Tartar" cavalry firing upon an Anglo-Indian contingent but went on to refer to the event as "Chinese treason" in his very next paragraph.⁸¹ Mac Vernoll's gendered discussion of Manchu physicality staggered confusedly between virility and impotence, as the "softness" around Xianfeng was at times a Chinese attribute, and at others, a Manchu failing. The flight of the Emperor and his consort from Beijing upon the entry of allied troops, he wrote, "proves that the emperor Hien-Foung and his company prefer playing at war to war itself."⁸² Montauban considered the Chinese who had fought in his ranks to be intelligent, courageous men who only lacked discipline. Many in the Coolie Corps had exceeded the terms of their contracts and thrown themselves into battle. A stronger hand, Montauban

⁸¹ Blondel, *Relation de l'Expédition de Chine en 1860*, 78-80, 129-31.

⁸² Mac Vernoll, *Le Monde Illustré*, 2 February, 1861. Tolbiac MICROFILM M-8000.

maintained, would turn them into “soldiers of the first order.”⁸³ Even in these cases, though, subtle variations signaled difference, with “Tartar” most often used in the context of violence, aggression, and leadership. “Tartars” captured Europeans, surrounded them in battle, and shot members of the Coolie Corps. Chinese fought gallantly, but died, as in Knollys’s account.⁸⁴ Even those who insisted that they found little evidence of widespread antipathy alluded to the keen disjunction of “ethnicities;” it was perhaps for both of these reasons that fostering greater discord was in the interests of the invaders. Maurice d’Irisson, the translator, refrained from including “tartar” in his vocabulary but nonetheless believed that the Qing government was consciously feeding both the populace and its own armies terrifying information about the “Occidental barbarians.” It was that fear – “fear of falling into our hands, the desire to protect their loved ones, their wives, their children from us, had driven them to horrible extremities.”⁸⁵ In d’Irisson’s version, the events at Bái Hé were not nasty attacks on peaceful Europeans, but a defensive reaction by the petrified tenants of an occupied land.

The profile of the Manchu in European writing in 1860 captured the fascination with the figure of the Tartar that had had emerged pointedly during the recent Crimean War, and which continued to linger in visions of Eurasia as a racial battleground. In the Crimea, the Tartar was an incarnation of the savage soul lurking within the veneer of a civilized Russia; contemporaries viewed the war as an unmasking of Asiatic incivility, revealing Europe’s ultimate difference from the East.⁸⁶ The Mongol/Tartar/Manchu in French writings from China likewise represented instability, guile, and brutality. With the

⁸³ Montauban, *L’Expédition de Chine*, IV, V.

⁸⁴ Knollys, 90.

⁸⁵ D’Irisson, *La Destruction du Palais d’été*, 86-7.

⁸⁶ Mary Anne Perkins, *Christendom and European Identity: The Legacy of a Grand Narrative Since 1789* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 289-90.

idea of a Christian-European civilizing mission taking on ever more urgent tones, all of those attributes were meant to be combatted globally. However, the specter of the Tartar also called to mind more immediate dangers, pushing upon the borders of Europe itself. In Venet's series of articles for *Le Monde Illustré*, for instance, "Tartars" appeared not only in Beijing, but in India, Central Asia, and Constantinople.⁸⁷ They surfaced again in Montauban's memoirs, as he contextualized the campaign of 1860 within a long-term race war between Aryan and "Turanian" that had begun with Ghengis Khan. In Montauban's mind, the Anglo-French defeat of the Qing dynasty was the last step in the Aryan rise to supremacy. The French had defeated the "Great Turk," and the British had brought down the "Great Mongol." Through a combined Euro-Aryan effort, French and British forces had shaken the might of the last representative of the nomadic "Turanian" civilization: the Emperor of China.⁸⁸

When French writers engaged in the amateur historical exercise of conflating Crimean Tartars with other Mongol-adjacent groups, they evoked a centuries-old threat to Christendom. Europe had been surprised by the Mongol armies at the gates of Vienna, and by Russians masquerading as refined brethren. Identifying the Qing ruling class with their nomadic cousins was an act of advance recognition, and a piqued turnabout of the language of difference. For Franco-British soldiers facing death and defeat, the "Tartar" armies became the real barbarians. Their savage means, so like those of the Mongol empire in the European imagination, proved it. The careful conflation of Qing and Manchu, Manchu and Mongol assured that this time, Europe would not be surprised. They would punish only the vestigial wing of Tartar power: the destruction of the

⁸⁷ Venet, Pékin et les Chinois (Suite et fin), *Le Monde Illustré*, 4 Février 1860.

⁸⁸ Montauban, Introduction, ii.

Yuánmíngyuán was meant to be “a blow aimed entirely at the Chinese Government [the Manchus], by whom, and not by the people, these atrocities have been committed.”⁸⁹

For many, though, the measures taken by the expedition called Europe’s own civility into question. While French soldier Armand Lucy had little trouble with his compatriots’ looting, he was deeply troubled by what he described as a unilateral British act of vandalism in their decision to burn down the Yuánmíngyuán. “It is destruction for the sake of destruction,” he wrote, an “act of savagery” that had reduced a great marvel to ashes.⁹⁰ In keeping with tradition – Balzac had offered his thoughts on the first of the Opium Wars – major literary figures like Victor Hugo also spoke out against the sacking. Hugo’s friend Captain Butler had evidently favored the bi-national expedition of 1860, and according to Hugo, saw it as “a glory to be shared between France and England.” Hugo disagreed. He spoke mournfully of the loss of a work of “an almost super-human people.” Imagine, he wrote to his friend, a “lunar edifice.” Cover it in marble, jade, porcelain, and bronze. “Drape it with silk, make it a sanctuary, the harem, the citadel, and house within it gods and monsters, cover it in varnish and gold.” Then, after making its architectural poets construct “a thousand and one dreams for a thousand and one nights,” add to this masterpiece gardens and fountains, peacocks and swans, and picture a “dazzling cavern of human fantasy.”⁹¹ That had been the Summer Palace.

Hugo’s linguistic choices render the act of construction a sacred one, as though the ephemeral edifice had been mapped onto the sacral relationships of a universal church and its global flock; it was France and China, writ small and large. This masterpiece of

⁸⁹ Knollys, 204.

⁹⁰ Armand Lucy, *Souvenirs de voyage*, 120-1.

⁹¹ Victor Hugo to Captain Butler, 25 November 1861, in *Actes et Paroles, Pendant l'exil, 1852-1870*, Second Edition (Paris: Michel Levy Frères, 1875), 199-200.

Asian art had been built over the course of centuries, and it belonged not only to China, but to all people. In spite of Hope Grant's insistence that "the blow" was a relatively humanitarian response that chastened the Qing while sparing lives and shielding the Chinese populace, many were profoundly disquieted by the destruction.⁹²

Hugo's discussion of the Yuánmíngyuán, which has entered Chinese discourse as an "apology" to the Chinese people, is perhaps the best-known condemnation to follow the destruction. Part of the text is enshrined on a plaque at the Yuánmíngyuán, and repeated on the wall of its museum. However, the measure also resonated well outside of his politically-conscious sphere. It reverberated across continents, and voices of anger issued from unlikely places.

In the villages of France and Britain, liberal souls worried that their nations had become the worst sort of imperialists, enacting a petty, vengeful punishment on a weaker government for daring to take on European strength. An open letter published in Yorkshire's Scarborough Gazette, written under the pseudonym "Viator," cried that the Treaty of Peking was "tarnished" by "an act of wanton outrage on our parts," the like of which has not been recorded for many ages in the annals of violence." It was the nadir of a series of misunderstandings stemming from the "first quarrel" [the First Opium War of the early eighteen forties]. In "Viator's" opinion, the Chinese had been the weaker party in the conflict. For that seemingly obvious reason, after the English had suffered an ignominious defeat early in the campaign, the nation had been compelled to "put forth its strength."⁹³ Up to that point, "Viator" implies, all had acted as honorably as could be

⁹² Hope Grant to Headquarters, October 18, 1860, in Knollys, 204.

⁹³ "The War with China, and the Destruction of the Summer Palace of the Emperor." Extracted from the Scarborough Gazette, Jan. 31, 1861. Scarborough: S.W. Theakston, Priter, Gazette Office, 1861. Cheshire Record Office, DJW 04/30, 3-5.

expected in warfare. However British and French forces had destroyed “an edifice, or rather a multitude of edifices, of unparalleled magnificence and curiosity.” Worse, of course, was that press coverage in the United Kingdom treated the incident as a unilateral British act, “the French Commander-in-Chief being opposed.”⁹⁴

More explicitly than any of his fellow commentators, “Viator” pointed to the very deliberate nature of the expedition’s movements. The immense distance that had to be covered to get from the gate to the end of the gardens alone suggested that the forces’ sojourn within the walls had been about more than finding temporary shelter. From the first place “seized by the French” on October 6th, he wrote, they would have had to march six or seven leagues before reaching the last building in the complex.⁹⁵ Still, the studied, pre-meditated nature of the action was even more nefarious. Viator noted that Lord Elgin himself had openly discussed his motives for the punitive step, going so far as to write to Prince Gong to warn him of the destruction to come. According to the writer, Elgin had only ever considered three possible courses of action: plunder, execution (“murder!,” interjected Viator) of China’s princes, or demolition of the Summer Palace. As the first was impossible – “money cannot be looted for” – and the second difficult, Viator remarked bitterly that “our great English Mandarin” considered it his duty to follow the third path; “oscillating between blood, plunder, and fire, came at last to the conclusion that the devouring element would most aptly answer all demands of his ethical proposition.”⁹⁶

The destruction of the Yuánmíngyuán was a “dark page of English History,” Viator asserted, because it demonstrated a profound lack of the “reservation” that ought

⁹⁴ “The War with China,” 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁶ “The War with China,” 7.

to “distinguish the English gentleman.” Imagine, he asked his readers, if after decades of forced commerce, thirty or forty Chinese scaled the walls of Balmoral, or burned Windsor Castle to the ground!⁹⁷ He asked, rhetorically, if might truly be considered was truly the “achievement” of a civilized people. Bristling at the Chinese designation of foreigners as “barbarians” or “devils,” Europeans had used their recent treaties to insist that new terminology be used to describe them. In Viator’s opinion, though, this act of destruction would do little to convince Chinese that “we are not a diabolical race.” It had done nothing to teach the supposedly “brutal Chinese... the European lessons of civilization and humanity.” It would leave, he argued, “an imperishable stigma on our memories.” He worried that it represented a troubling trend, a “constant tendency to deterioration in our national character.”⁹⁸

Viator, whose remarkably detailed description of the Yuánmíngyuán may have signaled his intimate knowledge of the place and what had occurred within it, echoed Hugo in his colorful description of the palace.⁹⁹ He first described its location in relation to Beijing, “at the foot of the first range of hills,” with yellow-tiled roofs visible through the foliage. A large lake containing several islands “lay buried in the midst of those wooded hills;” the islands were joined to mainland by “quaint and beautiful stone bridges.” He led the reader through the “favorite walks of the Emperor,” through stone paths, grottoes, and gardens. In the background were the high mountains of Tartary. The

⁹⁷ Ibid., 8-9.

⁹⁸ “The War with China,” 9-10.

⁹⁹ It is also possible that this was simply a reflection of the heightened public interest in the events at the Yuánmíngyuán following an abundance of information circulating between empires; newspaper correspondents who were attached to the expedition frequently used a kind of thick description in their narratives, and several members of the forces quickly published memoirs upon their return to France. However, “Viator’s” descriptions do seem to signal that he had been present within the gardens.

tableau, he remarked, was “one of the most beautiful scenes I ever beheld.”¹⁰⁰ And then it was gone.

The Yuánmíngyuán’s cosmopolitan composition was no accident. Literary theorist Haiyan Lee argues that in its role as the “garden of all gardens,” the Yuánmíngyuán was a heterotopia, in the Foucauldian sense – where utopia was achieved, at once a concrete manifestation and that *was* and was yet *removed from* all places. It was self-consciously imperial, she writes, in its goal of containing a representation of all real places (“all under heaven,” or tiānxià) including those outside of the Qing empire. She asserts that the European palaces (Xīyáng lóu) were not the primary targets of Anglo-French destruction; rather, as the Chinese-style wooden pagodas were decimated by the flames, the Xīyáng lóu are all that survive as ruins to testify to the more complete destruction of the complex.¹⁰¹

The allied accounts do not linger on how the demolition was accomplished. However, the stones were torn asunder, and not by nature. Thus, the Chinese parts of the gardens were destroyed; the stones of the European palaces were left to testify. However, the places that affirmed an older state of relations were also set upon. The Xīyáng lóu were physical manifestations of the old Sino-European partnership. Pulling them down seemed to leave evidence of its demise. Only the Jesuit labyrinth remained intact, a symbolic remnant of the old, now confused partnership between France and China, which had somehow lost its way.

¹⁰⁰ “The War with China,” 5.

¹⁰¹ Haiyan Lee, “The Ruins of the Yuanmingyuan: Or, How to Enjoy a National Wound,” *Modern China* 35 (2009), 159.



Figure 7: Xīyáng lóu (Western Buildings), Yuánmíngyuán. Author's Collection.

After its destruction, the Yuánmíngyuán took on a secondary universality. In its figurative death, it lost its capacity to contain all under heaven; however, it could do that in ghostly form, in the collective memory of empires.

