

“The Carnival of Blood and Fire”:
Responses to the Boxer Rebellion, a Canadian Case Study

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Torben Mikkell Schau
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Dr. P. E. Roy, Supervisor (Department of History)



Dr. G. R. Blue, Departmental Member (Department of History)



Dr. D. C. Lai, Outside Member (Department of Geography)



Dr. Y. F. Woon, External Examiner (Department of Pacific and Asian Studies)

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University of Victoria

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Supervisor: Dr. Patricia E. Roy

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the shared image of “the Chinese,” as reflected in thirteen Anglophone Canadian newspapers’ coverage of the Boxer Rebellion. Focusing on the portrayal of China and the Chinese people, the thesis examines both the common characteristics, and the particular regional, political and religious variations of that image. The common characteristics included irrationality, xenophobia, deceit and cruelty. The newspapers described Chinese customs as irrational and the people as xenophobic, but juxtaposed this approach by insisting that the Chinese were too inscrutable and alien to comprehend. The Qing government served as a focus for descriptions of Chinese deceit that ranged from treachery on the battlefield, through sanctioned assassinations, to the duplicity of the Qing in sponsoring the Boxers. False stories of Chinese cruelty towards Westerners overshadowed killings of Chinese Christians. The supposed storming of the foreign legations and the alleged torture and murder of the Russian ambassador provoked Western outrage and stimulated the most overt forms of Canadian racialization of the Chinese. Worries over the potential threat of the Chinese, influenced by Yellow Peril ideology, pervaded many newspapers but others discredited such claims by denigrating Chinese manliness and military skill. Other newspapers saw China as fertile ground for the missionary project, and the Rebellion as an opportunity to secure better opportunities for converting the Chinese population. Together, these images contributed to a strong anti-Chinese ideology at the outset of the twentieth century.

Examiners:

[Redacted]

Dr. P. E. Roy, Supervisor (Department of History)

[Redacted]

Dr. G. R. Blue, Departmental Member (Department of History)

[Redacted]

Dr. D. C. Lai, Outside Member (Department of Geography)

[Redacted]

Dr. F. Woon, External Examiner (Department of Pacific and Asian Studies)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Colin Mackerras, in *Western Images of China*, wrote that the “main image of the Chinese to emerge from the literature spawned by the Boxer uprising are cruelty, treachery, and xenophobia.”¹ While Mackerras’ work is a general survey over time and across cultures, it is possible to test his assertion in the Canadian context. Newspaper coverage of the Boxer Rebellion² offers a way to explore the racist thoughts that underlay racist action in Canada. A lexicon of anti-Chinese images, and an exploration of political and regional variations should complement the existing historiography and explain why the Chinese were such “convenient scapegoats” for racist action in the early twentieth century.³

For historians, the treatment of “‘Asians,’ ‘Asiatics,’ ‘Orientals,’ and ‘Mongolians’” in British Columbia has been a rich subject.⁴ The subject was opened thirty years ago by works such as “The Oriental Menace” by Patricia Roy, and *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British*

¹ Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989) 67.

² Newer scholars have challenged the use of Rebellion to describe the events of the summer of 1900, instead preferring to use the term Boxer Uprising. I find the second term more useful in describing the actions of the Boxers United In Righteousness, though I use the term Rebellion in the title of the thesis in recognition of the potency that the phrase “Boxer Rebellion” retains in the West.

³ Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man’s Province: British Columbian Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989) 267.

⁴ Roy, *A White Man’s Province*, x. Roy notes that the terms can be read sequentially for their roughly ascending pejorative strength.

Columbia by Peter Ward.⁵ Since then, there has been such an expansion of inquiry into the subject that Kay Anderson, in the 1991 *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada 1875-1980*, asserted that “in the case of British Columbia the subject of ‘Orientals’ ha[s] been comprehensively examined.”⁶ However the limited number of British Columbia references in her otherwise impressive bibliography on the subject of race suggests that the field of study has not yet been exhausted, in British Columbia and especially in Canada generally.⁷ What the literature does at least indicate, however, is that there have been serious inquiries into the subject.

In *White Canada Forever*, the first of the modern books on the subject, Peter Ward provides a valuable overview from the 1850s to the 1960s of anti-Asian sentiment across Canada and particularly the animosity towards Chinese, East Indian and Japanese people in British Columbia, in an explicit challenge to the present-day stereotype of Canadian racial equality, the “myth of the ethnic mosaic.”⁸ Instead, he finds that “the limits of tolerable diversity have been much more narrow than today we commonly believe. Before the mid-twentieth century, racial and cultural homogeneity was the touchstone for west coast whites.”⁹ Ward’s argument focuses on

⁵ Patricia E. Roy, “The Oriental ‘Menace in British Columbia.” in *Historical Essays on British Columbia*, J. Friesen and H. Ralston, ed. Toronto: Gage, 1980; W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978) 191. “The Oriental Menace” was first published in 1972. Ward cites a number of Roy’s articles in *White Canada Forever*, including the 1975 “Protecting their Pocketbooks and Preserving Their Race.” There were earlier studies, such as C. J. Woodsworth’s *Canada and the Orient* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1941), though remarkably frank in places, it remained squarely a product of its time.

⁶ Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991) 3.

⁷ Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 294-310.

⁸ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, x.

⁹ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, x.

the stereotype of the “unassimilable Asian” that “obsessed the west coast imagination.”¹⁰

Drawing on both published sources such as newspapers and the private correspondence of politicians, Ward notes that “until after World War Two, British Columbians were always extremely open about their racial prejudices and, as a result, left behind abundant evidence of their antipathies.”¹¹ Theoretically, Ward explicitly favours a social psychological approach over economic explanations of racism in British Columbia.¹² While briefly touching on “European thought” when he mentions the idea of the “Yellow Peril,” he privileges local conditions as a causal factor in the formation of a local racism. He notes that contact, if not familiarity, bred racial contempt: “Chinese immigrants offered their hosts occasion for close observation. This greater intimacy led to social and economic conditions which engendered the majority of stereotypes accepted by west coast whites.”¹³ Yet, while Ward is very much concerned with the construction of racism and racist thought in British Columbia, his insistence on the local in formations of racism lead him to largely ignore the racialized images that underwrite his own arguments or broader Canadian, North American and Western ideas about race. He states that the “scientific” racialism of Western intellectuals did not sharply influence British Columbian “anti-Orientalism.” Yet, he concedes, that this sensitivity to race was undeniably influential as it stimulated racial awareness amongst west coast whites.¹⁴ However, the terms in which British Columbians expressed their racist attitudes were not particularly

¹⁰ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 12.

¹¹ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 199.

¹² Ward, *White Canada Forever*, ix.

¹³ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 6.

¹⁴ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 13.

unique. Both the language of the “Yellow Peril,” which he briefly mentions, and the “‘scientific’ racialism” which he too easily disposed of, incorporated the same pejorative terms that British Columbians used to describe Asian people.¹⁵

In Ward’s work, the idea of race remains hegemonic and thus is not considered for inquiry. I use the notion of “hegemony” here in the sense defined by Jean and John Comaroff as:

that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies—drawn from a historically situated cultural field—that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it. It consists ... of things that go without saying because, being axiomatic, they come without saying; things that, being presumptively shared, are not normally the subject of explication or argument.¹⁶

Race takes on this “common sense” or “everybody knows” category in Ward. This is a particularly visible weakness, as Ward sites the heart of white racism, and his argument, in “the frustrated vision of a ‘white’ British Columbia” without discussing it.¹⁷

From a theoretical and conceptual point of view, his focus on “racial” pluralism and assimilation as the root of a localized racism, though interesting, is also problematic. Ward’s arguments carry a subtle, and almost certainly unintended, critique of the immigrants. Ward is careful to note that it was the image of “John

¹⁵ See, for example, Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996) 207; also see Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed. *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) for a selection of Enlightenment and nineteenth-century thinkers, including Renan, Kant and Hegel. The readings are of a more general nature, but many contain references to “Mongolians” or “Yellow” people. For a precursor to the idea of the “Yellow Peril,” see Gobineau, *Selected Political Writings*, Michael Biddiss, ed. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970) especially pages 242-247, in which he discusses the contemporaneous world political situation in terms of his racial theories and Gregory Blue, “Gobineau on China: Race Theory, the ‘Yellow Peril,’ and the Critique of Modernity,” *Journal of World History*, Vol 10, No. 1, 1999.

¹⁶ Jean and John Comaroff, “Introduction,” *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 23.

¹⁷ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 22.

Chinaman” which thwarted the “drive towards the goal of homogeneity,” and not the Chinese immigrants themselves. Yet, he does not account for the provenance of the “John Chinaman” image, instead blaming interactions between people and hence, to some extent, the Chinese immigrants themselves, for the tensions he explores.¹⁸

The white racist attitudes that are the foreground of *White Canada Forever* play a distinctly different role in David Chuenyan Lai’s *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada*. Here, racist attitudes and policies form the background to the model of Canadian Chinatowns he studies as the product of both “voluntary and involuntary segregation; usually the involuntary choice of the Chinese was followed by the voluntary isolation as a defensive response to discrimination and insults.”¹⁹ Methodologically, Lai draws on much of the rich primary source material used by Ward, on a growing body of secondary historical and geographical literature and, unlike Ward, on primary source materials in Chinese. He makes efficient use of “unusual sources of information such as hospital donation receipts, burial records, and the reminiscences of old-timers,”²⁰ as well as the minutes of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Victoria.²¹ He also uses census data and other quantitative sources to provide a nuanced analysis.

Theoretically, Lai’s analysis is informed by geographic theories of urban ecology, which focus on the “total environment of a city as a human life-support system.” The central problem of urban ecology is understanding “how a population

¹⁸ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 22.

¹⁹ David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988) 275.

²⁰ Lai, *Chinatowns*, xvi.

²¹ Lai, *Chinatowns*, xvii.

organizes itself in adapting to a constantly changing yet limiting environment.”²² This aim informs Lai’s organic model of Chinatowns; historically, Lai speaks of a faceless white society, represented mostly by policy decisions mandated by “white society” while he gives Chinese-Canadian society more nuanced contours. Recognizing the existence of factions in some Chinatowns, he tries his “utmost to present the views and opinions of all sides and refrain from siding with any group within the Chinese community.”²³ While Lai’s conceptual model looks at Chinatowns from the “inside” and sees them as the creation of the Chinese, Kay Anderson looks at them from without, and sees them as “in part a European creation.”²⁴

Kay Anderson’s *Vancouver’s Chinatown* examines the idea of the Chinatown, particularly that of Vancouver, in terms of Western images of the Chinese. She uses the study of the Chinatown as a lens through which to study larger trends in racial discourse, to illuminate “a European way of seeing and acting whose impact on people’s life chances and on Western social and spatial structures is pronounced to the present day” and to examine the process by which European society in British Columbia created and recreated “a racial category [“Chineseness”].”²⁵ In many ways, Anderson’s work complements that of Lai. While the body of her study is a chronological narrative of Vancouver’s Chinatown, she includes brief histories of race as an idea and a Western construct. While not unique methodologically, these histories serve to contextualize the terms she uses. In doing so, she consciously rejects Ward’s interpretation of racism in British Columbia, choosing instead to

²² Lai, *Chinatowns*, 273.

²³ Lai, *Chinatowns*, xvi.

²⁴ Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 9-10.

²⁵ Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 9-10, 32. Anderson seems to elide “Europe” and the “West” here.

examine hegemonic ways of conceptualizing race, the practices and power relations predicated on those ideas and of “the historical process that has produced the configurations we so often take as naturally given.”²⁶

However, while Anderson’s work is informed by critical theory, there is a tension between her theory and her methodology. Despite her conception of Chinatown as a lens through which to critique European society, she makes no overt critique of Canadian society. While Anderson does discuss the idea of race in detail, her conceptualization leaves much to be desired. Anderson describes Canadian racism as flourishing at the end of the nineteenth century, then reappearing out of the social legacy of the First World War.²⁷ The idea that the “race issue” can appear and disappear does injury to her arguments surrounding the construction of racial categories in British Columbia. The controversial Holocaust historian Daniel Goldhagen provides a valuable conceptualization of racial consciousness that serves equally well for discussing anti-Asian racism as for antisemitism:

The widely differing degree of antisemitic expression at different moments in a bounded historical time (of, say, twenty to fifty years) in a particular society is not the result of antisemitism appearing and disappearing, of larger and smaller numbers of people being or becoming antisemites, but of a generally constant antisemitism becoming more or less manifest, owing primarily to altering political and social conditions that encourage or discourage people’s expression of their antisemitism.²⁸

It would be more valuable to conceive of race as an underlying theme in Western, and British Columbian thought than to think of racial consciousness appearing and disappearing.

²⁶ Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 33.

²⁷ Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 109.

²⁸ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996) 39.

While Anderson claims to examine Chinatowns to illuminate white, “European” society, she succeeds only in general terms. Her theoretical approach predisposes her to discuss the social construction of race in terms of a vague and undefined “Europe,” rather than in terms of a specific social context beyond that of “Vancouver.” However, when discussion turns to British Columbians *qua* Canadians, rather than British Columbians *qua* Europeans, she falters. Through most of *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, the larger, national, context is represented by British Columbia’s interaction with “Ottawa.” While Anderson’s description of the Vancouver Chinatown is a valuable contribution to the field, she falls short in her stated aim, of discussing anti-Chinese racism in Canada.

In *A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants 1858-1914*, Patricia E. Roy provides an analysis of racism in British Columbia that differs both theoretically and methodologically from Anderson’s *Vancouver’s Chinatown*. Roy sets her work in relation to Peter Ward’s *White Canada Forever* seeking to fill in gaps in his analysis. In her view, “Ward’s fine intellectual history ... pays too little attention to the economic and political circumstances of popular attitudes. Indeed, racial and economic arguments were mutually reinforcing as British Columbia politicians well knew.”²⁹ In pursuit of her goal, Roy engages briefly with the secondary literature to frame her study, but she concentrates on the primary literature, taking in what her book’s dust jacket describes as “almost every newspaper and magazine report published in the province before 1914, and ... government records and private manuscripts.”³⁰ Her thorough mining of

²⁹ Roy, *White Man’s Province*, vii.

³⁰ Roy, *White Man’s Province*, inside front cover.

the archival sources produces a dense, and nuanced narrative of the sixty-five years discussed, a period in which the actors and the history are often allowed to speak for themselves.

Unlike Ward, Roy makes a strong case for distinguishing between Chinese and Japanese people in Canada, noting both the differences in attitudes held by white British Columbians towards each group, and the unequal relationship between Chinese and Japanese on the ground in Canada. This is a refreshing shift from Ward's analysis, which often lumps both together as "Orientals." In contrast with Anderson's focus on methodology and theory, Roy provides the reader with a rich Canadian context in which to place her argument.

She sites the roots of racist sentiment in economic considerations. She is also careful to note the blending of race and class in British Columbian attitudes:

Skin colour, however, was less relevant in determining attitudes than the phrase "a white man's province" suggests. Antipathy to immigrants was sometimes as much a matter of "class" as of "race." Japanese traders, diplomats, and military heroes were welcome visitors; Japanese workingmen immigrants were not.³¹

However, while invoking terms such as race and class, she is quick to caution against putting too much stock in ahistorical constructions: "Students of 'class' and 'race' in British Columbia would be wise to consider timing as well as terminology in their debates and to recognize that distinctions between 'class' and 'race' interests were blurred in other countries as well."³²

While Roy's analysis functions at the political-economic level, gaps in her argument appear when questions regarding her invocation of white fear are raised. She concludes that: "[m]aking a 'White Man's Province' was a useful political slogan

³¹ Roy, *White Man's Province*, x.

³² Roy, *White Man's Province*, xiii.

that could get broad support and assuage real fears that Asians could take over aspects of the economy or even the whole province, and became a common rallying cry for a province that was immature, uncertain of its future, and internally fragmented.”³³ The source of those fears is only considered in terms of British Columbia, and not in terms of broader Western approaches to Asia, including the idea of the “Yellow Peril” that had risen from nineteenth century racist thinking. Her treatment of “race” is somewhat more complex, as Roy recognizes the historical variability and specificity of the term, but does not provide her own explicit working definition of the term. Her definition of “racism,” too, seems problematic, or, at least, overly narrow. In making the case for an emergent, locally-defined and economically-based racism, she states that “[a]s the [Victoria] *Times* correspondent noted, racial conflict was not present at the creation of British Columbia. Colonial British Columbians were initially remarkably tolerant of the thousands of Chinese who came.”³⁴ This perspective elides “toleration” and a complete lack of racist sentiment.

The literature on anti-Asian sentiment in British Columbia contains recurring themes that mirror recurring silences. Anderson has taken the first steps to exploring attitudes regarding race, but her conceptualization is weak and calls out for the contextualization of British Columbian ideas of race within the larger body of intellectual history of race, and racism. Thus, while there has been a varied inquiry into the treatment of Asian people in British Columbia, this has not resulted in overlapping, fully complementary studies that would justify Kay Anderson’s

³³ Roy, *White Man's Province*, 268.

³⁴ Roy, *White Man's Province*, 4.

statement that “the subject of ‘Orientals’ in British Columbia has been comprehensively examined.”³⁵

While Anderson purports to illuminate Canadian culture by discussing racism and racist discourse, she fails to discuss the subject further.³⁶ Roy and Ward deal with British Columbia as their primary focus, and there is little exploration of the larger Canadian context beyond the federal government, often conjured as “Ottawa.” David Lai is most successful in drawing in the larger context, though his focus is on Chinatowns, and background material remains just that. Ward, Roy and Anderson, have little discussion, intended or not, of a society beyond the Rocky Mountains which might have interacted with British Columbian society, and more importantly, shared these anti-Asian sentiments. For the rest of Canada, the subject is still being explored. While there have been some excellent studies, particularly in regard to Chinese labour in Canada, and the Chinese as a sexual threat to white women, there has not been the same kind of focused inquiry on the subject as a whole, in the rest of Canada.³⁷ The interaction between Canadian missionaries and the Chinese people has been a subject of scholarly inquiry.

³⁵ Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 3.

³⁶ Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 33.

³⁷ See, for example, “Quong Wing v. The King” in James W. St. G. Walker, “Race,” *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies*. Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History/Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997, for an excellent study court challenges to anti-Chinese labour law in Saskatchewan in the early twentieth century. Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991) explores anti-Chinese sentiment as a part of her broader study of morality, sexuality and xenophobia in Canada. Madge Pon, “Like a Chinese Puzzle: The Construction of Chinese Masculinity in *Jack Canuck*” in *Gender and History in Canada*, Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, eds. (Toronto: Coop Clark Ltd., 1996) and Karen Dubinsky and Adam Givertz “It Was Only a Matter of Passion’: Masculinity and Sexual Danger” in *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy M. Forestell, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 80-105, both examine the construction of Chinese masculinity with an adroit touch.

In *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom 1888-1959*, Alvyn Austin offers a history of the Canadian missions in China. While he is sympathetic to the missionaries and the missionary project, his work is a fair treatment of the subject. Austin refers to the missionaries' views of the Chinese, though often obliquely, and in terms of the other parameters of the mission, such as bringing Western medicine to China. He does state that prior to the Uprising that missionaries had no background in Chinese studies or comparative religion, and often gleaned what little they knew from Sunday School lithographs and *The Mikado*.³⁸ Within the discussion of Canadian missionaries, he implicitly argues for the international nature of the project as both Canadians and Americans joined Englishmen at Dr. James Taylor's China Inland Mission. While Austin notes the over-representation of Canadians within the China missions, he also identifies Christianity as the common bond in the "international missionary enterprise."³⁹ Because religion not nationality was paramount, knowledge (including images of the land they were proselytizing) could flow between missionaries of different nationalities. While Austin presented a generally favourable account of missionaries, Stuart Miller examined their accounts from a very different perspective.

American scholars have also explored anti-Asian sentiment. Stuart Creighton Miller, in *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882*, demonstrated that anti-Chinese attitudes were a national, and not a regional phenomenon that "antedated the coming of the coolie migration by at least a

³⁸ Alvyn Austin, *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom 1888-1959* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) 69. While Austin is referring to American missionaries, he certainly implies that this was a broader phenomenon.

³⁹ Austin, 84-85.

generation.”⁴⁰ These attitudes portrayed the Chinese “as uniquely enslaved to an idolatrous ancient tradition, political servile, morally depraved, and loathsomely diseased.”⁴¹ His findings ran counter to a long-standing tradition of American historiography that blamed anti-Chinese sentiment at the feet of economically challenged Californians.⁴² He noted an American dependence on the accounts of European diplomats, missionaries and traders for many of these early views, which were then spread through the press. These “gatekeepers,” or “inside dopesters,” had a particularly influential effect on attitudes towards Chinese people in America, because their extensive contact with the Chinese gave their opinions a perceived legitimacy.⁴³ Miller also describes an interdependence between the three gatekeeper communities as he warns against blaming missionaries for the “lion’s share” of anti-Chinese sentiment in America.⁴⁴ Because the American newspapers began to bloom at the same time as the Opium Wars in China, he cites the wars as the crystallization point for popular attitudes towards the Chinese.⁴⁵ Miller’s observations speak to both the international nature of ideas about the Chinese, and to the importance of missionaries in spreading of ideas about China. Applied to the Canadian context, Miller’s approach suggests that a careful consideration of primary sources, might challenge the orthodoxy of regional racism.

⁴⁰ S. C. Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969) vii.

⁴¹ Miller, *Unwelcome Immigrant*, vii.

⁴² Miller, *Unwelcome Immigrant*, 4.

⁴³ Miller, *Unwelcome Immigrant*, 14, 16-80. While Miller uses the term “inside dopesters” throughout the book, I prefer “gatekeeper” or insider, as a way of avoiding potentially awkward allusions to opium.

⁴⁴ Miller, *Unwelcome Immigrant*, 78-79.

⁴⁵ Miller, *Unwelcome Immigrant*, 38, 112-115.

Andrew Gyory, in *Closing The Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*, offers a keen critique of Miller in the American context. While conceding that Miller succeeds in discussing of anti-Chinese imagery in nineteenth-century America, he points out what he sees as a fundamental flaw: Miller is “entirely intellectual.”⁴⁶ Gyory notes correctly that “racist thought does not necessarily produce racist action, and that by leaving the politics out, Miller fails to make the connection of how racist imagery – or racism itself – gained expression in national legislation.”⁴⁷ Gyory’s criticism is a strong one. Applied in the Canadian context, it could also be viewed as a call for balance between the study of racist thought and action. In Canada, the emphasis has been placed on racist action, instead of the thought underwriting it.

The major texts discussed above focus primarily on the Asian immigrant experience in Canada and the reaction to these immigrants, particularly in British Columbia. This thesis will approach the subject from another angle. It will focus on British Canadian attitudes towards the Chinese as a cultural totality. Certainly, while Chinese immigration to the west coast did influence the specific character of racist discourse in the Canadian west, white Canadians already had very definite, and racially-informed ideas about “the Chinese” before the arrival of any significant Chinese immigrant population. This study will attempt to fill in some of the holes, to provide a historically specific snapshot of Canadian attitudes. This thesis will use

⁴⁶ Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998) 10.

⁴⁷ Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, 10-11.

newspaper coverage of the Boxer Uprising to capture an image of anti-Chinese racial sentiment at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Boxer Uprising is particularly useful for this purpose because it dramatically claimed the attention of the Western world, including Canada. From mid-June to mid-August 1900, newspapers that had been previously preoccupied by the Boer War produced headlines about the Uprising. Where previously there had been exposés of Boer culture and custom now a rich and steady stream of articles instructed the public about the Chinese and their culture.

The “Yellow Peril,” a fear of Asian invasion, sometimes in a literal, and sometimes in a figurative (e.g. invasion-through-immigration) sense was a common theme in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western discourses. The term has been repeatedly attributed to Kaiser Wilhelm and his allegorical painting of the same name, although similar ideas had been in circulation since at least 1880 and the term was used in 1898.⁴⁸ Canadian newspapers feared that conflict in China would awaken the martial urges of the country, represented by everything from a giant Chinese man, to a lion or dragon.⁴⁹ According to the papers, once China became aware of the outside world it would discover that it was strong enough to conquer it, and this would inevitably lead to Chinese aggression.⁵⁰ The press cited Ancient

⁴⁸ Gregory Blue, “Gobineau on China: Race Theory, the ‘Yellow Peril,’ and the Critique of Modernity,” *Journal of World History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1999): 123. The attribution was made at the time, and appears in “The Oriental Question,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 25 July 1900, 4 and “British Public Deeply Agitated,” *Ottawa Journal*, 30 June 1900, 1.

⁴⁹ “The New Storm Centre,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 13 June 1900, 4; “No News From China,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 1 July 1900, 1; “The Powers In Harmony,” *Toronto Globe*, 13 June 1900, 1.

⁵⁰ “The Oriental Question,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 25 July 1900, 4.

Rome, Egypt and Persia, as examples of the kind of fallen civilizations that had possessed the complacency that observers felt was then overtaking Europe.⁵¹

The Boxer Uprising was a significant event in both the Chinese and world contexts. There are historical debates over the origins of the sect, its invulnerability rituals, the disposition of key public officials towards the Boxers and even over what was meant by the word 'Boxer.' The Boxers, and their precursors, the Big Sword Society, were mutual self-defence organizations, centered on the practice of particular styles of martial arts techniques. Initially formed to protect against bandits, they came into conflict with aggressive Catholic missionaries in Shandong province.⁵² However, until the killing of the first foreigner, the uprising remained essentially a matter of internal importance to China.⁵³ That first death occurred on the eve of the twentieth century – the night of December 31, 1899 – when S. M. Brooks, a British missionary, was confronted on the road as he travelled alone in Feicheng, Shandong province, in territory troubled by the 'Big Sword Society.'⁵⁴ Apparently, he was wounded while fighting his assailants and was killed after attempting to escape.⁵⁵ Until then, the uprising had been mainly of domestic interest, one in a series of peasant uprisings that had been destabilizing the Qing dynasty.⁵⁶

⁵¹ "Through A Glass Darkly," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 5 August 1900, 4.

⁵² Paul Cohen, *History In Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 17-21.

⁵³ Cohen, *History In Three Keys*, 8.

⁵⁴ Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) 269.

⁵⁵ Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 269-270.

