Understanding the Character *Yi* in Pre-Opium War Canton: A Study of the Merchant Newspaper *The Canton Register*

Chen Bin*

ABSTRACT: This paper examines the discussion on the meaning of the Chinese character *yi* among Western merchants in pre-Opium War Canton, China. In the pre-Opium War period, Western merchants in Canton understood the complexity of the meaning of *yi*, and they had different interpretations of the meaning of *yi*. However, with the development of the Sino-Western trade in Canton, Western merchants became increasingly unsatisfied with the Canton trade system established by the Qing Empire. They wanted to change the situation that they had to accept all of the rules set by the Qing government before they could do business in China. Under these circumstances, *yi* was attacked as a symbol of that situation. The literal meaning of *yi* became irrelevant even for many Western merchants.

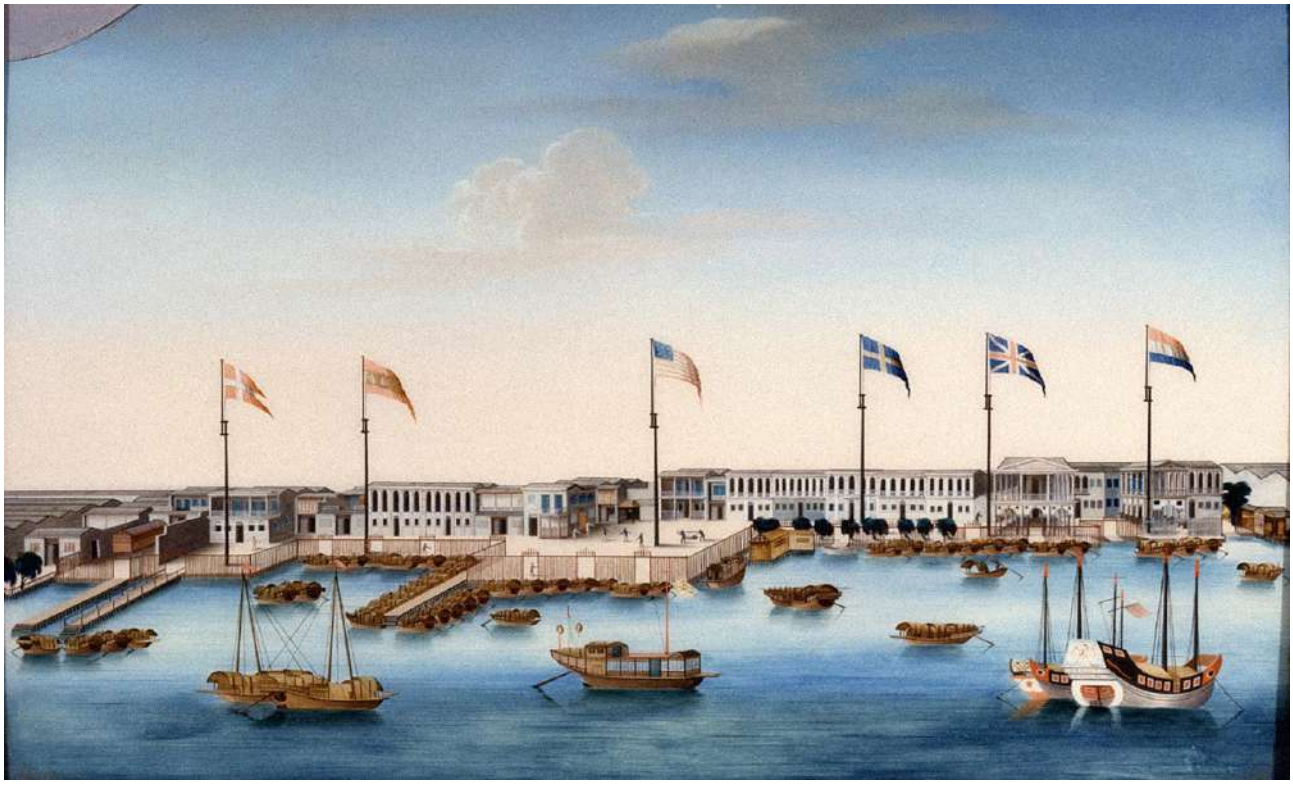
KEYWORDS: *Yi*; *The Canton Register*; The Canton trade system; Western merchants; Canton.

The character *yi* 夷 was a common Chinese epithet referring to foreigners in imperial China. As Lydia Liu points out, never has a single word made so much history as the Chinese character *yi*.[1] In the Tianjin Treaty of 1858, the Qing government was prohibited from using *yi* to address the British because the British believed that *yi* was derogatory and meant "barbarian". Liu argues that the prohibition of the character *yi* epitomized the clash of two empires: the Qing and Britain. The British exercised their sovereign rights in China by forcing China to give up the derogatory *yi*.[2]

*Earned his Ph.D. at the Pennsylvania State University, M.A. at the University of Macau, and B.A. at the Xiamen University. His research focuses on the history of modern China. He is currently a lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen.

Ph.D.pela Universidade Estadual da Pensilvânia, MA na Universidade de Macau e BA na Universidade de Xiamen. Centra a sua pesquisa na história da China moderna. Actualmente, é professor na Universidade Chinesa de Hong Kong, Shenzhen.