All this has been burnt, scattered or destroyed, by a brave English army the grandest gallery of oriental curiosities that ever existed, the choicest specimens of artistic skill, accumulated from age to age, in halls of marble or pavilions of porcelain, the shrines of the Deities, with their colossal statues of silver and the offerings of the Emperors of all the dynasties, together with all the ornaments and wardrobes for the ceremonies of state or the pomps of religion – all these, and whatever else we may suppose the most ancient and proudest monarchy upon earth had been collecting from generation to generation, by a boundless expenditure, have been delivered to the devouring flame, to express Lord Elgin's "sense of duty," and, as he plainly tells us, to wound the pride and hurt the feelings of the Emperor of China.¹⁰²

"Viator's" commentary, along with those of Montauban, Bazancourt, Elgin, Lucy, and Hugo, bequeathed the Yuánmíngyuán to the rest of the world. Once it had been

¹⁰² "The War with China," 9.

envisioned by those who had never seen it (and never would), its mental and verbal specters carved out a place for themselves in the global imagination. In its imaginary form, it took on a new life as a site of world heritage. While its Chinese-ness underscored its exotic importance, the shame of its destruction was contained in the violation of its now supposedly universal ownership. "... we may say that throughout the whole world there would be found nothing at all to compare to Yuen Ming Yuen." But this "brilliant scene of fairy-land... has been annihilated in two days labor of an English army... destined by their sovereign to shew their valour against the brave, not to wield the crow-bar of the burglar and the torch of the incendiary."¹⁰³

When word that the European invaders had violated the Yuánmíngyuán reached the Qing Emperor, he fled to Jehol (Chéngdé). His flight, if it were to be permanent, would leave a vacuum of power that the French commanders feared would drag them into a long-term stay in Beijing. It also provided evidence of the ultimate weakness of nomadic empires. European observers with any knowledge of Chinese history found an easy comparison with an earlier dynastic contraction. Adolphe Armande, a physician from Montpellier in the Expeditionary forces' ambulance unit, recalled that the last Mongol emperor, Shùndì, had been supplanted by a popular insurrection in 1357. Like the current conflict, it had plunged the country into "disorder and calamity" that bordered on civil war. When Shùndì was replaced by a new king chosen by Chinese soldiers, he found refuge in "Tartary," effectively committing regal suicide. Armand noted that the descendants of Ghengis Khan had ruled for less than a century; the Chinese, it was clear,

¹⁰³ Ibid., 6.

would not “support the barbarian yoke.”¹⁰⁴ In the next breath, he alluded to the Qing’s own barbarian origins, writing of the troubles of a different but related race: the “Manchu Tartars” currently on the throne. It seemed that flight was their hallmark. According to Armand’s rather confused polemic, early in the dynasty’s reign, as Jesuit and Dominican missionaries battled over Chinese souls and Father Schaal became the court’s own mathematician, the Kāngxī emperor’s father Shùnzhi, went mad with grief upon the deaths of his wife and infant son. He all but abdicated. When his attempts to seek a life of monastic seclusion were denied by his ministers of state, he died of a broken heart at the age of twenty-four.¹⁰⁵ Armand took a fair amount of poetic license. Shùnzhi’s consort and child died of smallpox; he succumbed to the same illness. The French doctor’s version also seems to amalgamate the stories of Shùnzhi and one of his predecessors, Wénzōng, who also died in his twenties, following a brutal civil war and the loss of his newborn heir.¹⁰⁶

Documents allegedly found in the Summer Palace, frequently published along with European accounts of the war, fostered credence in a vicious but weak Manchu warrior ethic. Most echoed ethnic Mongolian general Sengge Rinchen’s call to “attack the Barbarians and exterminate them.”¹⁰⁷ Mandarin “Kia-tchin” attributed that desire to the Emperor himself, in referring to a decree “by which our Emperor conveys his intention... to exterminate the accursed race of Barbarians.”¹⁰⁸ Sengge Rinchen’s own report to the Emperor, dated the tenth day of the seventh month in the Chinese calendar,

¹⁰⁴ Adolphe Armand, *Lettres de l’Expédition de Chine* (Paris E. Thunot et Cie, 1860), 131.

¹⁰⁵ Armand, *Lettres*, 132-3.

¹⁰⁶ Lauren Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures: The Jesuit Mission to China and its Influence on the Art of the West, 1250-1350* (San Francisco: Desiderata Press, 1999), 100.

¹⁰⁷ San Ko Li Tsin’s report to the Emperor, 26 August 1860, in Blondel, 174.

¹⁰⁸ “Adresse présenté à l’Empereur de Chine par Kia-chin et autres grands mandarins, le 24 jour de la 7e lune de Kien-Fong (9 septembre 1860), in Blondel, 176.

or 26 august 1860, pleaded with the Emperor to “follow the example of his predecessors by going to Jehol for the autumn hunt.”¹⁰⁹ However, others among his advisers worried that the absence would send a troubling message to the Anglo-French forces, and would likely even “compromise in the most grave manner... the stability of the government.” They begged him to return to Beijing “to restore tranquility.”¹¹⁰

For the Europeans observing the expedition, the documents worked together to compose a tidy narrative of Manchu deficiency. In warfare, the Qing were hyper-masculine savages; in peace, they were too soft to rule. These gendered extremes did not balance one another, but mixed together to form a dangerously impotent, misdirected power. The worst part, in French minds, was that Qing warrior excess was not mitigated by the kind of Christ-like feminine compassion that they had sought to cultivate in their rapport with the dynasty and its denizens. In this context, the events of 1860 represented both the apotheosis and the rejection of the feminized French guise. The execution of Auguste Chapdelaine and his followers in 1856 was taken as an outright rejection of the Sino-French friendship that had existed since Shùnzhì's reign, while the betrayal of the allied negotiating party openly insulted those who still placed trust in old bonds. In Blondel's words, the campaign had been undertaken with one thing in mind: they were there to avenge the “blood of our soldiers, which flowed at the mouth of the Bei He against the tide of broken treaties.” The French Emperor, having “accomplished his civilizing mission” by forcing the Qing government to formally recognize and amplify its partnership with France, had “recorded new triumphs in the annals of the nation.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Jehol, or Rèhé (热河) in Chinese. Rapport de San-Ko-Li-Tsin, in Blondel, 174.

¹¹⁰ “Mémoire adressé par Tsiouen-King et Ho, Autres dignitaires de l'Empire, le 27e jour de la 7e lune (12 septembre 1860); “Mémoire adressé par Tsiouen-King, Ministre d'Etat,” in Blondel, 178.

¹¹¹ Blondel, 169.

The Emperor's flight, however unstable it rendered the country, also presented the belligerents with the prospect of renewal, as the "native" Ming dynasty had done following the withdrawal of the Mongol Yuan. France had saved China; it could then help to renew her.¹¹² Setting the Emperor running returned the Manchu to an idealized nomadic state, and removed their violation of Chinese space. European troops then occupied Beijing and, in their association with its Chinese residents, returned it to its rightful owners. By bringing temporary earthly disorder, the Anglo-French believed that they had restored enduring celestial order.

They did not touch the Forbidden City. Having restored their honor in this way, they assumed the role of dominant instructors. They imagined that the Qing, "in spite of the cruel chastisement inflicted upon them," conceded French superiority, with Prince Gong desiring that "his officers be trained in the European art of war."¹¹³ They pretended that they were known for strength, not compassion; if they displayed love, it would be the distant, paternal sort, bearing the signature of Napoleon.¹¹⁴

For much of the previous two decades, French agents had nurtured a relationship with China that was founded upon a tripartite gender regime. The English-speaking powers acted as hyper-masculine father figures, whose mercenary interests and orderly codification of relations were superseded only by their punishing anger when they were opposed. China was understood to be the feminine partner – in spite of Qing agents'

¹¹² "La France seule peut sauver la Chine et la régénérer," remarked the Abbé Delamare; in his view, missionaries and their knowledge of Chinese – not Manchu – language and culture would be an indispensable partner in fostering democratic ideals in a future Christian Chinese state. Abbé S.C. Delamare, ex-interpreter of the French Embassy in China, to Montauban, Sichuan, 10 October 1862. AN-Paris, Montauban 682 AP/2, H15, AN-Paris.

¹¹³ Blondel, 171.

¹¹⁴ Many of the accounts of the expedition highlighted the king's satisfaction with the expedition, particularly in relation to the "perseverance and bravery" of its soldiers. Blondel, 172.

efforts to establish a stronger stance. France occupied a somewhat complex tertiary position, as a lover whose more ardent overtures were tempered by a Christian compassion. Without Britain in the equation, France and China might have stood together as Christo-feminized brothers, much like the apostles in their celibate mutual affection. Yet Britain was never absent. Throughout the 1850s, its diplomats were ever more strident in their insistence that their codified position was being flouted by the insolent Chinese. When Chinese subjects seemed to rebuff their part in the Franco-Christian trinity with Auguste Chapdelaine's martyrdom in 1856, the masculine element of France's position was also threatened. French masculinity depended upon successful evangelization; without China, it was but Britain's less-potent neighbor. The Second Opium War can thus be understood as more than simply an attempt to enforce treaty terms. Two of the parties rejected their roles in the imaginary tripartite regime, and the convulsive re-negotiation of positions became a contest of masculine valor, marking a fundamental transformation of the relationship. France threw off its Christo-feminine trappings and situated itself alongside masculine Britain, while the Qing state, in warfare, seemed to straddle the Manchu warrior ethic and "modern" diplomatic restraint. When French agents spoke of broken laws and treaties, they meant friendships and promises, and convinced themselves that their revenge was justified because it rescued their national honor. They played the part of scorned lovers, burning the keepsake album and keeping the valuables. The loot from the Yuánmíngyuán was their divorce settlement. Pulling down the Western palaces was a ritual recognition of this affective break; the stones were but physical manifestations of the relationships that were already irreversibly shattered.

CHAPTER 5

FROM EXPEDITION TO EXPOSITION: CHINA IN FRANCE

As tendrils of smoke from the burned-out ruins of the Yuánmíngyuán reached toward the sky, General Montauban and Lord Elgin took the objects that their forces had looted at the end of the Anglo-French expedition to China and wrapped them in silks from the Xianfeng Emperor's storerooms. They dispatched the collection posthaste to Paris and London.¹ The most precious items were intended as personal gifts for Queen Victoria and the Emperor Napoleon III, but in France the rituals of their acceptance made them the bounty of the nation at large. These artifacts testified to the experiences of the supposed victors. Most pointedly, those that invoked the symbolic conquest of the Chinese imperial apparatus in the guise of the Yuánmíngyuán were put on public display before being integrated into the regalia of the Second Empire. In the aftermath of the expedition of 1860, a series of public events that exhibited physical proof of the victory brought China back to the French metropole. However, other narratives of China dissociated from recent events were inserted into the triumphal parades. Spectacular exhibits of Chinese material culture portrayed a limited vision of the East in their reliance on "tradition," stereotype, and the familiar exotic. Alongside the Chinese pavilion at the International Exposition of 1867, they used the tropes that French eyes had encountered through art and commerce for several centuries.² Those very reminders paradoxically masked the history they were meant to recall. Their presentation relied upon the hybrid knowledge of an increasingly imperial France, but they also portrayed China as a pure

¹ *The London and China Telegraph*, 12 January, 1861.

² Among the most prominent examples were the Jingdezhen porcelain exported throughout the French empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Brook, 61.

and separate space. In their divestment from their place of origin and re-arrangement in the French metropole, the objects became souvenirs: reminders of something known and cherished, punished and rejected, and embraced again.

The allure of Chinese objects in France had been tightly bound to the French mission from its beginnings. Nineteenth-century exhibits used the language of the eighteenth-century craze for Chinoiserie, and that craze itself had deep roots: two centuries earlier, French Jesuits' fantastical descriptions of the imperial palace in Beijing had launched a faddish but lasting interest in Chinese objects. The vivid imagery contained within their *Lettres édifiantes* spawned a continent-wide obsession with "Oriental" objects, from fans and dressing gowns to lacquer screens and gardens, and inspired the literature of Montesquieu and Voltaire.³ The trend was equal parts exotic and imperial, and that potent combination made the style particularly welcome in the palaces of France. Madame de Sévigné's epistles were written at a Chinese desk, while Cardinal Richelieu's *cabinet chinois* (Chinese parlor) lent both substance and cachet to his residence on the royal *Place des Vosges* in Paris.⁴ Then, at the height of the attempt to extend French commercial interests, Théodose de Lagrene's trade delegation in the eighteen forties had also involved a highly important exhibition both of the cloth samples they hoped to unleash on Chinese consumers and the bric-a-brac that they found in

³ Ouyang Zhesheng, "The "Beijing Experience" of Eighteenth-Century French Jesuits: A Discussion Centered on *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites des missions étrangères*," *Chinese Studies in History*, vol. 46, no. 2, (Winter 2012–13): 35–57. Louise Tythacott argues that due to late Ming policies of isolation, Europe's connection with China was mediated almost entirely through objects, which were prized for their exquisite construction and association with the wealthiest, most "civilized" country in the world. Later, however, when the forced contact of the Opium Wars transformed collecting into an explicitly imperialist exercise, seized decorative objects and icons became more trophy-like. Louise Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects: Buddhism, Imperialism, and Display* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 52–73.

⁴ Richelieu's *cabinet chinois* and Madame de Sévigné's desk are today on display at the Musée Carnavalet in Paris. <http://www.carnavalet.paris.fr/en/museum-carnavalet>.

Guangzhou's markets.⁵ When Charles de Montigny returned to France to pretend that he had acted bravely overseas, he had his captivating two-thousand piece menagerie displayed near the Louvre.⁶ However, the displays of the eighteen sixties were markedly different from earlier examples. Previous salons and museums had treated Parisian society to Oriental curiosities, and eventually showcased the textiles, porcelains, and laquerware that had become part of everyday European life. The showcases of 1861, however, were bald Roman triumphs - even if they declined to strangle the Chinese Emperor at the end.⁷

Even before the punitive measures of the expedition made the triumphal parades possible, the French public was treated to a display of "precious objects" that a former consul in Shanghai had brought back from his stay. In May of 1860, as French troops "pacifying" Cochinchina were preparing to join their compatriots in the expedition to China, Charles de Montigny's "Chinese Museum" made its own journey from inside the walls of the Louvre to be put on view near the Champs Elysées. *Le Monde Illustré's* review of the show reported that Montigny seemed to have discovered the "secret of creation" in Chinese art. When the viewer entered the collection, he was "transported in an instant to a new world," one filled with golden dragons, enameled deer and flowers, bronze vases, and perfectly rendered birds. They could walk among exquisitely rendered

⁵ This is discussed at length in Chapter 2.

⁶ The collection of "la vie et l'art Chinois" was displayed again in 1860, as public interest was piqued by the presence of French expeditionary forces in China (the next week's paper featured General Montauban's disembarkation in Hong Kong). The second appearance took place near the Arc de Triomphe; the move transformed it from artistic to imperial display. "Collection d'objets précieux rapportés de la Chine par M. de Montigny," *Le Monde Illustré*, 19 Mai 1860; Maxime Vauvert, "Débarquement du général de Montauban à Hong Kong," *Le Monde Illustré*, 26 May 1860. BnF-Tolbiac, MICROFILM M-8000 (7 January 1860 – 28 December 1861).

