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**Some Corner of a Chinese Field: The Politics of
Remembering Foreign Veterans of the Taiping Civil War**

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Some Corner of a Chinese Field: The Politics of Remembering Foreign Veterans of the Taiping Civil War*

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Abstract

The memory of the foreign involvement in the Taiping war lasted long after the fall of the Taiping capital at Nanjing in 1864. The events were commemorated by various actors, Chinese and foreign from the end of the war until the end of the treaty port century in 1943 when the right to extraterritoriality was abrogated. This article explores the commemorations of the foreign role through three media: the issuing of medals to foreign fighters, the building of memorials to the foreign dead and the writing of histories of the events. Across these media different interest groups used the foreign interventions as a proxy for continuing debates about the role of foreigners in China and about China's place in the world. More broadly the commemorations of role of foreign fighters in the Taiping war is a case study in the transnational politics of memory. The memories of the war were not just contested or commemorated by states but also by individuals and groups whose views often diverged from those of their government. By tracing how memories of the war were remembered and forgotten over time we can trace the insecurities of different interest groups over time and their perceived power relative to each other.

Introduction

The Temple of Elegant Loyalty (文忠寺 *Wen Zhong Si*) was commissioned by the Qing government to commemorate the service of high official Li Hongzhang against the Taiping. Its name derived from the honorific granted to Li upon his death in accordance with Qing commemorative practices. According to the *North-China Herald*, however, the ‘common people’ of Wuxi, the city in which the memorial was constructed, called it ‘the temple of the man who sold his country’ (卖国寺 *Mai Guo Si*), a reference to concessions Li had been forced to make in diplomatic negotiations with Russia.¹ This anecdote underscores a problem with fixing meaning to historical events and actors through acts of commemoration. This article will explore how different groups and individuals sought to fix the meaning of the foreign interventions in the Taiping war (1850-1864). The debates these commemorations sparked became proxy for debates among foreign and Chinese actors about the extent of the foreign role in China and, by extension, the scope of Chinese sovereignty. More broadly, the commemoration of the interventions offers a case study in the politics of war memory in a transnational setting. The differing agendas of the groups involved created multidirectional waves of commemoration as the activities of one interest group inspired both complementary and contrasting commemorations of the period among others. At the same time, as transnational, these commemorations were prone to highlight distinctive differences in Qing, European and American memorial cultures, provoking as many disputes over the form of commemorations as over their content.

The Taiping civil war (1850-64) broke out when Hong Xiuquan, a failed civil service examination candidate who believed himself to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ, declared his intention to overthrow China’s Qing dynasty (1644-1911).² Hong’s call to arms came just as British, American and French communities had established their privileged position on the China coast, underwritten by the treaties which followed the Qing defeat in the Opium War (1839-42). Although some foreigners fought as mercenaries for both sides in the conflict as early as 1853, many more became involved after the Taiping armies advanced on the treaty port of Shanghai in 1860 and 1862.³ These advances were repulsed by British and French troops as foreign diplomats felt that the Taiping threatened trade and the security of foreign landlords’ property in the city.⁴ Although the Anglo-French force abstained from further intervention after 1862, British, French and American officials continued to support their citizens serving as mercenaries commanding Qing troops. Although more commonly known among Chinese scholars as the Taiping Rebellion, or the Taiping Revolutionary Movement, as several American scholars have recently pointed out, the conflict is more aptly cast as a civil war.⁵ With a death toll of upwards of twenty million people this was not a

¹ *North-China Herald*, 10 June, 1904, p. 1218.

² For accounts of the Taiping civil war and foreign involvement in it see Stephen R. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) and Têng Ssū-yü, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

³ Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), pp. 237-8.

⁴ Jonathan Chappell, 'The Limits of the Shanghai Bridgehead: Understanding British Intervention in the Taiping Rebellion 1860–62', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 44, 4 (2016), 533-50.

⁵ For example see Tobie Meyer-Fong, 'Where the War Ended: Violence, Community, and Commemoration in China's Nineteenth-Century Civil War', *The American Historical Review*, 120, 5 (2015), 1724-38, p.1724 and

rebellion which faced inevitable suppression, but a contest between two competing states for China's future, and one in which the outcome was far from certain. During the bloody campaigns in Jiangnan in the last four years of the war hundreds of foreign fighters serving the Qing died, though many admittedly from disease. This led to the vexed question of how to remember these men and of how to commemorate the service of those veterans still living.

The memories of these events must be set in two frames, that of lived experience and that of collective historical memory. Memory cannot be reduced to an individual phenomenological experience. Historians of memory, whether their focus is on individuals giving voice to their own, often traumatic, experiences, as with holocaust survivors, or on the construction of collective narratives, such as those of nation states, have accepted that memories are also social.⁶ Even our personal narrative memories are constructed in a dialogue with those around us.⁷ Individual and social memories typically have a lifespan of no more than eighty years, passing with the generation that experienced and constructed them. As Aleida Assmann points out, when memories cross this barrier in time they become mediated, relying not on a collection of experiences but on artefacts, memorials and collective commemorations.⁸ Once memories pass out of the realm of an individual lifespan they are no longer experiences people have but rather narratives that are made.⁹ Some of these narratives are actively remembered while others are 'archival' memories, that is to say they reside in a set of artefacts, documents and symbols which are not currently significant but may in future be drawn on to construct or bolster collective identities.¹⁰ We must therefore ask why, at any given point, some memories are given prominence over others. The memory of the foreign veterans of the Taiping war faded after its veterans dispersed from China in the years after the conflict's end. It was stored, however, in the local foreign and Chinese communities' archival memory, to be remembered when the presence of foreigners in the country was challenged by rising Chinese nationalism in the 1920s.

This study complements a growing literature on the commemoration of foreign fighters in civil wars and of the memory of the Taiping war in particular. The foreign interventions in the Taiping conflict were not unique. The involvement of the international brigades in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), for example, also raised disputes about how foreign fighters should be commemorated.¹¹ Nevertheless, the memory of foreign contributions to a war are, within a host nation, usually subsumed by attempts to come to terms with the memory of the war as a whole such that commemoration becomes a matter for the fighters' home nation, if

Stephen R. Platt, 'Introduction: War and Reconstruction in 1860s Jiangnan', *Late Imperial China*, 30, 2 (2009), 1-8, pp.8-9.

⁶ For example see Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, 'Setting the Framework', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6-39, p.6, and Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

⁷ For example see Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in *Cultural memories: The Geographical Point of View*, ed. by Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, and Edgar Wunder (London: Springer, 2011), 15-27, p.55 and Aleida Assmann, 'Transformations between History and Memory', *Social Research*, 75, 1 (2008), 49-72, p.50.

⁸ Aleida Assmann, 'Memory, Individual and Collective', in *Oxford Handbooks Online*, ed. by E. Goodin Robert and Tilly Charles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 210-, p.215.

⁹ Assmann, 'Transformations between History and Memory', p.55.

¹⁰ Assmann, 'Memory, Individual and Collective', p.220.

¹¹ See for example Josie McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades, 1945-1989* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004) and Teresa Huhle, "I see the flag in all of that"—Discussions on Americanism and Internationalism in the Making of the San Francisco Monument to the Abraham Lincoln Brigade', *American Communist History*, 10, 1 (2011), 1-33.

at all.¹² The Taiping case is unique because a foreign community with exclusive privileges including exemption from Chinese law remained in China for almost eighty years after the war's end. This fact added to the tensions Tobie Meyer-Fong has recently highlighted within the Qing government over efforts to commemorate its victory over the Taiping, which lasted until the dynasty's fall in 1911.¹³ Memories of the foreign role in suppressing the Taiping were no less contentious, but had a longer afterlife, lasting at least as long as foreign treaty privileges and treaty port communities. Different groups, whether Qing, foreign communities, foreign metropolitan governments or Chinese nationalists, sought to encourage distinct interpretations of the events based on their views on the continuing role of foreigners in China.

This article will argue that to understand the evolution of collective memories in a transnational, and multi-lingual, environment, we have to conceive of them as 'multidirectional'.¹⁴ That is to say, memories are not always in competition with each other. While commemorations often provoke competing narratives, this competition exists within a broader framework in which even attempts to emphasise historical memories which other communities might not recognise can spark parallel commemoration by those same communities. Foreign individuals and communities in China remembered the Taiping war to promote their own achievements, or to make the case for their continued relevance to the country's development. Importantly, these commemorations were not just the efforts to shore up foreign legitimacy in China that Robert Bickers has documented.¹⁵ As they drew on a critical moment in Qing history they were open to contributions and challenges from successive generations of Chinese. Conflicts occurred principally when commemorations took material rather than written form, and thus carried meaning across linguistic boundaries. The range of attempts to shape collective memories of the foreign role in the Taiping war over time highlight the plurality of groups involved, both foreign and Chinese, as well as reflecting the changing nature of alliances of interest on the China coast.

I will trace commemorations of the foreign role in the Taiping war broadly chronologically as they played out through three distinct media which together illustrate the changes in that memory over time. The first contentious site of commemoration was the issuing of medals to foreign fighters for their service to the Qing. These medals, deliberately modelled on British awards and therefore having the potential to undermine the British honours system, caused as much conflict within the British community over whether they could be worn as between British and Qing officials. The second form of commemoration was the construction of monuments to the foreign dead. These monuments were often constructed by Qing officials keen to promote their own role in leading foreign troops as well as to encourage a policy of adopting foreign support to reform the empire. Newspaper reports and travelogues suggest that these monuments, once constructed were largely ignored by Chinese and foreigners alike.

¹² Nir Arielli and Davide Rodogno, 'Transnational Encounters: Hosting and Remembering Twentieth-Century Foreign War Volunteers. Introduction', *Journal of Modern European History*, 14, 3 (2016), p.315.

¹³ Meyer-Fong, 'Where the War Ended', pp.1737-8.

¹⁴ This approach to the study of historical memory has been suggested by Michael Rothberg. See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009), p.11.

¹⁵ See for example Robert Bickers, 'History, Legend and Treaty Port Ideology, 1925-1931', in *Ritual and Diplomacy: The Macartney Mission to China 1792-1794*, ed. by Robert Bickers (London: Wellsweep, 1993), 81-92, Robert Bickers, 'Shanghaiers: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937', *Past & Present*, 159 (1998), 161-211 and Robert Bickers, 'Moving Stories: Memorialisation and its Legacies in Treaty Port China', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42, 5 (2014), 826-56.