However, past scholarship on the issue of *yi* has not paid enough attention to the following question: whether the British or Westerners understood the complicated meaning of *yi* in the Chinese context before the Opium War. Westerners in China were not ignorant of the different interpretations of *yi*. They knew that many Chinese would claim that *yi* was not a derogatory term. For instance, during the encounter of British merchant Hugh Hamilton Lindsay and Qing official Wu Qitai in 1832, Wu denied that *yi* was an offensive term. Lindsay refused to accept Wu's interpretation and insisted that *yi* was derogatory.[3] Thus, in one of the earliest Chinese–English, English–Chinese dictionaries, *yi* was translated as "foreigner".[4] Westerners were aware that there were other interpretations of *yi*. Moreover, those different interpretations caused intense debate among the Western merchants in Canton before the Opium War. A study focusing on the debate has been lacking. As a result, we have not fully appreciated Western



The Thirteen Factories in Guangzhou, circa 1805. Author: unknown Chinese artist.

merchants' nuanced understanding of the character's meaning.[5] This paper uses English newspaper *The Canton Register* published in Canton and Macao to help fill the scholarly gap.

The Canton Register and Western Merchants

Before the Opium War, the majority of Westerners in China were merchants.[6] Therefore, merchants' opinions on the character *yi* represented the general understanding of the meaning of *yi* among foreigners at the time. *The Canton Register* was crucial for the study of popular opinions among Western merchants in China. *The Canton Register* was the first English-language newspaper published in China. It was also a merchant newspaper. Its publisher was James Matheson, a Scottish merchant. Before the Opium War, four other merchants worked successively for *The Canton Register* as its editors: William W. Wood, James Matheson, Arthur S. Keating, and John Slade.

Although publishers and editors of *The Canton Register* were all merchants, their purpose in publishing *The Canton Register* was to provide commercial as well as cultural, historical, and geographic information on China to foreigners. The newspaper's first editorial article claimed that "the want of a printed register of the commercial and other information of China, has long been felt, and its utility and convenience, fully appreciated. With a view to remedy this deficiency, we have been induced to commence our present undertaking."[7] Meanwhile, *The Canton Register* constantly published letters from readers. In this way, *The Canton Register* acted as a forum for the foreign community in China, which in turn made the newspaper vital for studying the popular opinions of the community of Western merchants at the time.

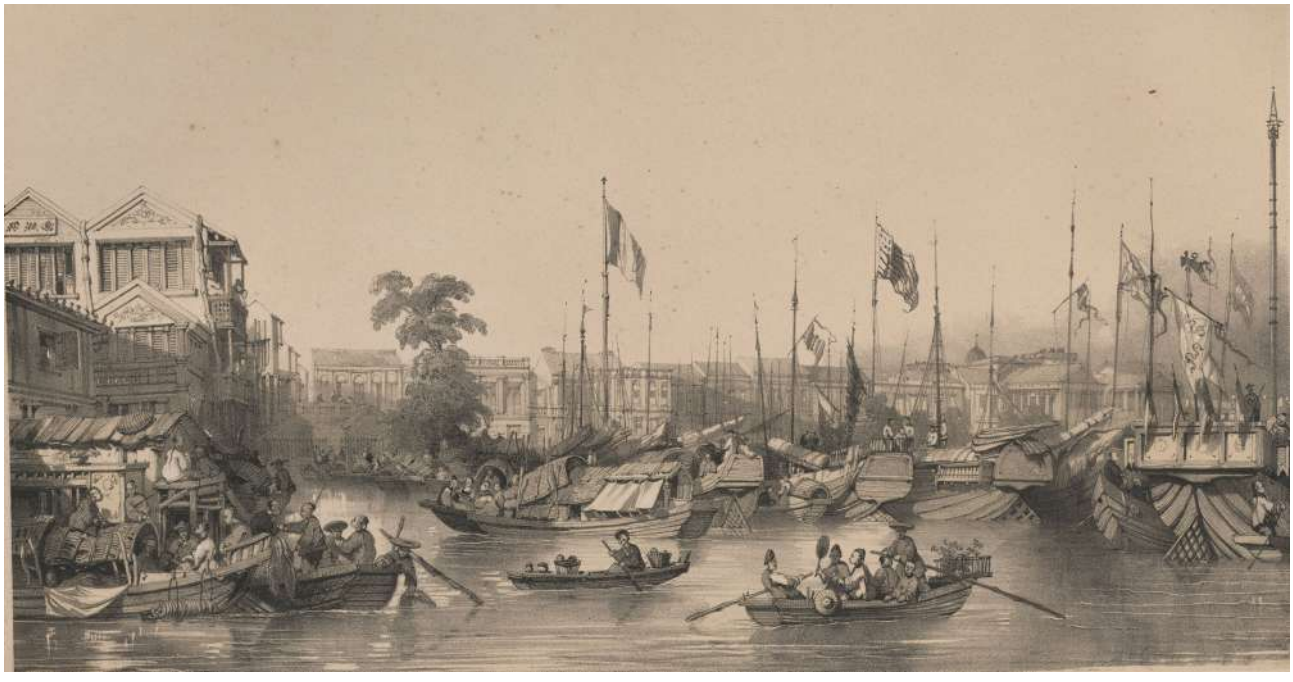
In *The Canton Register*, the issue of the character *yi* was one of the most popular non-commercial topics. Articles of all kinds, such as editorials,

letters from readers, and essays, contributed to the discussion about the meaning of *yi*, which implied an enormous interest among Western merchants in this topic. Both foreigners who were sophisticated in the Chinese language and those who only knew little about Chinese joined this discussion, which creates a fantastic opportunity to learn how well the foreign community understood China in general and the issue of the character *yi*.

