merchants simply want to buy the lion’s share of foreign goods so as to corner the trade in foreign goods. Those who adopt this strategy rarely take into consideration the mounting debts they incur as a result. In the end, unable to pay off their debt and with taxes mounting they go bankrupt. All of this happens, simply because their actions are not regulated. Unhealthy practices proliferated when other merchants had to follow the other’s example to obtain more [foreign] goods.

[..]

Now, with regards to how to straighten out foreign trade, it is necessary to alter the procedures while clarifying the responsibilities of the merchants. We have to find one or two wealthy and morally upright local merchants in each guild, order them to take charge of the Yanghang merchants and to represent the guild’s interests in negotiations with foreign merchants. They must not arbitrarily raise or lower prices, rather they ought to adhere to the going market price, conduct trade with fairness. If anyone secretly disobeys these rules, the head merchants must report them for prosecution.

I frequently encourage the merchants to live simple instead of lavish lives, to protect their reputation, and to eliminate evil customs. Only in this way will the merchant guilds become robust. In the future, when a new merchant is to be selected, the Head Yanghang merchant should notify all the wealthy and honest Yanghang merchants who should in turn jointly recommend a qualified candidate. Such pledge will be reported to and registered at the Board [of Revenue]. If the recommendation is deliberately false and they fall into debt, the debt will be the responsibility of those who recommended him. Similarly, when merchants retire from business for various reasons, a report must be sent to the Board of Revenue immediately to terminate their membership of the guild. At the end of each year, the list of registered Yanghang merchants will be reported to the Board of Revenue.

Should such a regulation be approved and incorporated, trade will improve quickly and the likelihood of employing unsuitable merchants into the Yanghang guild can be diminished and foreign trade will be improved.

Your slave’s foolish proposal may be completely inappropriate; it is merely stating the situation. With my forehead on the floor, [I] report this memorial, to Your Majesty, for his judgment.

2.3 RULES REGULATING FOREIGN TRADING IN GUANGZHOU (1832–1835)

Concerned about Westerners attempting to settle permanently in China, foreigners in Guangzhou were obliged to adhere to a list of eight rules that defined where they went, what guests they could bring, even how many servants they could have. The list of regulations was first handed down in 1760 by the Qianlong emperor, revised by his son the Jiaqing emperor in 1810, and confirmed again by edict in 1819. These rules were not idle threats. In 1829, one Yanghang served as guarantor for a boat that clandestinely brought the wife of a powerful British merchant to the factories. When the governor-general learned of this transgression, the head merchant was sent to prison and the guild fined so severely that it was sent to the brink of bankruptcy.

Questions
1. Why would the Qing emperor be concerned with regulating the lives of the European traders and sailors?
2. Do the rules appear intent on keeping the foreign merchants away from local Chinese or the reverse?
Regulation 1 All vessels of war are prohibited from entering the Humen. Vessels of war acting as convoy to merchantmen must anchor outside at sea till their merchant-ships are ready to depart, and then sail away with them.

Regulation 2 Neither women, guns, spears, nor arms of any kind can be brought to the Factories.

Regulation 3 All river-pilots and ships’ Compradores must be registered at the office of the assistant magistrate at Macau. That officer will also furnish each one of them with a license, or badge, which must be worn around the waist. He must produce it whenever called for. All other boatmen and people must not have communication with foreigners, unless under the immediate control of the ships’ Compradores; and should smuggling take place, the Compradores of the ship engaged in it will be punished.

Regulation 4 Each Factory is restricted for its service to eight Chinese (irrespective of the number of its occupants), say two porters, four water-carriers, one person to take care of goods, and one shop merchant who originally performed all the duties of the ‘House Compradores,’ as he is styled today.

Regulation 5 Foreigners are prohibited from rowing about the river in their own boats for pleasure. On the 8th, 18th, and 28th days of the lunar month they may take the air, as fixed by the government in the 21st year of Jiaqing (1819). All ships’ boats passing the Custom-houses on the river must be detained and examined, to guard against guns, swords or firearms being furiously carried in them. On the 8th, 18th and 28th days of the lunar month these foreigners may visit the Flower Gardens and Buddhist Temple on Henan Island, but not in groups of over ten at a time. When they are ‘refreshed’ they must return to the Factories, not be allowed to pass the night ‘out,’ or collect together to carouse. Should they do so, then, when the next ‘holiday’ comes, they shall not be permitted to go. If they should presume to enter villages, public places, or bazaars, punishment will be inflicted upon the linguist who accompanies them.

Regulation 6 Foreigners are not allowed to present petitions [to the emperor]. If they have anything to represent, it must be done through the Hang merchants.

