“Traitors” and the Qing Government Policies Directed at the Coastal Residents of Fujian and Guangdong at the Time of the Opium War

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Introduction

The aim of this article is to place the 1st Opium War (1839–42) within the context of the history of China’s seacoasts based on an examination of Qing government policy towards “traitors” (hanjian 漢奸) allegedly collaborating with the British at the time of the War. The topic of the 1st Opium War as the signal event marking the beginning of “modern China” has attracted a tremendous amount of attention among researchers in the past, but recently there has been a drop in interest concerning the effects of the War, in favor of a shift in focus to internal factors determining modernization. There is even the view that the War was for the Qing government merely a regional dispute with very limited effect on the Chinese people as a whole.

In response to such a view, there is the possibility of attempts being made by hawkish pro-war intellectuals of the day to intentionally downplay the War in the aftermath of China’s defeat. This is why it is necessary to analyze the effects of the War on the Qing government from source materials from the wartime period. Furthermore, if we are to focus our attention on the internal factors of change, there is no need to exclude the War as merely an external shock, but rather place it within the context of long term changes that were occurring in China’s coastal regions. When problematizing the issue in such a way and reexaming the War, where does the research to date fit in? The past study of the War may be divided according to at least two different analytical frameworks. The first attempts to understand the War in terms of conflict between two nations or two civilizations: Great Britain vs. the Qing Dynasty (China), the West vs. China, the modern world vs. the traditional world, etc. The second focuses on another set of conflicts occurring internally: arguments for lim-
ited prohibitions against opium (chijin 強禁) vs. those calling for strict prohibitions against opium (yanjin 嚴禁), anti-war factions vs. pro-war advocates forming at its outbreak; or rather conflicts based on regional interests like the central government (Beijing) vs. Canton (Guangzhou).3) Although the research based on both frameworks has produced a rich body of findings, analysis conducted within the framework of the state and that placing emphasis on debates among high level bureaucrats and intellectuals fails to include the perspective of the coastal people who were directly involved in the opium trade. In this sense, the present article is an attempt to reexamine the War within the framework of a conflict existing between the Qing government and those coastal people who were allegedly collaborating with the British Armed Forces and thus considered by the Dynasty as traitors.4) Unfortunately, the research to date has not only taken everything said in the Chinese sources about these collaborators as fact, but has also tended to depict them as passive participants suffering in dire economic need. Because the focus has been placed exclusively on the War itself, a cloud of uncertainty has formed around the historical context of the Qing government’s policy to deal with “traitors.”

In light of the above problems and viewpoints, the present article will begin with a section presenting the background to the appearance of the “traitors” in question on the scene, followed by a section on the Qing government’s policy for combating treason by enlisting traitors in local volunteer forces (xiangyong 鄉勇) and the local self-defense militias (tuanlian 團練). Finally, a section will be devoted to the question of port closings (fenggang 封港) denying both entry and debarkation. It is hoped that the discussion will not only help to place the Opium War within the context of the history of coastal China, but also contribute to a better understanding of that region following the War through further clarification of ways in which the Qing government attempted to govern and control it.

The region that will be covered in the discussion includes not only Guangdong, but also other battlefronts, such as Fujian, Zhejiang and Jiangsu, which have yet to receive the attention they deserve regarding the subject matter. The source materials to be used are mainly memorials submitted to the emperor by the imperial commissioner, governors-general, governors and generals (將軍) active in the field during the War. Since such documents tend towards much exaggeration and misinformation being rendered by Dynasty officials stationed in the coastal regions at the time of the War, their content will be compared with descriptions supplied by their British counterparts.
1. The Opium War and the Problem of “Traitors”

1-1. The Outbreak of the War

It was at the end of June 1840 that the British fleet arrived at the mouth of the Pearl River and imposed a blockade, an event which marked the beginning of the 1st Opium War. The fighting began with the British attack on the town of Dinghai 定海 in the Zhoushan 舟山 Islands, Zhejiang on 5 July, then as a result of the consternation caused by the arrival of the British fleet at Dagu 大沽 during August, hostilities were interrupted by a government decision to hold negotiations in the vicinity of Guangzhou. However, fighting was resumed around Guangzhou at the beginning of the following year, after which the British forces launched attacks along the southeast coast from Guangdong to Jiangsu. Hostilities finally came to an end on 29 August 1842 with the conclusion of the Treaty of Nanjing. The actual fighting had been one-sided in favor of the British on land and sea, due to their overwhelming superiority in military technology, including battle tactics. The individual battles that were fought were ended almost immediately with the British sustaining only very light casualties.

The main battlegrounds of the War were the environs of Guangzhou in Guangdong, Amoy in Fujian, Dinghai, Zhenhai 鎮海 and Zhapu 乍浦 in Zhejiang and Wusong 吴淞 and Zhenjiang in Jiangsu. All of these locations included important points of transportation and entrepôts for China’s foreign trade. In addition, those ports that were opened to free trade under the Treaty of Nanjing were all temporarily occupied by British troops during the War, with the exception of Fuzhou. The British fleet’s presence was felt all the way from Dagu (near Tianjin) to the shores of Fengtian, influencing the whole coastal area from Guangdong to Fengtian. It was the overwhelming shock and awe wrought by the British forces in such an expansive area that would give birth to reports of “treacherous” activity going on there.