⁷ James Hevia describes the objects looted from the Yuanmingyuan as "emblems of humiliation." James Hevia, "Loot's Fate: The economy of plunder and the moral life of objects "From the summer palace of the emperor of China," *History and Anthropology* Vol. 6, No. 4 (April 1994): 319.

panels of silk containing timeless scenes of Chinese life, then pass the two-story embroidered pagoda “more appropriate to modern tastes.” Finally, a series of window displays contained the wealth of the Chinese empire: jade, amethyst, cornelian, agates, lapis lazuli, and malachite, all arranged as if to form a relief. This “beau travail” of ancient artisans attested to the privilege of China’s emperors, and stupefied visitors. One wondered, the author wrote, “what other nation beside China could execute such marvels.” Of course, the goal of the exhibit was not simply to present the riches of China. As the review noted, the eminent Montigny aimed to present France IN China. Only the expert eye of the Consul could discern which objects were representative of “the most particular... tastes of a civilization about to be extinguished.”⁸

Le Monde Illustré included the expedition to China among its metropolitan and imperial milestones in its satirical end-of-year edition in 1860. In addition to the French flag being hoisted at the summit of Mont Blanc, the continued supremacy of Parisian fashion, and the Spanish traversal of Morocco, French soldiers’ departure for China, and the Chinese emperor’s flight to Chengde merited inclusion in the newspaper’s “Year in Review” supplement. France, embodied as a woman, adopting an abandoned child also made the list – a clear reference to the efforts of the *Oeuvre de la Sainte Enfance* in China.⁹ Yet shows like Montigny’s of the objects that testified to a real and profound French intervention – those whose materiality spoke of French bodies walking through China, French eyes seeing its treasures, and French hands carrying them home – made the greatest waves. For several years after the Yuánmíngyuán was sacked, its contents would

⁸ Allongé, “Collection d’objets précieux rapports de la Chine par M. de Montigny,” *Le Monde Illustré*, No. 162, 19 May 1860, 331. The next article, by MacVernoll (see Chapter 4), concerned the movement of troops from Cochinchina to China. BnF-Tolbiac Microfilm M-8000 1860-1861.

⁹ “L’Année de Saint-Médard,” *Le Monde Illustré*, No. 194, 29 December 1860, 428-9. BnF Tolbiac Microfilm M-8000 1860-1861.

be presented in the salons of Paris, gathered into a royally-curated “museum,” and auctioned off for the parlors of the wealthy. Some items would eventually be used to recreate a Chinese garden at the *Exposition Universelle* in 1867. Ian Hodder, a theorist of material culture, asserts that cultural objects are arbitrary in their use – in his words, “any object will do as long as it conveys the correct information.” Yet that object’s context – “the historical content of the changing ideas and associations of the object itself” – lend logic to its selection.¹⁰ Archeologist Charles Tilley builds on Hodder’s work to argue that objects have multiple, fluctuating meanings depending on context – for example, the context of display, as well as the context of viewership, drawing both the observer and the mediating expert into the “text” of the object. How a viewer perceives an object is thus entangled with why it is being presented and observed, all framed within and disseminated by institutional forms and discourses.¹¹ Although the mediators of the exhibits of the early eighteenth century are not known to us, but their broader context is apparent. They existed in a crucible of recent images of symbolic conquest, and in the translation of scholarly Orientalism into its own popular twin, all heavily informed by at least two hundred years of literary, stage, religious, and decorative knowledge production, stereotype, and imagination. The objects carried back to Paris seemed to hold the hallowed energy of their provenance. Yet their gathering, display, and possession were also a sort of exorcism. The exhibition sites – the Champs Elysées and Eugénie’s quarters at Fontainebleau – not only placed Chinese material upon French soil, but also coupled public access and royal domestication. By the time they appeared at the

¹⁰ Ian Hodder, “The contextual analysis of symbolic meanings,” in Ian Hodder, ed., *The Archaeology of Contextual Meanings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.

¹¹ Christopher Tilley, “Interpreting material culture,” in *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, ed. Susan M. Pearce (Routledge, New York and London: 1994), 67-75.

Exposition Universelle, they were little more than scenery in a tableau whose only life was breathed into it by French industrialists. The simultaneous removal of their perceived totemic significance (or disenchantment, in Charles Taylor's terminology) and re-articulation into European regimes of power echoed the public desacralization of the Chinese partnership with France, and its recasting into an explicitly imperial paradigm.¹²

Materializing Sovereignty

The ritual began when the French and British commanders of the Expedition of 1860 divested the Xianfeng Emperor of his most precious possessions. Lord Elgin and General Montauban had both denied responsibility for the looting of the Yuánmíngyuán, but according to the notes of the latter, they had not balked at removing the finest relics of its grandeur. They took pearls, lacquerware, and silks to fill their armies' coffers, but more important were the items that they handpicked for their sponsoring sovereigns: Mandarins' collars and scepters. (Montauban was permitted to offer three of the collars to his wife and daughters, and he had them reworked into pretty trinkets; that move would prove unpopular with his patron, Empress Eugenie.) Montauban wrote that he did not believe the objects held any commercial value, raising the question of why he would select them as his tithe to his monarchs. The answer, quite simply, is that the batons and collars were of greatest interest because they were the physical trappings of Chinese imperial authority. The collars had been intended as gifts to Xianfeng's favored officials, while the scepters ("*bâtons de commandement*") represented the Emperor's authority;

¹² See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 25-6.

they were bestowed upon Mandarins to allow them to govern in the Emperor's name.¹³ In taking the scepters, Montauban and Elgin were effectively removing the right to command from Xianfeng and his officials, and putting it in the hands of European sovereigns.

The scepters resonated in a more European genealogy, as well. They recalled Napoléon Bonaparte's *bâtons de Maréchal*, which had in turn been modeled upon symbols of dominance from the ancient world. Victorious Roman warlords, then Consuls and Emperors, carried an ivory scepter topped with an eagle.¹⁴ Magistrates and generals had also wielded baton-like emblems during the Roman Republic and Empire.¹⁵ The baton may have had an even older provenance – or at least, one that reverberated as ancient in nineteenth-century France. Jules Michelet's 1833 *Histoire Romaine*, based on an account by Herodotus, mentioned that the Scythians had sent Persian Emperor Darius "symbolic presents," in tribute, including a baton of wood containing a golden ingot.¹⁶ Later European monarchs imitated the Romans in many regards, and pomp served as a visible reminder that translated Roman power into the heads of its successor states. Cosimo I de' Medici, Duke of Tuscany, had himself portrayed in Roman military costume; Louis XIV of France associated himself with Apollo while emulating Roman emperors. Likewise, Grinling Gibbons's statue of James II in London's Trafalgar Square is depicted as Roman Emperor Augustus, with a baton as a symbol of authority.¹⁷

¹³ AN-Paris, Montauban Papers, 682 AP/3, 347. See also Chapter 4.

¹⁴ István Czachesz, "The Eagle on the Tree: A Homeric Motif in Jewish and Christian Literature," in F. García Martínez and G.P. Luttikhuisen, eds, *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome: Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honor of A. Hilhorst* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 94.

¹⁵ Richard Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art* (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1963), 58.

¹⁶ Jules Michelet, *Histoire Romaine* (Paris: Hachette, 1833), 111.

¹⁷ Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63-4.

Napoléon restored the Roman title of Marshall in 1804, and revived the baton as a symbol of the office. The batons measured 48 by 4.2 centimeters, and depicted eagles embroidered with gold and yellow silk, on an imperial blue velvet background. These “insignias of supreme commandment” were inscribed with the words “Terror Belli, Decus Pacis” – terror in war, decoration in peace.¹⁸

As the foremost French historians of empire have observed, the Roman Republic furnished French imperialists with a model for "enlightened" guidance of conquered peoples.¹⁹ Yet it did much more than that. Before the Third Republic embarked upon the well-known "mission civilisatrice" of the late nineteenth century, the Second Empire mobilized the symbols and rituals of Roman imperial authority, which had also been revived under Napoleon, to legitimize overseas conquest. Only a day before the sacking of the Yuánmíngyuán, a *fait divers* on the opening of the Musée Moillet had focused on the batons: in a collection showcasing objects from around the world, the Chinese 'contributed most richly' to the exposition. The piece, dripping with an irony it did not yet know it possessed, described how China had so easily “imposed” its Chinoiserie, opium, talismans, and porcelains upon an eager French public. Contrasting the "almost feminine tenderness" that (British) humorist Charles Lamb claimed to have had for the distinctly domestic Chinese porcelain, the article then described the decadent accoutrements of the opium smoker before pausing on the most important object of all, the ironically "unmajestic" *jou-ei* (*rúyì*, or *bâton de commandement*), “by which,” the author smirked,

¹⁸ R.P. Dunn-Pattison, *Napoleon's Marshalls* (London: Methuen & Co., 1909. Reprint edition Empiricus Books, 2001), viii; Alain Pigéard, *Dictionnaire de la Grande Armée* (Paris: Tallandier, Bibliothèque Napoléonienne, 2002), 32, 90.

¹⁹ Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard and Françoise Vergès, *La République coloniale: Essai sur une utopie* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2003), 44-45.

“China will always dominate us.”²⁰ Identifying the Chinese scepters with the Bonaparte batons – and, by extension, with their Roman inspiration – reminded French readers of the Roman legacy of Emperors conferring power upon their legate in an empire based on perpetual conquest. Thus, when Montauban and Elgin dispossessed the Chinese emperor of his batons, they simultaneously removed him from his position of domination and resuscitated continued Roman and Napoleonic tradition in their symbolic conquest. France had ritually castrated China by seizing its phalluses of jade and ivory.

At Home with the French Monarchy: The *Musée Chinois* at Fontainebleau

Many of the objects taken from the Yuánmíngyuán were ultimately destined for a special showcase at the imperial palace of Fontainebleau. First, though, they were shown to a curious public at the Pavillon de Marsan, which connected the palaces of the Louvre and Tuileries. For those who had not gained access to the show, *Le Monde Illustré* ran both a thick description and illustration of the “Chinese curiosities” in their temporary Parisian home. What first struck the viewer, wrote the author, was the “colossal grandeur” of six perfectly preserved vases, which had been placed along the axis of the gallery. Visitors, who had been educated in the finer points of Chinese craftsmanship by Montigny’s exhibit a year earlier, would recognize the clear tone of the vases’ enamel work. Though Montigny’s objects had represented the “incomparable” achievements of Chinese art, the treasure of the Yuánmíngyuán seemed even more exquisite. The vases were complemented by a finely chiseled bronze pagoda, collections of arms (sabers, pikes, pistols, daggers, and lances), and shelves full of jades, enamel ware, and corals; the

²⁰ Louis Dépret, “Musée Moillet a Lille: Alphonse Moillet's collection a l'Hotel de Ville,” *Moniteur Universel*, 9 October 1860.

work was so delicate that *Le Monde Illustré*'s observer speculated that it had taken years of skilled devotion to create.²¹ The most fascinating feature of the exhibit was a mannequin at the center of the room. It was dressed in the Emperor's fine clothes: steel chain mail topped with a yellow silk garment embroidered in every possible color, covered with golden buttons, pearls, and other precious stones. The mannequin was crowned with a combination helmet and tiara that ended in a steel spike that seemed to spill horsehair onto the head of the wearer. The effect, if bizarre, was nonetheless strikingly sumptuous. The Emperor's batons, which had merited their own article, were placed at the base of the mannequin.²²

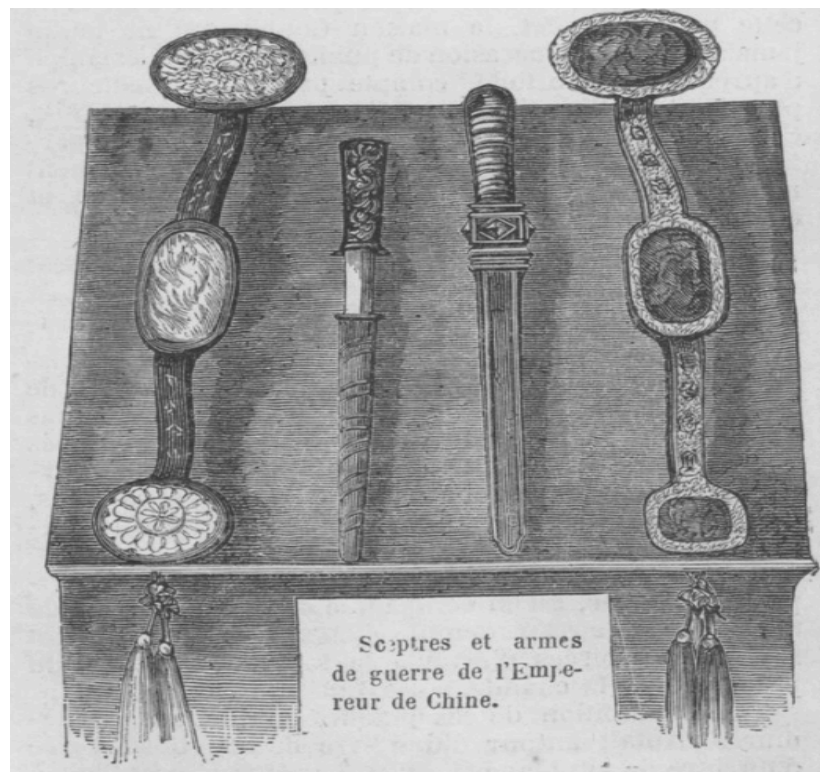


Figure 8: Depiction of scepters from the Yuánmíngyuán, *Le Monde Illustré*, 23 February, 1861.

²¹ Allongé, "Expositio des presents offerts à Leurs Majestés par l'armée expéditionnaire de Chine," *Le Monde Illustré*, 2 March 1861.

²² Allongé, "Exposition des présents offerts à Leurs Majestés par l'armée expéditionnaire de Chine (cont'd)" and "Exposition des curiosités chinoises offertes à l'Empereur par l'armée expéditionnaire (dessin)," *Le Monde Illustré*, 2 March 1861.

One was sculpted out of gold, with three delicate carved knobs of green jade interspersed with lapis lazuli, cornaline, and more jade, this time of the translucent variety. The other was less richly decorated, composed of wood inscribed with several Chinese characters. Its three knobs were inlaid with white jade, engraved with rosettes. Together, their beauty was nearly “inappreciable.” They sat subtly, but their workmanship nonetheless offered evidence of the might of China.²³ The author might well have added, “and its late transfer to France.”



Figure 9: “Exposition des curiosités chinoises offertes à l’Empereur par l’armée expéditionnaire,” *Le Monde Illustré*, 2 March 1861.

