



PEARL RIVER

The Awakening of the East

ZHANG SHENGYOU

Translated by Transn

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Preface

The Pearl River, the third longest river of China after the Yangtze and the Yellow rivers and the second largest by volume after the Yangtze, as History can prove, is destined to witness and exemplify the great changes of the Chinese nation.

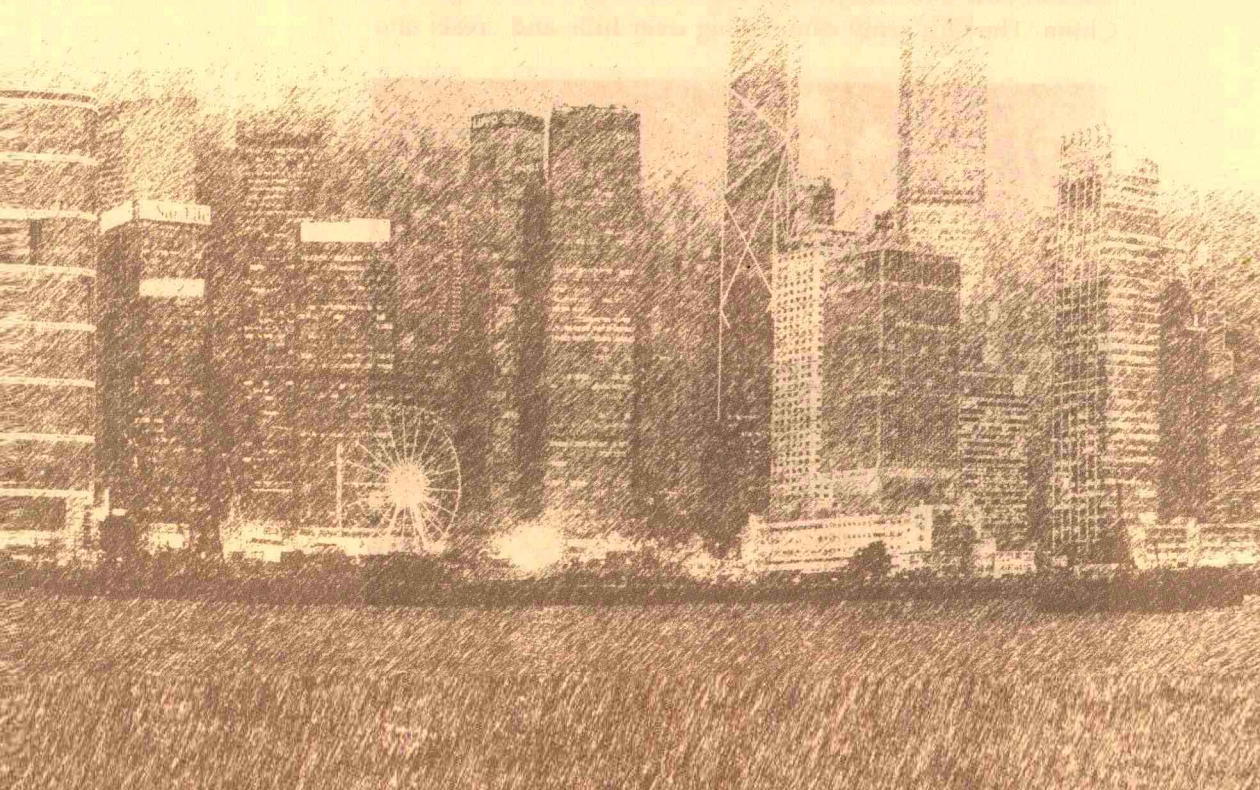
The three tributaries of the Pearl River, the West tributary originating from Qujing prefecture, Yunnan Province, and the North and the East tributaries flowing freely through Jiangxi Province, surge down into Guangdong Province and converge there as a long, swift and surging current. Then the river hastily affluxes into the vast expanse of fertile farmland along the Pearl River Delta, and finally radiates into the South China Sea through eight different outfalls at Humen, Jiaomen, Hongqimen, Hengmen, Modaomen, Jitimen, Hutiaomen and Yamen. Such a grand scene can be described as "with drops of water from verdant mountain peaks accumulating to form the three tributaries, the Pearl River runs thousands of kilometers all the way into the South China Sea."

