

A global dimension of the Congress of Vienna: The Opium War against China and its consequences (draft for a working paper)

Las dimensiones globales del congreso de Viena: La primera Guerra de Opium y sus consecuencias en el último siglo de los conquistadores Europeos (Traza para la orientación científica)

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Summary

According to Henry Kissinger the modern system of diplomacy was the result of the Congress of Vienna whose bicentennial jubilee is in 2014 along with the 200 year jubilee of Latin America's independence. According to the standards of political sciences, China was integrated into this modern diplomatic world system by the opium wars. This article is looking for the role of the opium in the Opium wars. To historians of the Americas the (first) Opium War (1839-42) is more a campaign of the last conquistadors and may have to do less with diplomacy and more with silver to buy tea, whereas the second Opium war (1856-60) coincided with the Taiping rebellion (1850-1864). It was a serious challenge to the Chinese government. Perhaps the Taiping rebellion was somehow influenced by the consequences of the first Opium war. It seems as this tragic history was the climax point of the European age of conquistadores, which has started 1518 with the conquest of Mexico followed with the conquest of Peru (which lasted longer, 1532-1572) and should have ended with the conquest of China (1839-1900), not justified not by Christianity and mission, but by modernity and an artificial conflict over the Ko-tau.

Resumen

Según Henry Kissinger (cuya política esta discutible, pero da la orientación acerca de la lógica del sistemas políticas) el sistema moderno de la diplomacia fue el resultado del Congreso de Viena, Austria, cuyo bicentenario se celebrará en el año 2014 junto con el bicentenario jubilar de la independencia de América Latina. De acuerdo a los estándares de ciencias políticas, China fue integrada en el sistema mundo moderno diplomática como efecto de las guerras del opio. Este artículo está buscando el papel del opio en las guerras del opio. Para los historiadores de las Américas de la (primera) Guerra del Opio (1839-1842) es más una campaña de los últimos conquistadores y puede tener que ver menos con la diplomacia y más con la plata para comprar té, mientras que la segunda Guerra del Opio (1856-1860) siguió a la rebelión Taiping (1850-1864). Fue un grave problema para el gobierno chino. Tal vez la rebelión Taiping de alguna manera influenciados por las consecuencias de la Primera Guerra del Opio. Con el mismo guerra se desencadenó la última etapa de la era de los conquistadores Europeos, cuya bandera no tiene más el Cristo, pero la modernización como símbolo emblemático de justificar sus acciones.

Zusammenfassung

Das moderne System internationaler Beziehungen und der Diplomatie wurde laut Henry Kissinger am Wiener Kongress entwickelt. Dessen 200-jähriges Jubiläum fällt mit dem 200 Jahr-Jubiläum der Unabhängigkeit der lateinamerikanischen Staaten zusammen. Am anderen Ende des euroasiatischen Kontinentes befindet sich aber eine traditionsreiche, hoch entwickelte Zivilisation, China, welches

laut politologischer Lehrmeinung über die Opiumkriege in dieses System integriert werden musste. Dieser Artikel stellt nun die Frage, warum diese Integration mittels Opium erfolgen musste, einem schweren Rauschgift, das China an den Rand des Unterganges gebracht hatte.

Introduction

After the end of the Napoleonic wars the European powers developed a new system of collective security: The “European concerto” based on diplomacy by systems of political communication, which means permanent ambassadors and extraterritorial embassies and congresses with clear roles for each European polity. This order of international relations, as interpreted by Kissinger was somehow based on William Pitt's ideas¹, but what about non-European polities?

The Congress of Vienna was faced with two kinds of non-European polities: Already decolonizing polities such as the newly independent polities in the Americas² and traditionally non-European polities such as the Chinese Empire, which was a great power in the 18th century.

