

“For the Equality of Men – For the Equality of Nations”: Anson Burlingame and China’s First Embassy to the United States, 1868

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Abstract

Anson Burlingame (1820-1870), often neglected or misunderstood today, was an ardently anti-slavery congressman from Boston whom Abraham Lincoln appointed minister to China in 1861. Burlingame developed a Cooperative Policy that advocated peaceful means while upholding China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Chinese government subsequently appointed him China’s first envoy to the Western powers. The first stop of the so-called Burlingame Mission was America, from March to September 1868. This article focuses on three topics: (1) How the mission’s reception reflected the partisan struggle over Reconstruction and the push for racial equality. Republicans, the party of Reconstruction, proved sympathetic to the mission and to China, while the opposition Democrats were hostile. (2) How Burlingame presented Americans with a strongly favorable image of China to emphasize treating it with full respect and as a normal nation. (3) The Burlingame Treaty, the first equal treaty between China and a Western power after the Opium War, which sought to place China on a full and equal status in international affairs and to place Chinese in America on an equal footing with immigrants from other nations. Burlingame’s friend, Mark Twain, wrote supportive articles.

Keywords

Anson Burlingame, Burlingame Treaty, Burlingame Mission, Chinese Americans, United States Relations China Nineteenth Century, United States History Reconstruction, racial equality

The first Chinese embassy accredited to Western nations visited the United States and Europe between 1868 and 1870. It arrived in San Francisco, the first stop on its journey, on 31 March 1868, staying in America until September and visiting, among other places, New York, Washington, and Boston. The embassy was led by Anson Burlingame and two Chinese officials, Zhigang and Sun Jiagu. Burlingame had been serving as the American minister to China when, in 1867, the Chinese government asked him to enter its service as envoy extraordinary to the Western powers. Because of Burlingame’s status, the embassy became known as the Burlingame Mission and the treaty signed in

July 1868, as the Burlingame Treaty. Burlingame died in 1870, in St. Petersburg, while still on his mission.¹

Anson Burlingame was born in upstate New York in 1820, raised in the Midwest, and entered politics in Boston in the late 1840s. Ardentely opposed to slavery, he followed a familiar political route, becoming successively a Conscience Whig, a Free-Soiler, a Know-Nothing, and then a Republican. He was elected to the Massachusetts State Senate, and subsequently served three terms in the U.S. Congress. Burlingame was a popular figure, a renowned orator, and involved in all the famous battles over slavery of the 1850s. One of his most memorable moments came in 1856, when Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina, in a famous incident, brutally beat Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts with a cane while Sumner sat at his desk in the Senate. Burlingame subsequently gave a passionate speech in the House attacking Brooks, who promptly challenged him to a duel and the latter accepted. The duel never came off, but Burlingame emerged an instant hero throughout the North.

In 1861, President Abraham Lincoln designated Burlingame minister to Austria; however, because Burlingame had been one of Louis Kossuth's principal hosts when the Hungarian revolutionary visited the United States in 1852, and was also an ardent supporter of Italian independence, Vienna rejected the appointment. Lincoln thereupon made Burlingame minister to China.

In China, Burlingame led the way in establishing the so-called Cooperative Policy to structure Sino-Western relations. The new approach aimed at treating China in a peaceful manner and upholding that nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As Burlingame put it, the "policy substituted for the old doctrine of violence one of fair diplomatic action; so that if a Consul and the Taotai [the local Chinese official most responsible for foreign relations] could not agree, before war should ensue, it should be referred to Peking and thence to the home governments. That policy was ... an agreement upon the part

¹ I would like to acknowledge my longtime colleague, Professor Morton Keller of the Brandeis University Department of History, whose book *Affairs Of State: Public Life In Late Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), alerted me to the relationship between the Burlingame Treaty and the radicalism of the 1860s. The most important secondary works on the Burlingame Mission are Martin R. Ring, "Anson Burlingame, S. Wells Williams and China, 1861-1870: A Great Era in Chinese-American Relations" (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1972); and Frederick Wells Williams, *Anson Burlingame and the First Chinese Mission to Foreign Powers* (New York: Scribner's, 1912), available on Google Books. I am currently finishing a biography of Burlingame. This paper draws on materials from the chapters on the Burlingame Mission in America.

of the representatives of the Western powers that they would not interfere in the internal affairs of China; would give to the treaties a fair and Christian construction; that they would abandon the so-called concession doctrine, and that they never would menace the territorial integrity of China.”² “Concession doctrine” referred to repeated efforts by Western officials in the treaty ports to obtain sole jurisdiction over a piece of territory and over its inhabitants, both foreign and Chinese.

Burlingame’s role in establishing the new policy, as well as the respectful and supportive manner that marked his dealings with the Chinese government, encouraged Beijing to name him China’s envoy to the West. In the United States, the Burlingame Mission achieved its greatest diplomatic success, the Burlingame Treaty, the first equal treaty between China and a Western power after the Opium War.

In this article, I focus on three topics to delineate Burlingame and his often misunderstood work as China’s envoy: first, the role of politics in determining the mission’s reception in the United States; second, how Burlingame portrayed China to America; and finally, the Burlingame Treaty itself. More broadly, this article suggests how a politician and a specific political moment, rather than broad cultural factors, can play the leading role in determining U.S. relations with China.

Politics in Command: The Reception of the Burlingame Mission

American politics in 1868 revolved around the bitter struggle between Republicans and Democrats over race and Reconstruction. In the years after the Civil War, the Republican Party dominated the federal government, proclaiming that it had saved the Union, freed the slaves, and now, through Reconstruction, was working to ensure the rights of the newly liberated Blacks. On the other side, the Democratic Party asserted its patriotism, but showed a kinship with the racist views of the defeated South and vigorously opposed Reconstruction. As a result, Burlingame’s close links to the Republican Party established the framework for the reception of his mission. Essentially, Republicans proved sympathetic to the Burlingame Mission and to China, while Democrats did not.

² From Burlingame’s speech, Boston, 21 Aug. 1868; *Boston Post*, 22 Aug. 1868, 3; and *Official Papers of the Chinese Legation* (Berlin: S. Calvary & Co., n.d.), 33ff. Burlingame’s speeches – often taken down stenographically as he spoke – show minor textual differences in different sources.

The intense partisanship of the era reached a crescendo just as the mission arrived. The impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson – who generally opposed Reconstruction – was underway, led by the pro-Reconstruction “Radical Republicans,” many of them close allies of Burlingame from earlier days. This was also an election year and the first presidential campaign since the war was beginning, with General Ulysses S. Grant, the greatest hero of the Union, set to serve as the Republican standard bearer.

On the West Coast, where Burlingame first stopped, the presence of the only sizable Chinese community in the United States further roiled the political scene. In California, attitudes toward China and the Chinese community were deeply influenced by party affiliation.³ In the 1850s, California, with a large Southern population and under Democratic control, passed an array of discriminatory laws against Chinese residents. These policies had heavy racial overtones, though, as time went on, the Democrats’ working-class constituency also came to view the Chinese as unfair competition in the job market.

