The Opium Wars while often an overlooked encounter in British history was a major event that led the great making of one empire and the fall of another. The battles that make up the Opium Wars left the Chinese empire embarrassed, and in many ways under the British rule. After the wars the British controlled the Kowloon peninsula, Hong Kong, and several Chinese ports. The British were almost in full control of their trading policies with China. Most of all the Opium Wars placed Britain as the world’s great superpower, and showed China to be a fading inferior power.

The beginning of the conflict between Britain and China could be traced back to when Lord George Macartney traveled to China for what he thought would be a simple exchanging of gifts from one empire to another. Lord Macartney had plenty of diplomatic experience, and a very well respected reputation. In 1764 Macartney had been sent on a diplomatic mission to Russia which enjoyed tremendous success. In 1767 he was elected to Parliament, and then a short time later appointed Chief Secretary of Ireland. Throughout his career he had been steadily promoted year after year serving as Governor of Madras, India then being created viscount. Then in 1793 was his trip to China. ¹

Lord George Macartney was sent on this trip to try to establish a British embassy in the capital and to make it available for British ships to dock at other ports besides just the one in Canton. The British wanted another available port because the trade in Canton had become so large they were hoping with a few other ports their trade there would become even more lucrative. The British were even prepared to stop the opium trade coming out of India in hopes of this new deal with the Chinese.
After Lord Macartney landed off the coast of China he was brought up the Bei He River to the capital. Once Lord Macartney arrived in Peking it was made clear that the pride of the two countries simply could not tolerate one another. The Chinese believe their Emperor was the Son of Heaven or the Lord of 10,000 years. The Chinese believed that foreigners did not come to negotiate with their leader, but rather to pay homage to him. When Macartney brought gifts including two carriages and a hot air balloon for the Chinese Emperor Qianlong thought of it as a gift from one country to another while the Emperor takes the gift as a tribute to a superior civilization. When Macartney met the Emperor the situation between the countries grew even more divisive when the custom of kowtow arose. The Chinese had a ritual of foreign ambassadors performing a process called kowtowing which included bowing, then kneeling, and then placing their forehead to the floor nine times at the Emperor’s feet. When Macartney was faced with this he countered by saying if the Emperor’s mandarin courtiers kowtow to a life size portrait of King George III then he would in turn kowtow to the Emperor. When the mandarins declined, so did Macartney. Over the time while Macartney was in Peking tensions never got any better, so the issue of Britain terminating their trade of opium was never even discussed.

In Emperor Qianlong’s edict of 1793 admonishing the British requests of China it is easy to see the feelings he had toward the British. He rejects all of the requests and tells the British that their requests are “utterly unreasonable.” Emperor Qianlong also said that he “allowed” King George’s ambassador “to be introduced in my presence” also shows the way that he viewed the British. The Chinese believed because of this letter to King George III was the reason that they did not experience any foreign pressure during the years of Jianqing’s reign before the Opium Wars, but the reality was the reason there was not much pressure on them at that time.
was that the British were in the middle of the Napoleonic Wars which left them with few resources to go into China.\textsuperscript{4}

In 1816 despite the Edict of 1793, Great Britain decides to send a second ambassador to China in the hopes of accomplishing very much what the first envoy’s mission was. William Pitt Amherst, Earl Amherst of Arracan would be sent to China hoping to “expand trading privileges, additional open harbors, and diplomatic residence in China.”\textsuperscript{5} Since Macartney had traveled to China the old Qianlong Emperor had retired and now his fifth son Jiaqing had taken over. Jiaqing at the time is seen as a weaker ruler than his father because of revolts that had been occurring and problems with pirates off the coast of China. When Amherst arrives Jiaqing was concerned about his weakening hold on the country, and he did not want to be looked upon as weak.