The most important achievement of the Congress of Vienna which is valid until today is the system of embassies and their extraterritoriality. This system was in conflict with the untouchable position of the *Tianzi*, the Chinese Emperor and the ideological position of China as a country situated in the center of East Asian civilization. This conception of “cosmological states” a catchphrase coined by Robert v. Heine-Geldern stemming from polities of mainland and maritime South-East Asia and their regime of symbols³ may correspond to the cosmological intellectuality of Daoism and later Neoconfucianism: China has ordered its East Asian hemisphere in a way that adjacent polities were considered as ideological and ritually defined dependences from the Chinese Emperor: “tributes” were returned by “gifts”. Officially the Chinese officials considered the people which were from different civilizations as “barbarians” but this didn't have the same connotation as in Western Europe: It didn't justify any war on them except so-called educational campaigns. Anyway, the European merchants to China were upset about their status as Barbarians and about trade restrictions. Therefore the official diplomatic parlance on the consequences of this Chinese attitude was that China became integrated into the diplomatic system as stipulated by the congress of Vienna. The ways of doing so were the Opium wars (1839-42 and 1856-60). Therefore the question is: Why diplomacy needs Opium?

Material and Methodology

The chief available source on the impact of Opium consumption on the Chinese population and civilization is provided by the German geographer and traveler Wilhelm Filchner⁴ in his book *Tschung Kue (zhongguo)* describing the late Chinese Empire⁵. Filchner traveled several times to China and had the same rank as Sven Hedin and the geographer Richthofen (who coined the catchphrase “Silk Road”) in the scientific world of Europe. The edition used here is from 1925 that means before Nazi rule and its ideology on non-European peoples⁶. Since this historical document is a description by a European traveler, special standards for a critical evaluation of this document are required⁷.

¹H. A. Kissinger: *Diplomacy*, German edition used here: *Die Vernunft der Nationen. Über das Wesen der Außenpolitik*, Siedler, Berlin 1996, pp.53-105

²U.C. Plachetka: [in German] „Der Krieg, den der Wiener Kongress auslöste“ *Der KonaK* 70 (1/2013), pp. 31-37

³R. v. Heine Geldern „Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia” Data paper 18. South East Asian program Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, April 1956

⁴See the Filchner Archive at the Bavarian Academy of science under stewardship of the Deutsche Geodätische Kommission: <http://dgk.badw.de/index.php?id=102> (Oct. 21st, 2013)

⁵W. Filchner: [in German] *Tschung Kue. Das Reich der Mitte. Altchina vor dem Zusammenbruch*, Berlin 1925, 247-260

⁶This doesn't mean the entire absence of ideological bias, but it was not enforced by Hitler.

⁷M. Leutner: [in German] „Helden, ihre Kämpfe und ihre Siege“ in W.Kubin (ed) *Mein Bild in Deinem Auge. Exotismus und Moderne: Deutschland – China im 20. Jahrhundert*, pp. 83-102

Anyway, Filchner describes Opium consumption in the province of Sichuan in some general words; he wants to alarm his readers: Smoking of Opium is common for the entire social spectrum from the official down to beggars. Young girls sometimes commit suicide to avoid getting married to an unwanted future husband, if they are saved (according to Filchner by Christian missionaries) they are flogged by their “loving” relatives (Filchner's wording). In addition to, Filchner says that Chinese people don't love their lives, so that suicide by opium consumption is a common feature⁸.

Anyway, smoking opium started during the 17th century, but soon it was forbidden. Filchner says that in order to harm the British trade, the Chinese government strictly prohibited the importation of this drug. This prohibition, says Filchner, was the sole reason for the opium wars because 80 per cent of British-India's opium had been cultivated for the Chinese market. In the year of 1887 China was obliged by its enemies to import opium in the volume of 10 billion pound sterling. Poor China comments Filchner with emphasize in the original⁹. Filchner simply ignores the problem of China's integration into the system of embassy-based diplomacy; no wonder because he suggests that he has seen personally the misery caused by institutionalized drug abuse.