Nevertheless, remaining on the landscape, they became sites of renewed attention in the 1920s and 1930s, largely when they were threatened with demolition. Finally, consciousness of the significance of these monuments, either as reminders of continued foreign dominance or of past foreign sacrifices for China, was fostered by the foreign and Chinese histories of the Taiping war. Commemorations of intervention served as a proxy for the negotiation of the foreign role in a China which remained, until 1943 when extraterritoriality was abrogated, a site of divided, and contested, sovereignty.¹⁶

Medals for the Men

The very first attempt to commemorate the service of foreign fighters, the issuing of war medals by Qing officials, demonstrates the divisions among different groups with interest in foreign relations with China which made later memories of the interventions so unstable. The first such division was between foreign states and their citizens in China based both on different views of the foreign role in China as well as on class divisions. While many British soldiers in particular wanted to be rewarded for their contribution, their government wished to forget its decision to encourage British citizens to become involved in a Chinese civil war altogether. After a number of controversies, including the murder by Qing troops of Taiping prisoners whose surrender a British army officer had negotiated, Prime Minister Lord Palmerston declared in parliament that intervention in China had failed.¹⁷ Requests for British medals for veterans of the conflict, similar to those offered to soldiers who had fought in the *Arrow War* (1856-60) in China, were swiftly rejected because their service against the Taiping was not 'of sufficient importance'.¹⁸ In addition to differing ideas about the significance of their contribution, veterans disagreed with the diplomatic establishment about the form any commemoration should take. Veterans wished to be remembered using forms, such as British-style medals, which they recognised, and many Qing officials, perhaps following a long-standing Qing tradition of patronage of other cultures within their empire, saw no problem with this.¹⁹ For senior British diplomats in China and the British government, however, disagreeable attempts to remember a policy they wished to forget were compounded by what appeared to be an attempt to imitate, and hence undermine, the British honours system.

Initial Qing attempts to reward the foreigners in their service using their own commemorative practices were largely unsuccessful. These took a variety of forms including issuing merit medals (功牌 *gongpai*) and signifiers of rank such as hat buttons (頂戴 *dingdai*), feathers (翎 *ling*) and official clothes, most famously what foreigners called the 'yellow riding jacket' (黃馬褂 *huang magua*). These efforts were often attempts to encourage loyalty among the foreign troops under Qing command rather than to commemorate services already rendered. The Qing court bestowed a fourth grade martial hat button (四品武職頂戴 *sipin wuzhi dingdai*) on the American fighter Frederick Townsend Ward in the same month that

¹⁶ For the negotiations on the abrogation of extraterritoriality see Robert Bickers, 'Settlers and Diplomats: The End of British Hegemony in the International Settlement, 1937-1945', in *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation*, ed. by Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 229-56, pp. 229-32 and K. C. Chan, 'The Abrogation of British Extraterritoriality in China 1942-43: A Study of Anglo-American-Chinese Relations', *Modern Asian Studies*, 11, 02 (1977), 257-91.

¹⁷ HC Deb, 31 May, 1864, Hansard vol.175, cc. 967-8.

¹⁸ Russell to Wade, 18 May, 1855, The National Archives of the UK, Foreign Office Records, FO228 Series (hereafter TNA, FO228), FO228/379.

¹⁹ For Qing emperors' patronage of the forms of other cultures within their empire see Pamela Kyle Crossley, *The Manchus* (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.117.

they accepted his service leading a force of Chinese troops they had dubbed the 'Ever Victorious Army' (常勝軍, *Changshengjun*).²⁰ Some foreign fighters clearly valued these awards. Most notable was Charles Gordon who led the Ever Victorious Army after Ward's death in battle in 1862. On receiving the yellow riding jacket signifying his status as one of the emperor's imperial body guard, he proudly told his mother that 'I think the Chinese government trusts me more than any foreigner ever has been trusted.'²¹ Most British fighters however, rejected these awards in favour of forms of commemoration they understood, such as British-styled military medals, and went as far as advising Qing officials on how to adapt their versions to more closely reflect British awards.

In early 1863 Li Hongzhang, then governor of Jiangsu, proposed the creation of foreign-style medals to resolve the problem, noted by Prince Gong, one of the regents of the Tongzhi emperor, that foreign fighters saw Qing awards as 'empty of status' (虛名 *xuming*).²² British consular and military officials played a role in shaping his proposals. The British consul at Shanghai, Walter Medhurst, was dismissive of the first medals proposed, complaining that the square holes in the middle of them made them resemble Qing copper cash currency. He suggested that British officers would only be happy with 'something more in the shape of an order', that is to say medals resembling existing British military orders.²³ The officers thus drew up their own proposals [figure 1] which Medhurst passed on to Li. The surviving medals strongly suggest that Li acted on this advice. The square hole in the original medal [figure 2, a later example issued to French forces], was removed by the time later medals were cast. Additionally, the yellow and green colour scheme on the ribbon of one of Medhurst's proposed medals is identical to that on medals issued in 1865, at the end of the Taiping campaign [figure 3].

A similar, though apparently separate, process took place at Tianjin highlighting the decentralised nature of the Qing state. In March 1863 the Nian, a distinct group of rebels from the Taiping but intermittently allied with them, advanced on the city.²⁴ Captain Coney, a British military officer then in charge of training Qing troops there, and acting British consul John Gibson, rode out to meet them with the newly drilled force. After a short exchange of fire, and a charge by a Mongolian cavalry unit, the rebels fled.²⁵ Chonghou, then trade minister for the northern ports of Tianjin, Niuzhuang and Yantai, consulted Gibson about appropriate awards for his service. Gibson declared that he did not want traditional Chinese rewards or Qing titles but instead only wanted a merit medal.²⁶ On investigating further Chonghou developed a new system of Chinese awards, distinct from those established by Li for the 1862 campaign. He noted that he had discovered, presumably after consultation with

²⁰ Xuehuan's memorial to the emperor and imperial response, 21st day of the first month of the first year of the Tongzhi reign (hereafter TZ1, M1, D21 etc.), (19 February, 1862) in *籌辦夷務始末：同治朝* (*The Complete Management of Foreign Affairs: Tongzhi Reign*), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), hereafter CYTZ, juan 4, memorials 111-112, p. 139.

²¹ Gordon to Elizabeth Gordon, 2 June, 1864, Gordon Papers, Bell Collection (hereafter GPBC), British Library Manuscripts Collection, London, Add MS 52389.

²² For Li's proposal see Li Hongzhang's memorial to the emperor, 7 January, 1863, enc.3 in Medhurst to Bruce, 31 January, 1863, TNA, FO228/347. See also Prince Gong's memorial to the regents, TZ2, M3, D19 (6 May, 1863), in CYTZ, juan 15, memorial 564, pp. 658-9.

²³ Medhurst to Bruce, 31 January, 1863, TNA, FO228/347.

²⁴ For the Nian see Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 96-151.

²⁵ Gibson to Bruce, 30 April, 1863, TNA, FO228/355.

²⁶ Prince Gong's memorial to the Emperor, TZ2, M3, D19 (6 May, 1863) in CYTZ, juan 15, memorial 564, pp. 658-9.

Gibson, that 'foreigners are partial to having precious stars (寶星 *baoxing*)'.²⁷ The term is possibly a transliteration of the British 'Order of the Bath' taken from the text of the Treaty of Tianjin because two British officials mentioned in the text were members of that order.²⁸ Gibson, and presumably the military officials who received the award, wanted something that resembled an English order which might provide them with status among their peers. Indeed, despite criticism of the medals by senior British officials, the award became popularly known as 'the order of the dragon'.²⁹

Almost as soon as the 'precious stars' were issued, senior British diplomats sought to prevent their citizens from accepting them. This action should be understood in the context of the nature and purpose of the British honours system. In Britain honours arose from the system of knighthood, a form of military honour recognising service in battle.³⁰ Although, by the Stuart period (1603-1714), knighthood had lost this functional role, the titles remained as one of the building blocks of the honours system.³¹ These awards operated within a status marketplace. An honours system which gave out too many honours, as the administrators of the Prussian system did in the late nineteenth century, would undermine the prestige of the status it was created to confer.³² By the mid-nineteenth century the British honours system had the dual functions of ensuring the loyalty of those upon whom titles were conferred, as well as reinforcing class hierarchies. It is not a coincidence that the Order of the Star of India, conferred on both British and Indian administrators, was created shortly after the Indian rebellion was suppressed.³³ Similarly, in the 1860s the British government re-established the Order of St Michael and St George for colonial officials elsewhere in order to inspire a sense of belonging, and loyalty, to the metropolitan government.³⁴ The British Empire was, in David Cannadine's words, 'ornamentalist', as it sought to structure its territories along the same class lines as those in the metropole.³⁵

As a result of the honours system's importance, the acceptance of foreign orders was rigorously policed. Regulations on accepting foreign awards were revised 1855, probably in response to the service by British subjects in the forces of foreign armies during the Crimean conflict. The regulations were explicitly referred to by officials responding to requests from recipients to wear medals bestowed by the Qing for service in the Taiping war.³⁶ The regulations were based on a distinction between orders, which implied lifelong membership

²⁷ Prince Gong's memorial to the Emperor, TZ2, M3, D19 (6 May, 1863) in *CYTZ*, juan 15, memorial 564, pp. 658-9. Gibson's role is suggested by the fact that consuls were the first point of contact for Qing officials and the most senior British diplomatic authority in the treaty port away from Beijing.

²⁸ Gavin Goh, *The Order of the Double Dragon. Imperial China's Highest Western Style Honour, 1882-1912* (Brookvale, New South Wales, 2012), p. 5. The transliteration was apparently *ba-si* and was converted to *baoxing* once Qing officials noted that foreign officials valued them and referred to them as stars.

²⁹ See for example H.A. Clery to Alcock, 22 May, 1866, TNA, FO228/443.

³⁰ Michael De-la-Noy, *The Honours System* (London: Allison & Busby, 1985), p. 21.

³¹ Antti Matikkala, *The Orders of Knighthood and The Formation of the British Honours System, 1660-1760* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2008), pp. 62-3.

³² Alastair Thompson, 'Honours Uneven: Decorations, the State and Bourgeois Society in Imperial Germany', *Past & Present*, 144 (1994), 171-204, pp. 198-9.

³³ John McLeod, 'The English Honours System in Princely India, 1925-1947', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Third Series)*, 4, 2 (1994), 237-49, p. 238.