In Amherst’s encounter with the Jiaqing Emperor the distance that had grown between the two empires is clearly seen. Amherst is first met with the same challenge Macartney faced, when the mandarins insisted that he kowtow before the Emperor. Amherst had brought with George Staunton, a member of Lord Macartney’s retinue, who spoke the language and also understood China’s world view. Staunton insisted that Amherst not bow or it would establish them as inferior, and after the British had just defeated Napoleon at Waterloo the year before they would not settle to be seen as inferior. After Amherst refused to kowtow he requested a day of rest before going attending an imperial audience, he was expelled from China. Nearly two decades would go by before the British would send another official representative to China, and by that point the relationship between Britain and China had diminished nearly completely.

When in 1834 Britain appointed its first Chief Superintendent of Trade in China, Lord Napier, there were more problems that arose. Lord Napier started his arrival in Canton by
demanding to meet directly with the governor-general of the region, instead of through the
merchants the way the British had previously done. This greatly offended the Chinese who
believed that members of the Celestial Empire did not meet with barbarians. When the Chinese
rejected a letter Napier had sent to the Emperor on the grounds that it lacked a Chinese stamp,
the Emperor followed with an edict ordering Napier to leave Canton and return to Macao. This
greatly angered Napier who then sent a letter to the Foreign Secretary for a few brigades to
retaliate. At the time the letter was sent the Foreign Secretary was Lord Palmerston, but before
the letter arrived the Whig government fell out of power in and under the new Tory ministry
Duke of Wellington took Lord Palmerston’s place. Known as an isolationist Duke of Wellington
would not authorize any force to be used against China. Napier replied with a letter in which he
described the Chinese with terms such as “mental imbecility” and “moral degradation.” Napier
also said the Chinese are “entirely ignorant of the theory and practice of international law.” This
would be the third diplomat of high standing in Britain to describe the Chinese in a very negative
light which encouraged even more so the way the British viewed the Chinese.

Then when in August of 1834 the Viceroy of Canton, Lu kun, enacted a partial embargo
on British imports, Napier bypassed talking to the Emperor and tried to talk directly to the people
of China by posting a placard in the City of Canton explaining how this action taken by the
Chinese government would cause thousands of Chinese industries to shut down. This action by
Napier infuriated Lu kun who then ordered all British residents of Canton to leave for Macao and
was not allowed back till Napier has left their region. Lu Kun accused Napier of trying to incite
a riot against the Chinese Emperor, and said that the Chinese would no longer trade with the
British until Napier is gone. Angered by all of this Napier being an ex-navy man as a
midshipman and commanded a frigate on the South American station had his mind set on
punishing the Chinese militarily.⁸ Napier decided to send three frigates to sail to Whampoa, which was twelve miles west of Canton.

When the *Imogene, Andromache,* and *Louisa* sailed by Canton they were fired upon by two Bogue Forts which is exactly what Napier had hoped for now he could retaliate with force. Napier had ordered Captain Blackwood to return fire when fired upon by the forts which the British thought of as more fireworks than any weapon. Charles Elliot, Captain of the *Louisa,* was so unmoved by the weapons he claimed that he sat in a chair sunning himself as the Chinese fired upon them. The British firing was much more effective destroying all sixty cannons at the forts, while only loosing two British sailors. This conflict is known as the Battle of the Bogue.

What Lord Napier had not foreseen was what the Chinese did next. Using fire rafts the Chinese blocked the exit from Canton, so while the British could sail to Canton they could not then leave. Even though he had provoked the Chinese into the attack Lord Napier was quick to blame the Chinese for firing upon the British ships and trapping them in Canton. Lu Kun knew that Napier had planned on inciting the attack, so he held his ground holding the British in Canton. Lord Napier soon contracted a fever and became very ill. Lord Napier’s doctor, T.R. College, instructed for him to go to Macao. College thought it would be better there for Napier because it had a milder climate and he could receive better medical care there. The Chinese decided that they would let Lord Napier go to Macao, but they would do so in humiliating terms. Instead of allowing Napier to leave in a British ship like he had requested, they would sail him out on a Chinese ship guarded by other soldiers and ships. The Chinese also played gongs and set off fireworks as Napier left Canton. All of this was an extremely irreverent way to send Napier off, since this was the same way the Chinese sent off high-ranking prisoners to be executed. Lord Napier’s extremely painful eighty five mile trip lasted five days. A few days
after his arrival in Macao Lord Napier died. Duke Wellington and most of the British public were not that mournful of Lord Napier’s death. Duke Wellington had not thought too well of Napier since he had asked for permission to use force on a couple of occasions before this event that Wellington had rejected and still made this aggressive military action toward China.  

