CHAPTER 5
SEEKING TO SOLVE CHINA'S ILLS

VISUAL SOURCE
Picturing the Boxers

WHO WERE THE BOXERS? Boxers were typically young and male. Many were around 19 or 20 years of age but some as young as 12 or over 40. The majority of the Boxers were poor peasants though many landowners also joined. The term "Boxer" was used by Westerners at the time to describe any anti-foreign violence. The Chinese term for the movement itself was "Boxers United in Righteousness" (Yihetuan) and destined to uprisings confined to northern China.

BOXER MAGIC: Boxer magic was a unique blend of ritual and theater based on magic and spirit possession. The Boxers believed that with a specific combination of spells and series of specific gestures spirit entities could possess their bodies. Boxer spirit masters also plied a variety of other spells, amulets and incantations to provide them with extra strength, speed even the ability to fly.

NORTH CHINA PLAIN: The Boxers emerged largely out of the North China Plain though anti-foreign massacres occurred in many other areas of China. North China in the years leading up to the Boxer Uprising experienced several years of repeated droughts, crop failures, and general hardship. This coincided with a surge in the presence of western missionaries, the extension of railroads and telegraphs, and new foreign concessions. Both pictures were likely taken in 1900 in the North Chinese cities of Beijing and Tianjin.

BOXER WEAPONS: While there are some instances of Boxers using matchlock style rifles, most Boxers showed the use of guns, perceiving them as foreign. Instead, most Boxers were armed with spears, swords, and, they believed, magical powers.

BOXER BANNER: The Boxer's banner in the photo reads (beginning with the small characters in the upper right) "Imperially ordered Boxers United in Righteousness; and finally Grain Unit."

BOXER CLOTHING: The typical Boxers wore headscarves, a sash around their waist, and leggings. Across their chest they would wear a chest covering with magical primitive qualities. If more affluent the Boxer might wear more ornate clothing. The Boxer pictured here represents a small minority of Boxers that could afford to dress in bright colored clothing complete with ornate flags.

BOXER ANTIFOREIGNISM: Boxers renounced all foreign things and classified all Chinese who interacted with foreigners and used foreign items into three categories: 1) "Hairy ones" (mazu) referred to the foreigners themselves 2) "Secondary Hairy ones (or mazu) were Chinese Christian converts" and Chinese who worked for foreigners and 3) "Tertiary Hairy ones" (tan mazu) those Chinese who sold or used foreign books, fountain pens, matches, or foreign style umbrellas. Boxers renounced all foreign things and all Chinese who interacted with foreigners and used foreign items.
On November 14, 1908, the Guangxu emperor died at the age of thirty-seven. His life, in much the same way as it had been lived, in the shadow of his aunt, the Dowager Empress Cixi (1834–1908). She would die within hours of his death. From her childhood, Cixi orchestrated the third successive installation of a child emperor on China’s imperial throne. For forty-eight years her decisions had, for better or worse, defined Chinese domestic and external policies. There remains today an image both shadowy and sinister of this woman who reigned behind the curtain (chuantian tingcheng). Such a characterization simultaneously exaggerates and diminishes her productive accomplishments in China’s history. While Chinese imperial customs stipulated that only male heirs could sit on the throne, there were historic precedents for a woman to take the reins of power when exigency, expediency, and personal ambition converged. In 1861, with the Taiping Rebellion raging, Western imperialism at its height, and a budding reform movement taking shape in China, the ambitious mother of the new emperor found her moment in history.

Born in 1834 to Manchu parents, Cixi entered the Forbidden City at the age of sixteen as an imperial consort. She caught the attention of the Xianfeng emperor (1851–1861) and soon gave birth to his only son, elevating her status to imperial consort and secondary wife. In 1861, after the emperor’s sudden illness and demise, her 6-year-old son ascended the thrones as the Tongzhi emperor (1861–1875). Foundling to rule on her own, Cixi, with the Xianfeng emperor’s widow Ci’an and Prince Yixin became the young emperor’s regents and prevented other challengers to the throne. When the Tongzhi emperor died fourteen years later (some say as the result of syphilis, others smallpox), she engineered the selection of her four-year-old nephew as the Guangxu emperor (1871–1908) assuring her continued role as regent.