During the Civil War, when they first took power in California, Republicans moderated the anti-Chinese legislation and did not pass new discriminatory laws. Although there were contradictions in the Republican position (including little support for Chinese citizenship) the party was generally perceived as sympathetic to the Chinese community. Republican views reflected both the radical ideals of the Lincoln era and the California party’s influential business base, which saw the Chinese as a source of reliable low-wage labor, particularly for mining and railway construction.

In San Francisco, Burlingame responded to the tense political atmosphere, as he did for the remainder of the American tour, by emphasizing his desire to keep the mission “above politics” and “without distinction of party.”⁴ He quickly let it be known that, despite endless “invitations to appear in public, invitations to private hospitalities, and invitations to be the recipient of serenades and other honors,” he would have to forgo all official activities.⁵ A major

³ On anti-Chinese policies and their relationship to politics, see Mary Roberts Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration* (1909; reprinted Taipei: Ch’eng-wen Publishing Co., 1968), chap. 2; Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (1939; reprinted Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1973), chap. 2; Jack Chen, *The Chinese in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 136 ff; and Michael H. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 75ff.

⁴ The first quotation is from a letter from Anson Burlingame to S. Wells Williams, San Francisco, 1868, no specific date, Samuel Wells Williams Family Papers, Yale University Library. The second is from Burlingame’s speech of 28 Apr. 1868, San Francisco. The text can be found in *Official Papers of the Chinese Legation*, 3 ff, and in the *Daily Alta* California, 20 Apr. 1868 (the *Alta* did not use page numbers).

⁵ *Alta*, 2 Apr. 1868.

reason for the decision, he said, was that his own political background was well-known and, as a foreign representative, he did not want his mission to become entangled in the sharp polemics of the moment.

As he wrote to S. Wells Williams, his closest aide in his years in China and now the chargé in Beijing, Burlingame was unhappy that his arrival found President Johnson “in the thrall of an impeachment” and hoped that the matter would be settled “one way or another” before the mission arrived in Washington. The group remained in San Francisco longer than expected, in part due to difficulties in making suitable travel arrangements, but primarily to avoid the impeachment process. As the Chinese ministers tactfully reported home, the mission “remained waiting” on the West Coast because “there was unfinished business between the president and Congress.”⁶

Nonetheless, Burlingame could not help becoming enmeshed in the highly partisan scene. He was a Republican to the bone. Moreover, to promote the mission’s success, he relied heavily on his excellent connections within the party, both in the executive branch and in Congress. Most important, William Seward, Burlingame’s chief throughout his service in China, continued as secretary of state. The two had been political allies since the anti-slavery struggles of the 1850s and had forged a particularly close bond during Burlingame’s diplomatic service.

As a result, party affiliation dominated perceptions of the mission throughout its stay, typified in San Francisco by the differing views of the leading Republican paper, the *Daily Alta California*, and the prominent Democratic journal, the *Daily Examiner*.

The *Alta*, which generally sympathized with China and the Chinese community, gave Burlingame and his colleagues full support and extensive coverage. Two editorials of welcome exemplified its views.⁷ The paper proclaimed that the “arrival in San Francisco of a special Embassy, clothed with extraordinary powers, from the oldest Empire in the world to the great Treaty Powers of America and Europe, is in itself an event deserving the marked attention which it is sure to attract.” The editors felt that “so long has China remained a sealed book to the rest of the world, so long have the meshes of her perverse and impenetrable diplomacy baffled the advance of all Christendom, we

⁶ *Chouban yiwu shimo* (Complete collection of the management of foreign affairs), Tongzhi period, 69:14a: Zongli Yamen memorial of Tongzhi 8/10/15 (18 Nov. 1869), Enclosure 1 (a report from Zhigang and Sun Jiagu on their visit to America). There are many editions of this famous collection of source materials.

⁷ *Alta*, 1 and 2 Apr. 1868.

cannot fail to regard this mission as one endowed with peculiar significance and importance.”

The *Alta* declared it particularly noteworthy that “the head of the Embassy is an American citizen, who returns to his own native land clad with extraordinary functions and holding the confidence of the Imperial Government of a mighty and wealthy people.” The paper rejoiced in the fact that Burlingame’s selection had “converted a citizen of the youngest nation of the world into the Ambassador of the oldest.” Then, in a comment illustrative of the continued bitterness over the Civil War, the paper alluded to one of Burlingame’s signal diplomatic successes: “The first Chinese Embassy to the civilized nations cannot fail to draw still closer the bonds of that friendship which was exhibited in so marked a manner when the *Alabama* [the famed Confederate raider] was denied in Chinese ports those privileges which Christian England and hypocritical France were so ready on every occasion that offered to concede.”

Despite their overall sympathies, the *Alta* and other friendly American papers easily adopted a patronizing tone toward China. They also regularly and unself-consciously employed terms like “Flowery Kingdom” for that country and “Celestials” for Chinese, or spoke of relations between China and “the civilized nations” represented by the West.⁸ One striking indication of Burlingame’s own sensitivity and respect for China is that he never used such language.

The attitudes of the Democratic *Examiner* contrasted sharply with those of the *Alta*. The paper was relentlessly anti-Chinese and, reflecting the partisan conflicts over Reconstruction, equated Blacks and Chinese. Both were supported by the Republicans, dubbed the “Mongrel” party.⁹ A typical article attacked the recently defeated Republican candidate for governor, George Gorham: “COOLIEISM. – The Mongrels now attribute their decreased majority in New Hampshire, at the late election, to the fact that George Coolie Gorham, formerly of California, stumped the State in behalf of the Rump Congress, advocating Chinese and negro [*sic*] suffrage.” (President Johnson used the term “Rump” to attack the Republican Congress because it refused to seat representatives from some ex-Confederate states.)

⁸ For example, the *New York Daily Tribune* – a staunchly Republican paper discussed at length below – 18 June 1868, 1 for “Celestials”; *Alta* editorial of 1 Apr. 1868 for “Flowery Kingdom”; and *Alta* editorial of 2 Apr. 1868 for the “the civilized world.”

⁹ “Mongrel” is from *The Daily Examiner* (San Francisco), 20 July 1868, in an editorial entitled, “That Revolution” (the *Examiner* did not use page numbers). The quotation that follows is from 6 Apr. 1868 in a notice entitled “Coolieism.”

The *Examiner* published only a brief notice of the mission's arrival and then, except for an occasional attack, virtually ignored the embassy. In place of the *Alta's* editorials of welcome, it ran its own long editorial, "Know-Nothing Out-Croppings."¹⁰ While the piece did not mention Burlingame by name, it delivered an unmistakable attack on his past and on the mission. "A distinguished feature of the Radical party is their proscriptive intolerance," it began. "The leaders – they who run the Rump machine at Washington are the lineal descendants of those Puritans, who like the Chinese, looked upon all others as kind of outside barbarians, whipped women for religious opinion, burned witches and expelled quakers [*sic*] from their society." These people from New England were "the originators of the prejudice against foreigners [chiefly Irish Catholic immigrants] which culminated in the Know Nothing party of latter times."

