

The History of the Twentieth Century
Episode 014
“The Righteous and Harmonious Fists”
Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

At the beginning of the twentieth century the German Empire is 30 years old, the Austrian Empire is 95 years old, the Ottoman Empire is 602 years old, having outlived the Roman Empire, if you accept 476 as the Roman Empire’s end-date. All of these empires are children compared to China. The Chinese Empire as we know it at the beginning of the 20th century is 2,121 years old and civilization in China goes back more than two millennia before that. Japan has had its ups and downs but it claims an unbroken line of emperors passing the Chrysanthemum Throne on from father to son for a total of 2,560 years. Now *that’s* an empire. But what happens when 2,000 years of tradition collide with the modern world?

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 14: The Righteous and Harmonious Fists

China has always been a land of mystery and fascination to people from the West. An important reason why is that China is a civilization that developed and grew independently of Western civilization. All Western nations, even the Ottoman Empire, grew out of common roots, China and Japan are entirely different.

Think of China this way, imagine a world in which the Roman Empire never fell, imagine it has remained intact in the center of known civilization ever since the first century BC. Now ask yourself what it would look like, and how it would think in 1901. The Romans always regarded themselves as the center of civilization. The name “Mediterranean Sea” reflects this attitude. It literally means “middle of the world - sea”. And so it is with China, which calls itself, literally “The Center Nation” or “Middle Kingdom” if you like. The Romans regarded all the peoples and kingdoms around them as quite obviously barbaric and inferior compared with the Empire, and so it is with China.

The Romans traded with their barbarian neighbors, occasionally fought wars with them and frequently claimed the right to determine their internal affairs, including who would rule them, and so it is with China. China has a set of tributary nations, nations within its sphere of influence to use a modern term. These include Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and to varying degrees, peoples and states of Southeast Asia and Siberia.

How would a modern Roman Empire think? After 2000 years it would be pretty set in its ways. Having decided long ago that the Roman way was superior to any other way they would see no

need to change, to adapt, certainly not to incorporate some ideas from their neighbors. And so it is with China.

In Episode 3 I described the early European efforts to reach East Asia by sailing around Africa, and thus avoiding the Ottoman monopoly on trade with the East. Geography dictated the first European contacts with China would be in the southeast of that country. In particular, in and near the port city of Guangzhou, known in English as Canton. As a result, the Cantonese, and the related groups from that part of China after centuries of contacts with foreigners, remain to this day some of the most metropolitan and outward looking of the Chinese. Until recent times, the vast majority of Chinese who emigrated to other nations of the world were Cantonese in background, and the Cantonese dialect is still among the most widely used in Chinese ex-patriot communities.

In other parts of China, particularly rural and inland regions there has been little or no contact with outsiders. Even to this day there are hundreds of millions of Chinese who have never seen a foreigner. On a personal note, I can attest to this as someone who has been to rural China and has had the experience of small children running away from me in terror because they had no idea what I was.

China offered many goods the Europeans considered desirable, including silks, porcelain and tea. But the problem of European trade with China has always been that Europe offers little or nothing that is of interest to the Chinese. The bland food and itchy clothing just isn't selling. Until the 19th century, trade with China generally involved westerners offering silver in exchange for consumable products. You don't have to be an economist to see why this is a problem.

Early attempts by European nations to establish diplomatic relations with the Empire were also hampered by the Chinese assumption that all foreign powers were inferior, symbolized by the expectation that foreigners would kowtow to the emperor. Kowtow, or *kou tou* is a Chinese phrase that literally means "knock the head" or figuratively to touch one's forehead to the floor as a gesture of respect. In Imperial China everyone was expected to kow-tow before the Emperor, usually nine times. In the imperial court everyone kowtowed including representatives of foreign countries.

When the Europeans arrived, well, the Dutch were willing to swallow their pride in order to get down to business, but the British... well, the fact that the word kowtow has made it into English and that in English it means "to grovel in a weak and humiliating way" tells you everything you need to know about what the British made of this ritual.

To the British, to kowtow before the Emperor implied that the King of Britain was a vassal, which, yeah that's kinda the point. But the British refused to do this. To the Chinese this was baffling. Everyone else kowtowed, even the Japanese, and the Japanese were pretty stiff-necked about asserting their independence. What was up with these British barbarians?

Meanwhile, trade with China was sucking up an awful lot of silver. And the British had another economic problem, cotton, which is the key crop produced by India. By the 19th century, India has been supplanted by Egypt and the United States as a source of cotton, what are the Indians supposed to grow now? And more to the point, what is the British East India Company supposed to make money off of now? The answer was opium.