The Pearl River is one of China's "mother rivers"—a cradle for the brilliant and splendid Chinese civilization, together with the Yellow and the Yangtze rivers. Slightly different from the two, which converge hundreds of streams, flow on with twists and turns, and finally empty themselves freely into the Sea, arousing sighs from Master Confucius, "Thus do things flow away, day and night!" The Pearl River valley brims with great social changes and cultural interactions, embraces things of diverse natures, updates its social concepts and advocates openness and harmony. Such a wonderful land also nurtures the firstly awakened nice people with lofty ideals, who have been dedicating themselves to the services of the native country generation after generation, playing their respective roles in the varied historical plays along the banks of the Pearl River, and now even launching the strategic and grand era for China's development in response to the global context.



A satellite photo of the Pearl River Delta.

THE ETERNAL RIVER



The vast expanse of China's richly endowed land comprises a myriad of landscapes. The meandering and rolling Southern Ridges (Nanling) stretch from Yunnan Province eastward to Guizhou Province, then extend windingly along the boundaries of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and several other provinces including Guangdong, Hunan, Jiangxi and Fujian, and finally into the South China Sea. The majestic ridges are connected in succession, among which, Dayu, Qitian, Dupang, Mengzhu and Yuecheng mountains are the best known, jointly called the "Five Ridges," the largest mountain ranges running from west to east in south China, which together form a natural barrier as well as a watershed to divide the Yangtze and the Pearl river systems. Meanwhile the ridges also block transportation and cultural and economic communications between the south of the ridges and the Central Plain in north China; hence the northerners' label for the south of the ridges "Barbarian Region" in the past.

From ancient times, the Pearl River basin used to be the habitat for the ancient Baiyue ethnic group. Dated back to 221 B.C., the First Emperor of Qin launched a large-scale expedition against the Baiyue people right after his vanquishing the other six independent states and unifying north China. The Qin army came along over hills and crests and



The Lingqu Canal.

On December 22, 2007, the "South China Sea Sunken Ship No. 1" was salvaged out of the sea surface near Yangjiang County, Guangdong Province.



eventually arrived in Guangxi. In order to meet the pressing need to facilitate transport of military supplies, the army completed construction of the Ling canal by digging and chiseling open some mountains in three years, to connect the Xiangjiang and Lijiang rivers and link up miraculously the Pearl and the Yangtze river systems.

The Lingqu Canal, an ancient water conservancy works constructed originally for military purposes, contributed incomparably to development of Chinese civilization in history. From then on the Pearl-Yangtze river basins were interconnected into a whole. An internal circulation system of China's economic, trade and cultural exchanges nationwide was thus established, with the south of the ridges officially included as part of China.

On a sunny day with a breeze and dispensing clouds, at 11:30, December 22, 2007, the "South China Sea Sunken Ship No. 1" was salvaged out of the sea surface near Yangjiang County, Guangdong Province. After a while, held up by the half way submerged barges, the sunken ship was transported to local museum and housed in a specially designed "Crystal Palace." Perhaps such a worldwide unprecedented archeological salvaging of the sunken ship may bring about too much thinking about the Pearl River and the river valley.

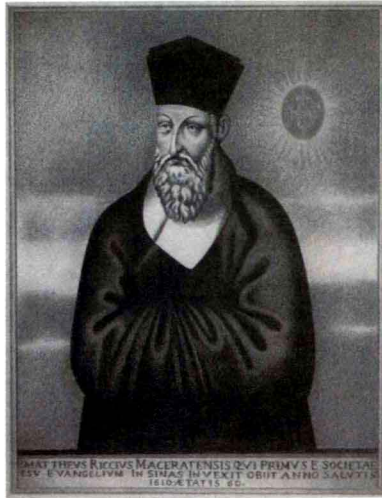
According to authentication, the ancient ship was built in the South Song Dynasty (1127–1279) and was supposed to be

a commercial ship along the “silk route on seas.” It approved that 800 years ago this ship set out from the Pearl River estuary on its journey of foreign trade. The large quantities of porcelain wares on the ship were even believed to have been tailor-made in accordance to foreign costumers’ orders. In review of a production mode then, a Chinese porcelain kiln fired a particular pure clay and glazed them with variously colored fusible materials just as per the drawings by its foreign costumers, which could be a way of “processing according to buyer’s samples” in foreign trade of the ancient China.

Every piece of historical and cultural relics in this region witness the unrelenting history of the Pearl River’s opening to the world over the past hundreds of years. Undoubtedly, they all deserve a monument for their richly embedded Chinese culture of opening to outside world.