⁵⁶ Throughout the text the *pinyin* system of rendering Chinese words is used. However, the articles cited do not use a single standard, as the old Wade-Giles system was not in place in 1900 and so use a wide variety of forms when discussing Chinese people, places and terms. This may cause confusion when reading quotations from the newspaper. One particular

Even at this point, as the account of the killing suggests, there was confusion even as to the name of the insurgents. The term Boxer, so often used by Western sources, is ambiguous. The Chinese term for boxing is a generic term for a range of martial arts practices. Paul Cohen discusses the naming of the Boxer movement:

In contemporary writing hostile to the movement the term most often encountered is *quanfei*, literally, “boxer (or boxing) bandit.” Nonhostile Chinese writing on the Boxers generally modifies the term *quan* [boxer] with the phrase “United in Righteousness” (Yihe), which was the name that first appeared in northwest Shandong in the spring of 1898 and remained the name of the movement (along with the alternative and more official-sounding Yihetuan or “Militia United In Righteousness”) throughout its expansionist phase.⁵⁷

Any ambiguity in naming the Boxers United in Righteousness certainly did not hinder their expansion during the early months of 1900 when they moved northwest into Zhili province towards Beijing and Tianjin, recruiting as they went. Their message was spread, often by itinerant monks who already had the aura of “magic and mystery,” at temple fairs, where they presented the possession (invulnerability) ritual and anti-foreign message to crowds of visitors and participants. Placards and handbills appeared when numbers were needed for some action or another.⁵⁸ Recruits, usually operating locally, would then be organized loosely around boxing grounds.⁵⁹ The movement was originally peasant-based, the members mainly young agricultural labourers. After the uprising expanded, boatmen, porters, ruined craftsmen, small

name to take note of is that of Cixi, who is referred to throughout the newspaper coverage as the Empress Dowager when worse epithets are not used.

⁵⁷ Cohen, *History In Three Keys*, 16. Understanding this confusion will aid the reader in deciphering some of the titles of newspaper articles cited throughout the body of the thesis.

⁵⁸ Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 276-277.

⁵⁹ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 41-43; Jean Chesneau, Marianne Bastid, and Marie-Claire Bergere, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976) 329-330. Boxing grounds, in this instance, refer to physical locations where martial arts and breathing exercises would be practiced.

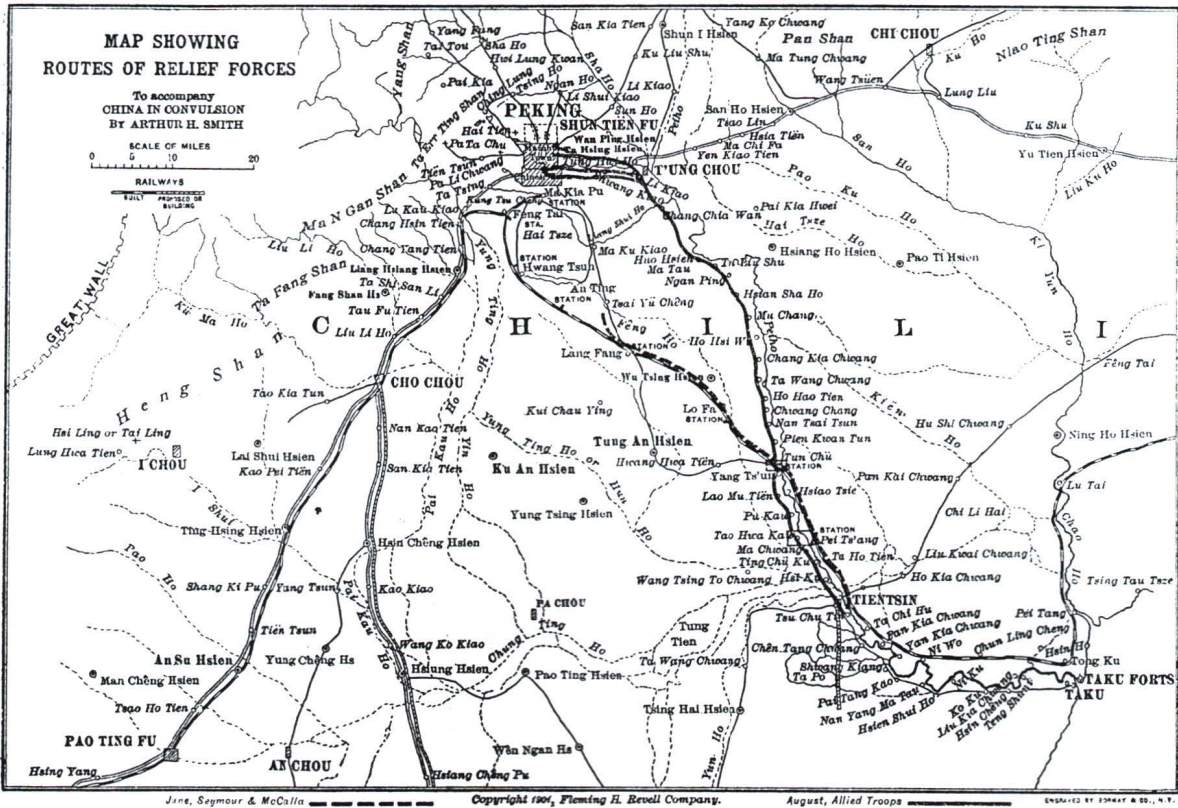


Figure 1. Arthur H. Smith, "Map Showing Routes Of Relief Forces," *China In Convulsion*, Volume 2 (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901) 438 facing page.

shopkeepers, peddlers, monks, schoolmasters, students, large numbers of soldiers, gentry and court officials joined the agricultural labourers who still dominated the movement.⁶⁰

As the Boxers approached Beijing in the late spring of 1900, some representatives of foreign powers in China remained complacent. The British Minister ignored the warnings of missionaries, believing that “a good shower of rain would do much to cool the atmosphere, both politically and meteorologically” and sent his family away on vacation in Boxer-occupied territory.⁶¹ The comment on rain was not as far-fetched as it seems. Both flood and famine wracked Northern China during the latter part of the 1890s, and this contributed to the instability of the region.⁶² The minister later defended his actions by pointing out that “even the Old China Hands ‘did not see the Boxer movement on the horizon nor yet comprehended it when it was at their doors.’ How, he asked, could he and his colleagues, mere ‘birds of passage,’ have foreseen the horrors to come.”⁶³

Other members of the foreign communities, however, were increasingly distressed by the intensity of Boxer activity. On May 22, Boxers ambushed Chinese government forces and killed the commander, Yang Futong. The first death of a government military leader at the hands of the Boxers shifted Boxer activity into “high gear” in Zhili province.⁶⁴ Boxers then attacked the Beijing-Baoding railway,

⁶⁰ Chesneaux, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*, 330.

⁶¹ Henry Keown-Boyd, *The Fists of Righteous Harmony: A History of the Boxer Uprising in China in the Year 1900* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991) 31; 46.

⁶² Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 173-181.

⁶³ Keown-Boyd, *Fists of Righteous Harmony*, 46. Keown-Boyd gives a very different perspective on the Boxer Uprising – this is even evident in the dedication: “To the Memory of the Gallant Defenders of the Peking Legations and the Peit’ang [Beitang] Cathedral, who, with a little help from their Enemies, withstood the strangest Siege in History.”

⁶⁴ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 46.

destroyed stations, bridges, and telegraph wires, and burned a station on the Beijing-Tianjin railway, the link to the coast for foreigners in Beijing.⁶⁵ The capture of the city of Zhouzhou sparked the diversion of the Western-trained Military Guards Army away from the capital.⁶⁶ These developments marked a change in Boxer strategy; until late May the Boxers concentrated almost exclusively on native Christian targets.⁶⁷

As the Boxers became more aggressive, the foreign Ministers of Europe and the United States collectively decided to call up the guards of the legations. They informed the Chinese foreign ministry, the Zongli Yamen, which resisted at first but then allowed thirty foreign troops for each mission. The foreign powers promptly ignored this restriction, and by 31 May, 340 guards had arrived by train, although the Zongli Yamen had said only 180 should go.⁶⁸

Blatant disregard for Chinese authority and court policies was nothing new for the foreign governments in China. The Opium Wars had marked a rapid opening of China to the world market and an attempt to harness it to “the institutions of European, and especially British, colonialism.” The settlement of the 1839-42 war had forced China to make a series of concessions, including surrendering Hong Kong, opening five ports to trade, abolishing impediments to trade, and providing indemnification for confiscated opium. Despite the indemnity, opium remained technically illegal in China until 1860.⁶⁹ The second Opium War, or “Arrow” War

⁶⁵ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 46-47.

⁶⁶ Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 284-285.

⁶⁷ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 47.

⁶⁸ Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 287.

⁶⁹ Gregory Blue, “Opium for China: The British Connection” in *Opium Regimes, Britain, China, Japan*. Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, editors (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 31.

(1856), ended in Chinese defeat. In 1860, Britain and France acquired the right to send diplomatic missions to Beijing, the opening of eleven more ports, the legalization of opium imports, and permission for Western missionaries and merchants to travel within China.⁷⁰

Resentment grew over foreign impingement on Chinese sovereignty, especially after China lost the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) to “the once disdained ‘Eastern dwarves’ of Japan.” The Japanese, using modern equipment, gained crushing victories over both the Chinese army and navy in Korea. The defeat left Chinese territory in Japanese hands, disgraced the minister in charge of Korean affairs of the time Li Hongzhang, driving him from office, and demonstrated the “impotence and incompetence” of the Qing government.⁷¹ China negotiated a secret treaty with the Russians, in which they offered lease territories in China, in return for a mutual defence agreement against Japan. Russia also offered aid to China in making payments to the Japanese that were demanded by the treaty that ended the Sino-Japanese War.⁷² This defeat, and the Russian intervention, led to a “Scramble for Concessions” as the foreign powers quickly claimed areas of China as spheres of influence, as they tried to ensure that they were not excluded from the process. A sense of crisis pervaded China in the face of this activity.⁷³ Notably, for the Boxer Uprising, Germany used the murder of two missionaries in Shandong province as a

⁷⁰ Chesneaux, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*, 79-80.

⁷¹ Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 73; Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*. Fifth Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 339-341.

⁷² Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 347-348.

⁷³ Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 74, 181.

pretext to seize Chinese territory and force the government to lease it for 99 years, along with an allowance to construct two railways on the claimed land.⁷⁴

The possibility of the dismemberment of China precipitated the sudden strengthening of reform movements in 1898. The prominent radical, Kang Youwei, gained the favour of the Emperor, and together they embarked on the Hundred-Day Reforms, in which the Emperor decreed sweeping changes to education, government administration, industry and international cultural exchange.⁷⁵ These changes provoked a conservative backlash, and Cixi, the Empress Dowager, organized a coup d'état, wresting control of the court away from the reform movement. Under Cixi's supervision, many of the reform measures were reversed. Kang Youwei fled into British protection, before he could be arrested.⁷⁶

While this was occurring, missionaries, who had gained increased access to China after the Arrow War, were busy. Treaty provisions protected them and their converts' rights to practice Christianity but then proved problematic.⁷⁷ The extralegal status of the missionaries was a frequent source of friction, especially when it was "extended ... without due consideration to undesirable people or to people whom the courts had judged guilty and who appealed to the missionaries in order to escape the jurisdiction of the mandarins."⁷⁸ As Esherick explains, although missionaries benefited from the subversion of Chinese authority,

to the ordinary villager of north China, the unequal treaties, the gunboat diplomacy, the concessions along the coast were of little consequence. If such

⁷⁴ Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 348-349.

⁷⁵ Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 366-375.

⁷⁶ Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 375-379.

⁷⁷ Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 85. As Esherick notes, it was easy to confuse oppression of a Christian, with the oppression of Christianity.

⁷⁸ Chesneaux, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*, 185.

folk ever saw a foreigner it was certainly a missionary – and the foreign presence meant the “foreign religion.” But the “foreign religion” was inextricably linked to all the other faces of Western imperialism in China. The more China was humbled, the greater the relative power of the Church.⁷⁹

Until the late May and early June of 1900, missionaries benefited from the Chinese association of the missions with foreign imperialism as it bestowed something of a protected status. After this point, the association made the missions and missionaries targets when the Boxers stopped focusing on Chinese Christians. Boxers applied their infamous slogan “*Fu-Qing, mie-yang*” (Support the Qing, destroy the foreign) equally to foreign infrastructure, people and religion.⁸⁰ The wall posters and recruiting placards of the movement highlight the equation of Christianity with the West.

The mood in northern China changed quite quickly with the Boxers’ strategic shift to Western targets. The court was divided on the subject of the Boxers, with both pro-Boxer, led by the reactionary Prince Duan, and anti-Boxer, including the head of the Zongli Yamen Prince Ronglu, factions attempting to gain favour.⁸¹ As the call up of the legation troops again flouted Chinese authority, Qing court policy on the Boxers changed suddenly. Immediately after the death of Yang, the court ordered the annihilation of Boxers who refused to disperse.⁸² After the Western ministers summoned additional troops from the coast, the court reversed course almost immediately, and gave explicit orders not to annihilate the Boxers.⁸³ These conflicting orders led to contradictory actions as provincial governors attempted to suppress the uprising.

⁷⁹ Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 95.

⁸⁰ Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 68.

⁸¹ Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 392-393.

⁸² Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 48.

⁸³ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 48.

As governmental policy oscillated, Boxers arrived in Beijing in numbers and the situation became “extremely grave” for the foreign legations. Boxers swarmed the city in mid-June, settling fire to churches, foreign homes and the Southern Cathedral. Boxers operating to the south of the city severed both rail and telegraph lines, effectively isolating the city from European outposts on the coast. Admiral Edward Seymour, leading two thousand European troops, then left Tianjin by train, completely without Chinese authorization. This unilateral action galvanized the Qing court to resistance and it appointed a leading ally of the Boxers, Prince Duan, and three other pro-Boxer officials to the Zongli Yamen, the foreign ministry, on June 10. Soon after, Chinese imperial troops were mobilized as part of preparations for war. Seymour’s expedition bogged down in late May and, defeated by a combined Qing-Boxer force, was driven back to Tianjin.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, Tianjin too was increasingly occupied by Boxers. Threatened by the prospect of losing all contact with Beijing, European troops issued an ultimatum to commanders of the Chinese forts at Dagou, which controlled naval access to Tianjin. The ultimatum sparked a new phase of confrontation. When news of it reached the court on June 19, the foreign ministers were given twenty-four hours to evacuate all foreigners from the capital. The next day a Chinese soldier shot and killed the German minister, Baron von Ketteler. Within hours, most foreigners in the city had taken refuge in either the legation quarter or the Northern [Beitang] Cathedral. On the afternoon of June 20, Chinese troops and Boxers fired on both the legation complex and the cathedral. Until August 14, combined Chinese imperial and Boxer forces attacked the legations using rifle fire, fire, mines and intermittent

⁸⁴ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 48-49.

artillery shelling. Casualties were proportionally high on both sides. The Boxers were then organized into a militia under the command of three Princes, including Prince Duan; on June 21 the court declared war.⁸⁵

With this declaration, unrest spread throughout China. Over two hundred foreigners and many thousands of Chinese Christians were killed during the uprising. In the south, the level of violence varied dramatically from place to place depending on the disposition of the local government. Many provincial governors worked out private arrangements with the Western powers to ensure that they would be untouched by foreign troop movements. In each of Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Manchuria and Zhili, however, the death toll among the Chinese population was in the thousands.⁸⁶ The most serious fighting and the greatest casualties occurred near Beijing and Tianjin during the summer. The Battle of Tianjin began four days before the declaration of war in Beijing, when, on June 17, Chinese imperial forces shelled foreign settlements in the city itself. A state of siege ensued until foreign reinforcements finally enabled Western troops to storm the walled Chinese quarter of the city amid heavy fighting. Looting, raping and pillaging followed. After several days, the troops regrouped and refocused on Beijing.⁸⁷ Having already defeated the best Chinese troops at Tianjin, their march to Beijing was quick and bloody, with heavy civilian casualties in the towns razed by foreign troops on the way. Western troops entered Beijing on August 14, lifting the sieges of the legations. On August 15, the Emperor, Empress Dowager Cixi and many court officials fled, as the Boxers abandoned their weapons and disappeared back into the population at large. After

⁸⁵ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 49-54.

⁸⁶ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 50-52.

⁸⁷ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 53.

this, foreign soldiers staged punitive raids into the spring of 1901. Many of these were carried out by late-arriving German troops, who had been spoiling for a fight since the assassination of Baron von Ketteler. In September 1901 the Qing government and the foreign powers formally signed a negotiated settlement.⁸⁸

One of the distinctive patterns in the newspaper coverage of the Boxer Uprising, was that many of the major “events,” never actually happened. Reflecting sensational but plausible stories that the public would believe, they were fabrications by reporters and editors – rumours expanded into “fact” by their presence in print. The three major fictional events of this sort were the destruction of the legations at Beijing, the poisoning of Emperor and Empress Dowager with opium, and the murder of the Russian minister, Mikhail de Giers. Throughout the siege, wire stories repeatedly reported the sacking of the legation, their desperate situation, destruction and salvation in explicit detail. Such stories occurred cyclically and continued to be published until late July.⁸⁹ The legations, in fact, survived the Uprising intact. Then again, in early July, Prince Duan supposedly forced the Emperor and Empress Dowager of China to commit suicide with poison. The most spectacular false reports concerned the torture and killing of the Russian ambassador, de Giers. In great detail, the newspapers reported his dismemberment and the rape of his wife. This lurid story, in particular, sparked calls for revenge on the Chinese people for their cruelty.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 54-55.

⁸⁹ For one example of this report see, “Story of Massacre,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 July 1900, 2.

⁹⁰ See, for example, “Tortured By Fiends,” *Vancouver Province*, July 14, 1900, 1 and see “I Will Repay,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 July 1900, 4 for an example of a call for vengeance on the Chinese.

Neither poisoning nor torture occurred, and unlike the siege of the legations, there was no direct basis for the manufacture of the tale.

The misreporting of news is certainly not limited to the journalistic sensationalism of *fin-du-siecle* newspapers.⁹¹ By cutting telegraph wires, the Chinese denied access to Western news correspondents. Since the peace treaty of 1895, China had become more open to foreign encroachment, and imperial business interests constructed railways and telegraph lines to support their new investments.⁹² Foreign newspapers also opened offices in China, taking advantage of the increased communication links, especially the telegraph, with the outside world.⁹³ Telegraphy's near-to-instantaneous message transfer shrank the world.⁹⁴ With a constant flow of news, the newspaper, already "the first site of public opinion," became even more important.⁹⁵ This made the destruction of telegraph lines from Peking to Tianjin particularly significant, as it disrupted the flow of information and left reporters, the Associated Press, and the newspapers scrambling to fill in the gap as best they could.

⁹¹ International Commission For The Study Of Communication Problems (The Macbride Commission). "Communication Problems Today" in *Crisis In International News: Policies and Prospects*. Jim Richstad and Michael H. Anderson, eds (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981) 41. Eighty years later this commission concluded that eight factors affected the "accuracy—or inaccuracy of news:" access to information, a vested interest in misrepresenting events, the availability of multiple news sources, the process of selecting news coverage, the qualifications of reporters, journalists' attitudes towards codes of conduct, difficulty in understanding foreign contexts and the general conditions affecting accurate reporting.

⁹² Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*. Fifth Edition. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 344.

⁹³ Fred Inglis, *Media Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) 23. During the late nineteenth century, a number of new technologies improved communication systems: the telegraph, the telephone, the camera and the antecedents of electronic television were all more or less in place by 1900.

⁹⁴ Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers* (New York: Walker and Company, 1998) vii. This book's title is deceptive. Despite the sensational tag line, it is a rather pedestrian, technologically deterministic history of the telegraph, with little analysis of the comparison in the title.

⁹⁵ Inglis, *Media Theory*, 28.

War correspondence blossomed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Between the increase in the number of the public presses, the increased use of the telegraph and “the tardy introduction of organized censorship,” this was a “Golden Age” in reporting.⁹⁶ Not only could reporters produce and distribute copy relatively freely, but the newly affluent newspapers could afford to send them to distant places and use the still-expensive new technologies.⁹⁷

Scholars disagree on the effects of the new technology on the mass press. E. J. Hobsbawm argues that the mass press, which reached a circulation of over one million in Europe in the 1890s, transformed the environment of print, but not its content or associations. Because men who founded newspapers were probably educated and certainly rich, and therefore sensitive to the bourgeois cultural values, there was nothing in principle new about newspapers and periodicals.⁹⁸ Inglis contended that the accelerated technological change that began in roughly 1850 demanded new communication systems to serve the needs of the unprecedented kind of society.⁹⁹

In *A Victorian Authority*, Paul Rutherford focuses attention on a neglected factor in press histories, the audience. The “sleeping power” of the “ordinary reader” must also be examined if one is to understand the social significance of newspapers: “the press baron, whatever his idiosyncrasies, had to satisfy his clientele or else the

⁹⁶ Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975) 42.

⁹⁷ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 42.

⁹⁸ E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987) 238.

⁹⁹ Inglis, *Media Theory*, 27.

popularity of his newspaper, and so his influence and revenue, would wane.”¹⁰⁰ He argues that the “survival and success [of newspapers] depended, at bottom, on the publishers’ willingness to cater to the tastes and prejudices of assorted constituencies,” the exaggerated, and at times panicked stories at least highlight the preconceptions to which the newspapers catered.¹⁰¹ The newspaper was not, however, an empty vessel to be filled with public opinion. It also had a strong role in shaping sentiment, one that was explicitly recognized even in 1900. The editor of the *Victoria Times*, observing that there was no sentiment in Canada for sending Canadian troops to China, expressed the hope that “there will be no necessity for working up one through the columns of the newspapers.”¹⁰² The newspaper was both site of and shaper of some public opinion.

Thirteen newspapers provide the primary sources for this project. These newspapers are drawn from five cities, Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto and Ottawa, which were chosen to complement each other. Both Victoria-Vancouver and Ottawa-Toronto pair a seat of government with a major commercial centre, one in British Columbia, and one in Ontario. Winnipeg is included for its status as a major transportation hub, and the political influence of the *Free Press*.¹⁰³ While the wire service was very influential in spreading news stories about the Uprising, one cannot discount the influence of local editorial staff in rewriting these reports and those

¹⁰⁰ Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: the daily press in late nineteenth-century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 7.

¹⁰¹ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 229.

¹⁰² “Canada and The Chinese Riots,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 17 July 1900, 4.

¹⁰³ It is impossible to consider Anglophone Montreal properly without discussing Francophone Montreal, and thus Montreal was excluded from the study. In a larger study, Halifax would also be an excellent inclusion, both for its role as Canada’s major Atlantic port, and also as a site of missionary activity.

culled from foreign newspapers. While it is possible to track similar reports and similar phraseology across newspapers, it is not possible to determine their provenance accurately. Often, the newspaper would collect wire stories as they arrived, and publish a daily summary of events in China, or, at other times, summarize two to three days' worth into a single story. Wherever they could, the newspapers supplemented the wire with other sources. In western Canada, they often interviewed politicians, retired diplomats, and missionaries and others arriving from Asia whose opinions had particular legitimacy because of their experiences in China. In eastern Canada, missionaries were an important source of comment because of their accessibility. A report of a public lecture on China replaced interviews with travellers stepping off the ship from Shanghai in British Columbia. The newspapers themselves, while drawing from the wire, had firm control of the final product.

Victoria is the capital of British Columbia, and home to Canada's oldest, and in 1901, largest Chinatown.¹⁰⁴ It had two major newspapers. The *Victoria Daily Times*, owned by William Templeman, a Liberal senator since 1897, was the Liberal Party organ, as well as a "populist tribune" and a staunch critic of various influence peddlers, eastern "plutocrats" and the Dunsmuir family.¹⁰⁵ The Dunsmuir family were a family of political and business leaders in British Columbia, who employed Chinese labour extensively in their coalmines. James Dunsmuir was premier of British Columbia from 1900-2. The paper itself benefited from the federal Liberal election

¹⁰⁴ Lai, *Chinatowns*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 148, 175, 220, 239; *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Hand-Book of Canadian Biography*. First Edition. Henry James Morgan, editor. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898) 1002-1003.

victory of 1896, which saw its federal patronage payouts increase twenty-fold. The *Times*' circulation rose from 4000 in 1891 to 5250 in 1900.¹⁰⁶

Victoria's other paper the *Daily Colonist* was mainly dedicated to local and provincial interests.¹⁰⁷ Since 1886, it had a semi-official role of Conservative party organ, serving as a newsletter, booster and critic for the Conservatives and as the mouthpiece for the same business interests that supported the Conservatives.¹⁰⁸ In particular, the *Daily Colonist* was so sensitive to the interests and viewpoints of James Dunsmuir, who partially owned it, that it was at times sarcastically known as the "Daily Dunsmuir."¹⁰⁹ Even though it lost significant federal patronage when the Liberals came to power, the *Colonist* still slightly surpassed the *Times* by 1900, with a regular circulation of 5500.¹¹⁰

Both newspapers found the Boxer Uprising newsworthy, and at the height of the crisis published two to four articles a day and occasional editorials on it. Those stories and coverage of the legislature's efforts to control Chinese immigration formed a significant portion of their presentation of "the Chinese" during 1900.¹¹¹ The stories from China were drawn from a variety of sources, including the Associated Press and other wire services and interviews with passengers arriving from Asia.¹¹² The manner in which each source was employed varied: the *Times* frequently used Associated Press stories straight from the wire, while the *Colonist*

¹⁰⁶ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 44, 239.

¹⁰⁷ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 239.

¹⁰⁸ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 209, 220, 239.

¹⁰⁹ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 206.

¹¹⁰ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 219, 239.

¹¹¹ Roy, *A White Man's Province*, 103.

¹¹² *Victoria Daily Colonist*, "Atrocities Of The Boxers," 24 June 1900, 6; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, "From The Far East," 1 September 1900, 3; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, "Victims Of The Chinese," 11 September 1900, 1; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, "More Victims Of Chinese," 12 September 1900, 2.

would often accumulate them into long syncretic stories that extensively used AP material, but rarely attributed them explicitly.

Across the Georgia Strait from Victoria was Vancouver, the largest city in British Columbia. It was also home to a growing Chinatown in 1900.¹¹³ At the time, Vancouver had three major daily newspapers. The *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, with a circulation of 3700, and edited by provincial Tory politician Francis Carter Cotton, was the oldest.¹¹⁴ The *News-Advertiser*, while solidly Conservative, was also responsive to public taste and mixed “party and people’s journalism effectively.”¹¹⁵ The paper served as a platform for Cotton’s dream of a United British Empire, “an enemy too dangerous to provoke and an ally too important for any other people to wish to lose,’ [and] able ‘to control the destinies of the world.’”¹¹⁶ While Cotton imagined that this united Empire might give Canadians the peace of mind to ignore foreign affairs and concentrate on domestic policy, a different reality was reflected in its critiques of British policy during the Boxer Uprising.¹¹⁷

John McLagan’s *Vancouver World* was also interested in imperial foreign policy, though for different reasons.¹¹⁸ The maverick Liberal paper, which boasted an aggregate circulation of 14,039, the largest west of Winnipeg, advocated Canadian

¹¹³ Lai, *Chinatowns*, 9-10. Of course, also see Anderson for a focused study of the Chinatown.

