85. See also Paul H. Clements, *The Boxer Rebellion: A Political and Diplomatic Review* (1915; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1967), 160.
86. Schrecker, *Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism*, 43–48.
87. Schrecker, *Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism*, 57.

5

Looting and Its Discontents

Moral Discourse and the Plunder of Beijing, 1900–1901

James L. Hevia

The suppression of the Boxer Uprising by European, American, and Japanese forces draws attention to the sharp distinction made by the end of the nineteenth century between civilization and barbarism in East Asia. In most cases, contemporary Western observers and interpreters outside of China located barbaric behavior squarely with the Boxers and on those members of the Qing administration who supported them—had not innocent women and children been murdered by the "savage" Chinese? The activities of military and civilian actors from "civilized" North Atlantic nation-states, with only a few exceptions, were generally exempt from critical scrutiny. In contrast, Chinese historians have long drawn on contemporary Chinese-language accounts to detail the violence directed against Chinese bodies by the allied expeditionary forces.[1]

Yet regardless of which population's behavior is called into question, often ignored is another kind of violence common in north China at the time, one that was directed not at persons, but at their possessions. In contrast to atrocities committed against Chinese people, the assault on Chinese objects, either through their destruction or plunder, did draw the attention of Western and Japanese observers in and outside of China. Critical voices were raised in protest not only to the scope of looting—it included Qing imperial palaces, residences of the Qing nobility, and private homes, as well as Tianjin and the towns and villages around Beijing—but also to the pervasiveness of the practice among all of the armies in north China, which some saw as a scandal.

Just why this was the case, why looting appears to have shocked the moral sensibilities of some contemporary observers, is the issue explored

here. I begin with a discussion of the sack of Beijing in 1900, with comparative references to the looting of the Summer Palace in 1860 by a joint Anglo-French force. The comparison will highlight specific differences between these two looting episodes and help to clarify unique features of events in 1900–1901. I then address the moral confusion that looting seems to have involved for some of the participants. Lastly, I provide an overview of the debate in Europe and North America concerning looting, which will help to focus attention on what appears to have been the fundamental issue that it posed for Euro-American perceptions of just warfare at the time.

"A CARNIVAL OF LOOT"

Almost immediately after the lifting of the siege of the legations on 14 August, members of the eight armies turned to looting in Beijing. Within a day, they were joined by the diplomats and missionaries they had rescued.[2] Speaking at a distance, the *Sidney Morning Herald* characterized the mad scramble for plunder as a "carnival of loot"; on the scene, W. A. P. Martin, a siege survivor, spoke of a riot "in the midst of booty."[3] These characterizations suggest that the sack of Beijing was similar to what had occurred at the Summer Palace forty years earlier; that a loot fever gripped the armies and Euro-American civilian population in Beijing, and a wild orgy of plunder ensued, one in which few if any could resist temptation.[4]

Yet, as much as the initial stages of this second looting episode at Beijing resembled the frenzy of its 1860 predecessor, there were certain differences. For one thing, no one stepped forward as Garnet Wolseley had done in 1860 to safely contain looting by declaring it to be a tendency among ordinary soldiers, as opposed to officers.[5] Secondly, the loot itself did not have attached to it the aura of a proper name such as "from the Summer Palace of the Emperor of China." Given the self-righteous conduct of Euro-American diplomatic and military personnel in China, particularly as it was articulated through rhetoric that demanded "retributive justice" for "savage" and "barbaric" Boxer assaults on Christian missionaries and defenseless legations, this is something of a surprise. One would expect to find references in museum collections of objects from the Forbidden City or Beijing 1900 taken during the Boxer episode. But only a few items so labeled seem to have surfaced in London then or later.[6] Nor were there sales of Boxer Rebellion loot in London and Paris auction houses like those that took place in the 1860s[7]; also not seen were public displays of objects looted from Qing palaces as had occurred in both cities in 1861 and 1862.[8]

The reasons for these absences are, perhaps, not too difficult to discern. First, as noted above, looting in 1900 was a major point of contention

and public debate in China, the United States, and Western Europe. Second, with respect to the proper names of Chinese art objects, the great auction houses and museums in London, Paris, other European capitals, and the United States had already begun to adopt a new standardized nomenclature for Chinese art, a descriptive language produced between 1870 and 1900 by a group of art experts, such as the Englishman Stephan Bushell, who were based in the legations and Imperial Maritime Customs at Beijing.[9] New knowledge and its adoption allowed looted objects to be slipped almost imperceptibly into markets and museums in Europe and North America.

