

The Canton Opium Confiscation of 26th March 1839

- A Game of Bribery, Corruption and High Treason -

1. Historical Background Info

The Central Kingdom

At the end of the 1800s China's four million square miles held 450 million people, up from 200 million a century earlier. The ruling dynasty was the Ching, established by Manchus from Manchuria, who in 1644 had superseded the Ming. These descendants of the Tatars appreciated Chinese civilization and adopted a conciliatory attitude toward their subjects. They refused, however, to allow intermarriage with the Chinese, for they realized that only their blood difference kept them from being assimilated and conquered. By and large, however, the Manchus gradually became Chinese in their attitudes and habits.

The Manchu emperors were remarkably successful. The reign of Chien-lung (1736-1795) was a time of great expansion. The Manchus gained Turkestan, Burma, and Tibet. By the end of the eighteenth century Manchu power extended even into Nepal, and the territory under the Ching control was as extensive as under any previous dynasty.

The Western Response

The foreigners were especially irritated by the high customs duties the Chinese forced them to pay and by the attempts of Chinese authorities to stop the growing import trade in opium. The drug had long been used to stop diarrhea, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth century people in all classes began to use it recreationally. Most opium came from Turkey or India, and in 1800 its import was forbidden by the imperial government. Despite this restriction, the opium trade continued to flourish. Privately owned vessels of many countries, including the United States, made huge profits from the growing number of Chinese addicts. The government in Peking noted that the foreigners seemed intent on dragging down the Chinese through the encouragement of opium addiction.

In the meantime, the empire faced other problems. The army became corrupt and the tax farmers defrauded the people. The central bureaucracy declined in efficiency, and the generally weak emperors were unable to meet the challenges of the time. The balance of trade turned against the Chinese in the 1830s, and the British decided to force the issue of increased trade rights. The point of conflict was the opium trade. By the late 1830s more than 30,000 chests, each of which held about 150 pounds of the extract, were being brought in annually by the various foreign powers. Some authorities assert that the trade in opium

alone reversed China's formerly favorable balance of trade. In the spring of 1839 Chinese authorities at Canton confiscated and burned the opium. In response, the British occupied positions around Canton.

In the war that followed, the Chinese could not match the technological and tactical superiority of the British forces. In 1842 China agreed to the provisions of the Treaty of Nanking. Hong Kong was ceded to Great Britain, and other ports, including Canton, were opened to British residence and trade. It would be a mistake to view the conflict between the two countries simply as a matter of drug control; it was instead the acting out of deep cultural conflicts between east and west.

The French and Americans approached the Chinese after the Nanking Treaty's provisions became known, and in 1844 gained the same trading rights as the British. The advantages granted the three nations by the Chinese set a precedent that would dominate China's relations with the world for the next century. The "most favored nation" treatment came to be extended so far that China's right to rule in its own territory was limited. This began the period referred to by the Chinese as the time of unequal treaties - a time of unprecedented degradation for China. The humiliation the Central Kingdom suffered is still remembered and strongly affects important aspects of its foreign policy. Meanwhile, the opium trade continued to thrive.

The British and French again defeated China in a second opium war in 1856. By the terms of the Treaty of Tientsin (1858) the Chinese opened new ports to trading and allowed foreigners with passports to travel in the interior. Christians gained the right to spread their faith and hold property, thus opening up another means of western penetration. The United States and Russia gained the same privileges in separate treaties.

2. Setting of the Game

This game is inspired by the true events on Lintin Island in Canton Bay on 26th March 1839 and centres around three British and three Chinese characters with their respective subordinates/followers. Although only three of the six main characters involved were real personalities of this age, the other three purely fictitious ones, are nevertheless fitting and credible for this early Victorian/Colonial period. Everyone of them wants to achieve his own mischievous opportunistic goals on this particular day.

It is early morning on 26th March. Lin Zexu (known as "Lin the Clear Sky") the Commissioner of Canton and personal envoy of his Majesty, the Emperor Hsuan Tsung, has received urgent orders to confiscate and destroy the complete opium storage of the British trade post on Lintin Island in order to set an example (even by means of violence if deemed necessary) . The Emperor is furious about the ruthlessness of British traders and the growing Chinese

opium addiction. Hsuan Tsung is also in deep sorrow as his son, a serious addict, died of opium abuse last night. As there must be an end to this despicable trade by the "foreign devils", Lin has been put in command of a company of Imperial soldiers to execute the emperor's orders. Meanwhile the commotion caused by the Imperial troops in the streets of Canton has attracted the attention of two devious fellows who sense the possibility of drawing some advantage out of this situation. On the one hand Tao Ling "The Tiger", a merciless bandit and fierce opium smuggler, and on the other Hung Ziu, a leading political "Taiping" activist with great contempt for the weak and corrupt Imperial government.