Regulation 7 Hang merchants are not to owe debts to foreigners. Smuggling goods to and from the city is prohibited.

Regulation 8 Foreign ships arriving with merchandise must not loiter about outside the river; they must come directly to Huangpu. They must not rove about the bays at pleasure and sell to rascally natives goods subject to duty, that these may smuggle them, and thereby defraud His Celestial Majesty’s revenue.

OPIUM IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY GUANGZHOU

Given the attention lavished on this historical period, it is perhaps surprising to learn that for the first several decades of intensive British and Chinese contact, both empires’ relationship revolved around tea, not opium. To the Qing court this seemed perfectly natural. Tea was of central concern in the court’s management of both maritime and overland trade. But with the emergence of Britain’s massive demand for tea in the

HUMEN—The mouth of the Pearl River, known in Chinese as “Humen” or literally “Tiger’s Gate.” Early European sailors labeled it “Boca Tigris” or “Mouth of the Tiger” which was later called the “Bogue” by British sailors.
superintendent, thus constrained by paramount motives affecting the safety of the lives and liberty of all the foreigners here present in Guangzhou, and by other very weighty causes, do hereby, in the name and on the behalf of her Britannic majesty’s government enjoin and require all her majesty’s subjects now present in Guangzhou forthwith to make a surrender to me for the service of her said majesty’s government, to be delivered over to the government of China, of all the opium under their respective control; and to hold the British ships and vessels engaged in the trade of opium subject to my immediate direction: and to forward to me without delay a sealed list of all the British owned opium in their respective possession. And I, the said chief superintendent, do now, in the most full and unreserved manner, hold myself responsible for, and on the behalf of her Britannic majesty’s government, to all and each of her majesty’s subjects surrendering the said British owned opium into my hands, to be delivered over to the Chinese government. And I, the said chief superintendent, do further specially caution all Her Majesty’s subjects here present in Guangzhou, owners of or charged with the management of opium, the property of British subjects, that failing the surrender of the said opium into my hands at or before six o’clock this day, I, the said chief superintendent, hereby declare Her Majesty’s government wholly free of all manner of responsibility in respect of the said British-owned opium.

And it is specially to be understood that proof of British property and value of all British opium surrendered to me agreeably to this notice shall be determined upon principles and in a manner hereafter to be defined by Her Majesty’s government.

Given under my hand and seal of office at Guangzhou in China, this twenty-seventh day of March, one-thousand-eight-hundred-and-thirty-nine, at six of the clock in the morning.

[L.S] (Signed) Charles Elliot,
Chief superintendent of the trade of British subjects in China.

2.9 A LETTER FROM LIN ZEXU TO QUEEN VICTORIA (JULY 19, 1839)

Perhaps the most famous of all the extant Opium War documents, Lin Zexu’s letter likely never reached its intended audience, Queen Victoria. Copied and given to the captain of the “Thomas Coutts” in February 1840, Lin sought to evade the obstinate British officials on the scene and appeal directly to the Queen. On many levels, Lin is reiterating many of the same points he made in 2.7, but the letter displays a more developed internal logic and a fuller awareness of the international economic and political situation. It has been suggested many times among western commentators that this letter was never viewed by Queen Victoria—and it may be true that she never viewed the actual letter Lin Zexu addressed to her—but only the most willfully unapprised could have missed its publication in the London Times on June 11, 1840.

Questions

1. It is often suggested by Western historians that China needed to be opened because it did not follow proper diplomatic procedures. How does the following document support or contradict such a perspective?

2. What do you think Lin Zexu hoped to achieve by writing directly to Queen Victoria?

Letter to Queen Victoria from Lin Zexu, Deng Tingzhen and Qialiang

[...]

The rule of your distinguished country has been passed down for generations, each ruler has been known for their respectfulness, with their tributes [to China] accompanied by declarations such as, “When my countrymen went to conduct trade in China, they received blessed and fair treatment from your Great Emperor.” We are delighted that rulers from your distinguished country understood the great principals of right and are grateful for our Emperor’s kindness.
Therefore, our imperial dynasty cherishes even more [this relationship], redoubled its kindness towards you by allowing profitable trade, extended to you over the past two hundred years. This is the reason your country has become known for its wealth.

During this long period of trade, there were good and bad foreigners, some of them brought in opium to seduce Chinese people and disseminated vice to every province. They only focused on their own profits and cared nothing of the damage caused. The laws of heaven and the feelings of the people cannot tolerate such behavior. The Great Emperor, upon hearing of this, was filled with rage, and has specifically sent me, his commissioner, to Guangdong. There he has charged me together with the governor-general and governor, to investigate and settle this matter.