¹¹⁴ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 239.

¹¹⁵ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 57.

¹¹⁶ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 186-187.

¹¹⁷ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 188. See *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, April 6, 1900, 3; June 21, 5; July 4, 1 and August 23, 4 for examples of the critique of British foreign policy in China.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, *Vancouver Semi-Weekly World (World)*, June 19, 4; July 13, 4 and July 16, 4 for examples of British policies critiqued in McLagan’s editorials.

independence from the Empire.¹¹⁹ However, the *World* still believed that civilization was reaching its zenith under the aegis of the imperial West, if not specifically imperial Britain.¹²⁰ Twice a week, the *World* prepared a kind of news digest, the *Semi-Weekly World*, for circulation in rural areas. As a summary of current events, it provided a different perspective than the two daily papers.¹²¹ The *Semi-Weekly World* printed over twenty of the *Daily World*'s articles on China and the Boxers, though it prepared its own summaries of the week's events in China.

The *Vancouver Province*, edited by W. C. Nichol, was a Liberal newspaper with a circulation of 9,835. Like the *News-Advertiser*, the *Province*, and Nichol in particular, was committed to "people's journalism" and attempted to balance being a party paper and catering to the public.¹²² Nichol was a great booster of the Canadian press, saying that it combined the best traits of the American and British media.¹²³ The coverage of the Boxer uprising in the *Province* was more restrained than in the other major Vancouver papers, perhaps reflecting Nichol's commitment to this balance.

The restraint of the *Province* was only relative. During the height of the crisis all three Vancouver newspapers had at least two news stories on the Uprising per issue, and sometimes as many as four or five. All three published stories on the control of Chinese immigration, Vancouver's Chinatown and Chinese-related law and

¹¹⁹ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 99, 183, 239. The *World* advocated independence from all – it opined that independence from the Empire would end the threat of US annexation. (Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 183)

¹²⁰ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 158.

¹²¹ Over the course of the crisis, the *Semi-Weekly World* reprinted over twenty articles on the Boxers, and the events of the revolution, as well as providing its own summary articles, and information pieces.

¹²² Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 71, 226, 239.

¹²³ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 76.

order but coverage of the Uprising provided the majority of content on “the Chinese” during 1900. All three often culled these news stories from the wire service but rewrote them to suit their own style and seldom gave the wire service credit. The *Province* often used terse language to create short summaries of the day’s events; the *News-Advertiser* gave extensive, verbose and sometimes graphic coverage, and the *Semi-Weekly World* summarized the events, though it too often provided extensive, sensational coverage of the uprising. All three newspapers supplemented wire-service stories with letters from China and perspectives culled from newly arrived travellers. The Uprising also spawned a series of articles on Chinese culture, names and geography designed to put the current crisis in context. The sum of the Vancouver coverage was an interrelated set of images that described and defined “the Chinese” as irrational, deceitful and savage. As we shall see, the coverage also revealed deep anxieties about “the Yellow Peril” and outlined the complex relationship between the newspapers and the Chinese reform associations. The Chinese community in Canada became increasingly involved in Chinese domestic politics after the 1896 visit of Li Hongzhang, who was touring the world after his disgrace in the Sino-Japanese War. In 1899, Kang Youwei travelled to Canada, and established a branch of his reform party in Victoria. The Empire Reform Association quickly spread through North America, and was vibrant and active during the summer of 1900, working towards institutional reform in China.¹²⁴

To the east of British Columbia, the prairies were still being settled. Winnipeg was the largest city in western Canada, a transportation hub, business centre and seat

¹²⁴ Harry Con, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg, William E. Willmott, *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada*. Edgar Wickberg, ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982) 101-103.

of the provincial government. Nicknamed the “Bull’s Eye of the Dominion,” the city was a definite part of “Canada,” as well as “the West.”¹²⁵ Unlike Vancouver and Victoria, Winnipeg in 1900 did not have a vibrant Chinatown.¹²⁶ It did have three daily newspapers, the *Manitoba Free Press*, the *Nor’Wester/Telegram* and the *Tribune*. The *Free Press* and *Tribune* are selected here for the purposes of exploring public attitudes in Winnipeg.¹²⁷ The feud between the *Tribune* and *Free Press* provides a dramatic backdrop to the newspapers’ portrayal of the Chinese and the Boxer Uprising and a compelling argument for their comparison.

In 1900, the *Free Press* was the largest newspaper in western Canada, with a circulation of 24,839, and it enjoyed the support of the Liberal party through publisher Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior.¹²⁸ The *Free Press*, which had already forced two other Winnipeg newspapers, the *Liberal Sun* and *Conservative Times*, out of business, by such means as distributing the free evening *Bulletin*, was threatening the *Tribune*.¹²⁹ The *Free Press* had a large circulation and was financially secure; it had an aggressive attitude towards competition and had secured big advertisers and investors. Furthermore, its exclusive rights to stories from the Western Associated Press, United Press and the Press News Association made it “the

¹²⁵ Alan F. J. Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth 1874-1914* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975) 13. In this context specifically “the West” refers to western Canada, and not to North America and Europe, as it does generally throughout the thesis.

¹²⁶ Lai, *Chinatowns*, 95. While Chinese people had been settling in Winnipeg since the 1870s, its Chinatown bloomed only after 1900.

¹²⁷ The *Nor’Wester/Telegram* has been excluded from the study because the other newspapers claimed more than double its circulation.

¹²⁸ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 110, 216, 240.

¹²⁹ Alvin Finkel, Margaret Conrad, Veronica Strong-Boag, *History of the Canadian Peoples: 1867 to the Present* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1993) 218; Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 61; *The Canadian Men and Women Of The Time*, 940.

premier source of foreign news west of Ontario.”¹³⁰ As Rutherford notes, Sifton took a very pragmatic approach to the promulgation of news, seeing it as “the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality.” He favoured news columns over editorials as a means of influencing “the simple-minded farmer,” an important part of the *Free Press*’ market.¹³¹ Playing on rural sentiment, Sifton’s paper occasionally referred to cities as “dens of iniquity,” though it also made a point of praising the intelligence of Winnipeg. The paper promoted prairie regionalism, while supporting pan-Canadian patriotism. Ultimately, the *Free Press* supported Anglophone Liberals, working to “dispel class and sectional tensions” and to let everyone “cultivate generous feelings towards each other and loyalty to their common country.”¹³²

The *Winnipeg Tribune*, on the other hand, was not on such a stable footing. It was still the second largest newspaper in western Canada but faced increasing pressure from the *Free Press*.¹³³ Built on the financial wreckage of a failed newspaper, the *Tribune* was, until 1895, a Liberal party organ, but a feud between its publisher, R.L. Richardson, and Clifford Sifton, ended its relationship with the federal Liberal party. The *Tribune* remained a supporter of the provincial Liberal party, but federally the paper espoused Radical views.¹³⁴ It supported farmers’ solidarity, opposed bilingualism with the slogan “unity of language tends to unity of purpose,”

¹³⁰ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 88, 94, 103-4, 205.

¹³¹ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 133.

¹³² Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 135, 173, 179, 185, 195.

¹³³ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 240.

¹³⁴ Radical, in this context, refers to a particular political ideology, embraced by a number of newspapers across Canada. While Rutherford refers to it as the most “confused” of the “trinity” of Liberalism, Conservatism and Radicalism, he describes it generally as the belief that democracy would lead to liberation of the “masses” and transform both society and politics. The term Radical should not be confused with “small-r” radicalism. (Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 147-148)

and promulgated a strong nativism.¹³⁵ In Rutherford's opinion, it exemplified "Protestant bigotry wedded to nationalism."¹³⁶ In practice, the *Tribune's* coverage of both the Boer War and the Boxer Uprising carried the stamp of its Protestant missionary concerns.

In both Winnipeg papers the Boxer Uprising challenged the Boer War for front page space. Each gave it significant editorial space and supplemented its coverage with interviews with travellers passing through on the CPR as well as with missionaries who had been to China. Nevertheless, both newspapers relied heavily on the wire service. In contrast with the press in Vancouver, Victoria and Ottawa, neither paper produced many articles to instruct the reader about Chinese culture. As elsewhere, the sum of the Winnipeg coverage was an interrelated set of images that described and defined "the Chinese" as irrational, deceitful and savage. Nevertheless, a striking comparison can be found in the *Tribune's* view of the Chinese as an improvable people, and the *Free Press's* confident anti-Yellow Peril imperialism.

While Winnipeg was the largest city in western Canada, Toronto was Canada's largest Anglophone city. A commercial hub, it possessed a large and active missionary community.¹³⁷ Like Winnipeg, its Chinese community was small and widely scattered.¹³⁸ The *Toronto Globe* was Canada's largest newspaper in 1900. A Liberal party organ, it was the first newspaper in Canada to become "popular" and had a reported daily circulation of 69,545.¹³⁹ The editor, J. S. Willison, a prolific

¹³⁵ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 225, 240.

¹³⁶ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 167, 168, 208.

¹³⁷ See Alwyn Austin, *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries In The Middle Kingdom 1888-1959* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) for a discussion of the missionary community in Canada, especially Chapter 5 "Loved Ones in the Homeland."

¹³⁸ Lai, *Chinatowns*, 97.

¹³⁹ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 40, 238.

writer and lecturer, was head of both the Toronto Liberal Club and the British Association of Canada.¹⁴⁰ While the *Globe* was officially a Liberal organ, Willison attempted to extricate it from party politics in the late 1890s much to the chagrin of politicians. However, he took offence at the assumption of Liberal politicians that he was a hired man to whom they could dictate and, in an angry letter to Clifford Sifton in 1901, he declared, "I claim as much freedom as any other Liberal."¹⁴¹ The *Globe's* news coverage, in the first half of 1900, emphasized Canada's links to the British Empire, and it explicitly used the *London Times* as its source for foreign affairs.¹⁴² Particularly sensitive to the Boxer crisis, the *Globe* reported on the state of affairs in China as early as mid-February 1900, matched only by some of the British Columbian papers. After the crisis in China escalated in mid-June the *Globe* resorted to the more usual Canadian approach of synthesizing wire service reports with stories from the *New York Times*, *London Times* and other European newspapers.¹⁴³

The *Toronto World*, on the other hand, was Toronto's third largest newspaper, according to Rutherford a "sometimes very servile" publication with Radical but Conservative leanings.¹⁴⁴ It was at the core of the pro-Boer War movement in Canada and its circulation was 34 243 in 1900.¹⁴⁵ In the 1880s, the *World* had first come to prominence as a self-declared people's journal, a proponent of democracy, Canadian chauvinism and a fierce enemy of railway and utility monopolies. During the summer

¹⁴⁰ Morgan, ed., *The Canadian Men and Women Of The Time*, 1087.

¹⁴¹ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 223.

¹⁴² Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 38.

¹⁴³ The reason for the end of the relationship was not explained, though it might have been that the *Globe* wished to draw in a broader range of sources. This is speculation, however, especially given the influence of the *London Times*.

¹⁴⁴ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 239.

¹⁴⁵ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 239; Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal & Kingston: Canadian War Museum and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993) 17.

of 1900, the usual mix of wire reports and news of the Boxer Uprising taken from the London dailies replaced news of the Boer War. As might be predicted from a staunchly militaristic newspaper, the coverage emphasized the military aspects of the Uprising.

To the northeast of Toronto, Ottawa, the national capital, did not yet have a Chinatown.¹⁴⁶ Ottawa had three major newspapers, the *Ottawa Journal*, *Ottawa Free Press* and *Ottawa Citizen*. The *Ottawa Citizen*, the Conservative party organ, was owned by the Southam family and claimed a circulation of 12,560, making it Ottawa's second largest daily in 1900. Rutherford notes its sensation-mongering and its rejection of the Protestant nativism of provincial Conservatives, a tendency reflecting the influence of the local Catholic population.¹⁴⁷ In covering the Uprising, the *Citizen* focused on the plight of the legations, shifting from a comparatively pro-Chinese stance to fearful invocations of Yellow Perilism as the situation seemed to worsen. Wire services provided most of the content on the subject though the *Citizen* did feature some colourful and poetic editorials, calling for vengeance upon the Chinese.

The *Ottawa Free Press*, in contrast, was a Liberal party organ. C. W. Mitchell, the owner and editor, was a colourful character, a noted "well-travelled" and outspoken seaman who had once been censured for libelling the Speaker of the House of Commons.¹⁴⁸ His paper thrived under Liberal patronage, and by 1900 had 11,800 subscribers. The *Free Press* was notably anti-immigration, averring that "almost every murderer in Canada ... the thieves, burglars and 'fancy men' whose

¹⁴⁶ Lai, *Chinatowns*, 99.

¹⁴⁷ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 200, 225, 237.

¹⁴⁸ Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women Of The Time*, 638.

exploits we are chronicling daily, ... are in every instance late importations or the children of such.”¹⁴⁹ However, in covering the Uprising, the *Free Press* was notable for including relatively pro-Chinese coverage, particularly through the lens of missionary experiences, which provided a significant portion of its coverage. Yet, side by side with the sympathetic coverage were long, lurid articles on Chinese culture, that painted a far from rosy portrait of the Chinese.

The *Ottawa Journal* was operated by Philip Dansken Ross, a Radical and independent, who was heavily involved with the Ottawa Board of Trade and various local athletic associations.¹⁵⁰ The paper boasted the largest circulation in Ottawa at 14 218.¹⁵¹ Ross’ takeover of the *Journal* was funded by the Bank of Ottawa, though the paper had taken both Conservative and Liberal payouts, and remained carefully neutral in the 1900 election.¹⁵² In 1885, its original founder, A. S. Woodburn boasted that the *Journal* would not be the organ of “any clique, party, or denomination,” and would give the news of the day regardless of its effect on either “friend or foe.”¹⁵³ In the context of the Uprising, the boast was only moderately successful. The *Journal* embraced Yellow Perilism, yet at the same time was one of the few papers to even mention anti-Chinese incidents in Canada connected to the Uprising.

The heavy coverage of the Uprising throughout these newspapers provides an opportunity to explore Canadian images of the Chinese. These pervading images taken from the wire service, reports from other newspapers, and Asian “insiders”

¹⁴⁹ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 174, 237.

¹⁵⁰ Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women Of The Time*, 889; Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 237.

¹⁵¹ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 237.

¹⁵² Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 206, 218, 237.

¹⁵³ Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 194.

allow the exploration of the shared ideas about the Chinese people that animated Anglophone Canadian “racial consciousness.” The existence of a shared view of “the Chinaman” as inscrutable, xenophobic, deceitful and cruel complements previous studies of the Asian immigrant experience in Canada, and of anti-Asian sentiment directed towards the immigrant population.

Chapter 2: The Irrational Chinese Mind: Inscrutable, Unknowable and Superstitious

“Irrationality” was a blanket category that encompassed images of “Oriental” inscrutability, xenophobia, backwardness, and superstition. Both the general category and all of these particular images are found throughout the coverage of the uprising in both the wire stories and the letters of those who lived in China.

The West saw China as a mystery, inscrutable and unknowable and called Chinese culture a complex knot, impossible to untie.¹ The *Manitoba Free Press* compared the military force sent to relieve Beijing to the eighteenth century explorers venturing into the unknown: “No European really knows anything about China. Some know less than others, but that is about all that it amounts to.” It characterized the advance of the troops of the civilized nations upon Peking not as “an expedition of war but a march of discovery.”² Even though China had figured in the Western imagination for almost six hundred years, Westerners still considered it a mystery and subjected the details of Chinese language, cultural and belief systems to an almost

¹ Untitled, *Winnipeg Tribune*, 3 July 1900, 2; “Something About China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 July 1900, 2. Throughout the thesis, multiple newspaper sources may be cited for a single paraphrased citation or quotation. This is an attempt to indicate the common content disseminated by Canadian newspapers in covering the crisis. In the case of paraphrases, articles reflecting the idea are grouped together (i.e. information articles on Chinese cities or on estimated Chinese troop strengths). In the case of quotations, articles using the same, or very similar, wording are grouped together (i.e. sack of the legations narratives).

² Untitled, *Manitoba Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 4. The phrase “march of discovery” was attributed to Napoleon during his Egyptian campaigns. Despite this attribution, there is no evidence to say that he actually uttered the phrase.

wilful blindness.³ Even though published guides to Chinese names and institutions were available, listing place names, institutions and public figures, and providing brief explanations of each, the West insisted on depicting China's status as unknown and unknowable. Novelty and information pieces on China outlined the geographic relationship between cities and explained Chinese names in the ostensible hope of educating the reader on a difficult subject.⁴

Stupidity, superstition and absurdity were not considered to be solely Boxer characteristics. After all, this was China, where “the Chinaman shakes his own hand instead of that of his visitor,” and “as a mark of respect he puts his hat on instead of taking it off.”⁵ The Chinese priests “stick to bright yellow,” the policemen are “armed chiefly with small drums, which they beat loudly in order, it is presumed, to let burglars and other marauders know that they are coming.”⁶ Even at dinner, “the Chinese begin with sweet meats and conclude with soup.” As for the foods themselves, the *Province* stated that “fricasseed dog is a favorite dish, a special breed of poodles being raised for eating purposes,” and added to the list “stewed rat,” shark fin, bird's nests and “eggs when they have passed the point where even the cold storage men could call them fresh.”⁷

³ Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989) 67.

⁴ “The Crisis In China,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 18 July 1900, 3; “Key To The Chinese Puzzle,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 15 July 1900, 9; “Distances of Points in China,” *Ottawa Journal*, 22 June 1900, 8; “Chinese Tongue Twisters,” *Ottawa Journal*, 9 July 1900, 2; “The City of Peking,” *Ottawa Journal*, 18 July 1900, 2; “Key To China,” *Toronto Globe*, 7 July 1900, 10; “Map Showing Relative Area Of China and Canada,” *Toronto Globe*, 7 July 1900, 13; “Mysterious China,” *Toronto Globe*, 21 July 1900, 5.

⁵ “China and Chinese,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 July 1900, 7.

⁶ “Facts About China,” *Vancouver Province*, July 12, 1900, 2.

⁷ “Facts About China,” *Vancouver Province*, July 12, 1900, 2; “China and Chinese,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 July 1900, 7; “Marrying Dead Children,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 14 September 1900, 4.

Nor only was Chinese food reported to be foul. Western visitors often described Chinese cities as disgusting and confusing – a reflection of the character of their inhabitants. A *London Times* article reproduced in the *Toronto Globe* and *Ottawa Free Press* described Tianjin like this:

Think of the filthiest European town you have ever been in; multiply the dirt and squalor of it by ten; add to it the smell of a charnal [sic] house, and people it with the canaille of the slums of Paris, and you have a picture of Tien-Tsin at its best. As for the streets, they are gloomy, narrow, irregular, indeed almost distorted, for they turn and twist in all directions, while overhead the second stories of the houses are for the most part decorated with signboards and flags and streamers, each more grimy than its neighbour.⁸

The press described the squalor and corruption in cities such as Chufu, Guangzhou, Dagu, Tianjin and Beijing.⁹ [See Fig. 1.] As well as providing context, such descriptions also reminded readers that China was “unintelligible to the better balanced portion of creation.”¹⁰ Both wire articles and editorials hammered home the point:

The reports have been so contradictory and the motives and the impulses and the reasonings which guide the Chinese in all their actions are so different from those which influence people of Occidental origin that by no mental process is it possible to conceive what they are aiming at in acting as they have done by the representatives of the European nations.¹¹

⁸ “Tien-Tsin The Filthy,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 12; “Tien Tsin and Peking,” *Toronto Globe*, 30 June 1900, 6.

⁹ “A Visit To Taku’ China,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 11 July 1900, 8; “Chee Foo and Tien Tsin,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 18 July 1900, 6; “Forced To Fall Back,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 25 June 1900, 2; “Snap Shots Of Canton,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 4 August 1900, 4; “In Chinese,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 July 1900, 2; “Tien Tsin and Che Fu,” *Toronto Globe*, 30 June 1900, 22; “From Taku to Peking,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 July 1900, 8.

¹⁰ “The Chinese Horrors,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 July 1900, 4.

¹¹ “The Situation In The East,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 9 August 1900, 4.



ONE OF THE BEST STREETS IN PEKIN.

Figure 2. "One of the Best Streets In Peking," *Ottawa Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 12.

This alleged “impenetrability” made events in China difficult to understand, and the task of winnowing the “grain of truth out of the mass of matter which comes from the threshing floor of Oriental news” seemed almost impossible.¹²

Many Westerners considered the Chinese unpronounceable, too alien and complex to grasp. The Chinese-Canadian editor of the *Hamilton Spectator*, while providing a pronunciation guide for Chinese place names, lamented “we are not able to supply the lingual organs necessary to a proper pronunciation of Chinese words.”¹³ This complexity in turn rendered the English language alien to the Chinese mind – creating a mutual incomprehensibility which extended to different senses of propriety.¹⁴

Despite all of the complaints against Chinese perversity, they were also said to have the world’s “most straightlaced” ideas of proper dress and behaviour and that “the missionaries, despite their native attire, have not always been able to live up to them.”¹⁵ Conversely, the *Ottawa Citizen* reminded readers that “to the Chinaman all white people are alike, and all Europeans.”¹⁶

Even when the Chinese were ostensibly allied with the British Empire, they were still subject to sly ridicule. For example, when Empire Reform Association members left to join anti-Boxer forces training in the south of China, the *Province*

¹² “The Orient,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7 April 1900, 4. The statement is almost certainly aimed both at Chinese sources and at Western reporters in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

¹³ Untitled, *Vancouver Province*, July 6, 1900, 6. The *Province* described the editor of the *Spectator* as a “naturalized Celestial who by a patient study of the language of the language of his adopted country, has risen to the dizzy position of editor-in-chief.”

¹⁴ “A Chinaman’s Suggestion,” *Vancouver Semi-Weekly World*, March 16, 1900, 4; “A Plea for Reformed Spelling,” *Toronto World*, 30 May 1900, 4. The suggestion in the title of the *Semi-Weekly World* article, made by Chinese diplomat Wing Tingfang, was to “improve” English spelling, so as to make the language more accessible to non-native speakers.

¹⁵ “With The ‘Boxers’ In China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 16 June 1900, 13.

¹⁶ “Life in China,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 29 July 1900, 12.

ridiculed their manner of speaking, even on serious subjects: “Boxer man belly bad man. He killee Chinaman too. We likee killee Boxerman.” Even in overt praise, there was winking reference to the Chinese accent in English.¹⁷ The condescending attitude of the press can be seen in the identification of sympathetic Chinese people as “intelligent,” which was often used as a synonym for “pro-Western.”¹⁸

During the crisis, all three Vancouver newspapers, but especially the *Province*, gave some attention to the Chinese Empire Reform Association. It was a political organization established by prominent reformer Kang Youwei during his exile and dedicated to reforming the Qing government.¹⁹ Both the *World* and *News-Advertiser* gave the association minimal coverage, describing it as the “foreign secretary” for the Triads, or “Chinese Masons,” who possessed an old antagonism with the Boxers.²⁰

Canadian newspapers depicted the Chinese secret societies as pervasive and as forming “an intricate web ... spread over the land” though “few who had not actually come into contact with the Chinese are aware that every Chinaman belongs to a society or guild of some kind.”²¹ While most Western people were familiar with the “Triad” and the “‘Water Lily’ Societies,” they were less familiar with “other societies with more or less declared political aims,” and thought of them as Chinese versions of

¹⁷ “Chinese Go To Battle,” *Vancouver Province*, July 30, 1900, 8.

¹⁸ See, for example, the character sketch of Prince Ching [Ronglu] in “Ching And Tuan,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 21 July 1900, 15.

¹⁹ Lai, *Chinatowns*, 210-211; Harry Con, et al., *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada*, Edgar Wickberg, ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982) 102-103.

²⁰ “The Boxers’ Hopes,” *Vancouver World*, 26 June 1900, 8; “Discussed the Boxers,” *Vancouver World*, 6 July 1900, 6.

²¹ “The Boxers’ Hopes,” *Vancouver World*, 26 June 1900, 8; “Mysteries Of The Chinese,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 7 July 1900, 12; “The Future of China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 11 June 1900, 3.

the Masons, or as malevolent criminal organizations.²² The Triads, or “highbinders,” were regarded with particular suspicion, partly because of their status as a secret society and partly for their initiation rituals in which they were said to drink blood and swear oaths, “some of which would not bear publication.”²³ The *Ottawa Citizen*, alarmed by the “menacing activity on the part of the secret society known as the Triads,” declared the Boxers “to be an offshoot of the Triads.”²⁴

The fact that the Boxers were making their presence felt served to focus Western attention on secret societies generally. The link between Chinese and Canadian reform associations was an open one, however, as Kang Youwei had established the Empire Reform Association, and immigrants had established other associations where they settled.²⁵ In Vancouver, the *News-Advertiser* also warned of an anti-foreign agitator in Chinatown, who was there not “merely for the innocent purpose of agitating against the tyranny of the Empress Dowager,” but was speaking out against the presence of all foreigners in China.²⁶ While the paper distanced Chinese merchants from the anti-foreign activity, it still created a Manichean distinction between the Reformers and Boxers. The Empire Reform Association received more favourable, though still ambiguous treatment in the *Vancouver Province* which presented it as a favourable medium by which Chinese reformers could present their message. Even before the crisis, the coverage of the reformers touched on their opposition to Cixi and their denial that they were “a secret society,”

²² “The Boxers’ Hopes,” *Vancouver World*, 26 June 1900, 8; “Chinese Highbinders,” *Vancouver Province*, 27 January 1900, 10.

²³ “Chinese Highbinders,” *Vancouver Province*, January 27, 1900, 10; “Discussed the Boxers,” *Vancouver World*, July 6, 1900, 6.

²⁴ “Another Chinese Secret Society,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 July 1900, 5.

²⁵ Lai, *Chinatowns*, 210-212; Con, et al., *From China to Canada*, 102-103.

²⁶ “Chinese Agitators Abroad,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 23 March 1900, 1.

but preferred to declare themselves members of a “political organization such as your party associations here.”²⁷ As the crisis deepened, the *Province* presented the reformers as being broadly sympathetic to Western intervention; hostilities in China then became a chance to “teach the anti-foreign element in China a lesson.”²⁸ To that end, the Empire Reform Association acted in support of Western interests, applying pressure where and how they could, and the *Province* treated them favourably in return.²⁹ Nevertheless, it could not refrain from observing that the Chinese volunteering to fight the Boxers were the same ones who peddled “vegbels” on the street.³⁰ The division between Boxer and Reformer was both clearer and less meaningful in the *Province*; with more elaboration, the reformer seemed less exceptional. The Reform Association had an awkward position in Canada, and Western missionaries in China occupied an even more difficult place.