Despite many popular claims to the contrary, Cixi did very little that many men had not already done before her. Why, then, is it that Cixi is portrayed to this day as the epitome of the Chinese “dragon lady” within both Chinese and Western historiographic traditions? The answer lies in the complex politics of the period and diverse challenges facing the Qing court.

The Forbidden City—the heart of China’s imperial bureaucracy—even in the best of times was a secretive, guarded and conservative entity run by an all-male bureaucracy. Opponents of her vision could (and did) offer equally viable all-male alternatives to her proposals. Her path to power was not only difficult, but also singular, with no precedent to it. She entered the Forbidden City as one of many young women selected to serve as low-level concubines, and within a few years she had secured herself a pre-eminent position by giving birth to the future heir to the throne. She also became highly educated and mastered the administrative intricacies of the Qing civil service, which readily enabled her to parry the numerous conspiracies and intrigues against her.

There can be little doubt that her success was the source of unending fascination, shudder and scorn by both Western and Chinese observers. The speculation surrounding her exploits runs the gamut from perversion to outrage. If we are to believe all that has

DOWAGER EMPRESS—Dowager indicates the emperor is widowed. In Cixi’s case the term is an over-stereotypification since she was the widowed mother of the Tongzhi emperor, the aunt of the Guangxu emperor and the great-aunt of the Xuantong emperor (better known as Pu Yi), the last emperor of China.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN (CHUIJIAN TINGCHENG)—During both of Cixi’s reigns, the Tongzhi and Guangxu emperors, when the young emperor sat on the throne for any audience with his officials, the empress would sit behind a silk curtain (or by some accounts, a decorative screen) where she could hear everything said to and by the emperor as well as issue instructions.

YIXIN (1833–1889)—The sixth son of the Daoguang emperor often referred to as Prince Guoz. He served as regent for the young Tongzhi emperor and became a strong proponent of the Self-Strengthening Movement and the establishment of the Zongli Yamen.

been written about her, the misdeeds include terminating the lives of two emperors, one consort, and numerous officials. It is also said she encouraged her son’s early initiation into Beijing’s brothels and diverted the entire Navy’s budget to build the Summer Palace (Yiheyuan)—to list the most infamous hecayary attributed to her.

If the more lurid conjecture is set aside, however, it is apparent that Cixi’s legacy is chiefly tarnished, not by rumors or palace intrigue, but by her actions in 1898 and 1900. As China emerged from its mid-century rebellions and fended off challenges from Western imperialists, many officials and advisors pressed for faster-paced reform. As calls for reform (and even revolution) mounted in the late 1890s, Cixi made two ill-advised decisions. In 1898, several of China’s leading reformers began to persuade the Guangxi emperor of needed reforms (known as the Hundred Days of Reform). Cixi intervened and orchestrated a conservative counter-attack by removing the emperor from the decision-making process, reversing many of his reforms, and summarily executing six top reformers. Two years later Cixi made matters worse when she catastrophically sided with the anti-foreign Boxer (Yihmen) Movement. She hoped that it would support her wishes as it threatened the inroads being made by foreign governments, religious groups and trading companies into Chinese affairs and culture. Her support of the Boxer Movement resulted in an invasion by an eight-nation foreign expeditionary force, the occupation of Beijing for over a year, and imposition of a massive $330 million indemnity.

Cixi, in the last decade of her life, did attempt to counter her earlier mistakes. Specifically, she became a forceful champion of the “New Policies” (xinzheng) focused on educational reform, constitutionalism, and institutional reorganization. While her patronage of the reforms is Cixi’s finest legacy, her efforts did not keep pace with the “revolution of rising expectations.” Many Chinese then (and today) felt that her actions in the late 1890s tipped the scales in favor of reactionary conservatism precisely when the empire desperately needed aggressive reform. The efforts in the last years of her life were too little and too late. As a result, the last emperor of China, Pu Yi, inherited a politically diminished and socially deeply traumatized empire.