Other differences are also evident. Consider, for example, the physical geography of looting. In 1860, it was more or less confined to the area in and around the Yuanming Gardens or Summer Palace. In 1900, it included all of Beijing, the new Summer Palace, and virtually every city and town of Zhili province. Moreover, unlike in 1860 when plundering lasted two to three days, looting in 1900 began with the occupation of Tianjin in late July and stretched well into October in Beijing. Outside of the Qing capital, it continued even longer as armies searched the countryside for Boxer remnants.

At the same time, there were also certain features shared by the two episodes. While many accounts attempted to minimize the extent of looting by their compatriots and shift the blame to the soldiers of other armies, it is clear when the accounts are pieced together that all of the armies plundered to a greater or lesser extent, including the Japanese army.[10] Common in both cases was the carnival-like atmosphere of unregulated plunder noted by the Australian reporter quoted above. Drunken Frenchmen were robbed of their loot by Sikhs, and soldiers ransacked pawn shops, the premises of curio dealers, and private homes, leaving chaos in their wake. Street bazaars where soldiers sold off some of their plunder spontaneously appeared. Even members of the otherwise dignified *corps diplomatique* joined in the mayhem. Lady Claude MacDonald, wife of the British minister, who was reported to have been at the head of one looting expedition, is said to have exclaimed, after having already filled eighty-seven cases with "valuable treasure," that she "had not begun to pack."[11]

As had occurred in 1860, much was broken and destroyed as soldiers searched for precious metals, jewels, and furs.[12] And while several British accounts claimed that their archrivals in Asia, the Russians, were the worst of the looters,[13] Bertram Lenox Simpson, a siege survivor, argued that everyone had been made "savage" by the loot fever.[14] Such "savagery" was confirmed by another eyewitness, Gadhadar Singh, a soldier in the 7th Rajputs of the British India Army, whose book on the campaign found little to distinguish one group from another in their lust for plunder (see Yang, this volume).

FROM LOOT TO PRIZE AND TROPHY

The period of unregulated plunder lasted for several days. By the end of August, however, serious attempts were being made by some of the allied commanders to control or manage looting. The British army took the lead in systematizing loot by establishing a prize commission. Echoing General Hope Grant in 1860,[15] the British commander, General Gaselee, explained in a report to the War Office that he had been compelled to set up the commission in order to maintain the "contentment and discipline" of his forces "under the demoralizing conditions of this particular campaign."[16] At the same time, he claimed that he was "unacquainted with the rules under which prize funds were established after Delhi, Lucknow and Pekin 1860."[17] While this may indeed have been the case, Gaselee seems to have had at least a passing acquaintance with the practices of the British army in India and China a half century earlier and with the often ambiguous rules on plunder to be found in military law and army regulations,[18] for he had little difficulty in putting together a prize committee that apportioned shares on the basis of rank and race. Indian soldiers were given one share less than British soldiers of equivalent rank, while native officers, regardless of rank, were held to be the equivalent of British warrant officers.[19]

