



### 3. Late Qing Large scale peasant unrest

Taiping Rebellion & Nian Rebellion

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### “Disorder under Heaven”

天下大亂\内亂外禍

- \* Were there large historical factors that played a central causal role in these rebellions?



- \* How do theories of collective action, class politics, and religious movements contribute to satisfactory explanations of these occurrences?

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### Some common reasons:

- \* Economic distress
- \* Famine
- \* Landlordism
- \* Population pressure
- \* Conflict between migrating Han farmers and the aboriginals minorities
- \* Nationalism
- \* Viewing the Manchus' rule as representing a corrupt alien dynasty
- \* Religious affiliations



- \* Two important ideas supported rebellions
  - \* “Guanbi minfan” 官逼民反, officials' suppression
  - \* Change of the mandate of Heaven




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## Rebellions in Late Imperial China

- \* *The White Lotus (1796-1806)*—central and north China
- \* *The Nian (1850s)*—north China, Yellow River
- \* *The Miao (1830s)*—central and southwest China
- \* *The Yao (1830s)*—central China
- \* *The Triads (1850s)*—south China
- \* *And its offshoot, The Short Swords (1850s)*—Shanghai
- \* *The Taiping (1850-1864)* south, central, and north China




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## Casualties

- \* Taiping, (1850-1864) : 20 million
- \* USSR: Stalin's terror, 1936-53 20. million plus
- \* WWII: combatant deaths 16.8 million
- \* Russia/USSR: civilian deaths by Nazis, 7-12 million
- \* Europe: The Holocaust, 1933-45, 6 million
- \* Other WWII noncombatant deaths 6 million
- \* Sino-Japanese War: 1937-45 3.5 million
- \* China: Civil war, 1945-49 1.2 million
- \* Korean War: 1950-53 2 million
- \* China: Great Leap Forward: 1958-61, 20 million

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Case study One

## Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864)




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## Hong Xiuquan (1814-1865)

- \* failed provincial examination four times
- \* Inspired by Liang Afa, *Good Words to Exhort the Age* 勸世良言
- \* his illness (1837)
  - \* younger brother of Jesus Christ
  - \* given a divine mission
- \* converted to Christianity in 1843.



\* God-Worshippers (Bai Shangdi jiao) (1844)

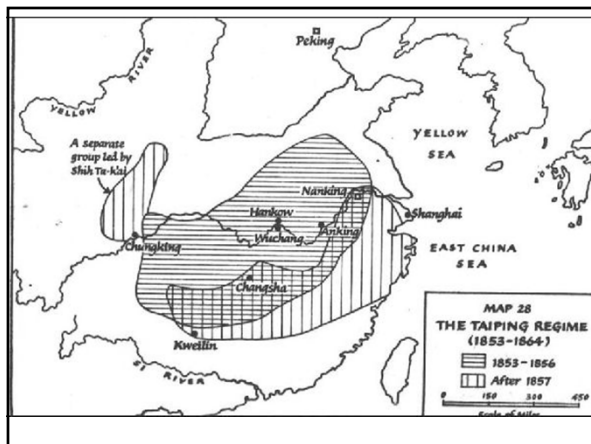


## Tipping Point

- \* shelter for the victims of social disorder
- \* poorer peasants, miners,
- \* Hakka people
- \* motivated by the God-Worshippers' faith and ethnic identity
- \* Local and central governments began to suppression 1850 onwards
- \* mass killing and wars between them, which anticipated a large-scale rebellion



- \* Took Nanjing in Mar 1853
- \* Controlled Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hubei, and Anhui






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## Millenarian

- \* Millenarianism [n]
- \* /ˌmɪlɪˈnɛːrɪəˌnɪz(ə)m/ (UK)
- \* /ˌmɪləˈnerēəˌnɪzəm/ (US)

- \* Millenarian [adj]
- \* /ˌmɪlɪˈnɛːrɪən/ (UK)
- \* /ˌmɪ-lə-ˈner-ē-ən/ (US)

\* **Millenarianism** is a cultural or religious framework that predicts catastrophic change in the near future.

\* Often there are “signs” that can be read to predict the coming catastrophe.




