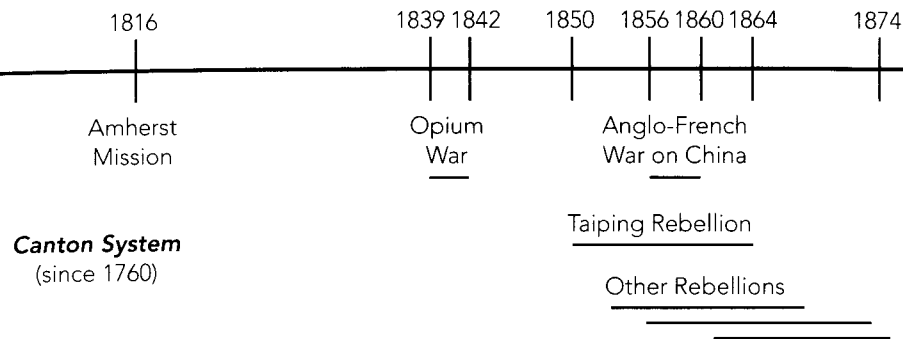


II. China



The Opium War (1839–1841) and Its Causes

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Internal Crisis

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China and the World from the Treaty of Nanjing to the End of the Taiping

Nineteenth-century China was beset by internal and external difficulties, each contributing to the severity of the other. Opium, for example, came from abroad, but its spread in China was made possible by official corruption, and the appeal of the drug to bannermen did not bode well. The Qing now faced long-term problems that would have taxed the ingenuity and energy of even an honest and effective government. Foremost were the problems created by population pressures, for the population continued to increase in the nineteenth century as it had in the eighteenth. By 1850 the number of inhabitants in China had risen to about 430 million, without any comparable increase in productivity or resources. As the pressures of the struggle for survival strained old humanistic values to the breaking point, it left little room for honesty, let alone charity. Life became brutish and hard. As ever, the poor suffered most, and they were legion, for the uneven distribution of land left many people landless, destitute, and despairing. The situation was made worse by government neglect of public works.

Emperor Jiaqing (1796–1820) tried to remedy the government's financial problems by cutting costs and selling official posts and titles, but was unable to solve the underlying fiscal and economic problems, reform the bureaucracy, or help the people, who ultimately supplied the funds. Emperor Daoguang (1820–1850) continued his father's policy of frugality but could not stem the decay. Internal pressures were building, but external crisis preceded internal eruption.

The Opium War (1839–1841) and Its Causes

Before turning to the opium crisis that triggered the war, we need to consider the long-range factors that made it a turning point in China's foreign relations. Underlying the tensions between China and the West was the incompatibility of the Chinese and Western views of themselves and the world. Both were supremely self-confident and proud of their own civilizations. Both were narrowly culture-bound. Thus, when the Macartney mission arrived in Beijing in 1793 in the hope of broadening the terms of trade and initiating treaty relations, the presents sent to Emperor Qianlong by England's George III were labeled as "tribute" by the Chinese. Qianlong responded to the English monarch by praising his "respectful spirit of submission" and, in the gracious but condescending language appropriate for addressing a barbarian king residing in the outer reaches of the world, turned down all his requests, political and economic. He saw no merit in the British request for representation in Beijing nor did he favor increased trade: "As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures."¹⁰

The sources are inconsistent on whether or not Lord Macartney performed the ceremonial kowtow expected of inferiors and performed by emperors themselves toward Heaven, but he was confident that the Chinese would perceive "that superiority which Englishmen, wherever they go, cannot conceal."¹¹ The English sent another mission to China in 1816, headed by Lord Amherst, but he was not granted an audience at court.

The British motive for coming to China remained primarily economic. In contrast to China's self-sufficiency and Emperor Qianlong's disdain for foreign products, there was a Chinese product in great demand in Britain. This was tea. First imported in tiny quantities in the late seventeenth century, tea was initially taken up as an exotic beverage with medicinal properties, then popularized as a benign alternative to gin, and finally was considered a necessity of English life. The East India Company, which enjoyed a monopoly of trade with China until 1834, was required by Act of Parliament to keep a year's supply in stock at all times. Tea imports reached 15 million pounds in 1785, and double that amount in the decade preceding the Opium War. Not only did the East India Company depend on the income from tea trade, the British government also had a direct stake in tea, since about one-tenth of its entire revenue came from a tax on Chinese tea.

Not until the 1820s did the Company begin experimenting with tea growing in India, and it was many years before Indian tea would provide an alternative to the tea of China. The importance of Chinese tea extended even to American history: it was Chinese tea that was dumped from East India Company ships in the famous Boston Tea Party (1773).

The British problem was how to pay for this tea. There was no market for British woollens in China, and the “singsong” trade in clocks, music boxes, and curios was insufficient to strike a balance of trade. Until the last third of the eighteenth century, the sale of British imports covered 10 percent or less of the cost of exports, with the rest paid for in cash and precious metals. Unable to find anything European that the Chinese wanted in sufficient quantity, the English turned toward India and the “country trade” between India and China, conducted under East India Company license by the private firms of British subjects. Money obtained in Canton by the “country traders” was put on deposit there for the Company against bills of exchange on London. In this way, England, India, and China were connected by a trade-and-payments triangle.

Until 1823 the largest commodity imported to China from India was cotton, but this never reached the volume necessary to balance the trade. That was accomplished by opium. Opium had long been used for medicinal purposes, but the smoking, or more accurately, the inhaling of opium fumes through a pipe, began in the seventeenth century. The spread of the practice was sufficient to provoke an imperial edict of prohibition in 1729, but this and subsequent efforts to suppress the drug were unsuccessful, and opium consumption continued to increase. Distributed partly through older salt-smuggling networks, and protected by the connivance of corrupt officials, it spread steadily and proved particularly attractive to soldiers and government underlings. The drug was debilitating and habit forming (see Figure 6.6). Withdrawal was excruciatingly painful. Over time the addict developed a tolerance for opium and needed more and more of the drug to achieve a “high.” Thus, to pay for tea, the Chinese were sold a poison. Since the opium was brought to China by private “country traders,” the East India Company disclaimed responsibility for the illegal traffic in China. At the same time, however, it profited from the sale of opium in India. However, within India, where the British, as the paramount power, felt a certain sense of responsibility, consumption of opium for nonmedicinal purposes was strictly prohibited.

The Chinese market for opium developed at such a pace that the balance of trade was reversed. During the 1820s and 1830s silver seems to have left China in large quantities to pay for opium imports. This caused an increase in the number of copper coins needed to buy a specific amount of silver, thereby destabilizing the Qing monetary system. What began as a public health problem now became a fiscal problem as well. In 1834, the Company’s monopoly of the China trade was abolished by the British government. This opened the gates of trade still wider on the British side, resulting in an increased flow of opium to China, and an increased flow of silver out of China.

Abolition of the Company’s trade monopoly was a victory for English advocates of free trade, who were as antagonistic to restraints on trade abroad as at



FIGURE 6.6 *Opium Smokers.* Those who could afford to do so indulged in high-quality opium prepared for them by servants at home. The less affluent had to prepare their own. But the least fortunate were left to smoke opium ash or refuse on rudimentary benches in shoddy surroundings in dismal opium dens.

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home. The immediate effect in China was to put an end to the system of Co-hong–Company relations in Canton. Now in place of the Select Committee of the East India Company, the British side was represented by an official of the crown. To initiate the new relations, Britain sent out Lord Napier as First Superintendent of Trade with instructions to establish direct contact with the Qing viceroy, to protect British rights, and to assert jurisdiction over Englishmen in Canton. To accomplish these aims, he was ordered to use a moderate and conciliatory approach. Napier, however, more ambitious than diplomatic, immediately took an adamant stand on the issue of direct communication with the viceroy. He violated Chinese regulations by not waiting in Macao for permission to proceed to Canton and by sending a letter rather than petitioning through the *hong* merchants. With neither side willing to back down, the impasse developed into a showdown. All Chinese employees were withdrawn from the British community, food was cut off, and trade was stopped. Napier finally withdrew to Macao, where he died. This all took place in 1834. Unfortunately, in the ensuing lull, no progress was made toward finding a new modus vivendi between the two sides.

For a brief moment the Chinese considered legalizing opium, but in 1836 the emperor decided on suppression. In doing so, he sided with the Spring Purification Circle of reform-minded literati officials, who were seeking influence in

government decision making. Thus an “Inner Opium War,” to use James Polachek’s formulation, developed parallel to and intertwined with the external conflict.¹²

Opium dealers and addicts were prosecuted with great vigor, and imprisonments and executions were widespread, with the result that the price of opium dropped precipitously. This program was well under way when the vigorous and determined reformer Lin Zexu (1785–1850) arrived in Canton in March 1839. As imperial commissioner, he was charged with stamping out the drug trade once and for all.

Lin conducted a highly successful campaign against Chinese dealers and consumers. He also severely punished corrupt officials who had connived at the trade. To deal with the foreign source of the opium, he appealed to Queen Victoria: “Suppose there were people from another country who carried opium for sale to England and seduced your people into buying and smoking it; certainly your honorable ruler would deeply hate it and be bitterly aroused.”¹³ He also admonished the foreign merchants, and he backed moral suasion with force. He demanded that the foreigners surrender all their opium and sign a pledge to refrain from importing the drug in the future at the risk of confiscation and death. To effect compliance, he used the same weapons of isolating the foreign traders employed successfully in 1834 against Napier. Elliot, the British Superintendent of Trade, took a fateful step in response when he ordered the British merchants to turn their opium over to him for delivery to the Chinese authorities. By this act he relieved the merchants of large amounts of opium they had been unable to sell because of the efficacy of the Chinese prohibitions, and he made the British government responsible for eventual compensation. No wonder that the merchants enthusiastically dumped their opium: 21,306 chests were delivered to Lin Zexu. It took twenty-three days to destroy it all.

In England, firms interested in the China trade exerted great pressure on the government for prompt and vigorous military action. Lin, meanwhile, pleased with his victory, continued to press Elliot on the issue of the pledges, but here he did not succeed. The Superintendent of Trade argued that it was against British law to compel the merchants to sign the pledges and that the imposition of the death penalty without the benefits of English judicial procedure was also contrary to British law. What was at stake here was the issue of British jurisdiction over British subjects, a source of Anglo-Chinese friction since 1784, when the British had refused to submit to Chinese justice. The issue came to the fore again in the summer of 1839, when a group of English sailors killed a Chinese villager in the Canton hinterland. Refusing to turn the men over to Lin Zexu, Elliot tried them himself, but when they were returned to England the men were freed, since the home court ruled that Elliot had exceeded his authority.

The first clash of the war took place in November 1839, when the Chinese tried to protect one of the only two ships whose captains had signed the bond despite Elliot’s stand and who now wanted to trade. When a British ship fired a shot across the bow of the offending vessel, the Chinese intervened with twenty-one war junks, which, however, were no match for the foreign ships. In December,

trade with the British was stopped, and on January 31, 1840, a formal declaration of war was announced by the governor-general of India acting in the name of the home government.

In June 1840, the British force, consisting of 16 warships, 4 armed steamers, 27 transports, a troop ship, and 4,000 Irish, Scottish, and Indian soldiers, arrived in China. First the British blockaded Canton and then they moved north. Lin and his associates remained confident of victory, holding that the British, like their maritime pirate predecessors, depended on the spoils of war to finance their military operations, and thus had grossly overextended themselves.

The British were fired on at Xiamen (Amoy) while trying to deliver a letter from Prime Minister Palmerston under a white flag of truce, a symbol the Chinese did not understand—just one example of mutual cultural misunderstanding. They then seized Chusan Island, south of the Yangzi estuary, and Dinghai, the chief city there. The main body of the fleet sailed another 800 miles north to Beihe, near Tianjin, where Palmerston’s letter was accepted. By this time the emperor had lost confidence in Lin Zexu, whose tough policy had led to the military retaliation. Lin was dismissed, disgraced, and exiled to Ili in Central Asia. His place was taken by the Manchu prince Qishan (d. 1854), who, in September 1840, by flattery and accommodation, got the British to return to Canton for further negotiations. When these came to naught, the British resumed military operations, with the result that in January 1841 Qishan was forced to sign a convention that provided for the cession of Hong Kong, payment of an indemnity to Britain, equality of diplomatic relations, and the reopening of Canton. Both Qishan for the Qing and Elliot for the British thought they had done very well, but neither government accepted their work. The Chinese emperor was indignant at how much had been conceded, while Palmerston fumed that Elliot had demanded too little. The reactions of the Chinese and British governments showed all too clearly how far apart they still were. Caught in the middle were the negotiators. Like Lin Zexu earlier, now Qishan came to feel the imperial displeasure: his property was confiscated and he was sent to exile on the Amur. Elliot too was dismissed; his next position was as consul-general in Texas.

In the renewed fighting, the British besieged Canton in February 1841, but the siege was lifted on payment of a ransom of 6 million Spanish silver dollars. However, before their departure, the British experienced the growing hostility of the local population. They were attacked by a body of troops organized by the local gentry. Although militarily ineffective, the attack was an indication of popular sentiment, and its results were embellished by hard-liners to support their advocacy of continued intransigence toward the British. In August, Elliot was relieved by Pottinger, and the last phase of the war began when the British moved north, occupying Xiamen in August and Dinghai in October. Reinforcements were sent from India, increasing the naval force and bringing troop strength up to 10,000. With this force, Pottinger continued the campaign, advancing up the Yangzi until his guns threatened Nanjing. There on August 29, 1842, the treaty was signed that ended the war. It was a dictated peace imposed by the Western victor on the vanquished Chinese.

The Treaty of Nanjing and the Treaty System

The Treaty of Nanjing (together with the supplementary Treaty of the Bogue, October 1843) set the pattern for treaties China later signed with the United States and France in 1844, established the basic pattern for China's relations with the West for the next century, and supplied the model for similar treaties imposed on Japan. The Canton System and the Cohong monopoly were abolished. Five ports—Canton, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai—were opened to British trade and residence. Britain received the right to appoint consuls to these cities. The treaty also stipulated that henceforth official communications were to be on a basis of equality.

The Qing was forced to pay an indemnity of 21 million Spanish silver dollars. Of this, 12 million was for war expenses, in keeping with the European practice of forcing the loser to pay the costs of a war. Another 6 million was paid as reparations for opium handed over to Commissioner Lin, while the remaining 3 million went to settle the debts owed by the *hong* merchants to British merchants.

An important provision of the treaty established a moderate Chinese tariff of from 4 to 13 percent on imports, with an average rate of 5 percent. The Chinese, whose statutory customs had been even lower, did not realize that by agreeing to this provision they were relinquishing the freedom to set their own tariffs. On the British side there was the conviction that, as Adam Smith had taught, the removal of constraints on trade would benefit all by allowing everyone to concentrate on what he did best.

The British, having acquired an empire in India, with all the burdens of government that it entailed, did not seek to create another in China. Trade, not territory, was their aim. But they did demand and obtain a Chinese base. Hong Kong Island, at that time the site of a tiny fishing village, was ceded to them in perpetuity. Well located and with an excellent harbor, it developed into a major international port.

The issue of legal jurisdiction over British subjects was settled by the Treaty of the Bogue, which provided for extraterritoriality—that is, the right of British subjects to be tried according to British law in British consular courts. Having only recently reformed their own legal system, the British were convinced of its superiority. There were precedents in Chinese history for allowing “barbarians” to manage their own affairs, but in the context of modern international relations, extraterritoriality amounted to a limitation on Chinese sovereignty.

The Treaty of the Bogue also provided for most-favored-nation treatment. This obliged China to grant to Britain any rights China conceded in the future to any other power. Its effect was to prevent China from playing the powers off against each other. It meant that once a nation had obtained a concession, it was automatically enjoyed by all the other states granted most-favored status. In the

1844 treaties, the United States and France gained this status. In the American treaty, China agreed to allow for the maintenance of churches in the treaty ports and to treaty revision in twelve years, while the French won the right to propagate Catholicism.

The status of the opium trade was left unsettled in the original treaties. An agreement to outlaw smuggling did not slow down the growth of the traffic, which was legalized under the next round of treaty settlements, 1858–1860, and opium even functioned as a kind of money. From the annual 30,000 chests prior to the Opium War, the trade expanded to reach a high of 87,000 chests in 1879. It then declined as Chinese production of opium increased. British opium imports were down to about 50,000 chests when, in 1906, the Qing took strong measures against the drug. British imports finally came to a stop in 1917, but opium smoking remained a serious social problem until the early 1950s.

For China, the treaties solved and settled nothing. A particularly ominous development was the permission granted foreign gunboats to anchor at the treaty ports, for when additional ports were opened, it gave foreign powers the right to navigate China's inland waterways. Today, with the benefit of hindsight, it is apparent that the cumulative effect of the treaties was to reduce China to a status of inequality unacceptable to any modern nation.

Although it is now universally regarded as a milestone, the treaty settlement did not seem so to the Qing authorities who, as John Fletcher has shown, had made many of the same concessions as recently as 1835 in reaching a settlement with the tiny Central Asian state of Kokand. This treaty involved an indemnity, a tariff settlement, the abolition of a merchant monopoly, and a special position exceeding that of most-favored-nation status, and seen by the Qing as simply a case of “impartial benevolence.”¹⁴ From the vantage point of Beijing, Hong Kong seemed as remote as Kokand.

Foreign policy remained deeply imbedded in political conflicts revealing deep lines of division in the body politic. When the Manchu-led centralizers, who advocated peace, came into power, they purged their opposition so thoroughly that Chinese scholar-officials of various intellectual persuasions found common ground in pressing for open discussion in official channels, administrative decentralization, and a policy of determined resistance against the foreigners. Few men had any inkling of the dimensions of the challenge facing the empire. For example, Wei Yuan (1794–1857), author of the influential *Illustrated Treatise on the Sea Kingdoms* (first version, 1844), limited himself to incorporating new information into old categories, and felt no need to break with tradition. Despite his geopolitical orientation, he persisted in underestimating the British threat.

Under the circumstances, the best that experts could suggest was for China to acquire “barbarian” arms and to employ the old diplomacy of playing off one “barbarian” against another. Less well-informed officials suggested that future military operations take advantage of the supposed physical peculiarities of the “barbarians,” for example, their stiff waists and straight legs, which made them dependent on horses and ships, or their poor night vision.

Internal Crisis

The encroachments of the foreign powers was ominous, but the internal crisis was even more dangerous. Government leadership remained totally inadequate. Earlier, Emperor Daoguang's partial success in reforming the official salt monopoly system had not compensated for his failure to reinvigorate the Grand Canal or Yellow River managements. The former was impassable by 1849, after which tax grain had to be shipped by sea. The abandonment of the canal cost thousands their jobs. Emperor Daoguang did not live to see the Yellow River disaster of 1852. Since 1194, the greater river had flowed into the sea south of the Shandong Peninsula, but now it shifted to the north, spreading flood and devastation over a wide area.