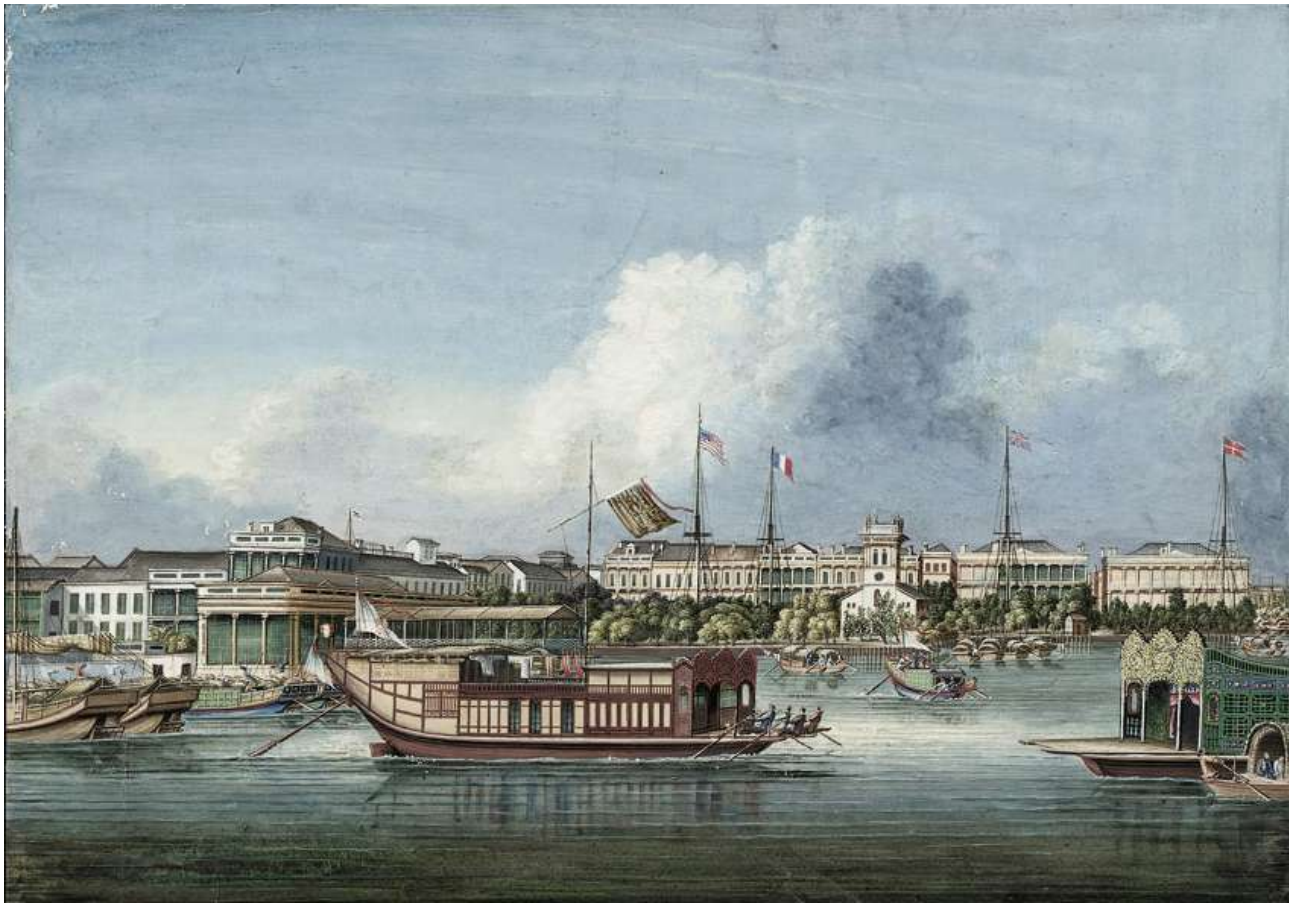
The Beginning of the Discussion about the Issue of *Yi*

The discussion about the meaning of *yi* first appeared in *The Canton Register* a few years after it was established. William Wood, an American merchant in Canton, published "Epithets Applied to Foreigners," the first essay discussing the meaning of *yi*. Wood argued that "barbarian" was not a correct translation of the character *yi*. Wood was the first editor of *The Canton Register*, but when the article was published, he had already resigned from his editorial position. Therefore, Wood's essay was published as a reader's letter to the newspaper.[8]

A translation in *The Canton Register* stimulated Wood to write the essay. On April 26, 1828, the *Register* published a translation of a petition from the inhabitants of the Wangxia or Mongha village to the Kwanmanfoo [the title of the Qing officer who superintended the coast].[9] This petition was against the construction of a new road planned by foreigners in Macao. In the translation, the Chinese term *yi,* used as a word to designate foreigners, was translated as "barbarian". Wood disagreed with this translation (though he did not know Chinese) and claimed: "It seems harsh to call us, Christians from Europe and America, barbarians."[10] He argued that the Greeks, Romans, and modern Christians, excluding themselves, called all the rest of mankind "barbarians". However, for them, the word "barbarian" only meant "uncivilized" and was not derogatory. Wood claimed that the Chinese term *yi* could be understood through comparison with Greeks and Romans, as they were all proud of their civilizations. Therefore, the Chinese term *yi* should be understood as "uncivilized" as well. Wood did not accuse the Chinese of calling foreigners



European Factories at Canton. Sketched and painted before the 1841 fire. Engraved and published in 1842. Auguste Borget (1842). Sketches of China and the Chinese; from Drawings by Auguste Borget. London: Tilt and Bogue. Plate 23.



Canton around 1850. Anonymous author.