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## Millenarian Religious movement ?

- \* Do collective action and rebellion sometimes occur as the result of symbolic politics or religious ideas?
- \* Is it possible for people to mobilize around purely religious or symbolic goals?
- \* Foreshadowed the rise of CCP & communist ideology [?]




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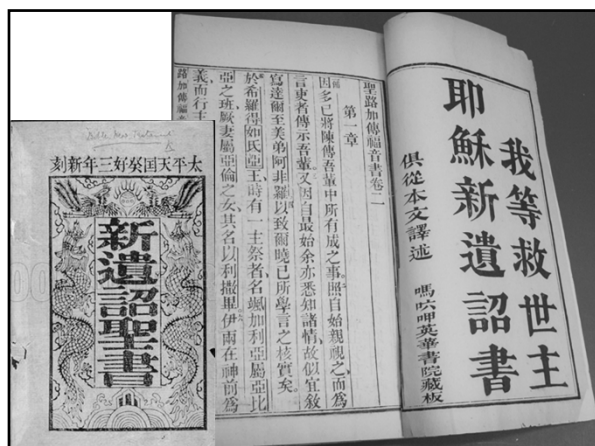
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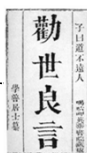
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### Religious character of Hong Xiuquan's ideology.



- \* Hong received the Protestant ideas
  - \* Taiping interpretation of "the word God": Shangdi
  - \* Liang A-fa 梁阿發, Good Words to Admonish the Age 勸世良言
- \* Protestant missionaries in Canton.
  - \* German missionary : Karl Gutzlaff
  - \* 1847 Chinese Bible adopted by Hong
  - \* Reverend Issachar Roberts (Southern Baptist missionary)
  - \* Taught Hong for 2 months in 1847




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### Authentic worship of "Shangdi."

- \* Taiping's own religious vision
  - \* preaching from the Bible
  - \* based on the Ten Commandments
- \* Taiping religion
  - \* worship of a new god
  - \* establishment of a new king
- \* **Secular** documents had religious motives
  - \* anti-Manchu Proclamation by Imperial Sanction (Banxing zhaoshu)
  - \* communalistic Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty (Tianchiao tianmou zhidu)




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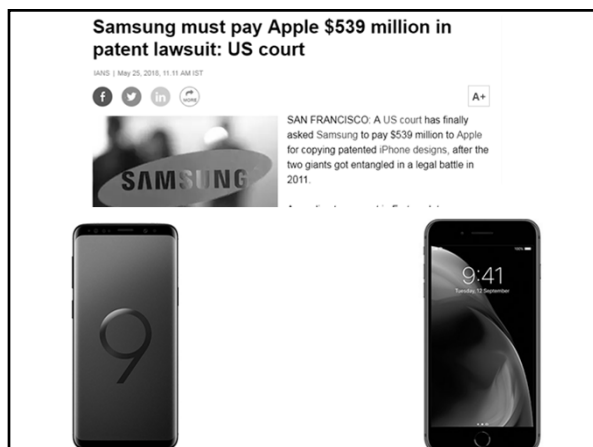
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## Taiping: making Christian message more authentic

- \* presented in the **form** of a traditional Chinese historical and cultural idiom & traditions
- \* “process of translation and **indigenization** of the term God was important to the religion of the Taiping ...
- \* **inspired** by Protestant Christianity yet not shaped by Chinese traditions:”
- \* Chinese cultural process of the translation and indigenization of Christianity. (p. 79)



## Taipings criticized the Qing religious establishment

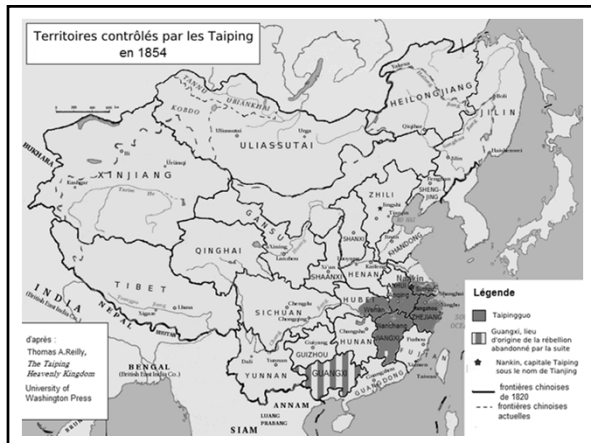
- \* actions of **iconoclasm**
- \* attacked Qing sacred legitimacy
- \* Perverse doctrines of the Confucian literati
  - \* deceived and destroyed the true religious order
  - \* bringing corruption and death to the people of China:
  - \* imperial order blasphemous