From the point of view of the missionaries who were trying to spread Christianity, the presence of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, dwelling side by side and with little or any friction was vexing and surprising. Missionaries had to meet and counter all three on their own ground if they wished to gain converts.³¹ This odd indifference to “matters of faith” was one demonstration of the Chinese departure from rationality. Another one, and one that was particularly strange, at least to the Chicago preacher who reported it, was the manufacture of firecrackers from rolled-up

²⁷ “Chinese Protest,” *Vancouver Province*, January 26, 1900, 1.

²⁸ “Restore The Emperor,” *Vancouver Province*, June 30, 1900, 1. See also “Distrustful Chinese,” *Vancouver Province*, July 7, 1900, 1.

²⁹ “Loyal Local Chinamen,” *Vancouver Province*, 12 July 1900, 1.

³⁰ “Chinese Go To Battle,” *Vancouver Province*, 30 July 1900, 8.

³¹ “Chinese Legations,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 2 August 1900, 9; “Popular Chinese Superstitions,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1900, 12.



BOXERS INVOKING THE GOD OF WAR.

Figure 3. "Boxers Invoking The God Of War," *Ottawa Free Press*, 30 June 1900, 13.

Bible pages.³² Missionaries tended to be meticulous in their accounts of Chinese superstition and “idolatries.”³³ They examined ancestor worship with fascination and recounted Chinese burial practices wherein white-garbed mourners would observe rites, on a lucky day, surrounded by a band, and with cooked food present to distract the spirits of the dead.³⁴ One missionary explained how:

Professors of light and air [Professors of wind and water or geomancers] make many taels out of dead men’s bones. They tell the family that the Feng-shui of the family grave is of ill omen and at much cost a new plot of ground is procured and the lowest available ledge walled up with a semi circle of brick, painted white, red and blue. Only then do the patriarchs slumber in their graves.³⁵

Another missionary correspondent described the Chinese pantheon with a similar fascinated condescension. In an account of the “Tai Mon, or Great Temple of the imperial ancestors” area in the Forbidden City, he explained,³⁶

Here offerings are presented before the tablets of deceased emperors and empresses, and worship performed by the imperial family and clan to their departed forefathers. Across the avenue from the temple is a tan, or altar of the gods of Land and Grain, where sacrifices are offered in spring and autumn by the emperor alone to those divinities, who are supposed to have originally been men.³⁷

A striking instance of the symbolic importance of these beliefs was the desecration and destruction of the tomb of the ancestors of prominent reformer Kang Youwei, after he fled the country.³⁸ Another example of superstitious desecration was the story of a general who, after being killed in a Boxer ambush was stripped of his rank

³² “How Chinese Use The Bible,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 July 1900, 11.

³³ “Seven Years In China,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 16 July 1900, 6.

³⁴ “Mendacity of the Mongolian,” *Vancouver Semi-Weekly World*, 14 August 1900, 7;

“Chinese Burial Customs,” *Vancouver Semi-Weekly World*, 5 January 1900, 5; “Scraps From And About China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 28 July 1900, 13.

³⁵ “The Tombs of China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 28 July 1900, 13.

³⁶ “The Gods Of The ‘Boxers’,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 21 July 1900, 16.

³⁷ “The Forbidden City,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 August 1900, 6.

³⁸ untitled, *Manitoba Free Press*, 28 March 1900, 4; untitled, *Ottawa Citizen*, 4 July 1900, 4; “Disturbance in China,” *Toronto Globe*, 17 February 1900, 13.

posthumously for disregarding orders and fighting the Boxers.³⁹ This story was framed as a comedy piece to describe the absurdity of Chinese culture generally.

Because of the hegemonic position of Christianity in the identity of the West, the press portrayed Chinese antipathy to it as a sign of their incomprehensibility as a people and China's incompatibility with the West.⁴⁰ Newspapers reported this antipathy in a variety of forms: the creation of a clever Chinese pun that mockingly rendered the term Christianity as the "Squeak of the Celestial Pig"; the claim that the Holy Communion wine was a potion that made Chinese Christians slaves of the priests was another, as were rumours that during Extreme Unction the priests cut the eyes out of dying men, and that priests harvested the eyes, fat and blood of children for use in magical drugs.⁴¹ Reports of these anti-Christian rumours contributed to Canadian perceptions of Chinese difference in a number of ways. First, the Chinese rejection of Christianity was antithetical to the Imperial Christianity of British Canada in which "the flag, the Bible, and the English language seemed as indivisible as the Trinity."⁴² Secondly, the intimations of witchcraft and blood magic called to mind other superstitions of the Chinese that featured heavily in descriptions of Chinese culture.

³⁹ "Dead General Cashiered," *Toronto Globe*, 28 June 1900, 2.

⁴⁰ See Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal & Kingston: Canadian War Museum and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993) 17-24 for a discussion of the intersection of Christianity and Empire, as it related to the Boer War, which occurred at the same time. While this antipathy might seem like a counter to the efforts of Western missionaries, it simply highlights the contradictory nature of the myth of the Chinese as unknowable and inassimilable. It also speaks to the changeable nature of the stereotype.

⁴¹ "The Trouble in China," *Toronto Globe*, 23 June 1900, 5; "With The 'Boxers' In China," *Ottawa Free Press*, 16 June 1900, 13; "Popular Chinese Superstitions," *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1900, 12; "A Terrible Book," *Ottawa Citizen*, 24 July 1900, 5; "Missionaries Not To Blame," *Ottawa Journal*, 7 July 1900, 1; "From Taku to Peking," *Toronto Globe*, 3 July 1900, 8.

⁴² Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 3.

Such depictions illustrated a much coarser belief in the stupidity of the Chinese. One correspondent claimed, “people who have never seen the Chinese workman to know him have very little idea of how ineffably stupid he really can be when he lays himself out for it.”⁴³ Likewise, an English engineer constructed a locomotive, only to have it hobbled “when he finally got his ‘machine’ ready for operation” because Chinese officials “at once forbade his using it unless he hitched some mules on the front of it. They insisted there was a ‘deblo’ or evil spirit in it.”⁴⁴

Chinese methods of warfare were subject to the same scorn. The *Winnipeg Tribune* likened a battle between Chinese troops and Boxers to a “comic opera.”⁴⁵ Western writers ridiculed Chinese troops for a variety of tactics, such as “utterly senseless acrobatic feats” that soldiers were expected to learn, “roaring to frighten the enemy,” or “strange dances ... in which unaimed fire is carried on, solely to create noise.”⁴⁶ Commentators also pilloried the Chinese approach to rioting. Though violent, the riots reportedly only took place after “long reflection and thorough deliberation,” which even included the rioters giving notice of their tactics and goals.⁴⁷

While the press ridiculed the stupidity, superstition and absurdity of Chinese culture, it simultaneously felt threatened by the disregard with which it thought the Chinese held life on the battlefield and in everyday life.⁴⁸ In commenting on their apparent lack of fear of death, the *Victoria Times* remarked:

⁴³ “Chinese Railways,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 17 August 1900, 6.

⁴⁴ “Railway Building In China,” *Vancouver Province*, June 25, 1900, 3; “In Northern China,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 19 June 1900, 4.

⁴⁵ “The Boxer Rising,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 12 June 1900, 2.

⁴⁶ “A Russian Opinion Of The Chinese Army,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 7 July 1900, 5.

⁴⁷ “Corruption In China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 June 1900, 2.

⁴⁸ “They Practice Self-Cremation,” *Ottawa Journal*, 5 February 1900, 6.

But in any case a Chinaman thinks little of beheading – that is a quick and merciful death. Strangulation is his horror; for then – as his spirit is supposed to escape through the mouth – the throat being contracted, that spirit can find no exit, and cannot be free.

Death is little to a Chinaman. He is a Buddhist, and believes that it is merely passing from one body to another – that each time he is born again in a slightly higher social sphere, until at last from being a mandarin's son he enters Nirvana.⁴⁹

This was both foreign and shocking to an overwhelmingly Christian audience, for whom death was and is a central religious and cultural motif. As described, this Chinese belief in reincarnation trivialized death, and as such was both threatening and next to incomprehensible.

Militarily, too, the Chinese disregard for life was held up to contempt. Lord Charles Beresford, British naval officer and Tory politician, described a series of vignettes in which Chinese artillery commanders seemed perfectly content to kill their own men while attacking the enemy. As Beresford reported,

Later on I visited another battery, where there were five sixty-ton guns. Observing the arrangement of these I asked the mandarin where his 'front' was. The mandarin pointed in one direction, but the guns pointed in another. I mentioned this, and the mandarin nodded, and said he thought there was some mistake. I then pointed out that only one gun could be fired safely in the desired direction. 'Oh no,' replied the mandarin, 'we should fire them all.' At my request the experiment was then made and on pointing the guns around as desired they became so that the wave of concussion of one gun would have destroyed the detachment on duty at its neighbor. Knowing this, I placed soldier's hats and clothes about the guns, and on firing the latter in succession these garments were blown sky high. 'You see?' I observed to the mandarin. 'Yes,' replied the latter, 'we should have had some men killed, but the shot would have reached the enemy, wouldn't it?'⁵⁰

The commentator and newspapers both saw this blithe acceptance of self-inflicted casualties not only as immoral, but also as undermining Chinese military effectiveness. The artillery emplacement would have become less effective with each

⁴⁹ "No Fear Of Death," *Victoria Daily Times*, 8 September 1900, 2.

⁵⁰ "Chinese Notions Of Gunnery," *Ottawa Free Press*, 7 July 1900, 9; "The Chinese Way," *Ottawa Journal*, 27 January 1900, 16.

firing, and losses could not always be recouped in combat. The writer implied that this was idiotic, but there was a more serious element to this seemingly careless attitude towards death.

Western observers saw these beliefs as having a profound effect on Chinese behaviour. An essay published in the *Victoria Times* after the sack of Beijing blamed the Chinese mindset for the massacres of the uprising:

The Asiatic thinks that the best way to overcome enemies whom he for any reason dreads is to strike terror among them, and knows of no instrument so terrorizing as death distributed wholesale, in pailfuls as it were. If he quarrels with his janissaries he destroys not only them, but the religious orders to which they are affiliated. He believes fully the evil Italian's maxim, that if you injure you should keep on injuring until there is no power of resistance, and knows of no method of obeying that law of statecraft so effective as wholesale slaughter.⁵¹

It implied that the Chinese attitude towards death contributed to the brutal aspects of the uprising. If death, in the general case, was not final, then death "distributed wholesale" to one's enemies might seem like a reasonable tactic, or at least not one so loaded with moral baggage.

While the supposedly inscrutable aspects of the Chinese bothered the Western press, that which was known was no comfort either. Western commentators felt that a worsening xenophobia prevailed in China.⁵² This rise was reportedly capped by the decoration of Hein Tung, "probably the most bitterly anti-foreign official of the Empire," with the "Three-Eyed Peacock Feather," which had not been granted in eighty years.⁵³ Xenophobia manifested itself as both a latent and active trait that

⁵¹ "Motive of Oriental Massacre," *Victoria Daily Times*, 14 September 1900, 7.

⁵² "Pekin's Exclusion Policy," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 1 March 1900, 8; "The Yellow Peril," *Victoria Daily Times*, 7 July 1900, 4; "The Chinese Side," *Manitoba Free Press*, 15 August 1900, 4.

⁵³ "Far And Near East," *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, March 16, 1900, 5; "Serious Trends Of Events In China," *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, March 20, 1900, 1.



JOHN CHINAMAN CRUSOE—We livee here alle lone hundleds and hundled of of years—me likee not see lem footprints, allee samee.

Figure 4. "He Views With Alarm," *Manitoba Free Press*, 7 July 1900, 9.

impelled the Chinese people towards acts of violence to foreigners. This contempt must have seemed particularly galling, given the ideas of white supremacy then popular in the West.⁵⁴

Newspapers reported xenophobic hatred in the highest echelons of Chinese society as well as among the masses. There were many reports of Cixi surrounding herself with xenophobic advisors and courtiers, to match her own political preferences.⁵⁵ Similarly, the *Winnipeg Tribune* and *Ottawa Citizen* accused Prince Duan, as the West knew Zaiyi, the newly appointed head of the Zongli Yamen, of being “rabidly” xenophobic, and of using Buddhist priests to spread his “anti-foreign gospel.”⁵⁶ They also blamed other Chinese elites for keeping the majority of the Chinese ignorant while teaching them to be hateful of foreigners. The Western press, already impressed with the ignorance of a Chinese lower class that thought of the Sino-Japanese war as a foreign invention, frequently noted that xenophobia was embraced with fanaticism.⁵⁷ The *Vancouver Province*, for example, saw this

⁵⁴ See Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996); Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989); Anna Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, editors (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 87; Susan Thorne, “The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, editors (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 238 for selected further discussions of the idea of white superiority at the turn of the Twentieth Century.

⁵⁵ “Snub To The Powers,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 21 March 1900, 9. This referred to the award of the “Three Eyed Peacock Feather,” a rare award whose reporting in the Western press bordered on tongue-in-cheek.

⁵⁶ “Prince Tuan, Commander of the Chinese Army,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 11 July 1, 1900; “Situation At Tien Tsin Is Desperate,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 July 1900, 1; “Is Holy War,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 July 1900, 7.

⁵⁷ “The Chinese Side,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 15 August 1900, 4; “The Trouble In China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 June 1900, 2; “Present Day Troubles,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 June 1900, 2; “The Po Wong Woey,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 9 July 1900, 2; “The Gods Of The ‘Boxers’,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 21 July 1900, 16; “Li Hung Chang A Fraud,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 30 June 1900, 15; “The Missionaries In China,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 7 July 1900, 11; “Origin Of The

xenophobia as resulting from a pervasive Chinese misapprehension of the West, the notion that all whites were “all foreign devils and are not distinguished by their nationality or their language.”⁵⁸

The *Victoria Colonist's* translation of a Chinese anti-Western polemic mirrored the charges of rape and murder that later appeared elsewhere in the Western press about the Boxers.⁵⁹ The *Victoria Daily Times* cited a British journalist to highlight the Chinese attitude that would be far from flattering to their reader's pride. Beijing was, the reporter said, the only place where being a foreigner did not make one a curiosity but rather an object of contempt. In a piece of unintentional foreshadowing, he quoted an unnamed Western diplomat who said that if the Zongli Yamen ever withdrew their protection of foreigners, the lives of the foreign officials “would not be safe here for twenty-four hours.”⁶⁰ This contempt was particularly galling because of the regard that many European and North Americans had for their own culture. Being hated was understandable – colonial conflict was common, but contempt was unusual and very unsettling. The press saw these negative Chinese sentiments as directly affecting the crisis. Xenophobia found violent expression among the people of China whose government complimented the Boxers on “their patriotism and public spirit” for killing foreigners and burning their property.⁶¹ The support that the “Central

Boxers: China's Empress And Her Coups,” *Ottawa Journal*, 30 June 1900, 9; Untitled, *Toronto Globe*, 15 June 1900, 6.

⁵⁸ “The Chinese Puzzle,” *Vancouver Province*, August 7, 1900, 5.

⁵⁹ “To Oppose All Foreigners,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 23 March 1900, 5.

⁶⁰ “The Yellow Peril,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 7 July 1900, 4.

⁶¹ Untitled, *Manitoba Free Press*, 1 June 1900, 4; “The Chinese Situation,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 13 June 1900, 7; “Authentic Pekin News,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 2 August 1900, 1; “Present Day Troubles,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 June 1900, 2.



"KILL THE FOREIGNERS."— NATIVES READING AN ANTI FOREIGN MANIFESTO IN PEKIN.

Not only in Peking, but in the villages between the capital and Tien Tsin, the Boxers have posted up placards, calling upon the readers to kill all foreigners. They have been exciting ignorant superstition in this way for some time now.— London Graphic.

Figure 5. "Kill The Foreigners' Natives Reading The Anti-Foreign Manifesto In Peking," *Ottawa Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 9. Also printed as "Kill The Foreigners' Natives Reading The Anti-Foreign Manifesto In Peking," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 July 1900, 1. It reads "Not only in Peking, but in the villages between the capital and Tien Tsin, the Boxers have posted up placards, calling upon the reads to kill all foreigners. They have been exciting ignorant superstition in this way for some time now -- London Graphic."

Government” gave to the Boxers, calling them “patriots,” and censuring regular troops for resisting them, did nothing to allay fears about Chinese xenophobia.⁶²

The Boxers skilfully exploited xenophobia, and the “universal ignorance of the people,” through placards and other public appeals to superstition that were calculated to promote trouble.⁶³ Simple gestures, such as flags “bearing the inscription ‘kill all foreigners’” and slogans like “[d]rive out all foreigners!” incited the populace: “Ha, ha, foreign devil; the Boxers have come, and you haven’t much longer to live.”⁶⁴ Placards in Beijing, Tianjin and in the villages between, called on readers to kill foreigners.⁶⁵ Similarly, after the reported destruction of the legations, Prince Duan supposedly rewarded the Boxers with “100,000 taels and huge quantities of rice.”⁶⁶ Boxer suggestions that the foreigners were “stopping the rain” demonstrated to several papers the powerful relationship between xenophobia and superstition.⁶⁷

Boxer propaganda appealed to these same “superstitions.” Boxer placards accusing Christians of offending the gods of China and causing a drought were translated in the *Tribune*; other translated placards prophesied the destruction of the enemy in accordance with “the horoscope.” Newspapers also published translations

⁶² “The Yellow Terror,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 9 May 1900, 3; “The Crisis In China,” *Vancouver Province*, 12 June 1900, 1; “The Legations Are Relieved,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 August 1900, 1.

⁶³ “Boxer Brutes,” *Vancouver Province*, July 20, 1900, 3; “Kill The Foreigners’ Natives Reading The Anti-Foreign Manifesto In Peking,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 9; “Kill The Foreigners’ Natives Reading The Anti-Foreign Manifesto In Peking,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 July 1900, 1. The “Kill The Foreigners” image appears in Appendix I.

⁶⁴ “The Boxer Movement,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 8 June 1900, 7; “The Trouble In China,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 9 July 1900, 4; “Letter From A Canadian In Peking,” *Ottawa Journal*, 4 July 1900, 1; “Missionaries’ Last Word,” *Toronto Globe*, 4 July 1900, 7.

⁶⁵ “Kill The Foreigners.’ – Natives Reading An Antiforeign Manifesto In Peking,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 July 1900, 1. Unlike some of the stories surrounding the Uprising, these placards certainly existed, and were read at the time.

⁶⁶ “Last Legation Attack,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 13 July 1900, 1.

⁶⁷ “Howling Mobs of Fanatics,” *Vancouver Province*, August 29, 1900, 1; “History Repeating Itself,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 28 July 1900, 14; “Chinese Boxers’ Methods,” *Toronto Globe*, 6 July 1900, 6.

of Boxer placards calling the “foreign devils” inhuman because of their blue eyes.⁶⁸ An American missionary’s letter, printed in the *Tribune*, referred to a Boxer announcement that “they had suffered foreigners for a cycle of (60) years” and were determined to mark this date with their destruction.⁶⁹ The Imperial Princes were said to have erected an altar in their palace on which Boxer rituals were performed.⁷⁰ The Boxers believed that these rituals assured them of immunity from injury or death, from sword cuts and bullets.⁷¹ The *Victoria Daily Times* quoted an unidentified “Pekin correspondent” who described the supernatural side of the belief:

⁶⁸ “How Boxer Rising Began,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7 June 1900, 7.

⁶⁹ “The Boxer Rising,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 12 June 1900, 2; “The Possibility of a Terrible Massacre,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 July 1900, 1.

⁷⁰ “Japs To the Rescue,” *Vancouver Province*, July 5, 1900, 1. These rituals have parallels in both the Ghost Dance, and in Zulu invulnerability rituals.

⁷¹ “Inviting Extinction,” *Vancouver Province*, June 5, 1900, 1; “The Yellow Terror,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, May 9, 1900, 3; “Boxer Brutes,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, July 20, 1900, 3. “Boxer Brutes” included a translation of a Boxer placard. The text is reproduced here:

Gods assist the Boxers.
 The Patriotic Harmonious Corps;
 It is because the Foreign Devils disturb the Middle Kingdom,
 Urging the people to join their religion
 To turn their backs on Heaven;
 Venerate not the Gods and forget the Ancestors.
 Men violate the human obligations;
 Women commit adultery,
 Foreign Devils are not produced by mankind,
 If you doubt this,
 Look at them carefully;
 The eyes of all the Foreign Devils are bluish.
 No rain falls,
 The earth is getting dry,
 That is because the Churches stop the Heaven.
 The Gods are angry,
 The Genii are vexed;
 Both are come down from the mountains to deliver the doctrine.
 This is not hearsay,
 The practice will not be in vain
 To recite incantations and pronounce magic words.
 Burn up the yellow written prayers;
 Light up the yellow written prayers;
 Light incense sticks;
 To invite the Gods and Genii of all the grottoes (Halls),
 The Gods will come out of the grottoes,
 The Genii will come down from the mountains,

The movement is something more than mere hate of foreigners and the religions which they have brought. This is a case of genuine fanaticism. Each Boxer believes he is possessed by some departed hero or beast, as monkey, fox, or tiger, and that they are assisted by them. Hence, the monkey-possessed men can jump over houses and the fox-possessed men have preternatural eyesight. Their danger comes from their very giving themselves over to the devil to be his willing slaves. They have mediums whom they consult when there is a special piece of devilry they wish to commit. They are very devout and never pass a temple without stopping to knock their heads. Their heads are swollen with their frequent knockings and the amount of incense they burn is resulting in scarcity.⁷²

The newspapers viewed these rituals with suspicion and considered them at least somewhat absurd: “Before drilling they throw themselves on the ground, work themselves into a frenzy, and then believe themselves invulnerable.”⁷³ Buddhist practices received the same farcical tone; each “good Buddhist” [sic] was expected to “kneel three hours daily, knock his head on the floor thrice, and pray earnestly that sudden cruel death may overtake all aliens.”⁷⁴ The *Manitoba Free Press* reprinted a *National Geographic* article, whose author spoke to a number of “intelligent Chinese” who described the effects of the Boxer invulnerability rituals:

And support the human bodies to practice the boxing.
 Then all the military accomplishments or tactics
 Are fully learned,
 It will not be difficult to exterminate the ‘Foreign Devils’ then.
 Push aside the railway tracks,
 Pull out the telegraph poles.
 Immediately after this destroy the steamers.
 The great France
 Will grow cold and downhearted;
 The English and Russians will certainly disperse.
 Let the various ‘Foreign Devils’ all be killed,
 May the whole elegant Empire of the Great Ching dynasty be ever prosperous.

This poem was also reprinted in other newspapers, including the *Toronto Globe*. (“Hymn of the Boxers,” *Toronto Globe*, 21 July 1900, 11)

⁷² “Peculiarly Inspired,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 4 July 1900, 3. The “Pekin correspondent” was not identified further, and the newspaper from which the *Times* quoted was only described as having come in “the mail.”

⁷³ “The Boxer Movement,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 8 June 1900, 7; “Put Too Much Trust In Chinese Promises,” *Ottawa Journal*, 19 July 1900, 2; “Diplomats At Peking Are Becoming Alarmed,” *Toronto World*, 7 June 1900, 1.

⁷⁴ “Peking Legations Holding Out,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 9 July 1900, 1; “Shanghai Saw The Storm Coming,” *Ottawa Journal*, 10 July 1900, 8.

they had themselves seen advanced members of the society strike different parts of their bodies with sharp knives and swords, with no more effect upon the skin than is produced by the wind. If any are killed, it is because they have broken the rules, as, for instance, by eating certain proscribed articles of food.⁷⁵

Chinese absurdity was thus twinned with superstition, and both were shown explicitly to lead to weakness.

Boxers publicly demonstrated their invulnerability rituals, swallowing knives and allowing themselves to be hit with fists and cleavers. These demonstrations were more effective with complicit partners as the papers did not fail to note. One account described how a Boxer who invited fist strikes to his stomach died of internal injuries, and how another nearly severed his arm after allowing himself to be hit with a cleaver.⁷⁶

While the Western press recounted examples of the failure of these rituals, it reported that the Boxers' reputation of invulnerability had infiltrated the minds of Chinese generals. One correspondent reported that General Nieh refused to disentrain his troops who were convinced that it was useless to fight against the Boxers. The correspondent explained that other Chinese had seen Boxers shot, then later rise and run away.⁷⁷ The Boxers profited from the superstition of their Chinese compatriots, it seemed.

The Boxer inclination to avoid firearms, especially before the mass battles of the summer, and to rely on exercises and postures that were expected to "hypnotize or

⁷⁵ Untitled, *Manitoba Free Press*, 22 July 1900, 4.

⁷⁶ "Horrible Tortures," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 22 July 1900, 9; "Shanghai Saw The Storm Coming," *Ottawa Journal*, 10 July 1900, 8.

⁷⁷ "The Boxer Movement," *Manitoba Free Press*, 8 June 1900, 7; "Situation In China," *Ottawa Journal*, 7 June 1900, 7; "Boxers Still Unchecked," *Toronto Globe*, 8 June 1900, 1-2.

terrify the enemy” gained particular notice.⁷⁸ One of the earliest mentions of the Boxers describes a battle against government forces armed with repeating rifles:

Whether because they are opposed to everything foreign, such as guns and powder, or for other reasons, the rioters had no firearms. They, however, believed themselves invulnerable because of certain incantations uttered while advancing; and they advanced ill prepared though confident against the imperial troops. The Mausers poured a hot fire into them as they came on, but they fought doggedly, with swords and spears.⁷⁹

Although the bravery of the Boxers, aggressive in the face of better-armed Chinese troops, was notable, the Canadian press found it easier to portray the Boxers as fanatical and driven by superstition than to admit that they were courageous.

As the uprising grew to a fever pitch newspapers emphasized the contempt for Western weaponry as a source of weakness since most Boxers were armed with spears and swords and the few with firearms handled them “awkwardly.”⁸⁰ Later in the crisis, the press reported that disheartened Chinese troops, including Boxers who perceived that the foreigners had broken their magical powers, would not approach the legations.⁸¹

In short, images of Chinese irrationality and inscrutability pervaded the coverage of the Boxer Uprising. Belief that Chinese culture was intensely xenophobic, superstitious and impassive in the face of death formed a distinct set of stereotypes about the Chinese. Western journalists presented Chinese culture as largely unknown in the West, and what was known seemed so foreign, or backward, as to be incomprehensible to rational people. Consequently, Canadian newspapers also

⁷⁸ “The Boxers And Their Supersition,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 21 July 1900, 12.