1-2 The Rise of “Traitors”

The series of one-sided defeats suffered during the War left the governor-general and the governors of the coastal region in utter shock and dismay. Many of the maritime entrepôts which had been turned into battlefields were in a very short period of time forced to fall into the power of the British forces, despite the great amount of capital and time that
had been invested in arming and defending them. Therefore, it became necessary for these top administrators who were responsible for defending the coast to explain what happened and hopefully shift the blame for the defeat to something or someone other than themselves. In that respect, while the Dynasty fully recognized the superior naval and artillery capabilities of the British Fleet, it was not as convinced about the fighting capabilities of the British infantry, so it became necessary to find a reason for the defeats on land other than British military superiority.⁵ And so began the reports of the “widespread activities of Chinese traitors,” mainly contained in the memorials submitted to the emperor by the top officials of the coastal areas.

This seditious activity was said to have begun at the time of the British occupation of Dinghai in July 1840 and spread in scale along with the expansion of the theater of war.⁶ This activity consisted of mainly of five types⁷:

1. Military collaboration with the British.
2. Signaling to the British from Chinese gun emplacements and forts.
3. Divulging secret information and providing guidance to the British.
4. Providing the British forces with material support (*jieji* 接濟).
5. Arson and brigandage.

Concerning military collaboration, a memorial submitted by imperial commissioner Yuqian 裕謙, reports that on 1 October 1841 marking the British re-occupation of Dinghai, that a force of over ten thousand “daredevils” from Fujian and Guangdong outfitted in black robes and skirts had landed.⁸ Since there is no report of such a maneuver in the British records,⁹ the report seems to have been completely devoid of truth. Also, we have no proof of any signaling to the British, although there were incidents of providing intelligence, which probably referred to the fact of coastal Chinese residents communicating with foreigners in their native languages. There were in fact cases of Chinese supplying the British with provisions, and these reflect the problem of coastal residents supplying pirates (*haikou* 海寇) active in the region during the Jiaqing Era (1796–1820).¹⁰ Concerning arson and looting, there is a distinct possibility that this was an attempt to attribute atrocities committed by the Qing Army and local volunteers to the activities of British collaborators. Therefore, the occurrence of “widespread treason” reported in the region was in terms of military collaboration purely invented, while the other kinds of collaboration was probably associated with the cooperation given by coastal residents to pirates of the not so distant past.
Of course the Qing central government was shocked and outraged by the continual reports from the coastal authorities about “traitors” providing the edge needed by the British to emerge victorious and consequently, chose to place a great deal of emphasis on how to deal with such sedition. On 29 July 1840, an order, apparently in response to a report that the fall of Dinghai had been facilitated by Chinese collaborators, was issued to the generals, governors-general and governors of Shengjing, Zhili, Shandong, Jiangsu, Guangdong and Fujian to arrest traitors, the first in a long series of central government policy directives concerning how to deal with the problem of “widespread seditious activity.” It was in this way that the Opium War became not only a conflict between the Qing government and the British Empire, but also a conflict between that Dynasty and “traitorous insurgents.” In fact, the central government was as interested in how to deal with traitors as how to defeat the British, a policy stance that was wholeheartedly supported and advocated by the coastal authorities.

Now let us turn to exactly what kind of people the coastal authorities viewed as “traitors,” beginning with from where they were thought to hail. To begin with, in the opinion of Yijing, admiral of the Yang Wei—“now that we are at a distant from Zhejiang, the traitors have become less in number,” Jiangsu was not the source of seditious activity in the region. Concerning Zhejiang, Niujian, the governor-general of Jiangsu, Anhui and Jiangxi, states that it was “traitorous members of the lumpen proletariat of Fujian, Guangdong and the eastern part of Zhejiang” who were leading the incompetent British infantry in their landings. Regarding Fujian, the governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang feared that secret information was in danger due to the large number of collaborators in Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, perceiving that they were particularly numerous in the southern part of the province. In Guangdong, imperial commissioner Qishan stated that Guangzhou was teeming with traitors who were leaking information to the enemy about all Chinese movements and communications, citing many examples that proved to him that almost no one residing in the region could be trusted. In other words, Fujian and Guangdong formed the nucleus of treachery, where it was the local residents who were collaborating, while in Jiangsu and Zhejiang the treachery was being perpetrated by “outsiders.” With regard to the occupations in which these traitors were engaged, the consensus seemed to be that they were fisherman, maritime personal, like sailors (shuishou 水手) and helmsman (duogong 舵工), dockworkers (jaiofu 脚
that it was the coastal people, mainly residing in Fujian and Guangdong, who were accused of collaboration and who became the targets of government policy dealing with acts of treason.

The backdrop against which these coastal residents were considered to be traitors was of course that Fujian and Guangdong formed the center of the opium business. It only follows that after designating those involved in the opium trade as enemies of the state, the local authorities would then relegate them to the role of collaborating with the British forces. Regarding measures to be taken towards the collaborators among the coastal people of Fujian and Guangdong, on the military front it was argued that efforts be made to kill or capture them on the battlefield. At the same, it was considered important to take measures to keep coastal residents from becoming collaborators and prevent the commission of the above-mentioned five-fold acts attributed to them. The strategy employed was to form local self-defense militias and voluntary forces in the region, regulate shipping and even close down ports, as will be described in detail in the following sections.