- \* Radical change in popular thought
  - \* Authority & legitimacy of the imperial order. {p. 4}
  - \* destruction of both the imperial institution and its image.

## Aversion to Taiping

- \* Confucian literati: linking Catholicism to the Taiping movement
- \* "stigmatized Chinese Catholicism as perverse and heterodox doctrine" (Cohen, 1961, p. 16).
- \* Other villages feared the rebellion's mix of warrior women, totalitarian rule, and bizarre foreign ideology.



## Factors for the Collapse of Taipings

- \* Never captured Peking (Beijing), the Qing capital
- \* Forceful implementation of the Christian faith
- \* Fratricide among the Taipings
- \* Lack of reforms such as land distribution
- \* Leadership unstable
- \* western powers eventually turned against the Taipings
- \* **Zeng Guofan** and his formation of the Xiang army



Case Study Two:

## Nian Rebellion 捻軍起義 (1851 to 1868)



## Local-politics theories [Political Science] / Rational actor models



Elizabeth Perry

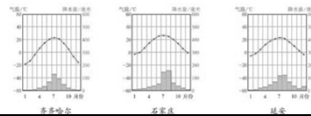
- \* Importance of local politics
- \* Discounted large scale collective goals or revolutionary ideology
- \* Political entrepreneurship: what motivates leaders in times of political unrest?
  - \* ability to make use of popular organization and motivation for their own political ends?
- \* which organizations—bandit gangs, village militias, crop-watching societies—function as instruments of collective mobilization and action?





## Harsh “ecological” environment of Huabei 华北

\* Hardened people prone to violence for survival.




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## Desolated land had little commerce

- \* Yellow and Huai rivers frequently changed their courses resulting in massive floods.
- \* Little government revenue - sorghum crop
- \* few government improvement works.
- \* little governmental presence
  - \* banditry and formation of militia to fend off robbers.
- \* “patterns of group aggression”
  - \* peasants of Huai-pei had the reputation of being “fierce and truculent.”(47)




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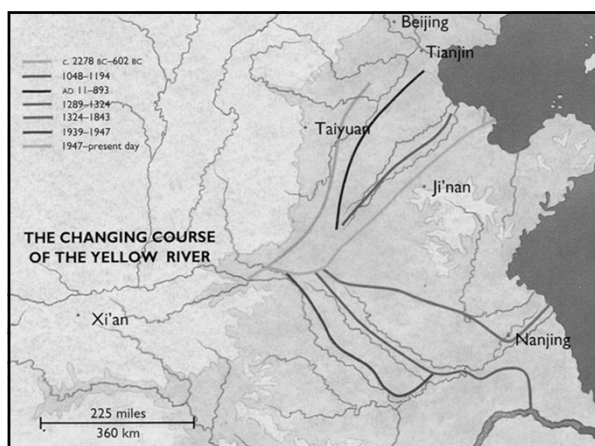
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### Two Coping strategies.

- \* 1. predatory: robbing the others.
- \* 2. protective: defending against losses.
- \* common ground: "cooperation, mobility and high-risk behaviour"
- \* easily developed into "dramatic" rebellions. (48)
- \* "levels of social organization" determines which strategy
  - \* organized to counter the difficulties encountered.
- \* extreme external dangers or pressures such as excessive taxes or "marauding soldiers" would provoke the already organized peasants into a coherent rebellion.




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### Perry: Local conditions !

