

Falling Stars in the Celestial Kingdom: The Qing Dynasty Court



JACKRABBIT MUN VIII

L.B. POLY - MAY 23th, 2026

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CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

Hello Delegates!

My name is Ella Shelton-Frates, and I'm one of your co-chairs for the Qing Dynasty Court Crisis Committee. I'm currently a senior at Poly and the treasurer for Poly's Model UN club. I've been involved in MUN since my junior year, and have attended both exciting local and travel conferences. To me, MUN is a space where I can practice my speaking and researching skills while discussing important issues. I've learned a lot about the world, its past, and its present through examining oftentimes underrepresented stories and histories.

Outside of MUN, I've been involved in girls tennis at Poly all four years, as well as interned with the Metro Youth Council (which I'd recommend checking out) and played with the Inner City Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles. I love to read, write, and go on walks in my spare time. My goal for JackrabbitMUN is to make sure that everyone has a chance to engage in debate and collaborate with fellow delegates, so if you need any help, please don't hesitate to ask me or my co-chair. I hope to see you all there!

Sincerely,

Ella Shelton-Frates

Crisis: The Qing Dynasty Court | Co-Head Chair

esheltonfrates@gmail.com



CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

Hello delegates!

My name is Alina Nhean, and I'm so excited to be returning back to JackrabbitMUN VI to chair the Qing Dynasty Court Crisis. Currently, I am a first-year student at Emory University, and have chaired and staffed at JackrabbitMUN the previous two conferences. Although I've only done MUN for two years, the memories and skills gained from these conferences will equip you with valuable insight and skills regardless of career path or major you choose. Historical crises, I find especially, are important precursors to understanding how it shapes today's politics.

At Emory, you can find me involved in many cultural clubs such as Asian Health Alliance, APIDAA, and Emory's break dancing club. Currently, I'm a Nursing major with a potential minor in either Global Health or International Studies.

Lastly, you have any questions regarding this crisis, please reach out to any of us! No crisis is fun if you're confused about what's going on!

Sincerely,

Alina Nhean

Crisis: The Qing Dynasty Court | Co-Head Chair

alinanhean20@gmail.com



CRISIS LEAD LETTER

Hello delegates!

My name is Abigail Hall, and I am your crisis lead for the Qing Dynasty Court Crisis Committee and the Director General of Poly's MUN club. I'm currently a junior, and since eighth grade I've always fostered a love for Model United Nations and the amazing experiences it offers. For me, Model UN offers an opportunity to gain insight into the complex forces that shape the world we live in. I believe learning about the issues present in different nations can help you develop knowledge of and empathy for people across the globe, and I hope BunnyMUN IV helps you find some of this insight and joy as well.

At Poly, I play on the Girls' Varsity Golf Team, and am also co-president of the Moot Court Club and Jackrabbits Act Now Club. Outside school, I love to make art and read (particularly fantasy and sci-fi). If you have any questions, feel free to contact me via email. I look forward to meeting all of you, and hope I can help you to have a fun and enlightening experience at JackrabbitMUN VIII!

Sincerely,

Abigail Hall

Crisis: The Qing Dynasty Court | Crisis Lead

abbyh1257@gmail.com | 562-476-7535



POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES

- Position Papers are due at 11:59 PM on **Sunday, May 17th**.
- Delegates **must** submit position papers to be eligible for **research AND committee awards**.
- Position Papers can be submitted through a Google form:
 - <https://forms.gle/H3ruhahP2SQUEPs38>
- At the top of each paper, include your character/country name, first and last name, school name, and appropriate committee.
 - United States
 - First Last
 - School Name
 - Qing Dynasty
- Papers should be emailed as a PDF file if necessary
 - Paper content should also be copied and pasted into the body of the email so it can still be graded in the event of any technical difficulties
 - Please name the file and subject line of the email [Committee_Country]
 - Ex. **Qing Dynasty_United States**
- Papers should be 1-2 pages in length with an additional Works Cited page in MLA format
- Papers should be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font and include no pictures or graphics
- Please include the following sections for each committee topic:
 - Background
 - Position of your Character
 - Possible Solutions

If you have any questions or concerns, please email one of your chairs.



COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

The day is **February 14, 1809**, and the Qing Dynasty has been in full swing for over 160 years, although the streets whisper that this reign will soon come to a close. A variety of factors have caused this to be the case, with the peasant class becoming ever more unstable, the court itself being rampant with corruption, and foreign forces closing in.

Emperor Jiaqing has also been a, shall we say, *controversial* figure within the empire, with the subjects of the Middle Kingdom being less than happy with their increasingly impoverished state, as exemplified by the White Lotus and Miao Rebellions. These uprisings were, of course, quelled, but not without the deaths of over 100,000 White Lotus rebels, and a financial cost that would cause the treasurers of any lesser nation to faint. This large fiscal and humanitarian cost has sparked outrage among both the court and the people of China, and it seems like discontentment with the empire has become the new norm in the streets.

While from an outsider's perspective it may seem that Emperor Jiaqing's rule is supreme, rumor has it that more than a few members of the court have rather unsavory opinions of their leader. Ex-Chief Grand Councillor Heshen, despite stealing over one million taels of silver from the national treasury, was rather popular in the court, and his support did not die alongside him. Grumbles about Heshen's removal (from his position and from the land of the living) are not uncommon for those who listen closely, and even members of the court who are not closely aligned with any faction seem a bit uneasy. This dissatisfaction is proving to be massively detrimental to the court's working environment, and thus combatting this issue—or otherwise *removing* it at its source—proves essential.