Any Chinese subject who is convicted of selling or smoking opium is punished to death. If we charge the foreigners for the years of their involvement in selling opium, and the deep harm they have caused in their pursuit of colossal profits, they would have been punished with death penalty as well. Nevertheless, we took into consideration the fact that many foreigners regret their crimes, have asked for forgiveness, and relinquished the opium from their ships in an amount of 20,283 chests to your representative Elliot; which has been confiscated and destroyed. I, along with the Governor-General, and the Governor, in a memorial to the Emperor have faithfully reported this information. The Emperor was exceptionally kind and pardoned the foreigners as a result of their cooperation. But if anyone repeats the crime, it will be hard to avoid punishment. With new regulations established, we presume the ruler of your distinguished country who favored our civilized culture, will instruit all foreigners to observe these new laws with care. The benefits and punishments of our imperial laws must be explained to all [who travel to China] and they must understand that under no circumstances will opium be allowed to cross our borders.

Having investigated the matter, we have determined that your country is sixty to seventy thousand li away from China, and that foreign ships compete for our lucrative trade. The foreigners have all profited from the wealth of China. Put another way, the large profits made by the foreigners are achieved only by the people of China seeking to share it with them. In return how could the foreigners use the poisonous drug to harm the Chinese people? Even though the foreigners may not necessarily intend to do any harm, in order to maximize their profit, they disregard the damages they impose on people. May I ask where is your conscience? We have heard that the smoking of opium is strictly forbidden in your country because the harm caused by opium is clearly understood. If you country does not wish such harm upon your own country, you should not impose it upon others, especially not China. Every single article exported from China whether it is to be eaten, used or resold, is for the good of foreign countries. Is there anything that China has done to harm foreign countries? This is not even mentioning the daily necessities, such as tea and rhubarb, that China provides to foreign countries.

[...]

The goods imported to your country from China are not only consumed by your own people, but also sold to other countries, which triple your profits. You can earn these threefold-profits without selling opium. Yet, you still engage in a trade that is based on selling harmful products to others simply to fulfill your greedy desire? What if people from other countries sold opium to England, enticing your people to purchase and smoke opium? Certainly a ruler of your distinguished stature must despise and forbid it.

We have always heard that the ruler of your distinguished country is kind and benevolent. Naturally you would not wish to do unto others what you yourself do not want. We have also heard that the ships coming to Guangdong have all been given regulations and orders clearly outlining the forbidden goods are not permitted to ship to China. This indicates that the administrative orders by the ruler of your distinguished country are strict and clear. Only because the trading ships are numerous, heretofore perhaps they have not been examined with care. Now with this communication and a clear understanding of the strict laws by the imperial kingdom, certainly you will not let your subjects to violate the law again.

[...]

The current penalty for Chinese who sell or smoke opium is death. Clearly, if foreigners do not bring opium in, then Chinese could not sell and smoke opium. It is really the wicked foreigners who cause the death of those Chinese. Why should opium smugglers be allowed to live? Anyone who takes a life has to pay with one’s own life. Opium’s harm is much beyond one life. Therefore the new law states foreigners who bring opium to China must be punished by decapitation or hanging. This is to eliminate the evils of the world.

Upon further investigation, we discovered in the second month of this year [April 9, 1839], Elliot, your consul, petitioned for an extension due to the stringent law. He requested an extension of five months
for Indian merchants and ten months for England proper, after which new regulations will be enacted. Now we, the commissioners and officials, have memorialized to the Great Emperor and have received the extraordinary mercy from His Majesty, who has granted Elliot’s petition with extraordinary consideration and compassion. Within a year [England proper] and six months [Indian areas], anyone who mistakenly brings in opium, but voluntarily surrenders themselves and all opium will be pardoned. After the deadline, anyone who violates the law does so deliberately and will be executed with no clemency. This truly demonstrates the height of kindness and the perfection of justice.

Our imperial dynasty rules over and supervises numerous states, and possesses unforeseen divine power. But we cannot bear to put people to death without giving them instructional guidance. Therefore, we specifically announce regulations clearly. If foreigners from your country are looking for long-term trade relationship, they must obey our statue, to permanently stop the source of opium. By no means should they test law with their lives.

May you, the Ruler, apprehend wicked people to guarantee the peace of your nation, to demonstrate further the sincerity of your submissiveness and enjoy the blessings of peace. How fortunate, how fortunate indeed! Upon receiving this letter will you give us a prompt reply regarding the details and circumstances of your opium ban. Please do not delay. The above is what has to be communicated.