HUNDRED-DAYS REFORM MOVEMENT

1898 was a tumultuous year in a chaotic era. In the wake of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), a group of liberal advisors and confidantes (the so-called “Emperor’s clique” (dadiang)) wielded increasing influence over the young Guangxu emperor. Among this group, Kang Youwei, a pro-reformist scholar, became particularly influential. Seeking

GUANGXU (1871–1908)—The sixth emperor of China, selected at the age of four by his aunt Cixi. He initiated the Hundred Days’ Reform of 1898, which was abruptly halted by Cixi who stripped him of all power, privileges, and honors. He died on November 14, 1908, a day before Cixi.

EIGHT-NATION FOREIGN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE—An alliance of eight nations (Austria-Hungary, Prussia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States) who came together to quell the Boxer Rebellion.

NEW POLICIES (1901–1910)—A series of political reforms set in motion by Cixi in an effort to erect a modern administrative bureaucracy.

PU YI (1865–1967)—More formally known as the Xuantong emperor, he was the tenth and last emperor of the Qing dynasty. He became emperor at the age of three, restored at the age of 7 in 1912, and was the titular head of Manchuria, the Japanese puppet state in northeastern China at the age of 27 in 1932.

KANG YUWEI (1858–1927)—A prominent late-Qing classically trained scholar who advocated modernism and reform within a Confucian framework. His influence peaked during the Hundred Days of Reform when the Guangxu emperor selected his proposals as the framework for reform. He was forced to flee China when Dowager Empress Cixi abruptly seized power and executed Kang Youwei’s younger brother and five other top reformers.
in the spring of 1900. The Boxers reflect one of the few popular Chinese movements of the nineteenth century that openly supported the Manchu Qing dynasty. The primary focus of their rage was the foreign presence, reflecting the deep animosity towards West- ern imperialism among a growing portion of the Chinese populace. The one central point of contention for virtually all Chinese was the extension of extraterritoriality to converts given by foreign missionaries and clergy that protected these converts from legal lawsuits. The following conforms to a somewhat traditional listing of grievances and appeals from a Confucian cultural outlook.

**Questions**

1. Why, according to this notice, are foreigners the focus of the Boxer anger?
2. What are the main objectives of the Boxers?

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**BOXER UPRISING**

In the spring of 1900, an anti-foreign insurrection began among the largely rural populace of the North China Plain. The English appellation for this movement, "Boxers," is derived from the group's Chinese name, "Boxers United in Righteousness" (yihetuan). The leaders claimed to have special rituals to bestow special powers—such as being impervious to bullets, flying, and extraordinary strength—on their followers. Tapping into the rising anti-foreign sentiments (particularly within Shandong province), the uprising was virulently xenophobic. The resentment against Christianity—particularly of mission- and the converts—was based both on its foreign origins and that Christianity sought to displace many traditional Chinese beliefs and practices (5.5). Chinese converts to Christianity were commonly instructed to cease "worshiping" their ancestors and praying to the large pantheon of smaller gods that regulated everyday life in China.

Despite considerable ambivalence among many senior Qing officials, the success of the Boxer's anti-foreign movement emboldened the Dowager Empress Cixi who was in sympathy with their goals. In late mid-1900 she declared war on all the foreign forces present in China. The Qing court sought to follow up on the Boxer's initial victories against Western forces with several edicts supporting the Boxers' efforts to kill all for- eigners as well as all Chinese Christians (5.7). The reaction by the imperialist powers was swift and devastating. An Eight-Nation Alliance military marched inland from Tianjin in order to rescue the besieged foreign community. After gaining control of Beijing from the Boxers, the Allied leaders wrangled for nearly a year over the demands to be made of China. They finally presented China with the Boxer Protocol on September 7, 1901 (5.8), which imposed a devastating 450 million taels ($333 million dollars) indemnity on an already impoverished empire.