All of this is in addition to the threat posed by Britain and Portugal, who seem just a little too happy to stay in China. Opium—which has been present in China since the Tang Dynasty—has begun to pose an issue as the British have smuggled more and more of it into Southern China, with several communities already becoming addicted. Additionally, Portugal has long held a presence in East Asia, establishing a colony in Macau and using it as a key trading post to receive Asian goods. As Western powers approach steadily and without signs of stopping, the Qing Court must be wary of any action that either nation may take.

While this is a historical crisis committee and the staff at Jackrabbit MUN pride themselves on producing committees that are as historically accurate as they are interesting, we do not condone **any form of racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, or any other bigotry. This includes but is not limited to genocide, ethnic cleansing, the creation of concentration camps, hate speech, sexual violence, and use of nuclear weapons. Even if these actions are accurate to the real event, any promotion of these ideas will be approached with extreme gravity.** Failure to comply will result in penalties ranging from verbal warnings to being banned from any future Jackrabbit MUN event.



TOPIC SYNOPSIS

It's **February 14, 1809**: the start of another lunar year and a time of new beginnings. However, the onset of the new year does not signify the end of trouble for the Qing Dynasty. Embroiled in struggles, including but not limited to: economic instability, political corruption, and the looming threat of imperialism from Britain and Portugal; the Qing Dynasty—for lack of better phrasing—has to get it together.

In this epic of the last dynasty of China, virtue will clash with corruption as delegates work to snatch the Middle Kingdom from the jaws of ruin, all while under the watchful eye of Heaven. As it has through all centuries bygone, the Celestial Empire will once again take a stand, but without proper management, this very well could be its last.

Navigating this crisis is essential, although how will be up for the delegates to decide; the fate of the Qing Dynasty is in their hands. Working together will likely prove as essential as moving in the shadows, and while delegates may learn to trust each other, they should never do so without the suspicion that the person behind them has a knife on hand.



BACKGROUND

HISTORY OF THE QING DYNASTY

In 1809, one shining star has overcome all others, and one dynasty now stands as the ruler of China. The Qing dynasty, officially established in China in 1644, has expanded and now rules from the Kazakhstan border to the East China Sea. This dynasty began outside of China, founded by the Manchu people of Manchuria. The Manchu who would eventually become members of the Qing dynasty initially comprised numerous Manchu (or Jianzhou Jurchen) tribes, primarily the four main tribes of the Hulun confederation. Nurhaci, a Jurchen chieftain, founded the Manchu state that would become the Qing dynasty, and united the Jurchen tribes under 8 banners, establishing the foundation of Manchu governance. He united conquered tribes, followers, and captives under this banner, and created a fundamental administrative system and hierarchy that would be carried into the creation of the Qing dynasty. However, the first acknowledgement of these 8 banners as the Qing dynasty came in 1636, when Hong Taiji, son of Manchu leader Nurhaci, formally established the Qing dynasty to grant himself legitimacy as a leader and named himself its founding emperor. This nascent dynasty wouldn't find a home in China until 1644, when a peasant rebellion resulted in the breakdown of the former Ming dynasty. Prior to this rebellion, the Chinese people had suffered catastrophic famine, extreme taxation, and government corruption under the Ming dynasty; This led a peasant army, led by Li Zicheng, to attempt to overthrow the Ming Dynasty. This uprising resulted in the death of the last Ming emperor, Chongzhen, leaving behind a power vacuum ripe for the Manchu to take advantage of. As Li Zicheng's army marched towards the Imperial Palace, or the "Forbidden City," the Manchu armies were let



through the Great Wall by General Wu Sangui of the Ming, who subsequently pledged his allegiance to the Manchu. With their organized and powerful military force under the 8 banners alongside the forces of Wu Sangui, the Manchu bested Li Zicheng's rebel army at the Battle of Shanhai Pass. By June of that year, the Qing Dynasty had officially settled in China, proclaiming its first emperor: the young Shunzi Emperor Fulin, son of Hong Taiji.

From tumultuous beginnings, the Qing dynasty would slowly grow into its power. However, it faced many challenges on its way to becoming the powerful force it is today. The initial response of China's people to the newly established Manchu leadership, such a new, foreign force, was apprehension. The previous Ming dynasty was ethnically Han Chinese, and the cultural differences between the Manchu and Han Chinese quickly arose within the peasant and noble response to the Qing dynasty. The Manchus faced strong peasant resistance that lasted for nearly forty years, facing a number of rebellions by Ming Loyalists, notably located in South China. By 1661, however, this resistance had been mostly extinguished, and China united under the Qing dynasty, memorialized by the ascension of the Kangxi Emperor. This was done not only through military responses, but also with the targeted integration of some Ming customs and systems. Upon taking power in 1644, the Qing dynasty immediately adopted Confucianism, admitting the already omnipresent system into their own philosophies in order to gain Chinese acceptance. Additionally, they accepted many Ming governmental systems and customs, incorporating Chinese culture and immediately instituting Ming legal codes. They encouraged traditional Chinese art, philosophy, and literature, partly to appeal to Han Chinese scholars (a part of the scholar-gentry class). On the other hand, the Manchu people also had a culture of their



own, and imposed customs such as the Queue hairstyle for Chinese citizens so as to blend Manchu and Chinese cultural practices.