⁷⁹ “Chinese Kill Missionaries,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 January 1900, 3.

⁸⁰ “Advance On Peking,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 13 June 1900, 1; “Battle With The Boxers,” *Toronto Globe*, 14 June 1900, 2.

⁸¹ “Peking Legations Holding Out,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 9 July 1900, 1.

portrayed the Chinese people as being vulnerable to the manipulation of their superstitions by both their elites and the Boxers. This premise formed a conceptual frame upon which images of Chinese deceit and savagery could be built. The image of the Chinese as deceitful was then heightened by a sense that irrational Chinese motives could not be divined by Western observers. The image of the Chinese as savage, violent and cruel tied in smoothly with ideas about Chinese xenophobia, backwardness and attitudes towards death. A people who cared little about death would hardly think twice about inflicting it on others, especially those they seemed to hate so much.

Chapter 3: “Foxy Beggars”: The Chinese as Deceitful and False

Images of irrationality, and especially inscrutability, blended seamlessly with images of deceitfulness. Not only were the Chinese difficult to understand at the best of times, but they had a reputation as “astute diplomatists, or liars” who acted with “characteristic treachery” at least in the political realm.¹ In particular, Cixi was singled out as a symbol of this deviousness.² Conceptions of Chinese deceitfulness, however, were not limited to generalized proclamations of conscious dishonesty. Instead, images of a basic “native” craftiness, the pervasiveness of secret societies and underhanded methods of rule all served to shape the broader notion of Chinese deceitfulness. Descriptions of “deceit” fell into a number of categories, including cunning, the use of assassination as a legitimate state tool, and other government conspiracies. The events of the Boxer uprising provided plenty of opportunity for Western authors to move from the general to the specific.

Sometimes cunning revealed itself in small ways, such as digging empty graves in lots adjacent to concession land to prevent the sale of land to foreigners.³ It was observed too that the Chinese were not so much law-abiding as law-evading:

¹ “The Story of the Siege of Peking,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 2 August 1900, 1; “The Chinese Situation,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 24 June 1900, 4; untitled, *Victoria Daily Times*, 28 July 1900, 4; “Life In China,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 29 July 1900, 2.

² “Atrocities Of the Boxers,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 24 June 1900, 6; “Li Hung-Chang,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 18 July 1900, 4; “Li Hung Chang A Fraud,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 30 June 1900, 15; “The Legations Are Relieved,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 August 1900, 1.

³ “Oriental Advices,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 26 April 1900, 3

“they never know anything they do not wish to know, and none can be denser than they when they choose.”⁴ There were also reports of the “cunning” Chinese posing as Christians to “have the protection of the missions while practicing evil.”⁵ Some Chinese also supposedly engaged in “damage-getting:” putting themselves in harm’s way just to sue Europeans.⁶ Many stories about China indicated crafty behaviour was not just practiced by clever individuals and highlighted the pervasive presence of secret societies, (discussed in Chapter 2) in Chinese society.

Chinese culture was supposed to be “honeycombed with secret societies.”⁷ This charge, which drew much attention, indicated to one observer that to “conspire in secret comes as naturally to them as to ventilate his grievances in a town meeting [comes] to the Anglo-Saxon.”⁸ The *Province* expressed particular concern that the father of the Emperor was the head of “the great secret societies known as The Great Sword and The Boxers.”⁹ There were also claims of more tangible political connections between Boxers and Imperial Government including protection of the Boxers from government persecution.¹⁰ Such claims connected the secret societies to the Chinese Court which, seen as ruling though underhanded means, was considered even more perfidious than the Boxers themselves.

More often, the West saw treachery as occurring on the field of battle; offering truces in order to induce besieged foreigners in the legation to “relax their vigilance,”

⁴ “More Chinese Stories,” *Vancouver World*, 7 August 1900, 3.

⁵ “A Defence Of the Missionary,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 17 August 1900, 2.

⁶ “Damage-Getting Proclivities Of The Wily Chinese,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 21 July 1900, 16.

⁷ “Pekin,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 23 July 1900, 4; “China’s Anarchists,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 23 June 1900, 12; Untitled, *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 July 1900, 4; “The Powers In Harmony,” *Toronto Globe*, 13 June 1900, 1; “From Taku to Peking,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 July 1900, 8.

⁸ *Manitoba Free Press*, “The Boxers,” 4 August 1900, 4.

⁹ “Upheaval In China,” *Vancouver Province*, January 26 1900, 7.

¹⁰ “Plots of the Boxers,” *Vancouver World*, 29 June 1900, 6.

or opening fire without warning at the warships anchored off the Dagu forts.¹¹ Chinese forces also used unfair tactics in fighting each other: a spy for General Yong Lu was beheaded for attempting to stab Prince Duan while he slept.¹² Similarly, Boxers killed the Chinese general Yang Lo as he parleyed with them.¹³

Intelligence from Admiral Seymour's expeditionary force referred to the Boxers falling back by using a series of rolling ambushes -- including a particularly fierce one at a river crossing -- against European troops.¹⁴ There were also reports from the interior of Chinese soldiers burning the homes of foreigners and killing the missionaries they had been sent to protect.¹⁵ The attack at Dagu was supposedly precipitated by unprovoked cannon fire at European gunboats, though the Chinese government later blamed European aggression for the incident.¹⁶ Newspapers also decried a "deep laid plot," designed to conceal the details of the Beijing massacre, wherein Chinese officials were going to claim that the Western and Japanese ministers had been escorted from Beijing but had been subsequently ambushed and killed by Boxers.¹⁷ Survivors of the siege told of a variation of the same trick when Chinese troops "posted proclamations assuring us of protection and the same night,

¹¹ "The Asian Mystery," *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 4 August 1900, 4; "A Sea Fight," *Vancouver World*, 10 July 1900, 4. ✓

¹² "A Chinese Victory," *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 12 July 1900, 1; "Things Look Most Ominous -- Eight Days, No Message," *Toronto World*, 12 July 1900, 1. ✓

¹³ "The Yellow Terror," *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 12 June 1900, 4. ✓

¹⁴ "Seymour's Story of Hard Fighting," *Manitoba Free Press*, 30 June 1900, 1; "Chinese Repulsed Several Times," *Ottawa Citizen*, 30 June 1900, 1; "Admiral Seymour's Story Of His Experiences," *Ottawa Journal*, 30 June 1900, 1. ✓

¹⁵ "Christians Burned Alive," *Manitoba Free Press*, 11 June 1900, 1; "Legations Alive But To Be Kept As Hostages," *Ottawa Journal*, 30 July 1900, 1.

¹⁶ "Capture of Taku Forts," *Manitoba Free Press*, 6 July 1900, 7; "The Chinese Trouble," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 19 June 1900, 2; "More News Of The Legations," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 11 July 1900, 1.

¹⁷ "A Deep Laid Plot," *Manitoba Free Press*, 28 July 1900, 11; "Legations On The Way To Tien Tsin," *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 July 1900, 1.

they made a general attack in the hope of surprising us.”¹⁸ Yet another secret message claimed that the foreign ministers were held in Beijing as hostages.¹⁹ As Western troops advanced on the city, there were stories of Boxers trying the “‘amigo’ trick” by removing their distinctive red clothing.²⁰ Even on the last night of the siege, reports cited battlefield treachery when the Chinese “informed the legations that orders had been issued to cease firing. This was followed by a desperate attack and only the welcome sound of the cannon of the relief force in the morning that renewed the courage of the foreigners.”²¹

Canadian newspapers were particularly outraged by the “criminal apathy” of China’s government in dealing with the Boxer uprising or its “connivance” with the rebels.²² The actions of the entire government were suspect, starting with the tortuous diplomacy that was blamed for practically instigating the entire Uprising.²³ Vancouver newspapers described the false front maintained by the Foreign Ministry as a “sinister farce,” and accused Qing diplomats of having glossed over both Boxer and Qing “savagery.”²⁴ At first, the government seemed to be working against the Boxers, after clearing Beijing of “trouble makers.”²⁵ Later, the press blamed the pro-

¹⁸ “The Veil At Peking Is Raised At Last,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 2 August 1900, 3.

¹⁹ “2,000 Converts Massacred!” *Manitoba Free Press*, 30 July 1900, 1.

²⁰ “Boxer Fight,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 August 1900, 3.

²¹ “Boxers Beaten At Tien Tsin,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 25 August 1900, 1; “Overtook The Fleeing Ruler,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 August 1900, 1.

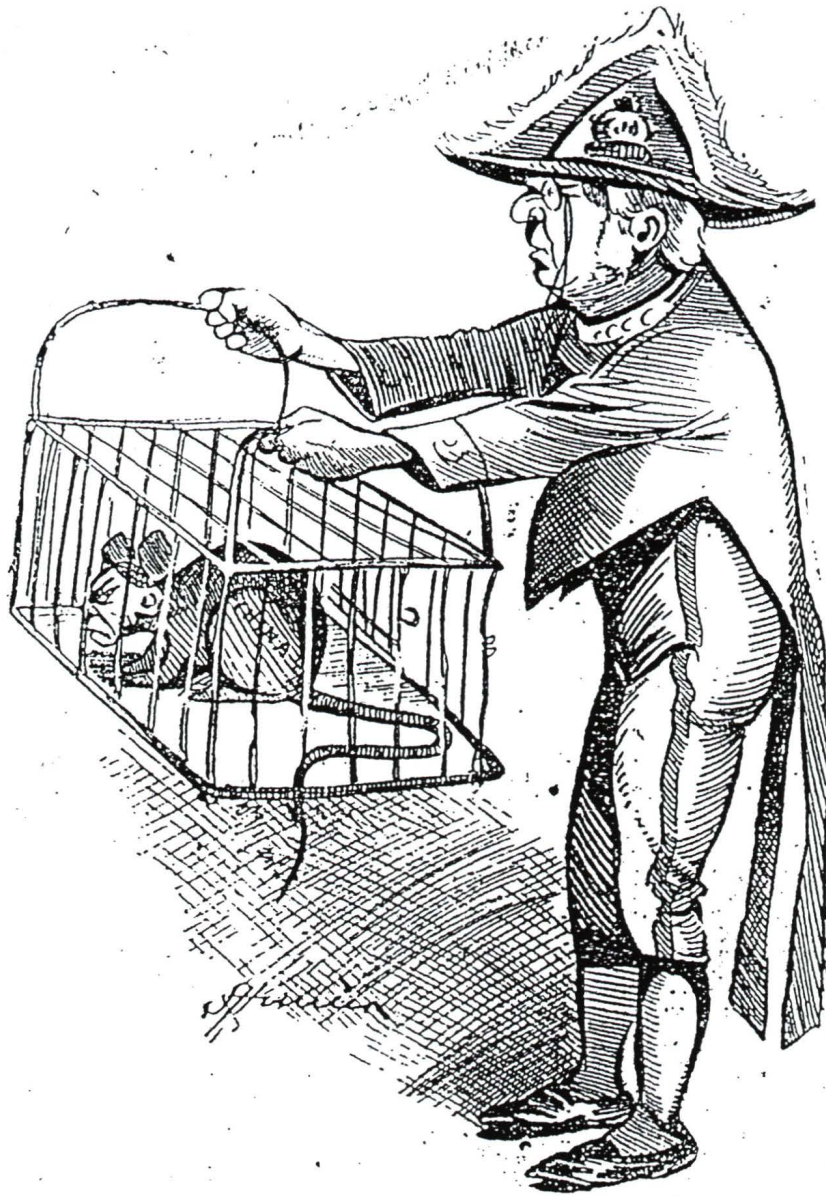
²² “Boxer Outrages,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 19 May 1900, 6; “The Whole Story,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 15 June 1900, 8.

²³ “The Chinese Crisis,” *Vancouver World*, 19 June 1900, 4; “China’s Position,” *Vancouver Province*, 5 June 1900, 4; “Ominous For Peace,” *Vancouver Province*, 6 June 1900, 1.

²⁴ “Ominous For Peace,” *Vancouver Province*, 6 June 1900, 1; “Out of Savage Lands,” *Vancouver Province*, 29 August 1900, 4; “The Case For The ‘Boxers,’” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 21 June 1900, 6; “Desperate Fighting,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 11 July 1900, 1.

²⁵ “Affairs In China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 June 1900, 4.

. THAT CHINESE RAT.



MR. EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY—I can't permit him to run loose, again—but what shall I do with him?

Figure 6. "That Chinese Rat," *Manitoba Free Press*, 27 June 1900, 7.

Boxer “sympathy” of various Qing officials, in particular Cixi, for worsening the crisis.²⁶ Reports from China accused Chinese officials of disrupting telegrams to “conceal the movements of the Boxers.”²⁷ The *Ottawa Free Press* noted the “covert threats” of “Li [Hongzhang] and the other viceroys,” when they warned that an advance towards Beijing might provoke the slaughter of the besieged legationers.²⁸ There were also reports of government edicts that described the Western ministers as “hostages pending the result of the overtures of the abandonment of the hostilities against China.”²⁹

The use of secret edicts to encourage the Boxers drew the ire of outside commentators, who used a series of proclamations as evidence of the government’s betrayal of the West.³⁰ They claimed that Cixi would issue edicts in pairs, one for release to Western diplomats, which called on officials to suppress the Uprising, and another that would be sent internally, exhorting the Chinese government to aid the Boxers.³¹ The press particularly cited an edict forbidding Chinese troops to fire on the Boxers as a hateful example of this policy.³² Another edict tried to absolve the government of blame for the anger of the Chinese people, stating that it was impossible to protect the foreign legations during the crisis. Canadian newspapers felt

²⁶ “Fighting In China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 8 June 1900, 1; “The Dowager Empress of China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 July 1900, 2.

²⁷ “Crisis In China,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 5 June 1900, 1.

²⁸ “The Big Knife,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 3 August 1900, 8.

²⁹ “China Ready,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 30 July 1900, 3.

³⁰ “Intervention In China,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 2 June 1900, 2; “Are The Legations Alive?” *Ottawa Citizen*, 25 July 1900, 4; “Russian Legation Tortured To Death,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 14 July 1900, 1; “Chinese Government Implicated In Massacres,” *Ottawa Journal*, 2 August 1900, 8.

³¹ “Admirals Are Determined,” *Toronto Globe*, 11 June 1900, 2; “Disquieting Situation,” *Toronto Globe*, 13 August 1900, 1.

³² “Situation Serious,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 June 1900, 2; “Atrocities of Boxers,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 27 June 1900, 2; “Alarming News From China,” *Toronto Globe*, 7 June 1900, 8.

that this edict was a dishonest attempt to paint the Chinese government as a victim of the Uprising.³³

While such edicts expressed a level of deceit which had violence and murder as its indirect consequences, the press also described the Chinese use of assassination as an accepted political tool. The killing of Baron von Ketteler, the German minister, was one example. The press described the killing as a trap laid by Prince Duan who planned to deflect blame for the murder onto fanatics.³⁴ Ketteler left the legations to attend a conference at the Zongli Yamen and was shot as he rode to his destination.³⁵

The use of poison to sicken, or madden, was noted with unsurprised calm.³⁶ The false reports in the Canadian press of the emperor's death provide a telltale example of the Chinese use of assassination. The press claimed that the court was preparing to go into mourning while the emperor was still alive. The *Free Press* noted "all agree that His Majesty is in a precarious condition, some averring that slow poisoning is doing its work, and that the numerous reports of his death will shortly reach some culmination."³⁷ Cixi supposedly kept the Emperor continually drugged prior to the crisis.³⁸

³³ "Allied Troops Defeated," *Manitoba Free Press*, 12 July 1900, 1; "More News Of The Legations," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 11 July 1900, 1; "'Goodbye' Message From Peking," *Ottawa Journal*, 12 July 1900, 1. The assumption was, of course, that the legations had been taken, and the inhabitants slaughtered.

³⁴ "Foreigners Holding Out," *Victoria Daily Times*, 4 July 1900, 2; "Legations Sorely Pressed," *Ottawa Free Press*, 4 July 1900, 8; "Put Too Much Trust In Chinese Promises," *Ottawa Journal*, 19 July 1900, 2; "Prince Tuan's Treachery," *Toronto Globe*, 4 July 1900, 2.

³⁵ "The Possibility of a Terrible Massacre," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 July 1900, 1. The *Tribune* presented two accounts of Von Ketteler's killing.

³⁶ "Ominous For Peace," *Vancouver Province*, 6 June 1900, 1; "Out of Savage Lands," *Vancouver Province*, 29 August 1900, 4; "The Case For The 'Boxers'," *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 21 June 1900, 6; "Desperate Fighting," *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 11 July 1900, 1; "In Suspense," *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 July 1900, 1.

³⁷ "Scramble For China," *Manitoba Free Press*, 25 April 1900, 3.

³⁸ "Oriental Advices," *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 April 1900, 8.

During this stage of the crisis, Canadian papers reported again that the Emperor had died from an opium overdose prescribed by Prince Duan who had forced the Emperor and Empress Dowager to commit suicide. The Emperor supposedly died within an hour, while Cixi craftily swallowed only a portion of the poison and survived, though reportedly “insane.”³⁹ Just weeks after she was thought to be “hopelessly mad,” the press reported that she had resumed control of the government.⁴⁰

In general, Cixi was a touchstone for Western complaints about Chinese perfidy, both in word and deed. The Western press called her the “Catherine de Medici of China” and the “modern Chinese Jezebel” and portrayed her as an icon of cunning and deceit. She inspired more than hatred however, as her patriotism admired by the newspapers that demonized her. When the Boxer crisis reached its height, reports placed her as the instigator of the Uprising, the woman who emphatically commanded the extermination of all foreigners in China.⁴¹

The press commented on the arrogant manner in which she exercised her power. This included an attempt to humiliate the wives of the foreign ministers by having

³⁹ *Manitoba Free Press*, “Whispering The Terrible Story,” 6 July 1900, 1; *Manitoba Free Press*, “Emperor Is Dead,” 6 July 1900, 7; “Allies May Not Be Able To Hold Tien Tsin,” *Ottawa Journal*, 5 July 1900, 7.

⁴⁰ “There Will Be No Delay,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 July 1900, 1; “Big Surprise From China Today,” *Ottawa Journal*, 10 July 1900, 1; “There Is Still Doubt As To The Fate Of The Legations,” *Toronto World*, 11 July 1900, 1.

⁴¹ “The Chinese War,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 24 June 1900, 1; “Chinese Catherine De Medici,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 12, “The Future of China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 11 June 1900, 3; “Kang Yu-Wei Reformer,” *Ottawa Journal*, 6 July 1900, 3; “Origin Of The Boxers: China’s Empress And Her Coups,” *Ottawa Journal*, 30 June 1900, 9.



THE CHINESE CRISIS.
(St. Paul Monocle Press.)

Figure 7. "The Chinese Crisis," *Victoria Daily Times*, 13 June 1900, 8.

them “kow-tow” to her in a formal audience.⁴² The *Winnipeg Tribune* focused on how she exploited ethnic divisions in her realm to maintain power, balancing Manchu and Han Chinese.⁴³ Moreover, Cixi even allegedly crafted the edicts that depicted the Boxers as innocent victims of the machinations of the evil Christians.⁴⁴ This skill at deception did not just emerge in the Boxer crisis. In the months before the Uprising, she was said to have arranged the “abdication” of the Emperor. An account of the abdication ceremony, written by an unidentified member of the Reform party, illustrates the manipulative skill with which Cixi was credited:

I was one of those who stood around with inkslab and pen for the Emperor to use while the Empress Dowager herself held out the pen to him. Even then His Majesty hesitated to take it and sign the ready prepared ‘Imperial’ decree of abdication held out to him; but an imperious stamp of the right foot and those piercing, menacing eyes of the Empress Dowager frowning upon him seemed to enthrall and fascinate the Emperor, who immediately stretched forth a trembling hand and the next moment with a groan and a gesture of despair, as it were, the fatal deed was done and the Empress Dowager triumphantly snatched the ‘decree’ from her nephew’s hand. Then a sudden change occurred, which those around her were too accustomed to see to be startled or astonished at. The Empress Dowager’s face became instantly suffused with smiles, her eyes became soft and benevolent, and she was all kindness and motherly solicitude for her Imperial nephew!⁴⁵

Reports of her cruelty and mischief so blackened her reputation that the *Ottawa Free Press* called on the British government to do its “duty” and shepherd her off to join “King Bomba, the Mahdi, and the late tyrant of Abyssinia” in oblivion.⁴⁶ She also inspired an editorial verse entitled “Hui San An (Disrespectfully dedicated to the Empress Dowager)”:

⁴² “Out of Savage Lands,” *Vancouver Province*, 29 August 1900, 4; “The Eastern Question,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 9 June 1900, 4.

⁴³ “The Crisis In China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 July 1900, 9.

⁴⁴ “Empress Sympathizes,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 28 June 1900, 2.

⁴⁵ “In Pekin’s Palace,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 April 1900, 3.

⁴⁶ “Chinese Catherine De Medici,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 12.

You're a cunning, bad old dame,
 Hui San An, Hui San An;
 And you play a cut-throat game,
 Hui San An, Hui San An;
 But your jig is nearly up,
 Cold Sorrow's in your cup,
 And its bitter dregs you'll sup,
 Hui San An.⁴⁷

This grudging combination of respect and hatred, very personally directed made her an emblem of the image of the lying “Chinaman” in newspaper articles throughout Canada. It was easy to focus hatred and outrage on her because of her high public profile, though demonizing her in no way softened the depictions of less famous Chinese people as deceitful. One of the ways that the Chinese supposedly deceived the West was the manipulation of telegraphic signals.

During the Uprising, telegraphic communication into the interior of China was unreliable at best. This meant that, in large part, Western correspondents located in the coastal treaty ports manufactured news based on first-person traveller's reports and rumours from the affected areas. It also seems likely, given the sheer number of false reports, that news correspondents crafted plausible stories based on what appeared likely to happen. Nevertheless, the press blamed the Chinese for inaccurate reports and misleading false rumours after the Boxers destroyed wire links to Beijing.⁴⁸ The Western press accused the Chinese officials who controlled the remaining telegraph system of lying about the date of the system's destruction and of

⁴⁷ “Hui San An,” *Vancouver Province*, 9 August 1900, 4

⁴⁸ “Allied Troops Were Repulsed,” *Vancouver Province*, 25 June 1900, 2; “Grave Situation Is Now Admitted,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 20 June 1900, 1.

creating a deliberate program of misinformation about the Uprising to aid their cause.⁴⁹

The absence of authentic, believable news from Beijing and the frequent “faking” associated with news reports from China was widely reported and lamented.⁵⁰ The *Ottawa Journal* dared not believe any “news from Peking;” the *Globe* stated that the worst part of the crisis was the suspense.⁵¹ Despite scorn for the allegedly unreliable reports emanating from Shanghai, most newspapers still drew heavily on the reports of Western journalists in Shanghai for lack of any other sources of information.⁵² The *Globe*, however, reported little news from Shanghai and then in only the most guarded of tones, as it excoriated other Toronto newspapers for inaccuracies and lamented the influence of sensationalism.⁵³ The *Globe* was just as sceptical of positive reports as of lurid stories of massacre. It blamed “half-penny journalism” for instilling false hope in the public, saying that no one could know what

⁴⁹ “Mendacity Of the Mongolian,” *Vancouver World*, 14 August 1900, 7; “With Fire And Sword,” *Toronto Globe*, 18 June 1900, 1. ✓

⁵⁰ “Slaughter In Peking,” *Vancouver Province*, 14 July 1900, 6; “Bombardment Of Tien Tsin,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 22 June 1900, 7; “Lucknow Recalled,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 20 June 1900, 8; “Coming From Peking Towards Tien Tsin,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 24 July 1900, 7; “Many Stories,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 July 1900, 1; “Hope Raised As To The Legation At Peking,” *Ottawa Journal*, 9 July 1900, 8; “Anxiety Is Intense,” *Toronto Globe*, 26 June 1900, 1; “Fake News From China,” *Toronto World*, 11 July 1900, 4. ✓

⁵¹ “The Chinese Wall,” *Ottawa Journal*, 24 July 1900, 4; “Allies Are Powerless,” *Toronto Globe*, 5 July 1900, 1. “News from Peking” refers primarily to Western reports from the treaty ports, though certainly stories from Chinese sources were regarded with even more suspicion.

⁵² “In China,” *Vancouver Province*, 5 July 1900, 4; “The Powers Hit Hard,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 18 June 1900, 1; “Legations Said To Have Been Taken,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 June 1900, 1; “Shanghai Saw The Storm Coming,” *Ottawa Journal*, 10 July 1900, 8; “Prince Tuan Has Ordered General Rising Of Chinese,” *Ottawa Journal*, 18 July 1900, 1; “Tien Tsin,” *Toronto Globe*, 22 June 1900, 1.

⁵³ “The Crisis In China,” *Toronto Globe*, 12 June 1900, 1; “Good News From China,” *Toronto Globe*, 27 June 1900, 1. However, on the 6 July 1900, the *Globe* buckled under, and reported the destruction of the foreign legations and the slaughter of those holed up. (“Foreigners At Peking Slain?” *Toronto Globe*, 6 July 1900, 1.)

was happening at Beijing because news from China was “always” suspect.⁵⁴ Despite widespread claims of systematic Chinese obfuscation, most newspapers tended to print stories first and disclaim them later, due partly to the state of panic brought on by the crisis.⁵⁵

In short, images of deceit were an integral part of the coverage of the Boxer Uprising. These images were broad – that is, the idea that Chinese society was penetrated with secret societies, and that this phenomenon, in turn, predisposed the Chinese culturally to plots and backstabbing. The Canadian press was also more specific, particularly when referring to the Qing government, which supposedly aided the Boxers in a variety of subtle ways, including the sending of secret orders, and the hijacking of the telegraph system to manufacture false news. These charges also touched on the behaviour of individuals, from soldiers employing ambushes and ruses on the battlefield, through mandarins and others commissioning assassinations in politics, to the figure of the Cixi herself, the spider at the heart of an immense Chinese web of intrigue. Such images were built upon ideas regarding Chinese inscrutability, and complemented those of Chinese cruelty and savagery which will be examined in the next chapter.

⁵⁴ “Repulse Of The Allies,” *Toronto Globe*, 17 July 1900, 1.

⁵⁵ *Manitoba Free Press*, “There’s A Bright Ray of Hope,” 21 July 1900, 1; “The Relief of Tien Tsin,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 28 June 1900, 7; “Chinese Situation,” *Toronto Globe*, 29 June 1900, 1. The *Manitoba Free Press* that was microfilmed contains a typographical error on the front page, listing it as “Saturday, July 20, 1900.” This is, however, incorrect, and it is in fact, Saturday, July 21, 1900.