The next emperor, Xianfeng (1851–1861), was nineteen when he inherited the throne and proved equally incapable of dealing with an increasingly menacing situation. Even while rebellion threatened the dynasty, a major scandal involving bribery and cheating shook the examination system.

Famine, poverty, and corruption gave rise to banditry and armed uprisings, as had so often happened in the past. The most formidable threat to the dynasty came from the Taiping revolutionaries. To aggravate the crisis, the dynasty also had to contend with rebellions elsewhere. In the border regions of Anhui, Jiangsu, Henan, and Shandong, there was the Nian Rebellion (1853–1868) led by secret societies, probably related to the White Lotus Society. There was also a Muslim rebellion in Yunnan (1855–1873) and the Dongan Rebellion in the Northwest (1862–1875). Yet it was the Taiping who came closest to destroying the Qing, in a civil war that, in terms of bloodshed and devastation, was the costliest in human history. It is estimated that more than 20 million people lost their lives.

The Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864)

The founder of the Taiping movement was a village school teacher named Hong Xiuquan (1814–1864), who belonged to the Hakka, ethnically a Han subgroup, which many centuries earlier had migrated from the north to the southeast, where they remained a distinct ethnic group. Originally, Hong hoped for a conventional civil service career, and four times went to Canton to participate in the civil service examination, only to fail each time. In 1837, shocked by his third failure, he became seriously ill, and for forty days was subject to fits of delirium during which he experienced visions. These visions he later interpreted with the aid of a Christian tract he picked up in Canton, where Protestant missionaries had made a beginning in their effort to bring their faith to China. He also received some instruction from an American Southern Baptist missionary. On the basis of his limited knowledge of the Bible and Christianity, he proceeded to work out his own form of Sinicized Christianity.

Central to Hong's faith was his conviction that in his visions he had seen God, who had bestowed on him the divine mission to save humankind and exterminate demons. He also met Jesus, and was given to understand that Christ was his own

elder brother. This recasting of Christianity into a familistic mode had its appeal for Hong's Chinese audience, but dismayed Western Christian missionaries, who were further appalled by Hong's claims that he himself was a source of new revelation. The emphasis in Taiping Christianity was on the Old Testament—on the Ten Commandments, not the Sermon on the Mount. Hong's militant zeal in obeying the first commandment by destroying "idols" and even Confucian ancestral tablets soon cost him his position as a village teacher. He became an itinerant preacher among the Hakka communities in Guangxi, gaining converts and disciples among the downtrodden and dispossessed, whom he recruited into the Association of God Worshipers. To the poor and miserable, he held out a vision of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (*Taiping tianguo*), an egalitarian, God-ordained utopia.

In keeping with both Christianity and native traditions, the Taiping stressed a strict, even puritanical, morality. Opium, tobacco, gambling, alcohol, prostitution, sexual misconduct, and foot binding were all strictly prohibited. Women were made equal to men in theory and, to a remarkable extent, also in practice. Consistent with both Christian egalitarianism and native Chinese utopian ideas was a strong strain of economic egalitarianism, a kind of simple communism. Property was to be shared in common, and in 1850 the members of the Association were asked to turn over their funds to a communal treasury that would provide for everyone's needs.

The Taiping land program was based on a system of land classification according to nine grades found in *The Rites of Zhou*, long a source of Chinese radical thought. The idea was that everyone would receive an equal amount of land, measured in terms of productivity of the soil. Any production in excess of what was needed by the assignees was to be contributed to common granaries and treasuries. The system did not recognize private property.

The basic political structure was a unit of twenty-five families consisting of five groups of five families each. The leaders of these and larger units were to combine civil and military duties and look after the spiritual welfare of their people by conducting Sunday religious services. The Taiping developed their own hymns, primers, and literature, which served as the subject matter for a new examination system open to women as well as men. Similarly, there were female as well as male military units. Marriages took place in church and were monogamous.

What stood in the way of realizing this utopia were the "demons," mostly Manchus. By July 1850 the Association had attracted 10,000 adherents, primarily in the remote and neglected province of Guangxi. In defiance of the Qing, they now cut off their queues, the long braids of hair hanging down from the back of the head, which had been forced upon the Chinese by the Manchus as a sign of subjugation. Since they also refused to shave the forepart of their heads, the government called them the "long-haired rebels." Millenarian religious beliefs, utopian egalitarianism, moral righteousness, and hatred of the Manchus proved a potent combination when fused into a program of organized armed resistance. In November 1850 there were clashes with government troops, and on January 11, 1851, Hong's thirty-seventh birthday, his followers proclaimed him "Heavenly King," thus formally defying the Qing.

At this stage, the Taiping enjoyed good leadership. One of the outstanding secondary leaders was Yang Xiuqing, originally a charcoal burner, who was a talented organizer and strategist. Starting from their base in Guangxi, the Taiping forces made rapid military progress. One of their favorite tactics in attacking cities was to use their contingent of coal miners to dig tunnels to undermine the defending walls. The incompetence of the government forces also helped. As the Taiping armies advanced, they picked up strength. It has been estimated that their number reached over one million by the time they took Nanjing in 1853.

After such a quick advance, with their ranks swollen by new adherents only partially versed in Taiping tenets, it was time to call a halt and consolidate. They had formally been proclaimed the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace in 1851. Now, with its capital at Nanjing, they attempted to turn it into a solid regime. To continue military operations, two expeditions were sent out. A small force was dispatched north and came within twenty miles of Tianjin before suffering reverses and defeat. Large forces went west and enjoyed considerable success until 1856, but they too were eventually defeated.

Taiping treatment of Westerners was cordial but clumsy. They lost much good will by employing condescending language and expressions of superiority not unlike those used by Beijing. After the British failed to obtain Taiping recognition of their treaty rights, they decided on a policy of neutrality, and the other powers soon followed suit. This remained the policy of the foreign powers through the 1850s.

A turning point for the Taiping regime came in 1856 in the form of a leadership crisis they could ill afford. Yang Xiuqing had increased his power to the point of reducing Hong to a mere figurehead. Yang, too, went into trances, and claimed to be acting on God's orders, but he was unable to convince the other leaders. When he over-reached, they turned on him. Yang, along with his family and thousands of followers, was killed, but no strong successor appeared to take his place. By the time Hong's cousin Hong Rengan (1822–1864) came into prominence in 1859, it was too late to restructure the regime. Hong Rengan was the most Westernized of the Taiping leaders, but had neither the time nor the power to build the centralized and modern state he had in mind. His leadership lasted only until 1861. Hong Xiuquan himself was immersed in his religious mission, occupied in writing elaborate comments on the Bible, and totally lost to the world.

Failure of the leadership was one source of Taiping weakness. Inadequate implementation of stated policies was another. Practice did not conform to theory. For example, Hong Xiuquan himself, as well as other Taiping leaders, kept numerous concubines despite the Taiping call for monogamy. Moreover, there were many missed opportunities: the failure to strike before the dynasty could regroup; the failure to cooperate with secret societies and other opponents of the regime who did not share the Taiping faith; the failure to cultivate good relations with the foreign powers.

To make matters worse, Taiping revolutionary ideas repelled all those Chinese who identified with the basic Confucian way of life and understood that the Taiping program was not merely anti-Manchu but anti-Confucian, and thus sub-

versive to the traditional social order. Consequently the Taiping not only failed to recruit gentry support, but they antagonized this key element in Chinese society. To the literati, rule by “civilized” Manchus was preferable to rule by “barbarized” Chinese.

Zeng Guofan and the Defeat of the Taiping

What ultimately prolonged the Qing dynasty's life was a new kind of military force organized by Zeng Guofan (1811–1872), a dedicated Confucian and a product of the examination system. Unlike the old armies organized under the Qing banner system (see p. 25), Zeng's army was a strictly regional force from Hunan, staffed by officers of similar regional and ideological background personally selected by him. They, in turn, recruited soldiers from their own home areas or from members of their own clans. A paternalistic attitude of officers toward their men, a generous pay scale honestly administered, careful moral indoctrination, and common regional ties all helped to produce a well-disciplined force high in morale. Qing statesmen were aware that strong regional armies such as Zeng's threatened the balance of power between the central government and the regions, and were ultimately dangerous to the authority of the dynasty. But the traditional armies of the regime had proved hopelessly inadequate, and the Manchu rulers had no choice but to trust their defense to Zeng. Although organized in Hunan, where it began its operations, the army also fought the Taiping in other provinces. It was not always victorious: twice Zeng suffered such serious reverses that he attempted suicide. But in the long run a well-led and highly motivated army, honestly administered and true to its purpose, proved superior to the Taiping forces.

The dynasty also benefited from the services of two other remarkable leaders. Zuo Zongtang (1812–1885) and especially Li Hongzhang (1823–1901) whose Anhui Army became the strongest anti-Taiping force. After the treaties of 1860, the Western powers sided with the regime that had made such extensive concessions to them, and Western arms were of great assistance, particularly to the Anhui Army. An American adventurer was succeeded by a British officer as leader of four or five thousand Chinese in the “Ever Victorious Army.” Meanwhile, French officers commanded the “Ever Triumphant Army,” composed of Chinese and Filipino mercenaries. Customs revenues helped loyalists purchase foreign arms and steamers and establish arsenals.

After a series of victories, the loyalist armies laid siege to Nanjing. When the situation became desperate, Hong Xiuquan relied on divine intervention, ordering the starving people to eat manna. According to a Taiping general, “The Sovereign himself, in the open spaces of his palace, collected all sorts of weeds, which he made into a lump and sent out of the palace, demanding that everyone do likewise.”¹⁵ The same source attributes Hong's subsequent fatal illness to his eating of these weed concoctions. Shortly after Hong's death, on July 19, 1864, the city fell to an army commanded by Zeng Guofan's brother. As had happened often in this bitter war, the fall of Nanjing was followed by a bloodbath. Hong's son managed to flee,

but was discovered in Guangxi and executed. The Taiping, once so close to victory, were completely eradicated. Similarly, the loyalist forces succeeded in quelling the Nian, Muslim, and other rebels.

The Taiping's example was to inspire future revolutionaries, while conservatives continued to admire Zeng Guofan. That others were restless and defiant is suggested by the famous life-size self-portrait of Ren Xiong (1820–1857), who served in a military headquarters but did not rest easily with his choice (Figure 6.7). Painted in Shanghai, which was beginning to assume its role as a major meeting place between China and the West, this original, unsettling work of art mirrors the stress of its time and foreshadows future conflict and distress.

China and the World from the Treaty of Nanjing to the End of the Taiping

As we have seen, the Treaty of Nanjing established a pattern, but satisfied neither side. Frustrated in attempts at local negotiation, the British demanded direct representation in Beijing. They also pressed for treaty revision, because the opening of the new ports had not led to the anticipated increase in trade. Behind the demands for freer trade was the persistent belief that only artificial restrictions prevented the development of a giant market in China for British textiles and other products.

One cause of friction between the English and the Chinese was the repeated postponement of the opening of Canton because of the strong antforeign feeling of its people. The continuation of the opium trade did not help matters, nor did the development of a new commerce in Chinese laborers. These men were often procured against their will, crowded into dismal “coolie” vessels, and transported as contract laborers to work the plantations of

Cuba and Peru. The boom set off by the discovery of gold in California in 1848 also brought Chinese immigrants to the United States, but they came as free laborers, their passage organized by Chinese merchants. By 1852 there were 25,000 Chinese in the American West, and by 1887 there were twice that number in California.

There were some efforts at cooperation during these years, as the foreign powers sided with the dynasty rather than the Taiping. With Chinese consent, the

British set about suppressing piracy. More important was the establishment of the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs in Shanghai in 1854 after the Qing officials had been ejected by rebels. The Inspectorate became responsible for the collection of tariffs and the prevention of smuggling. By the new treaties of 1858, its authority was extended to all treaty ports. It remained an important source of support for the dynasty during and after the Taiping Rebellion.

Nevertheless, there was more discord than harmony, and in 1856 war broke out once more. The immediate cause of war was the Arrow Affair. The Arrow was a Chinese-owned but Hong Kong registered vessel which, although flying the British flag, was boarded by Chinese officials, who seized twelve Chinese men whom they charged with piracy. When the viceroy returned the men but refused to apologize and guarantee that it would not happen again, the British responded by seizing Canton. There was a lull in the fighting while the British were occupied fighting a war in India set off by the Mutiny of 1857. When the war in China was resumed in December 1857, the English were joined by the French.

As in the first war, the Europeans again moved north, and in Tianjin the British and French negotiated the Treaties of Tianjin, providing for permanent residency of diplomats in Beijing, the opening of ten new ports, foreign travel throughout China, reduction of inland transit dues, an indemnity, and freedom of movement for all Christian missionaries. However, hostilities resumed after the British envoy discovered that the Qing planned to exchange ratifications in Shanghai rather than Beijing. Although the Chinese defeated the British at Taku, where the river leading to Tianjin enters the sea, victory went to the allies who entered Beijing, where Elgin, the British commander, vented his anger by burning down the imperial summer palace of around two hundred buildings northwest of Beijing. In October the Conventions of Beijing, were signed to supplement the Treaties of Tianjin, which now also took effect. In addition to the usual indemnity, China was forced to open eleven new ports, to grant rights to travel in the interior, and to allow foreign envoys to reside in Beijing. In 1860 the French also surreptitiously inserted into the Chinese text a provision granting missionaries the right to buy land and erect buildings in all parts of China.

The peace agreements were secured through the mediation of the Russian ambassador to Beijing, who used the opportunity to consolidate the gains Russia had made to date and to obtain new concessions for his country. Under Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, Russia's land empire had expanded into the area west of the Pamirs then known as Russian Turkestan, and in 1851 Russia obtained trading privileges and the right to station consuls at Kuldja and Chuguchak (Dacheng) in the Ili region of Chinese Turkestan (now Xinjiang) east of the Pamirs. Now areas southwest of Kuldja and Urga (Ulan Bator) in Outer Mongolia were also opened to them, but, having suppressed Muslim rebellions, the Qing were able to retain their position in Central Asia.

Meanwhile, Russia made massive gains in the northeast. In the Amur region Nikolai Muraviev, governor-general of Siberia, began putting pressure on the Qing in 1847. In 1860, the entire area north of the Amur was ceded to the Russians, who also received the lands east of the Ussuri River, which were incorporated into



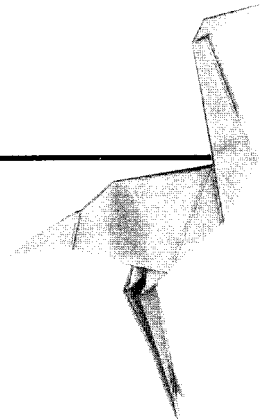
FIGURE 6.7 Ren Xiong. In a self-portrait never painted before, Ren depicts himself with a military haircut and expresses both confidence and anxiety. Hanging scroll, ink and paper. 177.5 × 78.8 cm.

REPRODUCED BY THE PALACE MUSEUM, BEIJING, CHINA.

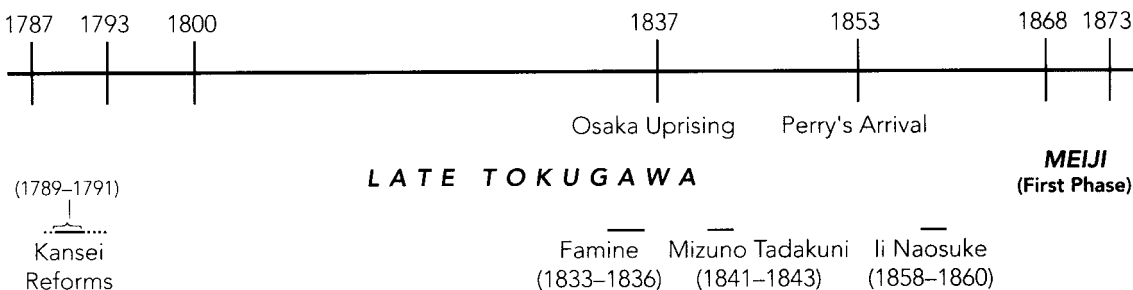
the Russian Empire as the Amur and Maritime Provinces. In the latter, Muraviev founded Vladivostok (“Ruler of the East,” in Russian). Russia also now received most-favored-nation status. The gains Russia made at this time remain a source of conflict between the Russians and Chinese.

Notes

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10. Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell, *The China Reader: Imperial China* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 105–13, which reproduces Harley F. MacNair, *Modern Chinese History, Selected Readings* (Shanghai: Commercial Press Ltd., 1923), pp. 2–9.
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14. John Fletcher, *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 375–85.
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Japan from Tokugawa to Meiji: 1787–1873



The Bakufu 1787–1841

Economy and Society

Reforms

Intellectual Currents

The Opening of Japan

Domestic Politics

Sonnō Jōi

Mixed Responses to the West

Last Years of the Shogunate, 1860–1867

*Formation of a New Government:
The Meiji Restoration*

The Charter Oath

Dismantling the Old Order

Disaffection and Opposition

The Crisis of 1873

The Meaning of the Restoration

Internal crisis and Western intrusion are the main themes of this chapter, as of the last. Although prior to the 1830s there were some good years, the Tokugawa system was showing many symptoms of stress even before challenges from abroad put the old order to a final test. However, the dynamism of the forces subverting Tokugawa state and society ultimately helped Japan to develop into a modern country.

The Bakufu 1787–1841

Nature rescued the land from the famine of the 1780s, but it took government action to relieve the *bakufu*'s financial distress. The Kansei Reforms (1789–1791) were led by Matsudaira Sadanobu (1787–1793), an earnest Confucian who served a young shogun and owed his position as head of the *bakufu* to the support he received from an inner circle of *daimyo*. Matsudaira encouraged a return to simpler times. He launched a much-needed campaign against corruption and made an effort to improve public services in Edo, but his fiscal and economic program relied on edicts mandating lower prices for rice, restrictions on merchant guilds, cancellation of some samurai loans, and rent control. Matsudaira also sought to freeze foreign policy, reducing contact with the Dutch and proposing to leave Hokkaido undeveloped as a buffer to foreign intervention.

To improve administration, he not only sought to advance “men of ability” but tried to control what they thought by furthering education and by making the Neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi the official doctrine. He proscribed heterodoxy from the official *bakufu* school, but this had little effect elsewhere. There was also a hardening of censorship. All told, these measures “institutionalized and hardened tradition . . . and left a regime less flexible and more concerned with preserving a tradition that had now been defined.”¹

It did not take long for the *bakufu*'s systemic fiscal ills to reappear. By 1800 its annual budget showed a small deficit, the beginning of a trend. Forced loans and nineteen currency devaluations between 1819 and 1837 brought only temporary relief. The political authorities remained dependent on the market and the merchants who understood and manipulated the market. The government could not simply borrow, because there was no system of deficit financing. When famine struck again, beginning in 1833 and reaching a crescendo in 1836, the *bakufu*'s response was once again inadequate. Once again reform was urgently needed.