³⁴ Bruce Knox, 'Democracy, Aristocracy and Empire: The Provision of Colonial Honours, 1818-1870', *Australian Historical Studies*, 25, 99 (1992), 244-64, p. 254.

³⁵ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. 9-10. Cannadine's wider claim that class was more significant than race in the structuring of the British Empire has, however, been vigorously critiqued. For example, see Ian Christopher Fletcher, 'Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire (Review)', *Victorian Studies*, 45, 3 (2003), 532-34.

³⁶ Stanley to Alcock, 30 October, 1868, TNA, FO228/447.

of a group patronised by the monarch, such as the order of the garter, and medals which were awarded for specific military achievements. The first clause of regulations on foreign orders stated that no British subject could accept a foreign order without the Queen's permission. Medals, meanwhile, could be accepted without consulting the government, but could not be worn without the Queen's permission.³⁷ Another clause made the ultimate purpose of the legislation clear. Permission to wear medals or orders did not authorise 'the assumption of any style, appellation, rank, precedence or privilege appertaining to a Knight Bachelor of Her Majesty's Realms.'³⁸ The awarding of foreign honours and medals had to be policed because such awards, particularly when they were designed to resemble British orders, risked undermining the hierarchical structures reinforced by the domestic honours system. These regulations were also rigidly enforced outside China. In 1856, soon after the regulations were updated, citizens of Glasgow were refused permission to wear the Légion d'Honneur bestowed by Louis Napoleon because the work they had carried out for the Paris grand exhibition was not of a military nature.³⁹

Senior diplomats' refusal to grant British subjects permission to wear Qing medals were not based just on a fear of the undermining the British honours system. They were also a result of specific anxieties about the class of recipient which highlight the divisions within the British presence in China. Rutherford Alcock, then British Minister in China, noted that the medals were to be rejected because 'The decoration in question...is not an imperial order but an imitation of the stars conferred on members of foreign orders devised by a provincial governor and by him bestowed...upon *all* [emphasis added] foreigners' who had fought against the rebels.⁴⁰ Alongside British army officers, many of the British fighters in the Qing ranks, to use Charles Gordon's description of his own men, were 'not gentlemen'.⁴¹ That is to say, they were not of the officer class. As well as a failure to be discerning, Qing officials were often discerning in the wrong way. When Chonghou wished to bestow a higher ranking medal upon Consul Gibson than that accorded to Captain Coney, who had actually led troops in battle, Lord Bruce, British Minister in China from 1860-64, refused to allow Gibson to accept the award. Bruce argued he could not 'assent to the Chinese notion of putting the services of a civilian official above those of a military officer for conduct in the field'.⁴² For the highest ranking British diplomatic officials the new Chinese orders were inadequate because, as Thomas Wade, who succeeded Bruce as British Minister, suggested, in their view Qing officials simply did not understand the 'nature and purpose' of decorations.⁴³

Criticism of the medals by senior diplomats, and refusal to grant permission to wear them did not diminish their lustre in the eyes of recipients, who wished to be remembered for their service at a time when this was exactly what the British government wished to forget. Gordon was still dealing with letters from his former officers requesting medals in 1871, seven years after his force disbanded.⁴⁴ Some such requests had to be refused, as in the case of Colonel Rhode, whose distinction in fighting for the Qing was somewhat diminished by

³⁷ *Regulations Respecting Foreign Orders and Medals*, 10 May, 1855, enc.1 in Stanley to Alcock, 30 October, 1868, TNA, FO228/447.

³⁸ *Regulations Respecting Foreign Orders and Medals*, 10 May, 1855, enc.1 in Stanley to Alcock, 30 October, 1868, TNA, FO228/447.

³⁹ *Dundee Courier*, Wednesday, 6 February, 1856.

⁴⁰ Alcock to Guy, 13 March, 1866, TNA, FO228/422.

⁴¹ Charles Gordon to Henry Gordon, 19 June, 1864, GPBC, Add MS 52389.

⁴² Bruce to Gibson, 23 June, 1863, TNA, FO228/355. Gibson's receipt of a higher class of medal is, perhaps, further evidence that he was the instigator of the scheme Chonghou put forward to the emperor.

⁴³ Wade to Russell, 1 December, 1864, TNA, FO228/358.

⁴⁴ Waters to Gordon, 29 January, 1871, GPBC, Add MS 52394.

his subsequent service in the rebel lines.⁴⁵ A Mr Ferns complained to the admiralty that he had been issued with a large silver medal for his services which was supposed to be passed on to him by Commander Boyle. The unscrupulous commander, however, had allegedly had it melted down and recast in a smaller size leaving Ferns with a mere 'miniature' version.⁴⁶ Among British subjects outside of the diplomatic establishment, who were unlikely to receive similar recognition from their own state, the baubles of the Qing were much in demand. Interestingly, this does not appear to have been the case for French fighters, with no major conflict over the issuing of medals surviving in French consular archives. Indeed, Zuo Zongtang, who oversaw the French-led Chinese force, the Ever Triumphant Army, noted that his fighters were uninterested in the new form medals.⁴⁷ This is perhaps because they were styled on British, rather than French, awards and so held no special attraction to French fighters.

In addition to creating conflict between British soldiers and their government the medals also created conflicts within the Qing government over their mode of distribution, in turn leading to further criticism of the new medals from foreign observers. For the central Qing government, headed by the three regents of the child Tongzhi emperor, Prince Gong and the dowager empresses Ci An and Ci Xi, foreign style medals were a way of ensuring equal rewards so that different groups of foreigners did not feel slighted. When Zuo Zongtang, responsible for a French-led mercenary force in Zhejiang, asked the court how his fighters should be rewarded, he was told that they should receive the same medals as the British.⁴⁸ This attempt to create a unified system of rewards for foreigners was frustrated at a time when the central court was, in any case, losing some of its power to its generals in the provinces.⁴⁹ Zuo refused to issue the same medals as his counterparts in other provinces, regarding them as too expensive.⁵⁰ The end result was the issuing of seven distinct styles of medal over the course of the campaign.⁵¹ Equally open to dispute was the mode of conferral of the medals. Some local Qing officials arranged, at the request of their foreign recipients, to have the medals bestowed by the central government.⁵² Zuo, however, flatly refused, arguing that if awards were directly issued by the central government they may cause foreigners to be 'disrespectful to our empire's prestige' (褻國體 *xie guoti*).⁵³ These disagreements over how to commemorate the foreign role in the war would reflect wider

⁴⁵ Hart to Gordon, 13 July, 1868, *GPBC*, Add MS 52394.

⁴⁶ Ferns to the Secretary of the Admiralty, enc.2 in Clarendon to Alcock, 28 May, 1869, TNA, FO228/467.

⁴⁷ Zuo Zongtang's memorial to the emperor, TZ3, M2, D20 (27 March, 1864) in *CYTZ*, juan 23, memorial 871, pp. 1039-40.

⁴⁸ Imperial Response to Zuo Zongtang, TZ2, M11, D15 (25 Dec, 1863) in *CYTZ*, juan 22, memorial 830, pp.988-89.

⁴⁹ This should not be over emphasised. Although Frederick Wakeman saw in mid-nineteenth century Qing decentralization a precursor to the warlord era of the 1920s, as Richard Horowitz points out, the Qing were able to build strong central institutions in this period, notably the customs service. See Frederick Wakeman, 'Introduction' in Stanley Specter, *Li Hung-chang and the Huai Army: a Study in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Regionalism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), p.xlii and Richard Horowitz, 'Central Power and State Making: Zongli Yamen and Self-Strengthening in China' (PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 1998), p.243. For the failure to centralise a system of medals for foreigners in the 1860s see also Elisabeth Kaske, 'Die Chinesischen Orden der Qing-Dynastie (1644–1911) (The Chinese Orders of the Qing Dynasty, 1644-1911)', *BDOS-Jahrbuch*, 2002, 91-100, pp.93-4.

⁵⁰ Zuo Zongtang's memorial to the emperor, TZ3, M2, D20 (27 March, 1864) in *CYTZ*, juan 23, memorial 871, pp. 1039-40.

⁵¹ Barry C. Weaver, 'The Development of Foreign Style Medals During the Late Qing Dynasty', *The Medal Collector*, 48, 4 (1997), 20-32, p. 28.

⁵² Parkes to Wade, 2 Nov, 1864, TNA, FO228/368.

⁵³ Zuo Zongtang's memorial to the emperor, TZ2, M11, D15 (25 December, 1863) in *CYTZ*, juan 22, memorial 829, pp. 987-8.

policy differences among Qing officials about the role foreigners might play in the country after it.

The nuance of this difference of opinion among officials was lost on foreign officials for whom the issue of direct contact with the Qing emperor was a long running sore. The British and French ministers joined Alcock dismissing the awards because they did not come directly from the emperor.⁵⁴ This was despite the fact that such medals were to be stamped with the words ‘imperially bestowed’ (御賜 *yu ci*) and that, in practice, all officials memorialised the regents of the Tongzhi emperor to request permission before bestowing any form of award.⁵⁵ The perceived local control over the issue of awards ran contrary to the entire rationale of foreign honours systems, in which the monarch was the fountain of honours, which were often bestowed by him or her in person and were thus a sign of their personal favour.⁵⁶ It will also have reminded foreign officials of the supposed aloofness of the Qing court at a time when they were trying to organise the protocols for an audience with the emperor. No audience had been held since Lord Amherst’s shambolic mission to China in 1816 when he was barred from access to the emperor because he refused to perform the koutou.⁵⁷ After the *Arrow War* the audience question was deferred by the death of the Xianfeng emperor in 1861 and his replacement by the child Tongzhi emperor, with whom no audience could be held until he reached maturity. In this context the differences of opinion among Qing officials over the type of medals to award and their mode of bestowal was interpreted as yet another technique for delaying foreigners access to the emperor to preserve his prestige.