Discussion

According to the official history of Great Britain there were no wars Britain was involved between the Napoleonic wars and the Crimean war¹⁰. This means that the Opium War should either be ignored (no wonder given the present political and economic power of China) or it was an international police action, which would endorse the Empire approach by Hardt and Negri¹¹: The polities in the core of the World System knit together by a system of political communication are therefore an Empire and the non-European polities were “underdeveloped” or “barbarians”. A political discourse on “barbarians” is an indicator of the existence of an Empire¹². It is hardly possible to ignore the Opium Wars, so the interpretation of the opium wars as a war to enforce China's acceptance of the system of the Congress of Vienna could be interpreted as an Empire's police action and therefore not as a war. The political scientist Kindermann is explicit on this interpretation of the opium war as a war on the Kotau and a war to enforce the presence of European embassy residences in Beijing¹³. Henry Kissinger's book on China starts with the so-called Kotau issue but tries to interpret the patterns of Chinese foreign policies in the terms of *Sunzi Bingfa* (Sun Tzu: The art of war)¹⁴. As a matter of fact, the decline and fall of the Chinese Empire was also promoted by the erosion of the authority of the imperial state apparatus, the Taiping revolution which was a gigantic revolution led by some weird interpretation of Christianity as a consequence of the First Opium war and the treaty ports.

The question of unrest and rebellion among the peasantry started at the end of the 18th century as it happened in France and is a matter of Victor Lieberman's seminal studies on “strange parallels”, initially based on the history of Mainland South-East Asia¹⁵ and expanded to the entire Eurasian World System. The issue of peasant rebellion and their ideologies is a special one, as

⁸Filchner, op.cit. pp. 252-254

⁹Filchner, op.cit. pp. 259

¹⁰Personal information by Prof. Christian Cwik, Trinidad and Tobago

¹¹M. Hardt, A. Negri: Empire, Cambridge 2000, German edition used here: M. Hardt, A. Negri: Empire. Die neue Weltordnung, campus. Frankfurt-New York 2003. It is imperative to identify indicators or evidences to prove Hardt and Negri's theory, as the existence of the postulated Empire as a network Empire is not a matter of assured facts.

¹²The standard theories on Empires are benchmarked by H. Münkler: Empires, Polity Press, Malden-Oxford 2007. The discourse on barbarians is a marker of Empires, but in the case of Empires this is a matter of a gradient, whereas European Imperialism is composed by nation-states with colonies, so that barbarians are an essentialist category.

¹³G.K. Kindermann: [in German] Der Aufstieg Ostasiens in der Weltpolitik 1840 bis 2000, Stuttgart-München 2001, pp.29-39

¹⁴H. Kissinger: On China, Polity Press New York 2011, German edition: China. Zwischen Tradition und Herausforderung München 2011 (Phanteon-Ausgabe 2012, S.55-91

¹⁵V. Lieberman: Strange Parallels. Southeast Asia in Global Context c. 800-1830 Vol 1: Integration of the mainland, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge et.al. 2003