The “parade” of objects in Paris was part of a process of disarmament and re-sacralization, removing the more threatening aspects of the pieces and their former owner

²³ Allongé, “Exposition des présents offerts à Leurs Majestés par l’armée expéditionnaire de Chine,” *Monde Illustré*, 23 February, 1861.

while imbuing them with a new, fetishized Orientalist power. Their tempered exoticism made sense only within the context of received knowledge, European ownership, and suspended disbelief. As Susan M. Pearce notes in her work on the contextual significance of ethnographic museum pieces, the objects' associations with specific historical moments impart upon them a function as personal souvenirs: "nostalgic, backward-looking and bitter-sweet." Drawing on the work of Saussure and Barthes, Pearce describes an object as a "message-bearing" entity - that is, it acts in relation to the event that it represents as an "intrinsic sign and... metaphorical symbol." Moreover, the assembly of such objects into a representation of the past also narrates a particular perspective on the present. While translation of that vision on the part of the viewer permits a variety of interpretations, but they are always mediated by what Pearce calls a "social consensus of meaning," in which received knowledge and that created by professional experts – scholars and curators – coalesce. The past survives, according to Pearce, in three ways: in objects and material culture, in physical landscapes, and as narratives. Individual memory of that past, meanwhile, draws together objects, physical sensation, and remembered emotion, all woven into narratives that very often resemble the "external form" that evolves in the social "interpretive imagination."²⁴ The objects were important due to their provenance; however, with the might of China sucked out suddenly and replaced with a French genealogy of acquisition, their *sublimation* bestowed still greater significance upon their placement in the imperial collection. The metaphysical import of scepters, arguably the items of greatest magnitude, was very much tied to their function in the Chinese imperial hierarchy. They also glean meaning in

²⁴ Susan M. Pearce, "Objects as meaning; or narrating the past," in *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, 19-27.

their physical resemblance to the relics of France's own pedigree (the scepters of Rome and of Napoleon). Their greatest potency, however, was assembled out of both of those roles, with the addition of a crucial sequence of actions. They had been seized by French hands, wrested from their former commander, and placed in the bosom of the French state, with its imperial monarch and his publicly domestic consort giving all the members of the nation brief but essential access to the new instruments of rule. Eugenie would display them in the Grande Salon Louis XV at Fontainebleau, where they remain today. She called it her *Musée Chinois*.

The objects were meticulously catalogued, described, and arranged. They were displayed in four "vitrines," or windowed cabinets, with three smaller cases surrounding an immense tower. A pagoda and stages upon which other objects were arranged filled the rest of the three-part salon. It mimicked, perhaps inadvertently, the scroll-like Chinese unfolding of chambers. Not all of the items came from the Yuánmíngyuán. Among the Chinese Emperor's old treasures, one could also find screens, parasols, elephant teeth and rhinoceros horns from Siam and Annam. These were gifts from two embassies, not loot from conquests, but their contiguous arrangement brought together the totems of an imaginary imperium that stretched from Beijing to Battambang.

The showpieces in the main chamber were the trappings of authority borrowed permanently from the sovereigns of Asian empires. The most prominent were two crowns, of Siamese origin. The first, a "great crown in gilded, chiseled bronze," gleamed with rings of pearls, turquoise, and precious stones. (The bean-counter at the palace noted that it contained two hundred and sixty "fine pearls," four hundred and two pieces of

turquoise, thirty rubies, and seventy-five coral beads.) The other was composed of enameled gold and thousands of rubies, emeralds, pearls, and crystal plaquettes. Less dazzling, but perhaps more exceptional were the jade cups, shoes, vases, figurines, palanquins, and pagodas that Montauban and Elgin had so generously selected for their suzerains. Eugenie seems to have prioritized aesthetic over order, and objects that were actually from the Yuánmíngyuán were intermingled with remnants from Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, their origins lent them a certain mystical quality. It was not their fine quality or exotic air that made them alluring to Napoleon and Eugenie; rather, the discovery of the objects in the Emperor's own abode assured the French monarchs that the Son of Heaven had drunk from the cups in their display cabinets. Their lions had guarded his gates. His consorts' tiny feet had been clad in the shoes that were now flattened next to the cup from which the Emperor of China had drunk.



Figure 10: Shoes for bound feet and jade cups from the Yuánmíngyuán, Musée Chinois at Fontainebleau, Author's Collection, April 2013.

A Chinese flag that the frigate *l'Audacieuse* had taken in Guangzhou on December 29, 1857 was another object of interest. Alongside this trophy of war were

figurines of a saint and a Buddha, and a number of “Chinese figures.” One was in a green robe, another in a crimson skirt, others wore skirts in burgundy and violet and yellow, and they were accompanied by several gardeners, as if the French monarchs had taken a microcosm of China’s population to reanimate in a new Yuánmíngyuán. The prize objects in the Grande Vitrine were a Mandarin and “Mandarine,” in yellow and blue robes respectively, with moving heads. Both had broken feet.²⁵

The Empress had imagined her *Musée Chinois* more in terms of an “academic” collection than a showcase for the spoils of war; the armor, scepters, and other military objects that had so enthralled Paris were moved to the Musée de l’Artillerie.²⁶ However, Eugenie placed smaller *batons de commandement* in her arrangement at Fontainebleau. The syncretism that might well have been read into their presence among European accoutrements was not incongruous with their symbolic significance as objects of conquest. Rather, their use permitted a re-narration of Sino-French history in more controlled French terms. Objects that had once been valued as evidence of a partnership – Jesuit maps, European paintings, and ambiguous scrolls – were either sold off in Beijing or left to the fires. Only the “authentic” remnants of old China – static China – were brought to Paris and displayed. Tellingly, the one object that Eugenie rejected was a rosary that Montauban had fashioned from a Mandarin’s collar. She reportedly found it

²⁵ Inventaire des Divers objets composant le Musée Chinois au Palais de Fontainebleau, AJ/19/261, Maison du Roi, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

²⁶ Colombe Samoyault-Verlet, “Le Musée chinois de l’impératrice Eugenie,” 13, and Jean-Paul Desroches, “Les collections provenant de la campagne de Chine, I: Les objets des palais,” 64, in Réunion des Musées Nationaux, *Le Musée chinois de l’impératrice Eugénie*. Colombe Samoyault-Verlet, Jean-Paul Desroches, Gilles Béguin, Albert Le Bonheur, eds. (Paris, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994).

offensive.²⁷ It seemed to haphazardly re-entwine two histories that others were determined to disentangle and reweave in different ways.

If Napoleon III had been the driving force behind the quasi-conquest, his consort was tasked with organizing the spoils into the fabric of French life. Eugenie's domestic space was a very public one, and it was a significant, early example of how imperial life was fostered by being seen, experienced, and cultivated at home. The *Musée Chinois* might well have been kept for personal enjoyment, but "personal" for the Empress entailed very little that was truly private. She received ambassadors and heads of state at Fontainebleau, including the Siamese delegation whose gifts would form part of the *Musée's* collection. Far beyond a simple display of objects, the rituals of imperial life for which they provided a setting served to incorporate China into the French monarchy. In February, the wife of the Count de Walewski, who had held a diplomatic role in China, threw a costume ball at the ministry of state; guests dressed as races from all the territories of an imagined French empire. Eugène Girard played the part of a "Chinaman." With his compatriots dressed as Cossacks, South American natives, and Arabs, they brought the memories of a future France-abroad into the Ministry of State.²⁸ Monarchs visiting Paris for the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 also toured the palace, and it was even open to the public for the duration of the fair.

Eugenie was also counterpart in feminine likeness to Victoria. The booty from the Yuánmíngyuán was divided between two women, at the behest of war-making men,

²⁷ Colombe Samoyault-Verlet, "Le Musée chinois de l'impératrice Eugénie," in *Le Musée chinois de l'impératrice Eugénie*, 12. Montauban received 3 ceremonial collars ("de Mandarins") had one made into rosary to offer to Eugénie. She probably felt compromised by the gift, as rumours circulated that officers were returning from China with pockets full of gold. (See Montauban to Ministre de guerre, 12 octobre 1861, and ordre general no. 98, G5-6, G5-7, Archives de Guerre, now at Service historique de la Défense-Vincennes.)

²⁸ Léo de Bernard, "Bal donné chez M. le comte Walewski," *Le Monde Illustré*, 23 February 1861.

Elgin and Montauban, in a gesture that seemed to mimic the rituals of courtly love. In fact, the transmission of Chinese artifacts echoed and re-created the trajectory of the French imperium, from Rome to St. Louis to Napoleon and his heirs.



Figure 11: Musée Chinois at Fontainebleau, Author's Collection, April 2013.

The chimeras and lions from the Yuánmíngyuán were placed among the stupas, gilded screens, and palanquins that a delegation from Siam presented to the French sovereigns in June of 1867. Theirs was the first such visit since 1686, when Louis XIV had received King Narai's representatives at Versailles.²⁹ Like the aesthetic parallels that allowed the Chinese scepters to assimilate France's Roman and Napoleonic roots into a new imperial destiny in Asia, the ambassadors' prostration before Napoleon and Eugenie in the grand ballroom at Fontainebleau echoed the glory of the Sun King.

²⁹ Colombe Samoyault-Verlet, 14-15.



Figure 12: Chimera among jade objects, Musée Chinois at Fontainebleau, Author's Collection, April 2013.

Yet it also recalled more recent events, and wove them into the narrative of France, Conqueror in Asia. The timing of the embassy (just months after the “repatriation” of China’s looted objects), and its subsequent portrayal by artist Jean Léon Gérôme (with men dressed in sumptuous Asian silks bowing before the French monarchs under an imperial golden eagle) suggested that the sovereigns were obtaining on their own soil the rituals of obeisance that the Chinese emperor would not give on his.



Figure 13: Jean Léon Gérôme, *Réception des ambassadeurs siamois par Napoléon III et l'Impératrice Eugénie dans la grande salle de bal Henri II du château de Fontainebleau, le 27 juin 1861*. 1864. Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, MV 5004;MI 744.

This is not to say that the monarchs, any more than the average French person, failed to distinguish Siamese from Chinese. Rather, visual cues like prostration before a monarch, which serve as focal points in Gérôme's painting, must be understood in the context of contemporary events in Asia. Key moments of the war that had just ended in China had turned upon the refusal of European prisoners to kowtow before the Chinese Emperor. Their punishment, torture, and death had been the premise for the decision to sack the Yuánmíngyuán.³⁰ The Siamese delegation's prostration was wholly customary in an Asian context. However, its occurrence would have resonated quite differently in Europe. While the physical resemblance of a Siamese prostration and the infamous Chinese kowtow might have been purely coincidental, Eugenie's choices in the Musée Chinois were not. She combined the gifts of Siam and the loot of China into a unified collection of objects linking the French monarchy to Oriental authority. The effect was to create a purpose-built temple to her increasingly Eastern-looking French Imperium. It had begun in Rome. It flourished under the first Napoleon. It reached its apotheosis, under his heir, in Asia.

In 1861, while Eugenie was arranging the artifacts of the Chinese empire into her own, other types of domestication were taking place in China. Alphonse de Bourboulon set up a French legation in Beijing, as the Convention of Peking had given foreign envoys the right to establish permanent embassies in the capital. Prince Gong established the Zǒnglǐ Gèguó Shìwù Yámén to deal with them. The agency, with a governing council of five Manchus, served as an official conduit between the Qing court and the representatives of foreign powers. A joint Franco-Chinese military contingent, apparently willing to put aside the trauma of the Yuánmíngyuán, engaged in a push against Taiping

³⁰ See Chapter 4.

forces in Ningpo, and another in Annam, where militias were allegedly massacring American missionaries. When the Taiping were defeated, France withdrew its occupying forces before the end of the year. Their presence in Annam would be a much longer-lived endeavor. Meanwhile, the consulate in Shanghai received a new head, M. B. Edan, while Montigny recovered from mental and physical ailments. Meanwhile, French Christians took advantage of the rights they had won. They revived the churches that had been seized during earlier persecutions and acquired the space for a Cathedral in Guangdong.³¹

In Paris, those objects that had not found their way into the *Musée Chinois* were sold off, to be incorporated into the parlors of well-to-do Parisians. From 1862 to 1864, auctions at the Hôtel Drouot capitalized on China's cachet, likely amplified by Eugénie's collection. At one o'clock in the afternoon on January 13 and 14, 1862, customers could bid on "curiosities" that had been taken from the palace of the Emperor of China himself. The cash-only sale offered the lacquers, teaware and furniture, ivory boxes and vases, porcelains and silk screens to which Parisian buyers were long accustomed. That the items had come from the Yuánmíngyuán doubtless conferred a certain sentimental value, in addition to the finesse of their workmanship. More astonishing, however, was the availability of the Emperor's old clothes. Hiding in plain sight, in sections of the auction catalogue simply marked "equipment" (*matériel*) and "miscellaneous objects" (*objets divers*), were Xianfeng's court robes, those of his consort, and an imperial seal. Scepters of white jade and lapis-lazuli were also on offer.³² Although subsequent auctions did not

³¹ See Henri Cordier, *Histoire générale de la Chine et de ses relations avec les pays étrangers depuis les temps les plus anciens jusqu'à la chute de la dynastie mandchoue*, Vol. IV (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1921), 75, 85, 111-112.

³² *Catalogue d'objets de curiosité provenant du palais d'été de l'empereur de Chine, Dont la vente aura lieu Hotel des commissaires-priseurs Rue Drouot, no.5, Les Lundi 13 et Mardi 14 Janvier 1862, à une heure, Par le ministère de Me Escribe, Commissaire-Preneur, rue Saint-Honoré, 217, assisté de M. Evans, Expert, quai Voltaire, 13, Chez lesquels se distribue le Présent Catalogue. Exposition publique Le Dimanche 12*

feature such courtly or intimate former possessions of the Emperor, they continued to give Parisians access to objects recently acquired in China. Another sale in April of 1862 featured porcelains, red lacquer from Beijing, shoes, silk cloth, and rare inks.³³ In March of 1864, buyers came for enamelware, vases of jades, crystal, and lapis lazuli, earthenware, porcelain, and bronzes.³⁴ As with the items destined for the *Musée Chinois*, pieces to be auctioned were put on public display before they were sold. The sales democratized the Expedition and quasi-conquest, giving those who were not monarchs, soldiers, or sailors access to the spoils of war.

Such sales were not new. Drouot had auctioned "objects of curiosity" in 1829, 1848, and again just before the Yuánmíngyuán's ransacking, in 1859. What was different in this case was that it offered ordinary – if wealthy – Frenchmen and women the possibility of owning pieces that had belonged to the Emperor himself. The set of robes is perhaps most interesting. While their availability calls to mind a farcical, Marie-

Janvier 1862, de 1 heure à 5 heures. (Paris: Renou & Maulde, Imprimeurs de la Compagnie des Commissaires-Priseurs, 1862). BnF-Tolbiac Cote 8-V36-5809.

³³ *Notice d'une collection d'objets d'art et curiosités arrivant de Chine dont la vente aura lieu Hotel des commissaires-priseurs rue Drouot, no.5 salle No. 6, Le samedi 19 Avril 1862, à une heure. Par le ministère de Me Vannois, Commissaire-Preneur, rue Laffite, 37, Assisté de M. Dhios, Expert, rue Le Peletier, 33, chez lesquels se distribue la présente Notice. Exposition publique le Vendredi 18 Avril 1862, de midi à cinq heures.* (Paris: Renou et Maulde, 1862). BnF-Richelieu Estampes, Yd1 (1862-04-19)-8, MFICHE CVE 1168.