The Ming dynasty differed greatly from the Qing, both culturally and motivationally. Alongside ethnic differences, one of the the Ming dynasty's primary goals was the protection of existing Chinese lands, demonstrated by their completion of the Great Wall, in stark contrast to the Qing's prioritization of expansion. The Qing ended struggles with nomadic groups that the Ming had failed to address, and even went as far as to acknowledge western influences in the form of Jesuit missionaries. The Kangxi emperor welcomed Jesuit missionaries who introduced Western sciences and technologies. This was in stark contrast to the Ming dynasty's philosophy, which supported a more isolationist set of policies, although a similarity did align in the form of allowing Jesuit missionaries to operate within China. The Qing dynasty focused largely on expansion in its early days, extending its influence into nearby regions such as Tibet, Mongolia, and Xinjiang under the reign of the Kangxi emperor.

Internally, many changes, as well as expansions on prior systems, were instituted by the Qing in order to ensure a flourishing economy and a stable society. The Qing instituted largely agrarian-based methods, growing crops such as peanuts, maize, and sweet potatoes, which in turn grew the economy. As foreign relations and the evolution of the Qing economy has progressed, the Canton system, established in 1757, has restricted all maritime trade with Westerners to the port of Guangzhou to be managed by the Cohong, a group of Chinese merchants, in order to control trade and foreign influence. In addition, the "Great Qing Code," established in 1646, imposed a legal standard with specific laws, punishments, everyday regulations, and legal philosophies incorporating Confucianist views. This involved a combination of the previous Ming systems with Qing legal revisions, first established in 1646 and finalized



by 1740. Regarding Qing society, social structure focused on Manchu rule over the Han Chinese, as well as the four major classes of landlord, peasant, craftsman, and merchant, with the emperor at the top and his officials/noblemen directly beneath him. Women, especially in high society, were still largely expected to follow traditional Confucian values, and saw minimal change during the bulk of the Qing dynasty. Footbinding remained a practice from the Han Chinese tradition, and became assimilated into Qing society, where it lives on today. Overall, the Qing dynasty upheld and still upholds Confucian beliefs such as benevolence, righteousness, and social order, with a strong focus on expansion and development.

Many of the Qing dynasty's primary issues arose later on in Manchu rule. The Kangxi Emperor's son, the Yongzheng Emperor, emphasized combating corruption and implemented multiple reforms to strengthen the internal government. These reforms included special allowances for government officials to prevent bribery, severe punishments and property confiscations for corrupt officials, and various accountability systems to verify finances and report incidents back to Yongzheng. These efforts created a stronger and more stable government under Yongzheng. Nevertheless, this stability did not outlast his rule. After him, Yongzheng's son, Qianlong, ascended in 1735 and expanded the Qing dynasty to its greatest extent, fully incorporating Tibet and Mongolia. However, in his later years, he became corrupt and entrusted power based on favoritism. The empire was then largely ruled by Qianlong's favored official, Heshen, who is widely regarded as the most corrupt official in Chinese history. This rule inflicted severe damage to the Qing dynasty's ability to rule and credibility with its people. The next ruler, Jiaqing, is where our present day arises and attempts to rehabilitate the dynasty have come up short. A host of issues still remain as of 1809.



GOVERNMENT OF THE QING DYNASTY

The government of the Qing dynasty maintained many aspects of the dynasty before it, yet integrated several Manchu systems and new changes to governance. The Qing government is led by the Emperor who holds absolute power and is considered the son of heaven under The Mandate of Heaven: a right to rule claimed to be granted by the divine that originated from the Zhou dynasty (~1046 BCE). The Emperor's role is to make decrees, appoint or dismiss officials, and manage the imperial examination system (keju) to take on official recruits. This Keju system gives exams on Confucian principles and texts to appoint successful candidates to government positions, emphasizing the role of Confucianism in Qing society. Under the Emperor, the central government is a centralized bureaucracy consisting of six boards: the Board of Personnel, Board of Revenue, Board of Rites, Board of War, Board of Justice, and Board of Works. Existing during the Ming Dynasty, these boards were carried over from the past government into the Qing dynasty's, allowing for different aspects of society to be run and maintained by each board. Every board is overseen by an individual Minister that handles specific state affairs. Meanwhile, local governments are separated into provinces, prefectures (districts run by a prefect), and counties. Regional administration is managed by governors in provinces and magistrates in prefectures and counties, both appointed by the Emperor.

One of the primary newer systems implemented by the Qing is the diarchy system, which splits power between Manchu and Han high-ranking officials. This system was created to ensure that the remaining Han Chinese officials from the Ming dynasty remained satisfied with their roles in society and did not rebel during the



early days of the Qing dynasty. The diarchy system allowed for a Manchu and Han official to share an administrative role between the central government and provincial administration, ensuring equal or semi-equal say between the Manchu and Han people. Later on in the history of the Qing dynasty, additional systems were implemented for management and advisory purposes. The Grand Council, established around 1733 by Yongzhen, is a powerful decision-making body within the central government that manages military and political affairs while translating between the emperor and his advisors. Although it began as an informal advisory, it now plays a large role in policymaking and fast-action decisions.

Under Kangxi and Yongzhen, fighting corruption was a main focus along with centralizing power, which strengthened the bureaucracy. The diarchy system, along with several other systems implemented, allowed for more transparency and a decrease in corruption as well as the strengthening of governmental trust, systems, and communication between all levels of government. For example, the Secret Palace Memorial System, Qing Administrative Revolution, and Yongzhen's fiscal reforms all resulted in changes to how the government operated. The Secret Palace Memorial system, created during Kangxi reign around 1693, allows local officials to communicate directly with the emperor, bypassing bureaucratic bottlenecks and increasing accountability. Meanwhile, the Qing Administrative Revolution, in which the court demanded more data from provinces, increased the central government's awareness of local issues during the 18th century. Finally, Yongzhen's fiscal reforms, including a standardized tax system and provincial salaries, normalized greater accountability and involvement by the central government in the affairs of provincial governments and the Chinese people, seeking to reduce corruption and create stricter rules and regulations to be followed. This differed from the government of the Ming dynasty,



which often had less-defined roles for provincial officials and looser regulations regarding communications between the central government and lower courts.

