

6 Europe and China

The Conflict Between Two Different Worlds



A map of European trade routes.

In the fifteenth century, the **Turks** took control of the overland silk and spice route between China and the West. The Europeans were furious about this and sent their sailors to find alternative sea routes to the East so that they could trade with a greater number of people through a greater number of routes. At the same time the Roman Catholic Church wanted to increase its influence in the East and so sent **missionaries** to China.

A Jesuit Priest

Matteo Ricci (1552-1609) was born in Macerata in Italy. He studied in the **Jesuit** school in his home town and then went to Rome to study law. In Rome he became interested in the East (also known at this time as the Orient). In 1582, Ricci arrived in Macao as a missionary. Matteo learned Chinese, befriended many high-ranking Chinese officials and converted some of them to Christianity. He was invited by Emperor Wanli to the Forbidden City (see box on page 38) but failed to convert him to Christianity.

Matteo introduced many aspects of European culture such as **cartography** and mathematics to China. When Ricci died he was buried in Peking (modern-day Beijing).

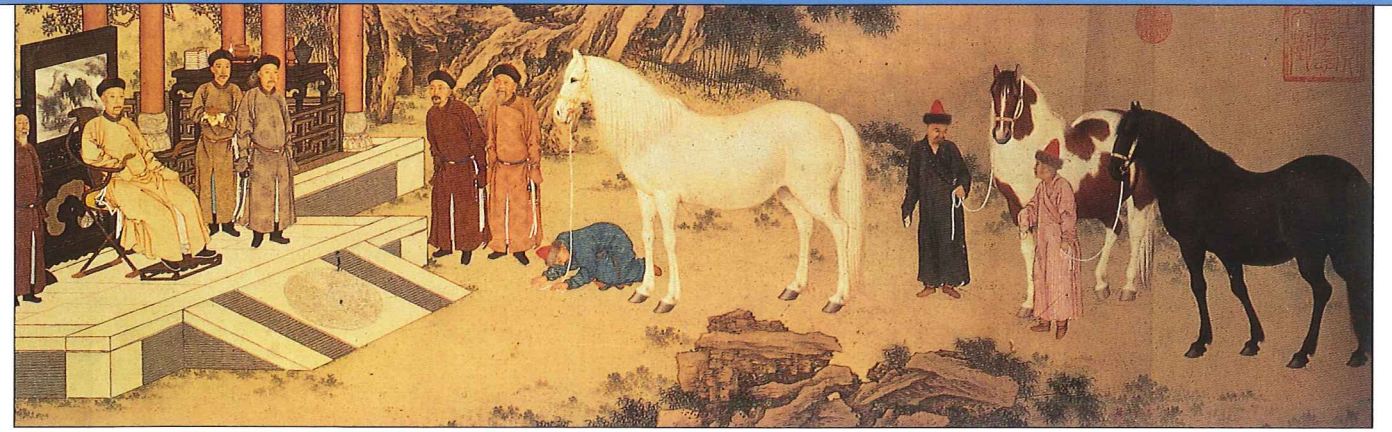
A Tourist at the Great Wall

Johann Grueber (1623-80) was a German Jesuit priest who set out from Venice for China in 1656. After reaching Peking, he stayed in China for three years and worked as a missionary (along with 56 other Jesuits) baptizing Chinese converts to Christianity.

Grueber left Peking in June 1661 with the French Jesuit monk Albert d'Orville and travelled for 60 days before arriving at Xining, a city near the Great Wall of China. Grueber described the distance between two of the gates on the wall as being a walk of 18 days. Grueber was also impressed by the width of the wall, saying that it was so wide that 'six horsemen may run abreast on it without embarrassing each other'.

After leaving Xining, Grueber and d'Orville travelled on to Lhasa in Tibet and were probably the first Europeans to enter the city.

Matteo Ricci is seen here with his Chinese friend Xu Guanqi, a Ming official and is dressed in traditional Chinese clothes.



The Qing Empire

In 1644, the Ming government was overthrown by a series of peasant rebellions. The Manchus of the Mongolian grasslands then defeated the peasant armies and established their own dynasty called the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Like the Mongols, the Manchus were very good soldiers and used their skills to expand the Qing Empire.

By the eighteenth century, Britain was the leading **industrial** power in the West and was keen to trade with China. In 1792, Lord George Macartney (1737-1806) took a delegation of 135 people to China to meet the emperor.