The fund itself was raised through the public auction of booty brought in by authorized "search parties" and held on the grounds of the British legation. Pictures of auctions were published in London illustrated newspapers such as *Black & White* and *The Graphic* (see figure 5.1).[20] By 22 August sale of plunder appears to have become a daily occurrence, and word had spread to other units. George Lynch, a reporter on the scene, provided one of the few descriptions of the auctions themselves. As in 1860, the sales were lively affairs and, at least in the first days, included the British generals as well as Sir Claude MacDonald, the British ambassador. In addition, members of each of the regiments of the British contingent, including native soldiers of the India army, Japanese, American, and German soldiers, legation members, and even Chinese traders were present. Although this constituted a much larger pool of buyers than in 1860, the bidding was moderate, with many valuable items, particularly furs, going for just a few dollars.[21] Even so, General Stewart suspected that the foreign residents and legation members—the "knowing ones" as he called them—probably got even greater bargains.[22] A reporter for the *London Daily Express* added that legation members "had a decided advantage over the relievers, inasmuch as they were familiar with localities and the whereabouts of precious things. They got in 'on the ground floor.'"[23]

Soon, residents of other treaty ports and eventually curio shop owners from Shanghai and Hong Kong, some of whom were reported to have commissions from European auction houses and art dealers, arrived to partici-

Figure 5.1. Scene of an auction at the British legation, *The Graphic*, 15 December 1900.

pate.[24] Later, as replacement troops filtered in, they too had the opportunity of acquiring valuable Chinese curios. People seemed to come from the "ends of the earth" to join in the plunder.[25] By mid-October, the auctions, which had been held daily except Sundays for almost two months, had generated a prize fund of more than $50,000.[26] Eventually the fund rose to $330,000. When divided up, it yielded $27 per share.[27]

The allotment was, as Sir Claude MacDonald later argued, orderly, fair, and moderate.[28] It also had the added virtue, as had been demonstrated in 1860, of drawing a distinction between the disciplined British forces and those of the other countries involved in the expedition. Morever, as before, auctions served to reproduce the army by order of rank and seal it off from the moral chaos of plunder, while maintaining a clear distinction between white Englishmen and Indian native soldiers.

Regardless of whether they understood the full import of the British "system," most observers who commented on it were impressed. The correspondent for the Paris weekly *L'Illustration* called it "*procèdent systématiquement,*" while Arthur Smith, an American missionary, thought it "scientific" in comparison to the behavior of other armies, who seemed (with the possible exception of the Japanese units, see below) on the whole to have no

method at all.[29] Discussing the behavior of the American forces, Army chaplain Leslie Grove told his wife, "Our rule against [looting] is utterly ineffectual & those who disobey do so with impunity & get many interesting articles thereby."[30] It was not until 21 September 1900, in fact, that General Adna Chaffee, the American commander, acted. Faced with open violation of U.S. Army general orders in time of war,[31] Chaffee followed the British lead by ordering that all loot be called in and auctioned off. But instead of becoming a prize fund, the proceeds from the sale of "captured property" went into a "Public Civil Fund" that was used to pay a portion of the cost of the American occupation of Beijing in the coming year.[32]

These formal measures for dealing with plunder were accompanied by the emergence of "extemporized" and "extremely picturesque" street bazaars.[33] With Chinese merchants and Western missionaries also participating in the sales, business was apparently brisk. Some buyers even wrote home to let their wives know of their good fortune.[34] While soldiers and civilians bought and sold plunder in various quarters of Beijing, army commands set their sights on collecting trophies for their national and regimental collections.

In the British case, this included gathering captured European-manufactured field guns and shipping them to London, Edinburgh, Sidney, and Dublin.[35] Meanwhile, the 4th Prince of Wales' Own Gurkha Rifles made off with a temple bell and a block of stone from the Great Wall of China, which was placed in the walls of the regimental headquarters in India and inscribed "China, 1900."[36] For their part, the American forces shipped examples of Chinese weapons, Boxer flags, and a statue of the Chinese god of war, Guandi, to the recently established trophy room at West Point.[37] In addition, two of the units involved, the 9th and 14th infantry regiments, incorporated yellow dragons into their insignias and took new nicknames, the "Manchus" and "Golden Dragons," respectively.[38]

In these and other ways, the meanings attached to Summer Palace objects were easily transposed onto 1900 loot. Objects could stand for the orderly reconstitution of armies (in this case, the British and American contingents), while highlighting the differences between disciplined and undisciplined forces. They could also act as signs of humiliation, of taste and discernment, of the triumph of civilization over barbarism, and of military trophy collecting and regimental "heritage."