The British trading post on Lintin Island has been fortified and placed under military orders, due to the increasing tension between the British traders and Imperial government. Commander of the trading post is now Major Sean Fitzpatrick of the 27th Inniskilling Regiment. He has recently arrived from India on H.M.S "Nemesis" together with Captain Charles Elliot, Superintendent of the British Fleet, a company of Royal Artillery, as well as a bulk delivery of opium. Fitzpatrick has received special orders, by British government officials, to root out any irregularities and corruption among the British garrison on Lintin Island. His main focus is on Lieutenant John Lloyd-Smithers of the 69th South Lincolnshire Regiment, who had command of the trading post until the Major's arrival. There is a strong suspicion that Lloyd-Smithers along with two non-commissioned officers is involved in embezzlement of opium and silver coinage.



Lintin Island 1839

3. The Characters and their Targets

A) Lin Zexu - Commissioner of Canton

Typical imperial bureaucrate not a man of violence. Sly, corrupt and a true expert in bribery. Strong interest to execute Emperor's orders and destroy opium storage to strengthen his prestige and status. Prefers peaceful approach and wants to avoid casualties, especially on the British side to prevent military retaliation, which could upset his excessive and luxurious lifestyle in Canton. To maintain his lifestyle Lin runs a secret gambling hall (Lt. Lloyd-Smithers is one of his best clients) and is always in need of cash. He is aware that the silver coinage used for paying the opium is still on Lintin Island and about to be transferred to H.M.S. Nemesis. He needs to get his hands on the large oak chest in which the silver is kept.

Combat factor: Lin = 0 / 11 imperial soldiers = 0

Bribery factor: 4

Points achievable (max. 90):

Burn opium: 20 points

Capture silver: 20 points

Taken prisoners alive: Fitzpatrick / Elliot / Lloyd-Smithers 10 points each

Capture - dead or alive: Tao Ling / Hung Ziu 10 points each

B) Tao Ling "The Tiger"

One of the worst criminals in the "Canton underworld". Convicted for murder, robbery, kidnapping and opium smuggling. Has a strong hatred for the British and in particular for Lt. Lloyd-Smithers, who handed over Tao's brother to the Imperial authorities for torture and execution. As Tao's brother was taken prisoner in Lin's gambling hall, Tao suspects that Lin Zexu also had an involvement. Tao has sworn to take fierce revenge on both of them. Apart from that he wants to capture as much opium as possible to sell on the black market and of course get the oak chest with silver. His supporters are fanatically loyal and wear tiger skin and shields with the Tao "Tiger" emblem.

Combat factor: Tao = +2 / 4 "Tiger" fighters = +1

Bribery factor: 3

Points achievable (max. 90):

Capture opium: 20 points

Capture silver: 20 points

Eliminate British: Lloyd-Smithers 20 points, Fitzpatrick / Elliot 10 points each

Eliminate: Lin Zexu 10 points

C) Hung Ziu

Leading political activist of the "Taiping" revolutionary movement, whose aim it is to overthrow the government, force the emperor to abdicate and set up a rule of the working class. To finance his revolutionary movement Hung requires a lot of cash and the status of a figurehead in the fight against foreign oppressors and exploiters. Hung is an opium addict and gets his personal supply from Captain Charles Elliot, who is personally indebted to Hung as he had saved him drowning in the Yellow Sea (Elliot cannot swim). Hung's bodyguard Chop Suey "The Axe", a dedicated Taiping disciple, saved his master from a deadly sword blow during a pub brawl by severing off the right hand of the attacker, who was Lt. Lloyd-Smithers.

Combat factor: Hung = +1 / Bodyguard = +1

Bribery factor: 4

Points achievable (max. 90):

Capture opium: 20 points

Capture silver: 20 points

Eliminate British: Lloyd-Smithers 20 points, Fitzpatrick 10 points

Save Life of: Elliot 20 points

D) Major Sean Fitzpatrick (27th Inniskilling Regt.)