The issuing of medals as a commemoration of the service of foreign soldiers was fraught with difficulties because of the array of different interest groups in China, with clear disagreements among both Chinese and foreign groups about the foreign role in the country. The British government’s representatives wished to forget their foray into a Chinese civil war and even more so as the soldiers they had tacitly permitted to join the Qing ended up causing more harm than good. A number of fighters who had initially fought for the Qing switched sides for the promise of better pay, leading the *North-China Herald*, to dub them ‘the dregs of society’.⁵⁸ While these men sought foreign-style medals to commemorate their service, senior officers were often dismissive of them. Gordon allegedly sold his medal to raise funds for victims of the Lancashire cotton famine, while, as we have seen, he held Qing awards such as the yellow riding jacket, a recognition of status on the dynasty’s own terms, in high regard.⁵⁹ In awarding medals, Qing officials mainly sought to reward foreign fighters either to pacify their demands for increased pay or to ensure their loyalty. Even then there was disagreement between officials about whether foreign service merited a whole new form of medal and mode of bestowal, with Zuo Zongtang resolutely resisting the proposal. When acts of commemoration take physical form they become ensnared in the constraints and meanings of those forms. These debates, and those over whether foreign interventions in

⁵⁴ Bruce to Gibson, 23 June, 1863, TNA, FO228/355 and Jules Berthemy to Édouard Drouyn de Lhuys, 10 August, 1864, French Archives Diplomatiques, Centre de La Courneuve, Paris, 25CP/40.

⁵⁵ Prince Gong’s memorial to the Emperor, TZ2, M3, D19 (6 May, 1863) in *CYTZ*, juan 15, memorial 564, pp. 658-9.

⁵⁶ For this general feature of honours systems see Bruno S. Frey, ‘Giving and Receiving Awards’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1, 4 (2006), 377-88, p. 382. Napoleon conferred the Legion d’Honneur in person, as did Victoria the Victoria Cross. See John A. Lynn, ‘Toward an Army of Honor: The Moral Evolution of the French Army, 1789-1815’, *French Historical Studies*, 16, 1 (1989), 152-73, p.170 and De-la-Noy, *The Honours System*, p. 76.

⁵⁷ Wang Tseng-Tsai, ‘The Audience Question: Foreign Representatives and the Emperor of China, 1858–1873’, *The Historical Journal*, 14, 3 (1971), 617-26, p.620.

⁵⁸ *North-China Herald*, 8 August, 1863.

⁵⁹ Charles H. Allen, *The Life of “Chinese” Gordon* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1884), p.10

China's affairs should be commemorated at all, continued when discussion turned from rewards for the living to memorials to the dead.

Monumental Memories

The monuments to the foreign dead, constructed both by Qing and foreign actors, gave rise to disputes which, unlike those over the Taiping war medals, had a long afterlife. Scholars of memorial structures have noted that, once built, they can either continue to be sites of active commemoration, be disavowed through destruction or neglect or become contested.⁶⁰ Given their obvious presence on the landscape allowing monuments to fall into disrepair suggests neglect of the memories they represent. The fate of three Taiping war monuments highlights both the number of interest groups with a stake in the memory of the foreign role in the war and the multi-directional nature of commemoration in a transnational environment: a memorial hall to Frederick Townsend Ward, an obelisk celebrating the Anglo-French recapture of Ningbo and a soldier's cemetery at Shanghai. The creation and reception of these monuments was heavily influenced by the changing nature of Sino-foreign alliances and antagonisms over time. In the decade after the war both the foreign community in China and Qing officials were minded to celebrate the foreign dead even if they sometimes disagreed over the form these commemorations should take. By the 1920s, with the Qing dynasty overthrown and Chinese nationalism on the rise, the collective memory of the Taiping war was far less settled.

Qing officials' efforts to commemorate the foreign dead built on an established but evolving Qing memorial culture. In the Qianlong reign (1735-96) monuments to Qing conquests were placed strategically, as in Guangxi province, where they might serve as a solid reminder to rebellious locals of Qing authority.⁶¹ Shrines were also constructed to commemorate loyal officials, such as Guan Tianpei, who died at Humen in 1841 resisting the foreign advance on Canton during the Opium War.⁶² The scale of the Taiping war, and the loss of life resulting from it, led the Xianfeng emperor in 1853 to decentralise the creation of memorials which had hitherto been the prerogative of the court.⁶³ These officials, such as Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang, used this power to commemorate their own role in winning the war, as distinct from the contribution of the central Qing state, in order to bolster their own reputation. From the early 1860s onward Li oversaw the construction of memorials to the Huai army which he commanded and which was responsible for the recapture of much of Jiangsu from the Taiping.⁶⁴

The different origins of the memorials to the foreign dead highlight shared Qing and foreign efforts at commemoration of the war in its immediate aftermath even if there were disagreements over their form. The construction of Ward's memorial hall seems to have

⁶⁰ Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, 'Unraveling the Threads of History: Soviet-Era Monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 92, 3 (2002), 524-47, p. 525.

⁶¹ Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Culture of War in China: Empire and the Military under the Qing Dynasty* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp.34-5.

⁶² James Flath, "'This is How the Chinese People Began Their Struggle': Humen and the Opium War as a Site of Memory', in *Places of Memory in Modern China: History, Politics, and Identity*, ed. by Marc André Matten (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 167-92, pp.174-5.

⁶³ Tobie S. Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, p.143

⁶⁴ Fu Deyuan, '李鸿章与淮军昭忠祠 (Li Hongzhang and the Loyalty Memorial Temples of the Huai Army)', *安徽史学 (Anhui Historical Research)*, 3 (2006), 71-82, p.73.

been part of Li's efforts to promote his own role in winning the war. It was not the only one. He also constructed a monument to the Ever Victorious Army as a whole which was resented by the foreign community because of its insufficient grandeur.⁶⁵ The Ward memorial's construction, however, was delayed for fourteen years because the American Chargé d'Affaires, Samuel Wells Williams, originally a missionary, resisted what he saw as an attempt at the pagan deification of Ward.⁶⁶ Even when there was agreement over the need for commemoration, cultural differences provoked disputes over its form. The imposing Ningbo obelisk, commemorating the Anglo-French recapture of the city, was also constructed by local Qing officials perhaps bolstering their own reputations or, as was the case with other commemorative efforts which took place while the war was ongoing, to placate the foreigners still in their service.⁶⁷ The final memorial to be discussed, the soldier's cemetery at Shanghai [figure 4], was constructed by the international settlement's Municipal Council. It was initially a practical space, housing some 300 soldiers and sailors buried without individual tombstones, who had largely died of Cholera, between 1862-65.⁶⁸ This was to change when the space, as with the Ward and Ningbo monuments, became contested in the 1930s.

The monuments built in the 1860s and 1870s were largely ignored between 1880 and 1920, perhaps because this was a period in which the foreign communities in China felt relatively secure in their privileged position in the country. Characteristic of this absence of commemoration was the failure to create a memorial following the death of Charles Gordon at Khartoum in 1885 while serving the Egyptian Khedive fighting another group of religiously-inspired rebels. One reason for this was probably the existence of the Ever Victorious Army monument, though, as highlighted, it was not favourably received by foreigners. On receiving news of Gordon's death members of the foreign community did consider constructing their own memorial but it was decided that the funds raised for this purpose should instead be used to support Gordon's relatives.⁶⁹ This failure to commemorate Gordon was symptomatic of a disinterest in his activities in China. When, in 1880, news circulated that Gordon planned to return to China, some treaty port newspapers could not even correctly report which group of rebels he had helped suppress.⁷⁰ This was in stark contrast to Gordon's reception at home. Gordon's death in part led to a rewriting, usually by metropolitan historians, of histories of the foreign role in the Taiping war. Gordon himself was interred in St Paul's Cathedral and his service in China was commemorated with the polite fiction, engraved in gold on his tomb, that 'with his warlike genius he saved an empire'.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Bickers, 'Moving Stories', pp.830-1.

⁶⁶ S. Wells Williams to W.F. Williams, 16 November, 1862 in Frederick Wells Williams and Samuel Wells Williams, *The Life and Letters of Samuel Wells Williams, LL.D., Missionary, Diplomatist, Sinologue* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 1972), p. 341 and Robert S. Rantoul, 'Frederick Townsend Ward', *The Essex Institute Historical Collections*, XLIV, (1908), 1-49, p. 48.

⁶⁷ See for example Jiang Tianyue, "'卜罗德之死"的历史省思 - 兼论法国与清政府在“华洋会剿”中的关系 (A Historical Examination of Admiral Protet's Death - A Discussion of Relations Between the Qing and French Governments During the Sino-Foreign Suppression of the Taiping)', *清史研究 (Qing History Journal)*, 2, 2016, 120-33.

⁶⁸ Christian Henriot, 'The Colonial Space of Death: Shanghai Cemeteries, 1844-1949', in *Twentieth-Century Colonialism and China: Localities, the Everyday and the World*, ed. by Bryna Goodman and David S. G. Goodman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 113-114.

⁶⁹ *North-China Herald*, 25 February, 1885, p. 220 and *North-China Herald*, 11 March, 1885, p. 275.

⁷⁰ *North-China Herald*, 8 January, 1880, p. 3. The reporter suggested that Gordon had fought the Nian rather than the Taiping.

⁷¹ Epitaph on General Charles Gordon's Tomb, St Pauls Cathedral, London.

The relative neglect of Gordon was not indicative of a lack of interest in commemoration from the 1880s, but perhaps a lack of interest in the memory of the Taiping war specifically, as the commemoration of other heroes of the foreign community illustrates. The first such hero, Augustus Margary, was a British vice-consul who was ambushed and killed while returning from a diplomatic mission to Burma. The British community in Shanghai formed a committee in December 1875 to discuss commemorating Margary, and unveiled a statue in his honour in Shanghai in 1880.⁷² Similarly, the British community were moved by the death in office in 1885 of the British Minister in China Harry Parkes, who they saw as an uncompromising proponent of their interests. A statue in his honour was unveiled on the Bund in 1890.⁷³ As with Margary, Parkes was commemorated for what he represented, a forceful British hand in China. These commemorations took place at a time when the British government in London supported the interests of their subjects in China. Indeed, the Margary affair was used to extract more concessions from the Qing government in the form of the Chefoo convention.⁷⁴ Gordon, however, represented foreign sacrifice for Chinese interests, a message with less salience for the attitudes and ambitions of the British community of the 1880s.