Economy and Society

Reflecting Japan's geographical and political diversity, there were major local differences in the economy and society. Fortunately, a number of local studies are currently helping to correct overemphasis on the center, which was less central then than now. Thus in his study of the herring fisheries in Hokkaido, which supplied fertilizer to the rest of Japan, David L. Howell found “a vibrant proto-

industrial complex of commodity production for distant markets, dominated by merchant capitalists who used their ties to the local feudal authorities to good advantage.”² A number of other domains pursued market-oriented policies, and commercial networks developed that linked communities in ways beyond the control of individual political authorities.

Change varied geographically and was complex socially. Some flourished; others suffered. Among the losers were lower-ranking samurai who had to convert a substantial portion of their rice stipend into cash and who were constantly at the mercy of a fluctuating market that they did not understand and would not study. When *daimyo*, burdened with periodic attendance in Edo and the need to maintain establishments in both Edo and their own *han* capitals, found themselves in financial difficulty, they frequently reduced samurai stipends. This hurt even the small minority of high-ranking men with large stipends, but was downright devastating for the bulk of samurai, who ranked low in status and stipend.

Some samurai married daughters of wealthy merchants, but many lived in increasingly desperate circumstances. They pawned their swords, worked at humble crafts such as umbrella making and sandal weaving, and tried to hide their misery from the world. A samurai was taught that his mouth should display a toothpick even when he had not eaten. The samurai were not dissatisfied with the premises of a social system in which, after all, they formed the ruling class, but they were enraged by the discrepancy between the theoretical elevation of their status and the reality of their poverty. Not only was their poverty demeaning, but the spectacle of merchant wealth hurt their pride. It seemed the height of injustice that society should reward the selfish money-makers and condemn to indigence the warrior whose life was one of service. They harbored deep resentment against incompetence and corruption in high places, and called on governments to employ more capable men from the lower samurai ranks.

City merchants and rural entrepreneurs flourished, but the increasing scope of the market had diverse effects on ordinary folk. In the Kanto there were villages left with untilled fields as people fled rural poverty in the hope of a better life in industry or commerce, but the market often proved a hard taskmaster. Consolation when things turned out badly and hope in a better future were offered by charismatic religious teachers and by cults such as Fujiko, which was centered on pilgrimage to Mount Fuji and worship of Maitreya, associated in Japan as elsewhere with millenarianism (see Chapter 1).

When, as during a famine, things became unbearable, people resorted to violence. The best estimate has it that during 1830–1844 there were 465 rural disputes, 445 peasant uprisings, and 101 urban riots. A great impression was made by the 1837 uprising led by Ōshio Heihachiro (1793–1837), a low-ranking *bakufu* official and follower of Wang Yangming's philosophy of action. Although poorly planned and quickly suppressed, the uprising expressed a general sense of malaise and of the disintegration of authority. This was the case also in the countryside, where, in earlier conflicts, villagers had united behind their headmen, but now the gap between the rich and poor had reached the point where interests diverged too widely for the village to speak with a single voice.

Reforms

In response to the financial and social crisis, there was one more concerted effort at reform both in the domains and at the center. On both levels, large doses of antiquated remedies such as economic retrenchment, bureaucratic reform, and moral rearmament were administered, but there were also some innovative policies. In the *bakufu*, reforms began in 1841 under Mizuno Tadakuni (1793–1851), a house *daimyo* (*fudai*) who rose to *bakufu* leadership. His measures included recoinage, forced loans, dismissal of officials to reduce costs, and sumptuary laws intended to preserve morals and save money. Censorship became stricter. An effort (by no means the first) was made to force peasants to return to their lands. This was in keeping with the Confucian view of the primacy of agriculture as well as with the Tokugawa policy of strict class separation—but it hardly solved any problems.

A program to create a solid area of *bakufu* control around Edo and Osaka called for the creation of a *bakufu*-controlled zone of 25 square miles around Edo and 12 square miles around Osaka by moving certain *daimyo* and direct retainers out of these areas. This could have rationalized administration and strengthened the shogunate, but the plan proved too ambitious and could not be carried out. In the hope of fighting inflation, merchant monopolies were broken up and an attempt was made to bar the *daimyo* from engaging in commercial monopolies. Despite the retrenchment policy, an expensive and ostentatious formal procession to the Tokugawa mausoleum at Nikko was organized in an effort to reassert the *bakufu*'s preeminence. But the *daimyo* were not easily bridled, and the reform lasted only two years.

Various domains, faced with similar problems, attempted local reform programs of their own. Here and there *han* government machinery was reformed, stipends and other costs were cut, and some domains even rewarded the expert assistance of outstanding members of the merchant community by promoting them to samurai status. Agriculture was encouraged and commercial policies were changed. Generally, in the *han* as in the *bakufu*, the reforms ended, “some whimpering their way into oblivion, others culminating in an explosion in which the reformers were dismissed . . . and sometimes thrown into prison as well. . . . Whatever the end, they were ignored until their resurrection as models for fresh reforms in the 1850s and 1860s.”³

A major domain in which the reforms did take hold was Satsuma in Kyushu (see Figure 7.1). Subsequently, Chōshū in southwest Honshu enjoyed similar success. In important ways these were untypical domains. For one, they were both large, outside *han* (*tozama*) which had accepted Tokugawa supremacy only when they had no other alternative. Both had had their domains transferred and reduced in size. One consequence was that they kept alive an anti-Tokugawa tradition. Another was that the reduction in the size of their domains left them with a higher-than-average ratio of samurai to the land. In Satsuma, this led to the formation of a class of samurai who worked the land (*goshi*) and maintained a tight control of the countryside, which experienced not a single peasant uprising

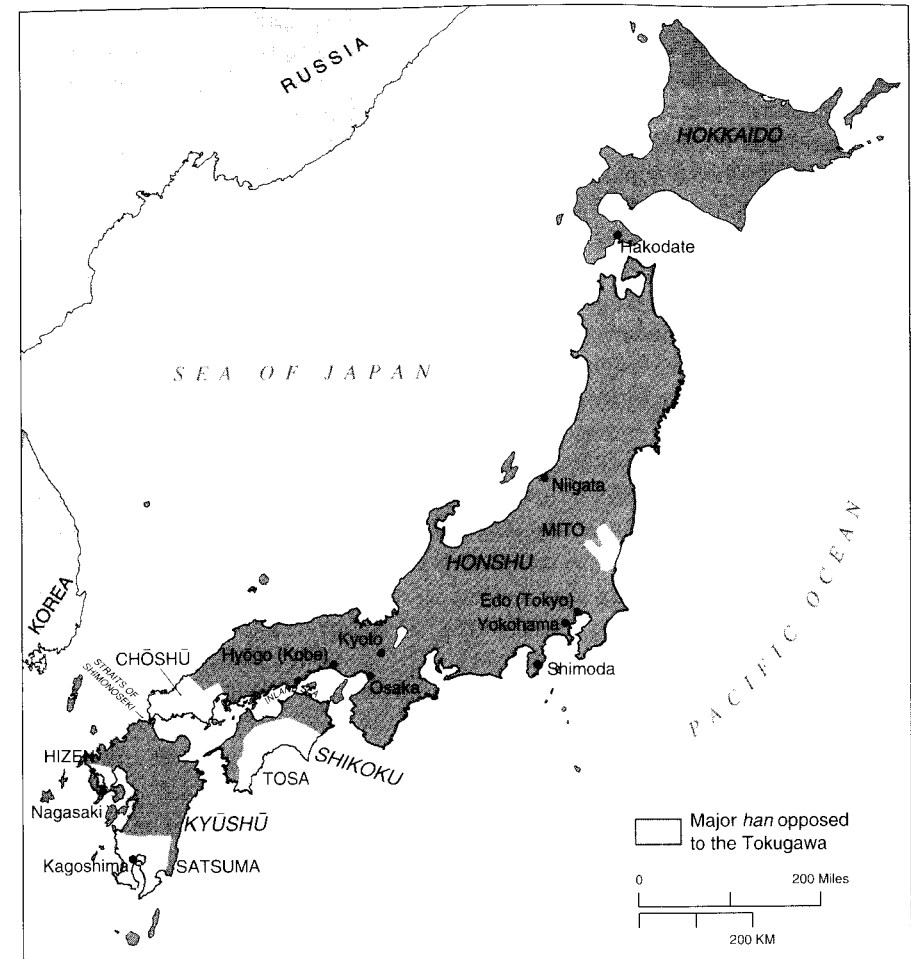


FIGURE 7.1 Map showing Satsuma in Kyushu and Chōshū in southwest Honshu, 1850s–1860s.

throughout the Tokugawa period. Satsuma backwardness was also an asset to the domain in the sense that it worked against the erosion of samurai values found in economically more advanced and urbane regions. Both Chōshū and Satsuma also had special family ties with the court in Kyoto, the most likely focus for any anti-*bakufu* movement.

In both *han*, finances were put in order and a budget surplus was built up, although by different means. In Chōshū, rigorous cost-cutting was initiated, major improvements were made in *han* financial administration, and the land tax was reformed. Most monopolies were abolished, since they were unprofitable for the government and unpopular among the people. Only the profitable shipping and warehouse monopolies at Shimonoseki were continued. Otherwise, commodity transactions were turned over to merchants for a fee. Satsuma, in contrast, derived

much of its income from its monopolies, especially the monopoly on sugar from the Ryukyu Islands, a Satsuma dependency, which was directed to continue sending tribute to China in order to foster trade. Thus the Ryukyus served as a source of Chinese goods for Satsuma. The sugar monopoly was strictly enforced: private sale of sugar was a crime punishable by death. The sugar was brought to market in Osaka in the *han*'s own ships, and at every stage, from production to sale, everything was done to maximize profit for the Satsuma treasury.

These programs required vigorous leadership, because they naturally ran up against the opposition of merchants and others who benefited from doing things the old way. Both Chōshū and Satsuma were fortunate in having reform-minded *daimyo* who raised to power young samurai of middle or low rank, men who tended to be much more innovative and energetic than conservative samurai of high rank. Particularly in Chōshū, such differences in background and outlook among the samurai class led to bitter antagonisms and political turbulence.

The fact that reform was more successful in Chōshū and Satsuma than in the *bakufu* suggests that it was easier to implement reform in a well-organized, remote domain than in the central region, where the economic changes were most advanced and political pressures and responsibilities were far greater. Reform attempts in other *han* varied in success, but Chōshū and Satsuma are particularly important, since these two large and wealthy domains were to play a crucial role in the eventual overthrow of the Tokugawa.

Intellectual Currents

Economic, social, and political changes were accompanied by intellectual restiveness. Perceptions and ideas advanced by Shinto Revivalists of the School of National Learning, the Mito school with its emphasis on the centrality of the emperor, followers of Dutch Learning, and advocates of social restructuring ate away at the intellectual foundations of Tokugawa rule.

From the world of Osaka merchants came the bold ideas of Yamagata Bantō (1748–1821), a great Osaka financier with a well-established place in society. Yamagata based his ideas on astronomy, and formulated a view of the world that allowed for achievements to occur anywhere on the globe. He had great regard for utility and trust. One of his recommendations was to make written Japanese more accessible by using only the phonetic *kana* script and eliminating all Chinese characters. An even more unorthodox thinker was Kaihō Seiryō (1748–1821), who spent his life traveling all over Japan free from encumbrances of status or family, and saw all relations, including that between lord and samurai, in economic terms: the samurai sells his service to the lord in exchange for a stipend. For Kaihō Seiryō this was merely accommodating to *li* (principle). Here a key Neo-Confucian concept is employed to structure a new theory of social conduct. The old bottles were capable of holding remarkably new wine.

In political thought, the respective roles of emperor and shogun continued to be subjects of discussion. In Mito, noted for its work on history (see Chapter 4),

scholars emphasized that the emperor ruled by virtue of his unique descent and that the shogun's legitimacy came from the mandate he derived from the emperor. Aizawa Seishisai (1782–1863), a leading Mito thinker, combined Confucian values and *bushidō* with Shinto mythology in discussing Japan's unique polity (*koku-tai*). In 1825 he wanted the emperor to create in Japan the kind of unity that he saw as the basis for the strength of Western states and attributed to (iniquitous) Christianity. As Bob Wakabayashi has indicated, in 1825 Aizawa's "argument for using the emperor's religious authority to bolster *bakufu* political supremacy was sensible and compelling."⁴ But thirty years later the emperor and shogun had grown so far apart that this would have been inconceivable. However, Aizawa's glorification of the emperor was to outlast the very idea of a *bakufu*.

Attitudes toward the West varied widely. Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843), for example, drew on the ideas of Motoori Norinaga (see Chapter 4, p. 78) and advocated an irrational and frequently naive nativism, but as a physician he admired Western medicine and studied Dutch medical texts. To reconcile his adulation of Japan with his appreciation for the foreign science, Hirata maintained that Japan had originally been pure and free of disease: the need for a powerful medical science arose only after Japan was infected by foreign contacts.

Most students of Dutch Learning took a more positive attitude. Interest in practical Western sciences such as astronomy, medicine, and mathematics continued to grow. The *bakufu* itself, in 1811, set up a bureau to translate Dutch books even while it maintained its closed door policies toward the West. Takano Chōei (1804–1850) and Watanabe Kazan (1795–1841), persecuted for disagreeing with the *bakufu*'s seclusion policy, ended as suicides.

Outstanding among the students of Western science was the Confucian scholar Sakuma Shōzan (1811–1864), who conducted experiments in chemistry and glassmaking, and later became an expert in the casting of guns; he was a serious thinker about the principles as well as the products of Western technology. There was ample room in his thought for Western learning, which he saw as part of the ultimate unity of *li* as taught by Zhu Xi, supplementing, not supplanting, his own tradition. His formula, "Eastern ethics and Western science," conveying the primacy of Japanese values as well as the compatibility of Western science, became an influential slogan after the Meiji Restoration. But Sakuma did not live to see the day, for he was murdered by an antiforeign extremist from Chōshū in 1864.

Sakuma's intellectual strategy was essentially one of compartmentalization. The basic framework was left intact, with native and foreign traditions assigned different functions. Each had its distinct role. Most students of Dutch painting would have agreed, for they valued Western techniques more for their practical results than for any aesthetic merit. Yet, like all generalizations, this demands qualification. Hokusai, who lived until 1849, once contrasted the use of shading for decorative purposes in Chinese and Japanese art with its employment to create an effect of three-dimensionality in the West. He concluded, "One must understand both methods: there must be life and death in everything one paints."⁵

The Opening of Japan

The opening of China to the West was a result of the Opium War and subsequent treaties with the European powers. In Japan, the opening resulted from an armed mission by Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the United States Navy in 1853 (see Figure 7.2). The treaties that followed that momentous event ended the Tokugawa policy of seclusion. This undermined not only the authority of the *bakufu* but of the entire Tokugawa system.

Before 1853 there were a number of Western attempts to induce the Japanese to broaden their foreign policy, but these efforts were sporadic, because they were not supported by substantial economic and political interests of the kind at work in China. Regarded as poor and remote, Japan was considered a low priority by the great powers. The first approaches came from Japan's nearest Eurasian neighbor, the Russian Empire, and took place in the north, in the Kurile Islands,

Sakhalin, and Hokkaido. In 1778 and again in 1792 the Russians requested trade relations in Hokkaido, and in 1804 a similar request was made in Nagasaki. All were refused. British ships seeking trade or ship's stores were also turned away. British whaling ships sometimes requested supplies, but in 1825 the *bakufu* ordered that all foreign ships should be driven from Japanese waters. In 1837 a private American-British attempt to open relations with Japan fared no better. But in 1842 the shogunate relaxed the edicts of 1825 and ordered that foreign ships accidentally arriving in Japan were to be provided with water, food, and fuel before being sent on their way.

China's defeat in the Opium War and the opening of new ports increased the number of Western vessels in East Asia, and hence the pressure on Japan. This changing situation could not be ignored. To begin with, the lessons of Chinese weakness and Western strength were not lost on Japanese observers. Information concerning Western science, industry, and military capabilities continued to be provided by scholars of Dutch Learning and by the Dutch at Nagasaki. Information also came from China: Wei Yuan's *Illustrated Treatise on the Sea Kingdoms* was widely read after it appeared in a Japanese edition in 1847. Furthermore, the Japanese were making progress in mastering Western technology. By the 1840s Mito, Hizen, and Satsuma were casting guns using Western methods. In 1850 Hizen possessed the first reverberatory furnace needed to produce iron suitable for making modern cannons. As

already noted, a few courageous students of the West had suggested abandoning the policy of seclusion well before the arrival of Perry. The Dutch, too, had warned the *bakufu* of the designs of the stronger Western nations.

In 1846 an American mission to Japan ended in failure, but, with the acquisition of California in 1848, the interest of the United States increased, since Nagasaki, 500 miles from Shanghai, was a convenient fueling stop for ships bound from San Francisco to that port. Thus the United States, rather than Britain or Russia whose interests remained marginal, took the lead, sending out Commodore Perry with four ships. Perry and his fleet reached Japan in July 1853, forced the Japanese to accept a letter from the American president to the emperor, and announced that he would return for an answer the following spring.

No match militarily for the American fleet, the *bakufu* realized that it would have to accede at least in part to American demands. In preparation for that unpopular move, it took the unprecedented step of soliciting the opinions of even the outside *daimyo*. This turned out to be a serious miscalculation, for instead of hoped-for support, the *bakufu* received only divided and unhelpful advice and seriously undermined its exclusive right to determine foreign policy.

When Perry returned in February 1854 with eight ships, an initial treaty was signed that provided for the opening of Shimoda and Hakodate to ships seeking provisions, assured that the shipwrecked would receive good treatment, and permitted the United States later to send a consul to Japan. Similar treaties with Britain and France followed in 1855, and the Dutch and Russians negotiated broader agreements in 1857. The task of negotiating a commercial treaty was left to the first American consul, Townsend Harris, who arrived in Japan in 1856 and gradually succeeded in persuading the shogunate to make concessions (see Figure 7.3). The resulting treaty was signed in 1858, and another round of treaties with the Dutch, Russians, British, and French followed.