However, the government has also been weakened by corruption, such as under the later years of Qianlong. Under his appointed Heshen, the dynasty's information reporting systems were exploited as more data was asked from the provinces, often overreporting data, which exposed greater issues. Heshen was notorious for embezzlement, bribery, and extreme exploitation of his position. Additionally, even as the population grew at this time, local positions did not expand, leaving administrators overwhelmed managing large amounts of people (~100million people to 310million during Qianglong's reign). Unequal land distribution into the hands of a few wealthy landowners angered the lower classes. This culminated in the White Lotus Rebellion, a peasant uprising against increased taxes and crackdowns on private trade. This rebellion lasted around a decade due to the government's discoordination and inefficiency, and no changes were implemented due to this. It took a large toll on the government, both in regard to governance and finances, and further eroded the bureaucracy.

CONFUCIANISM

Founded by Confucius (Kong Fuzi) in the 6th century BCE in China, Confucianism is a philosophy that contains societal structures and expectations, with the main idea being to create a stable society through ethical leadership and individual moral examination and accountability. This revolves around the idea that humans are innately good and inclined to do what's right, and that, by doing the wrong thing, it indicates a lack of morals and social conduct. Confucius believed in the concept of



“tian” or heaven, where all things originate from, and where a balance of yin and yang (opposite forces) holds high importance. In addition, Confucius advocated for a Strict ethics code with Five Constants and Four Virtues that one must maintain in order to live in prosperity: Ren (innate sense of right and wrong), Yi (righteousness), Li (ritual), Zhi (knowledge), Xin (integrity), Xiao (respect of family hierarchy), Zhong (loyalty), Jie (contingency), and Yi (justice). By following this code of ethics, one would become junzi (“lord's son”) and would understand their place in the world and its order.

As a result, Confucianism became the official state ideology during the Han dynasty, with the “Mandate of Heaven”—which asserts that a ruler's legitimacy is based on their virtue and ability to maintain harmony—serving as justification to rule. It then became the basis of Chinese society and structure, with social hierarchies such as father to son ingrained in Chinese culture and the morality framework of ren influencing ethical, cultural, and legal codes. Additionally, the civic service exam that determines who becomes an official is based on Confucian texts, demonstrating extreme influence.

Multiple criticisms can be made of Confucianism, including that it justifies inequality and corruption under its hierarchical system, especially between men and women, and creates an obedience standard that facilitates authoritarianism. In addition, filial piety can encourage abuse from parents or family, conservative traditions can hinder innovation and creativity, and such a strict social system discourages universal treatment and democratic participation in favor of obedience, obligation, and adherence to those above one’s status.



EMPEROR JIAQING'S REFORMS

Jiaqing was the 5th emperor of the Qing Dynasty. Prior to Jiaqing's reign, Qianlong, his father, was emperor. During Qianlong's reign, he directly opposed the White Lotus sect, and tried to ban them 1796. This raised the hostility between the 2 groups, and eventually the court realized that the emperor's goals could never be fulfilled. Jiaqing became emperor that same year after the abdication of his father. Although he was meant to replace his father, power still lay with Qianlong and his minister, Heshen, while Jiaqing was left with ceremonial duties.

Jiaqing finally gained the power of emperor after his father's death, and this marked the start of the Jiaqing Reforms. He tried to stop corruption in the government by arresting and executing his father's minister Heshen for his acts, and also made great changes in the state's policy in order to give grace to the White Lotus sect by issuing 'On the Heretical Religious Sects' 9 years ago. Also in 1800, Jiaqing proclaimed that the 2 characters 'White Lotus' (bai lian, 白蓮) have been commonly used in Buddhist scriptures. so how could we label it as heterodox?. This calmed tensions between the state and government and changed the perspective on how citizens viewed the White Lotus sect. Another part of the policy reforms was the promotion of capital appeals. This was not a usual way to express local grievances, but it helped prevent people choosing violence and causing rebellions against the government. Capital appeals served as a buffer to discourage people from starting a rebellion and was also a way to check political figures for corruption. The Jiaqing Reforms were an attempt to slow down the decline of the failing dynasty, and helped fight against corruption in the court, balance imperial finances, and strengthen imperial authority.

Many see the Jiaqing Reforms as a desperate last attempt to try to save the dynasty, and although they did good, they were ultimately unsuccessful. When



emperor Jiaqing finally gained power over the state, it was already very corrupted and disorganized. Jiaqing had less opportunities to expand the empire due to his father's corrupt government system and overly aggressive acts. Jiaqing tried to crack down on corruption, fix serious problems in the government, and quell citizen unrest after the White Lotus Rebellion, but most changes were surface level, corruption continued to be a problem in the state, and the Qing government kept declining despite these changes. The reforms had good intent behind them, but there were too many issues at one time for any of the policies to be effective.