Napier’s first replacement was John Francis Davis who was a Chinese scholar and a former employee of the East India Company. Davis disliked the British merchants whom he believed were trying to get Britain involved in an all out war with China. Davis resigned after a few months, because of his dislike for the merchants and the entire situation and was replaced by another former East India Company employee, Sir George Robinson. When Robinson suggested the British should stop dealing in the trading of opium he was fired. The next Superintendent of Trade that Britain would appoint was Captain Charles Elliot in June 1836. Charles Elliot also did not support the importing of opium into China, but his full loyalty was with his native country. Elliot would do what was in Britain’s best interests, and when the British wanted their tea trading with China to stay intact he would do what it took to make that happen even if it enabled the trading of opium.  

Even though the Emperor had made opium illegal, and had forbid the trade of opium into China the British continued to import it into the country. In 1836 Emperor Daoguang brought in his senior officials to help him decide what to do about the opium issue. The Emperor actually entertained the thought of legalizing the drug in the hopes that it would end the corruption and blackmailing of Chinese officials. In 1838, the Emperor had made his decision, he would assign Lin Tse-hsu eliminate the opium trade. The appointment of Lin to the High Commissioner of Canton brought confidence to the Chinese that the opium problem would be fixed. Lin after all had an extremely high reputation of having already quenched the opium trade in both Hubei and
Hunan where he was governor. Lin was even given a nickname “Blue Sky” which referred to his reputation which the Chinese claimed was as “pure and unblemished as a cloudless sky.”

Regarding Lin’s strong belief against the use of opium Wei Yuan, a Chinese scholar living at the time, wrote that Lin was the officer who held the most “uncompromising” view when it came to using “the most stringent measures” when it came to punishing offenders of their country’s laws against opium. Lin wrote a letter to Queen Victoria telling here how the opium being brought into China was destroying his country, and asked her to stop the trade of the drug. Lin then “placed thousands of opium addicts into special hospitals for treatment and arrested 1,000 merchants, opium den owners, and dealers.” While Lin did believe in the rehabilitation of addicts, he also believed if the addicts did not stop their addiction in 18 months they should be executed.

Then in March 1839, with his most bold move Lin surrounded the factories in Canton with his troops and demanded the surrender of all opium. Captain Charles Elliot afraid that if they did not obey the order by Lin that all 350 European and American merchants would be killed, told the merchants that the British would reimburse them their losses, so the merchants gave over their opium and Lin destroyed all 21,000 chests of it. Lin then ordered that all of the foreigners in Canton must leave for Macao, and could not return unless they signed bonds promising to never trade opium to China.

While in Macao the merchants refused to sign the bonds, and Lin ordered the governor of Macao to kick all of the merchants out. The merchants then traveled to Hong Kong where eventually their food and water ran out. When Elliot then sent some men to Kowloon under the protection of a British warship to get some food they were involved in a skirmish with the Chinese soldiers. In November 1939 there was more fighting at the mouth of the Pearl River
near Chuenpi when some Chinese war junks attacked two British frigates. The British frigates retaliated by sinking four war junks and killing the fleets commanders. During this time free trade advocates had been slowly gaining more traction in the British Parliament and these battles helped the case they were trying to make. The Free Trade advocates painted China as a belligerent power who was halting international trade and must be opened up by use of force. After the war junks attacked the British frigates the British government was convinced that a use of force would be needed.