Chapter 4: “The details too revolting to describe”: Images of Chinese Savagery

The Uprising of the Boxers was characterized by numerous mass killings, particularly of Chinese Christians outside of Beijing. The press compared the uprising to “the Indian mutiny, ... the Bulgarian atrocities, ... the wave of Mahdist fanaticism in the Soudan, ... [and] the Armenian massacres” in cruelty and in magnitude.¹ Standard images of Chinese savagery clearly intertwined with those of superstition and deceit, characteristics of the irrational Chinese mind. This combination attested to the ingenious nature of savagery in the Chinese.² Western commentators did not see this complex perfidy as unique to the events surrounding the Uprising. Rather, they saw the pages of modern Chinese history” as being stained with “the blood of helpless and defenseless men and women.”³

Chinese savagery, encompassing both violence and cruelty, appeared in descriptions of the murder of S. M. Brooks, an English missionary, and in accounts of the siege of the legations. The murder of Brooks was particularly shocking because it was the first killing of a foreign missionary in the Uprising.⁴ Later, such reports became commonplace, but as the first, it carried a special emotional load. According

¹ “The Nana Sahib of Peking,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 17 July 1900, 4.

² “Out of Savage Lands,” *Vancouver Province*, 29 August 1900, 4.

³ “Earlier Chinese Massacres,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 4 August 1900, 10; “Chinese Massacres,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 July 1900, 5.

⁴ Paul Cohen, *History In Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 8.

to the Canadian press, the Boxers took him, stripped him naked, dragged around by a rope attached to a hook shoved through his nose, and then, when he tried to escape, pulled him out of the temple where he sought refuge and cut him down, “wounded in seventeen places.”⁵ Then, his assailants hacked the body and tossed it into a canyon.⁶ With an almost morbid fascination the Canadian press presented the details of the case: the unusual cruelty and imagination shown in torturing Brooks, the shocking violence of the seventeen sword-stroke attack, the sword wounds on the backs of his hands, the dismemberment and other desecration of his dead body, the rope placed around his neck, or alternatively through a hook thrust into his nose, and the casual disposal of the body.⁷ Brooks’ murder was just a precursor to the events of the summer, when reports of scenes such as this would become commonplace, and even overlooked, in the newspapers.

Throughout the uprising, mob violence was always a threat and often a reality. Both pro-Boxer government troops and Boxers instigated such violence. This was particularly true during the siege of Beijing, when the streets, controlled by antiforeign protestors, were unsafe for travel.⁸ When Boxers took Tianjin, there was widespread violence within the city, with local officials reportedly burned at the

⁵ “Boxers Number Eleven Million,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 31 March 1900, 6; “Missionary Murdered,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 1 March 1900, 6; “News Of The Orient,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 March 1900, 6.

⁶ “Boxers Number Eleven Million,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 31 March 1900, 6.

⁷ “The Chinese War,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 3 July 1900, 1; “Death To The Foreign Devils,” *Vancouver Province*, 16 June 1900, 1; “Murder of Missionary,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, April 27, 1900, 2; “The Oriental Mail,” *Vancouver Province*, 8 February 1900, 10; “With The ‘Boxers’ Of China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 16 June 1900, 13.

⁸ “A Situation of ‘Veiled Warfare’ – Foreign Ministers Impotent,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 16 June 1900, 5; “Legations Sorely Pressed,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 4 July 1900, 8.

stake.⁹ The countryside was no safer. Chinese troops marching towards Tianjin left “trails of rapine, fire and blood,” the results of this were described explicitly: “Native women were ravished and children were cut in two.”¹⁰ Elsewhere, Boxers attacked Christian communities, and the manner in which they killed converts made for lurid copy. In one village, seventy-five Christians were reportedly immolated, while in another four Italian priests were burnt. Elsewhere, converts were scourged, then hung from their tongues and by their hair.¹¹ The *Ottawa Citizen* told of missionaries and Chinese Christians being killed by soldiers sent to protect them and of a bishop “diabolically tortured and decapitated.”¹²

Beijing was described as just as dangerous, with mass killings near the Imperial palace and four thousand Chinese slain for petitioning Prince Duan to control the unrest; later, five thousand Chinese Roman Catholic converts were supposedly killed by the Boxers and Qing troops.¹³ Nor were these killings limited to the Boxers. It was reported that Li Hongzhang, Chinese statesman and neutral in the conflict, was trying

⁹ “Chinese Reports Today Are Very Startling,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 16 June 1900, 1; “Who Can See The End?,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 16 June 1900, 1; “Veiled War,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 16 June 1900, 1.

¹⁰ “The Chinese Emperor Has Committed Suicide,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 5 July 1900, 1; “Trails Of Rapine, Fire And Blood,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 5 July 1900, 1; “Muttering Before The Storm,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 28 July 1900, 13; “Sliced To Pieces,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 5 July 1900, 8; “Allied Forces Are In A Tight Place,” *Ottawa Journal*, 5 July 1900, 8; “A Message From Peking,” *Toronto Globe*, 5 July 1900, 2.

¹¹ “Boxer Outrages,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 19 May 1900, 6; “Christians Burned Alive,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 11 June 1900, 1; “History Repeating Itself,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 28 July 1900, 14; “China Ready,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 30 July 1900, 3; “Awful Stories Of Torture,” *Ottawa Journal*, 11 July 1900, 1; “The Chinese Situation,” *Toronto Globe*, 11 June 1900, 3.

¹² “Sixty Killed,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 July 1900, 1.

¹³ “Closed To The World,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 18 June 1900, 1; “5,000 Catholics Killed,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 7 July 1900, 2; “Bad News Confirmed,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 7 July 1900, 1; “Peking Streets Run With Blood,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 6 July 1900, 1; “Butchered 5,000 Converts Also,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 July 1900, 1; “News of Massacre Said To Be Confirmed,” *Ottawa Journal*, 7 July 1900, 7; “Relief Of Legation – Not Partition Of China,” *Ottawa Journal*, 3 August 1900, 8; “Looking To Japan,” *Toronto Globe*, 7 July 1900, 13. Reports of the death toll ran as high as ten thousand, though five was the more often used estimate.



WHAT SOMETIMES HAPPENS TO A 'BOXER.'

Figure 8. "What Sometimes Happens To A 'Boxer'," *Ottawa Free Press*, 16 June 1900, 13.

to maintain order by a “virtual reign of terror,” in which his troops executed 2000 members of “the disorderly elements.”¹⁴

Despite the widespread coverage of massacres in the countryside and the Von Ketteler assassination, the stories that received the most attention were fabrications. Both the storming of the legations, and the torture and murder of the Russian Minister de Giers were never more than rumours, yet both were luridly reported in excruciating detail as fact. The legations were supposedly stormed in June or early July 1900, and everyone inside killed. A number of differing accounts were published; all reported that Boxers and Chinese soldiers put the remaining Europeans to the sword in spectacular detail.¹⁵

The foreign troops were so hopelessly outnumbered that their fate was certain. The moment the mob broke in the courtyard was converted into a shambles. Others of the invaders spread into the interior of the building. The correspondent adds: “There is only left the hope that in the final rush of the murderous horde, the men of the legation had time to slay with their own hands their women and children. The Chinese are whispering the terrible story under their breaths. Their attitude towards foreigners in the streets has undergone a strange change. The demeanor of the better class of Chinese is one of pity rather than of triumph; even the rabble in the native quarters are silent.”¹⁶

This was one of the most often repeated stories of the crisis. The fervent hope that white women and children died at the hands of white men, and not Chinese, is a testament to the strength of the belief in Chinese savagery and the fear with which the

¹⁴ “Authentic Peking News,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 2 August 1900, 1; “The Veil At Peking Is Raised At Last,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 2 August 1900, 3.

¹⁵ “Ghastly Details,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 17 July 1900, 1; “Bad News From China,” *Vancouver Province*, 3 July 1900, 4; “Fought Grandly To The Last Minute,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 16 July 1900, 1.

¹⁶ “Hope It Is Untrue,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 6 July 1900, 1; “Story of Massacre,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 July 1900, 2; “May Be Safe,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 July 1900, 7; “Outbreak Will Extend To China’s Southern Provinces,” *Ottawa Journal*, 6 July 1900, 2. The *Toronto Globe* echoed this sentiment: “The white men died at the post of duty and honor, and it is a matter of congratulation, under the awful circumstances, that white women and children died at the hands of their loved ones.” (“Terrible Rumors Are Confirmed,” *Toronto Globe*, 16 July 1900, 1)

Chinese were regarded. It was implied that at least in the hands of the white men the deaths would be clean, quick, and not punctuated by rape and torture.

Canadian newspapers reported that the heads of captured guards were carried through the streets on spears and that the rooms of the legations were filled with unburied corpses.¹⁷ The *Toronto Globe* labelled the attack and subsequent slaughter a “crime against humanity,” and even printed a list of the supposed dead.¹⁸ Subsequent reports of the legations’ survival had little effect on portrayals of the character of the Chinese people – the perception of savage behaviour had been seared into the public eye.

The supposed mutilation of captured corpses spawned many sensationalist articles including tales of the heads of both captured guards and members of Admiral Seymour’s expedition being removed from their corpses and paraded around the city as part of anti-foreign demonstrations.¹⁹ Just as often, details were left to the reader’s imagination.²⁰ For example, the reports of Baron von Ketteler’s death stated simply that his body was “hideously mutilated.”²¹ Several newspapers lamented that China had fallen into chaos and that the Chinese were mutilating the dead.²² Both the *Free Press* and the *Tribune* described China as a “carnival of blood and fire,” where the

¹⁷ “The Powers Helpless,” *Vancouver Province*, 4 July 1900, 8; “Three Days Of Hard Fighting,” *Vancouver Province*, 17 July 1900, 1; “Now For Vengeance,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 July 1900, 7.

¹⁸ “Victims of Peking Tragedy,” *Toronto Globe*, 19 July 1900, 2.

¹⁹ “The Possibility of a Terrible Massacre,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 July 1900, 1; “Murder of German Minister,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 2 July 1900, 1; “All Were Massacred!” *Manitoba Free Press*, 16 July 1900, 1.

²⁰ “Danger Increasing,” *Toronto Globe*, 20 July 1900, 1.

²¹ “The Possibility of a Terrible Massacre,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 July 1900, 1; “Will Massacre All Foreigners,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 4 July 1900, 1.

²² “Something About China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 July 1900, 2; “5,000 Catholics Killed,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 7 July 1900, 2; “Boxer Fight,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 August 1900, 3.

Chinese revelled in torture, murder and mutilation.²³ It was reported that during the uprising the foreign cemetery outside of Beijing had been disturbed though details of the desecration were left to the reader's imagination.²⁴ Not only were bodies said to be mutilated there and elsewhere, but living captives were supposedly tortured by methods such as "ling che [lingchi], or the slicing process."²⁵ Other stories asserted that prisoners of the Chinese had had their eyes removed and their cheeks, arms and legs cut off.²⁶ Some newspapers, such as the *Tribune* and *Toronto World*, asserted that there was little use in trying to describe the details because they were too horrible to be imagined.²⁷

The *Tribune* compared Chinese cruelty to that of "the American Indian," but noted that the Chinese add "the demoniac intensity of a race that is almost civilized, a race which appropriates the arts of white men without appreciating them."²⁸ Later, in a statement that demonstrates the clearly interconnected nature of Western images of the Chinese, it quoted W. D. Washburn, a former governor of Minnesota who had spent time in China and was familiar with Chinese political leaders, as saying that he would feel "just as safe in the hands of Sioux Indians during their most savage and bloodthirsty as in the power of the treacherous Chinese."²⁹ Likewise, the *Victoria*

²³ "Present Day Troubles," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 June 1900, 2; "The Situation In China," *Manitoba Free Press*, 13 July 1900, 4.

²⁴ "Great Britain's Policy In China," *Manitoba Free Press*, 30 August 1900, 1.

²⁵ "The Massacre of the Foreigners," *Ottawa Citizen*, 5 July 1900, 1; "Allied Forces Are In A Tight Place," *Ottawa Journal*, 5 July 1900, 8; "Prepare For The Worst," *Ottawa Journal*, 6 July 1900, 7.

²⁶ "The Chinese Emperor Has Committed Suicide," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 5 July 1900, 1; "Pekin News Is Shocking," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 16 July 1900, 1; "The Allies Defeated," *Manitoba Free Press*, 17 July 1900, 7; "Very Bad News From Tien Tsin," *Ottawa Journal*, 16 July 1900, 1.

²⁷ "The Streets Literally Running With Blood," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 July 1900, 1; "Horrors Of The Massacre Told By A Chinese Merchant," *Toronto World*, 20 July 1900, 2.

²⁸ "The Streets Literally Running With Blood," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 July 1900, 1.

²⁹ "The Crisis In China," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 July 1900, 9. These statements were attributed to W. D. Washburn while he was staying in Montreal. The *Tribune* stated that Washburn

Daily Times discussed Chinese cruelty in a manner that was particularly instructive of his racist perspective:

According to all accounts, the North American Indian at his worst was an angel of mercy compared with a Chinaman with a helpless victim in his power. Let the altruists and the apologists for the Mongols say what they will, there is no room for a nation like China in the world to-day.³⁰

Similarly, the *Ottawa Free Press* announced that “the most hideous outrages of the American Indians in colonial days were outdone.”³¹

Reports of torture and mass killings sparked furious editorials, calling for justice, or at least vengeance: “‘revenge to-day, mourning to-morrow’ is practically the universal cry of Europe,” reported the *Ottawa Journal*.³² The public outcry generated by these stories increased with news of the alleged torture and slaying of M. de Giers. The lurid and fanciful report of the killing of the Russian envoy was said to have brought the Tsar to tears.³³ The killing of M. de Giers was nevertheless presented carefully, the story rich in invented detail. The Russian envoy, several newspapers reported, had been captured, beaten and tortured before being thrown into a cauldron and boiled to death. His wife “suffered a fate worse than death,” then was beaten and tortured to death with sharp sticks.³⁴ This provoked widespread outrage in

knew Li Hongzhang well, and that the thought most of the Chinese leadership was “tarred with the same stick” – that of savagery and cruelty.

³⁰ “China,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 14 July 1900, 4.

³¹ “Li Hung Chang A Fraud,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 30 June 1900, 15.

³² “Latest From Tien Tsin,” *Ottawa Journal*, 16 July 1900, 7.

³³ “Were Tortured By Chinese,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 14 July 1900, 1; “Boiled To Death,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 1; “Russian Legation Tortured To Death,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 14 July 1900, 1; “Czar Gets News Of A Massacre,” *Ottawa Journal*, 14 July 1900, 9.

³⁴ “Shocking Atrocities,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 14 July 1900, 1; “Tortured By Fiends,” *Vancouver Province*, 14 July 1900, 1; “Czar Gets News Of A Massacre,” *Ottawa Journal*, 14 July 1900, 9. The phrase “suffered a fate worse than death” was a euphemism for sexual assault.

the Western press, and editorials condemning the Chinese and calling for revenge.³⁵

The *Ottawa Citizen*, for example, indulged in the following vengeance poetry:

“Vengeance is mine! Thus saith the Lord!”
 The dying missionary cried.
 Hear it, you vile, bloodthirsty horde,
 By whose foul sword a thousand died!
 Listen, and tremble at a crime,
 Blacker than that at Cawnpore’s wall,
 Your China might have been sublime,
 But you made of it a Hell.

Can you not see that black night
 Is banished by accusing day?
 After the darkness comes the light!
 “Vengeance is mine! I will repay!”

The souls beneath the altar stone,
 Cried out in torture, “Lord, how long?”
 For fiends like you there’s moan for moan
 For brutal beast there’s thong for thong
 We’ll break in twain the cursed sword
 Incarnadined with blood today;
 “Vengeance is mine! Thus saith the Lord!”
 And what the Lord says we obey!

Hear England’s retribution cry—
 Those that have slaughtered, they shall die,
 Heart of humanity, be still!
 Repay we must! Repay we will!³⁶

In a striking editorial, the *World* expressed deep despair and heroic defiance in the face of “the worst specimens of the human race.” The Chinese were “[f]iends incarnate to whom mercy is a term of mockery; who expect and give none; whose talents all run to ingenuity in inflicting pain.” It exalted de Giers’ fortitude in resisting torture, and facing death “like [a man] of the great white race,” and celebrated his

³⁵ “Crime of the Centuries,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 July 1900, 4. To be more specific, the *Citizen* threatened that one hundred and fifty thousand troops would capture Beijing, and carry out a punishment that would not only fit the crime, but be so fierce as to preclude the Chinese from ever doing it again.

³⁶ “I Will Repay,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 July 1900, 4.



Figure 9. "The Week In Caricature," *Vancouver Province*, 18 August 1900, 1. The text in the images, clockwise from the top left, reads: "Having entered Peking, The Allies should now hang the Shanghai Lair," "The End of the Whi-rld," "Sergt North's Squad Averages The Missionaries," and "British Legation. Relieved at Last. Sir Claude - 'Aw bai jove. You here?'"

wife's constancy in encouraging him to remain firm in his Christianity, even as the mob raped her.³⁷ This editorial was remarkable for its tone of desperation; even if foreigners fell victim to Chinese savagery, at least they would die in a superior manner. At times, the lines between corpse mutilation and torture were blurred.

Perhaps for these reasons, the press claimed that European troops preferred to be shot by their comrades rather than be captured by the Chinese.³⁸ The *News-Advertiser* reported that some Western inhabitants of Tianjin had similar mutual death pacts: that each would shoot the wives and children of the others should their capture become a certainty.³⁹ The *Citizen* noted that the ladies of the legation in Beijing had supplied themselves with poison against the possibility of capture.⁴⁰ However, the *Ottawa Citizen* also recounted that Chinese civilians, pursued by European troops, decapitated their own women and children.⁴¹

Other coverage of torture in Canadian newspapers was explicit and horrified. Stories of torture produce visceral, emotional reactions in readers.⁴² These very reactions also made excellent copy, and newspapers seeking a greater readership

³⁷ "The Chinese Atrocities," *Vancouver World*, 17 July 1900, 2. The idea that the "white race" was naturally superior to all other kinds of humans was in full bloom during the Boxer Uprising. While Rudyard Kipling may be the most famous poet to celebrate the notion, the idea was widespread and had become a convention in the West. Both Ivan Hannaford, *Race: A History of an Idea in the West* and Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, Edmund Howard, trans. (New York: Basic Books, 1974) make excellent surveys of white supremacist thought in Europe and North America. Steven J. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, also deals with the subject, though particularly in regard to scientific racism, while Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970) 226-230, discusses the intersection of white supremacy and Canadian imperialism.

³⁸ "Pekin News Is Shocking," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 16 July 1900, 1; "The Allies Defeated," *Manitoba Free Press*, 17 July 1900, 7; "An Ugly Story," *Ottawa Free Press*, 16 July 1900, 1; "Very Bad News From Tien Tsin," *Ottawa Journal*, 16 July 1900, 1.

³⁹ "Eastern Items," *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, August 10, 1900, 6.

⁴⁰ "Story of the Peking Massacre Believed," *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 July 1900, 7.

⁴¹ "Boxer Fight," *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 August 1900, 3.

⁴² Kate Millett, *The Politics of Cruelty: An Essay on the Literature of Political Imprisonment* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 159. Ms. Millett discusses her reaction to both photographs and written descriptions of torture.

exploited this.⁴³ While the newspapers did not provide photographs or illustrations of torture, the verbal descriptions of Chinese torture methods were very explicit. Images of torture in China were particularly strong, because of the interplay between Western ideas about torture and Western ideas about Chinese civilization. Edward Peters notes that torture, as a European symbol, represented a brutal past transcended in the late eighteenth century in a quest for perfect civilization. Its abolition was a great moral benchmark for nineteenth century writers and thinkers.⁴⁴ And so, the practice of torture placed Chinese society squarely in the realm of the depraved, where superstition and rule of force reigned. It was a placement that matched other images of Chinese culture, as superstitious, poorly and roughly ruled, and backward.

Newspapers also saw criminal punishments as a sign of Chinese cruelty.⁴⁵ With excruciating detail, the *Ottawa Free Press* presented these practices as a natural outgrowth of Chinese culture, since “no country has more refined cruelty, termed administration of law, as an every day occurrence than the Flowery Kingdom.”⁴⁶ Such cruelties included “minor” punishments (such as ear-twisting and the block, along with the rack, bamboo beating, face flogging, “monkey grasping the peach,” smoking of the head, and the swing) and execution methods such as decapitation and strangulation.⁴⁷ The newspapers gave more complete explanations of punishments for

⁴³ Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 71-74.

⁴⁴ Edward Peters, *Torture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 101-102.

⁴⁵ “News Of Massacre Said To Be Confirmed,” *Ottawa Journal*, 7 July 1900, 7.

⁴⁶ “Punishments of Torture Which Are Law in China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 18 August 1900, 12; “Where The Punishment More Than Fits The Crime,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 11 August 1900, 13.

⁴⁷ “Punishments of Torture Which Are Law in China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 18 August 1900, 12; “Where The Punishment More Than Fits The Crime,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 11 August 1900, 13. These punishments were enumerated without explanation, though the rack would have been familiar to many Western readers, and bamboo beating and face flogging descriptively named. The swing, monkey grasping the peach and smoking of the head were

particularly serious crimes, such as the “hot-water serpent” or various methods of blinding. The hot-water serpent involved boiling victims to death by means of a long coil of hose wrapped around their bodies. Boiling water was then poured into the hose, allowed to cool, drained and refilled for as long as it took to be fatal. According to the *Ottawa Free Press*, blinding took place in a number of different manners. In eastern China, it said, the victims were buried up to their neck in the ground and their eyes plucked out, while in western China, the victims were staked out, and their faces beaten with bags of quicklime. The tears produced fired the quicklime, and the eyes were burned out.⁴⁸

Tortures were not inflicted just on criminals. The Chinese were also accused of subjecting the wounded and captured to “what is known as ‘ling che,’ [lingchi] or the slicing process.”⁴⁹ The *lingchi* maintained its notoriety into the late twentieth century and has been featured in photographic exhibitions on torture.⁵⁰ Unlike some “events” of the Uprising, it was not just concocted by the Western press. Different newspapers described the slicing process differently. The *Vancouver World* explained:

The victim is enclosed naked in a wire cage too small for his body; when the cage is drawn up and fastened, portions of the flesh of the prisoner protrude through the meshes like the bulges in a quilted garment. The cage and its inmate are hung up in the sun, and each morning a man with a razor-edged sword comes round and

left without explanation. Instead, their colourful names served to stimulate the reader’s imagination.

⁴⁸ “Punishments of Torture Which Are Law in China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 18 August 1900, 12.

⁴⁹ “All Perished,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 5 July 1900, 1; “Prisoners Tortured,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 July 1900, 2; “The Massacre of the Foreigners,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 5 July 1900, 1; “Allied Forces Are In A Tight Place,” *Ottawa Journal*, 5 July 1900, 8; “Prepare For The Worst,” *Ottawa Journal*, 6 July 1900, 7.

⁵⁰ Kate Millett, *The Politics of Cruelty*, 158.

slices off the bulges, leaving the heat of the sun to dry the blood on the fresh surfaces. This is repeated as long as life remains.⁵¹

However, the *Ottawa Free Press* offered another description of the *lingchi*:

The condemned man is placed on his back, arms and legs extended, and fettered to pegs in the ground. With a knife the executioner hacks off the flesh at the eyebrows, the cheeks, the nose, the ears, the breasts, the hips, the thighs, and the calves, and then the hands are cut off and the arms and the legs. Meanwhile the body is being hacked with a knife by another operator, who skillfully avoids vital spots. Finally, when the victim is almost dead from loss of blood, with a stab in the pit of the stomach and a single sword blow at the neck he is finished.⁵²

Although it was not the only torture to be described thoroughly, the press most often referred to it by name and used it as an emblem of Chinese cruelty, of the depths to which Chinese culture had sunk.⁵³ Torture was also intimately tied to ideas about Chinese xenophobia. Because torture, as an act, objectifies and dehumanizes the human body, the Chinese willingness to torture Europeans seemed to be proof of their contempt for the West.⁵⁴

Of course, these images of cruelty and mass murder built upon a framework of ideas about the Chinese. They were in part based on assumptions about what the Chinese were capable of, rather than on what was actually happening in China. This is not to say that people were not killed during the Uprising, but rather that the most publicized cases were manufactured out of the shared image of the Chinese as

⁵¹ "China's Present Triumph," *Vancouver World*, 13 July 1900, 2. The article also describes the bamboo sprout punishment, in which plants are grown through people.

⁵² "Chinese Civilization," *Ottawa Free Press*, 7 July 1900, 12. Millett's account resembles the *Ottawa Free Press* more closely.

⁵³ "Appalling Practices Of Chinese Soldierly," *Vancouver World*, July 24, 1900, 5. Alongside descriptions of even more tortures, the article also cites instances of cannibalism in 1841 as proof of the debased nature of the Chinese.

⁵⁴ Laura E. Tanner, *Intimate Violence: Reading Rape and Torture in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 3. This also ties into Western ideas about the blasé Chinese attitude towards death, in their willingness to torture other Chinese people, as much as the Chinese willingness to torture Westerners seemed to speak to the image of the xenophobic Chinese. In both cases, death was trivialized.

xenophobic, tricky, casual about death, and intensely cruel. Because ideas about cruelty, and especially torture, provoked such a visceral reaction in both readers and commentators, they provide a uniquely revealing insight both into the image of the Chinese and into the prevalent racism. A hierarchy of cruelty among stereotypes is revealed: the Chinese were crueller than North American Indian people, who themselves were renowned for their imagination and willingness in torturing captives. Such descriptions also complemented earlier images of Chinese xenophobia, seeming to prove not only that the Chinese hated foreigners, but that they would act on that hatred without hesitation, given a chance to do so.