peasants tend to defend their moral economy. The “secret history of the 19th century” is the history of the impacts of the meteorological phenomenon of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which, along with enforced “modernization” - that means the “great transformation” from moral to market economy bombed especially India into a weak state to get colonized by the British East India company and later by Britain¹⁶: The buffer factors of the traditional economic systems of solidarity economics, reciprocity and other things especially the Inca Empire and the present Andean peasantry is a role model for were smashed by liberal modernization: El Niño found the population defenseless to starve due to the droughts caused by ENSO's cutting off the Monsoon rain. El Niño is the warm amplitude of ENSO and La Niña is the cold amplitude of ENSO which is more a peril to China. Although Mike Davis¹⁷, having discovered this secret or hidden history of the 19th century, describes the famine calamities in detail, caused by La Niña events impacting China, La Niña's general impact on history is not quite clear. Such variables are important for the peasantry but cannot explain patterns of diplomacy. But the Taiping revolutionary movement founded a counter-state whose organization blinded Westerner's eyes to the erosion of the imperial government of China¹⁸. Gernet's seminal historiography suggests that 19th China's problems are the result of a failed “modernization”, which means industrialization in terms of steam engines, railroads and the system of factories. But Britain and France expanded their influences into Mainland China and the industrialized Japan considered China as underdeveloped enough to establish colonies there. Nowadays, the political characterization of China as a *tian-xia* state corresponds to a conception of an Empire which is beyond an imperialistic state: An Empire that means a unified cultural area¹⁹, identifiable by distinctive traits and not by a uniform culture. Schmidt-Glinzer's approach considers China as a culturally heterogeneous realm whose cohesion powers is provided by the officials educated in Confucian philosophy since the Song dynasty. This cultural diversity may explain why the 19th century models of modernization failed: In countries such as Germany and Japan industrialization was culturally and ideologically underpinned by nationalism. Nationalism is undermining culturally heterogeneous empires as we know from Austrian history before 1914: Seen from the present state of art concerning Empires, an Empire which is not culturally neutral and therefore universalistic is doomed to fail, because it excludes people²⁰, the reason why Empires (and not imperialistic states) use a gradient to define “barbarians” and not an essentialist conception as racists do. This may allow the hypothesis that 19th century styled modernization was simply impossible because China is characterized by a diversity of regional cultures and a unifying imperial culture²¹. Given that China is a culturally heterogeneous country, the Song dynasty introduced the exam rally to get officials by their learned values of the imperial culture to outweigh the power of the local gentry: This “democratization” of the access to the imperial culture strengthened the central government as the civil service gentry outweighed the local aristocratic families. These considerations still don't explain why diplomacy needs opium. The Austrian Sinologist Pilz²² explains the situation of China by 1800 as characterized by the following set of crisis: An ecological crisis, an economic crisis and a crisis of the Qing government. The ecological crisis was a result of population growth says Pilz, the economic crisis was caused by the monetization of the Chinese economics by silver. Silver was required to pay for Chinese products,

¹⁶M. Davis: Late Victorian Holocausts. El Niño Famines and the making of the Third World, verso London 2001

¹⁷Ibid. German edition used here: Die Geburt der Dritten Welt. Hugerkatastrophen und Massenvernichtung im imperialistischen Zeitalter, Assoziation A, Berlin, Göttingen 2004

¹⁸J. Gernet [in German] Die chinesische Welt. Die Geschichte Chinas von den Anfängen bis zur Jetztzeit, suhrkamp taschenbuch 1505, Frankfurt am Main 1972, p. 473

¹⁹H. Schmidt-Glinzer: [in German] China. Vielvölkerreich und Einheitsstaat. Von den Anfängen bis heute, Beck, München 1997, p.16

²⁰E. Todd: Après l'Empire. Essai sur la décomposition du système Américain, Paris 2002, German edition (especially remastered): Weltmacht USA. Ein Nachruf, piper München 2004, pp.131-137

²¹Schmidt-Glinzer (see note 19) considers China as an essentially culturally heterogeneous land integrated by learned officials sharing the same canon of Chinese scholarship and using the standard language and communication forms.

²²E. Pilz [in German] „Von der Kolonialmacht zur Halbkolonie: China“ in: M. Mann (ed): Die Welt im 19. Jahrhundert (Globalgeschichte: Die Welt 1000-2000, Vol. 6). Mandelbaum, Vienna, pp. 64-91

but since the conquest of the Americas most of the silver came from Mexico, the Philippines were part of the Mexico- based Spanish Viceroyalty of New Spain. Therefore American silver revolted the Chinese economy, which has been a long lasting process²³. During the Taiping revolt, the local officials became entitled to draft military personals fighting against the Taiping foci. The devolution of military power is a problem for the central authority.