2. Local Militias and Volunteer Forces

2-1 Formation

The efforts to organize coastal residents into militias and volunteer forces, which began with an attempt in 1839 by Lin Zexu to enlist the boat people (danmin 蝸民) dwelling in the waters off Guangdong as naval volunteers (shuiyong 水勇), arose from mainly two historical moments. The first was the fall of Dinghai in July 1840. In response, Sheng Heng, seal-holding supervising secretary of the office of scrutiny for rites (禮科掌印給事中), submitted a memorial dated 30 July touching upon the activities of the naval volunteers of Fujian and Guangdong and requested that the coastal magistrates be ordered to form local militias and voluntary forces. In response, an imperial directive was issued to governors-general, governors and generals to assess their respective regions in terms of militias and naval volunteers and report to Beijing.

The second occasion arrived with the fall of Amoy, Dinghai, Zhenhai and Ningbo between August and November of the following year. On 24 October, Yin Detai 殷德泰, investigating censor in charge of the Zhejiang circuit (浙江道御史), submitted an memorial demanding that fishermen
and boat people (danhu 蠻戸) be enlisted into militia regiments and as naval volunteer forces, in response to which an imperial directive was issued to coastal generals, governors-general and governors to organize such detachments.

The organizing efforts which resulted from these two calls to arms varied according to region. In Guangdong, three types of organizations were formed: “volunteers” commanded by regular government military officers, a group formed by local gentry and commanded by administrative personnel, and genuine militias. On the other hand, in Fujian there existed rural militias formed for the defense of specific areas made up of able-bodied men (zhuangding 壯丁) selected from local communities and mercenaries (zhaomu 招募) paid with funds donated by the government and members of the gentry. As to the occupations of these enlisted troops, in Guangdong the naval volunteers who were first pressed into service came from the ranks of fisherman and boat people, while about half of Fujian’s naval volunteers were fisherman, and those in Zhejiang were composed of fisherman, sailors (chuanhu 舵戸) from Fujian, and helmsmen and sailors from commercial vessels. Therefore, despite some regional differences, the militias were regional defense forces composed of local residents, while the land and naval volunteer forces were mustered from mainly coastal populations of Fujian and Guangdong, in particular, fishermen who were expected to pose as a strong naval force, but all of whom could be moved around from locality to locality.

Turning to the actual objectives of militias and volunteers, at the beginning there is a distinct possibility that the naval volunteers organized by Lin Zexu were composed of unemployed people formerly engaged in the opium trade, and those naval volunteers later mustered under general Yishan were probably of the same ilk. The volunteers that were recruited in Zhapu during August 1840 consisted of about 10–20% local residents, while the remaining majority were fisherman, sailors and dockworkers who had been thrown out of work by port closings and had no other alternative than to enlist in order to earn a living. From the above examples, it seems that the main purpose of the recruitment policy was to hire unemployed coastal residents of Fujian and Guangdong, including “traitors” who had been formerly engaged in the declining opium trade and put out of works by port closings, and put them to the task of keeping the peace. Such a policy takes as its backdrop two important historical experiences: the first being the successes won by militias and volunteer forces in the pacification of the White Lotus.
Rebellion (1794–1804), which policy makers were fully conscious of at the time of the Opium Wars; and secondly, the militia organized by Bai Ling 百齡, governor-general of Guangdong and Guanxi, which was successful in driving off pirates during the Jiaqing Era (1796–1820). In other words, during the Opium War, the Qing Government adopted the same policy as that adopted to suppress rebellions. The policy was also a continuation of attempts to integrate coastal peoples under the opium trade policy implemented prior to the outbreak of the War. Such opium trade governance also included attempts to integrate coastal residents through the establishment of a local community self-defense system (baojia 保甲) and the control of guild halls (huiguan 會館); and when the War broke out such efforts were doubled. Therefore, it is in the context of the Qing government’s attempts to regain administrative control over its coastal populations that the organization of militias and volunteer forces should be placed. The fact that these efforts were extended to the entire Chinese coastline is an Opium War feature differing from the anti-piracy campaigns of the Jiaqing Era.

2-2 Militia Mythology

The “activities” of militias and volunteer forces, which the outbreak of the Opium War enables us to pinpoint, began with the formation of maritime volunteer forces described by Lin Zexu in the memorial he submitted. Although the War broke out in July 1840, according to the memorial submitted by Deng Tingzhen 鄧廷楨, governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang, on the preceding 21 June at Amoy, a force of maritime volunteers led by government military officers were “deployed” in an attack on foreign ships. Another memorial reported that on 25 September at Chongmin 崇明 in Jiangsu, a group of volunteers led by Wang Demao 王德茂, magistrate of Dantu 丹徒 County, joined forces with non-commissioned military personnel (bianbing 辨兵) and local residents to repulse “barbarian ships,” describing the latter’s “spirit as being mobilized into a veritable fortress of courage (zhongzhi keyi chengcheng 眾志可以成城).” While both accounts either fabricated the “victorious results” or at least greatly exaggerated them, they mark the beginning of a legendary narrative concerning local militias (militia mythology) that significantly influenced the actual organizing efforts to form militias and volunteer forces in the future and also became a focus of overall government policy regarding the opium trade.
One particularly well-known episode in the militia mythology is the Sanyuanli 三元里 Incident, which occurred in the suburbs of Guangzhou. On 31 May of 1841 a group of armed residents, either angered by the actions of the British army or motivated by bounties offered by government officials, clashed with British forces at the place called Sanyuanli. Although the encounter resulted in no more than 20 British casualties, it was claimed as a great victory for the armed residents, as the story spread far and wide about how the people had driven the British from Guangzhou, becoming a motivational force behind the organization of militias and the wave of xenophobia that sprang up on the Pearl River delta.\textsuperscript{33} The story was also transmitted throughout the coastal regions and to Beijing by members of the gentry, literati and bureaucracy, and became the raison d’être of militia formation everywhere.\textsuperscript{34}