The British government gave Admiral George Elliot command of 48 ships and 4,000 troops in June of 1840. Admiral Elliot brought with him his cousin the former Superintendent of Trade Captain Charles Elliot. Both Admiral Elliot and Captain Elliot had been granted plenipotentiary powers by the British government. Admiral Elliot decided that his first move would be to blockade the port at Canton. Admiral then brought the rest of his fleet to occupy the island of Chusan. Once arriving in Chusan Admiral Elliot sent Colonel George Burrell to the most important city in Chusan, Tinghai, with two regiments so they had full control of the area. Colonel Bullard moved into Chusan with ease considering most of the residents were leaving voluntarily at the news that the British were taking control of the area. Admiral Elliot then sent two warships to blockade Naingpo and two other warships to guard the mouth of the Yangtse River. The rest of his ships Admiral Elliot sent to the mouth of the heavily guarded Peiho River. Next the Admiral following orders sent a copy of a draft treaty to the Emperor.

The emperor’s provincial viceroy Chi-shan tried to evade the British for nearly a month to stall the talks of a negotiation, but finally succeeded to meet with the British in the hopes of reaching an agreement. With this news Admiral Elliot resigned placing his Captain Elliot in control to negotiate.
November 1840 the Chinese still have a blockade on Canton while Captain Charles Elliot and Chi-shan are negotiating. At this time the British troops stationed at Chusan had been suffering. Over the summer of 1840 450 soldiers died from either malaria or dysentery. The rest of the troops were still suffering from sever malnutrition that would hospitalize half of the soldiers. Around the end of December talks broke down, so Captain Elliot brought the force from Chusan down to join up with the rest of his men near Canton. When all of the troops combined they attacked forts at the mouth of the Pearl River on January 7, 1841. The British quickly destroyed the Chinese forts. The first fort the British encountered was the Chuenpi fort where the British killed over 400 Chinese while not having a single British casualty. After the British destroyed some other war junks near Chuenpi the Chinese were forced to begin negotiations again. At the Convention of Chuenpi the agreement was made that the British would gain possession of Hong Kong, that British and Chinese officials would be viewed on equal terms, the Chinese would pay the British 6 millions dollars as reparation for all of the British goods that had been described, and the opening up of Canton for the British to trade once again. While all of this seemed reasonable for both Charles Elliot and Chi-shan their leaders would view the agreement very differently.  

When news of the agreement at the Convention of Chuenpi reached the Emperor he was enraged. Not only did he repudiate the terms he called for Chi-shan to be executed. Even though Chi-shan was never executed it is clearly seen by the Emperor’s request how unacceptable he believed the terms were. Elliot’s superiors viewed the agreement very much the same way the Emperor did. When the news of the agreement reached the British government they repudiated the terms and recalled Elliot.
After the agreement at the Convention of Chuenpi was both rejected by the British and the Chinese government, Captain Elliot knowing the Chinese were preparing at Canton for an attack decided he would strike first. At the end of February 1841, Captain Elliot sent his warships up the Pearl River and in two days the British had captured all the Chinese forts sinking more than 40 war junks. The British sent some warships into Canton where General Yang Fang was faced with no choice but to negotiate with the British. Like Chi-shan, General Yang Fang tries to stall the negotiation by suggesting they have their talks take place in Peking. Then General Sir Hugh Gough arrived at Hong Kong to take over as military commander. Gough threatened to destroy the entire town of Canton. Yang was forced to reopen the Canton ports to the British, and Captain Elliot sent all the British troops back to Hong Kong.

Within two months though there was 45,000 Chinese troops outside of Canton that were destroying factories near the river while British warships on the river destroyed more than 70 war junks. In Honk Kong General Gough received reinforcements made up of both British and Indian soldiers. When General Gough returned to Canton with over 3,500 troops Yang Fang quickly agreed to pay the reparations that the Chinese had originally agreed to. The six million Yang Fang paid to General Gough is referred to as “the ransom of Canton.”

In August 1841, Sir Henry Pottinger came to replace Captain Elliot in Hong Kong. Pottinger’s assignment was to obtain a new agreement this time with the Emperor himself. Pottinger brought with him Rear Admiral Sir William Parker with a force made up of 2,700 men manning two battleships, seven warships, four armed steamers and 23 transports. From August to October Parker had captured all the forts in Amoy, Chusan, Chinhai, and Ninpo. The fleet stayed in Ningpo and Chinahai for the winter, but in May 1842 moved closer toward Chapu. When the British fleet arrived at Chapu there was met by a resistance of 8,000 Chinese and
Tartar troops. The British warships launched an assault at the forts, while General Gough landed 2,000 troops to surround all escape routes from the city. After four hours the British were in total control of the city. The British lost 9 men while 55 others were wounded, but the Chinese and Tartar forces had been devastated. Hundreds of the Tartars had even committed suicide rather than surrendering. The British then moved on to Shanghai which had already been evacuated by all the Chinese soldiers.