The Jiaqing reforms were rooted in Confucianism, visible through the policies that the emperor tried to implement in the state. Starting with anti-corruption, Jiaqing believed that himself and his officials should be held accountable as moral leaders, supporting Confucianism's belief of upright and virtuous officials. Confucianism ideals also stress the importance of officials serving the community with duty and loyalty, which we see with the Capital Appeals that were kept in place. With Jiaqing suppressing rebellions and restoring control to the government, he helped showcase the ideals of stability, hierarchy, and harmony. Jiaqing used Confucianism as a guide to make his actions limited during his reign, and believed that restoring morality would help restore the empire.

Corruption within the Qing Dynasty was something that the state struggled with before Jiaqing's reign, and it only became more apparent once Qianlong's abdication. By arresting and executing his father's favorite but most corrupt official, Heshen, Jiaqing took out one of the main corrupt members of the government, but there was still corruption prevalent in the bureaucracy. He had limited success in reclaiming the civil service, meaning that the connection between government and society was weakened and unable to effectively address the state's growing problems.



Jiaqing's focus on morality and administrative control was proven ineffective against the systematic corruption in the country.

THE WHITE LOTUS REBELLION

In 1796, the conditions in Qing Dynasty China were less than ideal for the lower classes. High tax rates and harassment by local officials bred poverty and despair. Harsh conditions for peasants under the control of landowners created discontent and resulted in the creation of homeless peasant refugee groups from the Hubei, Shaanxi, and Sichuan border regions. In desperation, these camps quickly aligned themselves with the secret society of the White Lotus, which encouraged equal and modest living under the guidance of a savior deity. They promised the Buddha's return to end their suffering, which was abundant during this time. As a result of high taxation rates to fund military pursuits, economic disparities from the stark contrast between land owners and peasants, and issues with the Qing dynasty's Manchu roots, the White Lotus society planned a rebellion amongst the Chinese secret societies and armed them to attempt an overthrow of Qing government.

Partly due to the corruption under Heshen at the time, the rebellion could not be properly addressed and went on for nearly 10 years. During the rebellion, the government attempted to arrest society leaders, which only increased resistance. Resistance fighters operated through guerrilla-style warfare in which raids were conducted. Rebels from the Xiangyang region amassed a large army that put up strong resistance to the de-unified Qing forces. This often led to provinces fighting for themselves, and small city armies being unable to properly defend themselves against the sporadic rebel groups. The White Lotus societies increased their participation, and by 1797, looting and guerrilla warfare were rampant amongst the rebels. This conflict



continued for such a long time due to the Qing's inability to target the base of operations for rebel groups such as the White Lotus societies, and ending the rebellion required organization of supply cutoffs, increases in militia training, and coordinated attacks. Eventually, in 1804, the Qing finally managed to surround the rebels where their rebellion originated: the Hubei, Sichuan, and Shaanxi provinces. This was accomplished by waging a war of attrition in which the Qing cut off supplies, food, and manpower for the White Lotus's rebel armies.

The White Lotus rebellion had a devastating impact on the Qing government. Many central Chinese districts were destroyed or damaged, countless lives of civilians and militia were lost, and there was extreme financial cost: around 200 million tael (over 5.7 billion U.S. dollars). This rebellion exposed the weakness of the central government, the profound impact of corruption, and the Qing's inability to suppress uprisings. It also damaged the Qing dynasty's finances, reputation, and stability.

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

During the 18th and 19th centuries, China experienced increasing pressure from foreign nations. Countries such as Great Britain, Portugal, France, the United States, and the Netherlands sought to expand trade with China. They were especially interested in valuable Chinese goods like tea, silk, and porcelain. Over time these nations gained greater access to Chinese markets and began to exert influence over China's economy and policies.

One of the earliest and most significant examples of foreign presence was Macau. Controlled by Portugal beginning in the 1500s, Macau served as a major trading port between China and Europe. Although it was technically under Chinese authority,



the Portuguese operated with a high degree of independence, showing an early sign of foreign control within Chinese territory (“ Macau History”).

Even before 1809, trade imbalances began to create tension. European demand for Chinese goods was high, but China had little interest in European products. To address the importation of opium into China in the late 1700s. Although the full crisis had not yet peaked by 1809, opium use was already becoming a growing concern, leading to early addiction problems and economic strain as silver flows out of China (Greenberg; “Opium Trade”).

Overall, foreign influence before 1809 was more limited than later years but still significant. Through trade, foreign controlled ports like Macau, and the early stages of the opium trade, outside powers were beginning to challenge China’s control over its economy and territory. These early interactions laid the foundation for the greater conflicts and loss of sovereignty that China would face in the 19th century, including the later Opium Wars (Spence).

CORRUPTION IN THE COURT

Corruption within China was something that the Qing Dynasty struggled with during its reign. The most known and prevalent example of this is Heshen, a government official during Emperor Qianlong’s rule.

Heshen began his career in the Imperial Palace in 1772 and quickly rose to become Grand Councilor in his late 20’s. The Qianlong emperor showed heavy favoritism towards him, and this was only more apparent after his son married the emperor’s favorite daughter. This favoritism allowed Heshen to control appointments, extort riches, and hold authority over important departments. His financial mismanagement and exploitation led to major problems within the government, such



as military inefficiency and scarcity within the populace. Heshen stole close to 1.1 billion taels of silver (\$270 billion) from the government which marks him as one of the richest men in history.

Leading up to his arrest, multiple things were in disarray in the bureaucracy. Government breakdown, financial crisis, rebellions, and instability were all problems within the country due to his corruption. The government was weakened by his crimes and he left a strong, negative impact on the Chinese court. The Qing Court became filled with less competent officials, the government was systematic instead of being isolated, He had too much power within the court, and made the government unprepared and ineffective during times of unrest.