Among all these discussions, the author of a pioneering work on the impact of new cultivated plants and crops on the global history gives a plausible explanation: Henry Hobhouse²⁴. Seen from a profound point of view, the opium war was the result of a poor freshwater supply system in Europe. People had to drink beer, wine or ale, because water available in European settlements was dirty and unsafe: The cholera epidemics in the rapidly growing cities such as London were the results of poor drinking water supply. But alcoholic beverages are not quite a sane solution; therefore leagues against alcoholism had to offer an alternative. To Great Britain this was tea. China had a monopoly on tea, which had to become paid in silver. As a consequence of political resistance to the skyrocketing costs of Zheng Hè's armada for gift diplomacy China ignored the rest of the world, so that nothing was known on tea, which had to be paid in silver. But the demand rose with the European industrial revolution, as tea turned into a strategic resource for Europeans who lacked a reliable freshwater supply system. The water had to become boiled and the tea leaves made it drinkable, anyway, tea was expensive in those days and there was no market for European products in China (the Levi's blue jeans etc. were invented later). Anyway, by 1801 the volume of tea consumed per year in Great Britain came up to about 1 Million Euros. Great Britain may have been the strongest sea power after the Napoleonic wars, but all European countries lacked money in those days. Therefore the silver required to buy tea was earned by selling opium to China. The British East-India company had a monopoly on Indian opium production since 1758: Britain imported 3 billion pounds of opium per year and had a vested interest to turn the Chinese population into drug-addicts in order to raise the silver required to buy Chinese tea²⁵. Hobhouse's interpretation is even endorsed by the references in Wikipedia²⁶, which allows a discussion on academic reluctance in Central Europe to open source data bases. Anyway, the discourse among political science on the opium wars to get China into the system of the Congress of Vienna reminds on a 19th century philanthropic imperialistic discourse on "civilizing others". In the days of the Spanish conquest of the Americas the Jesuit order prohibited any Christian assault against China as being a sin, justified by China's cultural level. Missionaries were expected to get adapted to foreign cultures.

An opposing encounter: The European respect for China in the 16th century

China had been on the European conquistadors' target acquisition list since around 1580, but after the conquest of the Incas of Peru it was declared as sinful to conquer China: A hardly known Jesuit missionary, Sanchez (1547-1583) made propaganda to do so. In order to stop such ideas the Jesuit José de Acosta, backed by his general Acquaviva wrote an instructive work for Jesuit missionaries²⁷: *De promulgatio evangelii apud barbaros sive de procuranda indorum salute*²⁸. This was the textbook for culturally adapted missionary strategy and the center to develop that was Juli at the Peruvian shore of the Lake Titicaca, a traditional center of the indigenous Andean civilization,

²³Pilz, op.cit. p. 65

²⁴H. Hobhouse: *Seeds of change. Five plants that transformed mankind*, London 1985, German edition used here: *Fünf Pflanzen verändern die Welt*, dtV paperback, 8th edition, München 2006

²⁵Ibid. p.p. 128-180

²⁶http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Opium_War (Oct 11th, 2013)

²⁷J.M. Headley: „Spain's Asian presence 1565-1590. Structures and aspirations“ *Hispanic American Historical Review* 75 (1995), pp. 623-646

²⁸Available edition: J.de Acosta: *De natura novis orbis ... et de promulgatio evangelii apud barbaros sive de procuranda indorum salute, Colonia Agrippensis 1588*. The famous Spanish edition of Acosta's work: *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, Sevilla 1590 is an abridgement on this Latin book.

which is known by the key word “Inca Empire”²⁹. Here Diego de Torres Bollo was elected as the chief of the missions in Paraguay³⁰, where the Jesuit mission was successful enough to raise the myth of a “socialist Jesuit state”³¹. Mateo Ricchis missionary methodology to learn Chinese and the rules of the Chinese civilization before starting missionary work in China was obeyed to not only his own brightness, it was imperative to the Jesuits. This was possibly the result of an intellectual trans-pacific communication system among the Jesuits using the Manila Galleon services connecting the Philippines to Mexico, which should be explored. This kind of respect was totally eroded by the 19th century. Persons such as Richard Wilhelm³² who translated the utmost of the Chinese philosophical literature (the *jings*) into German or Joseph Needham³³, the first to rediscover the entire scientific and technological legacy of China³⁴ can be paralleled to Sahagún in Mexico, Cieza de León and Garcilaso de la Vega in Peru in terms of an attempt to understand foreign cultures or, especially in Peru, to establish a kind of intercultural communication process: It seems as if the early contacts to China made Europeans developing a rudimentary transcultural empathy as long as China was a great power. Anyway, the European colonial attempts were responded by a kind of fierce and sometimes irrational movements, such as the Taqui Oncoy movement in Peru³⁵, the Oberà revolts among the Guaranies in Paraguay³⁶, and the Ghost dance movement in North America. Can the Taiping movement be analyzed in similar terms based on the composition of the Taiping ideology? Such movements are characterized by selected elements of the traditional culture of these people mobilized for means of cultural resistance. What was therefore the ideology of the Taiping revolutionists in terms of popular Daoism especially in the context of non-Han peoples³⁷: Such movements use to break out when people are marginalized enough that they cannot reproduce the basic systems of their way of life they consider as civilized. If such a movement doesn't succeed, these peoples are subject to fatalism, alcoholism or drug abuse: It is not funny to live as a member of the wretched of this earth.