The 'reawakening' of the Taiping memorials from the 1920s should be seen in the context of changing visions of China's place in the international order. Following the First World War, the British American and French governments began to consider, on the urging of the Chinese government, the renegotiation of their citizen's extraterritorial rights in China. Extraterritoriality, or the right of exemption from Qing law, had been perceived by the foreign community to be a cornerstone of their presence in China since it was granted in 1843. Negotiations to end it were sped up by the events of May 30 1925. The Shanghai Students Federation organised a protest in the international settlement in response to the murder of a striking mill worker by a Japanese foreman.⁷⁵ When protesters reached a police station on Nanking road, a police inspector gave orders to fire. 11 students were killed and a further 20 were seriously wounded.⁷⁶ The incident sparked mass anti-foreign protests, demonstrating to senior foreign diplomats that the demands of Chinese nationalists had to be taken seriously. The same year saw the founding of the Shanghai British Residents Association, an organization aimed at resisting moves to sell out their interests in the country.⁷⁷ One journalist encapsulated the perceived role of the foreign community in China, complaining that 'Foreigners are doing nothing but good works for China and the Chinese ... the Chinese are in some respect like Children who have not yet grown up and are only partially civilised'.⁷⁸

The American community in Shanghai in this period shared these concerns but was also increasingly conscious of the need to assert its own identity, which may have influenced the first commemorations of the Taiping war. Between 1911 and 1924 the American population in China saw a 154 per cent increase, compared with only a 43 per cent increase for the

⁷² Bickers, 'Moving Stories', pp. 832-4.

⁷³ Bickers, 'Moving Stories', pp. 835-6.

⁷⁴ Bickers, 'Moving Stories', p.832.

⁷⁵ Ku Hung-Ting, 'Urban Mass Movement: The May Thirtieth Movement in Shanghai', *Modern Asian Studies*, 13, 2 (1979), 197-216, pp. 200-2.

⁷⁶ Ku, 'Urban Mass Movement', p. 203. For more accounts of the May 30th movement see Richard W. Rigby, *The May 30 Movement: Events and Themes* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980) and Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me: an Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), pp. 163-7.

⁷⁷ Bickers, 'Settlers and Diplomats', p. 232.

⁷⁸ *China Weekly Review*, 1 November, 1924 cited in Nicholas R. Clifford, 'A Revolution Is Not a Tea Party: The "Shanghai Mind(s)" Reconsidered', *Pacific Historical Review*, 59, 4 (1990), 501-26, pp. 513-14.

British.⁷⁹ This encouraged the remembrance of a specifically American community history in the city. By the 1910s foreign observers noted that Ward's tomb had been entirely neglected and was being used as a venue for Daoist rituals.⁸⁰ During the 1920s however, the site became the location for an annual pilgrimage made by the American community. The roots of this new activity lay the need of veterans living in Shanghai to participate in American memorial activity following the First World War. This reflected a rise in interest in public remembrance after the war, with an emphasis on memorial sites reflecting community grief rather than glorious national victories.⁸¹ In 1919, the veteran's organisation the American Legion was established for this purpose. Branches were soon set-up around the world including at Shanghai in 1920.⁸² The group's membership voted to call its branch the Frederick Townsend Ward Post because Ward remained the most notable American citizen to have died fighting in China.⁸³ On American Memorial Day 1921 the post arranged a pilgrimage to Ward's tomb, an event the post's commander described as part of its 'Americanization programme', underlining its importance for emphasising the distinct American role in the country.⁸⁴ All of the key American dignitaries in Shanghai attended, including the Consul General and Commander H.I. Cone, Chief of Staff of the US Asiatic Fleet.⁸⁵

Although Ward's tomb was initially reinvigorated as a useful focal point for Memorial Day commemorations, as the 1920s progressed the site took on a new meaning. The tomb, gradually restored, became almost proxy US territory and Ward's memory was taken to remind US citizens of their role in China. In 1923, as part of the Memorial Day celebrations, a granite memorial tablet bearing the US shield was installed at the tomb, presumably funded by subscriptions from the Ward post, as were subsequent renovations.⁸⁶ In 1924 another memorial was unveiled and a fund of \$300 was contributed by the Legion to establish a troop of boy scouts at Songjiang who, in return, would keep the tomb well maintained.⁸⁷ Shortly before the May 30 incident, at the annual meeting at Ward's tomb, Judge Purdy, Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court for China, used Ward's memory in his eulogy to remind those gathered of their duty to the Chinese. He argued that Ward had been at the vanguard of a civilizing mission which Americans had a duty to continue in China so that it could become

⁷⁹ From 3470 residents to 8817 residents compared with 10,256 residents to 14,701 residents. See Yong Z. Volz and Chin-Chuan Lee, 'Semi-Colonialism and Journalistic Sphere of Influence', *Journalism Studies*, 12, 5 (2011), 559-74, p. 564.

⁸⁰ William R. Kahler, *Chinese Chips* (Shanghai: Reprinted from "The Union", 1914) cited in *Western Adventurer Buried in Ignominy*, *Shanghai Star*, 3 June, 2004, (Accessed Online 06.05.15: <http://app1.chinadaily.com.cn/star/2004/0603/cu18-2.html>).

⁸¹ See Alan Borg, *War Memorials: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991), p. ix and Sarah Tarlow, 'An Archaeology of Remembering: Death, Bereavement and the First World War', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 7, 1 (1997), 105-21, p.115.

⁸² For the establishment of the Ward post see J.C. Bond, 'Pictorial History of China Post 1: Part 1 - 1919-1959', in <http://www.chinapost1.org/2007/h/cp1HISTORY.pdf>, ed. by The American Legion Generals Ward & Chennault & Lt. Helseth Post No. 1 (China) (1988), pp. 1-3.

⁸³ American Legion Generals Ward and Chennault Post No.1, Poop Sheet 63, 17 November, 1959. Archives of the American Legion Generals Ward and Chennault Post. This document was generously shared by the post's current historian, Scott Riebel.

⁸⁴ *Millard's Review of the Far East*, 5 June, 1920, p. 41. For reference to the Post's 'Americanization programme' see John Hervey Ross to Rev. Clinton J. Bushey, 20 May, 1921, Ward's Tomb 1921 to 1939, Archives of the Frederick Townsend Ward Post of the American Legion, Texas, US.

⁸⁵ Charles Sumner Lobingier, 'An Early American Hero in China (Frederick Townsend Ward, 1831-1862)', *Bulletin of the American Legion Frederick Ward Post No. 1, Shanghai, China*, 1 (1921), 3-11, p. 1.

⁸⁶ *The Weekly Review*, 26 May, 1923, p. 452.

⁸⁷ *The China Weekly Review*, 15 March, 1924, p. 83.

one of the 'splendid galaxy of self-governing nations encircling the Pacific'.⁸⁸ In four years, Ward had gone from forgotten figure to honoured emblem of the US's role in China. Visits to his tomb continued annually until 1937. These were not small affairs: on the final visit in 1937 around 100 Americans took part.⁸⁹ After 1937, as a result of the Japanese invasion of China, the pilgrimage was, however, abandoned.

The extent of the renewed significance of Ward's tomb for the American community was revealed by their response to threats to it from the Japanese. Members of the Legion had worried that Ward's tomb was not clearly marked as American property, and was thus not to be interfered with. On 25 May 1938 two officers of the Ward Post raced in a Red Cross truck towards the site armed with paint and a large American flag. On arrival they hoisted the flag and painted a duplicate which they draped over his tomb.⁹⁰ For good measure the American consul-general at Shanghai sought, and received, assurances from Japanese consular officials that precautions would be taken to ensure that the tomb was not damaged. The politics of Ward's remembrance had more to do with contemporary circumstances than either with the man or his deeds. Although the symbolic marking of Ward's tomb was a reaffirmation of American interests in China, the event also marked an actual spatial retreat. No further pilgrimages were held until after the end of the Second World War. Although efforts were later made by the Ward post's former commander to establish American ownership of the site, these were overtaken by events.⁹¹ When the Communists captured Shanghai in 1949 the post went into exile, where it remains.⁹² Ward's remains were reportedly dug up by the CCP in 1955 and the tomb was paved over, though Songjiang locals apparently remembered its earlier existence as late as the 1990s.⁹³

The Soldier's Cemetery at Shanghai, a site of commemoration for the British community, followed a similar pattern to that of Ward's tomb and was perhaps encouraged by renewed commemorations there. As early as the late 1880s, just twenty-five years after the bodies were first buried, the missionary Arthur Moule highlighted the graves' neglect.⁹⁴ In 1912 and again in 1924 further complaints about the cemetery were also made to the Shanghai Municipal Council, the body governing the International Settlement.⁹⁵ In 1938 the Council finally acted, announcing the bodies would be moved to the Hongqiao Cemetery. A key rationale for this was that the old graveyard was now part of the Nandao refugee zone.⁹⁶ The dead of the Taiping war, neglected for so long, were to be rescued from the chaos of the Sino-Japanese conflict. The reburial did not pass without 'an impressive military ceremony'.⁹⁷ The bronze plate attached to the new memorial stated that the decision to move the bodies had been taken to 'secure from violation their last earthly resting place'.⁹⁸ Symbolically and

⁸⁸ *North-China Herald*, 30 May, 1925, p. 376.

⁸⁹ *The China Press*, 7 June, 1937, p. 5.

⁹⁰ Memorial Day on Monday: Spanish War Vets to Gather at Cemetery, *The China Press*; May 26, 1938, p. 2.

⁹¹ Mortimer to Frederick Townsend Ward Post, 30 September, 1947, cited in Bond, p. 4.

⁹² See <http://www.chinapost1.org/> (accessed online 23.11.15).

⁹³ Caleb Carr, *The Devil Soldier: the American Soldier of Fortune who Became a God in China* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 5. For local recollections of Ward's tomb see Keith Stevens, 'The American Soldier of Fortune Frederick Townsend Ward Honoured and Revered by the Chinese with a Memorial Temple', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 38, (1998), 285-91, p.288.

⁹⁴ *North-China Herald*, 10 June, 1887, p. 638-9.

⁹⁵ Henriot, 'The Colonial Space of Death', pp. 122-4.

⁹⁶ *North-China Herald*, 21 December, 1938, p. 499. Cost was also a factor. It was cheaper to move the bodies than restore the original graveyard in its current condition. See, *Minutes of the Shanghai Municipal Council*, 6 April, 1938 in Qian Zhang, Meiding Shi, and Changlin Ma, *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council* (Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2001), p. 29.

⁹⁷ *North-China Herald*, 8 March, 1938, p. 60.

⁹⁸ *North-China Herald*, 11 October, 1939, p. 60.

spatially the removal represented a retreat of British interests within the confines of the international settlement's existing cemeteries. Although also linked to a wider change in attitudes to war graves after the First World War, the move was also intended as a mark of respect to men who had, in the *North-China Herald's* words, died having 'fought China's battles'.⁹⁹ As in the case of Ward, those long dead served to highlight the continued purpose of the foreign communities at the time of their greatest insecurity.