While General Gough was in Shanghai he received some more reinforcements that brought his total number of troops to over 9,000 with over 26 armed ships. General Gough’s next target would be Nanking. While traveling down the Yangtse they reached Chinkiang on July 20 where they found the city’s walls covered by thousands of Chinese soldiers. The British and Indian troops blasted open the western gate and were met with some very heavy fighting. The British quickly left the town of Chinkaing devastated. Once again the weapons technology the British had was too much for the Chinese to handle. The British then began their trip to Nanking. Once they arrived the British found Emperor’s emissaries ready to negotiate and end to the fighting. In August the British and Chinese agreed to the Treaty of Nanking which brought and end to the first opium war. In the treaty the British gained the island of Hong Kong, brought 5 ports opened to British trading (Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai), and banned the importation of opium into China. Also the Chinese paid the British 21 million dollars for all of the losses of the British merchants during the conflict. While after the Treaty of Nanking the trading of opium into China slowed it did not take long for it to take off once again. By the mid-1850’s around 77,000 chests of opium were being brought into China each year.\(^\text{18}\)

Despite the Treaty of Nanking tension between the Chinese and British remained very high. The Second Opium war first started in October 1856 when a ship made to look like a
Chinese junk was brought into Canton, but the captain was British and the ship flew the British flag. The ship was named the Christened Arrow and once it anchored in Canton the crew was quickly arrested by the Chinese officials claiming the men were pirates. Commissioner Ye Mingchen decided to let the crew go with a demand that two of them must return to him for punishment. The governor of Hong Kong, Sir. John Bowring, could not believe that not only did Ye not issue an apology for arresting the men, but he had planned on still punishing two of them. Bowring also took the actions by Ye as a direct insult to the British flag. This situation would become known as the “Arrow Incident.” Then Bowring decided to respond by sending Admiral Sir Michael Seymour to teach Ye a lesson by launching an attack on Canton.

Admiral Seymour traveled up the Pearl River taking all the Chinese forts on their way. When the British enter Canton they search Ye’s home and are unable to find him. The British did not have enough troops to take the entire city, so Seymour decided to begin taking some more forts. Some Chinese soldiers disguised themselves as passengers on the steam packet Thistle take it over and kill all of the foreigners on board. After these events things calmed between China and Britain so the British government decides to send James Bruce, their high commissioner, to go seek a treaty to end the conflict. The French also wanted direct representation in Peking so they sent Jean Baptiste and Baron Gros to travel with James Bruce. When Bruce and the French representatives arrived in Canton they sent a note asking Ye to surrender. When there was no reply the British sent a second not, and again there was no reply so the British opened fire on the wall round Canton. By the end of the day the northern part of Canton was under British and French control. The British force had 15 dead and 113 wounded, and they had taken Ye as a prisoner. The British then sent Ye to India where he would die the next year. The British then sailed toward Shanghai.
When the fleet arrives in Shanghai they send a note to the Emperor Hsien Feng asking for a meeting with him and his commissioners. The Emperor instead sent two commissioners to meet with the British and French ambassadors. In that meeting the two parties agreed to the Treaty of Tientsin which gave the right for foreign diplomats to reside in Peking and it allowed foreigners who committed a crime in China to be tried in courts of their own country. Also China was ordered to pay the British 1.3 million pounds and the French 666,000 pounds, 11 new ports would be opened for international trades, and gave the rights for foreigners to travel throughout the Chinese Empire. Lord Elgin’s brother, Frederick Bruce, and Alphonse de Bourboulon replaced Elgin and Gros in March of 1859. The fleet then set sail for Peking when they found at the mouth of the Peiho River that the Chinese had blocked their path with iron stakes connected by chains to keep them within range of the firepower from the Chinese forts. British Admiral James Hope soon learned that the Chinese had assembled an army of 50,000 to prevent the British/French fleet from getting to Peking. The morning of June 25 British sailors had removed enough stakes for some of the ships to get through and the troops landed at Peking. When the British and French troops entered Peking they were met with heavy firepower from the Chinese forts. The British ground troops suffered many causalities and many of their ships also experienced some intense fighting. Luckily for the British an American ship, the Toeywhan was in the area, and came to aide the British. The captain of the American ship, Commodore Josiah Tattnall, later explained his actions going against his country’s neutrality to help the British was because he could not watch his fellow white man get massacred. Even with help from the Americans the British were forced to retreat to Shanghai, after losing four of their gunboats and nearly half of the 1,100 who went ashore were either killed or injured. After the British and French governments heard the results of all of the fighting they recalled Elgin and Gros. Lord
Elgin was then instructed to get ratification of the Treaty of Tietsin, reparations for what the British had spent, and possession of Kowloon.