By 1900, however, there appears to have been a more sophisticated approach to plunder among some of the looters. Officers in the Japanese army, for example, were especially interested in Chinese art and antiquities, and even issued guidelines to soldiers distinguishing various grades of plunder, ranging from those for the imperial household, for display in museums and schools, and for military trophy.[39] Such signs of taste and discernment were not unique to the Japanese army, however. While he makes light of it, George Lynch, a reporter on the scene, observed that "when offered a china cup or saucer, the correct thing to do is to look at the mark at the bottom as if one understood what it meant, and shake the head."[40] What these "knowing ones" were looking for were imperial reign date ideograms, meticulously recorded in the publications of Stephan Bushell and others, that provided authenticity and indicated the value of objects.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

The shift of understanding in the value of Chinese objects was matched by other novel forms of plunder. Perhaps the most controversial of these involved Christian missionaries, who also engaged in the looting of Beijing and its environs. In some cases, missionaries were reported to have seized the homes of imperial princes and wealthy urbanites and sold off their contents.[41] In addition, American missionaries pioneered another kind of plunder—tribute expeditions into rural areas where missions had been attacked and destroyed. Initially, these operations were conducted with the cooperation of U.S. forces. The first seems to have occurred on 20 September 1900 when a patrol of the 6th Cavalry, accompanied by the Reverends William Ament and Robert Coltman, entered a village outside the capital. Ament identified signs of Boxer activities, and after commiserating with a group of Chinese he identified as Christians, apparently sanctioned their looting of several of the homes in the village. Captain Forsyth, the commander of the unit, objected, insisting that the property be returned, or he would immediately go back to Beijing.[42] Incidents like this led higher officers in the American command to surmise that they were being used by the missionaries. As Colonel Dickman noted in the official campaign diary, "the missionaries wanted to show the troops simply for future effect by impressing the natives with the power of the foreign devils apparently at their disposal."[43]

Paralleling the missionary activities in rural areas were punitive expeditions designed to collectively punish communities. As armies swept through villages, they created an enormous amount of disorder, which contributed to the ranks of roving bands of robbers. Some of these groups may have been Boxer remnants, but most were probably persons displaced by six months of warfare in the region. In a case noted in December, local bands were reported carrying the flags of one or another of the allied forces and "levying tribute upon and plundering villages."[44] In other instances, deserters from the allied armies engaged in similar operations.[45] In what was perhaps the most spectacular such case, two American privates forced several Chinese at gunpoint to help them hold up a village outside Tianjin. As the wagons were being loaded, a French patrol caught them in the act. With the

testimony of the commandeered Chinese as evidence, the two were tried, convicted, dishonorably discharged, and sentenced to twenty-one years at Alcatraz.[46]

Although the American soldiers failed in this illicit activity, others appear to have been more successful. At least one case later surfaced to suggest even the "well-disciplined" British soldiers found ways of circumventing prize procedures. In 1926, a story circulated about the theft of two golden bells from the Temple of Heaven by officers of the 16th Bengal Lancers. Claiming them as "trophy," the officers had spirited them off with other items ostensibly destined for the officers' mess. Sometime around 1905, they decided to melt down one of the bells and divide the spoils, but one of their number objected, claiming the share allotted to him was insufficient.[47] This tale of "enterprise" and "initiative" is perhaps indicative of the enormous scale of the plunder of Beijing and Zhili province, a scale that to this day defies easy reckoning because with the exception of trophy, so little is known about where all the loot finally came to rest.

CIVILIZATION AND BARBARISM

In addition to enriching the plunderers, the scale of looting had other effects, one of which was to raise questions about the nature of the military expedition itself. For many in Europe and North America the allied intervention into north China was morally and politically just. From this perspective, the Boxers and the Qing government had violated international law, murdered Christian missionaries and converts, and destroyed the public and private property of foreigners in China. The expedition to relieve the legations was a high-minded mission founded on rational international law. Thus, activities such as looting could, in various ways, blemish the moral and legal principles upon which the relief expeditions were launched.