Chapter 5: The Yellow Peril, National Virility and the White Man's Burden:

Variations on Some "Chinese" Themes

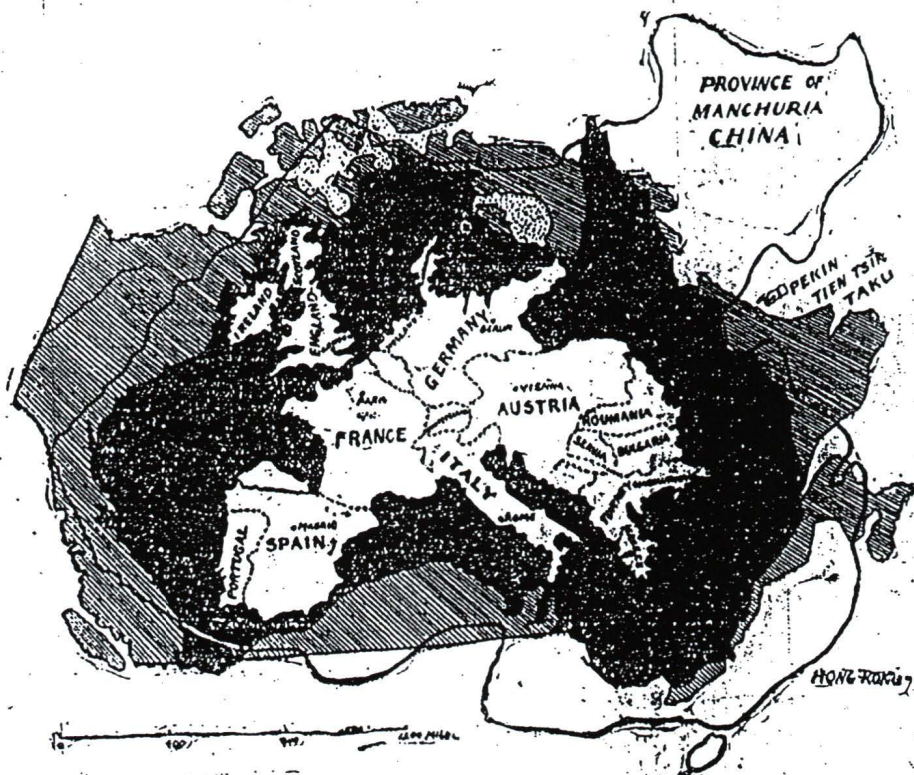
The interweaving of Chinese inscrutability, xenophobia, savagery and deceit formed the basis for much of the reporting in Canadian newspapers. The Canadian press however did not exactly speak in a single voice about "the Chinaman." In particular, there was significant tension between the fear of the "Yellow Peril" expressed in the *Colonist*, *News-Advertiser*, *Citizen*, *Journal*, *Province* and *World* on the one hand, and the *Citizen's* fragile compassion for the Chinese, the *Times'* contempt for Chinese masculinity, the *Manitoba Free Press's* confident Imperial jingoism and the *Ottawa Free Press'* and *Winnipeg Tribune's* view of China as improvable and as a source for potential Christian converts on the other. The *Toronto Globe* straddled the fence admirably during the crisis, at times fearful of the Chinese, and at other times dismissive.

The fear of the "Yellow Peril" appeared in many news reports. China contained "a teeming and seething population of more than 400,000,000" who were "almost insensible to pain, have no fear of death, and are imbued with a fierce hatred of the foreigner."¹ The threat of the large population of China producing huge armies of

¹ "China For The Chinese," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 24 June 1900, 10; "A Frenchman's Gloomy View," *Toronto Globe*, 10 July 1900, 3.

MAP SHOWING RELATIVE AREAS OF CHINA, CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND EUROPE (MINUS SCANDINAVIA AND RUSSIA.)

	Area (Miles)	Population
China.....	4,218,000	488,000,000
Canada.....	3,456,000	6,000,000
Australia.....	2,973,000	5,000,000
Europe.....	1,349,000	275,000,000



The above map shows at a glance, with an approximation to accuracy, the relative areas of China, Canada, Australia, and all Europe without Scandinavia and Russia. Europe will be readily recognized, standing white on the black background of Australia. Canada forms the shaded background to Australia, and the black line running roughly around all represents the area of China. The diagram and the figures attached give some idea of the vastness of the Ancient Empire, which, within a month, has fallen into anarchy and chaos.

Figure 10. "Map Showing Relative Areas Of China, Canada, Australia and Europe (Minus Scandinavia and Russia)," *Ottawa Free Press*, 21 July 1900, 16.

soldiers and workers, assorted fears of constantly improved Chinese armaments and troop quality, and a sense that China was shedding the passivity of the last millennium all served to make the Chinese threat seem all too real. The Perilists feared that they had seriously underestimated China's strength.² The *Toronto World* proclaimed that the British Empire, including Canada, must prepare for the inevitable conflict with China.³ Anticipation of Chinese improvement frightened Western commentators of this sort most of all. As the *Vancouver World* put it:

Suppose John [Chinaman] should catch the soldiering fever, and some Celestial Suwarrow were to arise and with his own hands and voice teach his countrymen the noble art of fighting: form them into battalions, army corps, divisions, procure for them the finest and most deadly weapons of modern warfare, start ammunition factories, gun foundries and so forth, what then?⁴

This was the Yellow Peril made manifest. China, someday featuring as many potential soldiers as in Europe's armies combined, armed with the best weapons, trained to be the equal of European armies and backed by an industrial base with access to more workers, could be depicted as a very tangible threat to European military superiority. The rhetorical question at the end of the *World's* editorial reveals a second assumption – if China should ever be Europe's equal, it would naturally attack the West.

The prospect of facing Chinese troops seemed daunting to Canadian journalists. Its population base threatened huge army sizes, while rumours from the field of battle did not paint a brighter picture. Whether it was reports of twenty-five

² "Should China Awake," *Vancouver Semi-Weekly World*, 19 June 1900, 4; "China," *Ottawa Free Press*, 21 July 1900, 4; "Fighting For Their Lives," *Ottawa Free Press*, 25 June 1900, 1; "China," *Toronto Globe*, 30 June 1900, 20; "Chinese Troops And Boxers Have Slaughtered Each Other," *Toronto World*, 9 June 1900, 1. "Fighting For Their Lives" carried a report that placed the number of Boxers in northern China at three million – one consequence of China's large population. The *World* placed the number of Boxers at four million.

³ "A Mighty Struggle At Hand," *Toronto World*, 7 July 1900, 6.

⁴ "Should China Awake," *Vancouver Semi-Weekly World*, 19 June 1900, 4.

thousand troops at “Latai,” or twenty-five thousand at “Shan-Hai-Wan” [Shanhaiguan], twenty, forty, or sixty or one hundred-fifty thousand troops at Beijing, the sheer number of soldiers supposedly mobilized and in combat was overwhelming and frightening.⁵ Even worse were reports that the “army of the eight banners,” with a strength of 230 000 to 330 000 men, and the Ying Ping, or national army, with 540 000 to 660 000 troops, were being mobilized, and might threaten European forces.⁶ European military commanders in China admitted that they lacked adequate intelligence about Chinese forces, partly due to incomplete reconnaissance, and partly because they suspected Chinese information.⁷ This uncertainty on the part of the European military added to the fears of the press – for if Western generals in China did not know how many Chinese troops they faced, who was to say that these reports were false, or claim with certainty that the West was safe.

Newspaper stories thus seemed to confirm the fears of Yellow Peril theorists, who warned of the implications of great “hordes” of skilfully led Chinese troops. In July 1900, the population of China, and the size of possible military levies, raised concerns that “if all China is practically up in arms then all the allied forces can do nothing except singe the beard and inflict pin-pricks on the hide of the great Chinese

⁵ “Allied Troops Were Repulsed,” *Vancouver Province*, 25 June 1900, 2; “Seymour Is Relieved,” *Vancouver Province*, 28 June 1900, 1; “Further Details,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 4 July 1900, 1; “Abandon Hope!” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 26 July 1900, 1; “China Prepares,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 26 July 1900, 8; “All Dead In Peking,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 4 July 1900, 1; “Seymour Relieved,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 28 June 1900, 1; “The Chinese Army,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 23 June 1900, 1; “Legations Safe On Fourth Of July,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 9 July 1900, 7; “Chinese Will Resist Europeans At Peking,” *Ottawa Journal*, 14 June 1900, 1; “Seymour’s Force Relieved,” *Ottawa Journal*, 28 June 1900, 1; “Things At A Serious Pass In China Now,” *Ottawa Journal*, 4 July 1900, 7; “Seymour’s Force Relieved,” *Ottawa Journal*, 28 June 1900, 1; “Prince Tuan Has Ordered General Rising of Chinese,” *Ottawa Journal*, 18 July 1900, 1; “An Alarming Situation,” *Toronto Globe*, 15 June 1900, 1.

⁶ “Bad News From China,” *Vancouver Province*, 3 July 1900, 4. One Russian intelligence estimate quoted in the *Toronto Globe* put the total Chinese army strength at 1 725 000. (“Prince Tuan,” *Toronto Globe*, 4 July 1900, 1.)

⁷ “Tze-Hsi In A New Role,” *Vancouver Province*, 10 July 1900, 1

dragon.”⁸ Not just the large population base and the corresponding potential to raise a huge army posed the threat.⁹ The perception that the Chinese did not fear death contributed to the trepidation of some writers. This recklessness in the face of danger, combined with European instruction, could make for an effective army.¹⁰ Chinese soldiers supposedly fought with “the same fatalistic madness” that made the “half-armed dervishes of the Soudan so formidable.”¹¹ In an editorial that calls to mind the body of discourse on Chinese deceit and racist comparisons of Chinese and Sioux “savagery”, the *Vancouver World* worried that the cunning of the Chinese made them more dangerous foes than the “stupid Negroes of the African wilds” whom British troops had faced in the Zulu Wars.¹² Reports that the Chinese had been arming and training themselves produced more dire predictions of military failure in the press.¹³

Most disturbing was the military skill displayed in 1900 by the Chinese forces who could no longer be considered an “undisciplined rabble.”¹⁴ In early May, even before the conflict escalated, the *Globe* praised the skill and discipline of Chinese Imperial troops under British command.¹⁵ Now, China had an “army of the modern type,” with three hundred thousand troops reported in and around Beijing during June

⁸ “The Mongolian Millions,” *Vancouver World*, 31 July 1900, 4.

⁹ “China’s Present Triumph,” *Vancouver World*, 13 July 1900, 2.

¹⁰ “The Yellow Terror,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 12 July 1900, 1; “Shanghai Saw The Storm Coming,” *Ottawa Journal*, 10 July 1900, 8.

¹¹ “The Chinese Crisis,” *Vancouver World*, 19 June 1900, 4.

¹² “The Chinese Crisis,” *Vancouver World*, 19 June 1900, 4.

¹³ “In China,” *Toronto Globe*, 26 June 1900, 6; “Awaiting News of Seymour,” *Toronto Globe*, 28 June 1900, 2; “Views Of A German General,” *Toronto Globe*, 28 June 1900, 2.

¹⁴ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, “In China,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 13 July 1900, 4.

¹⁵ “Brave Chinese Soldiers,” *Toronto Globe*, 15 May 1900, 1.

1900, armed with German-made Mauser repeating rifles, Creusot and Krupp field guns and Maxim machine guns.¹⁶

Possession of these weapons was particularly significant because these new weapons represented a marked jump in capability for Chinese troops. The Mauser was a new class of rifles developed since 1870. It was breech-loading and magazine fed, giving an infantryman a theoretical rate of fire of about thirty rounds a minute.¹⁷ The muzzle-loading gun of the early nineteenth century, by comparison, could manage two shots per minute in the hands of a skilled operator.¹⁸ The Maxim machine gun, the first of a new generation of rapid-firing weapons, could efficiently cut apart attacking formations. The Boers had recently employed larger calibre Maxim-designed machine guns against the British, with frightening effect.¹⁹ The Creusot and Krupp guns were modern, rifle-barrelled artillery pieces, which possessed superior range and reliability to older, muzzle-loading artillery.²⁰ All of these new weapons greatly enhanced the ability of the Chinese army to kill their opponents and kill them more efficiently. This was particularly frightening and threatening because of the fear that technologically-aided military successes would

¹⁶ "The News From China," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 15 July 1900, 4; "Admiral Seymour's Force Wiped Out," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 26 June 1900, 1; "Foreign Troops Reported To Have Fought With Chinese," *Ottawa Journal*, 15 June 1900, 1; "Foreign Troops At Tien Tsin Have Been Relieved," *Ottawa Journal*, 26 June 1900, 1; "Europe and China," *Ottawa Journal*, 14 July 1900, 4; "Views Of A German General," *Toronto Globe*, 28 June 1900, 2; "The Relief Column For Peking Makes Very Slow Progress," *Toronto World*, 15 June 1900, 1.

¹⁷ Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Evolution Of Weapons And Warfare* (Indianapolis: The Bobs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1980) 215.

¹⁸ Donald Featherstone, *Weapons And Equipment of the Victorian Soldier* (Poole: Blandford Press, 1978) 18.

¹⁹ Featherstone, *Weapons And Equipment of the Victorian Soldier*, 65. At a more technical level, the Maxims fired 650 rounds a minute, using the new, smokeless powder. They were particularly effective against charging infantry, because at that high rate of fire, four or five bullets would hit a soldier before he fell down.

²⁰ Featherstone, *Weapons And Equipment of the Victorian Soldier*, 85-88, 95-99; "Pessimistic View," *Toronto Globe*, 14 July 1900, 13.

inspire the Chinese to resist the expedition to Beijing, and even “assume the aggressive against foreign settlements generally.”²¹ In response to this threat, the *Toronto World* called on the Empire to send 100 000 troops to Beijing immediately as a pre-emptive action against the growing Chinese threat.²²

As the crisis deepened, the fighting at Tianjin seemed to bear out earlier fears. Chinese marksmanship with both small arms and artillery was effective, even at routing French and British guns with counter-battery fire.²³ After the anti-Boxer expeditionary forces took Tianjin, Western soldiers discovered evidence of Chinese preparations for war including a stockpile of arms and ammunition “of the most modern type” worth ten million dollars.²⁴ One commentator admitted that this was a serious change; previously, he had thought that China spending money on German weaponry was “money wasted” but recent events proved him wrong by highlighting both the heavy losses at the capture of Dagu and the change in “discipline” of the

²¹ “The Defeat At Tien Tsin,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 17 July 1900, 4.

²² “U.S. Troops Are Ambushed Near Tien Tsin – Few Killed,” *Toronto World*, 25 June 1900, 1. It repeated its calls for stronger military intervention on July 9, calling again for 100 000 troops to crush the Chinese and take Beijing, so that the Yellow Peril would not “menace the entire world.” (“Chinese And The Boers Were Working On The Same Lines,” *Toronto World*, 9 July 1900, 1 and “Canada And The Chinese Question,” *Toronto World*, 9 July 1900, 4.)

²³ “The Oriental Danger,” *Vancouver World*, 13 July 1900, 4; “The Situation In China,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 24 June 1900, 4; “Defeat Of The Allied Forces,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 12 July 1900, 4; “Chinese Marksmanship,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 16 July 1900, 7; “China’s Teeth Are Bared,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 15 June 1900, 1; “’Twas Fierce,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 August 1900, 3; “Seymour’s Force Relieved,” *Ottawa Journal*, 28 June 1900, 1; “Severe Fighting At Tien Tsin,” *Ottawa Journal*, 11 July 1900, 7; “Very Bad News From Tien Tsin,” *Ottawa Journal*, 16 July 1900, 1; “The Chinese Fight Well,” *Toronto Globe*, 11 July 1900, 1. The Chinese used purchased Krupp guns, which were generally considered to be the world standard in field artillery at the time. (“Bad News Only,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, July 3, 1900, 1)

²⁴ “Depending On Japan,” *Vancouver Province*, 6 July 1900, 1; “Troubled China,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, May 18, 1900, 3; “Pekin Streets Run With Blood,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 6 July 1900, 7; “Boxer Fight,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 August 1900, 3; “Russian Legation Tortured To Death,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 14 July 1900, 1; “Butchered 5,000 Converts Also,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 July 1900, 1; “Tien Tsin Relief Force Repulsed,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 25 June 1900, 1; “Prepare For The Worst,” *Ottawa Journal*, 6 July 1900, 7. The repetition of the figure of ten million dollars may also have been a way of justifying rich reparations from China in a peace settlement, despite China’s economic problems.

Chinese.²⁵ The *Globe* noted that it had been foolish and stupid for the West to arm and then antagonize the Chinese people.²⁶ Particularly galling was the fact that the Chinese had successfully turned European weapons and training against the very people who provided them.²⁷

The skilful use of European weapons against Europeans was only made more fearsome by the sense that China was shedding its earlier passivity: “certainly Europe and America are getting new light as to the fighting power of the Chinese” wrote the *Ottawa Journal* and it suggested that white superiority was not inherent but rather a function of superior weapons technology.²⁸ This newly perceived Chinese fighting ability was augmented by the realization that its large population had the potential to make China an industrial power.²⁹ Given the advantages China seemed to possess, “one-third of the world’s population” and “natural resources [that] far surpass such countries as France and Germany” its “awakening ... [would] be terrible.”³⁰ The threat that this represented impressed itself on a commentator in the *New York Herald*, reprinted in the *Vancouver Province*:

It is computed that China could put an army of forty millions in the field. Forty millions of the men of the type already described [insensate to pain, unconcerned

²⁵ “The Chinese Situation,” *Vancouver Province*, 9 July 1900, 4; “Further Details,” *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, 4 July 1900, 1; “Mob Murdering Foreigners; Empress A Prisoner,” *Ottawa Journal*, 4 July 1900, 8; “The Views of Count Cassini,” *Toronto Globe*, 4 July 1900, 4. The former Italian minister to China is quoted verbatim in these four newspapers.

²⁶ “The Chinese Troubles,” *Toronto Globe*, 30 July 1900, 4.

²⁷ “The Crisis In China,” *Vancouver Province*, 12 June 1900, 1; untitled, *Ottawa Citizen*, 23 June 1900, 4; “The Sinews of War,” *Toronto Globe*, 10 July 1900, 2; “The Chinese Puzzle,” *Toronto Globe*, 10 July 1900, 6. The *Citizen* editorial also pointed out that the Chinese invented gunpowder, so that the Chinese turning gunpowder weapons back on the Europeans seemed to be an even break.

²⁸ Untitled, *Ottawa Journal*, 17 July 1900, 4; “Pale Faces Bullying,” *Ottawa Journal*, 20 July 1900, 2.

²⁹ “The Chinese Puzzle,” *Toronto Globe*, 10 July 1900, 6.

³⁰ “The Crisis In China,” *Vancouver Province*, 12 June 1900, 1; “Japan and China,” *Vancouver Province*, 23 July 1900, 4

with death], officered and led by the Japanese, might well be able to put all Europe to the sword.

The barbarians of Northern Europe overwhelmed the civilization of Southern Europe. Now that civilization has everywhere been re-established in Europe, is it not time to ask whether the barbarians of the east may not overwhelm the civilization of the west? Is there not reason to fear that we may be driven back again into another period of darkness, when intelligence will slumber and brute force will be in the ascendant?³¹

This sentiment was echoed by the Chinese consul general in San Francisco, quoted in the *Citizen*, who reminded his audience of China's large population and the consequences of the "white race ... forcing its civilization and its knowledge upon them." With that knowledge, China could manufacture weapons as easily as the West, and under those circumstances "Christianity might triumph and again it might not."³² The threat was clear, and it was just as clear that the West had failed to forestall it.³³ It had disturbed the giant -- witness the "extraordinary bloody writhing of the hitherto inert mass" -- and would be lucky to escape unscathed.³⁴ Even though "Asiatics" had not been able to stand against European troops when the opposing forces were equally matched, the worry was that it would be different when the odds were not so balanced.³⁵

Recognizing the military potential of China's population, the *Victoria Times* and *Toronto Globe* shared the fear of overwhelming numbers hindering European interests in Asia "just as a swarm of grasshoppers have been known to stop a train."³⁶ Neither paper, however, saw these numbers as much of a fundamental threat, though the *Times* was more dismissive than the *Globe*. The Chinese people, the *Times*

³¹ "Japan and China," *Vancouver Province*, 23 July 1900, 4.

³² "Twas Fierce," *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 August 1900, 3.

³³ "The Situation In China," *Toronto World*, 20 June 1900, 4.

³⁴ "The Chinese Blackness," *Ottawa Journal*, 7 July 1900, 4.

³⁵ "The Situation In China," *Vancouver News-Advertiser*, June 26, 1900, 4; "Prince Ching And An Army Said To Be Defending Legations," *Ottawa Journal*, 9 July 1900, 1.

³⁶ "Chinese Problem," *Victoria Daily Times*, 13 August 1900, 4.

claimed, lacked the “manliness and the qualities analogous thereto which are ever present in a martial race.”³⁷ This after all, was China, where “the women act as sailors and boatmen, while the men are employed as chambermaids, laundresses, and seamstresses.”³⁸ Chinese women were portrayed as influential, secretive “tyrants” who ruled their families through underhanded means. In describing the Empress Dowager as “the only man in the empire,” the *Times* used her as a sign of the emasculation of the Chinese. It interpreted the willingness of women to commit suicide or murder as courage, and contrasted it with the weakness of Chinese men, who wished “their boys to be like wolves and fear lest they should be timid; their girls they wish to be like mice and fear lest they should have the boldness of the tiger.” But the Chinese fathers, it was implied, had had all their fears of their sons’ timidity come true.³⁹ The Chinese, the editor claimed, might enter a frenzy and kill without regard to their lives, but at heart they were timorous and cowardly.⁴⁰ Chinese men, in other words, were cowards, liars and deceivers, not warriors. Not only did they lack the manly qualities necessary to fight, but the combination of xenophobia, lack of military prowess, and recklessness with life led those who defended them in the Western press to warn that in any serious conflict they would be butchered by the millions.⁴¹

Instead of the Yellow Peril menacing Europe, some writers saw a helpless nation which made Turkey, “the sick man of Europe,” look like a “young and virile

³⁷ “The Next Step,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 20 August 1900, 4.

³⁸ “China and Chinese,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 July 1900, 7.

³⁹ “The Women Of China,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 21 August 1900, 8.

⁴⁰ “Chinese Problems,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 28 July 1900, 4.

⁴¹ “The Rioting Chinese,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 16 June 1900, 4.

nation.”⁴² At the outset of the conflict, the *Globe* concerned itself more with predicting the disintegration of the Chinese empire, a “despotism tempered by anarchy,” than with considering the situation at hand.⁴³ It, and by extension all loyal Imperialists, were particularly interested in the partition of China because of the economic benefits that would come from gaining control of such rich territory.⁴⁴ China had the potential to become a valuable trading partner for the British Empire, and for the same reasons that the Yellow Perilists feared it – namely, its large population could be a huge market for British Imperial goods.⁴⁵ The *Globe* also advanced the idea that trade was an antidote to the Yellow Peril: “The danger of the ‘yellow plague’ will diminish as Europeans learn to respect the strength as well as the prejudices of the Chinese.”⁴⁶ However, as the crisis worsened, the *Globe* shifted to advocate partition as the only way of ensuring that the Chinese did not kill more Westerners.⁴⁷ The *Globe* and *Times* were not alone in denying the Chinese threat.

The *Manitoba Free Press* described the Uprising in a particularly unique, though still jingoistic manner, rejecting Yellow Perilism, by dismissing the Chinese threat. It simply viewed China as weak, an irritation to the West rather than a threat. The Uprising was “the Mongolian ... making his last blind struggle against destiny.”⁴⁸ Instead of threatening yellow hordes, the *Manitoba Free Press* predicted

⁴² “The Crisis In China,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 13 June 1900, 4; “The Situation In China,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 4 June 1900, 4; untitled, *Toronto Globe*, 7 June 1900, 6.

⁴³ Untitled, *Toronto Globe*, 7 June 1900, 6.

⁴⁴ “The Trouble In China,” *Toronto Globe*, 18 June 1900, 6. The editor described the powers as waiting beside the “bedside of the dying possessor of a wealthy estate.” An evocative, if somewhat premature, description.

⁴⁵ “China and Trade,” *Toronto Globe*, 23 July 1900, 4; “The Trade of China,” *Toronto Globe*, 28 July 1900, 18.

⁴⁶ “The Chinese Embroglio,” *Toronto Globe*, 25 July 1900, 4.

⁴⁷ “All Hope Abandoned,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 July 1900, 1.

⁴⁸ “The Situation In Pekin,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 13 July 1900, 4.

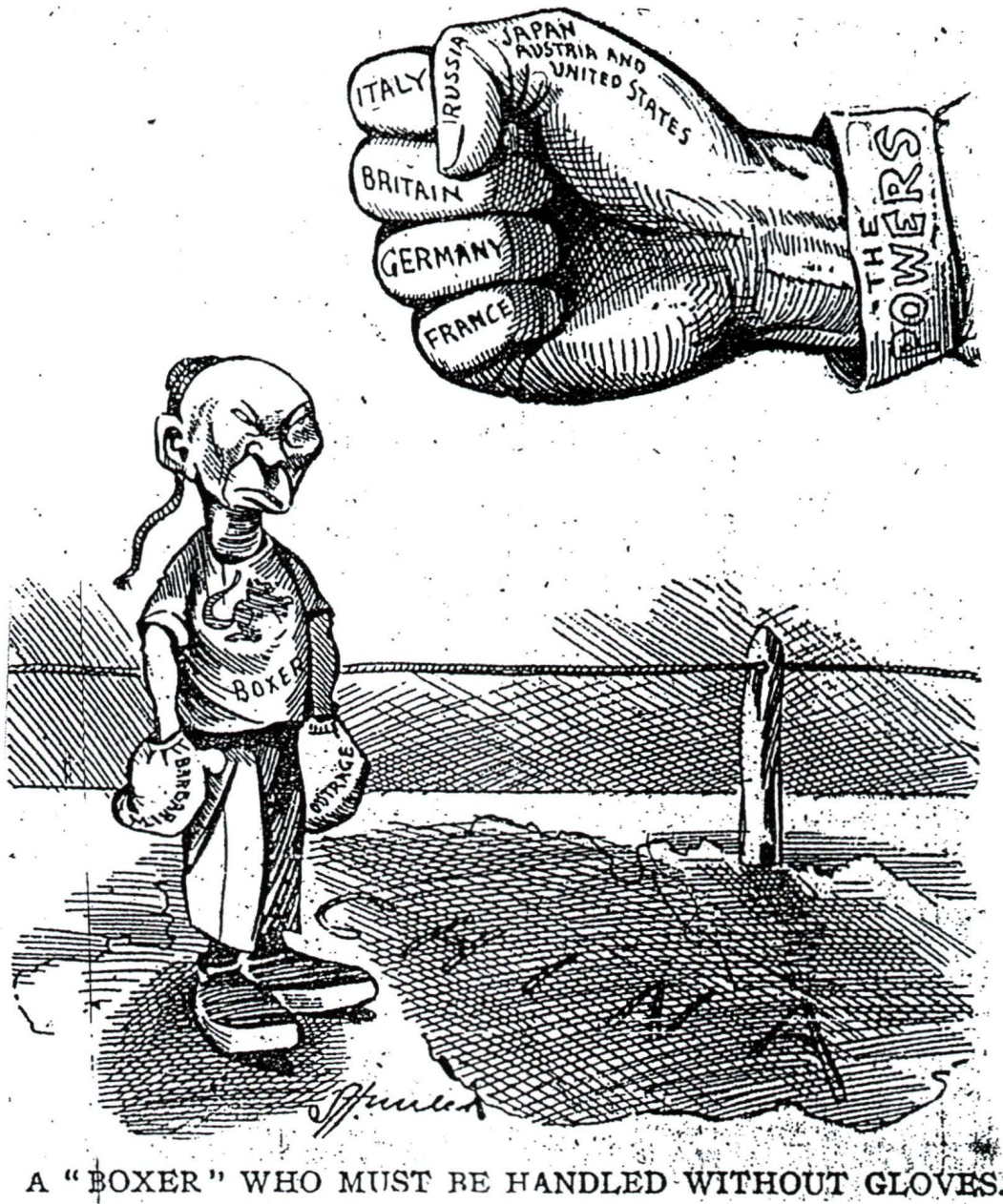


Figure 11. "A 'Boxer' Who Must Be Handled Without Gloves," *Manitoba Free Press*, 23 June 1900, 8.

that a “tide of civilization and liberty” would sweep over China, in spite of the Boxers and their sympathizers. While freely discussing the dismemberment of China, the *Free Press* maintained a strong belief in Western superiority. Whether discrediting Yellow Peril fears, acknowledging Western collaborators among the Boxers or boldly predicting Western success, the *Manitoba Free Press* refused to believe in China’s invincibility.⁴⁹ Instead, it asserted (quite absurdly) that China had only 200,000,000 people, not 400,000,000; it claimed that because they spoke different languages, they could not organize effectively to resist invasion.⁵⁰ By halving the size of the “yellow horde,” the *Manitoba Free Press* downplayed the threat to the West.