At Hong Kong the British and the French brought together a large fighting force that included a combined 110 warships and 120 transports. Elgin and Gros captured Chusan in April 1860 and then continued heading north toward Peitang. Once the British and French arrived in Peitang they split up and began to charge all of the forts. The British and French forces were soon able to control the city. During the fighting in Peitang the British and French had 17 dead and 325 injured. The Chinese commander had escaped, but the provincial viceroy signed over the territory between the Pieho River mouth and Tientsin over to the British. Elgin started talks with commissioners from Peking and told them he would need to meet with the Emperor to come to an agreement, and if he would not meet with him their forces would march to Peking. When hearing this, the Emperor sent his nephew, Prince I, to meet with Elgin.

Next, Prince I taking Elgin by surprise in a trap took him and his men as prisoners. Some of the British escorts escaped and were able to warn the British. The Chinese at Palichao executed one of Elgin’s representatives and a French missionary. After hearing the news French troops stormed the city. When the British were about to follow with a march to Peking they received word that the men the Chinese had captured nearly a month before were being released, so they stopped plans of a march. While some of the men had been released, Lord Elgin discovered that only 19 of the 39 captured were alive. The Chinese had tortured or executed 20 men European men. One of the men killed was Private John Moyes of the Buffs who refused to kowtow so he was decapitated.

The British decided they would now after the abuses to their prisoners attack Peking. The British told the Emperor at Peking to either surrender or they would attack their city. Peking
surrendered by means of the Emperor’s younger brother, Prince Kung who received the British. The Emperor had fled to Mongolia, where he would die the next year. Before the British and French left they decided to destroy the Emperor’s summer palace. In the palace were over 200 buildings including museums, libraries, filled with treasures. The British wanted revenge for what had been done to the captors at the hands of the Chinese, so they would burn all the treasure the Emperor had at his summer palace to the ground.  

On October 24 Lord Elgin met with Prince Kung and 500 mandarins at the Hall of Ceremonies. Before Lord Elgin arrived he had studies some of the Chinese customs so that he could degrade them as much as he possibly could. Lord Elgin arrived carried by eight porters which he knew the Chinese reserved that honor only for the Emperor. Lord Elgin also yelled at the at the Chinese mandarins to sit still directly following the signing of the treaty so the photographer could get a good picture of the Chinese during one of their most embarrassing moments. The Convention of Peking was signed by Prince Kung which expressed the Emperor’s regret for the actions he had taken, gave Britain permanent legation in Peking, implemented Treaty of Tientsin, and added Tientsin as a port of international trade, and agreed to pay the British for their trip to Peking. A similar treaty was signed with the French the next day.  