The generation of such legends was not limited only to Guangzhou and its environs. For example, the news that the British occupiers of Amoy had in August 1841 retreated from Island, leaving a garrison on Gulanyu 鼓浪屿, was interpreted as a rear action motivated by fear of attack by a coalition of the Qing army and local militias.\textsuperscript{35} In Zhejian as well, the destruction of a British ship in the waters off of Dinghai by local maritime volunteers on 3 May 1842 was reported by such figures as General Yijing to be the reason for the British retreat from Ningbo.\textsuperscript{36} In other words, the tactics employed by the British in preferring not to occupy most of the main entrepôts of the Chinese coast for long periods of time in favor of leaving behind small troop detachments became the raison d’être of the militia mythology and tales of resistance that spread throughout the regions of the coastal war-zone.

In the background of the formation of the mythology were gentry, literati and bureaucrats who spread the stories in order to legitimize the pro-war stances they had taken, and at the same time, local gentry were creating the pretext of forming anti-British militias to further their own personal interests.\textsuperscript{37} At the same time, the coastal authorities attempted to co-opt the support of local bureaucrats and gentry by applauding the formation of militias and recommending those who fought at the front for various rewards.\textsuperscript{38} The formation of this mythology also enabled the coastal authorities, local bureaucrats, gentry and merchants to launch a propaganda campaign of sorts attempting to recast “cowards” and “collaborators” involved in the opium trade as coastal militias bravely resisting the enemy. The fact of the stories spreading to every part of the coastal region would exert great influence on what would happen later
on\textsuperscript{39}; however, the question should be raised as to whether the formation of militias and volunteers forces made it possible to better integrate and control the coastal population outside of the gentry and powerful merchant classes.

### 2-3 Myth and Reality

The enshrinement of the militias and volunteers in the Opium War hagiography worked to greatly separate their image from their real situation, a problem that was pointed out from the very beginning with respect to both military and law and order concerns. In Guangdong, Lin Zexu, who was the first high-class official to recruit maritime volunteers, was of the opinion that they were useless in strengthening military potential and only conducted recruitment in order to prevent banditry and rebellion on the part of the recruits, showing that the actual character of militias and volunteers were looked upon as a problem from the beginning.\textsuperscript{40} General Yishan could not rely on the maritime volunteers that gathered around Guangzhou in the actual fighting that went on there, since they would run off at the first sound of canon fire.\textsuperscript{41} At Fujian, as well, on the occasion of the British occupation of Amoy on 25 August 1841, an official record tells us that volunteers set fire to government offices (\textit{yamen}), salt deposits and sailing vessels,\textsuperscript{42} while the British records tell of rampant looting on the part of some Chinese,\textsuperscript{43} most likely recruited volunteers. In Zhejiang, volunteers were not only useless in battle, but also posed hindrances to the Chinese effort. For example, when Zhapu fell in on 18 May 1842, strong resistance was encountered from a regiment of bannerman (八旗兵). General Yijing reported that the volunteers garrisoned at Zhapu, who had been selected from among the natives of Tongan 同安 Country, Fujian province, who resided in the port, instead of joining the government troops in engaging the British, led the British troops setting fires and causing destruction to the town. Here we see a complete reversal of the militia mythology, where “brave volunteers” defending Zhapu turn into “traitors” laying waste to the town. Thus, militias and volunteers were looked upon as a problem by local authorities. Furthermore, when the coastal area were embroiled in battle, they were not only considered useless and disbanded immediately, but also took advantage of the breakdown in local order to plunder and set fires. In other words, the reality of the situation was that the so-called contingent of “brave volunteers” whose raison d’etre lay in the dominance of Qing Dynasty authority in
local affairs, turned into a mob of deserters and outlaws whenever that authority broke down.

Furthermore, militias and volunteer forces became a fiscal liability, which is the reason why these groups were immediately disbanded whenever detente was achieved or the war came to an end, although their disbandment was directly connected to rising unemployment and the civil disorder that accompanies idleness. According to Gao Renjian 高人鑛, investigating censor in charge of the Guangdong circuit (廣東道監察御史), in Zhejiang the disbandment of maritime volunteer forces there led to looting in the village of Zhenhai. Militias and volunteer forces, which were supposed to have been one remedy to unemployment and civil disorder, posed great problems once they were disbanded.