5.4 MALAN BOXER PROCLAMATIONS (1900)

As with many popular uprisings, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly where, when and how the Boxer revolt began. The following proclamation was posted in a village outside of Beijing. It is typical of placards that appeared in villages between Shandong and Beijing.

**BOXER PROTOCOL (1901)**

In 1901, the Qing government, including a 450 million taels ($333 million dollars) indemnity, almost twice the annual Qing budget of 250 taels, and with interest totaling nearly 1 billion taels over 35 years.
5.8 BOXER PROTOCOL (SEPTEMBER 7, 1901)

From the moment the Eight-Nation Alliance decided upon the need for a multi-national force, disagreements between them emerged. Fearful of Japan's intentions, the European and American governments refused Japan's proposition to send 20-30,000 troops to relieve the siege of Beijing, effectively postponing the relief mission for six weeks until the other nations could transport their forces to China. The allied troops entered Tianjin in early July and reached Beijing in early August. Once the troops had occupied the city, they plundered and looted the Yihe Yuan in a grim repeat of the 1860 Anglo-French destruction of the Yuanming Yuan four decades earlier. It took nearly a year for the various governments to agree upon demands to impose on China. The final protocol required China to pay an indemnity of 450 million taels (or roughly $333 million USD at 1901 exchange rates). It was the largest indemnity in China's history and effectively bankrupted the imperial treasury, already in a state of financial crisis.

Questions
1. What goals does the protocol appear to be pursuing? How does an indemnity of 450 million taels help or hinder them?
2. What role does the fear of anti-foreignism in China play in the protocol (specifically Articles II, X, and XIII)?
the 16th of January, 1901, to occupy certain points, to be determined by an agreement between them, for the maintenance of open communication between the capital and the sea. The points occupied by the powers are: Huanggeun, Langfang, Yangsen, Tanjin, Junliangchong, Tanggu, Lutai, Tangshan, Luanzhou, Changli, Qinhuangdao, Shanhaiguan.

ARTICLE X

The Chinese Government has agreed to post and to have published during two years in all districts: the following Imperial Edicts:


b. Edicts of the 13th and 21st February, 29th April, and 19th August, enumerating the punishments inflicted on the guilty.

c. Edict of the 19th August, 1901, prohibiting examinations in all cities where foreigners were massacred or subjected to cruel treatment.

d. Edict of the 1st of February, 1901, declaring all governors-general, governors, and provincial or local officials responsible for order in their respective districts, and that in case of new anti-foreign troubles or other infractions of the treaties, which shall not be immediately repressed and the authors of which shall not have been punished, these officials shall be immediately dismissed, without possibility of being given new functions or new honors.

The posting of these edicts is being carried on throughout the Empire.

ARTICLE XII

An Imperial Edict of the 24th of July, 1901, reformed the Office of Foreign Affairs (Zongli Yamen), on the lines indicated by the Powers, that is to say, transformed it into a Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Waiwu Bu), which takes precedence over the six other Ministries of State. The same edict appointed the principal members of this Ministry.

An agreement has also been reached concerning the modification of Court ceremonial as regards the reception of foreign Representatives and has been the subject of several notes from the Chinese Plenipotentiaries, the substance of which is embodied in a memorandum herewith annexed.

Finally, it is expressly understood that as regards the declarations specified above and the annexed documents originating with the foreign Plenipotentiaries, the French text only is authoritative.

The Chinese Government having thus complied to the satisfaction of the Powers with the conditions laid down in the above-mentioned note of December 22nd, 1900, the Powers have agreed to accede to the wish of China to terminate the situation created by the disorders of the summer of 1900. In consequence thereof the foreign Plenipotentiaries are authorized to declare in the names of their Governments that, with the exception of the legation guards mentioned in Article VII, the international troops will completely evacuate the city of Beijing on the 17th September, 1901, and, with the exception of the localities mentioned in Article IX, will withdraw from the province of Zhill on the 22nd of September.