The opium wars ended with Britain emerging as the strongest power in the world, while the Chinese were made to look like a much weaker power that was diminishing in stature. The second opium war ended with the British and French burning down the Chinese Emperor’s extraordinary summer palace, and forcing the Chinese to sign multiple treaties giving the both the British and French more ports open to trade and giving them reparations for all the damages they experienced. The embarrassment from these wars and their aftermath would do a great deal
to damage the reputation of China for the years to come. Some believe that the Chinese still feel the opium wars are a reminder of Western domination of the Far East to this day.\textsuperscript{25} Through nearly every battle of both opium wars the Chinese were simply overwhelmed by the British forces. The technological superiority the British maintained in weaponry was too much for the Chinese to match. The inaccurate cannon fire was no match for the British gunboats which were easily able to travel the rivers destroying the Chinese war junks.\textsuperscript{26} Even though China was overmatched with weaponry they felt early during the conflict that they could prevail, but as the wars continued to wage on their strategies seemed very defensive. The Chinese were forced into several very one sided treaties that gave the British basically everything they were pursuing. With each treaty the British gained more Chinese land, and opened up more ports for international trading. The Opium Wars could be described as the military actions Britain used to open up China to international trade. After diplomatic missions between the two countries failed, the British forced China’s trade policy to open up by use of force. A major question that must be asked is why the diplomatic mission failed at this time. There are several answers historians have given over the years to explain why the military conflict known as the Opium Wars occurred between China and Britain.

One of the reason China and Britain were unable to come to any type of trading agreement was the effects of opium on the Chinese people. In the early 1800’s estimates were that there was already 2 million addicts in China with number with the number steadily increasing.\textsuperscript{27} Many of those addicted were in the upper class, some even being high raking officials and military officers. When in 1836 Emperor Daoguang met with his advisors and discussed opium use one of the reasons they thought about legalizing the drug was in the hopes that the corruption that went along with the drug with their high officials would go away.\textsuperscript{28}
Another reason of the conflict between China and Britain was the immense trade deficit between the two countries. Britain was a huge importer of Chinese tea. While the Russians, Dutch, and Americans were all taking a few million pounds of Chinese tea, the British were taking nearly 20 million pounds and by the end of the 1820’s that number would reach 30 million. With the British’s immense desire for Chinese tea and with the fact the British had little the Chinese wanted in return besides silver. The British needed to find a product that would help them recoup all the silver they were loosing in the trade for tea. When the British began smuggling opium into China not only did they make up their trade deficit, the British turned the trade into a tremendous surplus. At the end of the 1830’s two thirds of the trading between Britain and China was in opium. In 1835, 17 million silver dollars worth of opium was shipped to Canton. Since the Chinese refused to import many of the British goods the British were forced to find some product that appealed to the Chinese people. This immediately led to tensions between the two countries The Chinese Emperor had already restricted the sale of opium, but did not have enough power to quench the trade.

An important factor of the conflict between the Chinese and British were their differences in culture. These two countries were so different that they could not gain any sense of understanding of the other to come to a resolution. The Chinese often referred to themselves as the Middle Kingdom in which they meant they were the power between heaven and earth. The Chinese believed their Emperor was the Son of Heaven or the Lord of 10,000 years because of this belief the Chinese believed foreigners did not come to negotiate with their leader, but rather to pay homage to him. When Macartney brought gifts including two carriages and a hot air balloon for the Chinese Emperor he thought of it as a gift from one country to another while the Emperor takes the gift as a tribute to a superior civilization. The best example of how the
Chinese saw themselves was their demand for all foreign representatives to perform the kowtow.\textsuperscript{32}

Some historians believe that this visit from Macartney in 1793 visit would be the event that eventually would bring forth the first opium war. The claim is that in his refusing to kowtow before the Emperor Macartney angered the Emperor in such a way that he would not allow the British any more access in China whether that would be with more accessible ports or to allow a British ambassador to reside in Peking. The Chinese did believe that Macartney should have kowtowed before the Emperor. From the very beginning of his visit the mandarins tried to convince him to kowtow, and Macartney tried to work out a deal in which he would bow if the mandarin would bow to a portrait of King George III, but was not able to work out any agreement. Macartney was very distraught about the situation saying that he wanted to do what he thought “was most agreeable to the Emperor,” but he must show the utmost respect to his own king first.\textsuperscript{33} Macartney dedicates several pages in his writings to how much the mandarins tried to convince him to kowtow, but does not mention that the Emperor seemed phased by the fact that Macartney knelt on one knee instead of performing the kowtow. Macartney at one point described how the Emperor “graciously received” some watches from him directly after they initially met. If the kowtowing incident would have offended the Emperor so much, then Macartney would have spoken more of the first meeting between the two.