The *Manitoba Free Press* also discredited China’s military threat. Despite acknowledging the strength of Chinese defences in and around Beijing, including 100,000 Imperial troops and modern artillery defending the gates, and accepting that Admiral Seymour had under-estimated it, the *Manitoba Free Press* also discounted much of this Chinese threat.⁵¹ Even though “China could raise an army of 1,700,000 men,” the *Free Press* thought it would be “undisciplined and [only] one-third equipped.”⁵² The editor also noted that China’s purchases of large quantities of foreign weapons had not significantly strengthened its defences.⁵³

While Yellow Peril theorists viewed Chinese instruction by European officers as one of the great threats to the West, the *Manitoba Free Press* merely saw it as

⁴⁹ “The Crisis In China,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 11 June 1900, 4.

⁵⁰ “The Situation In China,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 5 July 1900, 4; “The Situation In China,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 13 July 1900, 4; “Population Of China,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 25 August 1900, 4.

⁵¹ “Prisoners In Peking,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 16 June 1900, 1; “Silence At Peking Still Continues,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 23 June 1900, 1.

⁵² “Sunday’s Assault On Tien Tsin,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 26 June 1900, 1; “China At A Glance,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 11 August 1900, 9.

⁵³ “The Chinese Artillery,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 25 July 1900, 4.

further proof of the incompetence of the Chinese. Whether it was a report that the English at Shanghai thought the Chinese had foreign advice at Dagu because of the precision of the attack, or that two foreigners “formerly employed to drill the Chinese troops” had plotted to flee Tianjin with Gen. Chang before the bombardment, it saw the presence of Europeans only as further proof that the Chinese could not fight on their own.⁵⁴

This contempt extended beyond the military. The *Manitoba Free Press* asserted that, by the beginning of August, when the court had fled and the Allied forces were poised to take Beijing “for all practical purposes, China, as a nation, is non-existent at the present time. She has neither cohesion nor character. She is decayed and utterly corrupt, and her government can only be purified by a fiery ordeal.”⁵⁵ While many newspapers moved away from a firmly Yellow Perilist stance as the summer progressed, and foreign troops seemed likely to succeed, this was by no means universal, and the *Manitoba Free Press*’s sentiments are strident in comparison.⁵⁶ Foreign intervention was a “service rendered to civilization” in a fight between the “Chinese” and the “Christians.”⁵⁷

The *Winnipeg Tribune* and *Ottawa Free Press* took a different approach. While promulgating the same stereotypes as the other newspapers, they interpreted them in a different manner. Informed by a very strong Protestant missionary ethic, they viewed China not as a threat, but as a land of opportunity, the home of teeming millions of

⁵⁴ “The Russians Shell Peking,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 20 June 1900, 1; “Directed By Europeans,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 13 July 1900, 1.

⁵⁵ “China,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 6 August 1900, 4.

⁵⁶ See “Through A Glass Darkly,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 5 August 1900, 4, for an example of a more pessimistic editorial written only a day before the *Free Press*’s call for the fiery baptism of China.

⁵⁷ Untitled, *Manitoba Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 4; “The Allies Defeated,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 17 July 1900, 7.

potential converts. This approach conformed to the admonition of contemporary preachers to “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” In *Saving China*, Austin observes that the missionary community sensed that the world was opening up, and that there was nowhere too remote or intransigent for the gospel.⁵⁸ Reports from Christian missions in Canton noted that the Chinese were eager to learn and to “take advantage of the educational facilities offered” and that there were forty thousand communicants, while about two hundred thousand people had abandoned their previous beliefs. Other reports noted that the emperor himself had studied the Bible and “the general literature of the western world.”⁵⁹ This offered hope of long-term success – if the Emperor could be convinced to accept Christianity, then surely the masses would follow. Missionaries who had been in China were confident of the success of Christianity. Some even felt that “the present war would only lead to better things for the millions of heathen and for the cause of the church.”⁶⁰ However, this view was not unchallenged. The *Globe*’s editor accused an aggressive bishop, who stated that the conversion of China was worth any cost, of wanting to smash treaties, and wade through blood in the service of Christianity, instead of spreading the gospel peacefully.⁶¹

The *Tribune* saw potential in China and stated that the Uprising in China might end in the establishment of a “modern progressive government in the country.” Given a “safe and good” government with protection of life and property, the

⁵⁸ Alwyn Austin, *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries In The Middle Kingdom 1888-1959* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) 5.

⁵⁹ “Chinese Anxious To Learn,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 9 April 1900, 4; “Something About China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 5 July 1900, 2.

⁶⁰ “Mission Work In China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 16 July 1900, 5.

⁶¹ Untitled, *Toronto Globe*, 19 June 1900, 6.

construction of railways and the development of the great coal and iron resources of China would quickly follow.⁶² The *Tribune* also found policies of value, and even confessed that “China is ahead of us in respect to railway policy, and the *Globe* pointed out that stock for Chinese railway enterprise has been readily subscribed in London.”⁶³

Western intervention in China, the *Tribune* hoped, would not only promote “commerce” and “throw wide open” the “door” to “European ideas, religion and literature.”⁶⁴ The hope was that “if the ‘foreign devils’ content themselves with an indemnity and the restoration of order, Kang Youwei and his followers may be able to lift China from the darkness of the past and place her in a few decades, among the earth’s great nations” and turn the dream of reform into a reality.⁶⁵ In order to realize this possibility the Western nations should not “wage war on a mission of vengeance,” but rather must enter China as “reformatory agents, with well-ordered work to be done, in the interest of civilization and humanity.”⁶⁶ Indeed, instead of seeing China or the Yellow Peril, as a threat, the *Tribune* pointed out that Europe, representing “the forces of civilization” had a greater combined population than China. Since in every other way the allies were “infinitely superior,” the “time of peril is not now, nor is the danger from the Mongolians.” It predicted the menace to the peace of the world would be felt when China was conquered and the division of

⁶² “The Future of China and the White Working Man,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 30 June 1900, 2.

⁶³ “Chinese Railway Policy,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 July 1900, 2; “The Chinese R’y Policy,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 July 1900, 9. Taken in the context of the Sifton-Richardson feud, the comparison of Chinese and Canadian railway systems seems to be a blatant jab at the Interior Minister. Certainly, the *Tribune’s* coverage of Chinese railways stands in stark contrast to other Canadian newspapers that pilloried the Chinese railway system.

⁶⁴ “The Future of China,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 26 June 1900, 2.

⁶⁵ *Winnipeg Tribune*, “Something About China,” 5 July 1900, 2; *Winnipeg Tribune*, “China’s Aspirations,” 16 July 1900, 2.

⁶⁶ *Winnipeg Tribune*, “Refused To Desert Them,” 18 July 1900, 1.

the spoils began.⁶⁷ The *Tribune* hoped that “the progress of the Gospel in China shall not be long hindered” and that “the trumpeter [would] give no uncertain sound, not China for the Great Powers, but China for Christ!”⁶⁸

In order to facilitate this outcome, the *Ottawa Free Press*, which saw war with China as “plowing the field for sowing the seeds of the gospel,” called for the protection of missionaries on terms “co-extensive with treaty rights.”⁶⁹ Declaring that “‘I am a Briton’ should be today as effective a defence as ‘I am a Roman’ was in Apostolic days,” it argued the British missionary was a British subject and had a right to the same protection given to any other subject abroad, be he traveller or tradesman.⁷⁰

The *Tribune* also ultimately hoped that “the forces of humanity and philanthropy” would rise above territorial greed, and that a war begun in “the name of civilization” would not end in a struggle for loot, a hope that allied forces unfortunately dashed when they took Beijing.⁷¹

Shouldering the “white man’s burden” in its approach to China, the *Tribune* believed in the efficacy of the missionary project and in China’s potential, both temporally and spiritually. It further considered that a measured approach to imperialist concerns would help China achieve civilization. Despite the violence of the Uprising, it thought that China should be governed by “the progressive enlightened element among the Chinese themselves,” rather than by an outside

⁶⁷ *Winnipeg Tribune*, “The Real Danger To Civilization,” 25 July 1900, 2.

⁶⁸ “China For Christ,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 18 June 1900, 3; “The Future of China,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 11 June 1900, 3.

⁶⁹ Untitled, *Ottawa Free Press*, 9 August 1900, 4.

⁷⁰ “A Defence Of the Missionary,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 17 August 1900, 2.

⁷¹ “The Real Danger To Civilization,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 July 1900, 2;

government, even one that had the “best of intentions.”⁷² The *Tribune* rejected the despair of Yellow Peril ideology in favour of a more optimistic view of the Uprising as an opportunity for the West, and in particular for Christianity.

Though generally supportive of the proselytizing mission of Christian missionaries, the *Ottawa Free Press* also acknowledged that the zeal of the missionaries had been partially responsible for the hostilities in China and that changes to their methods had to occur in order to ensure that they did not alienate those they sought to convert. This critique was unusual in urging missionaries to consider their positions as representatives of their country and not just of God.⁷³ Even more radical was the admission that one of the reasons for Chinese resistance to conversion was that “they have already a pretty good religion of their own,” and that it is more satisfactory to take them as they were, “a strange people from whom we Westerners have much to learn morally and otherwise.”⁷⁴ Another editorial noted that the “heathen Chinese” had no monopoly on the vices ascribed to them, and that the West should know better “in view of our religion, education and opportunities.”⁷⁵

The *Ottawa Citizen* generally took a comparatively compassionate view of China recognizing, like the *Ottawa Free Press*, that the behaviour of Western missionaries affected Chinese perceptions of Canada and the West. This was not rooted in a strident belief in the missionary project. Instead, it blamed rifts in the missionary community for antagonizing the Chinese.⁷⁶ In addition, the *Citizen* also

⁷² “Christians’ Versus Japanese,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 14 August 1900, 2.

⁷³ “The Machinery of Missions,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 14 July 1900, 4.

⁷⁴ “Chinese Civilization,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 7 July 1900, 12.

⁷⁵ “The Chinese,” *Ottawa Free Press*, 16 June 1900, 4.

⁷⁶ “As A Patriot,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 23 June 1900, 9. While the role of the missionary in China are beyond the scope of the thesis, there was a lively debate in the contemporary press on missionary work and its role in instigating the Uprising. There was a general cleavage

printed an article by a Victoria missionary, who was complimentary to the Chinese and sensitive to their plight in Canada, and who felt that the Canadian treatment of Chinese immigrants impacted negatively on missionizing efforts in China.⁷⁷ At least before the crisis deepened, this view seemed to be based on compassion for the political position of the Chinese: “Fair reader, if you stood in the dowager empress’ shoes, you, too, would raise a row.”⁷⁸ Similarly, it recognized that the treatment of the Chinese by Western powers would predispose the Chinese to be less than friendly: “How can you expect Chinese merchants to give you much business in the face of these facts [Canadian head tax, Chinese exclusion from the US]?”⁷⁹ While the *Citizen*, like other newspapers, presented Chinese culture as difficult to comprehend, it made at least a token attempt at explaining elements of Chinese nomenclature.⁸⁰ However, in early July, when reports coming from China worsened and the Beijing legation was supposedly being sacked, even the *Citizen* abandoned this position in favour of a strident Yellow Perilism.⁸¹

The *Ottawa Journal* was also, in a way, sensitive to the division between Boxer and non-Boxer but covered this distinction in something of the same backhanded manner. The Chinese in Ottawa were subject to street harassment because of the crisis, whether it was simply through rough language, or through a cry

between newspapers who supported the Imperial venture and blamed the missionary, and newspapers who supported missionary activity and blamed imperial greed for causing the Uprising.

⁷⁷ “Favors The Chinese,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 16 June 1900, 6.

⁷⁸ untitled, *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 June 1900, 4.

⁷⁹ “America and China,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 April 1900, 4.

⁸⁰ “Geographical Names,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 June 1900, 4.

⁸¹ This shift is reminiscent of the “cycle of sublime hope, frustration, and bitter disappointment” that Miller describes in the writings of American missionaries. (Miller, *Unwelcome Immigrant*, 204) While the *Citizen* was certainly not informed by missionary doctrine in the same way as the *Ottawa Free Press*, the patterns were similar.

of “Take that you Boxer!” accompanied by a cuff across the mouth. However, the *Journal* also emphasized the meekness of the Chinese response – they did not mind, it asserted, as long as no punches were thrown.⁸² This coverage in the *Journal* appeared amidst its other coverage of the Uprising. This juxtaposed the meekness of Ottawa’s Chinese population with Yellow Perilist warnings against provoking the Chinese in China. However, these differences did not provoke any editorial response in the *Journal*.

There were significant differences in the presentation of the Chinese among different newspapers. While many viewed them as a significant threat to the West, others saw the Chinese population as a prime target for conversion, or discounted China altogether, as unmanly or militarily incompetent. The religious and political orientations of the newspapers influenced their perspectives. Liberal politicians owned both of the most overtly contemptuous newspapers, while many of the most fearful papers were affiliated with the Conservative party. Newspapers with strong Protestant influences favoured the missionaries and blamed clumsy Western imperialism for the Uprising, while newspapers more sympathetic to the imperial project laid fault at the feet of missionaries. While there was a shared image of the Chinese in Canadian newspapers, there were also a wide range of variations in the manner in which it was articulated, and variation in the perceived practical implications of that image.

⁸² “The Chinese Are In Trouble,” *Ottawa Journal*, 24 July 1900, 3.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have explored the shared images of the Chinese in the newspapers of five cities in Canada. These include irrationality, xenophobia, deceit and cruelty, as well as more variable ideas about the threat that the Chinese posed to Western civilization, the nature of their souls, and the lack of manliness in Chinese males. These ideas formed a backdrop against which the Chinese immigrant experience was set, as well forming a part of the history of Canadian nationalism, imperialism and racism. The “Chinamen” occupied a troubled and troubling position in the racial hierarchies of the time, as their placement above the “stupid Negroes of the African wilds,” and comparisons to the Sioux indicate – while the Chinese were reviled, they were not as utterly inferior as other racial categories. The panic surrounding the Uprising also contributed to the sharpening of negative ideas about the Chinese, and thrust the Chinese into the forefront of the Western imagination. Across the country, the different newspapers dealt with the Chinese in their own particular ways, varying along political, religious and regional cleavages.

While the *Victoria Daily Times* and *Daily Colonist* shared a common construction of the Chinese people as irrational, savage and deceitful, they disagreed on the practical implications of these images. The *Colonist* cast “the Chinaman” as a

threatening figure, always surrounded by a swarm of his fellows, ready to overrun Europe, while the *Times* saw a paper tiger, an impotent, swollen hulk of an empire, peopled by unmanned and unmanly men, constitutionally unsuited to war. The *Colonist*, the paper of the business community, was interested in the implications of current events on trade with China. Since it thought that the business community would not profit from an extended war, it was better to let the Chinese beast slumber. The *Times*, the paper of the Liberal party, supported the British Empire wholeheartedly during the crisis. Its writers denigrated the enemy, encouraged patriotic attitudes towards Canada and the Empire, and declared that those who feared the Yellow Peril were doomsayers and pessimists. While the Liberals and the *Times* were certainly interested in business, they felt war would be no impediment to profit with such a feeble enemy.

The *Vancouver Province*, *Vancouver News-Advertiser* and *Vancouver Semi-Weekly World* shared a common conception of the Chinese as irrational, deceitful and savage. They agreed on these images, and on their practical implications. For different reasons, all three newspapers acknowledged the "Yellow Peril" to be a real and very pressing threat. The idea that hordes of fanatical Chinamen would destroy the British Empire or an independent Canada and would impair trade concerned the Conservative, business-oriented *News-Advertiser* the most. The "Yellow Peril" also made for excellent sensational copy for the *World* to serialize in both its Daily and Semi-Weekly editions. Where these papers differed most was on the subject of Chinese Reformers. Only the *Province* gave them more than cursory mention, and while it provided a platform for the Reform voice to be heard, it still largely portrayed

them as unknowable and irrational. A Chinaman was still a Chinaman, regardless of his political stance.

The *Manitoba Free Press* and *Winnipeg Tribune* shared a common construction of the Chinese people as irrational, savage and deceitful. However, they did not agree on the practical implications of these images even though both believed that the Chinese posed no credible threat to the West. The *Tribune*, with its orientation towards missionaries and its commitment to a robust, missionizing Protestantism saw China as possessing the potential to be civilized and the military conflict as an opportunity to improve the spiritual health of the people through the spread of Christianity. The *Manitoba Free Press*, on the other hand, as an organ of the ruling Liberal party, took an entirely different perspective. Like the *Times* in Victoria, it viewed China as a paper tiger, no match for the mighty British Empire. The Chinese, it asserted, were not worth the worry of good, patriotic Canadians.

The *Ottawa Free Press* and *Ottawa Citizen* had much more troubled views of China. While the *Free Press* hoped strongly for the success of the missionary project, it also presented fearful warnings of the Yellow Peril. It showed, in its half-fearful, half-hopeful imaginings, the tension inherent in different ideas about China – the idea that China was improvable coexisted uneasily with the idea that the Western missionaries were not infallible. The *Citizen* abandoned its compassionate stance towards China when reports from Tianjin and Beijing worsened. From the beginning of July it increasingly promulgated the standard fourfold image of China as savage, irrational, deceitful, and fearsome and embraced outright Yellow Perilism and

portrayed the Chinese less as fellow human beings, and more as the fearsome enemy featured in other newspapers.

The *Ottawa Journal* stood in contrast to both *Citizen* and *Free Press*. It embraced Yellow Perilism from the outset of the crisis, worrying in particular about the military strength of the Chinese, their use of modern weaponry, and the consequences of provoking a confrontation. One commentator stated “We have sowed the wind, and have reaped the whirlwind.” The *Journal* was far more willing than most other newspapers to concede that the Chinese could threaten the West.¹ By the same token, it was the only paper to cover Boxer-related attacks on the Chinese in Canada. Perhaps this recognition that the Chinese enemy was human was an admission no other newspaper would make as it was a step away from the image of the fearsome and strange “Chinaman” and towards an understanding of the Chinese in a Canadian context. However, the *Journal* made no attempt to reconcile the threatening figures described in China with the Chinese in Canada, and it claimed the meek Chinese-Canadians did not mind the harassment they endured, as long as they were not hit.

The *Toronto Globe* shared some of the same concerns as the *Ottawa Journal*. However, it was far more confident in the ability of the Empire and the European powers to subdue China. While it was adamant that the arming and subsequent provocation of the Chinese had been foolish, it tended to look beyond the immediate crisis, and rather than fear a roused China, saw a valuable trading partner. The *Globe* neatly straddled the line between overconfidence and Yellow Perilism, choosing mainly to focus on trade issues, while projecting a less bleak future. As such, its

¹ “Broadbrim On The Chinese,” *Ottawa Journal*, 28 July 1900, 9.

approach resembled those of fellow Liberal organs, the *Victoria Times* and *Manitoba Free Press*. However, the *Globe's* confidence was not so overblown as that of its counterparts.

The *Toronto World*, by contrast, was very strongly influenced by Yellow Peril ideology. In keeping with the militarism it displayed in covering the Boer War, it was intensely concerned with the confrontation between China and the West. From a military perspective, it found the West's response to the Boxer Uprising wanting and warned of the dire consequences of inaction regarding the Chinese. They had to be controlled, it argued, before they threatened the entire world.

Across Canada, newspapers tapped into shared images of the Chinese as inscrutable, unknowable, deceitful, violent and cruel but each added its own texture and interpretations. Most of them shared, or at least paid lip service to, the fear of the Chinese popularly known as the Yellow Peril. Not only were the Chinese strange, they were to be actively feared as the threat to Canada, the Empire and civilization. However, Yellow Perilism was not universal, and opinion was split regarding it, with Liberal newspapers less likely to acknowledge China as a threat. Instead, they tended to discount the threat wholesale, in favour of a jingo-tinged confidence in the Empire. The concentration of fear was instead manifest in the Conservative newspapers, which sounded alarms about the strength of the Chinese, and the failure of Canada, Britain and the West generally to perceive the Chinese threat correctly.

The cleavage was not entirely political. Religious influences also conditioned coverage of the Uprising. A number of newspapers, most notably the *Winnipeg Tribune*, saw China not as a threat but as an evangelical opportunity. While troubled

by the killing of missionaries and Chinese Christians, these newspapers tended to cast stories through the filters of martyrdom and sacrifice. China had the largest non-Christian population in the world and as such was ripe for conversion. This hope came through particularly in editorials about the uprising. Peace was desired, not for the trade advantages, but for the opportunity to send new missionaries into the land. Similarly, these newspapers tended to blame imperial policies for inciting the Boxers, while newspapers like the *Victoria Colonist*, *Manitoba Free Press* and *Toronto Globe* tended to blame overzealous missionaries.

Lastly, regional differences were evident in the coverage, though not to the extent that might be expected. Western Canadian papers and the *Toronto Globe* picked up the Boxer story earlier, as early as April. The ensuing crisis thus did not seem to arise suddenly in western Canada, whereas to the casual reader in Ontario or Winnipeg it might seem that the Chinese uprising flared up in just ten days at the end of May and beginning of June. Western Canadian papers also had the advantage of interviewing people at port, fresh from Asia, while eastern Canadian newspapers relied more on the wire, and on lectures by cultural gatekeepers, particularly missionaries who had worked in China. Nevertheless, the overall image produced varied little and retained the same distinguishing features across regions: the Chinese were violent, cruel, deceitful and xenophobic, while paradoxically at the same time unknown and unknowable. Chinese culture was too strange to understand, the newspapers declared while simultaneously publishing articles that purported to aid the reader in comprehending the absurd beliefs and practices of the Chinese. The Canadian press focused particularly on what seemed to be an endemic xenophobia.

The idea that an outsider would look upon the West with haughty contempt was unusual to the writers of the time, and the coverage of the Uprising was filled with references to the epithet 'Foreign Devils.'

The comparative intelligence of the Chinese people was also remarked on. While the adjective "intelligent" was reserved for pro-Western Chinese, Chinese people in general were described as cunning, crafty, sly and deceitful. Treacherous in battle, and two-faced in diplomacy, the Chinese government, and the Empress Dowager Cixi in particular were described by the newspapers as consistently dishonest throughout the Uprising, condemning the Boxers to the West while supporting them in secret, and manipulating rumours to hide the truth of the events in China. While the Boxer Uprising was bloody, the newspaper coverage of it transcended reality. Stories of torture, massacres and the mutilation of dead bodies filled the front pages, describing in explicit detail the supposed depravity and cruelty of the Chinese people. These stories were for the most part only stories, plausible constructions that did not reflect events in Beijing. The newspapers themselves faced significant barriers to gathering accurate information during the Uprising. Access to reliable source was limited, and this was made worse by Western insistence on the deceitfulness of Chinese sources, the same sources that might have shed light on the Chinese context for the newspapers. At the same time, Canadian newspapers commonly blamed Chinese deceitfulness for errors in reporting throughout the crisis, rather than acknowledge that they might have made mistakes. The Western insistence on the incomprehensibility of Chinese culture also made accurate reporting more

difficult by reading Western errors as the fault of an opaque Chinese culture rather than that of an insufficiently informed reporter or commentator.

The panic that surrounded coverage of the Uprising drew images of the Chinese into sharp focus. Editors writing polemical calls for revenge wrote in explicit terms, drawing on the shared idea of “the Chinese” for material. This outrage and anger brought a consciousness, a “racial consciousness” of “the Chinese” to the forefront of the popular imagination. While the lack of Uprising-instigated anti-Chinese incidents outside of Ottawa is notable, it is difficult to establish from newspaper sources whether this was due to a lack of incidents, or due to newspaper editors that did not see such incidents as newsworthy. This gap speaks to the difficulty in explicitly linking racist action with racist thought. However, the racist ideas about the Chinese detailed in this thesis existed at the same time that Chinese people in Canada were facing significant discrimination and institutionalized racism in the form of the Head Tax. The study of racist ideas about the Chinese complements the scholarship of Lai, Anderson and Roy. Used in combination, the study of abstract ideas about “the Chinese” and the study of the experiences of the Chinese in Canada accounts for Gyory’s critique of Stuart Miller’s intellectual history in *The Unwelcome Immigrant*. An exploration of this consciousness of “the Chinese” leads to a fuller understanding of the ideas that underwrote the history of anti-Chinese racism in Canada. This study aims to further this understanding.

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VITA

Surname: Schau

Given Names: Torben Mikkel

Place of Birth: Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended

University of Victoria	1993-2002
Carleton University	1994

Degrees Awarded

B.A. (Honours)	University of Victoria	1998
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Honours and Awards

Department of History Fellowship	1999-2000
----------------------------------	-----------

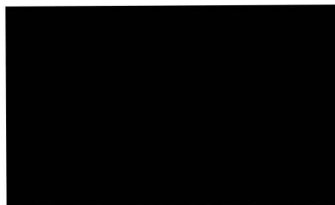
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Author



Torben Mikkil Schau

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