Attached is the new law: If foreigners bring opium to sell in China, the leader will be executed by decapitation immediately; the followers are to be executed by hanging immediately. All merchandise is to be confiscated. Within the one year and six months granted clemency period, those who surrender all opium will be pardoned.

Dao guang 19th year, 6th month, 9th day [July 19, 1839]. Since the edict arrived belatedly, the clemency period ends on Dao guang 20th year, 12th month and 9th day. [March 12, 1840]

### POPULAR RESPONSES AND DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTIONS TO THE OPIUM WAR

The Opium War (1839–42) was far from a popular war among either the Chinese or the British. There exist numerous instances in both countries of popular discontent over the manner in which the war was entered into and carried out. While the British lower classes were inevitably less aware of the war than their Chinese counterparts, several of the documents included below reveal that the greatest opposition to the war amongst the lower classes in both countries lay in moral objections to the opium trade. Such reactions are almost entirely forgotten in many histories of the war today. Instead many Western accounts seek to suggest that Britain’s actions were entirely instigated by Chinese attacks on British goods. One wonders what Britain’s options might have been without such an overwhelming military force to back up their commercial interests?

#### 2.10 GUANGDONG RESIDENTS’ DENUNCIATION OF THE BRITISH (1841)

The following anonymous document was almost certainly written by a local gentry member living in or near Guangzhou. The condemnation was likely hand-written, copied and then posted in several locations where the author(s) felt it would have the greatest impact. The language is idiomatic and employs crass vocabulary prevalent among the common classes. The document picks up the common themes (like the benevolence of the emperor, reliance on China for specific goods, etc. all employed in earlier documents) but turns them on their head to insult the British. The inclusion of rhubarb (here and by Lin in Document 2.7) reflects the mistaken belief that the British relied on the vegetable to prevent constipation. The defense of the emperor and attack on Qishan (Lin’s replacement) is also quite typical, since it was often assumed that the emperor was at the mercy of his officials.
unjustifiable outrage on the part of the Chinese authorities. ... The House has heard a good deal about the revenue which is hazarded by the adoption of my noble Friend's motion; it should also hear something of the nature and extent of those great interests which the adoption of his motion will tend to maintain and preserve. I trust I shall not say much regarding the advantages we derived from our position in China previous to the war. It is well known that we had long derived from China exclusively, our supply of the article of tea; that the China trade had yielded an annual revenue to the Exchequer of nearly four millions sterling, and that, even under the much reprobated monopoly of the East India Company, it was the medium by which the disposal was effected above a million sterling in value of the manufactures and productions of this country. [. . .]}

Our present great commercial advantages in China, which I have perhaps detailed at too much length, have been obtained by the vigorous employment of our united sea and land forces in the proper quarter, and with the advantage, I must say, of considerable good fortune; for a single untoward casualty, either on land, or in that unexplored navigation, might have marred the whole campaign. We were also fortunate, not only in what we accomplished, but in what we did not accomplish; we did not subvert the complicated and ancient fabric of the Chinese government; we did not spread anarchy and confusion over its fine provinces. We subdued the government to that extent only which was requisite to dispose it to make the necessary reparation for the injuries which we had received, and to grant to us those commercial concessions which, I doubt not, will prove as beneficial to them as to ourselves.

2.12 TREATY OF NANJING (1842)

The Treaty of Nanjing is a representative (if unjust) coda to the Opium War. Defeated by the most powerful navy in the world at the time, China was forced to accept the continued importation of opium, pay a massive indemnity, and cede the island of Hong Kong “in perpetuity” to Great Britain. Symptomatic of the manner in which Britain treated the affair from the beginning, the treaty mentions opium only obliquely in reference to China’s large indemnity. The treaty speaks of free trade and “opening” China, thereby suggesting that opium was incidental to the larger issues at hand. Despite Great Britain’s insistence that the treaty marks China’s entrance into “western-style diplomacy,” it is highly unlikely the Qing court thought that much would change as a result of it. Hong Kong was a barren island, undesirable to most Chinese. Opening designated places for trade had long been a concession given to appease aggressive neighbors along China’s inland borders. And the court had long questioned the effectiveness of the Yanghang guild system, so was not likely troubled by its demise. What Qing officials were most aggrieved by was the fact that they could not stop the only component of their relationship with Great Britain that mattered, opium.

Questions

1. In what ways is the Treaty of Nanjing more a continuation of Britain’s efforts begun in the Macartney Mission (1792–3) than a reaction to China’s efforts to terminate the opium trade?