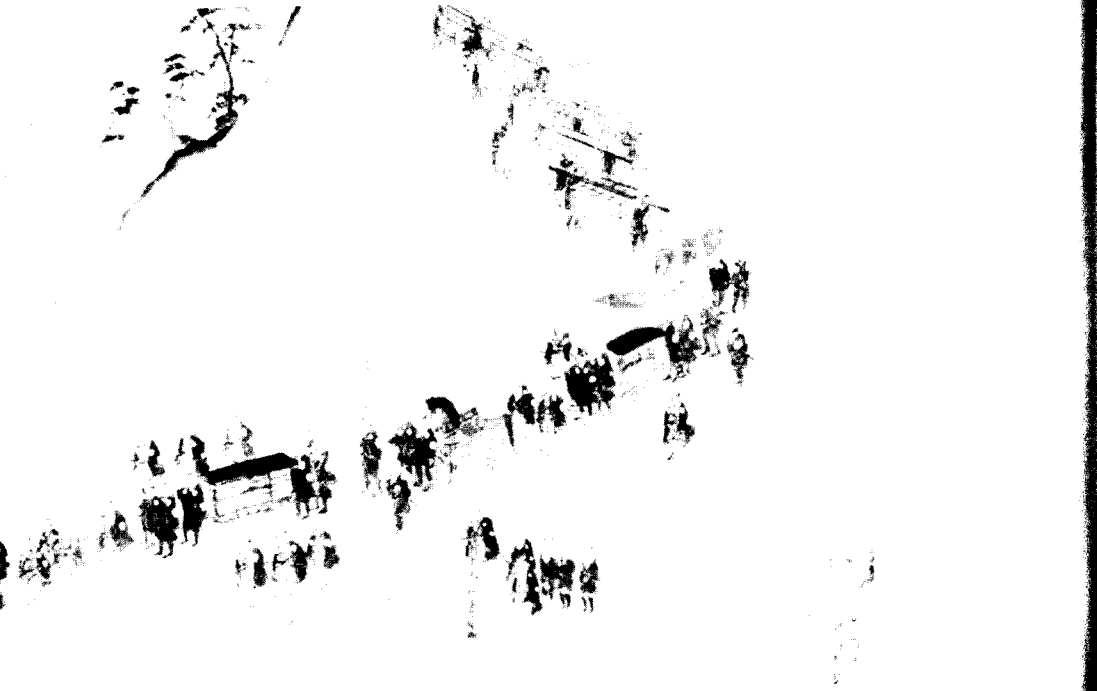
At the end of this process, Japan's international situation was essentially that of China under the unequal treaty system. First there was the matter of opening ports. This began with Shimoda on the Izu Peninsula and Hakodate in Hokkaido; it was extended to Nagasaki and Kanagawa (for which Yokohama was substituted); dates were set for the opening of Niigata, Hyogo (modern Kobe), and admission of foreign residents, but not trade, into Osaka and Edo. As in China, the treaties gave foreigners the right to be tried by their own consular courts under their own laws (extraterritoriality). Japan lost its tariff autonomy and was limited to relatively low import duties. Most-favored-nation treatment obliged Japan to extend to all states any concession it granted to any one of the others.

Domestic Politics

For the *bakufu*, forced to accede to the foreign demands without enjoying support at home, these were difficult years. Each concession to the powers provided additional ammunition to its domestic enemies. Compounding its difficulties, the *bakufu* was itself divided by factionalism and policy differences. An



FIGURE 7.2 Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1796–1858) of the United States Navy. Artist unknown. In 1853–1854, Perry successfully led an expedition to force isolationist Japan's agreement to trade and diplomatic relations with the United States. Woodcut, nineteenth century, 26 × 24.5 cm. COURTESY OF THE PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM, SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS.



Harris's Procession on the Way to Edo. Artist unknown. Townsend Harris, first American to travel to Japan, traveled to Edo (Tokyo) in 1856 to negotiate a commercial treaty with the shogun. The treaty that contained terms unfavorable to Japan. Watercolor, 53.5 × 38.8 cm. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

attempt was made after Perry's arrival to broaden the shogunate's base by drawing on the advice of non-house *daimyo*. The Lord of Mito, Tokugawa Nariaki (1800–1860), a persistent advocate of resistance to the West, was placed in charge of national defense. These measures, however, failed to strengthen the *bakufu*—too many men were pulling in opposite directions.

When the shogun died without an heir in 1858, a bitter dispute took place over the rival claims of two candidates for the succession. One was still a boy, but had the strongest claim by descent. He also had the backing of most of the house *daimyo* (*fudai*) including that of Ii Naosuke, greatest of the *fudai*. The other candidate was Tokugawa Yoshinobu (then known as Hitotsubashi Keiki), the capable son of the Lord of Mito.

The immediate issue in the succession dispute concerned control over the *bakufu*, for Keiki's accession was seen as a threat to the continued control over the shogunate by the *fudai*. At the same time, foreign policy was involved, for the *bakufu* officials, as men on the spot, were inclined to make concessions to the foreigners. The great lords, however, demanded a vigorous defense policy against the intrud-

ers from the West. Furthermore, the Lord of Mito and some of his peers envisioned their own *han* as playing important roles in building up military strength. Thus his advocacy of a strong foreign policy was consistent with his desire to strengthen his own domain at the expense of the center. Meanwhile, the split in the *bakufu* increased the political importance of the imperial court. Nariaki even appealed to Kyoto for support for his son's candidacy. And when the shogun tried to obtain imperial approval for the treaty negotiated with Harris, he failed.

The crisis of 1858 was temporarily resolved when Ii Naosuke took charge of the *bakufu* as Grand Councilor (*tairo*), a high post more often than not left vacant, and one that had previously been held by several members of the Ii family. The effective power of this position depended on the authority of the incumbent, and the strong-minded Ii Naosuke used it to dominate the shogunate. He proceeded to sign the treaty with the United States without prior imperial approval, vigorously reasserted *bakufu* power, purged his enemies, forced into retirement or house arrest the *daimyo* who had opposed him and were on the losing side in the succession dispute, including the Lord of Mito, and punished some of the court nobles and Mito loyalists. For a moment the *bakufu* was revitalized. But only for a moment: in March 1860 Ii was assassinated by a group of samurai, mostly from Mito. They were advocates of *Sonnō*—"Revere the Emperor"—and *Jōi*—"Expel the Barbarians."

Sonnō Jōi

As we observed earlier, Mito was the home of an emperor-centered school of historiography and political thought, and its lord was one of the most fervent advocates of a strong military policy to "expel the barbarians." It is therefore not surprising that Mito thought influenced the passionate and brilliant young man who became the main spokesman and hero of the *Sonnō Jōi* movement. This was Yoshida Shōin (1830–1859), the son of a low-ranking *Chōshū* samurai. Yoshida was influenced by *bushidō* in the tradition of Yamaga Sokō, by books on military science, and by Confucianism. From Sakuma Shōzan he learned about the West. Then he became acquainted with Mito ideas on a study trip to northern Japan, which, since it was unauthorized, cost him his samurai rank. Apprehensive of the West and convinced of the importance of knowing one's enemy, he tried to stow away on one of Commodore Perry's ships, but was caught and placed under house arrest in *Chōshū*. After his release he started a school there and attracted disciples, including Kido Kōin (or Takamasa, 1834–1877), one of the three leading statesmen of the Meiji Restoration, and the future leaders Itō Hirobumi and Yamagata Aritomo. Yoshida condemned the *bakufu* for its handling of the foreign problem. He charged that its failure to expel the barbarians reflected incompetence, dereliction of duty, and a lack of proper reverence for the throne. Like many men of lower samurai origins, he resented a system that rewarded birth more than ability or talent, and blamed the *bakufu's* inability to reject the foreigners on this system. What was needed to redress the situation were pure and selfless officials who

would act out of true loyalty rather than mindless obedience. Thus Yoshida's teaching combined elements of moral revival at home, opposition to the foreigner, and championship of the throne.

Initially, Yoshida favored the appointment of new men to the *bakufu*, but after the signing of the treaty with the United States in 1858, he concluded that the *bakufu* must be overthrown. Both personal fulfillment and national salvation required an act of unselfish self-sacrifice by a national hero. In 1858 Yoshida, seeking to achieve both aims, plotted the assassination of the emissary sent by the shogun to the imperial court to persuade the emperor to agree to the commercial treaty with the United States. Word leaked out. Yoshida was arrested and sent to Edo, where he was beheaded the following year.

Mixed Responses to the West

In this turbulent era, Japanese reactions to the West varied widely. Some Japanese, like the Confucian Shinoya Tōin (1810–1867), had an absolute hatred for everything Western. He even belittled the script in which the foreigners wrote, describing it as

confused and irregular, wriggling like snakes or larvae of mosquitoes. The straight ones are like dog's teeth, the round ones are like worms. The crooked ones are like the forelegs of a mantis, the stretched ones are like slime lines left by snails. They resemble dried bones or decaying skulls, rotten bellies of dead snakes or parched vipers.⁶

It is not surprising that a culture which prized calligraphy should find the strictly utilitarian Western script aesthetically unappetizing, but Shinoya's invective goes beyond mere distaste. Every word betrays, indeed is meant to express, horror and disgust at the beasts that had now come among them.

But there were others who were determined to learn from the West, even if only to use that knowledge to defeat the foreigner. Their slogan was *kaikoku jōi*: "open the country to drive out the barbarians." The learning process continued. In 1857 the *bakufu* opened the "Institute for the Investigation of Barbarian Books" near Edo Castle. Not only the *bakufu* but some of the domains sent men on study trips abroad; in the case of the *han* this was often done illegally. The process of adopting Western technology, begun even before Perry's arrival, was accelerated. An indication of the people's receptivity to the new knowledge is provided by the popularity of the writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), who went abroad twice in the early sixties and published seven books prior to the Restoration, beginning in 1866 with the first volume of *Conditions in the West* (*Seiyō jijō*), which appeared in 1866 and promptly sold 150,000 copies. Another 100,000 copies were sold in pirated editions. These works, written in a simple style easy enough for Fukuzawa's housemaid to read, were filled with detailed descriptions of Western institutions and life: hospitals and schools, tax systems and museums, climate and clothes, cutlery, beds, and chamberpots. Fukuzawa went on to become a lead-

ing Meiji intellectual, but the turbulent years just prior to the Restoration were dangerous for men of his outlook.

Unlike Yoshida Shōin, some people hoped for a reconciliation of the court and *bakufu*, and there were some who still hoped the *bakufu* could transform itself and take the lead in creating a more modern state. These issues, at work during the sixties, were finally buried in the Restoration.

Last Years of the Shogunate, 1860–1867

After the assassination of Ii Naosuke in 1860, the *bakufu* leadership tried compromise. An effort was made to effect a "union of the court and military" that was confirmed by the shogun's marriage to the emperor's sister. In return for affirming the emperor's primacy, the *bakufu* obtained assent for its foreign policy. It also sought to win *daimyo* support by relaxing the requirements for attendance at Edo. However, this policy ran into the opposition of Kyoto loyalists, activists of the *Sonnō Jōi* persuasion, samurai, and voluntary *rōnin* who had escaped the bonds of feudal discipline by requesting to leave their lords' service. Psychologically this was not difficult, as their loyalty to their lords had become bureaucratized and they now felt the claims of a higher loyalty to the throne. Men of extremist dedication, ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause, terrorized the streets of Kyoto in the early sixties and made the capital unsafe for moderates, who risked losing their heads and having them displayed as a warning to others.

This also happened to statues: their location in a temple did not save the statues of Ashikaga shoguns from decapitation at the hands of some followers of Hirata Atsutane who, unable to reach prominent living targets, exercised vengeance on the Ashikaga for wronging the emperor in the fourteenth century. Mito, too, was unsafe for moderates.

For ordinary people this was a time when their frustrations came to a head, a time of messianic visions and religious fervor, of amulets falling from the sky, and of people finding temporary escape from misery by dancing wildly in the streets, shouting "*ee ja nai ka*" ("ain't it great," or "what the hell"), barging into the houses of the rich and powerful demanding food and drink, forcing them to join the dance, and wreaking general havoc. Beginning in the cities of central Japan and spreading along the Tōkaido, these riots showed that the Tokugawa order was falling apart. George M. Wilson says of the Meiji Restoration that "a pervasive urge to remedy distress at home was just as compelling to most participants as the patriotic intent to elevate Japan in the international area."⁷

Westerners, too, were blamed for the distress, for the opening of the ports was followed by a marked rise in the price of rice, causing great hardship and reinforcing nativistic hatred of foreigners. Several foreigners were assassinated by fervent samurai in 1859, and in 1861 Townsend Harris's Dutch interpreter was cut down, and the British legation in Edo was attacked. In 1862 a British merchant lost his life at the hands of Satsuma samurai. When the British were unable to obtain satisfaction from the *bakufu*, they took matters into their own hands. In

August 1863 they bombarded Kagoshima, the Satsuma capital, in order to force punishment of the guilty and payment of an indemnity.

A similar incident involving Chōshū took place in the summer of 1863. By that time extremists had won control of the imperial court and, with Chōshū backing, had forced the shogun to accept June 25, 1863, as the date for the expulsion of the barbarians. The *bakufu*, caught between intransigent foreigners and the insistent court, interpreted the agreement to mean that negotiations for the closing of the ports would begin on that day, but Chōshū and the loyalists interpreted it more literally. When Chōshū guns began firing on foreign ships in the Straits of Shimonoseki, the foreign ships fired back. First American warships came to shell the fortifications, then French ships landed parties that destroyed the fort and ammunition. Still Chōshū persisted in firing on foreign vessels, until in September 1864 a combined French, Dutch, and American fleet demolished the forts and forced Chōshū to come to terms. These losses, plus a defeat inflicted on Chōshū adherents by a Satsuma-Aizu force in Kyoto in August 1864, stimulated Chōshū to overhaul its military forces. It had already undertaken to purchase arms and ships. Now peasant militia were organized, and mixed rifle units were formed, staffed by commoners and samurai, a radical departure from Tokugawa practice and from the basic principles of Tokugawa society. One of these units was commanded by Itō Hirobumi, recently returned from study in England.

Satsuma's response to defeat, although not as radical as Chōshū's, was similar in its appreciation of the superiority of Western weapons. With British help, the domain began acquiring Western ships, forming the nucleus of what was to become the Imperial Japanese Navy. The British supported Satsuma partly because they were disillusioned with the *bakufu* and partly because the French were supporting the shogunate with arms, hoping to lay the foundations for future influence in a reconstituted shogunate. By now many *bakufu* officials appreciated the need for institutional change as well as modernization. During the closing years of the Tokugawa, the issue was no longer one of preserving the old system but of who would take the lead in building the new. In Chōshū and Satsuma too there was now less talk about "expelling the barbarians" and more about "enriching the country and strengthening the army," at least among the leaders.

The politics of these years were even more than usually full of complications and intrigues, and, as long as Chōshū and Satsuma remained on opposite sides, the situation remained fluid. Traditionally unfriendly to each other, competing for power in Kyoto, and differing in their policy recommendations, they were nevertheless unified in their opposition to a restoration of Tokugawa power. There were two wars against Chōshū. In the first, 1864–1865, a large *bakufu* force with men from many domains defeated Chōshū. This in turn set off a civil war in Chōshū from which the revolutionaries, with their mixed rifle regiments, emerged victors. This led to a second *bakufu* war against Chōshū, but before this second war began, in 1866, Chōshū and Satsuma made a secret alliance. When war did come, Satsuma and some other powerful *han* remained on the sidelines. Although outnumbered, the Chōshū forces, better trained, better armed, and high in morale, defeated the *bakufu*.

After this defeat by a single *han*, the *bakufu*, under Tokugawa Yoshinobu (who inherited the position of shogun in 1866), tried to save what it could. There were attempts to work out a *daimyo* coalition, and calls for imperial restoration. In November the shogun accepted a proposal that he resign in favor of a council of *daimyo* under the emperor. According to this arrangement, he was to retain his lands and, as the most powerful lord in Japan, serve as prime minister. However, this was unacceptable to the *sonnō* advocates in Satsuma and Chōshū and to the restorationists at court, including the court noble Iwakura Tonomi (1825–1883), a master politician. On January 3, 1868, forces from Satsuma and other *han* seized the palace and proclaimed the restoration. The shogunate was destroyed. Tokugawa lands were confiscated, and the shogun himself was reduced to the status of an ordinary *daimyo*. A short civil war ensued. There was fighting in Edo and in northern Honshu, but no real contest. Last to surrender was the *bakufu* navy in May 1869.

Formation of a New Government: The Meiji Restoration

The men who overthrew the Tokugawa in January 1868 did not subscribe to any clear and well-defined program. There was general agreement on the abolition of the shogunate and "restoration" of the emperor, but this meant no more than that the emperor should once again be at the center of the political system, functioning as the source of legitimacy and providing a sense of continuity. It definitely did not mean that actual power should be given to the sixteen-year-old Meiji Emperor (1852–1912; r. 1867–1912),* nor did it necessarily imply the destruction of feudalism, for there were those who envisioned the restoration in terms of a new feudal system headed by the emperor. On the other hand, Japanese scholars had long been aware that the Chinese system provided a bureaucratic alternative to feudalism. This, very likely, eased the shift to bureaucratic centralization.

The new leaders did not always see eye to eye, but they did share certain qualities: they were all of similar age (35–43) and rank, and came from the victorious *han* or the court aristocracy, although the *han* coalition was soon broadened to include men from Tosa and Hizen. The three most eminent leaders in the early years of the restoration were Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830–1878), Kido Kōin (1833–1877), and Saigō Takamori (1827–1877). Both Ōkubo and Kido had risen to leadership in their own domains (Satsuma and Chōshū), through their influence in the domain's bureaucratic establishment and among the loyalist activists. Of the two, Ōkubo was the stronger personality—disciplined, formal, and somewhat intimidating, completely dedicated to the nation, cautious, and practical. Kido was more lively but also more volatile, less self-confident but more concerned than Ōkubo

*His name was Mutsuhito but, as in the case of the Qing emperors in China, it is customary to refer to him and his successors by the designation given to their reign periods.

with strengthening the popular base of the government. But he was just as devoted to building a strong state.

Ōkubo's was the single strongest voice in government during 1873–1878. One of his initial tasks was to retain the cooperation of Saigō, the military leader of the Satsuma forces who had joined with Chōshū to overthrow the Tokugawa. Saigō was a man of imposing physique and great physical strength. He was known for his outstanding courage, and possessed many of the traditional warrior virtues, such as generosity and contempt for money. More conservative than the others, he was devoted to Satsuma and its samurai, but worked with the others at least until 1873. They were united in their conviction that the country must be strengthened to resist the West.

For the sake of national self-preservation, the leaders were prepared to enact vast changes, but it took time to plan and carry these out, and indeed, to consolidate their own power in a land where, as Kido complained, “we are surrounded on four sides by little *bakufu*.”⁸ To insure that the emperor would not become a focus of opposition to reform, Ōkubo argued that he should be moved to Edo, renamed Tokyo (Eastern Capital) in September 1868. This took place the following year when the emperor moved into the shogun's former castle, which in 1871, after much debate, was renamed the “imperial palace.”