Similarly, the *Examiner* reported approvingly on a meeting of the "Ninth Ward Anti-Coolie Club," in which the lead speaker "made a good and interesting speech, commenting severely on the burlesque played by Mr. Burlingame, and his body guard of 40 Chinamen, which the speaker characterized as beneath the dignity of an American citizen and a pandering to oriental aristocracy."¹¹ Another article, "How they Swarm," quickly followed. It reported that the steamer *China*, on which the mission had arrived, also "brought as live freight no less than seven hundred and thirty-five Chinamen. Just think of it! Seven hundred and thirty-five heathens in one batch! And of these it is rumored that more than two thirds are neither more nor less than regular coolies – so many human slaves brought into competition with the white laborers of California."

When the mission arrived on the East Coast, the political drama of 1868 was in full swing. The embassy landed in New York on 22 May and moved on to Washington a week later, just as the Senate was voting to acquit Johnson. Meanwhile, the Republican national convention was meeting in Chicago to nominate General Grant, with Schuyler Colfax – an old congressional colleague of Burlingame and now the Speaker of the House – as his running mate.

Burlingame persisted in his efforts to remain above the fray.¹² However, politics continued to shape views of the mission and, at every turn, his personal connections to the leading figures in the Republican establishment

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 Apr. 1868.

¹¹ This article is from *ibid.*, 6 Apr. 1868; the next one is from 13 Apr. 1868.

¹² *World* (New York), 23 May 1868, 3.

proved crucial to his success. In New York, his political ties quickly surfaced. Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, the most important Republican paper in the nation, visited him shortly after the mission reached the city.¹³ The two had been friendly since anti-slavery days. At the same time, Burlingame, who had been in frequent communication with Seward since the mission's arrival in America, now made contact with other well-placed political allies. These included Senator Sumner and Representative Nathaniel Banks (another Massachusetts man who had long worked closely with Burlingame). Sumner was not only a leader of the Radical Republicans, but also well placed to assist the mission from his post as chairman of the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations. Banks chaired the parallel House Committee.¹⁴

Such links increasingly cast the mission in a partisan light. Unsurprisingly, the *Tribune* provided friendly and detailed coverage both in New York and Washington. Indeed, even before the group reached America, the paper had solicited an article from Mark Twain, a close friend and warm admirer of Burlingame. The article, "What Mr. Burlingame has Accomplished,"¹⁵ gave a knowledgeable and remarkably detailed summary of Burlingame's record in China, and concluded that the envoy was "quick, sagacious, and withal a deep and serious thinker. He is one of the ablest diplomats America has produced, and his works prove it."

The *Tribune* greeted the mission's arrival in New York with enthusiastic articles proclaiming that the delegation would "give an enormous development to our trade, and the interests of Christianity will be more effectively promoted by this action of the Chinese Emperor than by any other political event of the last two centuries."¹⁶ Greeley assigned a reporter to accompany the mission for the remainder of its stay in the United States and Burlingame, in turn, began to use the influential paper as a ready conduit for his views.¹⁷

Predictably, the Democratic New York *World* proved hostile. Like the *Tribune*, the paper was strongly partisan, commonly excoriating the Republicans as advocates of "miscegenation" and savaging the party's leaders.¹⁸ At first, however, the *World* remained relatively neutral toward the mission.

¹³ *New York Tribune*, 27 May 1868.

¹⁴ See also *World*, 24 May 1868, 1, for the communications. A notable example is the telegram: Nathaniel Banks to Burlingame, 24 May 1868, in "Papers of Anson and Edward L. Burlingame, 1810-1936," Library of Congress, box 1, folder "Letters to Anson Burlingame, 1868-70."

¹⁵ *Tribune*, 11 Mar. 1868, 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 May 1868, 4 and 27 May 1868, 4; the quotation is from the former.

¹⁷ On Burlingame using the paper, see, for example, *ibid.*, 27 May 1868, 4.

¹⁸ The word was used in an attack on Wendell Phillips, *World*, 30 May 1868, 4.

The paper announced itself pleased that Burlingame wanted to keep the embassy “entirely clear of section, of party, and even of national consideration, and to base it upon the universal interests of civilization the world over.”¹⁹ However, as the importance of the envoy’s links to the Republican establishment became clear, the paper turned sharply antagonistic. Its shift, presumably made for purely political reasons, provides a striking example of how everyday partisanship dominated views of China.

In Washington, Burlingame’s Republican ties proved vital to the mission’s success. Seward served as a solicitous host to the members of the delegation, inviting them to his home several times, escorting them to the theater, and squiring them to public functions. Simultaneously, he and Burlingame began an intense round of private discussions that ultimately produced the Burlingame Treaty. Burlingame’s Republican connections also facilitated easy access to the White House (including a dinner hosted by the president), a grand military tribute, and private visits with prominent party leaders. No such meetings with Democrats are recorded.

The most striking sign of Burlingame’s political clout came when both Houses of Congress honored the mission by receptions. On 9 June, the House of Representatives, in full regular session, welcomed its former member, the friend of so many in the room. Speaker Colfax gave an address of welcome, and Burlingame responded with one of his major speeches of the tour.²⁰ A week later, the mission received the extremely rare privilege of a reception by the Senate sitting in full session. The ceremony, arranged by Sumner, was modeled after Louis Kossuth’s Senate welcome of 1852 – a gracious allusion to Burlingame’s costly personal role in that event.²¹

Two days after the visit to the Senate, General Grant received the embassy and Mrs. Burlingame at his home. Speaker Colfax, Grant’s running mate, was among the military and civilian luminaries in attendance. After the reception, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase – an ally of Burlingame since Free-Soil Days – invited the delegation to his home for the evening.²² This latest round of hobnobbing with prominent Republicans turned the *World* into an unremitting opponent of the mission.

On 22 June, the embassy returned briefly to New York, where local dignitaries had organized a grand banquet in its honor and at which Burlingame delivered his major address of the tour. The next day, the *Tribune* praised

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 May 1868, 4.

²⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 40th Cong., 2d sess., 1867–68, pt. 3, 9 June 1868, 2970.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pt. 4, 15 June 1868, 3163. On the reception, see *Tribune*, 18 June 1868, 1, 5.

²² *Tribune*, 20 June 1868, 1.

Burlingame's "earnest and masterly speech" that "stated in terse and eloquent English ... the true position of China toward all other nations."²³ Simply selecting Burlingame to present its "rights, hopes, and concessions" was "evidence at the outset of the wisdom of the Chinese government." The paper warned, however, that Burlingame's task would not be an easy one, given the "rapacity and despotism of the commercial nations."