Even after Heshen's execution, corruption was still an issue for the Qing Dynasty. During Jiaqing's rule, he was an ineffective leader and was unable to unroot the deep corruption that infected the system. The Jiaqing Reforms mostly focused on taking out corrupt officials such as Heshen, but were not able to fundamentally reform the system. There was too much corruption embedded within the dynasty in order to remove it completely, so it affected things such as the military and its effectiveness to protect the country. Ultimately, the corruption in the Jiaqing era was a continuation of the corruption from the Qianlong era, and with Jiaqing being unable to replace and reestablish a new, non corrupt network, the Qing Dynasty continued its decline.



COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

This committee will begin on **February 14, 1809**. As delegates, you will receive various crisis updates throughout committee, where our dais or crisis staff will deliver new information pertinent to the events of committee. Time jumps may occur. **Since this committee begins on February 14, 1809, we understand that critical events within several character's lives may not yet have occurred, and some information has not yet been revealed to the public. Nonetheless, please abide by your character's original historical timeline. Also, this committee is set in an alternate timeline, and any character actions may diverge from the historical timeline. Character details, such as lifetime or relationships with other characters, may also be exaggerated or altered from the historical record in order to better facilitate engaging debate.** We recommend making a basic timeline for your character that you can refer to during debate.

When it comes to directives, we allow group (also known as joint private), personal, and committee directives, as well as communiques and press releases.

These directives will be written on one notepad, and then collected and responded to by crisis staff during updates. Crisis staff will give you another notepad until the next update, and delegates will continue to switch between those two notebooks for all of the committee.



In addition, on the day of the conference, you will be given a folder with a portfolio power. These portfolio powers are secret—only you will know what your portfolio power is—and include two major things: plots and powers. Plots are secret objectives a delegate is trying to accomplish or secret information that only one delegate or a group of delegates would be privy to. For instance, an example of a plot is how in our past “Red Scare” room, multiple delegates were Communists and plotted with each other to overthrow the United States. Powers are special actions that delegates can take. These can range from the ability to “OBJECT!” to another delegate’s speech to a secret task force of spies and analysts that a delegate can command to gather intelligence on their adversaries to the ability to call a general strike and cripple key infrastructure.

Finally, as the Qing Court, we must take precautions not to turn the Mandate of Heaven against us, especially not by being outwardly disrespectful to the emperor, the glorious son of heaven. As such, whenever his majesty enters the room during a crisis update, **all delegates must bow thrice at their seats before the emperor**, lest they risk certain *consequences*. Respect must be carefully maintained, and thus this is in effect for the entire duration of the committee.

Please be advised that at JackrabbitMUN we have a policy of not killing your fellow delegates. Therefore, please do not submit directives attempting to assassinate one another. We also will not entertain directives that involve genocide or nuclear weapons. Thank you so much for signing up and we look forward to meeting you on the 23rd



CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

Bao Shichen

A well-renowned calligrapher and known proponent of reforming the court, Bao Shichen has long been involved in the struggles of the recent Qing Dynasty. Born to a low-ranking officer, as a child he helped his father suppress the Lin Shuangwen Rebellion, and as he grew older, became a commander in the military during crusades to stamp out the White Lotus Rebellion. Currently, he works as a Confucian scholar under the statecraft school, writing his essay “On Wealth” about the importance of large-scale reforms, and decrying the evils of opium. While he lacks an official position in court, his prominence bequeaths him an informal place in the Forbidden City.

Du Shoutian

One of the most promising young scholars of his generation, Du Shoutian is currently working to follow in the footsteps of his father, a prominent academic in the prestigious Hanlin Academy. As it stands, he believes in the strength of the Chinese empire, but is concerned about the growing presence of foreign powers, especially as the common man increasingly obtains an affinity for opium. However, his main focus is on his studies, with a special focus on Confucianism and preserving the natural order of the world.

Gia Long

In the past few years the political landscape of Southeast Asia has drastically shaken up, due in no small part to the work of Gia Long, who ended centuries of feudal conflict by uniting Vietnam and naming himself emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty.



Recently, he sought the approval and recognition of Vietnam by Emperor Jiaqing, which was granted. Currently in China to seek guidance in governing Vietnam, Gia Long is similarly concerned about growing European influence in Asia and seems to have ambitions to secure relations with China.

He Changling

A recent admit to the prestigious Hanlin Academy, He Changling has made a name for himself already as a devout follower of Confucian ideology and, alongside others such as Bao Shichen, a strong believer in the statecraft school. Focusing on practical results and moderate amounts of modernization to amplify Chinese strengths, He Changling wishes to end corruption within the court and recenter the public as the number one priority. Diligent and honest, he stands as part of a new generation of scholars who demand change from a multiple millennia-old system.

Hong Liangji

Although Heshen's betrayal was a major controversy within the court, causing mass outrage and distrust in the court, few were as outspoken with their contempt as Hong Liangji. Openly criticizing Emperor Qianlong, he was banished to the northern rural outskirts of the empire. However, Emperor Jiaqing has pardoned him, and upon resuming his work within Beijing, has continued to examine Chinese society with much scrutiny and precision. Looking forward, Hong Liangji is set on ridding the court of corruption like that of Heshen. He worries for the people of China, with external pressures only exacerbating internal issues that spell disaster for the common man.