³⁴ *Catalogue d'une très-belle réunion d'objets d'art et de curiosité de la chine et du japon Dont la vente aura lieu Hotel Drouot, salle no. 5, le lundi 7 mars 1864 à une heure par le ministère de Me Charles Pillet, commissaire-priseur, rue de choiseul, 11, assisté de MM. Mannheim, experts, rue de la Paix, 10, chez lesquels de distribue le présent catalogue. Expositions: particulière, le Samedi 5 mars 1864, publique, le Dimanche 6 Mars 1864, de une heure à cinq heures.* (Paris, Imp. Pillet fils aîné, 1864). BnF-Richelieu Estampes, Yd1 (1864-03-07)-8; MFICHE CVE 1320. The auctions continued into 1867 (and possibly beyond), though the materials sold tended to come from private collections. Their original provenance in China is unclear. *Vente du Samedi 28 decembre 1867: Objets d'art et d'ameublement, curiosités de la chine et du japon, collection de Mme Callot, Exposition publique le Vendredi 27 decembre 1867, de 1 heure à 5 heures. M. Baudry Commissaire-priseur, M. Dhios, expert. Exemplaire de Dhios.* (Paris, Renou et Maulde, 1867), BnF-Richelieu Estampes, Yd1 (1867-12-28), MFICHE CVE 1905; *Catalogue d'une très-belle réunion d'objets de la Chine et du Japon, don't la vente aux encheres publiques aura lieu rue Drouot, no. 5, salle no. 3, le jeudi 24 janvier 1867 a deux heures par le ministère de Me Charles Pillet, Commissaire-Preneur... Assisté de M. Febvre, Expert.* (Paris, Renou et Maulde, 1867). BnF-Richelieu Estampes, Yd1 (1867-01-24)-8, MFICHE CVE 1698.

These later auctions may well have had interest fueled by the Chinese pavilion at the Exposition Universelle.

Antoinette-style costumed romp around the bedroom, clothing in fact had always played an important role in the French penetration of China. While dressing in Chinese clothing had allowed French voyagers to “pass” in China’s interior, dressing as the Emperor was something quite distinct. Removing the clothing from the palace was a figurative stripping, while the Frenchmen who might wear his clothes assumed the vestiges of his authority.

The biographies of these objects in cultural contact redefined their meanings, and the self-conception of those who possessed them – both were redefined in the act of borrowing.³⁵ It was not quite a “diversion,” in Arjun Appadurai’s sense, in which Western collecting of exotic everyday objects of an Other removes valuable commodities from their “customary circuits and thus retains an element of political economy.”³⁶ Possessing the souvenirs of a Chinese emperor, doubly disembodied in the transferral of his arms and outer garments, but pointedly, not himself, is in part what Susan Stewart refers to as the dispossession of metonymic objects, in which “the presence of the object... radically speaks to its status as a mere substitution and to its subsequent distance from the self.”³⁷ But the collection, with its now empty interior in need of filling – the private space of the individual, and by extension, the nation – could become, in Stewart’s words, a “model and projection of self-fashioning.”³⁸ Possessing the looted artifacts from the Yuánmíngyuán, and donning, holding, and beholding the Emperor’s belongings, gave French collectors access to the innermost confines of *l’Empire Celeste*. Cloaked in the

³⁵ Igor Kopytoff, “The cultural biography of things,” in Appadurai, ed, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986; 10th paperback edition 2012), 67.

³⁶ Arjun Appadurai, Introduction to *The Social Life of Things*, 29.

³⁷ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 135.

³⁸ Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 157.

sovereign's robes and wielding his scepter, they could imagine themselves masters of a new realm, with Chinese ancestors and French descendants.

China on the Champ de Mars: The International Exposition of 1867

The official list of participants was impressive, with nearly all of Europe joined by representatives from the Levant, North Africa, North America and East Asia. The host nation was joined by England, Prussia and the Northern German states, Austria, Bavaria, Russia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Egypt, China, Japan, Siam, Persia, Greece, Tunisia, Morocco, Brazil, the United States of America, Hawaii, Romania, Mexico, the Papal States, Sweden and Norway, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Hesse, Baden, Wurtemberg, and Denmark. The program danced carefully around national and imperial formations: the "République Américaine-Hawaii" was listed separately, while Ireland, the "*missions évangéliques*," Mexico, and the Suez were relegated to a park just off-site next to the Seine.³⁹

Like others of its genre, the Exposition was chiefly an expression of the progress and might of the host nation. As with all such staged expressions of progress, the Exposition of 1867 was as much about trumpeting the host nation's supremacy as it was about fostering global participation. There was no mistaking the international glory that its French organizers sought. The imperial decree calling for an exposition in Paris in 1867 had declared that it would be "more completely universal than its predecessors," and aimed to gather the finest works of art, industrial products, and "manifestations of all types of human activity" from every nation. The edict was to be widely publicized, in

³⁹ List of participating nations, H55194, BnF Richelieu-Estampes.

order for “all producers, even from the furthest countries, might have time to prepare.”⁴⁰

The Exposition’s goal was stated explicitly in a bulletin issued to herald the coming event: it was to “enthral those everywhere, and to satisfy them in ways that the Exposition of 1862 in London had been unable to achieve.” The government invested heavily in the event, committing to 12 million of the estimated 20 million francs required for the complete transformation of the Champ de Mars. The rest was covered by public subscription. The French Emperor, Napoleon III, was named President of the event, giving it both official sanction and royal flair.⁴¹ Empress Eugenie served as patroness of a model crèche and lauded the fifty small houses that aimed to provide “healthy and proper” accommodation that average workers could hope to own.⁴² As in the 1855 version, the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 aimed to demonstrate the “profit, prosperity, and well-being” of the Second Empire. Yet Jean-Jacques Bloch and Marianne Delort argue that its almost violent decadence also brought out the more carnivalesque elements of an empire founded on ambiguity and compromise. Enormously wealthy aristocrats from the world over mingled among poor workers who came to see the model homes and crèches that put a temporary public bandage on the misery of the masses. Bloch and Delort call the pavilions “artificial paradises,” with the entire spectacle feeling like a garden party.⁴³

It had been an enormous undertaking. In addition to reconstructing the Champ de Mars, and the Quai d’Orsay, and constructing grand palaces, galleries, and exhibitors’

⁴⁰ BnF-Tolbiac, Cote FOL-V-695 1867 (T1). Ducuing, François, ed. *L’Exposition Universelle de 1867 Illustrée*. Paris: La Commission Impériale, 1867. Series of pamphlets/bulletins/magazines? advertising expo. N.D.

⁴¹ Ducuing, 3.

⁴² *Exposition universelle de 1867. Compte rendu présente par quelques patrons, contre-maitres et ouvriers. Appartenant aux diverses Industries de Saint-Etienne*. (Saint-Etienne, Imprimerie de V. Théolier et Cie, 1868), 49-51. BnF-Tolbiac V-38481.

⁴³ Jean-Jacques Bloch and Marianne Delort, *Quand Paris allait “à l’Expo,”* (Paris: Fayard, 1980), 24, 37-9.

tents, installing gas lighting and running water, engineers were required to raise the level of the river Seine. They also installed an air conditioning system, with compressed air piped through a ventilation system. The construction of the Grand Palace alone cost more than a million francs.⁴⁴ Developing the “knowledge and taste” of a public visiting from around the world entailed building a garden in faux-Chinese style, replete with grottoes, waterfalls, and stone features. The cost of the garden alone, which included labor, materials, and running water, was 855,000 francs.⁴⁵

James Madison Usher, acting as an official agent of the state of Massachusetts, crowed that even the nations of the “Extreme East,” which had previously “kept themselves aloof” from international fairs, had presented themselves at this particular spectacle. Persia, Japan, and China had been persuaded, with missionary zeal and merchant industry, to take part. Henceforth, Usher wrote, those “great and industrious nations” would be drawn ever closer into the “orbit of our civilization,” to the greater advantage of humanity.⁴⁶ The problem was, China had not agreed to participate at all.

The Chinese pavilion was the showpiece of the exhibition. Although it was relatively small (732 square meters, shared with Siam and Japan, to France’s 61,314 and Britain’s 21,653),⁴⁷ it was located at the heart of the complex. It contained a theater and restaurant in addition to an ornate edifice for tea tastings.⁴⁸ The buildings were

⁴⁴ AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, F/12/11905.

⁴⁵ *Exposition Universelle de 1867 à Paris; Notice sur son organisation et les avantages qu’elle offrira aux exposants et au public*, AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine. F/12/11907.

⁴⁶ James Madison Usher, *Paris Universal Exposition, 1867. With a full description of awards rendered to the United States Department and notes upon the same* (Boston: Nation Office, 1868), 40. A Chinese delegation did arrive with ambassador Pin Ja Ting, but their goal was to establish a new embassy in Paris, not to support the Chinese pavilion. While they visited the exhibition, they were no more a part of it than the rest of the exotic crowd.

⁴⁷ Ducuing, 1, p.14.

⁴⁸ Introduction, p. 14 Section VI Chine: Tolbiac, Cote FOL-V-695 1867 (T1), Ducuing, François, ed. *L’Exposition Universelle de 1867 Illustrée*. Paris: La Commission Impériale, 1867.

surrounded by a garden in the Chinese style, complete with a cascade over a tower of rocks that fell into a small lake stocked with fish from Fontainebleau. The Chinese carpenters and gardeners whose work was indispensable to the exposition gave it a raft disguised as a floating island; Raoul Ferrere, whose thick descriptions formed the bulk of a promotional catalogue published by the Imperial Commission, predicted that within six months, the arrangement would be all the rage among the bourgeoisie.⁴⁹

Unknown to most of the visitors, no representatives from the Celestial Empire had delivered the pavilion at the center of the grounds. Upon receiving his invitation, Emperor Tóngzhì, still piqued about the France's role in the destruction of the Summer Palace, had refused to send a delegation. Moreover, he had allegedly forbidden his subjects to travel overseas to take part in the Expo. Instead, French businessmen constructed their own vision of the country, and purchased workers to populate it.⁵⁰ Ferdinand de Lesseps was the mastermind behind the “Oriental” pavilions, and of a number of other high-profile projects of the period. His work was in evidence from Egypt to Central America.⁵¹ His corporation had recently received thirty million francs from the Viceroy of Egypt for the completion of the Suez Canal; de Lesseps had contributed a replica to the Exposition. A correspondent from the *New York Times* called it evidence of a “grand and successful” representation of the new “highway of nations.”⁵² (Mark Twain had been tapped to write for both the *New York Tribune* and for the *Herald*, but he found

⁴⁹ Ducuing, François, ed. *L'Exposition Universelle de 1867 Illustrée*. Paris: La Commission Impériale, 1867.No. 5, 70; Tolbiac, Cote FOL-V-695 1867 (T1).

⁵⁰ Raoul Ferrere, in Ducuing, No.9, p.134-5, III, “Le Jardin chinois à l'Exposition”.

⁵¹ See Matt K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love*, 45-6.

⁵² “THE PARIS EXHIBITION: A Visit to the Oriental Department” From Our Own Correspondent,” *New York Times* (1857-1922); Jun 20, 1867. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

people-watching to be more interesting than the Exposition itself. After two hours, he gave up, and went off to stalk Napoleon III and his Middle-Eastern visitors.)⁵³

The transformation of the Champ de Mars from a military to an exhibition space mirrored France's engagement with China. The exposition's carefully managed depiction of nations – China being the most striking example – and the homey ritual contained within, speaks to the domestication of China both in physical space and in French imaginary. In spite of nearly three decades of attempting to encounter China differently and more deeply, the China that France brought home was reduced to stereotype. The makers of the Chinese pavilion relied on an elaborate charade. They told the paying crowds that they were about to experience an intimate connection with the unknown, while exploiting very familiar cultural cues of opulence and exoticism. The throngs of visitors were happy to play along. The Chinese pavilion, with its tea and couches, silken draperies, and traditionally dressed women, was like a life-size dollhouse. It offered a highly mediated vision of an “authentic,” profoundly othered China, even as it replicated the features of thousands of Europe's drawing rooms. The Chinese pavilion at the Exposition of 1867 thus drew upon dialectic ideas of Frenchness and alterity by locating familiar imagery and simultaneously signaling it as foreign.

The promotional almanac had promised that the Chinese would join other races – Lapps, Tartars, Tibetans, Birmans, Samoyeds, Kabyles, and “Nègres du Soudan,” among others – taking part in the Exposition for the first time.⁵⁴ However, the China that most

⁵³ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, or the New Pilgrims' Progress* (Hartford, CT: The American Publishing Company, 1869), 124-6.

⁵⁴ *Almanach de l'Exposition universelle de 1867. Guide des exposants et des visiteurs* (Paris: Drouot, 1867), 49-50. There may have been Chinese merchants and artisans showing their wares in the industrial section, but not a single Chinese name is listed in the directory of exhibitors. See “Répertoire des Exposants” in Auguste Chirac, *Lettres d'un Marseillais sur l'Exposition universelle de 1867 à Paris* (Paris, Librairie internationale, 1868), 402. Gallica NUMM-5809867 or Tolbiac V-34731.

visitors would encounter was one imagined, constructed, and staged by French minds. Although it had been built with Chinese hands, every element of the setting was envisioned, engendered, and managed by Europeans. Franco-Austrian composer Louise Haenel de Cronenthall transcribed Confucian odes, “tea songs,” and Chinese country airs for piano - and “harmonized” them for European ears. They were played daily at the pavilion, and she received a medal for her efforts.⁵⁵

The highly traditional depiction of China (and indeed, many of the other non-Western pavilions) must have stood in stark contrast to the signs of European progress that stood around them. The disparity may have been a deliberate feature of the Exhibition. The picture-perfect Chinese hills and tearooms, Ottoman minarets, and the soon-to-be notorious Mikado provided a perfect foil for the latest Euro-American technology in running water, machinery, lighting, and social engineering that should, in Victor Hugo’s words, make France the pinnacle of humanity.⁵⁶

In English case, exhibitions were part of a three-pronged “participatory system” involving home, subject colonies (like India) and settler colonies (such as Australia), each recognized for a distinct contribution to the imperial universe. India’s contributions, generally chosen by British officials of the Raj, were largely historical. India, in the Victorian imagination, existed outside of linear time, and visitors were presented a vision that included models of ancient landmarks and weavers making textiles on traditional looms. The displays collapsed differences in time and space into a single, idyllic, and unchanging version of “Indian life.” In contrast, representatives from the settler colonies

⁵⁵ “Exposition Universelle: Les instruments de Musique, Les méthodes et le matériel d’enseignement musical,” *Le Ménestrel*, 8 December 1867, 12-13. See also Jann Pasler, “Haenel de Cronenthall, Louise,” in *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, edited by Julie Anne Sadie, Rhian Samuel (New York: Norton, 1994. Reprint Macmillan, 1995), 206.