Not opium for Britain of course, that was illegal, but opium for China solves two problems at once. The Chinese government was willing to tolerate opium at first because it was making money off the trade. But opium boomed until eventually it was China that was exporting silver in exchange for opium. When China attempted to end the opium trade in 1839, war broke out between China and Britain. Yes, that's right, the British Empire is fighting for the right to be China's drug pusher. That's the Chinese view anyway.

In the West the war was viewed as being more about China's refusal to treat with Western nations as equals. Britain won the war, imposed the first in a series of humiliating treaties that it and other Western nations, including the United States, would impose on China. Modern Chinese call this period from 1839 to the revolution of 1949 the "Century of National Humiliation".

The First Opium War gave Britain the island of Hong Kong, legalized the opium trade, opened new "treaty ports" and opened China to missionaries, because western nations of this period had no problem identifying the spread of Christianity to Africa and Asia as a legitimate foreign policy objective.

There was a Second Opium War in 1860 which gave Britain Kowloon, a small peninsula on the Chinese mainland opposite Hong Kong. Gave Vladivostok to the Russians, and further expanded foreigner rights. By the end of the 19th century, foreigners in China had special legal privileges including certain territories where foreign law, not Chinese law, applied.

There is no evidence that during this time anyone actually put up a sign that literally said "No Dogs or Chinese Allowed" as is sometimes alleged, but it is true that at least one park in Shanghai had a posted set of rules and regulations that included #1 *The gardens are reserved for the foreign community*, and #4 *Dogs and bicycles are not admitted*. So, approximately the same thing, although phrased a little more politely. Can you imagine how you would feel if you saw a sign like that in your country?

[music: "Spring Blossoms on a Moonlit River"]

It appears that Christianity first arrived in China from the Sassanid Persian Empire in the 7th century, there may have been small Christian communities in China ever since. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Jesuit missionaries had some success in bringing Roman Catholicism to China; it seems mostly due to their willingness to accept ancestor devotion as not incompatible with Catholicism. Eventually, the Pope ruled that they were indeed incompatible and the Chinese Emperor responded by banning Christianity.

At the beginning of the 19th century it was a capital crime for foreigners to proselytize in China. It was also an offense for a Chinese to be a Christian, punishable by being sold into slavery to the Muslim minority of the western Xinjian province. But as the 19th century progressed, and Western powers, especially Britain, imposed new treaty obligations on China Christianity was legalized. The right of Christian missionaries to travel anywhere in China and build churches and missions was established, and special legal protections for Chinese Christians were enacted. As a result of these reforms missions to China expanded throughout the 19th century, beginning at the coast and penetrating inland.

But there was a downside to this new protected status for Christians in China. As you can imagine, greater freedom for Christian missions as a condition for signing a treaty to end a war imposed upon you by enemies, might leave you with a feeling that Christian missions are something of a burden or a punishment. Something your enemies have inflicted on you as a way of further weakening you. And so many Chinese came to resent the special status of missionaries and their converts.

And while many Chinese surely converted to Christianity for the purest of motives, others saw it as a way to ingratiate themselves with powerful western interests. Missionaries opened hospitals and schools and provided food and healthcare to poor rural people. But this led to suspicions that some people were converting to Christianity simply because it gave them the most direct pipeline to food and medicine. The Chinese disparagingly called such people "rice Christians." People who were in danger of prosecution or lawsuit, or wanted advantage in suing someone else, also had an incentive to convert to Christianity, because it gave them an edge in the courtroom.

And then there were rumors, there were terrible rumors about awful things missionaries did in secret. A common rumor was that missionaries were kidnapping Chinese children and using their body parts to make western medicines. I'm struck by the fact that variations of these "Westerners are coming to our country to steal our children and harvest their body parts" rumors would persist in many countries throughout the twentieth century. Missionaries were sometimes attacked as a result of these rumors and often it was the missionaries themselves who were the last to learn that someone was spreading rumors about them.

And then there was the question of ancestor devotions. I mentioned this before, most Christian missionaries regarded ancestor devotions, which are universal in China, as incompatible with Christianity. This was a major stumbling block for conversions. And Chinese who did convert to Christianity and ended the practice were regarded by their neighbors as undermining the community. If there was a drought or calamity it was easy to pin the blame on the Christians, those people are not paying proper homage to the ancestors and they are bringing disaster on all of us.