- \* **Previous interpretation:**
  - \* expressions of oppositions to the Confucian control
  - \* "anti-Manchu millenarianism."
- \* Perry: mundane communal - "families, clans and lineage settlements"- reaction
- \* natural disasters and backbreaking Qing taxes by Huai-pei peasants to simply survive.
- \* role of secret societies, such as White Lotus Society, overstated.
- \* 2 Strategies were sine qua non defensive actions in Huai-pei.




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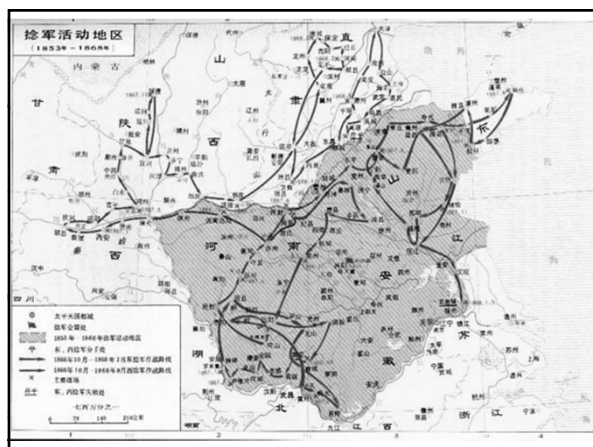
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## Regional activities - salt smuggling 走私盐铁

- \* “Owls” 盐枭 gained valuable experience in organization across geographical boundaries.
- \* Speedy spread of Nien Rebellion
- \* overt state suppression of initial rebels
- \* crushing taxes
- \* example of the Taiping rebels
- \* emboldened the robbers and peasants to combine into a full scale revolt. (150)

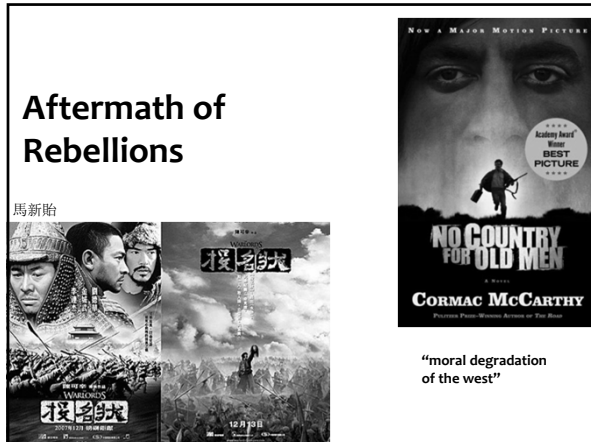


## Unstable organizational structure

- \* just looting to make a living.
- \* small, autonomous groups along kinship lines
- \* but eventually coalesced in 1855
- \* two thousand Nien forts in Huai-pei, each with one to three thousand inhabitants. 100,000
- \* nominal control of a population of some two to six million people
- \* No united front or sustained revolt
- \* Chang Lo-hsing 張樂行 was killed 1863; movement collapsed



## Aftermath of Rebellions



馬新貽

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN  
A FILM BY CORMAC MCCARTHY  
"moral degradation of the west"




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## Historical impact of Taiping Christianity

- \* Exposed the real nature of the imperial institution
- \* Radical criticism of the very foundation of the Chinese imperial system
- \* Serious ideology-based revolution
- \* Inspire later rebellions
- \* Millenarian sects - harbingers of dynastic change





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## Rise of Han Officials



- \* Zeng Guo-fan, Zuo Zongtang and Li Hongzhang
- \* given government posts and official financing.
- \* Officials use this financing to win major victories.
- \* the trio is given territory to rule.

曾國藩




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## The Taiping Rebellion anticipated future trends

- \* Provincial forces -
  - \* carry out much needed reforms
  - \* built railways
  - \* modernized military
- \* Resources moved from the central court to the provinces
- \* Regional armies after Taiping remain very powerful




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## Self-Strengthening Movement

洋務運動；自強運動

- \* The Opium War and Taiping Rebellion was a sort of “wakeup call”
- \* Several attempts to reform and modernize the imperial system were made between 1864 and 1911
- \* Zeng became icon for restoration
  - \* land reform, fixes public works, and revives educational system
  - \* Zeng has a militia which is loyal to him, not the dynasty
  - \* Invariably promoted greater local independence




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