In sum, militias and volunteers forces that were recruited from the coastal population to maintain law and order not only helped the local authorities to integrate and control the local leadership of gentry and merchants, but also greatly influenced the region by forming legends about the Opium War that spread for generations to come. On the other hand, as soon as the authority of the Qing government broke down as the result of its defeat in the War, militias and volunteers forces that enclosed the coastal population suddenly reverted to the status of “traitors” involved in acts of outlawry. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to conclude that militias and volunteer forces functioned in any way towards achieving their essential raison d’être, the maintenance of law and order. The attempt by the Dynasty in recovering its control over the coastal areas through organizing militias and volunteer forces from the local population centering around local ruling elites ended in failure in those locations that became Opium War battlefields.

3. Port Closings

3-1 Blockades by Restricting Entry

While the British blockade of the Chinese coastline began with the announcement to obstruct entry into the mouth of the Pearl River on 28 June 1840, it was soon abandoned due to its ineffectiveness. On the other hand, unrelated to British attempts, the Qing government engineered blockades in the following series of four phases.
Phase I: 1840

In 1840, when the British Fleet began maneuvers along the China coastline, blockades were set up in every region. Such was the case in Jiangsu until its ports were reopened in October, according to a memorial submitted by Yuqian, deputy governor-general of Jiangsu, Anhui and Jiangxi, dated the 9th month of Daoguang 20 and reporting that “after the reopening” sailors had boarded their ships and departed, causing a decrease in the region’s vagrant population. The blockade of Zhejiang, which lasted from July to December, ended with the creation of detente in the region. In other words, blockades were conducted during this phase depending on the situation in each separate coastal province.

Phase II: Debate Over Port Closings During First Half 1841

As soon as the fighting resumed in January 1841, Hailing 海齡, the vice-commander-in-chief of Jingkou (京口副都統) proposed that all coastal ports be temporarily closed. However, mixed reactions to the proposal were expressed in memorials submitted by imperial commissioner Yuqian, Yi Libu 伊里布, governor-general of Jiangsu, Anhui and Jiangxi, and Liu Yunke 劉韻珂, governor of Zhejiang, resulting in the commencement of a debate on the issue. Yi Libu, a pro-embargo proponent, stated in his memorial of 24 April 1841 that he had closed every port in Jiangsu Province in order to prevent the British forces from acquiring provisions. Opposed to the closures were Yuqian, Liu Yunke and deputy governor of Jiangsu Cheng Yucai 程矞采. As the result of a series of memorials from these anti-embargo proponents, an imperial directive was issued to Yi Libu on 12 May ordering him to lift the blockade.

Phase III: Second Half 1841

After the British forces occupied Amoy on 13 September 1841, anti-embargo proponent Yuqian reversed his position and ordered that port access of Zhenhai, Dinghai, Wusong, etc. to ships from Fujian and Guangdong be prohibited, while licensed brokers (yahang 牙行) would guarantee the ships anchored in those ports. Later on, Jiangsu would be reopened sometime before November, possibly due to the impact of Yuqian’s death in the losing cause on 10th of that month. Then during January of 1842, a memorial submitted by Liu Yunke requesting that the ports of Zhejiang...
be reopened was accepted.53)

**Phase IV: 1842**

Although the ports of Zhejiang and Jiangsu were closed during 1842,54 such a move had almost no significance for the war effort, since the British forces had already occupied such important maritime strongholds as Zhapu and Shanghai.

In sum, despite the fact that port closures were implemented on at least four occasions during a two-year period, they constituted merely temporary interruptions in such areas as Jiangze 浙江 and did not effect the whole Chinese coastal region. As to the purpose of the closings, in Jiangsu the reasoning was what Yi Libu described as a strategy by clearing the surrounding region of resources beneficial to the enemy (jianbi-qingye 堅壁清野): 1) to prevent local fisherman from aiding and abetting the enemy and 2) since the majority of collaborators were believed to be natives of Fujian and Guangdong, it was necessary to prevent their infiltration as betrayers and rioters. In other words, locking up the coastal population and trading ships within the region’s ports aimed at cutting off the supply of local provisions to the British and maintaining law and order. This seclusion strategy is similar to conventional ideas about how to pacify rebellions, only now the scene of the isolation was not herding the local population and resources into mountain fortifications during the White Lotus Rebellion,55 but rather shutting up coastal inhabitants within major port facilities, in order to regain control over their activities, which is the identical aim, as we have seen, behind the formation of militias.

Other examples of port closings include the maritime embargo to break down the resistance of the Zheng Family in Taiwan during the early years of the Dynasty56 and the damaging effect of that same anti-piracy strategy adopted in Guangdong during the Jiaqing Era.57 Moreover, in the case of the Opium War there is also the factor of the breakdown of trade regulation implemented through licensed brokers (yahang) active in coastal ports.58 That is to say, given the fact that access to ports could no longer be controlled by licensed brokers, the only alternative was to regulate shipping through embargoes prohibiting all maritime access and commercial activity. Such a course of action can be placed better within the context of enhanced efforts to control the coastal population than of policy concerned with restricting the opium trade. Therefore, the prob-
lem arises as to why port closings was not continued similarly to those during the early years of the Dynasty as a major policy agenda for the entire coastal region. To explain, an examination of the debate that arose over the two port closings enacted during the 21st year of Daoguang would be in order.