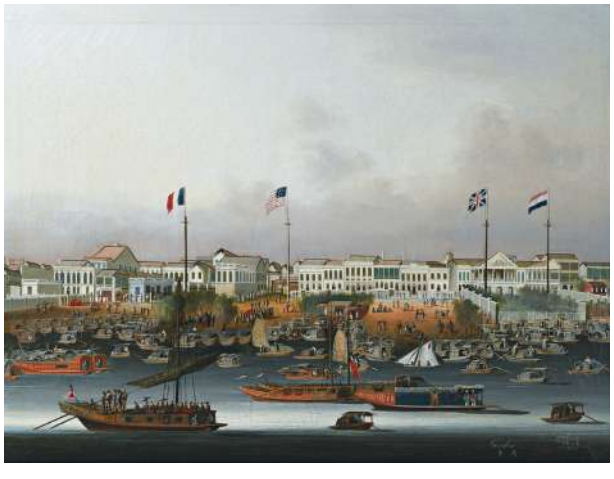
"uncivilized". After all, Greeks, Romans, and modern Christian countries did the same thing: "The pagan Greeks and Romans, excluding themselves, called all the rest of mankind barbarians."[11] Wood's position on the issue of *yi* suggested that when he was the editor of *The Canton Register*, he would have the newspaper translated *yi* as "foreign".

Before long, a lengthy essay on the issue of the character *yi,* also titled "Epithets Applied to Foreigners", was published on May 24, 1828. Contrary to Wood, the anonymous author argued that barbarian was a correct translation of *yi,* and *yi* was a highly offensive epithet. However, the author also believed it was a common habit of mankind, including Christians of Europe, to use disrespectful terms to call other people.[12] The author first pointed out that "Chinese think very highly of themselves, and very meanly of others", hence foreigners could not expect that the Chinese would use terms that were respectful to address foreigners.[13] Based on this assumption, the author argued, every term that the Chinese used to refer to the foreigners could be considered to be contemptuous.

Besides *yi*, the author claimed, there are three other terms that Chinese classics used to call foreigners, which were *di* 狄 (*Teih*, foreigners on the north), *rong* 戎 (*Jung*, foreigners on the west), and *man* 蠻 (*Man*, foreigners on the south). The author pointed out that the forms of these words were quite offensive. *Yi* was a large bow; *rong* was a man with a spear; *di* was a dog and fire; and *man* was a chattering insect. The author further pointed out that, among these words, *man* in

China was used "in the sense of rude, cruel, savage." *Yi* was sometimes used together with *man* as *man-yi*. *Man-yi* was believed to mean "savage barbarian". The author claimed he had heard that the term *man-yi* had been applied to "European Gentlemen". Thus, the Chinese were inclined to use offensive terms to address Westerners. The author also used Chinese classics to support his arguments. He pointed out that in *Analects*, Confucius talked about "expelling bad men from the middle and flowery Chinese nation, to four *Ee, I, e*, the 'barbarous nations' all around." The author was aware that in Chinese classics, some sages were occasionally called *yi*. For example, in *Book of Mencius*, King Shun 舜 was called an eastern *yi* and King Wen 文王 was called a western *yi*. However, the author pointed out that the commentator of *Book of Mencius* took pains to explain why *yi* should not be used to address King Shun and King Wen. In the end, the author did not doubt that the Chinese *yi* meant "barbarian".[14]

However, despite arguing that *yi* was a derogatory term, the anonymous author of "Epithets Applied to Foreigners" claimed that using contemptuous appellations for outsiders was a common habit of mankind. Greeks and Romans also used the word "barbarian" to call foreign people, and " [they] not only gave the degrading appellation of barbarians to every other people but, in consequence, asserted a right of dominion over them as the soul has over the body and men have over irrational animals." The Christians of Europe considered Africans and Indians as an inferior species as well. Therefore, the author suggested that mankind should work together to solve the problem of using derogatory terms to address foreign people. China was not singled out to blame by the author.[15]