Dating back to around 15th Century, the Great Geographical Discoveries brought every country into a complete world system. In 1569, Gerardus Mercator, Belgian map-maker and geographer, drew the first world map based on his navigation tool, Mercator Map Projection. In his view, geography is not only a tool to locate cities and rivers, but also the most convenient channel to learn about the world political situations.

Zhaoqing was the capital city of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces in the 16th century. In the year 1584, i.e., the 12th year of the reign of Emperor Wanli during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), an Italian missionary called Matteo Ricci came here and countermarked “Full Geographic Map of Mountains, Seas and Lands,” which was the first map of the world that the Chinese people had ever seen. The map surprised greatly the Chinese



Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), Italian Jesuit missionary.

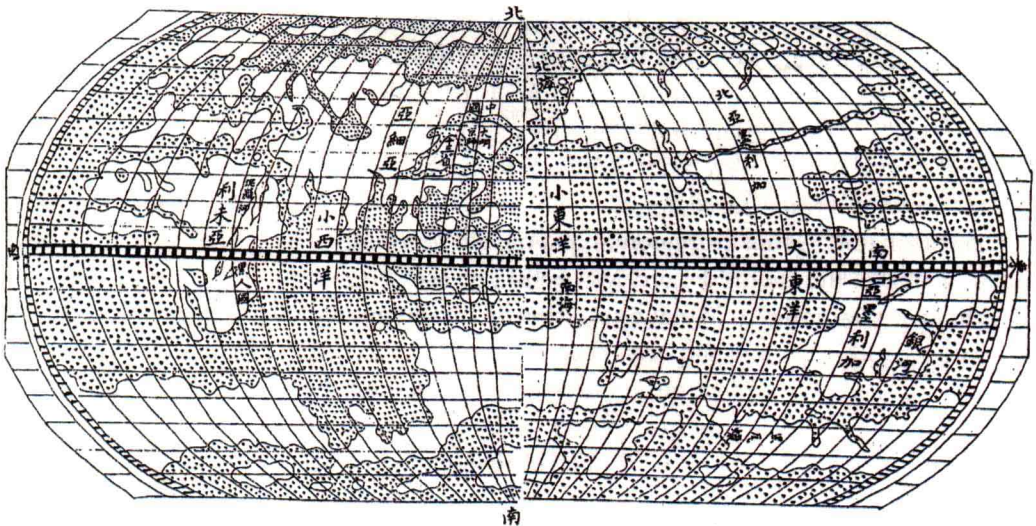
people at that time, who had believed that the sky is round and the earth is square and now learned that the earth beneath their feet is actually round and they would be able to return to their original place after a round walk circling the earth.

Robert Morrison was the first Christian Protestant missionary sent to China by a western country. An Englishman previously served in London Missionary Society for years, he took the U.S. cargo ship "Trident," departed from New York, bypassed Java and Macao, and finally arrived in Guangzhou on September 8, 1807, after four months' sail on the bumpy sea.

During his stay in China for 27 years, Robert Morrison was the first to translate the Bible into Chinese and have it published and also the first to translate *Three Character Classic*, *The Great Learning* and other Chinese classics into English and introduce them to the West. He compiled the first Chinese-English Dictionary, on which the future Chinese-English dictionaries are based. He founded the first Chinese monthly magazine, called *Chinese Customs Monthly Statistics*. He opened "Anglo-Chinese College" (later called Ying Wa College), the first educational institution first run by a missionary. At the same time, in Macao and Guangzhou, he established

"Full Geographic Map of Mountains, Seas and Lands."

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ophthalmology hospitals and was the first to do missionary work through medical work. Robert Morrison even made pioneering contribution in the aspects of Christian doctrine translation, dictionary compilation, magazine publication, school and hospital establishment, and printing and publishing industries, all of which made him a well-deserved pioneer for the communication amid modern Chinese and Western cultures.

Meanwhile, at the other side of the Earth, with the development of navigation industry and the subsequent rise of the Industrial Revolution, the Western ideology and culture, cultivated by the ocean culture and baptized by the Renaissance, was increasingly presenting its exuberant vitality. Soon after that, the rise of Spain, Holland, United Kingdom and other Western powers changed the world situation.

Maybe it was due to some predestined relationships or causes, the Pearl River Valley became the most ideal landing place for “the Western Learning to the East,” thus triggering the interaction and integration of the Eastern and Western cultures, ideas and thoughts. The Eastern farming civilization and the Western industrial civilization finally embarked on a strong collision.