On the other hand, the *World* published two editorials belittling the banquet.²⁴ The paper ridiculed the speakers at the party as having been taken in by the "Burlingame blaze" and "scanning the awful future of the Orient with subdued hearts. . . . Is this to be anything but a show – a wandering exhibition of which Mr. Burlingame is the showman at a high salary?" It also directly attacked China and its envoy – "Our American Missionary from the East." "Could the world have been saved by public dinners," it jibed, "how happy had we all of us been, and how near the advent of the Millennial day!" Burlingame claimed that China, "comes to the West asking to be dealt with as a member of one of the great modern family of nations"; but actually, the very "fact that China asks all this in the middle of the nineteenth century and by the lips of an American, refutes of itself all expectations of success. . . . 'Fleas are not Lobsters.' Mongolians are not Europeans." The paper went on to attack the Cooperative Policy that Burlingame had implemented while in China. Only force really worked: "it is not 'because the Western nations have reversed their old doctrine of force' that she responds, for it was by the assertion of the Western nations of their 'old doctrine of force' that the presence of Mr. Burlingame as an American Envoy in Peking was made possible."

Toward Respect and Equality: Burlingame's Presentation of China

Burlingame's speeches and interviews presented Americans with a strongly favorable image of China and emphasized treating that nation as a normal and equal actor in international affairs. Burlingame was a master of oratory in an age that reveled in it. His addresses, clearly constructed and elegantly delivered, presented the case for China using his trademark combination of idealism and political savvy, in both moral and practical terms. Where appropriate, he showed flashes of his well-known sense of humor. Burlingame's consistent purpose was to demonstrate the seriousness of his mission, China's progress,

²³ *Ibid.*, 25 June 1868, 4.

²⁴ *World*, 26 June 1868, 4, and 27 June 1868, 4.

and the possibility of a bright future for Sino-American relations. In particular, he aimed to influence diplomatic, commercial, and religious interests, the three major groups that determined America's Chinese policy, and which the historian Michael Hunt has called the "Open Door Constituency."²⁵

Burlingame sometimes exaggerated China's strengths or oversimplified the situation there. He did so partly because in the 1860s, at the height of Tongzhi Restoration, China was indeed implementing important reforms in its domestic affairs and fundamental changes in its approach to the West. Equally important, Burlingame was China's ambassador to the United States. Envoys are not meant – nor expected to be – objective in discussing the country they represent, but to extol it, and Burlingame would never have contemplated doing less for China.

Nonetheless, Burlingame opened himself up to denunciation from political opponents or those who opposed Chinese equality. In later years, his presentation of China has even led to derision from historians who, overlooking typical ambassadorial hyperbole, have unwittingly echoed the views of these opponents. In any case, Burlingame's stance, rare at the time, and growing out of his bone-deep belief in human affinity and the equality of all peoples, is now far more striking than any exaggerations or rhetorical lapses.

One feature of his effort to win respect for China was his care with vocabulary, never using words – such as "Celestial" or "Mandarin" – that implied China was exotic. Burlingame's vigilance suggests that such terms, so common in the nineteenth century, and in some cases down to our own time, were even then considered disrespectful.

Underlining China's position as a normal participant in international affairs also demanded punctilious attention to diplomatic protocol. Another reason Burlingame eschewed official activities in San Francisco was to avoid doing anything that might suggest he was undertaking negotiations before formally presenting his credentials in Washington.²⁶ In the same vein, when leaders of the Chinese community asked Burlingame's colleague, Zhigang, to intervene on its behalf, he responded, "I have not yet presented my credentials, so it is not convenient to discuss such issues with local officials."²⁷ The mission considered such formality particularly important because China had been

²⁵ Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*.

²⁶ *Alta*, 2 Apr. 1868.

²⁷ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji* (The first mission to the West), reprinted in Zhong Shuho, ed., *Zouxiang shijie congshu* (Collection of world travels) (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1985), entry for Tongzhi 7/3/30 (22 Apr. 1868).

working to ensure that foreigners negotiated with Beijing rather than local authorities, an effort strongly supported by the Cooperative Policy.

Similarly, Burlingame pushed hard to present his credentials, as was the custom among Western nations, directly to America's head of state, President Johnson. This goal, however, raised a sensitive and difficult issue: Beijing was not yet prepared to let foreign envoys meet directly with China's emperor. Nonetheless, with Seward's help, Burlingame managed to achieve a singular diplomatic triumph. He succeeded in presenting the credentials to the president at an appropriate White House ceremony, while the American government agreed to delay its own audiences with the emperor. This procedure, negotiated in the friendly atmosphere of Washington among Burlingame's old political allies, also provided a precedent for meetings with other rulers when the tour reached the less hospitable capitals of Europe.

Burlingame worked to relate a fair deal for China to Reconstruction's drive for racial equality. This politically savvy theme represented his own deepest convictions and also, of course, helped cement his relations to the dominant Republican Party. In his New York address, he proclaimed that "there are people who will tell you that ... it is the duty of the Western Treaty Powers to combine for the purpose of coercing China into reforms, which they may desire, and which she may not desire, who undertake to say that *this people have no rights which you are bound to respect* [emphasis mine]."²⁸ By paraphrasing the most infamous portion of the Dred Scott decision – that Blacks had no constitutional or legal protections and therefore "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect" – Burlingame invited his audience to share his belief in the parallel between justice for China and the struggle for racial justice at home.

However, recognizing that connecting China to Reconstruction could also prove politically damaging, he always emphasized that his cause stood above party. He began his New York address by thanking the company for "rising above all local and party considerations," and giving "a broad and generous welcome to a movement made in the interests of all mankind." In his hometown of Cambridge, he eloquently linked his efforts on behalf of China to his struggles against slavery in the 1850s, but went out of his way to minimize the political rancor of a decade that had, in fact, been marked by bitter partisan

²⁸ Burlingame speech, New York, 23 June 1868. Among other places, the text can be found in the *Tribune*, 24 June 1868. I have used the version in the official booklet "Banquet to His Excellency Anson Burlingame and His Associates of the Chinese Embassy by the Citizens of New York, on Tuesday, June 23, 1868" (New York: Sun Book and Job Printing House, 1868). This booklet is available on Google Books.

conflict:²⁹ “Here, I learned to denounce that pride of race which denies the brotherhood of man; here I learned to plead for four millions of human beings as I now speak for four hundred millions of human beings. ... These memories in your presence come thronging up with recollections of the thousand good wills extended not by my political associates, but my political opponents always. For this is true of them, that in exact proportion to the intensity of their political opposition was their loyalty in personal friendship. ... I speak today as in the old time for the equality of men – for the equality of nations; and I am glad that here there is unanimity in favor of the great mission with which I am connected.”

As an experienced politician, Burlingame celebrated the audience he was addressing and the glories of the locale he was visiting. He invariably extolled his fellow speakers at events, whatever their politics. Thus, in his major address in San Francisco – delivered at a large private banquet for the mission – he praised the “magnificent greeting” the envoys had received in the city, “Not because it is the reception of a few individuals. No! But, because it is a warm welcome to a great cause. I assure you that in all my wanderings, the sweetest memories which shall come to me, along with the recollections of your bright skies, your golden fields and your measureless hospitality, the pleasantest and the dearest will be those of this night.” California, he went on, “speaking through the lips of her eloquent chief magistrate and the other eloquent gentlemen who have spoken here to-night ... without distinction of party, has given a generous and fearless reception to the first mission sent forth by one third of the human race to the other nations of the earth.”³⁰ The “chief magistrate” was, in fact, the rather anti-Chinese Democratic governor of California, Henry Haight, who had just made clear in his own speech that he opposed Chinese immigration and was only hosting the event in the interests of commerce.³¹

Among his other themes, Burlingame stressed that the cultural values of China and the West were universal and compatible. Neither Burlingame nor the audience he was trying to influence were cultural relativists. Radicals like Burlingame had long espoused the concept of a common humanity, and before the Civil War they had equated their anti-slavery movement with an

²⁹ Burlingame speech, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 24 Aug. 1868. The text can be found in a newspaper clipping (the paper’s name and date are missing), in Papers of Anson and Edward L. Burlingame, box 2, folder “Miscellaneous Clippings.”