They set sail from Portsmouth in September and arrived in China the following year. Macartney took several artists with him and they recorded the things they saw in beautiful watercolours which they took back to Britain. Macartney took Emperor Qianlong presents as tokens of his goodwill but still failed in his mission to open up more British trade with China. One of the reasons for this failure was Macartney's refusal to kneel down at the feet of the emperor, called kowtowing. The kowtow was a traditional way of showing respect to the emperor.

Emperor Qianlong employed a number of foreigners as court artists. This picture was painted by an Italian called Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766).

William Alexander, (1767-1816) one of the artists who went to China with Lord Macartney, made this drawing of the Western Gate of Peking.



The First Opium War

In 1839, the First Opium War broke out between China and Britain over the trade in the drug **opium**. The English East India Company sold opium taken from British India to China in order to pay for Chinese imports such as tea, silk and porcelain. People in China gradually became more and more addicted to opium and spent vast sums of money on the drug. The Chinese government became worried as their treasury was being drained. In 1839 the Chinese government seized more than 20,000 chests of Indian opium in protest and burned them in Canton. The British retaliated by sending 4,000 troops to attack major Chinese ports and cities. The British eventually won the war and a treaty was signed in Nanjing in August 1842, which gave them the right to trade in China. The island of Hong Kong was handed over as part of the peace treaty.

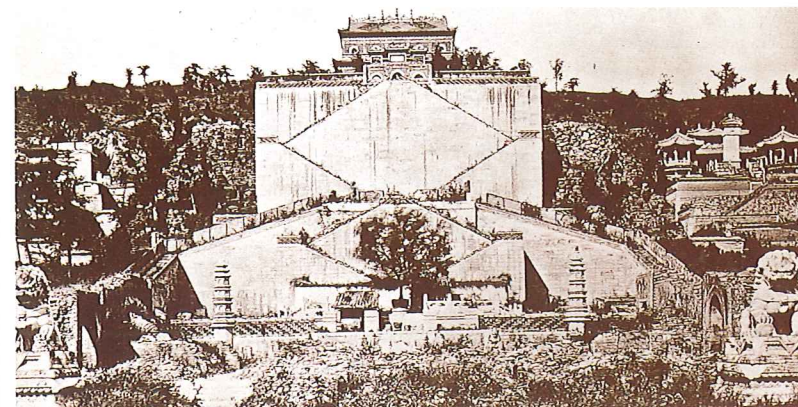
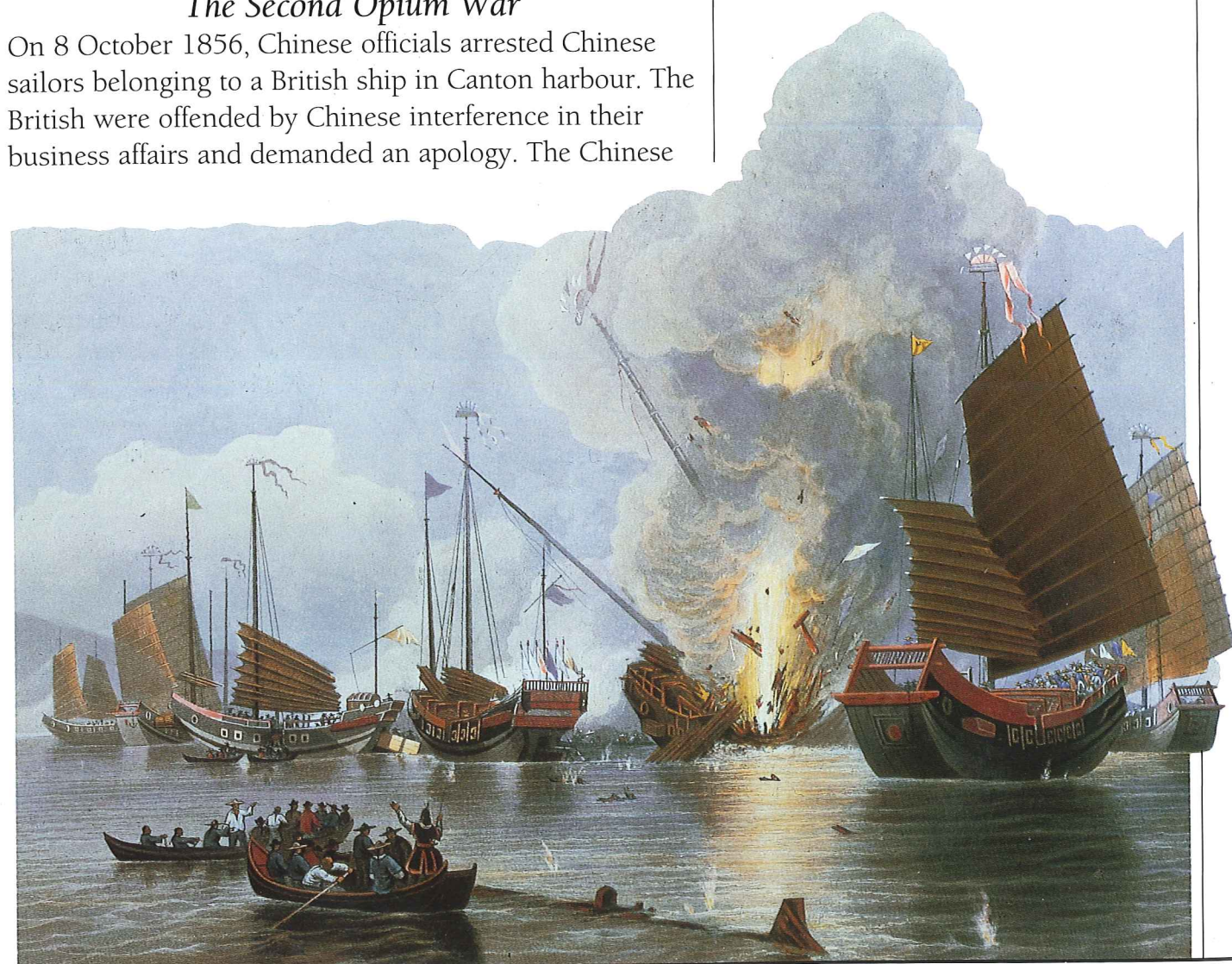
The Second Opium War