The present final Protocol has been drawn up in twelve identical copies and signed by all the Plenipotentiaries of the Contracting Countries. One copy shall be given to each of the foreign Plenipotentiaries, and one copy shall be given to the Chinese Plenipotentiaries.

Beijing, 7th September, 1901.

A. V. Munn [Germany]
M. Czikan [Austria-Hungary]
Joostens [Belgium]
B. J. de Cologan [Spain]
W. W. Rockhill [United States]
Paul Beau [France]
Ernest Satow [Great Britain]
Salvago Raggi [Italy]
Jutaro Komura [Japan]
F. M. Knobel [Netherlands]
M. de Giers [Russia]
Signatures and seals of Chinese plenipotentiaries.

POST-BOXER REFORM AND THE PUSH FOR REVOLUTION

After the failure of the Boxers and China's ignominious military defeat, few Chinese denied that China needed to reform. The debate after 1900 shifted from one of whether to reform to one of what type of reform was most suitable. The majority of Chinese reformers were split between two options for China's future: 1) a constitutional monarchy (as existed in England and Japan), or 2) a republic. The Dowager Empress Cixi, seemingly truly repentant for her role in the Boxer debacle, advocated incremental change and promised a timeline for establishing a constitutional government and reforming the examination system. There were numerous reformers advocating various permutations of these two options, but two of the most respected "radicals" seeking to push far beyond simple reform were Wang Jingwei and Sun Zhongshan. While the two men's specific visions for China differed, they agreed that a modern China needed a modern form of government. In their political treatises on the topic they actively adopted elements from foreign countries and earlier foreign revolutions to make their points (5.11 and 5.12). In recent years, more and more scholars of China's past have realized that the Qing dynasty's political decline was not politically moribund, nor was Chinese society stagnant as long assumed. The four documents below reveal the vigorous and spirited debates that inspired a growing segment of the population.

5.9 QING OFFICIALS' JOINT PROPOSALS FOR POST-BOXER REFORM (1901)

Official and public opinion in China shifted extensively in the years between 1895 and 1901. Prior to 1895, many conservative officials and large segments of the populace remained certain that only minor alterations to China's traditional structure were needed for China to remain a powerful Asian empire. With the loss of the Sino-Japanese War, Guangxu emperor's failed effort to implement reform, and the disastrous Boxer Uprising, all but the most ultra-conservative realized that fundamental changes needed to be implemented. The fact that the Emperor and the Dowager Empress remained in the western city of X'ian where they had fled to from the International Allied Force offers a stark backdrop to the following memorial advocating change. Liu Kunyi and Zhang Zhidong were two prominent Qing reformers and among the earliest to frame and set the agenda for many of the New Policies (xinheng) called for by the Guangxu emperor (and the Dowager Empress) earlier that year.

Questions

1. What do Liu Kunyi and Zhang Zhidong identify as the areas within China's government most in need of reform?
2. Give the long list of problems (and their entrenched nature) which of their reforms would most quickly bring about institutional change?

Your ministers have planned and proposed four items for developing education and nurturing ability, which have been jointly memorized and are on record... In general there are three important factors in building a good nation: good administration, wealth, and strength... This reorganization of the Chinese political system is to serve as an instrument for bringing about better administration. The adoption of Western methods is for the purpose of attaining wealth and strength. We have carefully considered those aspects of the...
Chinese system which ought to be reorganized and reformed, and make proposals under twelve heads: (1) to reform official formality, (2) to break down custom and red tape, (3) to stop the contributions or payments for the official rank, (4) to examine the officials and increase their emoluments, (5) to remove the useless clerical staff, (6) to weed out the government servants and messengers, (7) to lighten punishments and imprisonments, (8) to reform the method of civil service examination, (9) to plan for the livelihood of the Manchu Bannermen, (10) to abolish the military colonies and garrisons, (11) to abolish the Army of the Green Standard (loying) and (12) to simplify the documents and laws. These are reventently prepared for the Court's selection and adoption.