The Charter Oath

Even before the move, in April 1868, while the emperor was still in Kyoto, a Charter Oath was issued in his name to provide a general, if vague, statement of purpose for the new regime. It consisted of five articles:

1. An assembly widely convoked shall be established and all matters of state shall be decided by public discussion.
2. All classes high and low shall unite in vigorously promoting the economy and welfare of the nation.
3. All civil and military officials and the common people as well shall be allowed to fulfill their aspirations, so that there may be no discontent among them.
4. Base customs of former times shall be abandoned and all actions shall conform to the principles of international justice.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world and thus shall be strengthened the foundation of the imperial polity.⁹

Although the government was reorganized to provide for an assembly in keeping with the first article, power remained with the original leadership, and the attempt to implement this provision was soon abandoned. In contrast, the end of seclusion, the acceptance of international law, and the openness to foreign ideas conveyed by the last two articles did take place. Symbolic of this shift was the audience granted representatives of the foreign powers by the emperor in Kyoto just

a month before the Charter Oath was issued. The document itself was drafted by two men familiar with Western thought; it was then revised by Kido. The ramifications of the Charter Oath were far from clear, but the last article, to seek for knowledge “throughout the world,” was taken very seriously. Furthermore, with its call for an assembly and its strong internationalism, the entire document illustrates the gulf between Japanese and Chinese leaders at this time. No Chinese government would have issued such a document in an attempt to gain political strength.

Dismantling the Old Order

While the machinery of the central government underwent various reorganizations, the prime need was for the government to extend and consolidate its authority and ability to collect taxes. Since the continued existence of the feudal domains was a major obstacle to this, the government leaders undertook the delicate but essential task of abolishing the *han*. In March 1869, Kido and Ōkubo were able to use their influence to induce the *daimyo* of Chōshū and Satsuma to return their domains to the emperor. They were joined in this act by the lords of Tosa and Hizen. Many others followed suit, anxious to be in the good graces of the new government and expecting to be appointed governors of their former domains, which they were. The real blow came in 1871 when, in the name of national unity, the domains were completely abolished and the whole country was reorganized into prefectures. This was made palatable to the *daimyo* by generous financial arrangements. They were allowed to retain a tenth of the former domain revenue as personal income while the government assumed responsibility for *han* debts and financial obligations. The *daimyo* were also assured continued high social standing and prestige. Finally, in 1884, they were elevated to the peerage.

By background and experience, the new leadership was keenly sensitive to the importance of military power. Initially, the new government was entirely dependent on forces from the supporting domains, but this would hardly do for a government truly national in scope. Accordingly, the leaders set about forming a new army freed from local ties. Rejecting the views of Saigō, who envisioned a samurai army that would ensure the warrior class a useful and, he hoped, brilliant role in Japan's future, the leaders decided in 1872 to build their army on the basis of commoner conscription. In January 1873, the new measure, largely the work of Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922), “father of the Japanese Army,” became law.

The restoration had a profound effect on the samurai. The new army, by eliminating distinctions between commoners and samurai, cut right to the heart of the status system. Anyone could become a warrior now. Other marks of samurai distinctiveness were eliminated or eroded. In 1870 commoners were allowed to acquire surnames and were released from previous occupational and residential restrictions. In 1871 the wearing of swords by samurai was made optional; five years later it was to be prohibited entirely.

The samurai's position was further undermined by the abolition of the *han*, which left them without any political or social function. Furthermore, continued

payments of their stipends at the customary rate was more than the central government could afford. Accordingly, they were pensioned off. But in view of their number, the government could not afford to treat them as generously as it did the *daimyo*. At first, samurai stipends were reduced on a sliding scale from half to a tenth of what they had been, then they were given the right to commute these into 20-year bonds (1873), and finally they were forced to accept the bonds (1876).

Reduction and commutation of samurai stipends was only one of the measures taken to establish the new government on a sound financial basis. In addition to monetary and banking reform, a tax system was created (1873). The fiscal measures were largely the work of Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922), a man from Hizen who was to remain prominent in Meiji politics, and Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909) of Chōshū. The main source of government revenue was, as before, agriculture, but in place of the old percentage of the crop payable by the village to the *daimyo*, the tax was now collected by the government in money in accordance with the assessed value of the land. It was payable by the owner, and for this purpose ownership rights had to be clearly established. This was not done in favor of the absentee feudal interest long divorced from the land, nor did ownership pass equitably to all peasants. Instead, certificates were issued to the cultivators and wealthy villagers who had paid the tax during Tokugawa times. In this way tenancy was perpetuated. Since poor peasants, often unable to meet their taxes, were forced to mortgage their land, the rate of tenancy increased, rising from about 25% before the new system to about 40% twenty years later.

Disaffection and Opposition

The creation of a modern political, military, and fiscal system benefited the state but hurt some of the people. The peasantry was unhappy not only about the land system but also about forced military service, and showed its bitter displeasure by staging uprisings with increasing frequency from 1866 to 1873. Many of the large merchant houses that had developed symbiotic relationships with the *bakufu* or *daimyo* also suffered during these years and some went bankrupt.

More serious for the regime was samurai discontent. The new government was itself led by former samurai, and for many men the new order meant a release from old restrictions and the opening of new opportunities. Since the samurai were the educated class with administrative experience, it was they who supplied the personnel for local and national government, provided officers for the army, teachers for the schools, and colonists for Hokkaido. Casting aside tradition, some entered the world of business and finance. Yet there were many who did not make a successful transition, who were unable to take advantage of the new vocations now opened to them or to use their payments to establish themselves in new lines of endeavor. And among the leaders as well as the supporters of the Meiji government were men who firmly believed that its purpose was literally the restoration of the old, not the creation of the new. A split between conservatives and modernizers developed early in the Restoration and came to a head in 1873.

The Crisis of 1873

The crisis of 1873 centered on the issue of going to war with Korea in order to force it to open its doors to Japan. Those who advocated war, such as Saigō and Itagaki Taisuke (1836–1919) from Tosa, did so not only out of nationalist motives but also because they saw war as a way to provide employment for the samurai, an opportunity to give them a greater role in the new society, a means to preserve their military heritage. Saigō, a military leader with great charisma and devotion to the way of the warrior, asked to be sent to Korea as ambassador so that he could get himself killed and provide a cause for going to war.

A decision for war was made in the summer of 1873, in the absence of Ōkubo, Kido, and other important leaders who were abroad, in America and Europe. They were on a diplomatic and study mission headed by Iwakura Tonomi, the noble who had played a leading role at court in bringing about the Meiji Restoration. The purposes of the Iwakura mission were to convey the Meiji Emperor's respects to the heads of state of the treaty powers and build good will, to discuss subjects for later treaty revision, and to provide its distinguished members with an opportunity to observe and study the West at first hand. It took 631 days, including seven months in the United States, four in England, and seven in continental Europe. The Japanese leaders did not just have audiences with heads of state and observe parliaments and courts. They were interested in everything.

They toured cotton mills, iron foundries, shipyards, newspaper plants, breweries, prisons, banks, stock exchanges, cathedrals, telegraph offices, military fortifications, lunatic asylums, libraries and art galleries . . . [They] visited zoos; attended the theater and opera; and took in endless concerts, ballets, and an occasional masked ball, circus performance, and fox hunt.¹⁰

They returned home in September 1873 with a new appreciation of the importance and complexity of modernization and new realization of the magnitude of the task facing Japan in its quest for equality. They were convinced of the urgent priority of domestic change.

When the mission returned, Ōkubo led the opposition to the Korean venture on the grounds that Japan could not yet afford such an undertaking. Ōkubo, Kido, and Iwakura prevailed, with the support of many officials and the court. In October it was decided to abandon the Korean expedition and to concentrate on internal development. The decision split the government. Bitterly disappointed, the war advocates, including Saigō and Itagaki, resigned. They provided leadership for those who were disaffected by the new government and its policies, an opposition which would prove troublesome to those in power. But their departure left the government in the hands of a group of men unified by a commitment to modernization. Most prominent among them were Ōkubo, Itō, Ōkuma, and Iwakura.

By 1873 the Meiji government had survived the difficult period of initial consolidation. It had established the institutional foundations for the new state, had

found a means of defense and national security, and with the resolution of the 1873 crisis, had charted the basic course of development at home and peace abroad that was to dominate Japanese policies during the next twenty years.

The Meaning of the Restoration

Like other major historical events, the Meiji Restoration meant and continued to mean different things to different people. Most visible was increased openness to the West in matters small and large. Already in the early 1870s the gentleman of fashion sported a foreign umbrella and watch and, as recommended by Fukuzawa Yukichi, strengthened his body by eating beef. Faddish Westernism was satirized in one of the best-sellers of the day, *Aguranabe* (*Sitting around the Stew Pan*) (1871) by Kanagaki Robun (1829–1903). Ōkubo ate bread, drank dark tea for breakfast, and wore Western clothes even at home. In 1872 Western dress was made mandatory at court and other official functions. The Gregorian calendar was adopted the same year. After the Tokyo fire of 1872, the city's main avenue, the Ginza, was rebuilt under the supervision of an English architect. It boasted brick buildings, colonnades, and gas lamps (see Figure 7.4).

The inhabitants of Tokyo could take pleasure and pride in the Ginza, but the glitter of the capital was not shared by the countryside. Already in 1874 the widening contrast between the prosperous modern capital and the hinterland prompted Fukuzawa Yukichi to warn:

The purpose [of the government] seems to be to use the fruits of rural labor to make flowers for Tokyo. Steel bridges glisten in the capital, and horse-drawn carriages run on the streets, but in the country the wooden bridges are so rotten one cannot cross them. The cherry blossoms bloom in Kyōbashi [in Tokyo] but weeds grow in the country fields. Billows of smoke such as rise from city stoves do not rise from the farmer's furnace. . . . We must cease making Tokyo richer and concentrate on rural districts.¹¹

Unfortunately for those at the bottom of society, this was not to be.

Ideologically, the main thrust was to use the old to justify the new, a process which produced a new vision of the past as well as of the future. Invoking the name of the emperor, a symbol of continuity with the old, the Meiji leaders were able to innovate even as they assured the survival, in new forms, of old values and ideas.



FIGURE 7.4 The Ginza, 1873. The Ginza's facade and lamp posts represent the Meiji Restoration's most visible feature—an increased openness to the West in matters small and large.

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Along these lines, there was an effort to turn Japan into a Shinto state. In 1868 Shinto was proclaimed the basis for the government and a Department of Shinto was established, with precedence over the other departments. There was a drive to purify Shinto, to eliminate Buddhist influences that had steadily seeped into Shinto, and to make Shinto the only religion of Japan. This drive, however, ran into opposition from Buddhists, and conflicted with Western pressures for the legalization of Christianity. In 1872 the Department of Shinto was abolished, and in 1873 the ban on Christianity was lifted. Settlement of the legal status of Shinto had to wait until 1882 (see Chapter 8).

The restoration was revolutionary in that it destroyed the old system and created a centralized state. It eliminated the old class lines and legally opened all careers to all men. In all areas of human activity it prepared the way for the profound changes that, during the next century, were to transform the very countryside of Japan. But if it was a revolution, it was a revolution from above, an “aristocratic revolution,” to borrow a term from Thomas C. Smith.¹² Though popular unrest helped undermine the Tokugawa, the restoration was not the product of a mass movement nor of a radical social ideology. It did not radically change the structure of village life or the mode of agricultural production. It eliminated the samurai elite as a legally defined, privileged class, but, led by men who were themselves samurai, did so in terms samurai could understand.

The legacy of the restoration was complex and perhaps is not even yet fully played out, for it provided a base for both the successes and the failures that were to come.

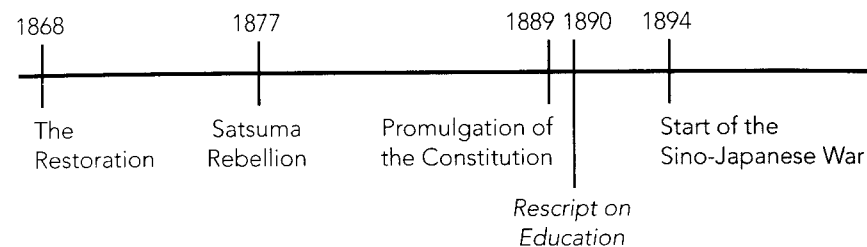
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York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), pp.
95–121, which cites Smith on p. 103.

The Emergence of Modern Japan: 1874–1894



MEIJI JAPAN

Political Developments

Formation of Parties

The Emperor and the Constitution

Western Influences on Values and Ideas

"Civilization and Enlightenment"

Social Darwinism

The Arts

Conservatism and Nationalism

Education

Modernizing the Economy

The Zaibatsu

The Military

Continental East Asia and Imperial Japan: 1895–1945

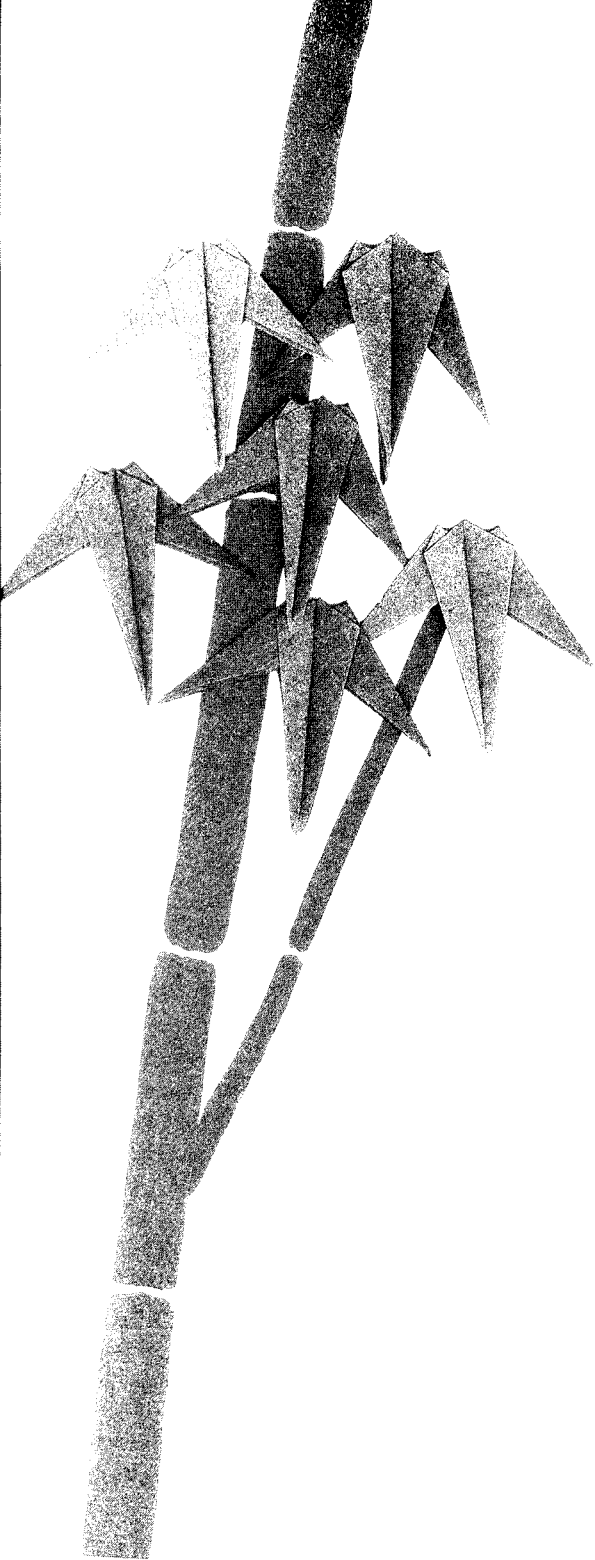
During this half-century, interaction between the world's civilizations increased in intensity and complexity until all became involved in World War II, which brought in its wake drastically redrawn mental as well as physical landscapes in East Asia as elsewhere. Earlier, World War I had encouraged ethnic nationalism but failed to achieve a stable multinational state system. Resulting directly from the war, the Russian Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union offered a radical vision of equality and world revolution. The mostly prosperous twenties gave substance to the claim that the war had ended in a "victory for democracy," but the thirties were to show how precarious a victory that was, as Fascism, also rooted in the debacle of the war, gained ground, and the advances in international cooperation achieved in the twenties were negated.

World War I shattered old European verities and led to a period of cultural and intellectual ferment. Einstein, Freud, and Picasso achieved major breakthroughs prior to the war, but it was in the twenties that their ideas became current. Now people read and argued over Joyce and Pound, delighted in or sneered at Bauhaus architecture, applauded or were puzzled by surrealism, futurism, the antics of the Dadaists, and the sounds of Schoenberg, Hindemith, and Stravinsky. It was also a time of the de-

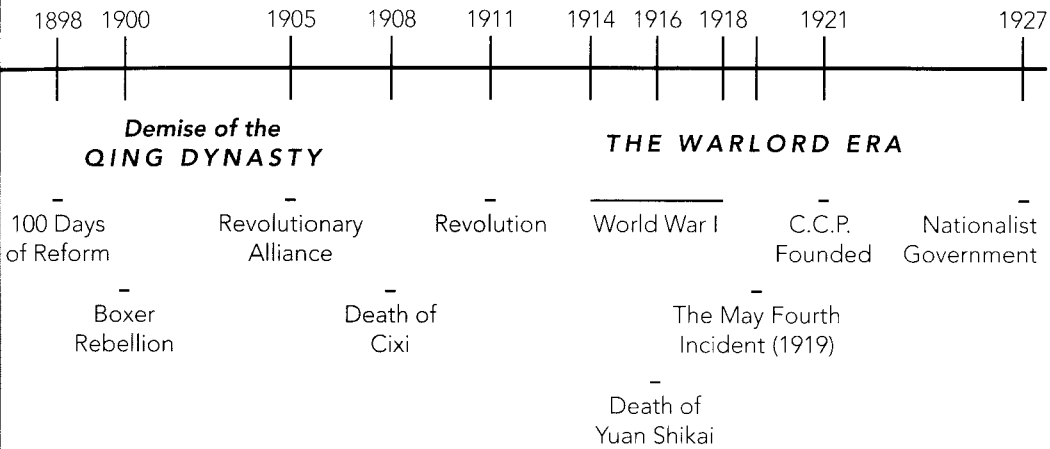
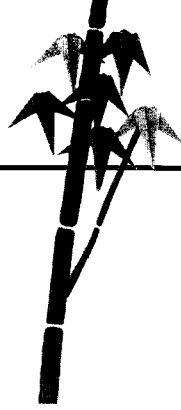
velopment of popular culture, spread not only in print but through radio and film.