On 8 October 1856, Chinese officials arrested Chinese sailors belonging to a British ship in Canton harbour. The British were offended by Chinese interference in their business affairs and demanded an apology. The Chinese

The Taiping Rebellion

It was not only Westerners who caused trouble in China. In 1851, Hong Xiuquan (1814-64) led a rebellion from south-west China and set up his own kingdom which he called the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace in Nanjing. Hong came from a farming background and was inspired by Christian teachings. He dreamt that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ and that it was his mission to save China. His revolution lasted for 13 years and affected half of China.

Chinese ships fighting the British navy during the First Opium War. The Chinese lost the Opium War and were forced to open their ports to foreigners.



The Summer Palace was destroyed by British and French troops in 1860.

government refused to apologize and crowds of protesters burned British shops and factories in Canton. This is how another trading war, called the Second Opium War (even though it had nothing to do with opium), began. Anglo-French troops occupied Peking and set fire to the Imperial Summer Palace. The Summer Palace was one of the finest buildings in the world, built in both Chinese and European styles of architecture. It contained many precious treasures and a royal library. Before destroying the Summer Palace, the British and French troops grabbed as much as they could carry away with them. A British soldier wrote: *'You can scarcely imagine the beauty and magnificence of the buildings we burnt. It made one's heart sore to burn them . . . it was wretchedly demoralizing work for an army. Everybody was wild for plunder.'* Now only a few ruins of the palace are left.

By the early nineteenth century there were plenty of foreigners living in China. This European painting shows different flags hung on ships and buildings.



Scientist Explorers

When China opened its doors to foreigners in the nineteenth century, many Western scientists arrived to study the country's animals and plants. In 1803, William Kerr was sent to China by the Royal Gardens at Kew (London) to collect plants from the Far East. Another famous plant collector was Robert Fortune, who studied at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. In 1843 Fortune was appointed by the Royal Horticultural Society at Chiswick in London as their special plant collector in China. Fortune travelled all over China for nine years and found many new plants.