A strikingly similar process of reaffirmation in the face of spatial retreat can be seen in the fate of the Anglo-French obelisk at Ningbo. The monument was not entirely ignored after its construction. In 1906 a British naval captain, acting on instructions from the Commander-in-Chief of the China station, oversaw refurbishment works paid for by the British, French and Qing governments. Other than this, little interest was shown in the monument by either the British or French communities until the nationalist government threatened to demolish it in the 1930s. Instead the foreign community paid for the removal of the obelisk from the Chinese city to the foreign cemetery across the river.¹⁰⁰ The removal of the monument, and the ceremony to mark its re-dedication in the foreign cemetery were intimately bound up with resistance to the nationalist campaign to limit foreign influence in the country. The chairman of the foreign cemetery committee noted that the monument had been moved because 'owing to changed and changing conditions' it had become 'a source of embarrassment to the Chinese authorities.' At the ceremony the British consul suggested that the Anglo-French recapture of Ningbo highlighted both countries' role 'as the defenders of civilisation against the forces of disorder' outside of Europe. If memories of the foreign role in the Taiping war were a 'source of embarrassment' to the nationalist administration, they invoked ideas for some in the foreign community of their *raison d'être* in China.

The monuments to the foreign dead attracted uneven attention over time, reflecting the changing relations between the foreign communities in the treaty ports and their Chinese hosts as well as changing global memorial practices. Initially the foreign community in China and Qing officials both saw a need to commemorate the dead. Indeed, Qing officials reportedly continued to pay homage at Ward's tomb into the twentieth century, long after it had been neglected by the American community.¹⁰¹ These may even have been the 'Daoist rituals' that a foreign sojourner noted as a sign of the tomb's neglect. The fall of the Qing in 1911, the rise in Chinese nationalism in the 1920s and the changes in European and American memorial cultures following World War One all changed this. The monuments, as part of the foreign communities' archival memory, were reinvigorated to remember a forgotten history. This was a history with the salient lesson that the foreign community had been and could remain a stabilising force in a chaotic country. This was all the more potent because the 1920s and 1930s were a time of fighting between Chinese groups, whether warlord factions or nationalists and communists, just as the 1860s had been. This commemorative activity ceased when the foreign community itself departed after the Communists took full control in 1949. The monuments themselves appear to have disappeared in the chaotic thirty years that followed, before the country began its post-Mao reforms.¹⁰² Conflicts over the positioning of

⁹⁹ *North-China Herald*, 21 December, 1938, p. 499. For the change in the philosophy of burial following the first world war see Caroline Winter, 'First World War Cemeteries: Insights from Visitor Books', *Tourism Geographies*, 13, 3 (2011), 462-79, p. 465.

¹⁰⁰ These and all subsequent references to the rededication ceremony are taken from the *North-China Herald*, 10 May, 1933, p. 214.

¹⁰¹ Rantoul, 'Frederick Townsend Ward', p.48.

¹⁰² For an account of the removal of some of these memorials as well as the defacing of gravestones deemed 'imperialistic' by the communists see Bickers, 'Moving Stories', pp. 24-5.

the memorials to the foreign dead did not arise in isolation. They were also born out in, and perhaps influenced by, the changing narratives within written histories of the events.

Written Histories

The writing of histories of the intervention, unlike medals and statues, did not prompt disputes between Chinese and foreign agents or states. Medals and monuments, as visual symbols, could give rise to disputes between groups who spoke different languages in a way in which written word accounts could not. Nevertheless, histories of the intervention kept alive their memory for mono-linguistic audiences, and could still serve specific agendas at the expense of others. English language histories of the intervention were shaped by the death of Gordon, who emerged in popular memory as the British hero who saved China. The multidirectional nature of commemoration in a transnational environment meant that this inspired American historians to review the life of Ward. This revision of history may have provided inspiration for the American legion's visits to his tomb. Tobie Meyer-Fong has highlighted the disputes between pro-dynastic Chinese groups over how to celebrate victory continued until the fall of the Qing. Nonetheless these efforts elided the fact that not all of the Jiangnan population, or even all of the ruling local elite, had backed the dynasty.¹⁰³ The dispute about the foreign role in the war continued beyond the fall of the dynasty at least until the end of foreign treaty privileges in the country were terminated. As a new generation emerged in Jiangnan, one committed to Chinese nationalism, their histories suggested that their predecessors had stood with, rather than against, the Taiping, just as they stood against foreign dominance in the country.

The first Anglophone history of the foreign role in the war reflected a prevailing belief among British policy makers in the need to collaborate with the Qing to ensure order in China, an order the Taiping war had threatened.¹⁰⁴ *The "Ever Victorious Army"*, was published in 1868 by Andrew Wilson who had already authored strident criticisms of Britain's belligerent Opium War era stance towards the Qing Empire.¹⁰⁵ He explicitly stated he had written his history to promote the British government's new policy of supporting and strengthening the Qing state.¹⁰⁶ He hoped to do so by dispelling the myth, propagated by the *Times* amongst other sources, that the Ever Victorious Army had somehow won the Taiping war for the Qing.¹⁰⁷ By presenting the Qing as a capable military force in their own right, Wilson was inferring that their continuing efforts to stabilise the country were worthy of British support. The almost twenty-year silence following Wilson's account was at least in part influenced by the controversy which still surrounded the interventions, particularly after the Qing massacre of Taiping prisoners at Suzhou in 1863.

This narrative changed following Gordon's death at Khartoum in January 1885, ushering in a wave of hagiographies which highlight the multi-directional nature of memory in a transnational environment. Gordon's death transformed him into the imperial martyr par excellence, particularly as Gladstone's government had prevaricated about getting involved,

¹⁰³ Xiaowei Zheng, 'Loyalty, Anxiety, and Opportunism: Local Elite Activism during the Taiping Rebellion in Eastern Zhejiang, 1851–1864', *Late Imperial China*, 30, 2 (2009), 39–83, pp.40–41.

¹⁰⁴ Wilson's work was preceded by that of Augustus Lindley, a British Taiping partisan, but this work was written in the belief that the Taiping were still a viable force, in order to persuade his compatriots to support the cause. See Augustus F. Lindley, *Ti-ping Tien-kwoh: The History of the Ti-ping Revolution, Including a Narrative of the Author's Personal Adventures* (London: Day, 1866), p. xii.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Wilson, *England's Policy in China* (Hong Kong: A. Shortrede & Co., 1860)

¹⁰⁶ Andrew Wilson, *The "Ever-Victorious Army": a History of the Chinese Campaign under Lt Col C. G. Gordon, CB RE and of the Suppression of the Tai-Ping Rebellion* ([S.l.]: Blackwood, 1868), p. xvi.

¹⁰⁷ Wilson, *Ever-Victorious Army*, pp. 256–8.

leaving it too late to dispatch a relief force to rescue him. The flurry of publications after his death portrayed Gordon, with more or less nuance, as the saviour of the Qing.¹⁰⁸ This was partly because these works were not histories but were instead representative of the bombastic nature of much Victorian biography, later skewered by Lynton Strachey as 'tedious panegyric[s]'.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the change in narrative after Gordon's death and the passage of time detoxified discussion of the rebellion, resulting in a flurry of memoirs from the late 1880s.¹¹⁰ The Gordon hagiographies, and nationalistic rivalries, had a multidirectional impact, also stimulating a revival of interest in Frederick Townsend Ward.¹¹¹ These works, all by American authors, stressed that Ward had been 'overlooked by fame' and that while he was dismissed as an adventuring mercenary Gordon had not been treated 'an actual man, but a figure in stained glass'.¹¹² Regardless of their rival national heroes, both sets of works had the same overall effect: countering Wilson's account and recasting the Taiping war as one which foreigners had won for the Qing. When foreign communities in China began celebrating the dead of the Taiping war again in the 1920s and 1930s, it was this account they remembered. The narrative's few detractors, such as William Hail, who protested not unreasonably in the pages of the *North-China Herald* that Zeng Guofan's armies would have won the war with or without foreign help, only serve to highlight its dominance.¹¹³

While Anglophone histories and biographies moved from downplaying the foreign role in the Taiping war to eulogising it, surviving Chinese narratives moved in the opposite direction. Immediately after the war Qing historians appear to have promoted the foreign role in the war, at a time when foreign support was being sought to implement reforms within the empire. Their work should be placed in the context of long-standing Chinese historiographical traditions, adopted by the Qing, in which history served a dual purpose. Firstly, historians were tasked with providing an accurate record of past events. Court historians kept diarised records which were kept from a ruler's eyes to prevent him editing interpretations of events of which he did not approve. During the Spring and Autumn period (770 BCE – 476 BCE) a grand historian recorded that Cui Zhu, first minister of the state of Qi, had murdered his brother. On reading this Cui demanded the line be removed. The historian refused and was executed, only to be replaced by his younger brother who recorded the same detail. He too was killed and the process was repeated until the fourth brother, when Cui finally accepted that history could not be altered according to his whims.¹¹⁴ Apocryphal though this anecdote

¹⁰⁸ See William F. Butler, *Charles George Gordon* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1889), p. 70, A. Edgmont Hake, 'Introduction', in *Events in the Taiping Rebellion*, ed. by A. Edgmont Hake (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1891), 1-98, pp. 6-7 and Samuel Mossman, *The Great Taiping Rebellion: A Story of General Gordon in China* (London: Griffith Farran Browne & Co., 1893), p. 347.

¹⁰⁹ Giles Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing, 1920), p.vi.

Although this is not representative of all Victorian biography. See Juliette Atkinson, *Victorian Biography Reconsidered: A Study of Nineteenth-Century "Hidden" Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.8-9.

¹¹⁰ See for example R. P. Mercier, *Campagne du Cassini dans les Mers de Chine, 1851-1854* (Paris: Retaun-Bray, 1889), Thomas Lyster and E. A. Lyster, *With Gordon in China: Letters from Thomas Lyster, Lieutenant Royal Engineers* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1891), Edward Forrester, 'Personal Recollections of the Tai-Ping Rebellion', *Cosmopolitan*, 22, 6 (1896), 625-29 and Arthur Evans Moule, *Personal Recollections of the Tai'ping Rebellion* (Shanghai: Shanghai Mercury, 1898).

¹¹¹ See for example Rantoul, 'Frederick Townsend Ward' and E. Alexander Powell, *Gentlemen Rovers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913).

¹¹² Powell, *Gentlemen Rovers*, pp. vii-viii and Holger Cahill, *A Yankee Adventurer: The Story of Ward and the Taiping Rebellion* (New York: The Macaulay Company, 1930), p. 271.