One result of these attitudes was to attach a stigma to all Chinese objects, regardless of how they had been acquired. Major-General Norman Stewart, commander of one of the British units, noted the phenomenon in his campaign diary. Expressing discomfort with the behavior of other officers and the men and women of the diplomatic corps, Stewart exclaimed that he had come to hate the sound of the word "loot." "If you happen to pick up an article which seems good, and for which you have paid the price," he observed, "you are at once asked 'Where did you loot that?' Even those who ought to know better seem to doubt your honesty. *Life under such conditions is a bit degrading.*"[48]

Stewart's sense that the honesty and integrity of Europeans and Americans, even officers, was under scrutiny is borne out in other sources, some

of which acknowledge participation in the opportunities available to obtain Chinese objects, while privately expressing moral doubts about the conditions of acquisition. For example, Leslie Grove, a U.S. Army chaplain, initially wrote his wife of the unique opportunity he had to acquire valuable Chinese curios. However, as he became more fully aware of the extent of the looting, the American missionary involvement in it, and the degree to which plunder was made acceptable through prize sales, Grove found great cause for concern. Among other things, he told his wife that he would no longer buy at the British auctions and that he was certain the missionary complicity in looting would deal a severe blow to their cause.[49]

Grove's instincts were right, but perhaps more significantly, his observations about possible consequences at home points directly to one of the major differences between 1900 and 1860—the huge explosion in media coverage of events in China. Wholly new mechanisms of information processing were in place to exploit the story on a scale unimaginable in 1860. Vastly expanded transportation and communication systems linked the east coast of China into a global steamship and railroad network capable of rushing reporters to the scene in two to three weeks. Submarine cables across the Pacific and through the Indian Ocean made it possible for newsmen to communicate by telegraph with Europe and North America at high speed. New printing technologies, particularly able to accommodate large numbers of photographs, packaged and delivered the sensational developments in China at a velocity and in a form that made information itself a spectacle, allowing for a vast expansion of vicarious audience participation in events. And audiences were not entirely predictable in their responses.

Added to this were the dramatic elements that the event itself offered for exploitation. The reports of missionaries having been killed were not only sensational news, but recalled other instances of atrocities committed against whites in the colonial world. Thus, when contact with the legations in Beijing ceased after the telegraph line to Tianjin was cut in July and the fate of the hundreds of other missionaries in China and members of the legations was unknown, the relief expedition took on epic proportions, fed by speculation and fantasies of oriental cruelty.

It was into this new media climate that "news" from north China entered. Newspaper reporters were present from the moment the allied armies landed at Dagu. Their accounts of the campaign, including vivid descriptions of looting and in some cases of atrocities committed by allied soldiers not only appeared in their own newspapers, but were picked up by others in the treaty ports and in review magazines in Europe and North America. In addition, some accounts from 1860 were republished and comparisons between the two campaigns were immediately made.[50] Even if such reports contained no negative judgments, they gave a sense of the scale of violence and the sheer breadth and scope of plunder, both of which seemed to require evaluation.

In most cases, editors and commentators justified the use of force against Chinese "barbarism" either on the grounds of retributive justice or as a timeless feature of warfare. Looting, on the other hand, appears to have been less easily reconciled with Euro-American values. That bastion of foreign privilege and treaty rights in China, the *North-China Herald*, expressed concern over reports coming from Tianjin early on. Recalling 1860, when looting had been "authorized" as a means of "punishment of the Peking Government," the editors seemed perplexed by the plunder of private, as opposed to government, property in Tianjin. The editors concluded that

> it will be a shock to the modern sentiment of the civilised world if such orgies . . . are to be the regular thing. Wherein will the much-boasted civilisation of the West appear if such deeds are the outcome of it? Our troops have come to do a necessary duty. They have to get the upper hand of a savage and sanguinary enemy, to whom murder and pillage are but the incidents of an ordinary day's work. It is to exterminate this demon, *not imitate him*, that the United Powers of Europe have sent troops, and we shall be much mistaken if the plunder of civilians in the shameless manner depicted does not raise a howl of execration from one end of the civilised world to the other.[51]

Of import here are three elements that would become central to many other critiques of looting. First, and perhaps most importantly, was the problem plunder posed to civilization. Could one be civilized, or claim the superiority of European nations, if one looted? The second, and related issue, was that question of mimicry—how could the "victims" of Chinese "barbarism" retain the moral high ground if they slavishly copied the behavior of savages? Third, looting appeared to have occurred without a sense of shame. This was not only akin to the practices of the uncivilized, but invited criticism from throughout the civilized world. When reports arrived in Shanghai of a repetition of the loot "orgy" in the Qing capital, the paper added one more element to the mix—it referred to the sack of Beijing as a "scandal." The only solace it found was in the fact that "the loot taken by the British troops was brought back to the Legation and sold by auction for the general benefit."[52]

As the *Herald* predicted, when word reached Europe of the carnival of loot, it caused a sensation. The *London Daily Express* observed that once the mission to China was accomplished, "civilization" ought to "have the grace to blush."[53] In an editorial, the *Review of Reviews* argued that the news from China was "calculated to make Europeans hang their heads for shame." Pointing to looting, loot sales in the British legation, and Russian massacres in Manchuria, the editorial concluded "we have flung aside the garb of civilization, and are acting like our piratical ancestors in the days of the Vikings. Civilization is but skin deep, and the restraints that conscience endeavours to place upon the human brute have snapped under the strain of

events in China."[54] In France a similar pattern emerged. As early as 25 August 1900, *Le Monde Illustré* fantasized about China's future *revanche* against the harsh treatment of the allies. Another French weekly, *La Vie Illustrée*, critically discussed "*La Guerre et Le Pillage en Chine*" (see figure 5.2) in great detail in its 1 February 1901 issue. In the face of such criticism, the government returned a bronze lion sent as trophy to Paris by the French com-