⁵⁶ Victor Hugo, introduction, in *Paris, Paris-Guide*. (Brussels: Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie, 1867).

decided how to represent themselves, and generally chose hallmarks of progress – urban planning and manufacturing. The supposedly timeless Orient provided an escape from the conditions of modern life for the expo’s tourists.⁵⁷

Of course, China was not a colony – although parts of it were coming under direct French administration – but the display involved similar tropes in its marshalling of particular regimes of knowledge garnered from an “old China hand.” (On the other hand, as Peter Hoffenberg points out, those regimes of knowledge were hybrid ones, as they relied on colonial subjects for “collecting, describing, naming, and comparing,” while varied interpretations of images could engender pluralism even within the context of representation.⁵⁸) Yet in the case of Paris in 1867, Chinese laborers were kept behind the scenes, with only a handful of effectively mute participants – young women acquired and transported with French money, effectively confined to a gilded cage for the duration of the expo - permitted to interact with the visiting crowds.

In Victorian Imperial Britain, and elsewhere in imperial Europe, control of knowledge was tied to security. It was a replacement of the power that could not be held over the colonial world.⁵⁹ Thus, staged conquest, display, and managed interaction were becoming a crucial component of national-imperial identity. Sanitized versions of imperial warfare were arranged for public consumption, as when the conquest of Algeria had been re-created on the Champ de Mars to celebrate the *Fête Nationale* on August 15. While complete with faux mountains and marabouts, it lacked the gore and uncertainty of

⁵⁷ Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), xiv-xv, 230-1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 57-8

⁵⁹ Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 5.

actual battle, and could thus present the thrilling triumphal narrative that sat well with metropolitan audiences.⁶⁰

Jeffrey Auerbach writes that in contrast to museums, expositions' knowledge production was neither unilateral or hegemonic.⁶¹ In the case of the Chinese pavilion at the Exposition of 1867, China had almost no role in determining how it would be portrayed. In the Exposition's catalogue, author Raoul Ferrere described how China's response to its invitation was not what France had hoped for: China had refused to "follow the example of other oriental peoples, who responded with enthusiasm." It would not answer the call of France. So, Marquis d'Hervé-de-Saint-Denis, (named elsewhere as Hervey, Saint-Denys, and other permutations of spelling), who was familiar with the nation's language and customs, offered to organize the Chinese component of the exposition with his own resources. With the help of de Lesseps and M. de Meritens, head of customs in China for fifteen years, he located and sent for necessary items. With the help of Prince Gong, he commissioned items from China's imperial factories.⁶² What had once been made exclusively for the Emperor was now purchased for the Exposition.

M. Hervé, recounted the catalogue, wanted to create something truly impressive. Everyone had heard about the Yuánmíngyuán, and they knew the story of how the imperial family's favorite residence had its doors forced open, as armed men penetrated, pillaged, and burned it to the ground. If readers had been unfamiliar with the account, Ferrere hoped to jog their memory with the vivid imagery that had pervaded newspapers

⁶⁰ Bibliothèque nationale de France-Richelieu Estampes, Va275a/H55069.

⁶¹ Jeffrey Auerbach, introduction, in Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg, eds, *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), xii.

⁶² "Le Jardin chinois à l'Exposition" (by Raoul Ferrere) Tolbiac, Cote FOL-V-695 1867 (T1) Ducuing, François, ed. *L'Exposition Universelle de 1867 Illustrée*. Paris: La Commission Impériale, 1867), No. 9, 134-5.

seven years earlier. “A few hours sufficed,” he wrote,” to reduce to ashes the incomparable, unique collections that even the Tartars had respected.” Thankfully, some objects had been saved by the Colonel Dupin. Among them was an album of plans of the Yuánmíngyuán, which he bequeathed to the Imperial Library. Hervé was particularly inspired by its tea kiosk, where Emperor Xianfeng drank each day. Hervé-Saint-Denis aimed to re-create it at the Exposition. He had a garden built, filled it with plants, flowers, and bamboo structures from China. (Every detail was so fine and striking, “it must be real!” commented Ferrere.) He brought in gardeners from Zhejiang; Ferrere remarked that it was “a pleasure to watch them work,” with their queues wound around the tops of their heads until the end of the day’s labor allowed them to “flaunt their elegant appendage in all its glory.”⁶³

Ferrere described the *pièce de résistance* – a box, covered in gold and encrusted with pearls and precious stones, with an inscription in Manchu, Tibetan, and Chinese, indicating that the box was made under orders from Qianlong from the skull of a Tartar general of whom the emperor was particularly fond. He wrote of the idiosyncratic Chinese style of eating – different from the French “in form, rather than essence” – with the soup last rather than first, and chopsticks replacing the European fork. He noted that the Chinese “esteem meat, fish, and vegetables as much as we do,” but that they also relished truly strange dishes like shark’s fin and swallow’s nest. Their rarity, and expense, made them perfectly suited for the Mandarin’s table. Grotesque and fascinating customs aside, the tea kiosk was the true heart of the pavilion. Ferrere’s verbal picture presented the tasting room on the ground floor, with two “young Chinese girls” behind the counter. In an exposition full of surprises, remarked Ferrere, this was among the most

⁶³ Ibid.

astonishing. “Two authentic Chinese women!” Their very presence in Paris was subversive. The laws of the Celestial Empire allegedly “prohibit[ed] in the strictest manner the exportation of women.” Even after Monsieur de Meritens went through the rigorous process of obtaining permission to hire servers for his teahouse, it had been difficult to find women who would consent to “expatriate themselves and embark in great ships to deliver themselves to the countries of the Barbarians.” With no volunteers, Meritens finally bought two women in Fujian for 16,500 francs. The women – girls, really, at fourteen and sixteen years of age – were named A-Tchoë and A-Naï. Ferrere believed that they were considered beautiful in their homeland, but with different standards applying in France, he allowed only that French men found them “genteel.” They would spend their days at the Exposition playing music, painting fans, and playing dominos (“a Chinese passion,” interjected Ferrere). They were housed in a “boudoir chinois” of “unimaginable luxury.”



CHINOISES DÉBITANT LE THÉ. — Dessin de M. Gaildrau.

Figure 14: M. Gaildrau, “Chinoises débitant le thé,” in Ducuing, 304.

Though they found the beds too soft, Ferrere insisted that they were very happy, and aware of the care taken for their happiness. As the women could not speak to him, one wonders how he came to that conclusion. Even Ferrere was willing to admit that the attention and bald curiosity that the women attracted in the garden bordered on the puerile, but found it a reasonable extension of the “living reproduction of a civilization, one of the greatest segments of the human race, that is so unknown to us.”⁶⁴ Ferrere’s colleague Chirac seemed rather more taken with the tea itself, describing its harvest, differences in leaves, and manner of consumption in China. Yet when he asked his reading public, “why not give it a taste,” he might well have been referencing the consumption of the teahouse’s other pleasures, including the charming women who prepared the beverage for enthralled international visitors.⁶⁵

The tea salon was sure to be a success, not only due to the quality of the product. It appeared prominently in the pamphlets circulated in Paris to draw new visitors, and to coax the initiated back. One, praising the pavilion that Hervé-Saint-Denys had constructed “at his own expense” as “very original,” found the two women “well chosen from the environs of Beijing” - inconsistent with the catalogue’s description, but in keeping with the theme of the Yuánmíngyuán.⁶⁶ If the young women weren’t charming enough, the pavilion added a late addition to the exposition’s marvels. *Le Figaro*’s correspondent D’Aunay observed that customers at the kiosk were drawn in part by the prospect of being served by “a giant and a dwarf, both Chinese as well.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid., 138.

⁶⁵ A. Chirac, “La Culture du thé,” Ibid., 138-9.

⁶⁶ Henri de Parville, *Itinéraire dans Paris; précédé de Promenades à l’Exposition*, (Paris, Garnier Frères, 1867), 39. BnF-Tolbiac 8-LK7-13284

⁶⁷ D’Aunay, *Le Figaro*, 17 June 1867.



LE GÉANT ET LE NAIN CHINOIS. — Dessin de M. Gaildrau.

Figure 15: Gaildrau, “Le géant et le nain chinois,” in Ducuing, 352.

The pair, named Woo Foo and King-Foo, made another appearance in the press when prince Napoléon and princess Clothilde visited the French salon where they served and then the Chinese pavilion to see a “ juggler of eggs and swallower of swords; they “seemed greatly amused by this phenomenal Chinese.”⁶⁸

While the correspondent from *Le Figaro* had been dismissive of the early “little recitals,” the Chinese concerts offered in June drew praise both for their devotion to the original notes and for their adept translation for European ears and instruments – by M. Henri de Cronenthal, whose real name was Madame la marquise d’Héricourt. While those rendered were less jarring than the music one would hear in China, D’Aunay still felt compelled to explain that the raucous opening notes would soften by the end – becoming sufficiently soothing to put a European audience to sleep. D’Aunay prefaced his admiration with a note about Chinese tendency to preserve tradition – “one hears

⁶⁸ D’Aunay, *Le Figaro*, 22 June 1867.

three-hundred-year-old airs sung on street corners.” One of the pieces played, *The Great Rotation*, was a sacred dance, while *Return of the Nightengale* and *Song of Betrothal* were popular songs. D’Aunay believed that they were at least two thousand years old.⁶⁹ However, he dismissed the Chinese section of the Exposition as tacky. In contrast, D’Aunay was quite taken with the Japanese pavilion, particularly the Mikado and the “Taïcoun.”⁷⁰ While the Japanese section (like most of the “Extreme Orient”) was also financed by French interests, the appearance of the brother of the “Taïcoun” seems to have convinced visitors of the legitimacy of the staging.

The somewhat salacious element of the Chinese non-presence dogged the pavilion. It was June before anyone was willing to admit that the Chinese Emperor’s absence from the planning stages would be repeated at the Exposition itself. Rumors that the Chinese emperor would visit France were quashed in June, with *Le Figaro* reporting that His Majesty would not visit Paris, “no matter what anyone says.”⁷¹ The explanation given, according to the Figaro’s source (a Mandarin named Yu-Chung, attaché to the exposition) was that the sovereign was only twelve and a half years old, but had eight hundred wives to occupy him. His uncle, as regent, was also unable to travel, as it appeared that he would not be able to “keep his employ upon his return.”⁷² Several days later, D’Aunay printed a retraction (with the hope that China would be open to reading *Le Figaro*): “We are so used to consider Chinese as objects of fantasy” that he had falsely attributed words to the servant of Heaven that that man had never uttered. D’Aunay

⁶⁹ D’Aunay, *Le Figaro*, 19 June 1867. After D’Aunay’s snarking, M. d’Hervey-Saint-Denis put on another concert using Chinese musicians and instruments. Although the audience found the Chinese harmonies rather melancholy, it was enough of a success to draw applause from audience member George Sand. *Le Figaro*, 24 June, 1867.

⁷⁰ D’Aunay, *Le Figaro*, 1 June, 1867.

⁷¹ D’Aunay, *Le Figaro*, 5 June, 1867.

⁷² D’Aunay, *Le Figaro*, 8 June, 1867.

nonetheless believed his information to be precise, save that concerning the emperor's wives: there were a hundred and ten, rather than eight hundred.)⁷³ While the French press, led by D'Aunay, argued that it was only his tender age keeping him away, American journalists thought otherwise, reminding their readers that "if he were at Paris, he might possibly recognize a considerable number of Chinese curiosities and treasures as having belonged to his late father," which had been looted from the Yuánmíngyuán. The objects had been taken as the spoils of war; the *New York Times*, at least, did not find their presence in Paris illegitimate. However, their correspondent wrote snarkily, if the boy-Emperor should have access to them, "he might wish to carry them back again by the right of peace."⁷⁴

The unexpected presence of the Chinese ambassador on his way to London brought out visiting and resident Chinese alike. In contrast to the shivers of excitement that their nation elicited from the French, they were purportedly unmoved by any of the charms of Paris. American commentator Howard Payson Arnold wrote, with equal parts bemusement and frustration, that the Chinese in Paris showed "wooden indifference to everything around them," always remarking that they possessed something better at home. If their apathy irritated their hosts, the feeling was mutual. The throngs of visitors were happy to swoon over a faux, tempered version of China, and Arnold gently mocked the "versatile tastes" of the Parisians, who had brought Chinese Mandarin ducks and "little black pigs with no bristles" to their botanical gardens before they re-created the animals' homeland at the Champ de Mars. However, they reacted very differently to the Chinese residing among them. Arnold noted that their "every peculiarity" became fodder

⁷³ D'Aunay, *Le Figaro*, 11 June, 1867.

⁷⁴ Monadnock, "The Monarchs in Paris," Special correspondence of the *New York Times*. June 19, 1867. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times* (1851-2009), 1.

for comic treatment. French visitors giggled at their queues and features, and Arnold observed street urchins roaring with laughter as they watched an unhappy group weighed down by their robes scramble across a busy, muddy street.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, there seemed to have been a promise of a later engagement with the Chinese community in Paris; D'Aunay reported that the Empress followed the King and Queen of Belgium to the Chinese section, and promised four Chinese that she encountered there that she would come to buy products from their bazaar as soon as it was set up. However, it remained unclear whether that bazaar was intended for the Exposition, whose content was constantly evolving, or if it was to be established in Paris with momentum from interest generated by the Exposition.⁷⁶

The "Orientals" were grouped together in the south-west corner of the grounds, with the Moorish architecture of the palaces of Tunis flowing into Egyptian hieroglyphs. The embellishments of China, the "Central Flowery Kingdom," were separated from the rest by a wall – New York's correspondent found it "appropriate." The *Times*' correspondent remarked that the faux deserts of the faux North Africa had left him parched enough to "just drop into China" for a cup of tea; after making a "treaty" at the gate (paying half a franc), he was free to roam the truncated empire. He was disappointed to find that it contained only four natives: the ticket-taker and three women, sitting on an elevated platform in the gift shop, where they also proffered their own photographs in addition to tea by the package. One, he wrote, was a middle-aged woman "whose wrinkles show through a thick coat of paint." The others were young and fair, "or uncommonly well enameled." He commented, as expected, on their long fingers, and

⁷⁵ Howard Payson Arnold, *The Great Exhibition with Continental Sketches, Practical and Humorous* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1868), 18-22.

⁷⁶ D'Aunay, *Le Figaro*, 27 May, 1867.