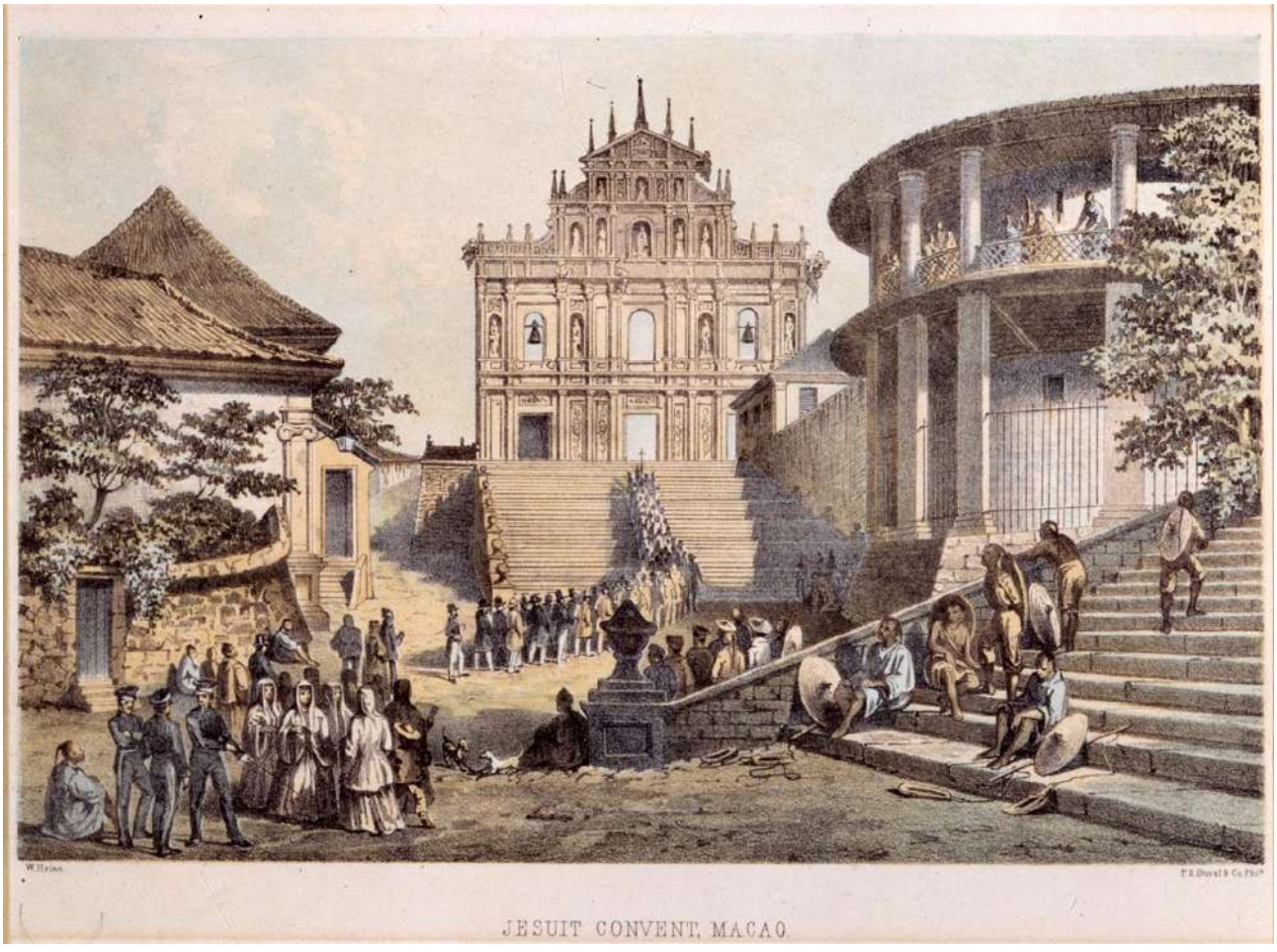


Oil on canvas of the port of Canton, circa 1830. Author: unknown.

The second article was a rebuttal to the essay of William Wood in many ways. The author was clearly someone who knew Chinese quite well. He made an argument that *yi* was equivalent to the word "barbarian" by engaging the Chinese classic. However, the author was aware that the Europeans also regarded non-Europeans as inferior species. Therefore, like Wood, he was hesitant to blame the Chinese for using *yi*. The first two articles on the issue of *yi* in *The Canton Register* offered Western merchants in Canton two different interpretations of the meaning of *yi*. They disagreed with each other on the issue of whether *yi* meant barbarian, but whatever the meaning of *yi*, they did not regard using offensive terms to call outsiders as the problem of only the Chinese. In other words, there was room for two different interpretations of *yi* to co-exist among Western merchants.

The Issue of *Yi* in the Mid-1830s

During the mid-1830s, the interpretation that *yi* meant barbarian suddenly became the dominant interpretation among merchants' discussions in *The Canton Register*, and the Chinese and the Qing government were singled out for blame for calling foreigners by a derogatory term. On August 5, 1833, a long essay titled "Oi Barbaroi" restarted the discussion about the issue of *yi* in *The Canton Register*. This essay claimed that the word barbarian was the literally correct translation of *yi*. However, unlike the former essays, it argued that China alone should be blamed for calling other people barbarians because the Chinese civilization was no longer the best in the world. And the West had become more civilized.[16]



The facade of St. Paul's Church, titled 'Jesuit Convent, Macao'.1854. Author: Wilhelm Heine (1827–1885).

The author of "Oi Barbaroi" also used the example of ancient Greek and Rome. He pointed out that the ancient Greeks and Romans utilized contemptuous terms to call other people, but that was only in the past: "it is very doubtful, whether the Grecians and Romans would have continued to apply this hateful term to any nation as far advanced in civilization as the modern Europeans are at this moment." According to the author, Chinese civilization was also no longer the best in the world at the time. Based on the same reason, the author called for the Chinese to change their attitude toward the West. To achieve this goal, the West had to show how civilized they were: "Let us hope for better days, when the Chinese will be able to appreciate duly our arts and sciences, and look up to instead of looking down upon foreigners."[17] This essay called on China to stop using "barbarian" to call the West, but it implied that "uncivilized' people deserved the label of "barbarian".

On September 29, 1835, another long essay, "The Dispute with China", was published. This essay argued that the word barbarian was a correct translation of the term *yi*, as well. Still, the author made a new contribution to the discussion of *yi* by pointing out that it was the Qing government that made the term derogatory. The author argued that "the character *E [yi]*, as used in the present day, does not convey the full force and meaning it once covered… but it is used by the Chinese officers as a taunting, insulting, and disrespectful epithet, when it is

addressed to the foreigners now in Canton."[18] In other words, the author claimed that the character *yi* was not a derogatory term, but the Qing Empire indeed used it contemptuously as a name for foreigners. Therefore, the Qing government needed to make changes to deal with the issue of *yi*.

Why, during the mid-1830s, was the discussion about *yi* in *The Canton Register* full of anger? Why was China, especially the Qing government, singled out for blame? I argue it was related to a new change to foreign trade in China, which was the development of the strength of foreign private merchants. Private merchants had long dominated the Sino-British trade, and the Sino-British trade, in turn, dominated the foreign trade in Canton. However, it was not until 1833 that the British East India Company's monopoly right over the Sino-British trade was abolished.[19] I argue the abolishment encouraged private merchants to pursue their rights in China in a more aggressive way. They then wished to change the old Canton trade system.