3-2 The Issues at Hand

As in the previous section, during our Phase II of port closings, there was strong opposition expressed by leading bureaucrats concerning Yi Li-bu’s decision to block access to ports. In his anti-blockade memorial of 25 April 1841, imperial commissioner Yuqian stated that the inhabitants of Jiangsu and Zhejiang whose livelihoods depended on the sea numbered over 100 thousand and that those who benefited from foreign trade overall could not be counted. Moreover, the number of inhabitants who were engaged in foreign trade was even greater in the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong; therefore, if the ports were closed, the ruling classes would probably be able to get along, but the weaker classes would be forced into vagabondage and turn to thievery.59)

As to the kind of folk Yuqian thought would not be able to sustain port closures, his memorial of 23 April predicts that in Jiangsu it would be sailors, dock workers and fisherman who were in the midst of the fishing season who would suffer economically.60) These are the poverty-stricken coastal people, whom we have seen being already suspected of collaboration with the enemy, who are now thought to be in danger of losing their sources of income and causing social instability. Yuqian’s opinion that domestic security should be given priority over eliminating the foreign threat lay in contrast to that of another blockade opponent, deputy governor of Jiangsu Cheng Yucai, who stressed both issues as being of equal importance.61) Therefore, from the reasoning of the anti-blockade faction that since domestic stability (law and order) was more important than the war against the British, the closing of ports was not the proper policy to pursue.

This brings us to whether or not the powers that be were able to solve the problem by absorbing the unemployed into the ranks of militias and volunteer recruits. Actually, when port closings were implemented during Phase III, Liu Yunke was able to calm the situation somewhat by selecting his volunteers from the ranks of helmsmen and sailors idly trapped inside the ports; however, he was able to enlist only a portion of that actual
population given the funds available. Given the inability to absorb all of those put out of work by the port closings, due to both fiscal limitations and the fundamental temperament of the coastal population, it became impossible to keep the blockade policy from worsening the law and order situation.

Of course, the maritime people who suffered from the port closings were not limited to fishermen and workers. In his memorial of 17 November 1841 describing the denial that September of port access to ships from Fujian and Guangdong, deputy governor-general of Jiangsu, Anhui and Jiangxi Liao Zhangju 梁章鉅 stated that merchants and residents of Shanghai, Fujian and Guangdong together with licensed brokers had come to the government offices in protest requesting that port access be granted, and concluded that all that was needed in fortification was the “will of the people,” adding that after the lifting of the blockades, the situation had calmed.62)

Liu Yunke, governor of Zhejiang, also reports that in Zhejiang after the ports were closed, helmsmen, sailors, dock workers and brokers had come to the offices of the circuit intendant of Hangzhou, Jiaxing 嘉興 and Huzhou 湖州 (杭嘉湖道) and the vice-commander-in-chief in Zhapu 蘇州请求 that the port be reopened, filing a signed petition as guarantors of the action, adding that the request of the intendant Song Guojing 宋國經 that the port be opened was a key to “maintain internal security and repel foreign invasion (annei rangwai 安內攘外).”63) These statements prove without a doubt that everyone related to the coastal trade, on the ships and on the land, were strongly opposed to the closing of ports. It was Liu Yunke who, based on the strong opposition existing throughout the circuit to blockades learned through the circuit intendant, came to realize that reopening the ports would bring about peace and security and in effect did just that.

In sum, the closing of ports, which was implemented for the express purposes of preventing the British from obtaining provisions and maintaining law and order, actually threatened to worsen security due to a rise in unemployment. The response to that collateral problem, absorbing the unemployed into self-defense militias, had also became fiscally impossible. The policy also met with strong opposition by local elites who controlled the coastal region, as the slogans of the central authorities, “maintain internal security and repel foreign invasion” and “the will of the people is our most important fortification,” came into conflict. For these reasons, although ports were closed time and again throughout the
War, they never stayed closed for very long.

The reason why the authorities could not shut down ports for any length of time was because of the rapid growth that had occurred throughout the mid-Qing Period in the volume of domestic coastal trade. Coastal trade during the 19th century occupied a place of far greater sociopolitical and economic importance than it had during the early years of the Dynasty. This is why the central government authorities were unable to close coastal ports in an across-the-board fashion during the War and would never be able close another port again afterwards.

3-3. Aiding the Enemy and Maritime Piracy

Regarding the effects of restrictions on sailing vessels discussed above, from the aspect of supplying the British forces with provisions, it goes without saying that in the Guangdong region, Hong Kong, which was occupied by the British in January 1841, functioned as a supply base; however, there were other locations which were provisioning the enemy. For example, in Amoy, even according to British sources, the chaotic situation there caused no interruption in transportation between the mainland and Gulanyu, and there was no attempt by the Qing government to block British supply routes. The British sources also relate almost no difficulties in acquiring provisions, meaning that Chinese attempts to block supply routes ended in utter failure. Furthermore, together with the British establishing maritime control over the Chinese coast, the opium trade was reopened there. There was also an increase in smuggling, even in Guangzhou, where the authorities, including general Yishan, were also involved, meaning that Qing Dynasty’s coastal control was insufficient even in the major ports. What these facts indicate is that due to British mastery over the waters off its seacoast, the Dynasty’s control over shipping had worsened in comparison to the situation before the outbreak of the War.