“little clumpy feet.” He believed that they amused themselves by watching the people who came to watch them, or by smoking opium, or by taking in the Chinese theater. The latter was filled with French and English actors, not Chinese ones. On top of the sweetened, diluted, too-expensive tea, the *Times* concluded that China at the Exhibition was worth seeing, but rather too much like America: “scarcely ready yet to see company.”⁷⁷

The put-on was not lost on some of the French who experienced it, either. D’Aunay, writing under his real name of Alfred Duplessis, praised the artful stylings of the Tunisian musicians playing for the Emperor Napoleon, but remarked that the East Asian group included representatives “aussi étranges qu’étrangers” (as strange as they were foreign). While one of the “Siamese Mandarins” on the platform was outfitted in the Oriental splendor that the crowd expected, the other appeared disappointingly in a coat and tie.⁷⁸ He scoffed that the Chinese section was not put on by the Chinese, or even by M. Hervé-de Saint-Denis, who had financed and staged the Chinese section. Rather, it had been built by dozens of Parisian gardeners. The “Chinese island” in the pool that served as the garden’s centerpiece was more a temporary shelter for the too-bright carp of Fontainebleau than a visual marvel. The pond lacked the tall grasses, vases, and surrounding lake that would have lent it an air of authenticity – or would, at least, have provided pleasant shade for the fish. After its official opening by the French Empress (who had sponsored the garden), daily free concerts were to be played. Duplessis

⁷⁷ “THE PARIS EXHIBITION.: A Visit to the Oriental Department” From Our Own Correspondent” *New York Times* (1857-1922); Jun 20, 1867; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The *New York Times* (1851-2009)

⁷⁸ Alfred (d’Aunay) Duplessis, “Ouverture de l’Exposition,” *Le Figaro*, 3 April 1867. Alfred d’Aunay and Duplessis were pseudonyms for Alfred Descudier; his byline varied in issues of *Le Figaro*, and he used both for this particular story. See Georges d’Heilly, *Dictionnaire des Pseudonymes* (Paris: Rouquette, 1868), 34.

anticipated that the scene would “absolutely” resemble the concerts of the Champs Elysées – not those of “traditional China.”⁷⁹ Writing about the inauguration of the exposition’s Chinese theater, Duplessis was similarly nonplussed by the shows (two per day, at a mere fifty centimes: “if it isn’t funny, at least it isn’t expensive”) and the on-site restaurant, which served typical noodle dishes alongside expensive delicacies like bird’s nest (at 20 francs per serving).⁸⁰ Duplessis had noted, early in the run, that visitors paid extra to see only a few parts of the exhibition: the Mexican temple and the Chinese pavilion. He allowed that both were staged by private proprietors, whose efforts to transport and reassemble the likenesses of foreign lands demanded an “understandable” attempt to recuperate their costs.⁸¹ However, after sampling overpriced noodles and unpalatable swallows’ nests in their Orientalist’s paradise, he theorized that the entire production was but a clever marketing scheme. The canteen was a means for some cunning restaurateur to sell roast beef disguised with oriental flair, while the circus-masters of Paris gave their performers a Chinese air with bleached bears and new costumes.

As the pavilion’s financier, Marquis d’Hervé-de-Saint-Denis stood to gain the most – the display would encourage French consumers to buy the kinds of knick-knacks (“bibelots”) that they saw in the pavilion, driving up the prices of goods for which the Marquis was the sole importer. The two recently-arrived young Chinese women were probably players in the great con; their goal, assumed the author, was to catch a husband from among the circulating “arch-billionaire” boyars and sultans who were set to visit their salon. His suspicions were confirmed by an “authentic Chinese” acquaintance, who

⁷⁹ Duplessis, “L’Exposition,” *Le Figaro*, 17 April 1867.

⁸⁰ “L’Exposition: Revue Quotidien du Figaro,” *Le Figaro*, 5 May 1867.

⁸¹ *Le Figaro*, 7 April 1867.

informed him that the exotic teas supposedly brought across oceans for the tasting pleasure of discerning Parisians were identical to those that had been on sale in English tea parlors for the better part of twenty years.⁸²

Once the theater opened, Duplessis wrote sarcastically that it was everything one could have hoped for – but not in the least Chinese. The orchestra, which had been billed as authentic, was composed of several musicians from the Hippodrome. The curtain opened to reveal Chinese on the corners of the stage; the scene reminded Duplessis of the Guignol, a theatre in the seedy district of Pigalle north of Paris. The spectacle itself involved “rather successful” acrobatic exercises and juggling. The problem was that the show’s “impresario,” Monsieur Arnault, was “presenting Indians to an elite public that wanted Chinese.” The “little Chinoises” from the tea salon would attend each of the spectacles – “it is in the program,” sniped Duplessis. He hoped that they would at least have a good time in Paris.⁸³ Meanwhile, the crowds being “disgorged” from the spectacles had their morals preserved with bright electric lights, which cast pretty “ombres chinoises” (shadow puppets) on Oriental buildings mostly devoid of actual “Chinois.”⁸⁴

For all its flaws, though, the Chinese section captured the imagination of those who came through it, precisely because it required so little imagination from them. It contained all of the tropes and signs that they expected, neatly compressed and accessible. The correspondent from the *New York Times* wrote that he was “greatly

⁸² “L’Exposition: Revue Quotidien du Figaro,” *Le Figaro*, 5 May 1867.

⁸³ *Le Figaro*, 6 May, 1867.

⁸⁴ *Le Figaro*, 7 May, 1867. Duplessis would continue to rail against the Chinese pavilion. On May 8, he remarked that the two thousand visitors still inside at eight o’clock were looking for a pleasant soirée; unfortunately, all that they were offered was the Chinese theater. On the twelfth, he railed against the restaurant, which was unexplainably closed for an hour at dinner – “it must be when the Chinese feed themselves.”

interested” with his tour: it was quick and generally inexpensive, and he had been able to see “more, probably, than falls to the lot of many travelers who spend more years in foreign parts than I gave hours to this morning [sic] exploration.”⁸⁵ On another occasion, he described the Chinese tea garden as among the most successful parts of the Exposition, “perhaps the most beautiful and striking piece of work that has been done there.” Nobody believed that its theater contained Chinese acrobats, but its “Celestial element” was sufficient. Meanwhile, the tea garden was adorned with scenes straight from the “old blue Chinaware of our youth.” Its exoticism was a very familiar one that referenced China only as far as it concerned its simplified history in France. *The Times* correspondent was charmed by the story of how plans for the garden had resided at the Summer Palace, and rescued before that complex was sacked. He was pleased that the privately-financed materials – mostly bamboo - had also been brought directly from China. He enjoyed the garden’s careful arrangement into kiosk, bazaar, and pavilion, and was captivated by the museum of Chinese “curiosities” on loan from private collections - including Qianlong’s “Tatar” skull-box.⁸⁶

The *Times* followed the exposition catalogues in writing that the women who populated the garden were “pretty, and thought to be much prettier than they are, because they are scarce.” It repeated, nearly verbatim, the official version of A-Tchoë and A-Nai’s acquisition: the laws of China purportedly forbade the “exportation” of women; after permission was secured – with great difficulty - to bring women to France, few were willing to go; in the end, two girls were “found” in Fujian province, “at a cost of 16,500

⁸⁵ “THE PARIS EXHIBITION: A Visit to the Oriental Department” From Our Own Correspondent,” New York Times (1857-1922); Jun 20, 1867; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009)

⁸⁶ “The Paris Exposition, From Our Own Correspondent.” New York Times (1857-1922); June 24, 1867; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009), pg. 2.

francs.” They were fourteen and sixteen years old, and in Paris, they lived ornamental lives for the benefit of gawking crowds. The press discussed their passions – dominoes and music – and their appearance, but no one broached the subject of their consent. They had been brought across the world to be living “lions of the Chinese tea garden,” but the 16,500 francs was not their salary. They had been bought, effectively as chattel. Visitors wrote that the choice of the women had been “a happy one,” but that was based on the satisfaction of the masses coming to the small-scale human zoo.⁸⁷ A-Tchoë and A-Naï, who could only communicate with one another, could not speak to the crowds to contradict the assessment.

There were other silences. The massive modification of the Champ de Mars, the raising of the Seine, and the subsequent construction of dozens of the pavilions and gardens and palaces all required vast amounts of manual labor. The organizers did as they had in France’s overseas territories. They hired coolies. Hiring and transport was arranged by DeLesseps, and men from China, Japan, and Egypt were brought to Paris to re-create the scenery of their homelands – and to construct a vision of an ostensibly Modern West.⁸⁸ Like any laborers, they enabled the existence of the spectacle, but they were not part of it. The few observers who elected to mention the workers, who likely numbered in the hundreds, did so to emphasize either the scale or the authenticity of the

⁸⁷ “The Paris Exposition, From Our Own Correspondent.” *New York Times* (1857-1922); June 24, 1867; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009), pg. 2.

⁸⁸ There are frequent references to the need for non-European manual labor, but little in the way of detail. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned a report by Henri Bellonnet, chargé d’affaires in Beijing, on the feasibility of using Chinese labor for the exposition, and DeLesseps’s correspondence with consular authorities in China and Japan discusses transporting coolies by way of Suez, where ships would pick up extra laborers (at the Nurbar Pasha, whose own letters on the subject also appear in the archive). An administrator from the Imperial Navy Mail (*Messageries marines impériales*) also submitted a memo to the organizing committee that concerned transporting Far Eastern coolies along with the objects to be exhibited from their home countries. Denion Dupin, *Au sujet des transports des ouvriers et des produits Chinois et Japonnais*, 5 June 1866; 14 Juin. Nubar Pacha. *Au sujet du transport des coolis provenant de la Chine, du Japon, du Suez*; 15 October 1866, Jules de Lesseps to Consulat générale du Japon et de la Chine. AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, F/12/11853.

work. Ducuing's *L'Exposition universelle de 1867* included an illustration of a Chinese gardener, but in its setting and subjects – cultivating tea – it could have easily represented archetypes in China, rather than individuals working on the Champ de Mars.⁸⁹

While the paper trail left by the exposition's organizers includes minute detail on the soil moved, the water made to flow, and the materials needed to create the spectacle, there is virtually nothing on the Chinese and Egyptian laborers who had actually been brought to form a mountain from a plain, to create gardens out of dirt, or serve tea to an endless stream of tourists. Their obsession with presentation, and with the technical aspects of the transformation of Paris, had led them to seek out Chinese gardeners and laborers who they believed could craft a more accurate reconstruction of China itself. Yet the supposed authenticity of their constructions contained the built-in hybridity of a Sinicized France and of China filtered through the French imagination. Beyond the spectacle of model workers' housing and improved labor practices, the men upon whose backs the exhibition had been built remained largely invisible, and wholly anonymous. The workers, like the fruits of their labor, were then excised from post-Exposition France. Correspondence from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which discussed how the coolies were to be dealt with when their work in Paris was done, noted that the Convention of Peking required Europeans employing coolies to release them after a five year term and to provide their repatriation costs. However, the rules only applied to individual countries. Thus, a loophole allowed such workers to be engaged for successive five-year

⁸⁹ M. Jundt, *Jardiniers chinois* (dessin), in Ducuing, *L'Exposition universelle de 1867, Illustrée* (Paris, E. Dentu, 1867), 135.

terms if their employers came from different nations.⁹⁰ Their fate after the Exposition, like that of the women in the teahouse, is unknown.

The Chinese pavilion at the Exposition certainly reflected a continued desire to find and understand an "authentic" China. It repeated the trope of the unknown-but-knowable Orient that had informed European voyages, religious missions, trade delegations, and military expeditions, even if "discovery" could only take place in France for the crowds who would get no further than Paris in their search for the exotic Outside. Yet in many ways, such discovery was impossible *except* in Paris. The oft-deployed image of mysterious China would prove to be a durable one – it would live in reports of missionary work, and in subsequent wars in the eighteen eighties and at the turn of the century. However, as Ferrere's commentary unwittingly divulged, France's docile China of quaint tea rooms and silent women no longer existed anywhere but in France.

Both Eugenie's Chinese Museum and the Chinese pavilion at the Exposition of 1867 worked within mutually constituting regimes of remembering and forgetting. They held memories of partnership, commerce, and conquest. Yet ambiguity remained. The very presence of Chinese objects in metropolitan France suggested that China was known, in the intimate realms of commerce and conquest. The integration of those objects into the heart of French cultural life and politics indicated still further intimacy. However, the display and arrangement of those objects rendered them exotic, and recast China as a distant place to be perpetually rediscovered. By bringing the relics of the nineteenth-century French adventure in China back to Paris, Montauban, Montigny, and their associates both embraced the Celestial Empire and held it at arm's length.

⁹⁰ Letter from M. Drouyer de Lhuys, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Direction des Consuls et Affaires Commerciales to M. le Ministre de l'Agriculture, du Commerce, et des Travaux Publics (Emigration), Paris, 26 May, 1866. AN-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, F/12/6342.

CONCLUSION

OTHER EMPIRES

In eighteen sixty-nine, the mission houses of Tianjin were set ablaze amid rumors that the Catholic Church was buying and killing kidnapped Chinese infants. An angry crowd killed ten Sisters of Charity and one French businessman. According to French journalist Henri Cordier, “their eyes were torn out, and their remains were nearly unrecognizable.” The businessman’s wife, who escaped when some Chinese women hid her in their house, was allegedly also put to death after she took the wrong route home.¹ The next year, another angry mob set upon the French consul, souring relations between France and China. Yet the Chinese delegation that arrived on French soil to apologize for the massacres was almost ignored. “It was impossible,” remarked Cordier, “for the Chinese Plenipotentiary to arrive at a worse moment.” In a strange parallel to the events for which he was about express his regret, the Plenipotentiary arrived just as the Prussians invaded. As they besieged the city, the Chinese official Tchoung Heou could see the fires from Saint Germain. Needless to say, Cordier wrote, there was no audience for a Chinese apology. With Napoleon in Prussian hands, Tchoung fled to New York.²

Cordier’s narrative of the Tianjin Massacre and its aftermath was highly melodramatic, and took some liberties with the historical record. Another author reported that the embassy had achieved its goal of presenting its “redress and apology” (“*satisfactions et des excuses*”) for the massacres. However, he agreed that the news “had made little sensation” in France, as the populace was entirely distracted by the more

¹ Cordier, *Histoire générale de la Chine*, Vol. IV, 125-8.

² Cordier, 140.

immediate war within their borders.³ Both versions are instructive on several registers. While it is difficult to disregard parallels between Prussian capture of Paris and the Anglo-French sacking of the Yuánmíngyuán, the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune in fact diverted attention from China. Meanwhile, the grislier elements of the massacre itself are almost allegorical. Like the mutilated remains of the corpses in Tianjin, the state of the Franco-Chinese relationship in eighteen seventy was almost unrecognizable in comparison with the one that French agents had sought in the eighteen forties. In moving from affect-driven courtship to conquest and punishment, the French had created the conditions for the intense animosity and distrust that catalyzed the events in Tianjin. Then, with the rest of Cordier's work focusing upon the French conquest elsewhere - namely, in Annam, Cambodia, and Saigon - it was clear that the focus of French endeavors had moved south. While Cordier connected French military action there to events in China, the Sino-French relationship was becoming much less of a priority.