According to the Canton trade system, foreign merchants should accept the restrictions set by the Qing government. For instance, they were only allowed to do business with a group of selected Hong merchants in Canton.[20] The Qing government refused to make any changes to the Canton trade system. It even refused to meet and receive letters from the first Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China, Lord William Napier. Lord Napier was called *yi mu* 夷目 by the Qing government. In *The Canton Register*, *yi mu* was translated as the "barbarian eye". Foreign merchants in Canton were outraged by this title and the Qing government's attitude toward this matter and its treatment of Lord Napier. Merchants claimed that, according to China's own treatise of ceremonials, which consisted of 36 volumes, there was not a mention of *yi mu* or "barbarian eye". They denounced the Qing government for inventing a derogatory term for a British representative.[21] It was under these circumstances that discussion on the issue of *yi* began to change. Even so, as mentioned above, some foreign merchants still argued that *yi* was not necessarily derogatory, but the Qing government used it in a derogatory way.

Challenging the Canton Trade System

Since the Qing government even refused to accept letters with Lord Napier, the official representative of the British government, the discussion about *yi* became more and more aggressive in *The Canton Register*. However, the meaning of *yi* became increasingly irrelevant. The debate started to identify the Canton trade system as the main problem behind the issue of *yi* because the Canton trade system forced foreign merchants to accept unfair rules. *Yi* became a symbol

THE

CANTON REGISTER.

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CHARLES GRANT.

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ALL LETTERS MUST BE POST PAID.

CANTON.

The RUBY, Warden, and WILLIAM WILSON, from Calcutta and Singapore, DIANA, Dudman, and SUMATRA, [Am] Roundy, from Batavia, are the vessels arrived in the week. Newspapers, containing important intelligence from Europe, have come by these opportunities, but they reached us too late for making any extracts.

The ship SARAH, Whiteside, arrived in England on the 20th of July; dates of sailing, from China on the 23rd of march, from the Cape on the 9th of June. This vessel was the first that sailed from China as a *Free trader*, under a license from the select committee; and, although "we defy augury," we trust the information of her speedy and safe passage will be pleasing to our readers.

RIGHT OF PETITION.—A gentleman, who has been some years resident in Canton as a British merchant, had lately occasion to petition the governor of this province on some circumstances connected with his own affairs. He wrote a petition to the governor, which was translated into chinese, and delivered it to the senior hong merchant, Howqua, for presentation to his excellency. The petition was returned to him from Howqua, accompanied with an insolent note, which was signed by the three senior merchants, Howqua, Mowqua, and Puankequa, describing the subject as too trifling to be intruded upon the governor, with some other irrelevant reasons. The petitioner then determined to present the petition at the city gates, where he was accompanied on the 7th inst at 12 o'clock by several of his friends of the mercantile community of Canton, who had been informed of the first cause of petitioning, and of the refusal of the hong merchants to present the petition. On their arrival at the Tsing-hae mun (water gate) the attendant officers made their usual blustering opposition; but admittance through the first gate was obtained, and two deputed military officers, the Tsung-Heë and the Qwang-Heë shortly arrived. The petition was presented to them, but they refused to receive it, except through the hong-merchants. The petitioner would not submit to the indignity of again requesting Howqua and Mowqua to forward his petition, and the officers went away. The English, who were there assembled, were determined to assist the petitioner in carrying his just resolution into effect, and they consequently remained in the confined space between the inner and outer gates, and sent for provisions, which soon arrived and were heartily fed upon. During the time from one o'clock till five the hong merchants and linguists, amongst whom Mowqua Junior was the most active, made various propositions, all of which were peremptorily refused. At length the Tsung and Qwang Heës came again, and renewed their former offers, and said that an order *had arrived* from the emperor directing the local officers not to receive any petitions unless they were sent through the hands of the hong-merchants. This assertion the English did not believe, and they asked to see the edict, and enquired why it had not been communicated to the foreign residents in Canton.

After a rather noisy discussion, not very well understood on either side, a proposition was made that the petition should be presented in this manner; the Qwang-Heë and Mowqua were to place their hands simultaneously upon it: to this the petitioner agreed, but in the very act of deliverance chinese trickery and cunning defeated their own plan; for Mowqua snatched the petition, whilst the Qwang-Heë, although standing up, did not extend his hand to it; the paper was, of course, instantly recovered from Mowqua; and after some little time the officers again retired. About six o'clock the party of Englishmen returned home, excepting the petitioner, who was left alone, well provided with food and clothing; for the weather was cold. Towards nine o'clock the Tsung and Qwang-Heës again returned, and offered to receive the petition from the hands of the petitioner; but he told them *that the mendacity of their country was now so notorious* that he required witnesses of his

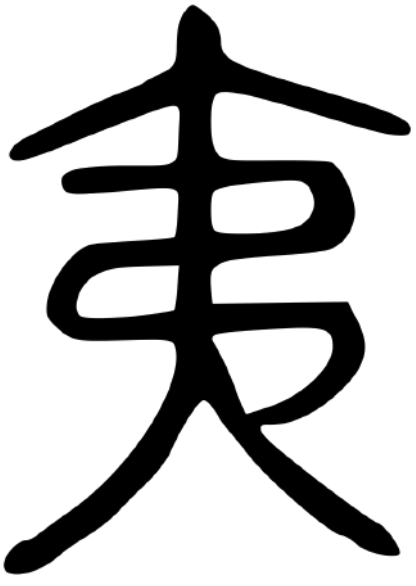
The Canton Register, 1835.