One more important issue was the rampant wave of piracy that began during the War. Of course, even before the War, maritime theft was a common occurrence throughout the coastal region, but the British invasion had greatly emboldened such activities, for example in southern Fujian. On the other hand, there were incidents of clashes between pirates and the British forces. In Amoy, where pirates took advantage of the weakening of government control caused by the British occupation to plunder nearby villages, the *HMS Druid* was deployed on a search and
destroy mission, which resulted in a number of pirate vessels sent to the bottom. It was in this way that coastal residents of Fujian and Guangdong who turned to piracy came to clash with the British.

**Conclusion**

In response to the appearance of “treasonous collaborators” brought about by the shock of the Opium War, the Qing government attempted to revive its control over the coastal people of Fujian and Guangdong, from among whom this “treachery” was being perpetrated, through such measures as the formation of local militias and volunteer forces and closing down ports. In other words, policy was directed at tightening restrictions on the “people” and “sailing vessels” of those two provinces. Precedents supporting such policy arose from the Dynasty’s experience in dealing with the Zheng Family during its early years, the White Lotus Rebellion and pirates during the Jiaqing Era and the pre-War opium trade.

The question of how to control the residents of the coastal regions of southeast China had been a crucial issue in Dynastic politics since the Ming period. The Qing Dynasty’s conventional lax control over the region was greatly disturbed by changing trends in foreign trade and the pirate uprisings that occurred from the end of the 18th century on, and was then threatened with a complete breakdown in the face of opium trade activities and the outbreak of war with the British. Within such developments, the Dynasty’s policy towards “traitors” was not only an immediate response to the opium trade, but also an attempt to regain control over the coastal populations of Fujian and Guangdong. That is to say, for the Qing government the Opium War should be placed in the context of not only China’s immediate response to the British, but also attempts to regain control over its coastal regions since the establishment of its opium trade policy.

A comparison between the measures taken to deal with “traitors” and those adopted in dealing with the Zheng Family reveals that while in both instances forced relocation and maritime blockades were considered, forced relocation was not adopted in the former case and although maritime blockade was taken in the former case, it was far from successful. The difference in decision-making should be considered against the backdrop of the expansion in coastal trade that occurred throughout the period. Also, in contrast to the measures adopted in response to piracy during the Jiaqing Era being limited to the southeast coast from Guang-
dong through Zhejiang, the anti-treason policy encompassed the entire Chinese coastline and thus had a far greater impact on the region. In comparison to previous opium trade policy, the anti-treason measures aimed at mobilizing the whole coastal region with a series of far more ambitious and forceful measures in the form of port closings and enlistment of the population into self-defense forces. On the whole, the anti-treason policy made up the most formidable, large-scale measures taken towards the coastal population since the early years of the Dynasty. From not only a policy perspective, but also from the fact of the defense preparations taken throughout the coastal region and actually engaging the British in battle, the Opium War was for the Qing government, at least during the fighting, by no means an isolated regional matter.

Under the anti-treason policy, local militias, volunteer forces and port closings aimed at enclosing people from Fujian and Guangdong and their sailing vessels in armed regiments or in the confines of ports, for the purpose of stabilizing the area and maintaining law and order there. The slogans “maintain internal security and repel foreign invasion” and “the will of the people will become our fortress” seen from time to time in memorials submitted by local authorities to the central government are phrases describing the same objective. This is why port closings were not effective in thoroughly implementing the policy, because of their side effect in destabilizing regions by throwing their residents out of work. Consequently, throughout its reign the Qing government became more and more dependent on licensed brokers to control commerce, and on militias and volunteer forces (and their commanders) to defend their borders. Both types of dependency were by no means coincidental, since both performed the common function of controlling highly diffused trade transactions and local populations by grouping them under the leadership of ruling elites. The series of militia formations and port closings were the result of a desire to deal with coastal trade regulation, taxation and security in one single package, under the slogan of “the will of the people will become our fortress” implemented by coordinating people and their activities into militias, volunteer forces and groups of licensed brokers.

However, even before the War, the trade control system based on licensed brokers was already in decline, and during the War, the anti-treason policy was ineffective in consolidating decentralized trade negotiations and organizing groups of coastal residents. Furthermore, the series of defeats suffered by the Dynasty in the coastal region worked only to break up such amalgamations of people as militias and volunteers, thus
failing to “form their will into fortresses.” In sum, the last opportunity to bring the coastal regions under Dynasty control presented by the Opium War was lost.