The twenties seemed to prove Henry Ford a better visionary than Karl Marx, but in 1929 came the great crash followed by the Great Depression. Both Communism and Fascism made great gains when the depression discredited prewar capitalism and, to varying degrees in different countries, the political systems in which it had been nourished. The legitimacy of existing states was challenged not only by Marxists longing for "the withering away of the state" after the triumph of the proletariat, but equally by Fascists and other ethno-nationalists advocating a special destiny for their "people," "nation," or "race." These terms meant different things to different people, but were no less powerful on that account during a decade when economic crisis intensified ideological passions to an extent difficult to imagine in the present time of economic prosperity and political apathy.

As we will see, World War I had major repercussions also in East Asia, but there Japan's defeat of China in 1895 looms even larger, for it marked the beginning of a half-century of Japanese empire building that had a profound effect throughout and beyond the region.



China: Endings and Beginnings, 1895–1927



China's defeat by Japan ushered in a period of accelerating changes as the forces of reform, reaction, and revolution interlocked in complex patterns in an international environment full of menace. After the demise of the Qing, it proved easier to do away with the old than to create the new.

I. The Last Years of the Last Dynasty

The New Reformers

The Scramble for Concessions

The Boxer Rising

Winds of Change

Stirrings of Protest and Revolution

Eleventh-Hour Reform

The Revolution of 1911

The New Reformers

The shock of defeat allowed new voices to be heard. They differed from the proponents of self-strengthening both in the scope of the changes they advocated and in a willingness to reexamine basic assumptions. At the same time, the radicals of this generation still had received a Confucian education and had a command of traditional learning.

A major influence was Yan Fu, the one-time naval student at Greenwich, who voiced the bitter resentment of many:

We thought that of all the human race none was nobler than we. And then one day from tens and thousands of miles away came island barbarians from beyond the pale, with bird-like language and beastly features, who floated in and pounded our gates requesting entrance and, when they did not get what they asked for, they attacked our coasts and took captive our officials and even burned our palaces and alarmed our Emperor. When this happened, the only reason we did not devour their flesh and sleep on their hides was that we had not the power.¹

Emboldened by the more open atmosphere, Yan publicized his ideas, first in a series of essays, and then in a number of extremely influential translations, notably Thomas Huxley's *Ethics and Evolution* (1898), Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1900), and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1903). Yan argued that Western learning was needed to release Chinese energies, and rejected much of Chinese tradition including even Confucius. He was especially attracted to Social Darwinism,

with its dynamic view of history as evolutionary and progressive, and the hope it held out, on a supposedly modern scientific basis, for those who would struggle.

Yan Fu was no political activist, but others, notably Kang Yuwei (1858–1927) and his followers Tan Sitong (1865–1898) and Liang Qichao (1873–1929), not only spread their ideas through their writings and in study groups but tried to implement political programs. Kang, an original thinker deeply grounded in Buddhism as well as Confucianism, elaborated a highly original theory to construct a Confucian basis for ideas that went well beyond the Confucian tradition. Drawing on an unorthodox school of classical interpretation, he argued that Confucius was not merely a transmitter of ancient teachings but a prophet whose language was full of hidden meanings. Kang's Confucius saw history as a universal progress through three stages, each with its appropriate form of government: the Age of Disorder (rule by an absolute monarch), the Age of Approaching Peace (rule by a constitutional monarch), and the Age of Great Peace (rule by the people). His Confucius was a seer and prophet not only for China but for the entire world. Tan Sitong went beyond Kang to argue that the monarchy should be replaced by a republic, and attacked the traditional Confucian family distinctions in the name of *ren*, the central Confucian virtue. Neo-Confucian thinkers had earlier given *ren* a cosmic dimension, but Tan drew on modern scientific concepts in identifying *ren* with ether. Kang Yuwei, too, equated *ren* with ether and electricity.

In their political program, Kang and his followers sought to transform the government into a modern and modernizing constitutional monarchy along the lines of Meiji Japan. Thanks to a sympathetic governor, they were able to carry out some reforms in Hunan, but their greatest opportunity came during the “Hundred Days of Reform” (actually 103 days, June 11th to September 20th), when Emperor Guangxu asserted his authority to issue a flood of edicts aimed at reforming the examination system, remodeling the bureaucracy, and promoting modernization. It was an ambitious program, but the edicts remained more significant as expressions of intent than as indicators of accomplishment, for most were never implemented.

The reforms were initiated by moderately experienced statesmen, but later accounts exaggerated the influence of Kang and his associates and the degree to which there was, from the start, a struggle between a progressive emperor and a supposedly reactionary Empress Dowager (see Figure 9.2). However, rumors of Kang's allegedly extremist influence on the emperor helped to solidify the opposition and pave the way for Cixi, backed by General Ronglu, to stage a coup. She placed Emperor Guangxu under house arrest and turned him into a figurehead for the remaining ten years of his life.

After the coup, Tan Sitong remained in China and suffered martyrdom. Kang Yuwei and Liang Qichao managed to flee to Japan, where they continued to write and work for renewal and reform. Kang, elaborating on his utopia, dreamed of a future when the whole world would be united in love and harmony under a single popularly elected government, which would operate hospitals, schools, and nurseries, administering a society in which all divisive institutions would have disap-

peared, including even the family. Meanwhile, Liang continued to expand his horizons as well as those of his numerous readers. Like many of his contemporaries everywhere, he championed evolution and progress, processes which he conflated and, contrary to Darwin, saw as products of human will. But this will had to serve the group. Like most Chinese and Japanese thinkers, Liang was not an individualist.

The Empress Dowager's coup sent China's most advanced thinkers into exile, but did not spell a wholesale reaction against reform. She approved moderate reforms, including military modernization and reforms in education and the monetary and fiscal systems. That little was accomplished was due to the weakness of the central government and the magnitude of the problems facing the dynasty. By no means the least of these came from abroad.

The Scramble for Concessions

China's display of weakness in the war against Japan set in motion a scramble for special rights and privileges in which Russia, France, Britain, Germany, and Japan pursued their national interests and jockeyed for position in case China collapsed completely, as seemed quite likely at the time. The concessions extracted from China were economic and political. Loans were forced on the Qing, secured by tax revenues, such as maritime customs. Long-term leases of Chinese territory were granted, including the right to develop economic resources such as mines and railroads. Germany leased territory in Shandong; Russia leased Port Arthur in the southern Liaodong Peninsula; France held leases on land around Guangzhou Bay; and Britain obtained Weihaiwei and the New Territories, adjacent to the Kowloon area of Hong Kong. The powers frequently obtained the right to police the leased areas. Often they combined leaseholds, railroad rights, and commercial rights into a “sphere of interest,” where they were the privileged foreign power, as, for example, Germany was in Shandong. Finally, there were “non-alienation” pacts in which China agreed not to cede a given area to any power other than the signatory: the Yangzi Valley to Britain, the provinces bordering French Indochina to France, Fujian to Japan. Russia received special rights in Manchuria.

Britain, as the prime trading nation in China, pursued an ambiguous policy, concerned to retain access to all of China but also to obtain a share of the concessions. The United States at this time was acquiring a Pacific empire. In 1898 it annexed Hawaii and, after war with Spain, the Philippines and Guam. At the urging of Britain, the United States then adopted an open-door policy enunciated in two diplomatic notes. The first of these (1899) merely demanded equality of commercial opportunity for all the powers in China, while the second (1900) also affirmed a desire to preserve the integrity of the Chinese state and Chinese territory. This was a declaration of principle, not backed by force; neither its altruism nor its effectiveness should be exaggerated.

The Boxer Rising

The Boxers, members of the *Yihequan* (Righteous and Harmonious Fists), developed in response to harsh economic conditions. Popular anxieties were also fueled by anti-foreignism, stemming from alarm over the spread of railways, which cut across the land regardless of the graves of ancestors or the requirements of geomancy, railways along which stood telephone poles carrying wires from which rust-filled rainwater dripped blood-red. As a counterforce, the Boxers relied on *qigong* (ritualized exercise), spells, and amulets to endow them with supernatural powers, including invulnerability to bullets. In 1898 flood and famine in Shandong, combined with the advance of the Germans in that province, led to the first Boxer rising there in May of that year; but it was drought in the spring and summer of 1900 that brought many new members and wide popular support.

Originally antidynastic, the Boxers changed direction when they received the support of high Qing officials prepared to use the movement against the foreign powers. Thus encouraged, the Boxers spread, venting their rage on Chinese and foreign Christians, especially Catholics. On June 13, 1900, they entered Beijing. Eight days later the court issued a declaration of war on all the treaty powers. The Boxers were officially placed under the command of imperial princes. There followed a dramatic two-month siege of the legation quarter in Beijing, where 451 guards defended 473 foreign civilians and some 3,000 Chinese Christians who had fled there for protection. The ordeal of the besieged was grim, but they were spared the worst, for the Boxers and the Chinese troops were undisciplined, ill-organized, and uncoordinated. The city was full of looting and violence, but the legation quarter was still intact when an international relief expedition reached Beijing on August 15 and forced the court to flee the capital.

During these dangerous and dramatic events, southern governors-general ignored the court's declaration of war, claiming it was made under duress. The powers, nevertheless, demanded from the Qing court a very harsh settlement. It included a huge indemnity (450 million taels, or 67.5 million pounds sterling) to be paid from customs and salt revenues. Other provisions required the punishment of pro-Boxer officials and of certain cities, where the civil service examinations were suspended. The powers received the right to station permanent legation guards in the capital and to place troops between Beijing and the sea. The Boxer rising also provided Russia with an excuse to occupy Manchuria, where some Russians remained until Russia's defeat by Japan in the war of 1904–1905.

The Boxer rising became a source of literature focusing on one of its leading figures, Sai Jinhua (1874–1936), who was a courtesan, the concubine of a Chinese diplomat in Europe, and supposedly the mistress of the German field marshal who commanded the allied forces occupying Beijing. Depraved strumpet to some, selfless heroine to others, she fills both roles in *A Flower in a Sea of Sins* (*Niehai hua*, 1907) by Zeng Pu (1872–1935).

Winds of Change

Between 1895 and 1911, the modern sector of the Chinese economy continued to grow, but it was dominated by foreign capital. Extensive railway concessions were granted to the treaty powers, and Chinese railroads, like that linking Beijing and Hankou, were financed by foreign capital. Foreigners also controlled much of China's mining and shipping, and were a major factor in manufacturing, both for export (tea, silk, soybeans, and so on) and for the domestic market (textiles, tobacco, and so on). Modern banking was another area of foreign domination, prompting the Qing government in 1898 to approve the creation of the Commercial Bank of China as a "government operated merchant enterprise." Two more banks were formed in 1905 and 1907.

Except for railways and mines, foreign investments were concentrated in the treaty ports. It was also there that Chinese factories gradually developed, taking advantage of modern services and the security found in foreign concession areas. Chinese enterprises were particularly important in textile manufacturing. Most remained small (by 1912 only 750 employed more than 100 workers), but they were an important part of China's economic modernization. It was during this time that Shanghai became China's largest city.

In Shanghai and, to a lesser extent, in other treaty ports, changes in social structure occurred. During the last five years of the dynasty there emerged a bourgeoisie, "a group of modern or semi-modern entrepreneurs, tradesmen, financiers, industrial leaders, unified by material interests, common political aspirations, a sense of their collective destiny, a common mentality, and specific daily habits."² There were also the beginnings of an urban working class, who at times expressed their resentment over terrible working conditions by going on strike. In the city, too, the old family system lost some of its economic underpinnings, and an audience developed receptive to new ways of looking at things.

There were now 170 presses supplying 2 to 4 million readers for the "depravity novels," "chivalric/court case novels," "exposé," and "science fantasy" novels studied by David Der-wei Wang. More often than not they took a jaundiced view of those in power, though few were as blunt as the prostitute in the "depravity novel" *Nine-tailed Turtle* who tells her customer, "The whole of officialdom is just like a big whorehouse."³ In *The New Story of the Stone* (1908), Wu Jianren (1866–1910) brings back the main protagonist of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and at one point has him arrested as a dissident, but also takes him to "The Civilized World," filled with technological wonders, a utopia (unlike Kang Yu-wei's) not to be taken as actually attainable.

Meanwhile, out in the real world a strong influence on provincial affairs was exercised by a semi-modern urban elite composed of merchants and bankers (more or less traditional), military and professional men (among them journalists) trained in modern methods, and absentee landowners, an elite whose interests and even values often differed from those of the landed gentry on the one hand and from the central government on the other. The very definition of elite status

was changed forever when the examination system was abolished in 1905, putting an end to a key institution that had linked government and society, thought and action, the local and the central for well over a thousand years.

The government had taken this radical step in recognition of the need for more modern specialists, but also to secure the loyalty of graduates of new schools by reassuring them in their career expectations.

Stirrings of Protest and Revolution

Some were caught off balance by the winds of change, others trimmed their sails, but there were also those who looked to the future with hope, and organized attempts to induce further changes. An early and notable example was the formation of the first antifootbinding movement in 1894, which resulted in a law banning the practice in 1902. However, even in the cities the law was largely ignored. Footbinding persisted longest in rural areas, and old women with bound feet can still be seen in remote areas. Other expressions of public opinion included a flurry of criticism at what appeared to be a maneuver to depose the emperor (1900), protests at Russia's refusal to leave Manchuria (1903), a boycott against the United States protesting exclusionary immigration laws (1905), and a boycott against Japan (1908), as well as movements to regain railway rights.

Readers of the political press that emerged after 1895 were now exposed to articles and cartoons linking dissatisfaction with the government to resentment against foreign exactions (see Figure 10.1.) Politically, the defeat of 1895 opened the way not only for radical reformism but also set Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) on the path of revolution. Sun was born into a Guangdong peasant family, received a Christian education in Hawaii, and studied medicine in Hong Kong. He founded his first revolutionary organization in 1894. Throughout his life overseas, Chinese communities remained an important source of moral and financial support. Over the years he elaborated his “Three Principles of the People”—nationalism, democracy, and the people's livelihood. He called for the overthrow of the dynasty and the establishment of a republic, principles broad enough to attract the varied and loosely organized membership of Sun's Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui), formed in Tokyo in 1905 by the merger of a number of revolutionary groups. His supporters now included students, many from elite families.

Many looked to political revolution to solve China's ills, but some more radical voices sought social revolution as well. One such was the pioneer feminist Qin Jin, born in 1877 and executed as a revolutionary in 1907. In 1904, shortly after she had left not only the husband her family had selected for her but also a son and a daughter, she wrote the following poem:

Regrets: Lines Written en Route to Japan

Sun and moon have no light left, earth is dark;
our women's world is sunk so deep, who can help us?
Jewelry sold to pay this trip across the seas,

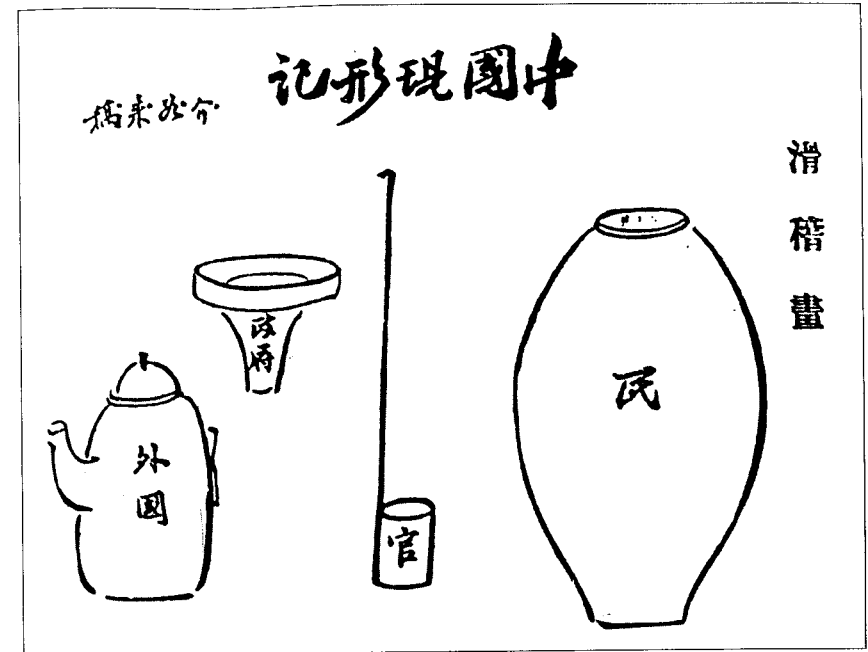


FIGURE 10.1 “A record of the situation in China.” Cartoon in *Shihao*, August 26, 1907. The ladle in the center represents officials scooping from the jug of the people (on the right) and pouring their resources through a government funnel into the foreigners' teapot.

FROM *PRINT AND POLITICS: “SHIBAO” AND THE CULTURE OF REFORM IN LATE QING CHINA*, BY JOAN JUDGE (STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1996), P. 184. REPRINTED COURTESY STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

Cut off from family I leave my native land.
Unbinding my feet I clear out a thousand years of poison,
With heated heart arouse all women's spirits.
Alas, this delicate kerchief here
Is half stained with blood, and half with tears.⁴

Eleventh-Hour Reform

The abolition of the examination system was only the most drastic of a series of reforms by which the Empress Dowager hoped to save the dynasty after the failure of the Boxers. Some, like the drive against opium, accomplished much, but the program as a whole failed to inspire officials to change their ways. The momentum was all downhill. In *Modern Times: A Brief History of Enlightenment (Wenming xiaoshi*, 1905) Li Boyuan (1867–1906), a widely read author of exposé novels, depicts officials whose venality is matched only by the ignorance and arrogance

of purveyors of the new Western learning. According to David Der-wei Wang, “Li Boquan saw in this campaign for reform and modernization less a promise of new economic and political structure than an omen of collective self-delusion, incompetence, and procrastination.”⁵

Frequently, measures taken to save the Qing ended up undermining it. The educational reforms are an example. By 1911 even remote provinces boasted new schools, teaching new subjects and ideas. Students also studied abroad in record numbers, especially in Japan where, by 1906, there were at least 8,000 Chinese students, many supported by their provincial governments. There, away from home, they enjoyed new personal and intellectual liberty. Even those who did not manage to complete their education drank in the heady wine of new ideas. From the writing of the highly influential Liang Qichao, many learned about the major events of world history and were introduced to Western social and political thought. The example of Japan was itself a powerful influence, as were books translated from Japanese. More books were translated into Chinese from Japanese than from any other language. Many Japanese loanwords entered the Chinese language, thus reversing the flow that had taken place over a millennium earlier.

Chinese students thus learned about Western history, law, science and logic, became convinced of the truths of Social Darwinism, and were inspired by the visions of nationalism. As non-Chinese, the Manchus were an obvious target. The Japanese example showed that nationalism was compatible with the preservation of elements of traditional culture, but a commitment to nationalism entailed a willingness to jettison those elements of tradition that failed to contribute to national development. Toward the end of the decade students became increasingly restive and revolutionary.