Conclusion

Filchner's report on opium consumption in China reminds on a civilized people exposed to the entire process of “desestructuración”, a term coined by Wachtel and adapted by Melià. Desestructuración is not to be translated by destruction, but by the way people feel the rapid erosion of their “home culture”, so they are left disoriented and in a profound state of helplessness³⁸. Especially the idea of using opium for the purposes of suicide and Filchner's stereotype that Chinese people don't want to live may be due to the fact that the situation of the Chinese population during Filchner's travels there was perhaps horrible enough. Hobhouse's opinion that the objective of the Opium War was opium or, to be more precise, free *narcotráfico* seems more sound an explanation

²⁹The Inca Empire was conquered by the Spaniards from 1532-1572

³⁰Nicholas del Techo: *Historia Provinciae Paraguariae Societatis Jesu* (Leodii 1673) several (spoiled) reprints. Diego de Torres Bollos booklet *De rebus Peruanis* (1604) has several reprints in German; the original was published in Rome in Italy 1603 in order to defend the Jesuit mission strategy. The Latin edition has reports on the Philippines.

³¹G. Otruba: *Der Jesuitenstaat in Paraguay. Idee und Wirklichkeit* (Österreich-Reihe 157-9), Bergland, Wien 1963

³²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Wilhelm_%28sinologist%29

³³http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Needham

³⁴http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_and_Civilisation_in_China

³⁵N. Wachtel: *La Vision des Vaincus – Les Indiens du Pérou devant la Conquête Espagnole (1530-1570)*, Paris 1971

³⁶B. Melià: *El Guaraní conquistado y reducido. Ensayos de etnohistoria* (Biblioteca Paraguaya de antropología 5) (3rd edition) Asunción del Paraguay 1993, pp.30-40

³⁷As far as known the Taiping jing belongs to the end of the Han dynasty when Daoist rebels proclaimed the „way of the great peace“ (Taiping dao). Afterwards Daoism turned into a kind of church according to M. Darga [in German] *Taoismus, Kreutzlingen-München* 2001, pp. 40-43, I. Robinet [in German] *Geschichte des Taoismus, München* 1995, pp.108-113, where the Taiping Jing is considered as an example of cosmological philosophy. Anyway, what is the reason of the re-run of the Taiping idea at the beginning of the 19th century?

³⁸The traditional anthropological keyword for the interplay between oppression, psychological stress and millenaristic movements is „mazeway“.

for the Opium War than the official explanation by political science: Can a people left in profound despair and enforced drug addiction be justified by political necessities in the sphere of international relations? Well, the situation has changed profoundly. China is now a super-power and a booster rocket of the World Economy we are all living on. It is too often forgotten that, unlike the Roman Empire, China is a civilization that never collapsed, although it was at the brink of apocalypses during the 19th century.

Concerning the periods when China and other civilizations were teaching the Europeans, historical research is to be done based on an adequate mind map of the areas concerned as shown below.



Fig. 1: Abraham Ortelius' map on the Pacific Ocean (including the Great Chinese Wall, northwest, nearby the Islöa de Plata, which is the Northern Japanese island) from 1589 indicating a proper scientific orientation for a Global History 2.0 where ecology etc. is to be taken into account³⁹.

³⁹ Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4e/Ortelius_-_Maris_Pacifici_1589.jpg