In other words, the coastal question—that is, how to gain control over the residents of the Fujian and Guangdong coasts—could not be solved. From the time of the expansion of the opium trade, the conventional practice of utilizing influential men, like licensed brokers, powerful merchant guilds and gentries to organize diffused coastal populations was not sufficient in itself to maintain law and order. This inability to control coastal people and their sailing vessels is directly related to the problems of smuggling and piracy that arose after opening of the treaty ports. In addition, due to the existence of coastal people who could not be absorbed into local defense forces and the consequent disbandment of the forces that were actually mustered became the causes of post-War piracy and the various rebellions that occurred during the 1850s. The chaos that ensued in the coastal regions after the Opium War, as described by John Fairbank, was actually a continuation of what was already happening during the War, and therefore cannot attributed as being caused by the opening of the treaty ports. As a matter of fact, it was the British Navy that had to take the place of the Qing naval forces, which proved to be powerless during the War, to combat coastal residents involved in piracy. Moreover, the Qing government’s deep suspicion of the coastal population triggered by alleged “crimes of treason” attributed to its members during the War worked to strengthen the government’s animosity towards anyone who collaborated with foreigners. Already during the negotiation stages of the Treaty of Nanjing, during inquiries made by Yi Libu and others of British plenipotentiary Henry Pottinger on 1 September 1842, they expressed deep concerns that traitors would ignore the law and flee to the British side. Such fears were proven after the War with the development of such problems as Chinese residents of Southeast Asia claiming to be British subjects, and Chinese compradors employed by foreign merchants utilizing unequal treaty concessions to aggrandize their own interests, resulting in a whole new meaning to the term “traitor.”

NOTES

1) Major research on the Opium War includes Peter Ward Fay, The Opium War 1840–1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Gerald S. Graham, The China Sta-


4) Tanaka Masayoshi 田中正美, “The Hanjian (Traitor) Question Prior to the Opium Wars” 「阿片戰爭前における“漢奸”の問題」, Shigaku Kenkyu 『史學研究 (東京教育大學)』, vol. 46 (1964); Zhang Quanlu 張銑律, “Studies on the Hanjian (Traitor) Question During the Opium Wars” 「鴉片戰爭時期的“漢奸”問題之研究」 (Masters thesis submitted to the Taiwan National Normal University Institute of History 國立臺灣師範大學歷史研究所, 1996); Chen Yongsheng 陳永升, “The Hanjian (Traitor) Question in Guangdong During the Opium Wars” 「兩次鴉片戰爭中廣東地方的“漢奸”問題」, in Proceedings of the China, Taiwan, Hong Kong Symposium “Modern China as Seen Through the Eyes of Graduate Students” 『兩岸三地“研究生視野下的近代中國”研討會論文集』 (Taipei: Taipei National Chengchi University Department of History and Hong Kong Chuhai College Asian Research Center 臺北政治大學歷史學系・香港珠海書院亞洲研究中心, 2000).


6) Immediately following the fall of Dinghai, Hangzhou general Ji Mingbao 奇明保, hearing of clear cut acts of treasonous collaboration, order the investigation and arrest of the perpetrators (“17 July 1840 Memorial of Hangzhou general Ji Mingbao,” Opium War Archives 『鴉片戰爭檔案史料』, vol. 2, pp. 174–175).


8) “2 October 1841 Memorial of imperial commissioner Yuqian,” Opium War Archives, vol. 4, pp. 135–137.

9) Mao, The Fall of Imperial China, p. 356.

10) Robert J. Antony, Like Froth Floating on the Sea: The World of Pirates and Sea-

14) “4 April 1842 Memorial of governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang Yiliang 润良 et al.,” Opium War Archives, vol. 5, pp. 146–149.
16) Tanaka, “The Hanjian Question Prior to the Opium Wars.”
17) Ibid., p. 18.
23) Wakeman, Strangers at the Gate, pp. 36–37.
33) For more detailed information about Sanyuanli, see Wakeman, Strangers at the Gate, pp. 11–41; Sasaki, “Studies on the Opium Wars: From the British Invasion (5)–(6)”; and Mao, The Fall of Imperial China, pp. 293–325.
37) Polachek, The Inner Opium War, pp. 177–203.
38) Mao was of the opinion that Jingni general Yishan appointed many officials and gentrys in order to flatter them (Mao, The Fall of Imperial China, p.291).
39) Wakeman, Strangers at the Gate, and Yoshizawa Seiichiro 吉澤誠一郎, Tianjin in Modern Times: Political Culture and Social Integration in Urban Areas During the Last Years of the Qing Dynasty 『天津の近代 清末都市における政治文化と社会統合』 (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai 名古屋大学出版會, 2002), chaps. 1 and 4.
50) Although, imperial commissioner Yi Libu promoted regional peace in Zhejiang, Yuqian, a hawk, opposed it. Finally, according to the wishes of Emperor
Daoguang, Yi Libu was discharged as commissioner and Yuqian chose to succeed him (Mao, *The Fall of Imperial China*, pp. 184-205).

52) “11 September 1841 Memorial of imperial commissioner Yuqian,” *Opium War Archives*, vol. 4, pp. 54–55.
56) There were bureaucrats who argued for what amounted to relocation orders based on recollections of the actions taken against the Zheng Clan (“24 June 1842 Memorial of investigating censor Li Guangshu 黎光曙,” *Opium War Archives*, vol. 5, p. 469).
60) “23 April 1841 Memorial of imperial commissioner Yuqian,” *Opium War Archives*, vol. 3, pp. 379–381.
64) *Chinese Repository*, vol. 11, no. 9, Sept. 1842, pp. 504–507.
67) For example, in Daoguang 21, the pirates activity on the part of Fujian residents was exposed in such locations as Tongshan 鐵山 and Weitou 圓頭 on the province’s southern coast (“29 July 1842 Memorial of governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang Yiliang et al.,” *Records and Documents of the Department of War 『軍機處檔案奏摺』*, 3-64-3954-41–42).