The Macartney trip in 1793 did have a major impact on pitting the two countries against each other for years to come, but it was not because of the kowtow incident. While Macartney was in China he was brought to see the Great Wall. While Macartney was prepared to see the magnificent wall he had seen in paintings, he saw a very different view. Some parts of the wall he said were “stupendous works of human hands,” but Macartney was also very surprised at how
parts of the wall had decayed. When he returned to Britain with the description of a decaying wall that had not been preserved the view of the British people toward the Chinese would be forever changed. No longer were the Chinese some great overpowering empire, but China was perceived as a country that was falling from its once high status.\textsuperscript{34}

Also Macartney bought with him to China an artist named William Alexander. While in China Alexander began working on some watercolor paintings, so that the British could get a view into the Chinese kingdom. In his painting Alexander projected China to be a very backward country. When the British citizens saw the paintings and heard Macartney’s testimony of the decay of the once Great Wall of China, they began to question how powerful China really was.\textsuperscript{35}

The Chinese after Macartney’s visit were left with a radically different view of the British. When Macartney brought the Emperor the hot air balloon, he refused to fly it. The Emperor did not want the Chinese people to see how British had superior technology. The British also brought their latest advancement of cannon technology, but the Emperor never allowed it to be shot. The Chinese and British were at very different times of the Empire during Macartney’s visit. The Chinese Emperor was slowly losing power over the people, which will later be seen in the Taiping Rebellion, while the British were experiencing great technological advantages and were just victorious in the Napoleonic Wars. The British knew after Macartney visited that they could impose their will on the Chinese, and after the visit the Chinese Emperor realized he must protect what power China had left over Britain.\textsuperscript{36}

The Opium Wars were a conflict that proved what was discovered during the time of Macartney’s visit, the British Empire was growing to be the world’s great superpower and China had greatly weakened in stature. With China’s view as being above all other world powers, and
the British power exceeding tremendously created an environment that made diplomacy very difficult. China had a trade policy of only allowing trade with foreigners out of Canton and only for a few months. That trade policy brought tensions even higher, but when they stopped trading altogether that was the breaking point. The British knew they had become much more powerful than China, and if the Chinese would not grant them the trade policies suitable to the British then they would take them. In the end the Opium Wars were the way the growing superior British power enforced their trading policies on a weaker declining Chinese Empire.


2 Hanes, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*, 18.


4 Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (W.W. Norton: 1999), 147.

5 Ibid., 148

6 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 149.

7 Hanes, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*, 29.

8 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: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 69.

9 Hanes, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*, 32.

10 Hanes, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*, 33.

11 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 149-150.

12 Hanes, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*, 37.


15 Ibid., 3.
16 Ibid., 4.
17 Ibid., 4.
18 Ibid., 5.


21 Brown, “The Opium Wars,” *Military History*.

22 William Travis Hanes and Frank Sanello, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*, 10.

23 Hanes, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*, 289, 290.


25 Hanes, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*, xii.


28 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 149-150.

29 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*, 17.

30 Joyce Madancy, “Unearthing Popular Attitudes Toward The Opium Trade And Opium Suppression In Late Qing And Early Republican Fujian.” *Modern China* 27, no. 4 (2001), 438.


33 Helen Henrietta Robbins and Macartney, *Our First Ambassador to China; An Account of the Life of George, Earl of Macartney, with Extracts from His Letters, and the Narrative of His Experiences in China, As Told by Himself*, 1737-1806 (London: J. Murray, 1908), 284.

34 Robbins, *Our First Ambassador to China; An Account of the Life of George, Earl of Macartney, with Extracts from His Letters, and the Narrative of His Experiences in China, As Told by Himself*, 1737-1806, 294.


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