5.10 THE ABOLITION OF THE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS IN CHINA (1905)

By 1905 the examination system reformers had gained increasing support since first propounding reforms in the late nineteenth century. The system was perceived as anti-competitive and perpetuating an outdated style of learning ill-suited for China's modern needs. To many reformers, its abolition seemed well overdue. The examination system depended on a largely ad-hoc system of private schools and tutors focused on rote memorization. The exams, while merit-based, required years of education that only a few could afford. Although the topics covered in the exams had begun to include more modern topics, the structure of the examinations remained antiquated. The following memorial and edict attempt to provide an infrastructural support for a broader-based education system. With an imperial system on its last leg and a population approaching a half-billion, there was no choice but to moderate a system that had shaped Chinese culture for well over a thousand years. The following is a memorial written by several senior Qing officials within the inner circle of the Dowager Empress.

1. Why does the memorial advocate an immediate rather than gradual abolition of the examination system?

2. Reading through the memorial and the emperor's rescript, what factors do they fear the most in adopting a new style education system?

MEMORIAL

A Joint Memorial by the Manchu General of Shenyang, Ch'en Feixian; the Governor-General of Philt, Yuan Shikai; the acting Governor-General of Liang-Jiang (Jiangxi, Jiangsu, and Anhui), Zhou Fu; the Governor-General of Hu-Guang (Hubei-Hunan), Zhang Zhidong; the acting Governor-General of Liang-Guang (Guangdong and Guangxi), Chen Chunxuan; the Governor of Hunan, Duanfang, respectfully presented for Imperial consideration, in which it was shown that this system was a hindrance to the establishment of schools. The arguments used in these memorials need not be repeated. Recently an Imperial Edict has been issued for the gradual abolition of the system of examinations extending over a period of three triennial examinations, so that after ten years all promotions should be made from schools. Such a system of examinations has long been considered a source of reproach by foreigners, but schools are considered to be the chief factor in a reforming government. As such, conservative methods are slowly but rigorously abandoned and new methods adopted, those who see and hear what is being done will all use their best endeavors to treat with us on a basis of mutual respect, and the students from China who are pursuing their studies in foreign countries will also receive encouragement. Emphasizing the importance of students will obviate the possibility of being carried away by gross superstition and idle rumors. The value of men of intelligence equipped with useful knowledge cannot be over-estimated. The establishment of schools is not solely for the training of learned men but for the general dissemination of knowledge among the people, so that all may receive the advantages and acquired powers of an elementary education. This will result in patriotic loyalty to the country and in increased ability to earn a livelihood.

Although the examination system may be abolished, there are several important matters to be attended to, and the first of these is in importance is that due regard should be paid to classical learning. There are those who fear that when these examinations are abolished classical learning will be neglected. In the present system of education, which has received Imperial sanction, the study of the classics is emphasized. There will be no lessening of the study or examination of the Classics either in the primary or secondary schools, the purpose being that pupils who have finished the courses of these schools shall have studied Ten Classics so as to understand them. In the colleges there will be a special department for classical study in which history, literature, and philosophy will be studied. It will thus be seen that all of the ancient learning will be included in the curricula of the schools and none of it will be lost.

A second important matter which needs attention is that emphasis should be placed upon personal character. Under the old system students were only examined as to the quality of their literary attainments, but no attention was paid to their character, with the result that there was often a feeling of shame as to the attainment of students in this respect. In the present regulations for schools, however, it is provided that in addition to their examination in literary subjects, they shall also be examined for marks of conduct. These marks will be given to students for six things: viz: good conversation, careful personal appearance, courtesy, religion, rectitude, and conduct on the street. When students are examined in their studies an average will be made between these marks and those for daily conduct.