³⁰ Burlingame, San Francisco speech, 28 Apr. 1868 (for location of the speech’s text, see footnote 4).

³¹ Haight’s speech can be found in the *Alta*, 29 Apr. 1868.

international drive toward freedom and progress. Such perspectives, for example, had drawn Burlingame into his powerful advocacy for Louis Kossuth. The mission, he said, was undertaken in “the broad interest of civilization”³² and he worked to make China comprehensible by presenting it in terms that would make it seem familiar to Americans.

A single ideal of civilization was also compatible with Chinese values and the attitudes of Burlingame’s Chinese colleagues toward the United States provide a striking example of this belief. Two members of the mission, Zhigang himself and Zhang Deyi,³³ a young interpreter, later published extensive travel diaries of the trip. Both appreciated American public life and, in good Confucian manner, saw it as a prime source of the nation’s success. They displayed particular respect for American government and politics, including the institutions of liberal democracy. At the same time, they appreciated what they perceived as an activist government working for the public welfare, economic success, and military effectiveness. American technological achievement made a tremendous impression on them. Of course, not everything was to their liking – they criticized the treatment of Blacks and of Chinese, and the independence and relative equality enjoyed by American women tended to dismay them. Still, overall, they saw a broad compatibility between the ideals of China and America, and so provided wonderful support for the Confucian belief in the unity of human experience and for Burlingame’s own feelings.

Another of Burlingame’s talking points was that China had entered upon fundamental change. Prior to the 1860s, he said in San Francisco, the West had treated the country roughly, and “affairs went on upon a system of misunderstandings, resulting in mutual misfortune.”³⁴ But this situation had changed in the 1860s when foreign emissaries first resided in Beijing and so come into direct contact with “the great men who carry on the affairs of the Chinese Empire, and coming into personal relation with them ... were led straightaway to consider how they should substitute for the old false system of force one of fair diplomatic action.”

The new Cooperative Policy had, in turn, contributed to new developments in China, roughly encompassing what today would be depicted as the

³² Burlingame, San Francisco speech.

³³ Zhigang, *Chushi taixi ji*; and Zhang Deyi, *Ou Mei huanyou ji* (Travels in America and Europe) (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1981). The latter is available in English: Simon Johnstone, tr., *Diary of a Chinese Diplomat* (Beijing: Panda Books, 1992). Zhang Deyi went on to become a senior Chinese diplomat and the most famous author of travel diaries in the late Qing.

³⁴ The Burlingame quotations from here to the next footnote are from the San Francisco speech.

foreign relations aspects of the Tongzhi Restoration and the efforts of the Self-strengthening Movement to introduce Western science and technology. The innovations he cited ranged from new arsenals, harbor facilities, and a rise in trade, to the creation of the Zongli Yamen (China's new "foreign office"), the translation of Wheaton's text on Western international law, and the growth of the Imperial Maritime Customs. Burlingame stressed that his embassy itself epitomized the new Chinese policy. The mission meant "*Progress*," he said. "It means that China ... desires to come under the obligations of ... international law. ... It means that she intends to come into the brotherhood of nations. It means Commerce; it means Peace; it means a unification of her own interests with the whole human race. ... This is one of the mightiest movements of modern times ... the fraternal feeling of four hundred millions of people has commenced to flow through the land of Washington to the elder nations of the West, and it will flow on forever."

Burlingame's praise for the growing Western influence in China might today be seen as rather chauvinistic and condescending. However, it reflected his view of a common humanity and, more concretely, his goal of selling China to American audiences. More important, he always took care to stress China's national autonomy. China, he said, "asks of you not to interfere in her internal affairs. ... She asks you that you will respect the neutrality of her waters, and the integrity of her territory. She asks, in a word, to be left perfectly free to unfold herself precisely in that form of civilization of which she is most capable. ... I desire that the autonomy of China may be preserved. I desire that her independence may be secured."³⁵

At the same time, he balanced praise for China's assimilation of things Western by underscoring that the West also had much to learn from China. In particular, he cited Chinese ideals of equality, orderly social institutions, and what today is known as the Confucian personality. He called on America for the "generous spirit which is not too proud to learn, and which is not afraid to teach: that great spirit, which, while it would exchange goods with China would also exchange thoughts with China; that would inquire carefully into the cause of that sobriety and industry of which you have made mention; that would learn something of the long experience of this people ...; that would ask what means that competitive system under which the lowest coolie's son may rise to the highest office in the Empire, and which makes scholarship the test of merit."³⁶

³⁵ From the New York speech.

³⁶ San Francisco speech.

To nail down his arguments, Burlingame depicted the vast benefits that would accrue to America if China were treated fairly.³⁷ In New York, he proclaimed that China

tells you that she is willing to trade with you, to buy of you, to sell to you, to help you strike off the shackles from trade. She invites your merchants, she invites your missionaries. She tells the latter to plant the shining cross on every hill and in every valley. ... She offers you almost free trade to-day. Holding the great staples of the earth – tea and silk – she charges you scarcely any tariff on the exports you send out in exchange for them. ... Trade, carried on in foreign vessels, which has in my day in China, risen from \$82,000,000 to \$300,000,000 [something over 4½ billion in today's dollars], is but a tithe of the enormous trade that will take place with China when she gets into full fellowship with the rest of the world. Let her alone; let her have her independence; let her develop herself in her own time, and in her own way. ... Let her do this, and she will initiate a movement which will be felt, in every workshop of the civilized world. She says now: 'Send us your wheat, your lumber, your coal, your silver, your goods from everywhere – we will take as many of them as we can. We will give you back our tea, our silk, free labor, which we have sent so largely out into the world'. ... The imagination kindles at the future which may be, and which will be, if you will be fair and just to China.

For the past fifty years, the single phrase from Burlingame's New York speech, that China invited missionaries "to plant the shining cross" has sometimes seemed more famous than anything else he ever said or did. The phrase was emblematic, it is asserted, of his misrepresentations and naiveté about China. Such a critique is unwarranted, even ironic. As minister to Beijing, Burlingame had distinctly mixed feelings about missionaries because of the tensions they often aroused. On the American tour, he rarely mentioned them, despite the importance of missionary interests to the budding "Open Door Constituency" he was working to influence. Even in the New York speech, the phrase constituted the only mention of missionaries in a very long address, and Burlingame followed it by immediately returning – and at much greater length – to commercial matters.