Between 1864-74 the Frenchman, Père Jean Pierre David (1826-1900), made three journeys into China, travelling from Peking to Mongolia, and from Tibet to Sichuan by boat, horse and on foot. Père David was probably the first Westerner to discover the giant panda in March 1869 while travelling between the borders of Tibet and Sichuan. Some local hunters killed a white 'bear' and sent it to him. Père David wrote in his diary, *'Is it possible that it is new to science?'* and sent the skin and skull of the panda back to Paris where it was identified as a species that was new to the West.

The Last Emperor

The Child Emperor

Pu Yi was born in 1906 when the Qing Dynasty was coming to its end. Emperor Guangxu's wife, Ci Xi, imprisoned him and made herself the head of state. Guangxu died in November 1908 and Ci Xi (called the Empress Dowager) chose two-year-old Pu Yi as the new emperor of China. She knew he was too young to rule, which meant that she would have more power. But the empress died just a few months later. When Pu Yi was five years old, China became a republic (a country with an elected government rather than one ruled by a king or queen), but the new government allowed him to carry on living in the Forbidden City. Pu Yi learned to read and write with his servants and practised calligraphy for hours every day. Pu Yi had a British tutor, Reginald Johnston, who visited the palace almost every day from March 1919 until 1922.

The Forbidden City

Peking (modern-day Beijing) was the old capital of the Yuan Dynasty (see page 26). In 1421, Emperor Chengzu, of the Ming Dynasty, decided to move his capital to Peking and turned the Forbidden City into the Imperial Palace. The Forbidden City occupies 720,000 square metres, took 15 years to build and is right in the middle of Peking. It has nearly 100,000 rooms and is surrounded by a moat. The city is divided into two sections: one area is made up of large ceremonial halls for conducting official business and the other contains living quarters and gardens. The front entrance of the palace is called the Gate of Heavenly Peace.

Empress Ci Xi and the child emperor Pu Yi.

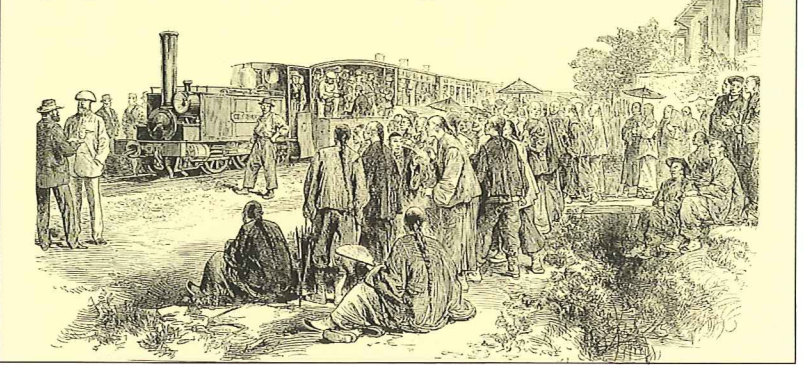


Like all Chinese emperors, Pu Yi had many wives. This photo is of Pu Yi and his favourite wife, Wan Rong, in Tianjin, together with their foreign friends.

During the 1930s, the Japanese expanded their empire and marched into China. Pu Yi was persuaded to go to Manchuria (where he originally came from) by the Japanese to act as the emperor during their occupation. Pu Yi's life was controlled by the Japanese. The Russian army arrested him when the Japanese left China after the Second World War (1939-45). After some time in prison the last emperor of China later worked as a gardener in Peking (modern-day Beijing) and died in 1967 at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (see pages 43-4).

The First Railway in China

The first railway in China was built in Shanghai in 1874 with money raised by British companies. People came from miles around to see trains for the first time. Often a wall of people would stand along the side of the tracks watching the trains. Tickets were very expensive: the price of a first class ticket from Shanghai to Wusong was the same amount as rice for a family for one month. However, the railway was built without a proper licence and the Chinese government had it dismantled.



Shanghai: An Adventurer's Paradise

Seven hundred years ago, Shanghai was a small fishing village. It became larger during the Yuan (see page 26) and Ming (see pages 30-31) Dynasties, but was often under attack from Japanese pirates. In 1832, the first British boat to China arrived at the port of Wusong, but was fired upon by the Chinese army. The peace settlement of the First Opium War made Shanghai one of the five open ports where Westerners were allowed to trade. More and more foreigners went to Shanghai to do business and hundreds of foreign shops, banks, clubs and restaurants sprang up. Most foreign visitors lived in special districts rented from the government.

The port of Shanghai during the 1930s.