Manchu political reform included restructuring the government along modern lines and developing a constitution. After a study mission abroad (1905–1906) and subsequent deliberations, in 1908 the government announced a nine-year plan of constitutional reform, beginning with provincial assemblies in 1909. Although elected on a limited franchise, these assemblies, as well as the central legislative council convened in 1910, became centers of opposition rather than sources of popular support.

Nothing was more urgent than the creation of a modern military, but here too the reform program backfired. The new forces proved unreliable because they were either influenced by new, subversive ideas or were loyal to their commanders rather than to the throne. The main beneficiary of military modernization turned out to be Yuan Shikai, who, after his service in Korea (see p. 187), had advanced his career by siding with Cixi in her coup and by standing firm against the Boxers. He became commander of the New Army in 1895 and, as governor-general of Zhili from 1901 to 1907, continued to build up the army with which he retained ties even after he was dismissed from the government in 1909.

The government had some foreign policy success, especially in reasserting sovereignty over Tibet, but failed to emerge as a plausible focus for nationalism. Not only was it handicapped by its non-Han ethnic origins, but at this critical

juncture, there was general confusion and disorganization after the Empress Dowager and Emperor Guangxu both died in 1908. Since the Emperor had seemed in good health, there were rumors that his death one day before that of the Empress Dowager was due to poison. The rumors were never proven, but this was not a propitious way to start a new reign. The new emperor was an infant, and the regent was inept, but bitterly resentful of Yuan Shikai, who was fortunate to be allowed to retire in 1909.

The Revolution of 1911

In its program of modernization, the dynasty was handicapped by its financial weakness. This became painfully apparent in its handling of the railway issue. In order to regain foreign railway concessions, a railway recovery movement was organized by provincial landed and merchant elites, who created their own railway companies. The Qing government, however, wanted to centralize, and in 1911 decided to nationalize the major railway lines. Lacking the necessary financial resources, it was able to do so only by contracting foreign loans, inevitably with strings attached. The loans and the subsequent disbanding of provincial railway companies caused a furor, nowhere more so than in Sichuan, where the local investors felt cheated by the price the government was willing to pay for their shares. Provincial interests resented the threat to provincial autonomy. Nationalists were indignant over the foreign loans that financed the transaction. This was the prelude to revolt. The insurrection that set off the revolution took place when a New Army regiment mutinied in Wuchang on October 10. It was carried out by men only very loosely connected with the Revolutionary Alliance, the main revolutionary organization in the land. Its leader, Sun Yat-sen, was traveling in the United States raising money, but rushed home when he heard the news.

After the October 10 incident, province after province broke with the dynasty. It turned for help to Yuan Shikai, who had served as Grand Councilor and Foreign Minister in 1907–1908, but had been dismissed after the death of his patron Cixi in 1908. Yuan was the obvious man to turn to, for he enjoyed foreign support as well as the loyalty of China’s best army, and he had prestige as a reformer. However, he was not about to sacrifice himself for a losing cause, but he was not strong enough to impose his will on all of China. The revolutionaries had in the meantime formed a government at Nanjing with Sun Yat-sen as provisional president. A compromise between Yuan and the revolutionaries was clearly called for if China was to avoid prolonged civil war and the nightmare of direct foreign intervention. An agreement was reached. The Manchu child-emperor formally abdicated on February 2, 1912, bringing an end not only to a dynasty but to a political system whose foundations had been laid in 221 B.C.E. China became a republic.

II. From Yuan Shikai to Chiang Kai-shek

Yuan Shikai

The Warlord Era

Intellectual Ferment

Intellectual Alternatives

Cultural Alternatives

Marxism in China: The Early Years

The Guomindang and Sun Yat-sen
(1913–1923)

GMD and C.C.P. Cooperation
(1923–1927)

The Break

Establishment of the Nationalist Government

Yuan Shikai

After the Qing abdication, Sun Yat-sen stepped aside, and Yuan accepted the presidency of a republic with a two-chambered legislature. He also agreed to move the capital to Nanjing, but once in office he evaded this provision, and Beijing remained the capital of the Republic. In the absence of well-organized political parties or deep-rooted republican sentiment among the public, there was little to restrain Yuan from rapidly developing into a dictator. To be sure, elections were held in February 1913 with about 5 percent of China's population entitled to vote.

The Guomindang (GMD or Nationalist party), the successor to the Tongmenghui, was the largest party in the new parliament. Yuan, however, was not about to share power. He bullied the elected parliament, and in March 1913, Song Jiaoren (1882–1913), architect of the constitution and leader of the parliamentary GMD, was assassinated on Yuan's orders. That summer Yuan forced a showdown

by ordering dismissal of pro-Nationalist southern military governors. When they revolted in what is sometimes known as the Second Revolution, Yuan crushed them easily. For the next two years, the other military governors remained loyal, but Yuan remained dependent on military authority.

Yuan basically sought to continue the late Qing program of centralization, but to do so he had to struggle against the forces of reformist provincialism as well as revolutionary nationalism. Often the two combined, because to finance a program regarded with suspicion by provincial interests, Yuan needed funds, and, in the absence of a radical social revolution, this meant obtaining foreign loans. This antagonized nationalists because the loans came with foreign strings and “advisors.” The *Shibao* cartoon rang truer than ever (Figure 10.1).

In 1915, taking advantage of the great powers' preoccupation with World War I, Japan presented China with the notorious Twenty-One Demands, divided into five groups: (1) recognition of Japanese rights in Shandong; (2) extension of Japanese rights in Mongolia and Manchuria; (3) Sino-Japanese joint operation of China's largest iron and steel company; (4) China not to cede or lease any coastal area to any power other than Japan; and (5) provisions that would have obliged the Chinese government to employ Japanese political, financial, and military advisors, to give the Japanese partial control over the police, and to purchase Japanese arms. Yuan managed to avoid the last and most onerous group of demands, which would have reduced China to a virtual Japanese satellite. However, with the other powers preoccupied in Europe, Yuan was forced to accept Japan's seizure of Germany's holdings in Shandong, grant Japan new rights in southern Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, and acknowledge her special interest in China's largest iron and steel works, which had previously served as security for Japanese loans. The domestic result was a wave of anti-Japanese nationalist outrage, which expressed itself in protests and boycotts.

Yuan made no attempt to harness nationalist feelings to his own cause, but prepared for restoration of dynastic rule with himself as emperor. According to an American advisor to Yuan, China was not ready for a republic. Yuan probably was not off the mark in believing that bringing back the emperorship would follow the preferences and meet the expectations of the vast majority of China's population, but he did nothing to tap or mobilize mass support or to mollify the resentment of the educated. He just went ahead. The new regime was proclaimed in December 1915, to begin on New Year's Day. Hostility to the new dynasty was so overwhelming that in March 1916 Yuan gave way and officially abandoned his imperial ambitions. He never regained his old prestige, and died a failure in June of that year.

The Warlord Era

After the fall of Yuan Shikai, the pattern of Chinese politics became exceedingly complex, as military men came to the fore. In 1917 there was even a two-week restoration of the Qing. In August of that year China, under the premier

and warlord Duan Qirui (1865–1936), entered World War I by declaring war on Germany. During the next year the Chinese government received loans of some 145 million yen from Japan (the Nishihara loans), ostensibly to strengthen the Chinese ally, but actually siphoned off to support Duan's military and political plans.

Although a national government ruled in Beijing, actual power lay in the hands of regional strongmen (warlords) who came to dominate civil administration in the areas under their control largely through force of arms, and who struggled with each other to enlarge or protect their holdings. They constantly made and unmade alliances with each other, while the foreign powers (especially Japan and the Soviet Union), fishing in these troubled waters, sought to play the warlords off against each other for their own benefit.

Some of the warlords, including Duan, had been generals under Yuan Shikai; others had begun their careers as bandits, and more or less continued to behave as such. One of the most notorious was the “Dog-Meat General” of Shandong, with his entourage of White Russian guards and women. A huge brute of a man, greedy and cruel, he decorated his telegraph poles with the severed heads of secret society members. Other warlords showed a genuine interest in social welfare and education, and tried to build up their areas economically, but they lacked the vision and organization to clear a way for the future. Conditions varied widely, but for many these were years of great insecurity and suffering.

Internationally, the 1920s were peaceful, but China's sovereignty was more impaired than ever. Its customs and salt revenues were committed to paying foreign obligations, and tariffs were kept artificially low. China's major cities were designated as treaty ports, some—most notably Shanghai—with foreign concession areas under foreign jurisdiction. In these enclaves foreigners led privileged lives. They also continued to enjoy extraterritoriality wherever they went. While the foreigners' economic impact should not be exaggerated, both commercial travelers and missionaries used British steamers to travel inland on waterways, policed if necessary by foreign gunboats, to service churches and clinics. Foreigners were everywhere. It was politically offensive and profoundly degrading.

Economically, the modern sector expanded during the global postwar boom so that 1917–1923 has been called “the golden age of Chinese capitalism.”⁶ The influence of the world economy on China expanded, with, for example, the sale of kerosene spreading into interior villages. Over all, these economic developments were insufficient to destabilize the economy enough to bring about either a fundamental breakdown or a breakthrough to growth. However, economic activity can never be separated from other aspects of life. We may speculate that with the state too weak to exert pressure, the examination system no longer in place to reward Confucian learning, and the old paternalistic ideology tarnished, there was increasingly little to prevent former gentry families from turning into landlords pure and simple. If so, this suggests fragmentation of the social fabric analogous to the political fragmentation produced by the warlords. Meanwhile, the shattering of the old world was most visible in the intellectual arena.

Intellectual Ferment

It did not take the fall of the Qing to produce iconoclasm and protest. Revolutionary ideas had already been current among Chinese students in Tokyo and were discussed in magazines and schools in China itself. We have already noted the beginnings of feminism. In China, as in Japan, radicals were drawn to the teachings of anarchism—especially the ideas that the state is inherently oppressive and that natural human social tendencies can create a just society. The abolition of the examinations and the collapse of the Qing opened the floodgates to new ideas, but destroyed neither the respect accorded scholars and intellectuals nor their commitment to society and their sense of their own importance.

A major landmark was the founding in 1915 of *New Youth*, the journal that came to stand at the core of the new intellectual tide. In the first issue, its founder, Chen Duxiu (1879–1942) issued an eloquent call for the rejuvenation of China, accompanied by an equally strong denunciation of tradition. The new intellectuals castigated Confucianism as responsible for all that was found wanting in the old state and society, for stifling human creativity and suppressing women, for standing in the way of freedom and progress. Few were convinced by Kang Youwei, who tried to cast Confucianism in a new role as the official state religion. Unsuccessful in his earlier attempt to construct a Confucian justification for modernization that would persuade scholars grounded in the classics, he now failed to make Confucianism acceptable to those whose primary loyalty was to the nation. He was not the only intellectual whom time passed by as ideas once considered radical appeared conservative in a changed world. Confucianism was not destroyed, but it was put very much on the defensive.

New Youth opposed not only the traditional teachings but also the language in which they were written. The journal opened its pages to Hu Shi (1891–1962), a former student of the American philosopher John Dewey, and China's leading champion of the vernacular language (*baihua*). Hu Shi argued that people should write the spoken language, not the language of the classics, and that the vernacular should be taught in the schools. He praised the literary merits of the old novels written in the vernacular, which had long been widely read but had not been considered respectable. The campaign for the vernacular was a success, although classical expressions had a way of creeping into the vernacular and newly borrowed terms stood in the way of easy comprehension. Nevertheless, the new language was both more accessible and more modern than the old. Introduced into the elementary schools in 1920, it was universally used in the schools by the end of the decade.

New Youth was also the first magazine to publish Lu Xun, pen name of Zhou Shuren (1881–1936), who became China's most acclaimed twentieth century writer. Lu Xun had gone to Japan to study medicine, but decided to devote himself to combating not physical ailments, but China's spiritual ills. His bitter satire cut like a sharp scalpel, but a scalpel wielded by a humanist who hoped to cure, not kill. The protagonist in “A Madman's Diary” (*New Youth*, 1918) discovers the

reality underneath the gloss of “virtue and morality” in the old histories: a history of man eating man. He ends with the plea, “Perhaps there are still children who have not eaten men? Save the children. . . .”⁷

Chen Duxiu and many other intellectual leaders taught at Beijing University. Their ideas found a ready following among the students at this and other universities. On May 4, 1919, some 3,000 students staged a dramatic demonstration in Beijing to protest the assignment at the Versailles Peace Conference of Germany’s former possessions in Shandong to Japan, even though China, like Japan, had entered World War I on the allied side and sent labor battalions to France. The students were outraged. Their demonstrations became violent. The house of a pro-Japanese minister was burned and another minister was beaten badly. In clashes with the police one student died. There were arrests followed by more protest, a wave of strikes, and a show of merchant and labor support for the students. In the end the government had to retreat. Those arrested were released, and those who had ordered the arrests were forced to resign. China never signed the ill-fated Treaty of Versailles.

The May Fourth incident came to symbolize the currents of intellectual and cultural change first articulated in *New Youth*, and gave rise to the broader term “May Fourth Movement” (c. 1915 to early 1920s). After the incident, there was a new sense of urgency. What had been a trickle of protest became a tide of attacks on just about every aspect of Chinese culture in a total rejection of the past—including such basic institutions as the family. Simultaneously, the movement introduced a host of new and radical ideas. New journals appeared, and there was much heady and excited talk, but also action, as young people spurned arranged marriage and engaged in increased social action, including organizing labor unions. The May Fourth movement had long-term revolutionary consequences, both in what it destroyed and in what it introduced. In the short term, although the current of nationalism ran deep and strong, there were intense disagreements over the future direction of Chinese culture, and a tremendous variety of ideas, theories, and styles swelled the eddies of intellectual and cultural life.

Intellectual Alternatives

Europe’s self-destruction in war and the failure of liberal principles at Versailles prompted Liang Qichao to turn back to the Chinese tradition in the hope of synthesizing the best of China and the West, with Chinese elements predominating. An important debate began in 1923 between the proponents of science and those of metaphysics, involving different evaluation of Chinese and Western cultures. Among the advocates of the latter were proponents of scientism, who believed that science holds the answers to all problems and that the scientific is the only method for arriving at truth. Their opponents argued that science is applicable only to a narrow field of study and that moral values have to be based on deeper metaphysical truths that by their very nature are beyond the reach of scientific methodology. Since similar problems agitated the West at this time, Chinese

thinkers drew on the ideas of such classic European philosophers as Immanuel Kant and also on the thought of contemporaries widely different in methodology and results. For example, some promoted the ideas of John Dewey (1859–1952), the American pragmatist who would replace “absolute truth” with truths which worked as solutions to problems; but others turned to Henri-Louis Bergson (1859–1941), the French exponent of vitalism, a doctrine centering on life as a force that cannot be explained in material terms.

Those who identified with the Chinese tradition further drew on the insights of Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism, particularly the former. One of the most noteworthy defenders of tradition was Liang Shuming (1893–1988), who put his Confucian principles into action by working on rural reconstruction. Another was Zhang Junmai (1887–1969), later the leader of a small political party opposed to both the Communists and the Nationalists. Other philosophers such as Feng Yulan (Fung Yu-lan, 1895–1990) and Xiong Shili (1885–1969) drew on Neo-Confucian thought, but the trend of the times was against them.

Among the champions of science and Western values were the scientist Ding Wenjiang (1887–1937) and the father of the vernacular language movement, Hu Shi. Hu Shi was a leading liberal who advocated a gradualist, piecemeal problem-solving approach to China’s ills in the face of attacks both from the traditionalists on the right and from the left. His message increasingly fell on deaf ears, for his approach required time, and time was precisely what China lacked. More often than not, this included time to digest the heady dose of new intellectual imports or, for that matter, to study the old traditions in depth.

Cultural Alternatives

Qi Baishi (1863–1957), probably the most beloved painter of the century, was singularly unaffected by the turmoil of the times. Qi began as a humble carpenter and did not turn to painting until his mid-twenties, but his industry and longevity more than made up for a late start. It is estimated that he produced more than 10,000 paintings. Qi was a great admirer of the seventeenth-century individualist Zhu Da, but followed his own inner vision. He was not given to theorizing, but did express his attitude toward representation: “The excellence of a painting lies in its being like, yet unlike. Too much likeness flatters the vulgar taste; too much unlikeness deceives the world.”⁸ His works show, to quote a Chinese critic, “a loving sympathy for the little insects and crabs and flowers he draws,” and have “an enlivening gaiety of manner” so that “his pictures are really all pictures of his own gentle humanism”⁹ (see Figure 10.2).

There were other painters and calligraphers who remained uninfluenced by the West, but many felt that the new age required a new style. Among those who tried to combine elements of the Chinese and Western traditions were the followers of a school of painters established by Gao Lun (Gao Jianfu, 1879–1951). Gao sought to combine Western shading and perspective with Chinese brushwork, and was also influenced by Japanese decorativeness. He sought to bring Chinese



FIGURE 10.2 *Grasshopper and Orchid Leaves*, Qi Baishi (Qi Huang, 1863–1957). Although Qi also painted landscapes and portraits, he excelled in depicting the humble forms of life, such as rodents and insects, with a loving and gentle humor reminiscent of the haiku of Kobayashi Issa. Ink on paper, 21.5 × 30.5 cm., signed Baishi.

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painting up to date by including in his works new subject matter, such as the airplanes in Figure 10.3.

In Shanghai, meanwhile, a small group of artists tried to transplant French-style bohemianism into that international city. Xu Beihong (1895–1953), for example, affected the long hair and general appearance popular in the artists' quarter of Paris. When he returned from that city in 1927, Xu also brought back a thorough mastery of the French academic style. Somewhat more advanced in his Western tastes was Liu Haisu (1896–1994), founder of the Shanghai Art School (1920), where he introduced the use of a nude model. This was also one of the first schools to offer a full course of instruction in Western music. Liu was inspired by French postimpressionists like Matisse and Cezanne. Later, however, Liu returned to painting in a traditional manner, and Xu, too, abandoned his Western dress for a Chinese gown. Today Xu is perhaps most appreciated for his paintings of horses (see Figure 10.4).

Modern Chinese literature had its origins in the novels of the late Qing. A very popular but superficial genre was “Butterfly” literature, named after poems inserted into a novel, comparing lovers to pairs of butterflies. Between 1910 and 1930, around 2,215 such novels offered a literate but unlearned public amusement and escape. Also going back to the late Qing there was a steady and swelling stream of translations. Lin Shu (1852–1924), the most famous and prolific early



FIGURE 10.3 *Flying in the Rain*, Gao Lun (Gao Jianfu), 1932. Chinese painters, like writers and intellectuals throughout East Asia, devised different ways to combine traditionalism and modernism in style and subject matter, but lyrical landscapes with airplanes bouncing through the sky are rare anywhere. Ink and color on paper.

