

The Canton System

Qing Territorial Expansion



- Kangxi (r. 1662-1722)
- Yongzheng
- Qianlong (r. 1736-95)
- Hardworking at the art of governing
- Patronized the Chinese literati and won over the Chinese gentry
- 17th century: expeditions and expansion – Tibet, Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan, Taiwan – today's territory

Tribute System

Discussion:

- 1) Tribute as ritual: different cultural understanding of “Kotow”?
- 2) What are functions and purposes of the tribute system?
- 3) Tributary trade / Tributary vs. trade -- “Tribute was a cloak for trade”? Why “trade and tribute were cognate aspects of a single system of foreign relations in the Confucian view”?
- 4) In what aspects can we see the Manchus make themselves Sinified?
- 5) The relationship between merchants and officials in the “Canton system” – a tributary system?
- 6) In Fairbank’s account, why China’s response to the Western impact is slow?

Maritime Trade

- Portuguese and the trade at south Chinese ports in the 16th century (Settlement 1557); Dutch in the 17th century, and the English in the 18th century (British East India Company), and others.
- H. B. Morse (*The Chronicles*), 1634 Britain's first attempt, 1699 "London", 1760-1834 Regulated – the Canton System.
- The Canton Trade (the only city in which Europeans were allowed to trade between 1760-1840)
- *Co-hong*, the Chinese official merchant guild in Guangzhou after 1759– Hongts, "licensed Chinese monopolists"
- Lucrative trading: the demand for tea in 18th-century Britain (5 chests in 1684 – 400,000 pounds by 1720 – 23 million pounds in 1800)
- the flow of silver into China: rose from 3 million ounces of silver per year in the 1760s to 16 million in the 1780s.

Macartney Mission to China

- British wanted to create a market for their goods in China, and also wanted China to abandon the tributary system (commercial treaties and published tariffs)
- Macartney Mission to China: in 1793, Lord George Macartney was sent as an envoy to Qianlong Emperor.
- 84 people, 600 cases (scientific instruments, carpets, woollens, knives, plate glass and other gifts to attract Chinese interest in British manufactured goods); refused to perform kowtow
- Diplomatic failure, yet obtain information (no interest in material growth, ill-prepared for war, soldiers used bows and arrows)
- Qianlong saw no real trade. “We possess all things,” in a letter to the king of English, “I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country’s manufactures.”

Understanding the Canton System

- Fairbank, pp. 46-51, discussion:
- What's the background of "Canton System"?
 - 1) Western Commerce in China in four periods, particularly, [3] and [4].
 - 2) Evolution of "Canton System": How many different parties joining in this system? Who were they?
 - 3) What was the role of Chinese merchants? Who were they? How did they usually perform in the trading system?
 - 4) What does *Cohong* mean? How did the trading system instituted based on this organization?
 - 5) How did foreigners live in Canton? How did they participate the trading activities?