In 1773, a large British fleet arrived at the Lingding Sea opposite to the mouth of the Pearl River and a British Lord named George McCartney on a diplomatic mission to China. Coveting and desiring for the gold and spices of the East, Lord McCartney intended to promote relationship between the Qing Dynasty with Emperor Qianlong dreaming of “Celestial Empire” and the “sun-never-set” British Empire for exchange of diplomats and trade agreements.

Unfortunately, a small ceremonial dispute led to a historical turning point. How would Lord McCartney present himself to Emperor Qianlong? In a haughty attitude as the emperor over the world, the Qing imperial court demanded the ritual of bending knees for three times and bowing in salute for nine times while the British side insisted on getting down on one knee and kissing the hand of the Emperor. Such a dispute continued from August 12 to September 10, the King of the United

On Sep.4, 1793, British ambassador McCartney presents himself before Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty of China. A Cartoon by James Gillray (British).



Kingdom finally lost patience and the door to normal Sino-British trade relationship was temporally terminated. Half a century later, the United Kingdom swarmed in by fleet and bombed open the door of the Qing Dynasty.

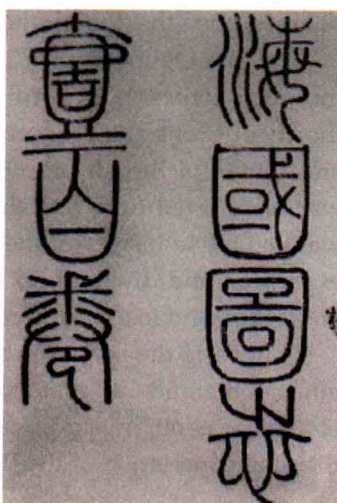
The first Opium War in 1840 was apparently a big live ammunition contest between the complacent, impotent Qing authority of China at its sunset and the industrialized, aggressive and powerful British Empire, like the sun at high noon. The war manifested fully that the buildup of the Western powers was actually a history of the colonialists' intrigue of "outward expansion and dividing up the world" by means of fire, with bloodshed and tears of the colonies.

Following the invention and improvement of the steam engines in the mid-18th century, the entire process of human civilization was obviously pushed to the new era of steam, with the final completion of the British national railway network as

its hallmark. Such was the Industrial Revolution that started from England, swept across the continental Europe and then spread to the North America, finally achieving the historic leap from the traditional agricultural society to the modern industrial society.

Today, we can deem it the first round of economic globalization. When the Western countries enjoyed rapid development thanks to industrial civilization in history, the old China just lost all the opportunities in this round of economic globalization. After the Opium War the old China was gradually reduced to the semi-colonial and semi-feudal societal status. Then the Qing authority fell down from the “Supreme Empire” to the very bottom, and was forced to open its national door, for which Li Hongzhang, a leading statesman and a pioneer of industrial and military modernization in the late Qing Dynasty, uttered a distressful cry, “What a turbulence this country has never suffered for thousands of years!”

A group of scholars born in the Pearl River Valley or officials worked there were the first to experience the impact of the European and American social tides. Recalling the first map of the world brought by Matteo Ricci 300 years ago, these elite people felt painful in their bottom heart and then appealed with deep sorrow to the whole society to “open eyes and see the world.”

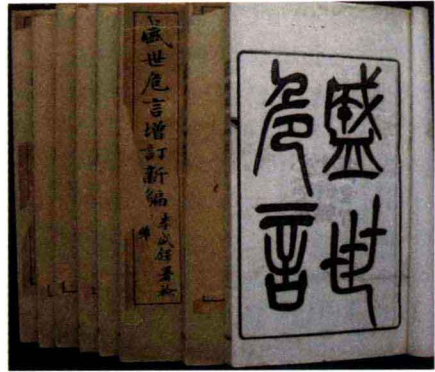


Left: Wei Yuan.

Right: *Illustrated Treatise on the Countries Overseas* (image of the book).



Left: Zheng Guanying.



Right: *Warnings to a Prosperous Age* (image of the book).

Wei Yuan (1794–1857), the enlightenment thinker in the modern Chinese history and took the post of magistrate of Gaoyou Prefecture of Guangdong Province in his late years, wrote with great attention a 100-volume *Illustrated Treatise on the Countries Overseas*. In the works he left descendants two famous remarks: “Learn from the westerners and then triumph over them” and “Ways of the world are in progress and the future’s better than today.” What aroused great sorrows from the Chinese people of insight was that Wei Yuan’s masterpiece later became a great think tank for the east neighbor Japan to facilitate “the Meiji Restoration” and grow into a modernized country.