¹¹³ William James Hail, *Tsêng Kuo-fan and the Taiping Rebellion: with a Short Sketch of his Later Career* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp, 1964), p. xiv and *The China Weekly Review*, 16 May, 1925, p. 310.

¹¹⁴ Huang Chun-Chieh, 'The Defining Character of Chinese Historical Thinking', *History and Theory*, 46, 2 (2007), 180-88, pp. 180-81.

may be, it illuminates the tradition in which Qing historians saw themselves to be working. Equally important was history's function as a 'mirror to aid government'.¹¹⁵ Historians were expected to illustrate the ideal social order by apportioning praise and blame to noteworthy individuals and actions.¹¹⁶

The only Qing history to focus exclusively on the foreign intervention laid claim to both of these traditions and drew on the foreign interventions as a lesson for future policy for the court. The *Record of the Foreign Armies* (洋兵記略 *Yang Bing Jilüe*) was compiled by Dong Xun, a minister in the Zongli Yamen, the office managing Qing foreign relations, in the mid-1860s.¹¹⁷ Dong explicitly affirmed the *Record's* accuracy while celebrating the work of the foreign soldiers it took for its subjects.¹¹⁸ Dong's work was influenced by his background and resulting political beliefs. Dong was a reform-minded official who took up an active role in reform initiatives underway in the capital including administering the examinations at the newly established translators school and inspecting the foreign-trained Peking Field Force.¹¹⁹ Given Dong's pro-reform leanings it is unsurprising that he should wish to paint such a positive picture of the foreign contribution to the suppression of the Taiping. His account ignored problematic episodes such as the British and French armies' refusal to fight in the summer of 1862 because of what they viewed as Qing ineptitude on the battlefield, and instead emphasised their role in breaking the Taiping siege of Shanghai in January of the same year.¹²⁰ The *Record* thus presented the foreign interventions in the best possible light. As a factual record, and as a 'mirror to aid government', the work aimed to persuade officials of the need for foreign-supported reforms. Published only in Chinese, and apparently predominantly circulated within official circles since there is no record of wide publication, the work was aimed at an audience of Qing policy makers.¹²¹

It was not just reforming officials who had an interest in glossing over the incessant diplomatic spats that the foreign armies' support in suppressing the Taiping had provoked in the first decades after the war. For different reasons both local officials and many within the Jiangnan elite remembered the interventions positively. As is evident in the building of memorials to both his own armies and foreign fighters, Li Hongzhang, governor of Jiangsu, was keen to commemorate the war to highlight his own role in a triumphant victory. In an extension of this strategy he commissioned Du Wenlan's *Record of the Suppression of the Southern Rebels* (平定粵匪記略 *Pingding Yue Fei Jilüe*).¹²² The account praised the foreign

¹¹⁵ The title of a historical work by Northern Song dynasty (960 AD – 1127 AD) historian Sima Guang. See Luke S. K. Kwong, 'The Rise of the Linear Perspective on History and Time in Late Qing China c. 1860-1911', *Past & Present*, 173 (2001), 157-90, p. 163. See also On Cho Ng and Q. Edward Wang, *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

¹¹⁶ Axel Schneider and Stefan Tanaka, 'The Transformation of History in China and Japan', in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing Volume 4: 1800-1945*, ed. by Juan Manguerra Stuart Macintyre, and Atilla Pók (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 491-519, p. 492.

¹¹⁷ Probably while Dong was serving as Vice President of the Records Office, a post he was appointed to on 26 August 1864. See Dong Xun, 還讀我書室老人手訂年譜 (*Autobiographical Record of the Old man of the Study for Returning to Read my Books*) '近代中國史料叢刊 (Collected Materials on Modern Chinese History)', 29, (Taipei: Guangwen Shuju, 1971), p. 96.

¹¹⁸ Dong Xun, '洋兵紀略 (Record of the Foreign Armies)', in *太平天國文獻彙編 (A Collection of Documents on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom)*, ed. by Jialuo Yang (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1973), 527-64, p. 564.

¹¹⁹ Dong, *Autobiographical Record*, pp. 92-3

¹²⁰ Dong, 'Record of the Foreign Armies', pp. 536-8 and pp. 540-41. For the foreign withdrawal in the summer of 1862 see Staveley to Hope, 13 June 1862, TNA, FO17/384.

¹²¹ Modern editions of the work are all based on the same draft copy, found in Beijing University Library. See Dong, 'Record of the Foreign Armies', p. 527.

¹²² For Li Hongzhang commissioning the work see Hail, *Tsêng Kuo-fan and the Taiping Rebellion: with a Short Sketch of his Later Career*, p. 384.

role in the war while omitting regrettable events which might have cast doubt on Li's management of the Ever Victorious Army.¹²³ Li was not alone. Similar details were also omitted from the history sections of local gazetteers, guidebooks written by officials for officials who frequently moved from one part of the empire to another, as an introduction to their new jurisdiction. The Songjiang prefecture gazetteer, compiled in 1883, neglected to mention some of the more lamentable practices of the Ever Victorious Army during the period it used the town as its base.¹²⁴ This included Henry Burgevine, Ward's successor as head of the force, shutting Songjiang's gates and threatening to behead local officials unless his troops were paid.¹²⁵ The omission of these particulars from otherwise detailed accounts may reflect an elite antipathy towards the Taiping informed not only by the destruction they wrought but also by their social prejudices, regarding them as 'déclassé outsiders' from the poor southern provinces.¹²⁶ Those opposed to them, foreign, Qing and Chinese, were more likely to have been treated favourably by the historical record.

This positive view of the interventions was echoed in the Chinese language press in the first thirty years after the war, suggesting that their readership, Chinese merchants in Shanghai and its surroundings, remained grateful for the expulsion of the Taiping. When Gordon returned to China in 1880 the *Shenbao*, the premier Chinese-language newspaper in Shanghai from 1872, reprinted a translated article from the *North-China Daily News* discussing his service against the Taiping and potential new role serving the Qing against Russia.¹²⁷ *Shenbao* offered no comment on the article, but its inclusion suggests that the newspaper felt that its Chinese readership would be interested in Gordon's past and present exploits.¹²⁸ More concrete evidence of the continuing interest in Gordon amongst a Chinese readership in Shanghai can be found in *Dianshizhai* pictorial's coverage of Li Hongzhang's visit to pay his respects at Gordon's statue in England in 1896 [figure 5]. Li visited London as part of a diplomatic world tour. The text accompanying the article, in addition to providing details of Li's visit, included effusive praise for Gordon's service, suggesting China would not find another like him in 'hundreds of thousands of years'.¹²⁹ The magazine, publishing from within the safety of the foreign concessions, was not averse to criticising the Qing government, so its editors were not simply following the established Qing narrative of the interventions.¹³⁰ They clearly felt Gordon's service was of interest to *Dianshizhai*'s wide readership, and that the author's sentiments might be shared by them.

By the mid-1890's, however, *Dianshizhai*'s editors, who had been in favour of foreign-aided technological and military development, were regarded as conservative by a new generation of reformers who took a very different line on the foreign interventions against the

¹²³ These included ignoring one of its leaders' defection to the Taiping. See Du Wenlan, *平定粵匪紀略* (*Record of the Suppression of the Southern Rebels*) (1881), pp. 734 – 768.

¹²⁴ See '松江府續志 (Songjiang Prefecture Gazetteer of Achievements)', Fu Sinian Library, Academia Sinica, Taipei, 19, (1883 (Guangxu 9)), juan 19, p. 1788.

¹²⁵ Medhurst to Bruce, 8 January, 1863, TNA, FO 228/347.

¹²⁶ Tobie S. Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, p. 15

¹²⁷ *Shenbao*, 21 August, 1880, p. 19287.

¹²⁸ Although *Shenbao* was owned by the British newspaper proprietor Ernest Major, it had an entirely Chinese staff and was intended to address an entirely Chinese audience. See Barbara Mittler, 'Domesticating an Alien Medium: Incorporating the Western-style Newspaper into the Chinese Public Sphere', in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910*, ed. by Rudolf G. Wagner (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 13-45, p. 16.

¹²⁹ *点时斋画报* (*Dianshizhai Pictorial*), (Guangdong: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1983), juan 忠, p. 50.

¹³⁰ Ye Xiaoping, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884-1898* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2003), p. 14.

Taiping.¹³¹ The Qing defeat in the Sino-Japanese war (1894-95) bolstered the cause of anti-Qing reformers and revolutionaries. When the dynasty collapsed in 1911, it was initially replaced by revolutionaries who identified the Taiping as their forbears. The first president of the new Republic, Sun Yatsen, was part of the same Hakka (客家 *Kejia*) minority as Hong Xiuquan and, in his youth, was referred to as 'little Hong'.¹³² He later claimed that the stories he had heard of the Taiping's battles as a boy had inspired his subsequent revolutionary activity.¹³³ This led to increased interest in the history of the movement. Historical research on the movement was difficult to conduct in China, however, because the Qing had been so effective in extinguishing traces of the rebels, including their surviving documents. This changed in 1921, when new Qing documents on the Taiping were discovered in a private family archive. This led the historian Ling Shanqing, who described the Taiping as 'a ray of light, after which we returned to darkness', to publish an *Unofficial History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*.¹³⁴ Ling's work encouraged a flurry of activity among Chinese historians keen to travel to libraries across the world collecting surviving Taiping documents.¹³⁵ The foreign interventions against the Taiping were remembered by many of these scholars as an act of imperialist aggression.¹³⁶

This revival of the memory of the Taiping civil war was not universally welcomed, reflecting the very divisions in Chinese society opened up by the Taiping themselves. This was particularly the case after Sun's successor Chiang Kaishek orchestrated a purge of communists in 1927. Against this backdrop, for nationalist anti-communists the Taiping again fell out of favour. Chiang gave his soldiers a pamphlet on Zeng Guofan's suppression of the Taiping. In his forward, he expressed the hope that his generals would be able to crush the communists just as Zeng had put down the would-be revolutionaries of earlier times.¹³⁷ Historians who shared Chiang's political outlook also began to play down the Taiping and hence the role of foreigners in their suppression.¹³⁸ This interpretation was later dismissed as 'borderline propaganda' by Lo Erh-kang, who would become the preeminent Taiping historian in communist China.¹³⁹ This division mirrored that which the Taiping themselves had opened up within Jiangnan society, between proponents of the status quo and supporters of revolution. Despite the division among historians in the republican period, neither group

¹³¹ Ye, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial*, p. 14.