One of the toughest officers in her majesty's forces. First swordsman of his regiment. Disciplinary, authoritarian and extremely stubborn. Hated by his subordinates. Employed by highest government officials for special tasks. Very much seeks a promotion to Lt.-Colonel of his regiment. Last action was in India where he unveiled a Sikh plot against the Viceroy. His motto: "Victory or Death". His only vice is Irish whisky. He detests Captain Elliot for a personal matter which has stained his honour (some rumours say that Elliot "destroyed" Fitzpatrick's ample whisky supplies in Calcutta). He wouldn't mind if Elliot had an accident. Fitzpatrick will defend the trading post up to the last man and is not prepared to neither yield the opium nor the silver (nor his whisky barrel).

Combat factor: Major = +2 / 5 Royal Artillery = 0

Bribery factor: 5

Points achievable (max. 90):

Defend opium: 25 points

Defend silver: 25 points

Defend Whisky barrel: 20

Eliminate: Elliot 20 points

E) Captain Charles Elliot (Superintendent of the British Fleet)

A charismatic leader, womanizer, expert marksman (survived many duels). His main interest is of a commercial nature. He benefits personally from the opium trade and wants to keep the trade flowing steadily. A destabilised and chaotic China with increasing numbers of opium addicts is the right basis for his business. For this purpose he maintains close links with the "Taiping" movement and finances Hung Ziu with silver and opium. (In addition he is personally indebted to Hung who saved him from drowning). This revolutionary movement will plunge the country into further chaos, Elliot hopes. In addition Elliot is keen on Fitzpatrick's whisky supplies.

Combat factor: Elliot = +1 (Marksman hits with 4,5,6) / 2 Chinese servants = 0
Bribery factor: 4

Points achievable (max. 90):

Capture opium: 20 points

Capture silver: 20 points

Capture whisky: 20 points

Save life of: Hung Ziu: 20 points

Eliminate: Lin Zexu 10 points

F) Lieutenant John Lloyd-Smithers (69th South Lincolnshire Regt.)

Was in command of the trading post until Major Fitzpatrick arrived. This is most annoying as the Major could now uncover his secret opium deals. Lloyd-Smithers is a pathological gambler and in constant need of cash to pay his debts to Lin Zexu. His accomplices are the two non-commissioned officers of the garrison. They have decided to make a getaway with as much opium as possible and the oak chest containing the silver, when the Chinese attack. But before Lloyd-Smithers wants to take revenge on Hung and his bodyguard for mutilating him (lost his right hand in a pub brawl).

Combat factor: Lloyd-Smithers = +1 / 2x Sergeants = +1 / 3x Privates = 0
Bribery factor: 3

Points achievable (max. 90):

Capture opium: 20 points

Capture silver: 20 points

Eliminate: Hung and his bodyguard 20 points each

Safe life of: Lin Zexu 10 points

4. Rules and Victory Conditions

- The game is played in 10 moves and the player with most points achieved gains victory (draw if difference is 10 or less points)
- At the beginning of the game each player picks a card to determine his Character for the entire game (makes a note and keeps it secret)
- Cards are returned to the heap and shuffled. At the beginning of each game move, each player picks three Character cards and will play these until end of move.
- During every game move each player has the possibility of attempting one act of bribery against any Character. Average dice determines whether bribery factor of Character is reached or not. If yes, then the bribe will either stop or prevent the Character from any specific action (bribe cannot be used to initiate an action)
- Movement distance of figures/boat: 20cm / Firing range of musket, pistol, bow: 20cm / Cannon: 40cm.(Cannon requires at least 3 artillerymen to function or 2 artillerymen and two other figures)
- Hit with a 5 and 6 (if behind cover figure has a saving throw of 5 and 6). Exception marksman Elliot: hits with 4,5 and 6.
- NEW Casualty rule: if figure is hit or defeated in combat, there is the possibility of an extra saving throw of 5 and 6 to determine whether figure is only wounded. If so, then a little marker is applied. Figure combat factor is reduced by 1 and movement distance reduced to 10cm. Second wound is deadly.
- Carrying of chests/barrel. One figure = 10cm per move / Two figures = 20 cm (as standard)
- Opening of doors/gateways = dice 5 or 6 (one figure enters door and 3 figures gateway per move)
- Set opium/buildings alight = dice 5 or 6 (then throw percentage dice per move. If total reaches 15 points then opium/building is destroyed. To extinguish fire max. two figures. Max. two average dice. Sum is subtracted from percentage dice total. If total results in 5 or less, fire is extinguished. To be repeated per move until final result.