Zheng Guanying (1842–1922), the Reformist representative in the late Qing Dynasty born in Xiangshan (now Zhongshan), Guangdong, wrote the book *Warnings to a Prosperous Age*, which greatly shocked the imperial court and were widely read among the people across the country. With the theme “to be rich and strong enough to save the nation,” this book covers measures and strategies for the reforms in the political, economic, military, diplomatic, and cultural aspects. Governor-general Zhang Zhidong sang high praises for it, “What an effective therapy for the upper rulers to rule the whole nation and what a good standard for talents reserve in the whole society!”

Humen City has the broadest water area and the most prosperous urban landscapes among the eight outfalls of the Pearl River. It is well renowned as the site where Lin Zexu

(1785–1850), a Chinese pioneer of modern Reformist thinking, supervised the destruction of opium. Loyal and brave, Lin, leading a whole life of “experiencing the society and self-encouragement,” once wrote to Emperor Daoguang and firmly stated his opinion to ban on opium-smoking and the opium trade, “The law should be strict and if people pay no attention, a few decades later, the Central Plain would have no soldiers to resist the enemies and no silvers for the soldier’s pay and provisions.”



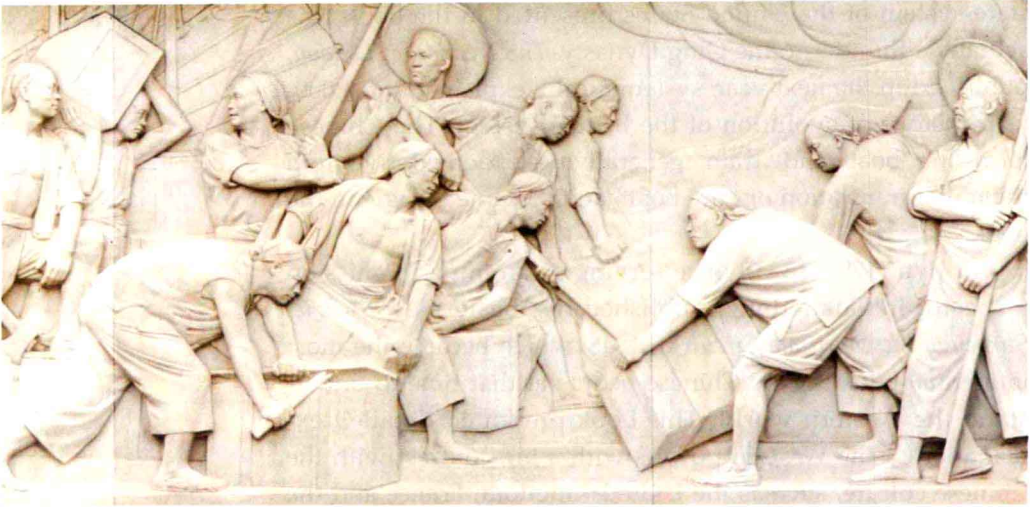
Lin Zexu.

Lin Zexu contributed his whole efforts to organize people to translate the book called *Geographic Records of the Four Continents* (the original title as *Cyclopedia of Geography*, written by the British Hugh Murray, the first edition, London, 1834), which was the first practice for the modern scholars to translate world geography books and initiated the tradition to learn and research on the Western world.

“To uphold high the interests of the nation without care of personal life or death, and to serve the nation without pursuit



The 600 kg cannon for Humen fort, a defense artillery in Guangzhou during the Opium War, made in Foshan during the Daoguang Reign of the Qing Dynasty, is now housed in Guangdong Museum of Revolutionary History.



Humen Opium Destruction Relievo engraved on the Monument to the People's Heroes at Tian'anmen Square.

for fortune and escape from misfortune." Such is the famous saying left by Lin Zexu, which had most embodied Lin Zexu's great sense of justice and inspired the Chinese descendants for generation after generation to make unremitting efforts for development of China into a strong nation.

Liang Tingnan (1796–1861) from Shunde, Guangdong, was one of those with deepest insight into the international situations at that time. After the defeat of the Qing troops in the Opium War, he exerted himself to write books in order to alert the whole nation, and continuously published *On the United*

States, The Treatise on the Inaccessibility of Protestantism to China, The Treatise on the Tributary States Doing Trade in Guangdong, and The Treatise on London, which were finally compiled into *The Four Treatises on the Countries Overseas*. Published in 1844, *On the United States* was the first book on the history of the United States independently written by the Chinese people and the



Liang Tingnan.