During the period of the most dramatic French imperial expansion elsewhere, the French China moved away from the self-consciously affective exceptionalism that had exemplified its mid-century Chinese engagement - even as such emotive interest was developed in other parts of the empire.⁴ One of Cordier's observations was particularly prescient: in the late nineteenth century, France "followed... step by step the progress made by other nations." If his remark was meant to demonstrate imperial competence, it rings hollow in the aftermath of his compatriots' earlier declarations of distinctive leadership. Yet, in its alliance with Britain during the expedition of eighteen sixty, France

³ P. Dabry de Thiersant, *Le Massacre de Tien-tsin et nos intérêts dans l'Empire chinois* (Paris: Charles Douniel et Cie, 1872), 5.

⁴ Matsuda, *Empire of Love*.

had inadvertently rendered itself a junior partner, following in the lead of its European competitor. The tactic of following the British, which had begun tentatively during the First Opium War and become more pronounced during the second, would be even more acutely evidenced in territorial demands in the late nineteenth century. The strategy was somewhat successful: in demanding an equivalent to Britain's ninety-nine year lease of Kowloon, France would receive Guangzhouwan (Zhanjiang) as a leased territory in 1898, and would win the right to extend the French concession in Shanghai in 1900.⁵ The French relationship with China continued, but it was profoundly different from the one that Theodose de Lagrené and his delegates had envisioned when they established trading partnerships half a century earlier.

While most contemporaries would have agreed that the Franco-Chinese relationship was an important one, its precise parameters had never been well defined. Even those who, like Lagrené, seemed to believe in their public pronouncements of amity encountered moments of acute doubt about the long-term prospects. Perhaps they recognized that their cozy arrangements with particular Chinese allies would not guarantee a similar reception elsewhere. Close relations with a Guangzhou merchant would not ingratiate French agents with his viceroy; likewise, a carefully fostered détente with that viceroy would not necessarily smooth the road to Beijing. Even if they might hold out hope that French charm could win every heart in China, this was a family romance, and the in-laws tended to behave badly.⁶ However ardently Lagrené, Montigny, the Bourboulons, and Montauban insisted that their nation was different from other

⁵ Cordier, 206-7.

⁶ The concept of a family romance is borrowed from Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); its imperial reworking follows that of Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

national empires in Europe or America, they were uncomfortably aware that their very presence in China could not be separated fully or enduringly from that of their Euro-American counterparts. They were in many ways dependent upon those others in dealing with the Chinese. The French expatriates who had at first sought trade and partnership were all too soon seduced by the imperatives of conquest.

In the eighteen forties, the personal connections that had shaped relations between nationalities had often worked to destabilize stereotypes and calm underlying tensions between vaguely-defined groups. In the contact zone of mid-nineteenth-century China, everyone was an intermediary. Thus, French expatriates most easily formed bonds with Chinese whom they believed to be within their own social class, so that (mostly male) artisans and diplomats looked for and identified with men they believed might share their values and concerns. Forming affective ties, even shallow ones, on the basis of European class formation may have imposed an alien structure and rendered invisible Chinese forms of social stratification, but it also separated the Chinese into discrete, dissimilar types – the Chinese were not an undifferentiated mass. These were not merely archetypes. There was mutability in the representative molds that informed French interaction with the Chinese. Peasants were sometimes cast as blameless victims of Chinese social stratification, Qing neglect, and war (both internecine and due to Franco-British incursions); at others, their pitiful state was ascribed to flaws in character. Some writers described individual shortcomings; some found that the Chinese soul was inherently corrupt. Some vacillated between the two viewpoints, depending upon the context and upon their relationship to the individuals in question. Such characterizations may have reproduced metropolitan class antipathies; alternatively, anxieties may have

been involved in forming and buttressing European class woes. When French agents found common ground with their fellow artisans, merchants, citizens, and petty officials, they reproduced the middle-class agency – and complaints – that were the source of concurrent cataclysms on the European continent.

Attributing European characteristics to certain individuals was not merely a measure of civility, but a means by which Europeans sought to identify with and build a relationship with Chinese counterparts, a way of rendering them less foreign, and more sympathetic. Sympathetic ties, which were often forged through personal interaction, further differentiated among Chinese, and both mitigated and reinforced classifications of Chinese character as “friends.”

Personal bonds, of course, required a certain amount of intimacy, broadly construed. There were also more coercive forms of familiarity, such as those among captors and captives at the height of each of the Opium Wars. However much they might have been reconfigured by the particularities of nineteenth-century China, these forced relations of captivity resembled closely those of other times and places. Their parallels were as much narrative as they were substantive, with key figures like Anne Noble and Fanny Loviot borrowing the language of white, Christian womanhood from the likes of Mary Rowlandson and Susannah Johnson.⁷ While fear and distrust characterized *most* of Noble and Loviot’s associations with their keepers, the prominent sub-plot of Loviot’s productive camaraderie with a Chinese prisoner is a reminder of the constructive potential of affective discernment.

⁷ Loviot, *Les Pirates chinois*. See also Christopher Castiglia, *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst*. Women in Culture and Society (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996).

More often, the bonds that ordered the French presence in China were homosocial ones. Some fell rather neatly into nineteenth-century tropes of intense male friendships, sorted into hierarchies of wealth and social status. Some were complicated by elements of race, with the pseudo-scientific language of Gobineau creeping ever more deeply into the configurations as partners moved through the century and rearranged themselves into new formations through war and occupation.⁸ Relations at the imperial level were not merely a sum of the collected attachments of the French and Chinese subjects. Rather, relationships between imperial bodies were read symbolically as intimate connections writ large. This anthropomorphized set of imperio-national relationships overlapped with individual relationships on the ground, with each informing the other. Thus, early relationships, such as Lagrené's overtures to Qiying and photographer Jules Itier's imagined fraternity with Guangzhou's artisans, both reflected and fostered an idealized equal partnership between their respective nations. When conflict added complexity to the arrangement, former partners' identification as allies or enemies became dependent on a host of fluctuating contextual elements, from rebellion to expedition. State-level politics mirrored the volatility of personal relationships. Mutual Franco-Chinese understanding fell apart when the concepts of "French" and "Chinese" proved too be too rigid to contain unpredictable relations between real people. The categories that described the actors involved then underwent necessary transmutations, with both imperial and individual relations pulled apart and cobbled back together according to the newly

⁸ Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* first appeared in 1853. While none of the figures discussed in this dissertation make direct reference to Gobineau or his work, discussions of ethno-racial categories, types, and tendencies in material from the later eighteen fifties and sixties – roughly around the Second Opium War – seem to reflect an increasing pervasiveness of the racialized thinking that he pioneered. See Alfred de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1853).

splintered sub-fields of Manchu and Chinese, or fell back upon old archetypes of metropolitan and colonial, Christian and European. Adding to the division were competing ideas about what China was, and who represented it; the most evident cleavage was between a nebulous but awe-inspiring historical China and its less-impressive contemporary incarnation.

In military memoirs French and British officers traded accusations of incompetence, each blaming the other side for the failure to take Chinese positions. Of course, intra-European relations cannot be disentangled from Chinese affairs. Because alliances were so unstable, soldiers of any nationality were deemed untrustworthy: both French and British sources speak rather disparagingly about abuses by the other nation's troops.⁹ On one level, then, their Qing counterparts were simply guilty of the indelicacies common to those of their rank. A series of illustrations that accompanied a pro-intervention pamphlet in 1858 showed little difference between Taiping and Imperial conscripts – all appear disheveled and disorderly. Their commanders, on the other hand, have noble bearing, calmly preparing to give orders.¹⁰ However, by 1859 and 1860, perhaps to soften the blow of being equally matched (or even surpassed) by the Chinese military, French observers were unusually consistent in deriding Chinese armies, although the terms of their supposed inadequacy changed over time. Prior to the second Opium War, at least one account made light of the effeminacy of Imperial troops as they faced off against rebels outside of Canton, calling them “the most ludicrous affair imaginable” and comparing them to San Francisco burlesques as they carried “an

⁹ Mann's *China, 1860* illustrates the enmity that accompanied the uneasy cooperation between French and British forces, with British troops complaining of French tactical incompetence, unpreparedness, laziness, and hypocrisy, most pointedly when French troops were allowed to keep their booty after Montauban forbade looting at the Summer Palace.

¹⁰ Haussmann, 72-73.

umbrella, a fan, and a lantern.”¹¹ Observing that the Emperor was unwilling to cooperate with Europeans and unable to defeat the rebels, Haussmann, the former Chancellor of the French Legation, even wondered after the fact whether cooperation with the Taiping insurgents might have been more favorable to European interests.¹²

Two years later, direct engagement with the Emperor’s forces transformed European descriptions. French and British chroniclers of the war no longer portrayed Qing soldiers as comical or ineffectual. Instead, it was implied that unable to defeat the European expedition outright, the Chinese attempted to break the spirits of those they had captured. Alleged harsh treatment of prisoners of war was ubiquitous. British soldiers’ memoirs contain references to two European hostages who were beheaded as retribution for a Chinese general’s wounds, while others claimed that they were exposed to sun and rain for three days.¹³ Yet the same sources also reveal that tensions arose between European allies. Resentment over the taking of spoils from the Summer Palace (in which British men were forced to relinquish their booty to their commanders, while the French, who denied looting, kept what they had stolen) nearly boiled over, destabilizing the alliance.

Fissures in the European alliance could also be witnessed in diplomatic activities. Disputes over property rights in the treaty ports had emerged in earlier times of relative peace: in Guangzhou, during an imbroglio over damages made to a French flagpole in a public garden, a rancorous series of letters placed blame first upon British, then Chilean,

¹¹ Fanny Loviot, *A Lady’s Captivity*, 59-60.

¹² Haussmann.

¹³ Discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Argentine, Belgian, and Hanoverian, and finally American representatives in the city.¹⁴

The decline in conflicts with various Chinese parties, which had cemented the Franco-British coalition even amidst antagonism between the parties, was followed by attempts to manage (rather than defend) the foreign concessions. That seems to have led to a decline in intra-European camaraderie. Claiming exceptional authority, the French withdrew from the united International Settlement of Shanghai in 1862, forming their own municipal council and obtaining special assurances from the Qing government for French nationals to construct churches, schools, and commercial establishments on land purchased from Chinese authorities.¹⁵

On the other hand, even if we regard the establishment of permanent legations in Beijing as a diplomatic, rather than imperial, development, and even when we insist on adding the prefix of semi- to the colonial nature of the concessions and enclaves of the coast, there are clear imperialist overtones in the punitive expedition of 1860. While there does not seem to have been any intent to occupy China outright, the attempt to secure French and British “interests,” while also guaranteeing the continued safety of treaty port concessions – with their mixed composition of short-term expatriates, settlers, and resident Chinese populations - looked very much like a push to consolidate Anglo-French power in the East. The occupation of Beijing and penetration of the Yuánmíngyuán were simply more symbolic manifestations of conquest. The subsequent “repatriation” of the Yuánmíngyuán’s treasures exacted tribute by other means. Afterward, a small chorus of French denials and apologies couldn’t drown out the calls for more of the same in Saigon.

¹⁴ March to April 1853, Series Pékin D 277, CADN: .

¹⁵ The land assurances had apparently already been granted in 1858, but were reiterated when the French established a separate authority “Convention signed by Viceroy Lao/ the Government of the Two Kwangs and Count Kleczkowski, Secretary of the Legation of the French Emperor in Peking,” 1862, Series Pékin A477, CADN.

While Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina would be brought under the kind of direct French administration that China effectively resisted, the Chinese and Indochinese spheres remained intertwined. During that period, the French placed their lease of Guangzhouwan under Tonkin's supervision. Meanwhile, the *Compagnie française des chemins de fer de l'Indochine et du Yunnan* built a railway linking Haiphong, in Tonkin, and China's Yunnan province. The former was, of course, a French colony. The latter was a sphere of influence. Administrative force – or lack thereof – was the only discernable difference between the two territories, and even that was negligible. Both were unfinished projects. In any case, the rail project was undertaken at the behest of the Minister of the Colonies.¹⁶ The campaign of 1860 thus laid the groundwork for what we now consider to be the epoch of high empire, from the eighteen seventies into the early twentieth century.

¹⁶ Amaury Lorin, "La civilisation suit la locomotive: le credo ferroviaire de Paul Doumer, gouverneur général de l'Indochine (1897-1902), *Revue de l'histoire des chemins de fer*, no. 35 (2006): 44.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AMAE	Les Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères
AN	Archives nationales
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
CADN	Centre des Archives diplomatiques, Nantes
CCC	Chinese Coolie Corps
PRC	People's Republic of China

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France:

Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères

25CP: China/French Foreign Ministry

PA-98: French foreign commerce and navigation

Personnel 1ère série:

2135 Itier

2982 Montigny

Les Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères

25CP/2: China

PA-98: French Commercial Mission to China

Archives nationales, Paris

C/II/191: Legislative Corps

682 AP: Montauban Papers

Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine

AJ/19/261: Inventory of the Musée Chinois at the Palais de Fontainebleau

F/12: Chinese commercial documents

Bibliothèque nationale, Paris

Tolbiac site

4-LC5-138 : Ministry of Commerce, *Annales du commerce extérieur*, China

8-LG2-307, Collected Diplomatic Documents

8-LK7-13284: International Exposition of 1867

8-O2N-173, Catherine de Bourbon Memoirs

8-V36-5809, Drouot Auction Catalogue

FOL-V-695: Participants, International Exposition

L1.40-MF2: French Foreign Missions

V-38481: International Exposition of 1867

VP-26217: Commercial Mission in China, Rouen Chamber of Commerce

Richelieu Site, Estampes

Yd1: Drouot Auction Catalogue

H55069-H55194 and Va275a: International Exposition of 1867

Centre des archives diplomatiques, Nantes

513PO/A/2 Pékin (Beijing): Embassy

Pékin (Beijing) Series A-D

Shanghai Series C

Université de Poitiers, Bibliothèque Universitaire Droit-Lettres, Fonds Ancien
A-2967: Du Halde manuscripts

United Kingdom:

British Library, London

Hope Grant Papers
India Record Office, China Papers
Letters of Anne Noble

British National Archives, Kew

FO17: Foreign Office: Political and Other Departments, China

Cheshire Record Office

DJW 04/30: The War with China

CONTEMPORARY PERIODICALS

Bengal Catholic Herald (Calcutta)

Commerce, Le: Journal politique et littéraire (Paris)

Constitutionnel, Le (Paris)

Figaro, Le (Paris)

Gazette de France (Paris)

Hong Kong Register

Hong Kong Gazette

Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires (Paris)

Journal des Savants (Paris)

Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (Shanghai)

London and China Telegraph (London)

Ménestrel, Le (Paris)

Monde Illustré, Le (Paris)

Moniteur Parisien, Le (Paris)

Moniteur Universel, Le (Paris)

National, Le (Paris)

New South Wales Advertiser (Sydney)

New York Times

Patrie, La (Paris)

Siècle, Le (Paris)

Singapore Free Press

Sydney Gazette

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