2. Aside from the heavy indemnity what aspects do you think most affected China?

 Peace Treaty between the Queen of Great Britain and the Emperor of China. HER MAJESTY the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and His Majesty the Emperor of China, being desirous of putting an end to the misunderstandings and consequent hostilities which have arisen between the two countries, have resolved to conclude a Treaty for that purpose [. . .] and found them to be in good and due form, have agreed upon and concluded the following [selected] Articles:

I. There shall henceforward be Peace and Friendship between Her Majesty the Queen of the

TREATY OF NANJING (1842)—Treaty ending the Opium War between China and Great Britain. It opened five treaty ports, ceded the island of Hong Kong, and imposed a 21 million taels indemnity.
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and His Majesty the Emperor of China, and between their respective Subjects, who shall enjoy full security and protection for their persons and property within the Dominions of the other.

II. His Majesty the Emperor of China agrees, that British Subjects, with their families and establishments, shall be allowed to reside, for the purposes of carrying on their mercantile pursuits, without molestation or restraint, at the Cities and Towns of Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai; and Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, etc., will appoint Superintendents, or Consular Officers, to reside at each of the above-named Cities or Towns, to be the medium of communication between the Chinese Authorities and the said Merchants, and to see that the just Duties and other Dues of the Chinese Government, as hereafter provided for, are duly discharged by Her Britannic Majesty's Subjects.

III. It being obviously necessary and desirable that British Subjects should have some Port where at they may careen and refit their ships when required, and keep stores for that purpose, His Majesty the Emperor of China cedes to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, etc., the Island of Hong Kong, to be possessed in perpetuity by Her Britannic Majesty, her heirs and successors, and to be governed by such laws and regulations as Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, etc., shall see fit to direct.

IV. The Emperor of China agrees to pay the sum of Six Millions of Dollars, as the value of the opium which was delivered up at Guangzhou in the month of March, 1839, as a ransom for the lives of Her Britannic Majesty's Superintendent and subjects, who had been imprisoned and threatened with death by the Chinese High Officers.

V. The Government of China having compelled the British Merchants trading at Guangzhou to deal exclusively with certain Chinese Merchants, called Hang merchants (or gonghang), who had been licensed by the Chinese Government for that purpose, the Emperor of China agrees to abolish that practice in future at all ports where British Merchants may reside, and to permit them to carry on their mercantile transactions with whatever persons they please; and His Imperial Majesty further agrees to pay to the British Government the sum of Three Millions of dollars, on account of debts due to British subjects by some of the said Hang merchants (or gonghang), who have become insolvent, and who owe very large sums of money to Subjects of Her Britannic Majesty.

VI. The Government of Her Britannic Majesty having been obliged to send out an expedition to demand and obtain redress for the violent and unjust proceedings of the Chinese High Authorities towards Her Britannic Majesty's Officer and subjects, the Emperor of China agrees to pay the sum of Twelve Millions of Dollars, on account of the expenses incurred; and Her Britannic Majesty's Plenipotentiary voluntarily agrees, on behalf of Her Majesty, to deduct from the said amount of Twelve Millions of Dollars on account of the Expenses incurred, and Her Britannic Majesty's plenipotentiary voluntarily agrees, on behalf of Her Majesty, to deduct from the said amount of twelve millions of dollars, any sums which may have been received by Her Majesty's combined Forces as Ransom for Cities and Towns in China, subsequent to the 1st day of August, 1841.

[...]

XIII. The ratification of this Treaty by Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, etc., and His Majesty the Emperor of China, shall be exchanged as soon as the great distance which separates England from China will admit; but in the meantime, counterpart copies of it, signed and sealed by the. Plenipotentiaries on behalf of their respective Sovereigns, shall be mutually delivered, and all its provisions and arrangements shall take effect.

Done at Nanjing, and Signed and Sealed by the Plenipotentiaries on board Her Britannic Majesty's ship Cornwallis, this 29th day of August, 1842, corresponding with the Chinese date, twenty-fourth day of the seventh month in the twenty-second Year of Daoguang.

(L.S.) HENRY POTTINGER.

[SIGNATURES OF THE THREE CHINESE PLENIPOTENTIARIES]

TREATY PORTS—Any city in which foreigners were to be allowed to trade and conduct business within China. In addition to treaty ports, foreign settlements and foreign concessions were carved out of existing Chinese cities. These were under the direct control and rule of resident foreign consuls.

MEXICAN DOLLAR—A silver coin minted in the Spanish Empire (later in Mexican mints) and the source of nearly all silver on the global markets during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. The Mexican dollar (also referred to as the Spanish dollar or "pieces of eight") was the preferred international currency external to European commerce. Most treaties that indicate "dollars" referred to this currency.