ZELEK Sebastian 6/01/2014

History-Geography essay

“Analyse the impact foreign nations had on China up to 1928”

Already from year 2200 BC, China has been governed by emperors. An imperialistic state, embracing the rules of Confucianism, remained unchanged up to around year AD 1800, believing that everything should be left “as is” because any attempt to change anything would be fruitless. The maintenance of harmony was the Chinese society's chief purpose, resulting in a quietist and obedient population, which lead to the appearance of strong nationalism in China. The belief in the Chinese superiority over the whole world that was tended since centuries under the rule of dynasties of emperors, who's authority derived from the “mandate of heaven”, fate, was challenged in the XIXth century with the arrival of the European expansionism.

The Chinese Sino-centric society was enforced in the contact with the West in 1839, when the China fought against the British during the Opium wars, where at the end the British came out victorious. It came out as a shock to the traditional Chinese society that China was not superior to every nation in the world. This defeat caused the European major powers such as Great Britain, France and Germany to assume domination over China. China was forced into a series of unequal treaties with the Western powers and had treaty ports imposed, resulting in a situation comparable with the “scramble for Africa”, but this time it was all about the concessions, bits of territory controlled by Westerners. Their presence in China resulted in a love-hate relationship: on one hand the Western powers were exploiting China for their own goals, but they caused an economical growth of China through these concessions: Western companies provided an extensive job market for the Chinese, who have been stuck with oppressive local industries. The Western achievements impressed the Chinese to the point that they started to implement the Western methods in China. To do that, Chinese students went to study in the Western countries in order to expel the “foreign devils” from China. But in the end, China becomes entirely dependent economically and financially on the West.