¹³² Chuck Wooldridge, 'What Literati Talked About When They Talked About Memory: Commemorating Resistance to the Taiping in Nanjing's Yu Garden, 1900-1911', *Twentieth-Century China*, 40, 1 (2015), 3-24, p. 4.

¹³³ Jen, *Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, p. 9.

¹³⁴ Ling Shanqing, *太平天国野史 (An Unofficial History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom)* (Shanghai wenming shuju 1923), p. 1.

¹³⁵ Xiao Yishan noted that Ling's work had influenced his decision to collect Taiping documents held in libraries as far afield as London, Paris, Berlin and Washington. See Xiao Yishan, *太平天国丛书 (Collected Documents on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom)*. (Beijing: Guoli bianyi guan, 1936), pp. 1-2. For an example of such work see Wang Zhongqi and He Bingsong, *太平天国革命史 (The History of the Revolution of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom)* (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshu Guan, 1931).

¹³⁶ For example see Yang Yitang, *太平天国之研究 (Research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom)* (Shanghai: xin zhongguo shudian, 1930), p. 4 and Jian Youwen, *金田之游及其他 (A Trip to Jintian and Other Essays)* cited in Têng Ssu-Yü, *New Light on the History of the Taiping Rebellion* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 5.

¹³⁷ Guo Yingjie and He Baogang, 'Reimagining the Chinese Nation: The "Zeng Guofan Phenomenon"', *Modern China*, 25, 2 (1999), 142-70, p. 144.

¹³⁸ For example see Xie Xingyao, *太平天国丛书十三种 (A Collectanea of Thirteen Taiping documents)* (Beijing: wenhai chubanshe, 1938), p. 82.

¹³⁹ Lo Erh-kang, *太平天国史纲 (A Draft History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom)* (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshu Guan, 1936), p.1. Lo took up a directorship in the PRC's Institute of Modern History in 1949.

had an interest in actively promoting the foreign role in the Taiping war as both ultimately aimed to end foreign treaty privileges in China. As a result, monuments to it sat uncomfortably on the landscape.

Conclusion

The changes in memories of the Taiping war reflect changing ideas about the foreign role in China over time. Memories of the Taiping war crossed Assmann's eighty-year divide between the social memory of participants to form a political memory, constructed by interest groups through imbuing importance in acts and sites of remembrance.¹⁴⁰ The memory of the war was initially celebrated by Qing officials, members of the Jiangnan elite and by foreign veterans if not by their governments. This convergence in memory of the Taiping war did not last as Chinese nationalism rose in prominence and foreign communities in China felt threatened. British and American commemorations of the interventions ended with the end of the foreign treaty port communities after the Second World War.¹⁴¹ After the end of extraterritoriality in 1943, and the subsequent departure of almost all foreigners from the China coast, sovereignty in the country was no longer divided and the debates over the role of foreigners in the Taiping war were no longer transnational. There were no treaty port communities left to cling to their past in order to preserve their future. Amongst Anglophone historians the Taiping movement and the foreign response to it has generated only a handful of monographs in almost forty years.¹⁴² For commemorations to continue they need an audience.

In China, however, only now are efforts to remember the interventions beginning to fade. Over the course of the early twentieth century, recollections of the Taiping war had travelled in the opposite direction to those of the foreign communities. In the words of one scholar writing in 1940, the Taiping had gone 'from being a story grandmothers told their grandchildren to make them cry, to being a topic of conversation amongst civilised people over tea'.¹⁴³ The Communist leadership took ending China's 'century of humiliation' at the hands of foreigners as a keystone of their legitimacy. Initially, remembering the evils done by foreigners, in suppressing the revolutionary potential of Hong Xiuquan's regime, bolstered that narrative.¹⁴⁴ The changing contemporary fate of the memory of the Taiping, however, is most clearly illustrated in the transformation of the museum in their honour in Nanjing. Originally it was a site to commemorate the Taiping as anti-imperialist heroes, but in the China of the 2010s the government appears to take rather less interest in championing a revolt by dispossessed rural communities against an urban ruling elite. The museum now markets itself through the garden in which it is situated, 'The Best Garden of Old Nanjing'.

¹⁴⁰ Assmann, 'Transformations between History and Memory', p.52.

¹⁴¹ For an account of the British community's departure from treaty-port China see Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism, 1900-49* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 236-40.

¹⁴² See Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, and Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*. In addition to this there have been a couple of biographies of key figures including Carr, *The Devil Soldier* and John Pollock, *Gordon: The Man Behind the Legend* (London: Constable, 1993).

¹⁴³ Guo Tingyi, *太平天国史事日志 (A Day by Day History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom)* (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1957), p. 1. The forward to the original 1946 edition was dated 1940.

¹⁴⁴ See for example Albert Feuerwerker, 'China's Modern Economic History in Communist Chinese Historiography', in *History in Communist China*, ed. by Albert Feuerwerker (Massachusetts Institute of Technology: M.I.T. Press, 1968), 216-46, pp. 219-20.

Indeed, it is this alone which is the focus of online reviews by Chinese visitors.¹⁴⁵ In Hong Kong and Taiwan, which lacked the same political imperatives, historians have remained interested in the period, questioning whether the Taiping were unique or just another armed peasant rebellion, akin to those which have littered China's dynastic history.¹⁴⁶

The case of the efforts to remember the foreign role in the Taiping war suggests that commemoration in a transnational environment can create as many disputes over form as they do over content. In order for events to be remembered beyond the lifespan of their participants they must take material form to be stored in a community's archival memory. With an issue as emotive as commemorating war dead, cultural differences can create tensions. The medals issued to foreign fighters and the original Qing plan for Ward's tomb created more conflict because they clashed with British and American expectations about these forms than they did as acts of commemoration in themselves. These conflicts only occur when commemorations take a non-linguistic material form. Histories of the interventions helped shape their different readerships' perspectives on the foreign role in the Taiping war, but conflict only arose when efforts to remember the interventions took the form of medals and monuments, lacking the divisions in comprehension created by the written word.

The divergent recollections of the foreign role in the Taiping war on the China coast also reflects the multidirectional nature of memory in a transnational setting. In an age of European and American empire building, China was far from the only extra-European territory where western fighters became involved in civil conflicts between rival factions. Indeed, as his death at Khartoum highlights, it was not even the only place where Charles Gordon became involved in extra-European disputes. What made China different was the continuing division of sovereignty into the mid-twentieth century, with distinct foreign communities living side by side with a Chinese population amongst which nationalist sentiments were rising. This meant that efforts at commemoration, or in the case of the Ningbo monument the deconstruction of commemorations, caused counter-reactions or inspired different memories of the events. By the 1930s the historian Yang Yitang suggested that his history of the Taiping movement had been inspired by a recent trip to Wusong, in the suburbs of Shanghai, where he had heard locals reminiscing about how they, seventy years previously, had bravely fought the foreign imperialists.¹⁴⁷ It is most likely that this was the 'they' of political memory, in that members of the community had heard the story and identified with it, for they are unlikely to have been methuselah-esque veterans themselves. The fact that actual Taiping supporters in Shanghai in the 1860s were in short supply did not matter. The political memory of the period did.

¹⁴⁵ Tobie Meyer-Fong, 'Civil War, Revolutionary Heritage and the Chinese Garden', *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, 13 (2014), 75-98, pp.90-91.

¹⁴⁶ Xu Yongzhi, '港台太平天国史研究概述 (1949-1990) (A Brief Discussion of Historical Research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in Taiwan and Hong Kong (1949-1990)', *安徽史研究 (Anhui Historical Research)*, 4 (1991).

¹⁴⁷ Yang Yitang, *Research on the Taiping*, p.4.



Merit medals proposed by British officers

208x118mm (300 x 300 DPI)

View Only



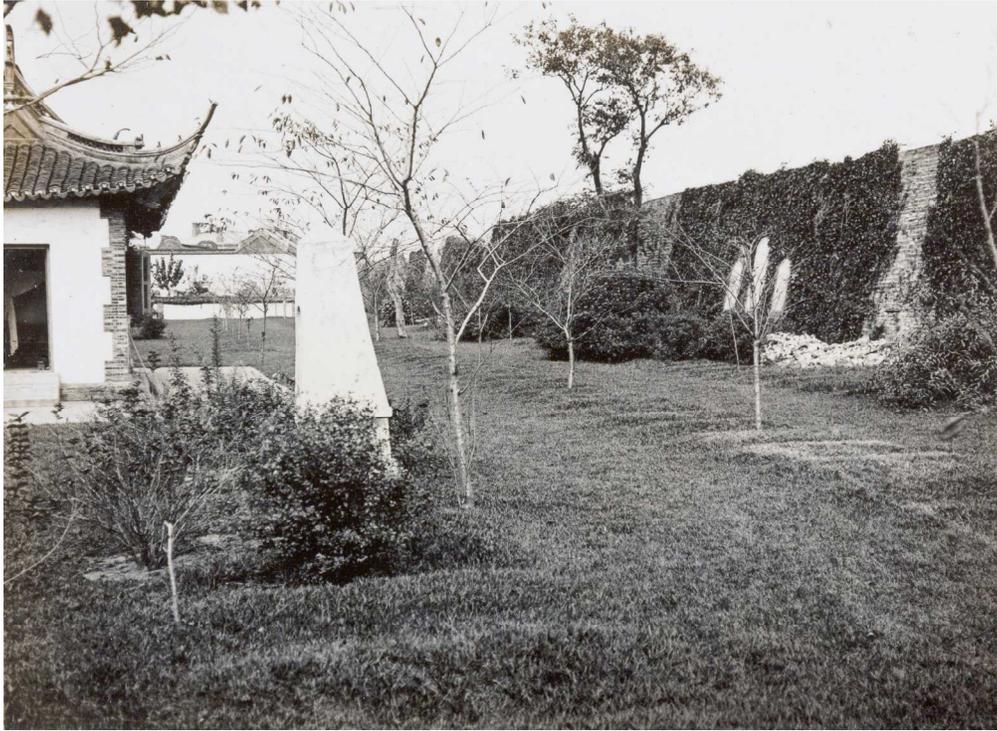
Traditional style merit medal issued to French forces in 1864

367x626mm (72 x 72 DPI)



Merit medal issued to customs official for service against the Taiping near Fuzhou in 1865

230x488mm (72 x 72 DPI)



The Soldier's Cemetery at Shanghai

295x216mm (300 x 300 DPI)

View Only