Huang Juezi

While only having recently entered the government school, Huang Juezi has already distinguished himself among his peers as a particularly bright scholar, being a talented poet ever since childhood. Possessing an unusually large amount of wisdom despite his age, his current main concern is the overreaching influence of the British, particularly with smugglers bringing in opium despite the drug being criminalized for nearly a century. He has already found himself to be a staunch critic of the drug, even among its opponents within the court. Young and outspoken, Huang Juezi intends to make a name for himself by bringing China back to her former glory.

Lin Zexu

Studying the classics since childhood, Lin Zexu quickly rose through the ranks of the Chinese bureaucracy, passing his first examinations at just 12. However, he comes from a humble background, and seems to be disillusioned with the treachery that bubbles just beneath the surface of the Qing court. Desiring to join the ever-illustrious Hanlin Academy, Lin Zexu is currently working to pass the highest level of examinations and fight the internal corruption and inefficiencies that seems to be penetrating every area of the government.

Liu Quanzhi

Following the death of his predecessor Ji Yun, Liu Quanzhi was promoted to Assistant Grand Secretary after multiple years working within the bureaucracy. However, following a disagreement with other scholars within the court, Emperor Jiaqing demoted him to the role of editor. Nevertheless, working diligently Liu Quanzhi rose in the rankings again, and began to work in the Guanglu Temple as a reader. Desiring to



return to the Forbidden City once more, Liu Quanzhi waits for his excellence to be recognized again, continuing his considerable efforts in the meantime.

Lu Guangheng

A young man in Guangzhou who has dreams of joining the growing and increasingly wealthy class of *hong* merchants, Lu Guangheng views the current situation in China as a massive financial opportunity. The current situation with the encroaching British and Portuguese may raise some concerns, but Lu Guangzheng believes that both countries' immense wealth and international pull can turn China's economic state around. Working directly with foreign powers, he aims to cause the change that will lead China into a new era of prosperity.

Lu Kun

Originally joining the Qing court as a Hanlin scholar, Lu Kun has moved through several posts from the Ministry of War to governmental affairs in Guangdong and Shandong. As it stands, it seems his interest has turned to governance, although he still works under the Hanlin Academy in order to build experience for his desired role. However, his areas of choice being near the South China Sea could prove to be challenging to manage due to the tumultuous nature of the region given all the foreign powers centering in the area.

Mingliang

A highly regarded Manchu official, Mingliang proved instrumental during the Miao and White Lotus Rebellions, putting down the uprisings with all of the severity that they were known for. Between his valor and familial relations with Empress



Xiaoxianchun, Emperor Qianlong's wife, he married the daughter of the first rank prince and served in several governmental positions, including as the Minister of Justice, General of several different provinces, and currently, the Minister of War. Known as a loyal supporter of the emperor given his ties to the royal family, Mingliang has proven that he can and will do what is necessary to protect them alongside the empire.

Nikita Yakovlevich Bichurin

Born in Russia with a strong Orthodox Christian background, Nikita Yakovlevich Bichurin dedicated his life to religion and became a monk, traveling to Beijing as a missionary to spread Orthodox Christianity. However upon reaching China, he became increasingly fascinated with the regional history and language, forgoing the more traditional role of a missionary in order to further immerse himself in the empire's culture. Bichurin is currently working with imperial scholars to translate ancient Chinese texts to Russian, appearing to have dedicated himself to scholarship with little intent to mold the public with European ideals.

Prince Mianning

The son of the reigning Emperor Jiaqing, Prince Mianning was known to be favored by Emperor Qianlong, accompanying his grandfather on hunting trips and other such activities together. Attending all of the duties typical of a high-ranking nobleman, Prince Mianning works diligently at all of his studies from philosophy to swordplay, knowing that history is as unpredictable as it is unforgiving. Although he believes in the Mandate of Heaven's strength to pull China through any difficult time it should face, he looks on in concern at the foreign powers causing increasing instability.



Princess Hexiao

The youngest of the late Emperor Qianlong's daughters and the half sister of the current Emperor Jiaqing. Although she was highly regarded in the court during her father's rule as one of his favorite children, her tangential involvement with Heshen's corruption scandals as his daughter-in-law has tarnished this reputation. However, materially she has remained unharmed, as Emperor Jiaqing has granted her amnesty as well as part of Heshen's confiscated property. Currently, she resides in the outskirts of the empire with her husband, who now serves as a military officer, although rumor has it she desires to return to Beijing.

Qian Daixin

A scholar long acclaimed for his interdisciplinary approach to politics and philosophy, Qian Daixin has long served as a powerhouse of Chinese academics, working in fields including but not limited to history, linguistics, and education, and renowned for emphasizing the importance of learning the past while nurturing the future. His prose and poetry is also notedly beautiful, inspiring even the late Emperor Qianlong to seek him out to work in the court. While technically working for the Hanlin Academy, Qian Daixin has been known to make an active effort to seek out information beyond just his colleagues, even drawing from Western advancements in math and astronomy in order to increase his knowledge. As one of the empire's strongest educational experts and advocates of scholarship, Qian Daixin seeks to create a future through learning that will draw from the successes of yesteryear's China, but pave a way for future generations to thrive.



Qishan

Serving as Emperor Jiaqing's personal bodyguard, Qishan is a Mongol nobleman noted to be strong not only in battle but also in politics and negotiation. Schooled in statecraft, he pushes for greater reforms to curb the corruption poisoning the empire. As a bodyguard, he is one of the emperor's most trusted staffers and has one of the most direct lines of contact with his majesty out of anyone in the court. Qishan, looking out for both the welfare of his fellow Mongols and the rest of China, knowing that the fate of everyone relies on a mutual effort towards good.