To the extent that Burlingame touched on religion in his addresses, he ranked fair and moral treatment for China as far more important than its conversion. China, he said, "comes with the great doctrine of Confucius, uttered two thousand three hundred years ago, 'Do not unto others what you would not have others do unto you.' Will you not respond with the more positive doctrine of Christianity, 'We will do unto others what we would have others do unto us'? ... She asks you to give those treaties which were made under the pressure of war, a generous and Christian construction."

³⁷ The quotations in the following passages are from the New York speech.

Further evidence of Burlingame's naiveté is seen in the fact that relations with China did not live up to his optimistic rhetoric. As one scholar has written, "Hard on the heels of Burlingame's words came the Tientsin massacre of foreign missionaries and thirty years of Chinese antforeign agitation that culminated in the Boxer Rebellion."³⁸ But Burlingame, of course, never suggested that the benefits he described were assured, but always made a point of emphasizing that they depended on fundamental changes in Western behavior – something that did not occur.

Indeed, far from predicting an automatically rosy future, Burlingame sharply and repeatedly attacked those who hoped to continue oppressing China and emphasized the dangers of their approach. Thinking primarily of powerful Treaty Port interests and influential factions in the British and French governments, he said, "Who is there that would say to China: We wish to have no other relations with you than such as we establish in our own partial and mean and cruel interests at the cannon's mouth. I trust there are none such as these."³⁹ Such retrograde views, he warned could, in fact, result in violent retribution and war.

His speech to House of Representatives, tough-minded and at times even threatening, made clear that the burden for improved relations now rested on the West.⁴⁰ The current moment, Burlingame said, represented the

meeting of two civilizations which have hitherto revolved in separate spheres. It is a mighty revolution. ... Let us hope that it will be achieved without shedding of one drop of human blood. We are for peace. We come not with beat of drum nor martial tread. Though representing the latent power of eighty millions of fighting men, we are the heralds of good will. We seek for China that equality without which nations and men are degraded. We seek not only the good of China, but we seek your good and the good of all mankind. ... It is for the West to say whether it is for a fair and open policy, or for one founded on prejudice, and on that assumption of superiority which is justified neither by physical ability nor by moral elevation.

While Burlingame's use of "we" in the speech referred primarily to the mission, it also suggested that he was speaking from China's point of view and felt moved to express the frequently bitter feelings of the nation he represented.

Finally, one of Burlingame's major hopes is evident only between the lines of much that he said: that achieving a more normal position for China in

³⁸ James C. Thomson, Jr., "A Cycle of Cathay," *American Heritage* 23 (1972).

³⁹ San Francisco speech.

⁴⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 40th Cong. 2d sess., 1867-68, pt. 3, 9 June 1868, 2970. The speech can also be found in *Official Papers of the Chinese Legation*, 20ff.

international affairs might help modify the most unusual and deleterious feature of Sino-Western relations, the system of unequal treaties. Any hint that he wanted to modify the unequal character of the treaties would have aroused bitter opposition. Indeed, Westerners in China had long argued that the Cooperative Policy was simply a wedge for undermining all foreign privilege in that country.

Still, he could proclaim in his New York speech, "Missions and men may pass away, but the principles of eternal justice will stand. I desire that the autonomy of China may be preserved. I desire that her independence may be secured. I desire that she may have equality. ... There are men – men of that tyrannical school – who say that China is not fit to sit at the Council Board of the nations, who call her people barbarians, and attack them on all occasions with a bitter and unrelenting spirit. These things I utterly deny."

Justice for China and for the Chinese Community: The Burlingame Treaty

The culmination of the mission's work in America was the Burlingame Treaty, an agreement that displayed a tone of reciprocity and mutual respect unlike any other signed between China and the West after the Opium War.

Burlingame and Secretary of State Seward negotiated the treaty, consulting regularly and frequently in June. The discussions were kept private and confidential lest they become caught up in the ever-present politics, and no records of the talks survive. As Frederick Seward, the secretary's son, and himself assistant secretary of state, later recalled:

It is difficult for any one, nowadays, to fully realise the intense political excitement and bitterness that prevailed in Washington in 1867 and 1868. It seemed as if Congress and the nation had gone daft over the question of impeaching President Johnson. Every other subject was subordinated and misconstrued by some supposed connection therewith. The treaty with China, like the treaty for Russian America [Alaska], was a measure of prime diplomatic importance. But neither treaty could have been concluded by the ordinary methods of diplomacy. Correspondence and discussion would instantly have aroused antagonisms that would be fatal. The negotiations in each case had to be conducted by means of personal interviews and confidential conversations between the secretary of state and the foreign minister. ... Fortunately, in both cases, the governments were in full accord, and their respective representatives had entire confidence in each other.⁴¹

⁴¹ Quoted in Williams, *Anson Burlingame*, 145.

Both through its stipulations and its wording the treaty sought, in so far as possible, to give China full and equal status in international affairs, to stand, Burlingame said “in opposition to the old doctrine that because she was not a Christian nation she could not be placed in the roll of nations.”⁴² To achieve this goal the agreement aimed, above all, at maintaining and strengthening the Cooperative Policy, with its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China.

Similarly, the treaty worked to redress the injustices facing America’s Chinese community by placing it on an equal footing with immigrants from other nations. In San Francisco, community leaders had impressed their problems on Zhigang and had urged the mission to correct the situation. Consequently, with the Burlingame Treaty, the Chinese in America emerged for the first time as an active force in relations between Beijing and Washington.

In addition, Burlingame had tactical diplomatic goals for the treaty. He wanted to use the opportunity offered by negotiating with America – the nation in which he had his most influential contacts, often with the most radical elements in the government – to achieve a settlement that could serve as a precedent for the mission’s more difficult tasks in Europe. At the same time, he hoped that a quick and striking success would bolster the position of his allies in the Zongli Yamen.

The treaty, officially designated *Additional articles to the treaty between the United States of America and the Ta-Tsing Empire of the 18th of June, 1858*,⁴³ was signed on July 28, 1868. On the same day, the secretary of state formally proclaimed that the Fourteenth Amendment, having been ratified by the states, was now part of the Constitution. The timing of the two events may have been coincidental, but their juxtaposition provides a telling symbol of the radicalism of the era, and of the connection between justice for the freedman and a fair deal for Chinese. Indeed, the Fourteenth Amendment, like the Burlingame Treaty, was to play a significant, though ultimately temporary, role in countering anti-Chinese legislation.⁴⁴

As soon as the treaty was signed, and before it passed the Senate, Burlingame initiated a press campaign to rally support. Sympathetic newspapers tended to provide a uniform analysis of the draft, one very likely provided by Burlingame himself. In line with his views, for example, the New York *Herald* emphasized

⁴² Burlingame’s Boston speech, 21 Aug. 1868.

⁴³ Among other places, the text can be found in Williams, *Anson Burlingame*, 275ff.