of this trading system. The author of "On the Meaning and Use of the Character E (Yi)" (published on August 1, 1837) argued that the meaning of the character *yi* was complicated. He claimed earlier discussions in *The Canton Register* on this issue had failed to understand the complexity of *yi* and had failed to determine a correct translation of *yi*. The term *yi* should not be understood to be "the most honorable one that might have been employed to denote foreigners" by the Chinese, but it was also wrong "to give it a directly vituperative sense".[22]

In order to reveal the complexity of the character *yi*, the author of "On the Meaning and Use of the Character E (Yi)" referred to a Chinese classic, *Mencius*《孟子》. The author understood the significance of the Chinese classics: "Classical authority in the Chinese language is limited to those books which may emphatically and not irreverently be called their *Scriptures*, for on those books, and those books only, their political science and their moral code are based."[23] The paper quoted a paragraph from *Li Lou II*, *Mencius*.[24] In this paragraph, two prominent Chinese sages, Shun and Wenwang, were called *yi*. In this case, *yi* seemed to be a neutral term. The author then cited another example from *Mencius*, suggesting that Mencius used the term *E Jin* [yi ren] 夷人 to define "barbarous". Besides, the paper quoted words directly from a native Chinese language teacher to further reveal the complexity of the meaning of *yi*, as the teacher claimed that "the use of the word *E (yi)* is neither insulting nor derogatory in any degree." Therefore, the paper argued that there was not a single and literally correct translation of *yi*.[25]

However, the author claimed that *yi* contained a sense of Chinese superiority when the Chinese used it for Western foreigners. That being said, the author argued that the sense of Chinese superiority was nurtured by foreign merchants because foreign merchants accepted every rule of the Canton trade system for the sake of business, prompting the Chinese to look down upon them. The author claimed the foreigners "called these insulting epithets down on themselves by their mean and base submission to the arrogant pretensions of the Chinese government and people for the sake of lucre only".[26] In other words, the author argued that *yi* was not a derogatory term in and of itself; however, the way the Qing government used it concerning foreigners and the way the foreigners accepted the term were the problems.

On August 15, 1837, another noteworthy essay regarding the issue of *yi* was published, written by a merchant named "Sloth." Sloth acknowledged the complexity of the character *yi*, pointing out that the word *yi* had two senses: "first as barbarians in the east, and secondly as foreigners generally". He believed that *yi*'s original meaning was barbarians from the east but, when *yi* applied to all foreigners in a general way, it did not mean barbarians. The author's argument was based on two Chinese phrases: *hua yi xiang he* 華夷相合 and *tang fan xiang he* 唐番相合. These two phrases, according to the author, have the same meaning, which is "May the Chinese and foreigners dwell together in amity."[27] As these two phrases were often found in Chinese stores, the author argued that general usage of *yi* did not convey vituperative meanings.



Character *yi*.

However, like the author of "On the Meaning and Use of the Character E (Yi)," Sloth argued that, while the character *yi* might not be offensive in a general sense, it did contain a sense of Chinese superiority: "The Chinese looks upon his country as the first in the world; he considers it his glory to have been born in the central flowery land. So, in like measure, does he consider all foreign nations inferior; and that those who are born there are peculiarly unfortunate. It is in this sense that the *Hwa* [Chinese] is very superior to the *E* [foreigner]." Sloth pointed out the sense of Chinese superiority needed to be "cured" because it hindered the Chinese from interacting with other countries and justified the existence of the Canton trade system.[28]

Sloth was among the first to articulate the connections between the issue of *yi* and the Canton trade system in *The Canton Register*. *Yi* represented the sense of Chinese superiority, which in turn legitimized the Canton trade system. Sloth suggested that the Chinese people's attitude toward foreigners could be changed through aggressive approaches. Sloth spoke with high regard about how the Manchus changed the way they were called in Chinese. Manchus used to be called *Di* 狄 by the Chinese, which was an offensive term. According to Sloth, the Chinese no longer called the Manchus this way, because the Manchus had become rulers of China. Sloth then claimed that "whenever the English or any other foreign nation[s] apply the argumentum ad hominem to the Chinese so effectually as the Manchoux Tartars did, the Chinese will give them 'handsome names' to their heart's content."[29] Sloth was hinting that violence was a solution to the issue of *yi*.

A few weeks later, on August 29, 1837, the then-editor of *The Canton Register*, John Slade joined the discussion when he published an editorial on *yi*, in which he summarized the previous discussion and proposed a clear solution to solve the issue of *yi*. Slade could speak and write Chinese.[30] He was quite confident about his Chinese and his familiarity with China, as he claimed, "natives and teachers of the language give such different meanings to the character *E (yi)*, that is difficult to learn from them what is meant by its use." By denying the authority of native Chinese on the meaning of *yi*, Slade made the character *yi* a simple strawman for foreign merchants. He agreed that the character *yi* had two senses: in the narrow sense it meant barbarians and in the general sense it meant foreigners. He also agreed that *yi* contained a sense of Chinese superiority.[31]

Slade articulated that the key issue in the discussion of *yi* was not about the true meaning of the character; no matter what the character *yi* meant and no matter how foreigners felt about it, there was nothing that the foreigners could do about it under the present circumstances. As Slade claimed, "Whatever the Chinese officers may mean by the use of the word, and however we may feel offended by its use, we confess that under present circumstances we cannot see any means by which we can fairly prevent its use." The Qing government could call foreigners whatever they wanted, and the foreigners could only accept it. Therefore, for Slade, the key was to change the "present circumstances" and let the Chinese, especially the Qing government, understand that they could not do whatever they wanted to foreigners. The "present circumstances" were epitomized by the Canton trade system. Under this system, foreigners in China, including the Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China, could only do business according to the rules set by the Qing government.[32]

