

Chinese Reaction to Western Imperialism

INTRO:

The unfair terms of the Nanjing treaty left the Chinese people frustrated and humiliated in their own land. Millions of Chinese were addicted to opium and this was only one of their many problems. Population growth and poor harvests in the mid 1800's meant that China could no longer feed its own people. Drastic action needed to be taken.



The Taiping Rebellion of 1850-1864 and the Boxer Rebellion of 1898-1901

These two rebellions occurred over thirty years apart and took very different approaches to solving China's troubles.



The Taiping Rebellion 1850-1864

The Taiping rebellion was actually a civil war where a group known as the Taipings attempted to take over China's government and drastically reform Chinese society. The movement was led by a teacher named Hong Xiuquan who believed that the Qing government was corrupt. In the eight years after the signing of the **Treaty of Nanking**, Hong saw many more millions of Chinese become addicted to the drug Opium, which was now legal in China. He argued that the Qing government did little to prevent the spread of Opium and saw the Chinese government as unable to adapt to the new dangers of Western

Imperialism. The anger of the Taiping's was directed at China's government much more than at the foreign presence in China. In fact, Hong was interested in even adopting many of the ways of the West. Hong himself was a Christian and hoped that all Chinese would convert to Christianity and leave behind their old traditional Chinese religious beliefs.

1. Why did Hong start the Taiping Rebellion? Who and what were they angry about?

Beginning in 1850, the Taiping army captured various territories around Southern China. At its height, the Taiping army reached a strength of around 1-3 million soldiers who controlled over 30 million people. As the Taipings captured territory they would seek to enlist new recruits.

The distribution of land is made according to the size of the family, regardless of sex, with only the number of persons taken into account. The larger the number, the more land they shall receive; the smaller the number, the less land they shall receive... All lands under Heaven shall be farmed jointly by the people under Heaven.

In the empire none shall have any private property, and everything belongs to God, so that God may dispose of it.

If China is to survive, she must adopt the ways of the West. For it is the West's technology that has made its nations powerful enough to overtake other underdeveloped areas of the world...If any Chinese can build a fire wagon (railroad) as well as the foreigners make them, able to cover great distance by day and night, let him have a monopoly (total control) to do so... When the Taipings take power, we shall first build 21 highways in the 21 provinces.

2. List the changes promised by the Taiping's above:

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Results of the Taiping Rebellion

The Taiping army was actually made up of many different armies led by different leaders. These leaders had different ideas of how to wage the rebellion which resulted in internal feuds (inside fighting). In order to preserve their trade and business interests, British and French forces came to the assistance of the Chinese (Qing) government in fighting the rebels. The Chinese (Qing) government was successful in stopping the Taipings in 1864. As a result of brutal fighting and mass starvation, **over 20-30 million Chinese people were killed** (that's 3x the population of New York City). The Taiping Rebellion is known to be the bloodiest civil war in human history.

The Boxer Rebellion 1898-1901

Thirty-four years after the failed Taiping rebellion, and as the influence of foreigners continued to spread, the Chinese once again tried to make drastic changes to their society. **The Boxers, also known as "The Righteous and Harmonious Fists"**, was an ancient and secret society which began a campaign against foreigner privilege. In 1900, the Boxers descended on Beijing shouting "Death to the foreign devils" and surrounded the European section of the city.



The foreign devils have spread their poison throughout China. The British do as they please in the ports of Canton, Shanghai, and many more. Hong Kong now belongs to them. France, Russia, Germany, and Japan have also rushed in to pick our bones clean. China is a country in name only. We Chinese have become second-class citizens in our own country.

We, the members of the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists (The Boxers), are planning to storm (invade) the city of Peking (Beijing). We must rid China of all of her foreign devils. No longer will we be treated as inferiors and laughed at in disgrace! No longer will we permit Westerners to cheat us and steal from us. No longer will we let them commit horrible crimes against us and escape punishment.

3. Who were the Boxers and what did they hate?

4. What do the Boxers hope to accomplish?

5. (see below) How does the Boxer Rebellion end?

International Reaction

The Boxers held a large group of foreign diplomats and civilians hostage in Beijing for 55 days. In September of 1901, a multinational force of 20,000 soldiers arrived in Beijing and defeated the Boxers. The international troops looted the city and the empress disguised as a peasant escaped in a cart. These forces forced China to sign an agreement stating that they would have to pay each of the imperialist nations large sums of money (the equivalent of about 6.6 billion dollars today).

The Boxer Rebellion, like the Opium war before it, was an excuse for the imperial powers to take advantage of China. The humiliation China suffered as a result of this foreign defeat would lead to strong Chinese nationalism and a great desire for Chinese independence in the 20th century.

TASK:

You and your group are recruitment officers for either the Taiping's or the Boxer's (pick one) Create a "catch phrase" or slogan that would convince or motivate someone to join your group. Your slogan must refer to something specific about your group (from today's work).

You are Taipings or Boxers _____

Our slogan:
