

Ch'i-ying Biography

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Biography

The Manchu official and diplomat Ch'i-ying (ca. 1786-1858) was chief negotiator for the first series of treaties concluded between China and the Western nations between 1842 and 1844.

Born an imperial clansman of the Ch'ing dynasty, Ch'i-ying began his official career in 1806. He first achieved international prominence in August 1842 at Nanking, which the British, who had been engaged in the Opium War in China since 1839, were threatening to bombard if China did not capitulate. Ch'i-ying had been granted full authority to negotiate peace.

The ensuing Treaty of Nanking (Aug. 29, 1842), which Ch'i-ying signed for China, granted to the British the island of Hong Kong, which was turned back over to China in July of 1997; an indemnity of \$21 million; the opening of five ports--Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai--to foreign trade; and diplomatic equality between Chinese and British officials. On Oct. 8, 1843, Ch'i-ying also signed the supplementary Treaty of the Bogue, which established tariffs and granted consular jurisdiction and other extraterritorial rights to the British. It also contained the "most-favored-nation clause," by which any privileges granted by China to one country might be demanded by other treaty powers. Ch'i-ying also negotiated similar treaties with the United States, France, Sweden, and Norway.

During the negotiations Ch'i-ying was severely criticized for his unorthodox conduct. His camaraderie and conciliation were regarded as a betrayal of Chinese traditional procedures vis-à-vis foreigners. In his defense, Ch'i-ying stated, in a memorial in 1844, that these foreigners were so ignorant of normal Chinese procedures, so suspicious of Chinese motives, and so arrogant that the normal methods of dealing with barbarians could not be applied. Ch'i-ying, in effect, was questioning Chinese values and inadvertently took the first step toward the destruction of traditional China.

Under the treaties, the British claimed the right to enter Canton, but the xenophobic Cantonese refused. Ch'i-ying, as the governor general of Canton between 1844 and 1848, was thus placed in an untenable position. His appeasement policy had failed, and he was recalled to Peking in 1848.

When British and French forces threatened Peking in 1858 as a consequence of the Arrow War (1856-1860), Ch'i-ying was ordered to participate in the peace negotiations. However, when the British presented him with a copy of his memorial of 1844, Ch'i-ying fled. For having left his post he was arrested, tried, and permitted to commit suicide.