The Chinese national government was weak and corrupt during this time and often unable to enforce its own will. Local officials in places far from Beijing, the national capital, might find it

difficult to enforce government edicts, or they might be too busy enforcing their own will on the peasants. As in a little, shall we say, freelance taxation. To bother with national policy. As a result, local people in rural regions sometimes found it necessary to organize their own self-defense militias to protect themselves against corrupt officials, roving bandits, and other such threats that the central government was unable or unwilling to deal with. These secret, illegal organizations often had poetic names like “The White Lotus Society”, or “The Big Knife Society” or “The Righteous and Harmonious Fists”. And sometimes they saw missionaries and Chinese Christians as threats and attacked them.

And so, missionary work in China could be dangerous. Missionaries and their Chinese converts were repeatedly exposed to violence as the 19th century progressed. Western nations responded to violence against missionaries by demanding compensation from the Chinese government and often new and stronger legal protections for Christians, which then fueled further resentment.

Back in Episode 1 I talked a little about Japan’s dramatic modernization efforts in the second half of the 19th century. If you think about Japan you might start wondering why China isn’t modernizing itself, what with all this bullying by Western countries and all. Because that’s exactly why Japan undertook it’s amazing drive toward modernization; because they didn’t want all this to be happening to them. This is a question that provokes a lot of debate, but I think the answer is as simple as this: for all its history Japan has had a powerful neighbor, China, on which it always had to keep a wary eye. Over the centuries the Japanese had repeatedly adopted Chinese ideas and then adapted them for Japanese use. The Japanese adopted the Chinese system of writing then modified it to be more phonetic and better suited for the Japanese language. The Japanese adopted chopsticks, but Japanese chopsticks are not the same as Chinese chopsticks, they have been “Japanized”.

Japan had no choice if it wanted to maintain political and cultural independence. China was a land of innovation, so it was either adopt Chinese ideas or be left behind. But the Japanese were always careful not to make their country into a miniature replica of China, but rather to adapt foreign ideas to suit Japanese spirit. China on the other hand never had a China to worry about. Chinese history taught that all good ideas come from China and that foreign ideas don’t deserve consideration. This is not to say that China refused to modernize, they just went about it in a different and much less effective way.

By the late 19th century any fool could see that Westerners had better weapons and better ships, so China sought to modernize its own military by acquiring western-style arms. But unlike the Japanese who were willing to reorganize their government, their schools, and their military along Western lines, the Chinese sought to graft western arms onto Chinese traditional tactics, an initiative that came to be called the “Self-Strengthening Movement”. There we see the difference between the two countries. Chinese forces were reasonably well equipped, but not well-trained in the use of modern weapons and tactics. And the corruption in the Chinese government also meant that a significant amount of the money earmarked for military and economic modernization got wasted, diverted, or embezzled.

The first Sino-Japanese war began in 1894. Most Western observers expected China with its large army armed with modern weapons to defeat Japan easily. Instead Japan won an amazing victory and forced China to cede the island of Taiwan and the Liaodong peninsula, as well as Korea; a nominally independent state that was de facto a Chinese satellite and make it into a de facto Japanese satellite. This move was important to Japan because Japan imported food from Korea. China also had to pay a heavy indemnity.

Kaiser Wilhelm himself gave voice to Western anxiety about Japan's rise by coining the phrase "Die Gelbe Gefahr" - "The Yellow Peril". The term has been used ever since by anxious westerners, when they decide to have a freak-out over rising Japanese, and later Chinese power. You may also recall from Episode 1 that a coalition of Western powers: Russia, France, and Germany, pressured Japan to return the Liaodong Peninsula to China. Russia and Germany had their own designs on the region and France was an ally with Russia, so none of them was happy to see Japan making territorial gains in the East.

Japan felt humiliated at being forced to give up the Liaodong peninsula although this humiliation pales when compared to how the Chinese must have felt at being beaten by Japan, a country that used to pay tribute to China. As you may recall from Episode 1, following defeat in the war the Guangxu Emperor began a series of reforms. Known as the Hundred Days Reform, intended to revamp China's political and economic systems and move to a constitutional monarchy, as Japan had done. You may also recall how the 60-year-old Dowager Empress Cixi effectively overthrew the 24-year-old Guangxu Emperor, placed him under house-arrest, and took control of the government.

Now you might wonder, how can a 60-year-old woman possibly take control of a 2100-year-old government in the most populous country in the world. Well the answer is she can't, at least not without the support of most conservative elements of the government.

On the night of November 1st, 1897 in Zhang Jia Zhuang on the Shandong peninsula a group of more than 20 armed men broke into the Roman Catholic mission and murdered two German priests staying there. It is widely believed that these men were members of the Big Knife Society. Now the sources often call this group the Big Sword Society, but the Chinese name reads to me like Big Knife Society, so that's what I'm going with. Anyway, a third priest who survived this attack believed that it was instigated by the mayor of the neighboring Cao Jia Zhuang, Zhang Jia Zhuang means Zhang family village. Cao Jia Zhuang means Cao family village. And as the names of these villages suggest, there's a good chance that the missionaries got caught up in the middle of a family feud.

Now as I already said, violent attacks on missionaries in China were nothing new at this time, and the German government imposed on China the usual measures. The administrator of the province had to be replaced, money had to be given to the mission in compensation, and new churches and mission buildings were to be built in the province at Chinese government expense. But this time was different, in that the German government, which had already been

eyeing the Shandong peninsula as a really great place to build a naval base, also demanded territorial concessions from China in and around the Chinese village of Qingdao on the Shandong peninsula, which China was forced to lease to Germany for 99 years.

The Germans were interested in establishing a Naval base in the Far East for the usual reasons. A coaling station to support German Navy ships operating far from home, and a shiny new colonial territory to help Germany make up for its feelings of inadequacy for having relatively few colonial possessions. Germany invested hundreds of millions of dollars to build Qingdao into a gleaming modern city. You may recognize the name “Tsingtao” as a brand of Chinese beer sold internationally, and yes, Tsingtao beer comes from Qingdao city. And if you’re thinking that it can’t possibly be a coincidence that China’s most famous beer comes from a city with a German colonial legacy, well, you’re absolutely right.

I need to say a word here about geography so you can understand how all this fits together. If you start in Japan and travel westward, first you cross the Sea of Japan, then you cross the Korean Peninsula. On the other side of the Korean Peninsula you come into the Yellow Sea. If you travel northwest from the Yellow Sea you enter a bay called Bohai. Bohai leads you to the major Chinese city of Tianjin and further inland to Beijing, the capital so this is a strategic body of water. The narrow Bohai strait that you have to pass through to get from the Yellow Sea to Bohai Bay is formed by two peninsulas of Chinese territory. The Liaodong peninsula extends southwest from Manchuria, and the Shandong peninsula extends northeast from China proper, so these two peninsulas represent the best port locations in northern China and are strategically located as a choke point for traffic heading toward Beijing, as well as proximity to Korea and Japan. So small wonder that Western powers were interested in them.

After Germany got Qingdao on the Shandong peninsula, it set off a scramble for territory in northern China. Remember how the Japanese won the Liaodong Peninsula during the Sino-Japanese War back in 1894 only to be forced to give it back? Like two years ago? Well the Russians alarmed by a German incursion into northern China, which they regarded as their sphere of influence forced China to lease them territory on the Liaodong peninsula including the Chinese city of Dalian, which the Russians like to call Dalniy, which means “distant” in Russian, as well as the port town of Lushunkou, which westerners like to call Port Arthur. Port Arthur has an excellent natural harbor, and the Russians based their Pacific fleet there, much to the outrage of Japan.

The British meanwhile became alarmed because they had a strong presence in southeastern China down at Hong Kong but not much in northern China, so they forced China to grant them a 99 year lease on new territory just outside Hong Kong, which came to be called the “new territories” and also demanded and got a port of their own on the Shandong peninsula, not far from Qingdao, the village of Weihaiwei which is sometimes called Port Edward.

These new foreign concessions engendered new outrage among the Chinese, particularly on the Shandong peninsula, over the next two years a new peasant militia would form, probably originating somewhere on the Shandong peninsula, called the Righteous and Harmonious Fists.

[music: "Jasmine Flower"]

The Chinese economy was weak, and the year 1899 had seen a bad drought. Many Chinese farmers were impoverished, many rural laborers went unemployed. Large numbers of angry, unemployed, young men are never a good thing.

I need to stop here for a minute and say a word about kung-fu. In English the word "kung-fu" refers to Chinese martial arts, but that's not what the term means in Chinese. In Chinese "kung-fu" means a skill acquired through hard work, dedication, discipline, and effort; all virtues highly regarded in Chinese culture. If someone learns to speak French fluently for example you could say in Chinese that that person has "kung-fu" in French, by which you mean they show a great deal of skill which they earned through hard work and dedication.

Practitioners of the martial arts also develop kung-fu through hard work and discipline, and this is what the Righteous and Harmonious Fists were all about. They gave these angry and unemployed young men, many of whom were still teenagers, a way to focus their physical and mental energies, as well as their anger against the indignities their country was suffering. You probably also have heard that the Righteous and Harmonious Fists claimed that practitioners could make themselves immune to bullets.

On a personal note, I have to tell you that I have met Chinese people in the here and now modern world who are still willing to argue that a dedicated master of the martial arts who has devoted the proper amount of training and dedication can indeed make himself immune to firearms. Now it's easy to look down our noses at uneducated rural peasants, but I'd invite you to look at the world through their eyes.

Imagine you are an 18-year-old rural Chinese peasant man. You live in a small village in the Shandong province, your village is about 20 families, all of whom you have known all your life. Around the village are fields where you have worked all your life. You have never been more than 20 miles from your home, and when you have travelled, all you have ever seen are other villages that look just like your village full of people just like you who work in fields just like the ones you work in. You understand that you live in China, a nation so large it would take you years to walk across it. It is ruled by the Emperor, a semi-divine being who is your sovereign and to whom you owe your allegiance.

As big and amazing as China is, you have also heard that beyond it lie other lands, lands populated by strange beings called foreigners. These foreigners, with gargantuan noses and skins white as death, come to China with sticks that can kill a man at a thousand paces. They bully and harass your fellow Chinese, intimidate the Emperor, and humiliate the nation. But there is hope. The proper application of good-old Chinese kung-fu can make a fighter who is more than an equal to those foreigners, can make them immune to their weapons and make them able to drive them from our country.

Now I ask you, is the last part of that story really any less plausible than the rest of it? At least it adds a note of hope to what is otherwise a grim situation. And of course the Righteous and Harmonious Fists were willing to demonstrate their immunity to foreign firearms. One of their masters would assume a defiant stance while another would take one of the Western rifles, load it with powder, point it at the master and fire. The gun would go bang, but the master would just stand there, unmoved. If you're a rural peasant who has hardly ever even seen a firearm before you're likely to be impressed by this demonstration. So impressed in fact, you might not even have noticed that no one put a bullet into the rifle.

The governor of Shandong province during this time was no supporter of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists, but he appears to have been either unable or unwilling to do anything to suppress them. By early 1900 the Righteous and Harmonious Fists, whom by the way I'm going to call Boxers from now on because it's easier to say in English and because that's what Westerners were calling them. Boxing was a very popular sport at the time, and calling these martial arts practitioners "Boxers" was not too far off the mark.

But anyway, by early 1900 the Boxer movement was strong in Shandong province and neighboring regions. Edwin Conger, the American ambassador in Beijing cabled Washington in the spring of 1900 that "The people are very poor, until yesterday practically no rain has fallen for nearly a year. Plowing has not been and can not be done, crops have not been planted, the ground is too dry and hard to work in any way, and consequently the whole country is swarming with hungry, discontented, hopeless idlers, and they are ready to join any organization offered".

The Boxers adopted the chant "Support the Qing, kill the foreigner". Qing is the name of the Emperor's dynasty. They began to head toward Beijing, where there were the most Christians and the most foreigners. There was at this time a Chinese military unit called the Gansu Braves, a mostly Muslim troop of soldiers from the province of Gansu in the northwest. Their commander was the outspoken Dong Fuxiang. Dong Fuxiang was a self-made man with no formal education who worked his way up from donkey-trader and sometime-bandit to commander of one of the most feared army units in China.

The Gansu Braves had been redeployed away from Beijing in 1898 at the request of foreign diplomats because of General Dong's outspoken hostility toward foreigners. But as the Boxers began to arrive in Beijing, so too came the news that the Gansu Braves were also headed toward the capital and attacking Christian missions along the way.

Eleven nations had embassies in the Legation Quarter, one of those foreign concessions. It was a section of Beijing set aside for foreigners, where diplomats and their families lived and worked. By spring there were reports of multiple attacks on missions in the countryside and the mood in the capital was growing ugly. Frantic diplomats were cabling their governments asking for protection, and warships were being dispatched to the Yellow Sea.

By the last week in May, Chinese staff and servants were no longer showing up for work in the Legation Quarter, and Chinese Christian refugees were pouring into the city. Boxers and even

imperial soldiers were strolling the streets of Beijing holding up anti-foreigner signs. The diplomats asked for permission to bring in soldiers to protect their embassies. Initially the Chinese foreign ministry refused these requests, but then relented. And by the beginning of June there were more than 400 foreign soldiers in the Legation Quarter, much to the relief of the diplomats.

Their sense of relief did not last. Thousands of Chinese refugees, mostly Christians, came to the Legation Quarter for sanctuary and the number of Chinese soldiers in the city was clearly increasing. On June 5th the Boxers cut the rail line to the coast, Chinese soldiers sent to stop them reported firing in the air to chase the Boxers away, but the Boxers would just ignore them. On June 9th the British ambassador, Sir Claude MacDonald, sent a cable requesting reinforcements. Hours later, the telegraph line was also cut.

Sir Claude's telegram was received by the British Vice Admiral Sir Edward Seymour, commander of the British ships stationed in Bohai. Seymour quickly assembled a force of about 900 British sailors and marines in the city of Tianjin and invited troops from the other nations that had forces in the area to join him in an effort to relieve the legations in Beijing. About 500 Germans, 300 Russians, 150 French, 100 US Marines, 50 Japanese, 40 Italian, and 25 Austrian soldiers joined him, creating a force of around 2100. Seymour put together a convoy of five trains and this force left for Beijing the following morning.

It's a little hard to understand what Seymour was thinking, he must have heard the reports that Boxers were tearing up the rail line since he brought along supplies to repair the line. Apparently he planned to fight his way up the rail line to Beijing, stopping the trains to rebuild the tracks where necessary. But his force only had three days worth of supplies, so Seymour must have gravely underestimated what he was up against.

The first day, the force travelled about 25 miles to the town of Yangtsun. There was a Chinese army force. Its commander allowed Seymour's force to pass. Just beyond Yangtsun however, they found the track had been destroyed, so they spent the rest of the day repairing it. The following day, June 11th, the force made it as far as Langfang, just 40 miles from Beijing. There the rail line was again destroyed. Seymour sent scouts forward to determine the state of the line closer to Beijing. The scouts reported miles and miles of destroyed rail line and a large number of Boxers between them and Beijing.

Meanwhile back in the capital a Japanese diplomat named Akira Sugiyama naively traveled unarmed to the Beijing train station hoping to meet Seymour's force when it arrived. Instead he ran into some of the Gansu Braves. They disemboweled him, cut his corpse into pieces, and put the pieces on display.

Admiral Seymour's force meanwhile, under attack by Boxers and with no hope of reaching Beijing, turned around and began heading back toward Tianjin, harassed by Boxer attacks. At Yangtsun, the formerly friendly Chinese regulars turned on the foreigners who were forced to

abandon the trains and proceed toward Tianjin on foot, transporting their wounded with them, subsisting on quarter rations, and under constant attack by Boxers and Chinese regulars.

Back in the capitals of the eight nations, now united in a de facto alliance against the Boxers, anxieties mounted. They had lost contact with their legations in Beijing, and now they had lost contact with the force that had been assembled to relieve them. The call went out for more soldiers, but, lacking news from China, government officials in eight nations asked themselves, "Is it already too late? Are we organizing a relief force or a retaliatory expedition."

We'll have to stop there for today, this coming week brings Christmas, at least in Western Christianity, and I apologize for leaving you in the middle of a war for the second time in a month, but I need to take some time off to spend with family, and also to read and research for future episodes. So there will be no new episode next week, but I hope you will join me in two weeks time for *The History of the Twentieth Century* as we conclude the story of the Boxer Uprising and see how it changes China, and how she is viewed, and the effect the uprising had on the balance of power. That's in two weeks time on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have joined the facebook page, who have posted those kind ratings and reviews at the iTunes store, and who have sent me emails of encouragement and support. I appreciate all of it very much, and I want to wish you all a peaceful and happy holiday season, may it be a joyful time for you and may you spend it in the company of the ones most important to you. I've been too busy with the podcast to do the Christmas Card thing this year, so I'd like to offer a special Christmas wish to my friends and family who listen to this podcast, and to my family and friends who don't listen to the podcast, why the hell not?

Oh, and one more thing. In the United States in 1889 a new religious movement appeared among Native Americans, the Ghost Dance. Practitioners believed they could create special garments called ghost shirts that could protect against bullets. At about the same time Africans fighting back against colonial rule began to trade in charms which they also believed could protect the wearer from white man's bullets. It's easy to dismiss these beliefs as products of superstition but it's important to bear in mind that they are also products of desperation. Different people on different continents, who knew nothing of each other's struggles, but do know that their way of life is on the verge of extinction, and they will grasp at anything that offers the faintest of hopes. Because hope is the very last thing any of us can afford to lose.

[music: Closing Theme]