ART MUSEUM, CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG, CHINA.



FIGURE 10.4 *Standing Horse*, Xu Beihong, 1935.

XU BEIHONG MEMORIAL GALLERY, BEIJING, CHINA. PERMISSION.

translator, rendered into classical Chinese the novels of Charles Dickens, Walter Scott, and others in an opus that grew to some 180 works. Thanks to the labors of Lin and other translators, soon all the major European literary traditions as well as that of Japan were available in translation.

The May Fourth movement had a strong effect on literature. The intellectual revolution was accompanied by a literary revolution. This brought with it experiments, such as those of Xu Zhimo (1896–1931), who modeled his poetry on English verse, complete with rhyme. More widespread was a tendency toward romantic emotionalism, an outpouring of feelings released by the removal of Confucian restraints and encouraged by the example of European romanticism. One strain, as

analyzed by Leo Ou-fan Lee, was the passive-sentimental, presided over by the hero of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, read in China and Japan as "a sentimental sob story." The subjectivism of these writers was not unlike that of the writers of "I novels" in Japan. Another strain was dynamic and heroic. Its ideal was Prometheus, who braved Zeus's wrath and stole fire for mankind. Holding a promise of release from alienation, it was compatible with a revolutionary political stance. For Guo Moruo (1892–1978), once an admirer of Goethe, Lenin became beyond all else a Promethean hero. Perhaps the strongest expression of Promethean martyrdom came from Lu Xun, "I have stolen fire from other countries, intending to cook my own flesh. I think that if the taste is good, the other chewers on their part may get something out of it, and I shall not sacrifice my body in vain."¹⁰

Controversies and rivalries stimulated the formation of literary and intellectual societies as like-minded men joined together to publish journals advocating their causes and denouncing the opposition. Revolutionaries were not alone in arguing that literature should have a social purpose, but as the years passed without any improvement in Chinese conditions, the attractions of revolutionary creeds increased. Writers of revolutionary persuasion such as the Communist Mao Dun (Shen Yanbing, 1896–1981) depicted and analyzed the defects in the old society and portrayed the idealism of those who were out to change things. Such themes appeared not only in the work of Communist writers like Mao Dun, but also in the work of the anarchist Ba Jin (Li Feigang, 1905–), best known for his depiction of the disintegration of a large, eminent family in the novel appropriately entitled *Family* (1931), a part of his *Turbulent Stream* trilogy (1931–1940). Such works provide important material for the student of social as well as literary history.

Marxism in China: The Early Years

Marxism was not unknown in China, but had little appeal prior to the Russian Revolution. The few who were drawn to socialism were attracted more by its egalitarianism than by concepts of class warfare. The writings of Marx and Engels offered the vision of a perfect society, but their thesis that socialism could only be achieved after capitalism had run its course suggested that Marxism was inappropriate for a society only just entering "the capitalist stage of development."

The success of the Russian Revolution (1917) changed all that. Faced with a similar problem in applying Marxism to Russia, Lenin amended Marxist theory to fit the needs of his own country, and thereby also made it more relevant to the Chinese. His theory that imperialism was the last stage of capitalism gave new importance to countries such as China, which were the objects of imperialist expansion and the places where capitalism was particularly vulnerable. Also most significant was Lenin's concept of the Communist party as the vanguard of revolution, for now party intellectuals could help make history even in a precapitalist state.

Furthermore, Marxism was modern, and claimed "scientifically" valid doctrines. It shared the prestige accorded by Chinese intellectuals to Western and "advanced" ideas, even as it opposed the dominant forms of economic and politi-

cal organization in the West. A Western heresy to use against the West, it promised to undo China's humiliation, and persuaded its converts that "dialectic materialism" assured that Communism was the wave of the future. Thus China could once again be in the forefront of world history. The Russian Revolution demonstrated that it worked.

Li Dazhao (1888–1927), professor and librarian at Beijing University, was initially attracted by its promise as a vehicle for national revolution, while Chen Duxiu turned from science and democracy to Marxism as a more effective means of achieving modernization. Others were drawn to it for a mixture of reasons, high among them the promise it held for solving China's ills. By spring of 1920, when Grigorii Voitinsky arrived in China as an agent of the Communist International (Comintern), a core of Marxist intellectuals was available as potential leaders for the organization of the Chinese Communist party (C.C.P.) that took place the following year.

At its first gathering in July 1921, the C.C.P. elected Chen Duxiu its Secretary General. Despite considerable misgivings, the party submitted to a Comintern policy of maximum cooperation with the Guomindang. A formal agreement was reached in 1923 which allowed C.C.P. members into the GMD as individuals, subject to GMD party discipline. The C.C.P. leaders found it difficult to accept the Comintern's theoretical analysis of the GMD as a multiclass party, but submitted to Comintern discipline and the logic of the situation where the few hundred Communists were outnumbered by the thousands of GMD members, and had little contact with the masses. This initial period of cooperation lasted until 1927. The C.C.P. grew, but the GMD remained the senior partner.

The Guomindang and Sun Yat-sen (1913–1923)

After the failure of the "second revolution" of 1913, Sun Yat-sen was again forced into exile in Japan, where he tried to win Japanese support for his revolution. After the death of Yuan Shikai, Sun was able to return to China and establish a precarious foothold in Canton, where he depended on the good will of the local warlord. Denied foreign backing from Japan and elsewhere, Sun was also handicapped by the weakness of the GMD party organization, which was held together only loosely, largely through loyalty to Sun himself. The success of the Russian Revolution provided a striking contrast to the failure of Sun's revolution. Sun was also favorably disposed to the U.S.S.R. by the Soviet Union's initial renunciation of Czarist rights in China. This corresponded to a new anti-imperialist emphasis in his own thought and rhetoric, after the end of Manchu rule had not led to marked improvement in China's position in the world. Also, he was impressed by the mass nationalism of the May Fourth Movement.

Sun was therefore ready to work with the Communists, and in 1923 concluded an agreement with the Comintern that concurred with Sun's view that

China was not ready for socialism, and that the immediate task ahead was the achievement of national unity and independence. Through this pact, Sun received valuable assistance and aid. Under the guidance of the Comintern agent Mikhail Borodin (originally named Grusenberg), the GMD was reorganized into a more structured and disciplined organization than ever before, while General Galen, alias Vassily Blyukher (or Blücher), performed the same service for the army. Sun made some minor ideological compromises, but did not basically depart from his previous views.

GMD and C.C.P. Cooperation (1923–1927)

For both sides this was a marriage of convenience. At first it worked. The GMD gained guidance and support. C.C.P. members rose to important positions in the GMD, and the party grew. A good example of a C.C.P. leader occupying an important GMD office is Zhou Enlai's (1898–1976) service as chief of the political department of the Whampoa Military Academy under Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975). Here the cream of the GMD officer corps was trained and prepared to lead an army to reunify China and establish a national regime.

The C.C.P. devoted itself mainly to organizing the urban labor movement, which had already won its first victory in the Hong Kong Seamen's Strike of 1922. Shanghai and Canton were particularly fertile grounds for labor organizers, since in these cities the textile and other light industries continued their pre-First World War growth, assisted by the wartime lull in foreign competition. Of some 2.7 million cotton spindles in China around 1920, 1.3 million were in Chinese-controlled factories, and 500,000 were owned by Japanese. In Chinese and foreign plants alike, wages were very low, working hours long (averaging nine and one-half hours in Shanghai, up to thirteen in the provinces), and all-around conditions remained very harsh. Under these circumstances, the C.C.P.'s work met with substantial success. It gained greatly by its leadership during and following the incident of May 30, 1925, when Chinese demonstrators were fired on by the police of the International Settlement in Shanghai, killing ten and wounding more than fifty. A general strike and boycott followed; in Hong Kong and Canton the movement held out for sixteen months. The strike did not achieve its goals, but C.C.P. party membership increased from around 1,000 in early 1925 to an estimated 20,000 by the summer of 1926.

Sun Yat-sen did not live to witness the May 30 incident, for he died of cancer in March 1925. He was an energetic speaker and tireless visionary, glorified as the father of the revolution, but he left no clearly designated heir, and an ambiguous ideological legacy. His last major statement, "Three Principles of the People" (1924), stressed the first principle, nationalism—now directed against foreign imperialism—and provided for self-determination for China's minorities. The second principle, democracy, contained proposals for popular elections, initiative, re-

call, and referendum, but full democracy was to come only after a preparatory period of political tutelage. He emphasized the need for a disciplined people and believed that the Chinese people had too much freedom, not too little. The state would be a republic with five branches of government: legislative, executive, judicial (as in the West), plus an examination branch to test applicants for government posts, and a censorial branch to monitor government officials and control corruption, as under the emperors.

Finally, the principle of the people's livelihood aimed at both egalitarianism and economic development. It incorporated a proposal by the American reformer Henry George (1839–1897) to tax the unearned increment on land values in order to equalize holdings. An additional refinement was a land tax based on each landowner's assessment of the value of his land. To prevent underassessment, the state was to have the right to purchase the land at the declared value. Beyond that, Sun had a grandiose vision of "building the wealthiest, most powerful and happiest nation on earth,"¹¹ but his plan for Chinese industrialization was unrealistic. More realistic was a proposal for state ownership of major industries, but he remained critical of Marxist ideas of class struggle.

After Sun Yat-sen's death, Wang Jingwei (1883–1944) was well placed to succeed to the GMD leadership, for he had been associated with Sun in Japan and was considered a revolutionary hero for his attempt to assassinate the Manchu Prince Regent in 1910. But in 1926 it became apparent that he had a formidable challenger in Chiang Kai-shek. In 1923, Sun had sent Chiang to Moscow to study the Soviet military. On his return to China, Chiang became head of the Whampoa Military Academy, where he was highly successful, esteemed alike by the Soviet advisors and by the officer candidates.

While Wang Jingwei loosely presided over the GMD, the C.C.P. steadily gained influence in the party, much to the alarm of the GMD right and of Chiang Kai-shek. In March, 1926, Chiang decided to act: he declared martial law, arrested Soviet advisors, and took steps to restrain the C.C.P. influence in the GMD, yet managed to retain the cooperation of both the C.C.P. and of its Soviet supporters, whose assistance he needed for the military unification of the country. This he began in the summer of 1926 by launching the Northern Expedition (see Figure 10.5), setting out with his army from Canton. Although there was some heavy fighting against warlord armies, the force made rapid headway on its march to the Yangzi, and some warlords decided to go over to the Nationalist side. In the fall of 1926, the Nationalist victories enabled them to shift the capital from Canton to more centrally located Wuhan. There, Wang Jingwei headed a civilian government, but could not control Chiang and his army.

The Break

On its march north to the Yangzi, the army was assisted by popular support, and nowhere was this support more enthusiastic than among the Communist-led workers of Shanghai, where the General Labor Union seized control even before

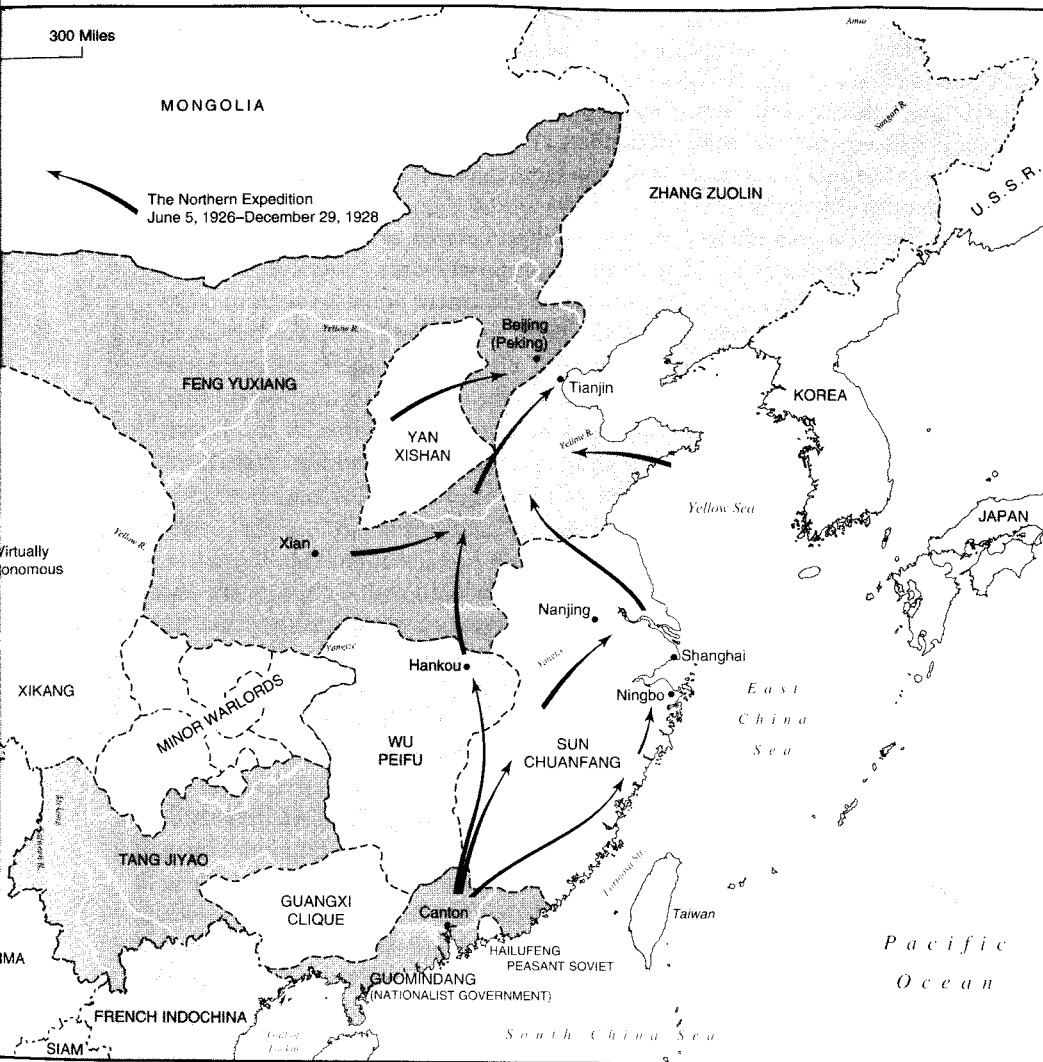


FIG. 10.5 China and the Northern Expedition, 1926–1928.

the arrival of the troops. Elsewhere, too, there was an increase in labor activity. This alarmed Chinese bankers and industrialists, who, ready to support a national but not a social revolution, financed the increasingly anti-Communist Chiang Kai-shek. In April, 1927, Chiang finally broke with the C.C.P. completely by initiating a bloody campaign of suppression in Shanghai, which then spread to other cities. Union and party headquarters were raided; those who resisted were killed; suspected Communists were shot on sight. C.C.P. cells were destroyed and unions disbanded in a devastating sweep that left the urban C.C.P. shattered.

The C.C.P.'s emphasis on city factory workers was entirely consistent with Marxist theory, but the majority of the Chinese people continued to work the land.

Marx, as a student of the French Revolution, despised the peasantry as “the class which represents barbarism within civilization.”¹² But Lenin, operating in a primarily agrarian land, assigned the peasantry a supporting role in the Russian Revolution. The C.C.P., although it concentrated on cities, had not neglected the peasants. In 1921, China’s first modern peasant movement was organized by Peng Pai (1896–1929), and by 1927 the C.C.P. was at work in a number of provinces, most notably Hunan, where the young Mao Zedong (1893–1976) wrote a famous report urging the party to concentrate on rural revolution and predicting, “In a very short time . . . several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back.” In another famous passage in the same report, he defended the need for violence, saying, “A revolution is not a dinner party.”¹³

In Hunan, as in other rice areas, tenancy rates were high, and the poorer peasants were sorely burdened by heavy rental payments and crushing debts. Tenants had few rights and faced the recurring specter of losing their leases. It was, as Mao saw, a volatile situation, fraught with revolutionary potential. But the Chinese party and its Soviet advisors remained urban-minded.

After Chiang’s coup, the C.C.P. broke with him, but continued to work with the government at Wuhan, which also broke with Chiang, but still depended for military support on armies officered largely by men of the landlord class, the prime object of peasant wrath. In this situation Comintern directives were wavering and contradictory, reflecting not Chinese realities but rather the exigencies of Stalin’s intraparty maneuvers back in Moscow. The end result was that in June the C.C.P. was expelled from Wuhan. Borodin and other Soviet advisors were sent back to the U.S.S.R. The C.C.P. entered on a difficult period of regrouping and reorganization.

Establishment of the Nationalist Government

After Chiang Kai-shek’s coup in Shanghai, he established a government in Nanjing, which remained the capital until 1937. The Northern Expedition resumed in 1928, by which time the Wuhan leaders, bowing to the inevitable, had made their peace with Chiang, as had a number of warlords whose forces now assisted the Nationalist drive north and actually outnumbered Chiang’s own troops. In June 1928, after a scant two months of fighting, Beijing fell. China again had a national government, but the often only nominal incorporation of warlord armies into the government forces meant that national unification was far from complete. Warlordism remained an essential feature of Chinese politics until the very end of the Republican period in 1949.

In 1927 anti-imperialist mobs attacked British concessions in two cities, and violence in Nanjing left six foreigners dead, a number wounded, and foreign businesses and homes raided. Such incidents were officially attributed to Chiang Kai-shek’s leftist rivals. The powers concluded that he was the most acceptable leader, who would negotiate rather than expropriate their holdings. Chiang’s victory reassured all the powers except Japan, which had plans of its own for Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. Japan had restored its holdings in Shandong to

Chinese sovereignty in 1922, but now sent troops to Shandong, claiming they were needed to protect Japanese lives and property. In 1928 they clashed with Chinese soldiers. Still more ominous was the assassination that year of the warlord of Manchuria, Zhang Zuolin, by a group of Japanese army officers who acted on their own, hoping this would pave the way for seizure of Manchuria. The Japanese officers did not get their way in 1928, but their act was to serve as a prelude to the Japanese militarism and expansionism that threatened China during the thirties, even as the Nanjing government tried to cope with warlords and revolutionaries at home, in its attempt to achieve stable government.

Notes

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Imperial Japan

1895–1931

1895

1912

LATE MEIJI

TAISHŌ

Between the founding of empire in 1895 and the advent of militarism in 1931, Japan increasingly participated in world history. It was in many respects a success story, but later history was to reveal the potential disaster. The death of the Meiji emperor in July 1912, while not as momentous as the abdication of China's last emperor earlier that year, marked something of a watershed, and was experienced as such. People at the time felt that the passing of the emperor, who had presided over Japan's transformation for over forty years, signified the end of an era, a transformation with which many later scholars have concurred. We have discussed this chapter accordingly.