Slade asked his fellow merchants: "What opinion, then, are those [Chinese] officers to form of all foreigners, when they see them and their national authorities tamely and silently submit to every insult heaped upon them: to the infamous placards publicly pasted up at the Consoo house; to the interdiction of walking but a few paces beyond their factories." Slade implied if foreigners accepted every rule and term set by the Chinese, the Chinese would naturally look down upon them. To earn respect, Slade argued the foreigners had

to challenge the rules of the Canton trade system set by the Chinese, as he claimed that "the foreign trade to China must be conducted and protected by a far different policy before we can hope to meet respect from the natives."[33] Thus, in Slade's argument, the issue of *yi* had become a symbol of the situation that the Chinese could do whatever they wanted to foreigners, and the true meaning of *yi* was irrelevant.

Conclusion

Before the Opium War, Western merchants in Canton were aware that the meaning of the character *yi* was complicated. They frequently discussed the implications and subtext of the character *yi*. These discussions were heavily influenced by the trading relationships between China and Western countries, especially Britain. *Yi* was the term that the Qing government used to refer to Westerners in the context of Canton trade. Western merchants in China understood that *yi* was not necessarily a derogatory term. However, with the development of foreign trade in China in the pre-Opium War period, Western merchants became increasingly dissatisfied with the Canton trade system. Under this system, the Qing government set all of the rules, including how foreigners should be addressed, and foreigners had to obey. As a term that the government of Qing China usually used to call Westerners prior to the Opium War, Western merchants consciously attacked *yi* as a symbol of the old trading system. They did not attack *yi* simply for its meaning. RC

NOTES

1 Lydia He Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 31.
2 Ibid., 35, 91.
3 Ibid., 42–3.
4 Robert Morrison, *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (Shanghai: London Mission Press, 1865), 188.
5 Chen Xulu's *Bian yi yang* (*Differentiating between Yi and Yang)* is one of the earliest studies on the issue of the character *yi*. Chen Xulu argues that the literal meanings of characters differ from their historical meanings. Characters like *yi* and *yang* originally carry no negative or positive connotations. However, in the particular historical context in modern China, *yi* became the symbol of Chinese arrogance and *yang* stood for the Western elegance.Lydia H. Liu's *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* is the most comprehensive study on the issue of the character *yi* so far. Liu demonstrates that the dispute over the character *yi* is in fact the clashes of two great empires: Qing and Britain. The British believed that *yi* equals barbarian. By coercing the Chinese into British interpretation of *yi*, the British could exercise their sovereign rights in China, force China to accept their sovereign thinking, and even bring China under their imperial system. Some scholars claim that *yi* is always a derogatory term. For instance, Fang Weigui's "Yi, Yang, Xi, Wai and Other Terms: The Transition from 'Barbarian' to 'Foreigner' in Nineteenth-century China" argues that a character contains certain concrete meanings, and *yi* has meant barbarian from its earliest usage.
6 For instance, in 1826, there were 76 non-Portuguese, European or American, adult males living in Canton and Macao. The majority of them worked as merchants to make a living; see H. B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635–1834*, vol. 4 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926, n.d.), 128–9.
7 "To Subscribers", *The Canton Register*, November 8, 1827, 1.
8 Frank H. H. King & Prescott Clarke, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers, 1822–1911* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: East Asian Research center, Harvard University, 1965), 43.
9 "Improvements at Macao", *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany* 27 (1829): 234.
10 "Barbarians", *The Canton Register*, May 17, 1828, 78.
11 Ibid., 73.
12 "Epithets Applied to Foreigners", *The Canton Register*, May 24, 1828, 82.
13 Ibid., 81.
14 Ibid., 82.
15 Ibid.
16 "Oi Barbaroi", *The Canton Register*, August 5, 1833, 71.
17 Ibid.
18 "The Dispute with China", *The Canton Register*, September 29, 1835, 154.

19 Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800–42* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1951), 175–95.
20 H. B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire* (New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1900), 66.
21 "Mr. Editor", *The Canton Register*, November 4, 1834, 174.
22 "On the Meaning and Use of the Character E", *The Canton Register*, August 1, 1837, 128–9.
23 Ibid., 128.
24 The paragraph that the author quoted was 孟子曰：“舜生於諸馮，遷於負夏，卒於鳴條，東夷之人也。文王生於岐周，卒於畢郢，西夷之人也。地之相去也，千有餘里；世之相後也，千有餘歲。得志行乎中國，若合符節。先聖後聖，其揆一也。” see, ibid. The translation of this paragraph—"Mencius said, 'Shun was born in Zhufeng, moved to Fuxia, and died in Mingtiao—a man of the Eastern Yi. King Wen was born a Mount Qi, in Zhou, and died at Biying—a man of the Western Yi. In terms of place, they were separated from one another by more than a thousand Li, and in terms of time, by more than a thousand years. But when they realized their intentions and implemented them in the Middle Kingdom, it was like uniting the two halves of a tally: the sage who came earlier and the sage who came later were one in their dispositions." *Mencius*, Mencius, trans. Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 86.
25 "On the Meaning and Use of the Character E", 128–9.
26 Ibid., 129.
27 "To the Editor of the *Canton Register*", *The Canton Register*, August 15, 1837, 137.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 "The Obituary of John Slade", *The Hongkong Late Canton Register*, July 18, 1843, 131.
31 *The Canton Register*, August 29, 1837, 144.
32 Ibid., 144–5.
33 Ibid., 145.

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