⁴⁴ Earl M. Maltz, “The Federal Government and the Problem of Chinese Rights in the Era of the Fourteenth Amendment,” *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 17 (Winter 1994) 242ff.

that the precise terms of the agreement were less crucial than the equality attained by China:

The full importance of the treaty is scarcely understood from a bare reading of its language. ... The great antipathy which has been felt by the Chinese towards Europeans has sprung from the unwillingness of the latter to acknowledge the former as social or political equals and from the unfairness and injustice with which they have been treated in their negotiations. Minister Burlingame, therefore has accomplished one of the great objects of his mission in thus obtaining a recognition of the national equality of China.⁴⁵

The Burlingame treaty had eight articles. The first prohibited the United States and other powers from fighting one another on Chinese territory. It also clearly disavowed foreign territorial concessions. Article Two stipulated China's sole control of the nation's commercial regulations in so far as these were not governed by existing treaties. Burlingame argued that these first two articles made a major contribution to furthering China's sovereignty, even hinting that they could limit features of the unequal treaties.⁴⁶ Thus, he suggested, the ban on third-parties warring in Chinese territory restricted the reach of extrality: "It declares the neutrality of the Chinese waters in opposition to the pretensions of the ex-territoriality doctrine, that inasmuch as the persons and the property of the people of the foreign powers were under the jurisdiction of those powers, therefore it was the right of parties contending with each other to attack each other in the Chinese waters. ... This treaty traverses all such absurd pretensions."

With regard to concessions, he said that the treaty "strikes down the so-called concession doctrines, under which the nationals of different countries located upon spots of land in the treaty ports had come to believe that they could take jurisdiction there not only of their own nationals, not only of the persons and property of their own people, but take jurisdiction of the Chinese and the people of other countries." Under the Cooperative Policy, the Western envoys in Beijing had united in opposing such claims. Burlingame admitted that concessions were now developing, but could still claim that opposition to them remained the official policy of the Western governments: "I aver that every treaty power has abandoned the concession doctrines, though some of their officials at the present time in China undertake to contend for them, undertake to expel the Chinese, to attack the Chinese, to protect the Chinese,

⁴⁵ New York *Herald*, 17 July 1868.

⁴⁶ Quotations from here to the next footnote come from the Boston speech.

although the territory did not belong to them. China has never abandoned her eminent domain, never abandoned on that territory her jurisdiction; and I trust she never will. This treaty strikes down all the pretensions about concessions of territory.” In later years, of course, despite the policies of the 1860s and Burlingame’s work, concessions completely under foreign jurisdiction emerged in the treaty ports.

Articles three through seven aimed at correcting the injustices faced by the Chinese community on the West Coast and did so by underlining China’s international equality. Article three specified: “China shall have the right to appoint consuls at ports of the United States, who shall enjoy the same privileges and immunities as those enjoyed by public law and treaty in the United States by the consuls of Great Britain and Russia, or either of them.” Burlingame expressly connected the greater security for the Chinese community to the increase in China’s international status: “Her subjects have been put upon a footing with those of the most favored nations, so that now the Chinese stands with the Briton or the Frenchman, the Russian, the Prussian and everybody else.”

Article Four guaranteed religious freedom to the Chinese community, though persecution on that ground was not one of its particular problems. However, the article served Burlingame’s broader purposes by explicitly describing the guarantee as reciprocity for the religious privileges that the West had insisted upon in China. Earlier treaties, it read, “having stipulated for the exemption of Christian citizens of the United States and Chinese converts from persecution in China on account of their faith...Chinese subjects in the United States shall enjoy entire liberty of conscience and shall be exempt from all disability or persecution on account of their religious faith.”

Article Five guaranteed the right of free Chinese emigration to America and recast the existing anti-coolie laws on a bilateral basis. The text provides a particularly striking example of wording that underlined China’s equality, for it banned a reverse coolie trade from America to China and granted Americans the right to emigrate there, neither very common or even likely events. Burlingame’s comments on the article emphasized the benefits that Chinese immigration offered to America. The text

strikes down and reprobates – that is the word – reprobates the infamous Coolie trade. ... It invites free immigration into the country of those sober and industrious people by whose quiet labor we have been enabled to push the Pacific railroad over the summits of the Sierra Nevada. ... I am glad the United States had the courage to apply her great principles of equality. I am glad that while she applies her doctrines to the swarming millions of Europe, she is not afraid to apply them to the tawny race of Tamerlane and of Genghis Khan.”

Article Six declared the discriminatory anti-Chinese legislation in California illegal, and again did so by putting the treaties on a reciprocal basis:

Citizens of the Untied States visiting or residing in China shall enjoy the same privileges, immunities or exemptions in respect to travel or residence as may there be enjoyed by the citizens or subjects of the most favored nation, and, reciprocally, Chinese subjects visiting or residing in the United States shall enjoy the same privileges, immunities and exemptions in respect to travel or residence as may there be enjoyed by the citizens or subjects of the most favored nation. But nothing herein contained shall be held to confer naturalization upon citizens of the United States in China, nor upon the subjects of China in the United States.

One crucial purpose of Article Six was to permit Chinese to become naturalized as U.S. citizens. Existing American law barred this⁴⁷ and Burlingame's successful effort to end the prohibition provides yet another indication of his profound commitment to racial justice. For even in the radical atmosphere of the Reconstruction era, when citizenship was extended to African Americans, few people (Charles Sumner was one) favored granting citizenship to Chinese.

The depth of the opposition to Chinese citizenship is evident in the last sentence, which was appended to the Burlingame-Seward draft in the Senate on the motion of Senator John Conness of California. The draft treaty had not granted Chinese any special privileges with regard to citizenship and, as the text now stood, it simply treated Chinese equally to other foreigners, eligible for naturalization in the usual ways. As it turned out, however, although the Burlingame Treaty was to make a real, if temporary, contribution to improving the legal position of the Chinese community,⁴⁸ its mandate for Chinese citizenship remained a dead letter from the start, and by the 1880s, Chinese were again officially barred from American citizenship.

Article Seven also took aim at anti-Chinese legislation by guaranteeing Chinese access to public educational institutions controlled by the federal government. Once more, the text displayed remarkable symmetry by granting Americans access to schools in China.

Article Eight reaffirmed China's national sovereignty, this time with regard to economic development. It stipulated that America would support efforts that Beijing itself chose to undertake, but made clear that the United States, "always disclaiming and discouraging all practices of unnecessary dictation

⁴⁷ Charles J. McClain, "Tortuous Path, Elusive Goal: The Asian Quest for American Citizenship," *Asian Law Journal* 2 (May 1995), 35; Maltz, "The Federal Government and the Problem of Chinese Rights."

⁴⁸ Maltz, 242ff.

and intervention by one nation in the affairs or domestic administration of another, do hereby freely disclaim and disavow any intention or right to intervene in the domestic administration of China in regard to the construction of railroads, telegraphs or other material internal improvements.”