Ruan Yuan

Among one of the greatest Chinese scholars of this era, Ruan Yuan has proved himself an aspirational academic as an avid painter and calligrapher and government official in the provinces of Shandong and Zhejiang. Typical of a scholar under the kaozheng school of thought, Ruan Yuan is a devout follower of Han Confucianism and is decidedly focused on a results-based approach to governance. He's outspoken in his distaste for Yangmingism, and believes the path forward for China will be through facts and figures, not feelings and subjectivity.

Sun Shiyi

Thought to have died in the chaos of the White Lotus Rebellion, Sun Shiyi has astonished the court by coming to Beijing alive. His miraculous arrival is warmly received by most members of the court, who fondly remember him for his various eccentricities and sharp mental and physical capabilities. Instrumental in suppressing White Lotus rebels, he was named Duke Mouyoung of the First Class by the emperor. However, having seen the bloodshed firsthand, Sun Shiyi has become primarily



concerned with preventing further tragedies involving civilian uprisings, focusing on internal restructuring to benefit the common man.

Sun Yuting

Sun Yuting, having served in the court for over three decades, is a well-established official and scholar born to a family of scholar-bureaucrats from Shandong Province. Serving previously as the Governor of Guangxi and Guangdong, he has returned to the Forbidden City to work in the Hanlin Academy. Advising the emperor to recognize Gia Long as the ruler of Vietnam a few years prior, Sun Yuting additionally has much relevant knowledge of foreign nations, and although he is wary of European powers. In his eyes, the West is not a force to be shut out, but their growing influence does demand the strengthening of Chinese institutions to address the empire's most pressing problems: its resource and land shortages, the plight of the common folk.

The Hoppo

The Hoppo is the head administrator of all trade passing through Canton. This port is the crux of China's trade tensions with Europe, as it is the only place where Europeans can freely trade in sovereign Chinese territory. It is thus Europe's strongest foothold in China, though they are currently seeking to expand from it. It is his job to ensure that Canton's trade is transparent and regulated. As such, an immense stream of wealth flows through the Hoppo's hands, giving them strong and profitable connections to the Qing Court and foreign merchants. Ultimately, however, his primary goal is that of protecting the financial interests of the Emperor.



Wang Delu

Wang Delu stands as the head of the Qing navy. Despite the kingdom's growing maritime crises, the navy is far from able to compete with superior European merchants and rampant black market trading and lawlessness on the high seas. Such problems are of great importance to Wang Delu, and so he is mainly concerned with convincing the rest of the court of the criticality of naval power at the dawn of the 19th century. He believes that protecting and controlling China's waterways requires a powerful navy, well-equipped and free of corruption.

Wang Niansun

As a prominent scholar-official and Director-General of the Grand Canal, Wang Niansun prides himself on respecting the responsibility and duty of his position. Accordingly, he has no patience for those who defile their office with corruption and bribes, as so many officials are unfortunately wont to do. Wang Niansun is particularly well-known for his impeachment of the former Qianlong Emperor's immensely corrupt officer, Heshen, earning him no shortage of ire at court. Wang Niansun believes that restoring the integrity of the Qing government is paramount to preserving stability within China, so he is set on ridding the bureaucracy of all forms of corruption,

Wu Bingjian

Wu Bingjian may very well be the wealthiest man in China. His work as a *hong* merchant has enabled him to amass an unimaginable sum of wealth. Said work has also afforded him lucrative connections to prominent merchants the world over. Centered in the 13 Factories of Canton, Wu Bingjian grew his firm, *Wu Howqua*,



through trading tea, silk, and porcelain with European merchants. Though the activities of such merchants have been raising concerns among some members of the court—to the extent of some ire even being drawn toward Wu Bingjian himself—he is unconcerned. A businessman at heart, Wu Bingjian is always on the lookout for whomever can offer him the best deal.

Yan Ruyi

Yan Ruyi is a top scholar-official working independently in Southern China, known to be talented even as a child, studying at the prestigious Yuelu Academy. However, after a poorly-planned defence against the Miao rebels, some Qing soldiers mistakenly attacked, believing Yan Ruyi's defence to be enemies. Despite this disgrace, upon returning to his hometown, he has made major contributions in foreign relations, connecting native peoples with the Qing government, proving himself as a major asset during times of conflict.

Yang Fang

Yang Fang is a highly experienced general. Having fought to suppress the Miao Rebellion and White Lotus Rebellion, he has seen the terrible bloodshed that political instability can cause within China. Known for his bravery, having nobly blockaded and tracked down White Lotus rebels, Yang Fang is likewise a force to be reckoned with in court, stern and principled in demeanor whether painting or riding into battle. Having seen this fighting firsthand, he has no doubt that China will be able to weather any violent conflict that dares to challenge it, but he worries about what will be lost should that be allowed to occur.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the strategies of past dynasties to curb corruption and could they be applicable to the Qing Court? If so, what changes or continuities would be necessary to enact them?
2. Given the increasing overreach of European powers, the British and Portuguese in particular, what is the best strategy to protect Chinese interests, and what sectors face the biggest threats (or potential gains) because of this development?
3. Recent rebellions have inspired similar ideas in certain groups of commoners, and fear and frustration towards the government in others. What strategies can help pacify the civilians, and how will these be enacted?
4. In times of great contention and instability, disagreement among the upper class on how to react is common given the vast array of differing educations, schools of thought, and personal interests. Is it necessary to sacrifice personal values in order to keep peace as efficiently as possible, or is it possible to navigate difficulties without amending principles?



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