Burlingame’s comments on this article could summarize his hopes for the entire treaty:

It has been the habit of the foreigners in China to lecture the Chinese and to say what they should do and what they should not do ... when they should build railroads, when they should build telegraphs; and, in fact, there has been an attempt to take entire possession of their affairs. This treaty denounces all such pretensions.⁴⁹

On the East Coast, press reactions to the agreement reflected the predictable partisan divisions. The Republican *Tribune* gave full support. Its most noteworthy commentary took the form of a six-thousand word article, “The Treaty with China – Its Provisions Explained,” written by Mark Twain, but actually – as Twain privately acknowledged – “concocted” together with Burlingame.⁵⁰ The sparkling product of their collaboration used information and analyses supplied by the envoy that Twain then presented with his typical panache. The *Tribune* gave no hint of Burlingame’s role in the article’s creation and simply described Twain as a “gentleman who thoroughly understands whereof he writes.” In the piece, Twain does make satiric use of the term “Chinamen/man,” but Burlingame himself never employed even this very commonly used but disrespectful word.

Twain pays most attention to how the Chinese community in California would benefit from the agreement:

It affords me infinite satisfaction to call particular attention to this Consul clause, and think of the howl that will go up from the cooks, the railroad graders, and the cobble-stone artists of California, when they read it. They can never beat and bang and set the dogs on the Chinamen any more. ... In San Francisco, a large part of the most interesting local news in the daily papers consists of gorgeous compliments to the ‘able and efficient’ Officer This and That for arresting Ah Foo or Ching Wang, or Song Hi for stealing a chicken; but when some white brute breaks an unoffending Chinaman’s head with a brick, the paper does not compliment an officer for arresting the assaulter, for the simple reason that the

⁴⁹ From the Boston speech.

⁵⁰ The article can be found in the *Tribune*, 4 Aug. 1868, 1. On Burlingame’s role in its creation, see letter from Twain to Edward Burlingame, 7 Oct. 1868, in Harriet Smith and Richard Bucci, eds., *Mark Twain’s Letters: Vol. 2, 1867-1868* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 261.

officer does not make the arrest; the shedding of Chinese blood only makes him laugh. ... I have seen hod-carriers who help to make Presidents stand around and enjoy the sport. ... I have seen Chinamen abused and maltreated in all the mean, cowardly ways possible to the invention of a degraded nature, but I never saw a policeman interfere in the matter and I never saw a Chinaman righted in a court of justice for wrongs thus done him.

The treaty would bring citizenship and suffrage to Chinese and Twain particularly enjoyed contemplating the political reaction to this new constituency:

There will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth on the Pacific coast when Article 6 is read. For at one sweep, all the crippling, intolerant, and unconstitutional laws framed by California against Chinamen pass away, and “discover” (in stage parlance) 20,000 prospective Hong Kong and Suchow voters and office-holders! ... In that day, candidates will have to possess other accomplishments besides being able to drink lager beer and twirl a shillalah. They will have to smoke opium and eat with chop-sticks. Influential additions will have to be made to election tickets and transparencies, thus: “THE COUNTRY’S HOPE.THEPEOPLE’SCHOICE–DONNERWETTER,O’SHAUGHNESSY, AND CHING-FOO!”

In contrast to the *Tribune*, the Democratic *World* ridiculed the agreement in an editorial titled “The Fizzle of the China Puzzle.”⁵¹ “No baby so small has been born as the new Chinese Treaty; and never before was there so great a fuss made in anticipation. ... The babe is born.” The only way to deal with China, the paper again suggested, was force, not Burlingame’s “easy-going, smooth-grooved” approach.

Though East Coast opinion followed predictable party lines, views in California indicated growing sectional differences among Republicans. For not only did the state’s Democratic press launch a particularly vehement attack on the treaty, but the *Alta*, hitherto one of Burlingame’s most ardent supporters, also kept its distance. Its position, like that of the Republican senators from California, foreshadowed the time when the politics of that powerful state would lead the way in nullifying Burlingame’s achievement.

In California, typical Democratic views appeared in *The Daily Morning Call*. The paper, which had the largest circulation in San Francisco, attacked the treaty and the Republican press:

The *Bulletin*, a leading Radical organ in this State, unhesitatingly endorses the provisions of the Treaty and all the principles it contains. It plainly tells the people of this State that they must tamely submit to the outrage, which it is proposed to

⁵¹ *World*, 3 Aug. 1868, 4.

place upon them, in violation of our National Constitution, as such outrage is in accordance with Eastern sentiment, as represented in the person of the recreant BURLINGAME and those who rule at Washington. We do not think the people here will tamely submit to such an infamous imposition. This country cannot be given up to hordes of Asiatics in order to please a few Eastern humanitarians and usurping politicians. The *Union* and *Alta* will doubtless follow in the wake of their contemporary.⁵²

Actually, the *Alta* proved unwilling to associate itself with an agreement that could supply ammunition to the political opposition. It wrote only one editorial on the treaty, and that decidedly unenthusiastic.⁵³

Concluding Observations

By the time of Burlingame's death in 1870, his struggles against slavery, his service in Beijing, and his unique role as China's envoy had made him something of a national hero. In a celebrated obituary, Mark Twain could write of his friend, "in real greatness, ability, grandeur of character, and achievement, he stood head and shoulders above all the Americans of to-day, save one or two. ... He was a good man, and a very, very great man. America lost a son, and all the world a servant, when he died."⁵⁴ Chinese attitudes toward Burlingame paralleled those in America and he became a hero and a revered figure both in China and among Chinese in America.

Though Burlingame's fame diminished as the years passed, his reputation remained high both in the United States and China. Then, after the Communist victory of 1949, when the two countries became bitter enemies, the situation changed. Many American academicians came to view Burlingame as a man whose optimism about Sino-American relations made him a naive, even ridiculous figure. As one scholar put it in 1972, in Burlingame's "curious role" as

⁵² The microfilm run of the *Daily Examiner*, the paper used above to discuss Democratic views of the mission in San Francisco, has many gaps in August 1868. There are, however, clippings in the Burlingame Papers that give a sense of the Democratic press, including this one from the *Daily Morning Call* (San Francisco), August 1868 (the day of the month is blurred). See Papers of Anson and Edward L. Burlingame, box 2, folder "Miscellaneous Clippings."

⁵³ *Alta*, 30 July 1868. The paper did reprint Mark Twain's article from the *Tribune*. However, it put the piece in its Sunday supplement, a section devoted to non-political matters. So the article, titled here "The Treaty With China. Its Provisions Explained by 'Mark Twain'" – and clearly labeled as "From the Tribune" – was presented as an essay by a famous author, not as editorial comment.

⁵⁴ "A Tribute to Anson Burlingame," in Charles Neider, ed., *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), 3ff.

China's envoy, he "established (and indeed pre-empted) the euphoric tradition of Sino-American relations. ... The Burlingame syndrome of great expectations survives to this day."⁵⁵ It was in these years that the "shining cross" phrase sometimes seemed the only thing widely associated with Burlingame's name. Similarly, in the heyday of Maoism, historians in China sharply attacked him as a typical agent of "American imperialism."

Now that we are in a new era in Sino-American relations, the verdict on Burlingame, both in China and America, has begun to return to a greater appreciation of this great man, a statesman far ahead of his time. One can only hope the process will continue.

⁵⁵ Thomson, Jr., "A Cycle of Cathay."

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