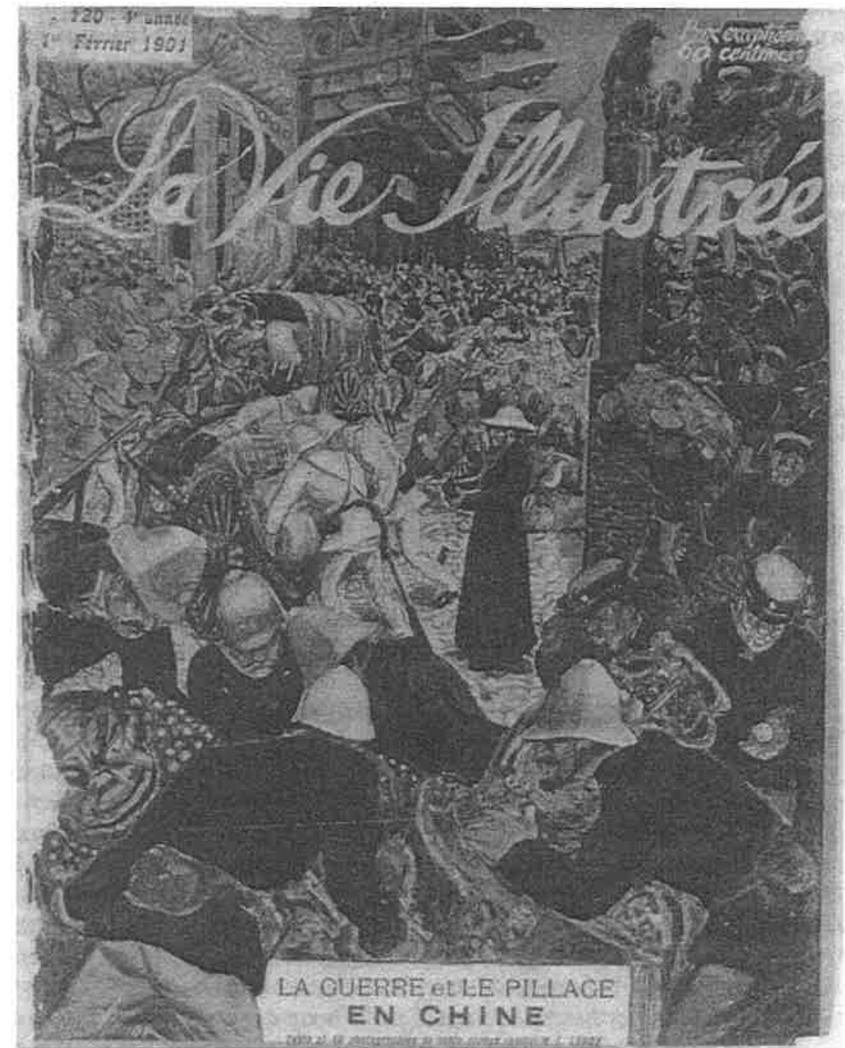

Figure 5.2. The War and the Pillage of China, cover, *La Vie Illustrée*, 1 February 1901.

mander General Frey. Similar outrage at plunder was expressed in the pages of the Japanese newspaper *Yorozu Chōhō*, which published a series of exposes between November 1901 and March 1902 (see Middleton, this volume).

Other sources echoed the sense of outrage and concern evident in the newspaper accounts. Robert Hart, the head of the Imperial Maritime Customs and a longtime resident of Beijing, noted that a bit of temptation placed before a European easily led to a "retrogression to barbarism." More importantly, he worried that "for a century to come Chinese converts will consider looting and vengeance Christian virtues!"[55] According to James Ricalton, a photographer on the scene, Li Hongzhang, the eminent official and Qing representative to the "peace" conference that would produce the Boxer Protocol, was also puzzled by the behavior of members of Western civilization. As the story went, after consulting the "Mosaic decalogue," Li suggested that "the eighth commandment should be amended to read, Thou shalt not steal, but thou mayst loot."[56] Li's criticism was all the more telling because it indirectly pointed to Christian missionary involvement in the looting.

In the United States, once word of missionary actions had circulated in American newspapers, there was an uproar. Some of the earliest reports of questionable behavior on the part of missionaries appeared in the *New York Sun*, under the byline of Wilbur Chamberlain. But what elevated the missionary question into a cause célèbre was an interview that Chamberlain conducted with the Reverend William Ament. The *Sun* published it on Christmas Eve, 1900. In it, Ament not only justified looting, but in a most un-Christian spirit, echoed other missionaries in arguing that "the soft hand of the Americans is not as good as the mailed fist of the Germans. If you deal with the Chinese with a soft hand they will take advantage of it."[57] The logic of Ament's argument prompted a response from no less a figure than the essayist, novelist, and humorist Mark Twain, one of the leading critics of American expansion into the Pacific. In an article entitled "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (*North American Review*, February 1901), Twain lampooned missionary morality and likened it to questionable American activities in the Philippines. Twain's caustic indictment generated, in turn, a defensive apologetics on the part of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Both Judson Smith and Gilbert Reid (independent missionary, formerly a member of the American Presbyterian mission) claimed that missionary looting was "high ethics," and added that American missionaries had only looted to provide money for the relief of Chinese Christians, a proposition that Twain gleefully shredded in his reply, "To my Missionary Critics."[58] Somewhat at a disadvantage in this exchange, missionary leaders nevertheless attempted to influence opinion in treaty port China; Arthur Smith joined Reid and Judson Smith in writing letters to the *North-China Herald* justifying missionary actions and criticizing Twain.[59]

While missionaries and their critics appear to have been bounded by the discursive regularities of a Christian moral universe, others attempted to mobilize history and international law to make their arguments. This was the case with John MacDonnell, who, in a piece that appeared in the *Contemporary Review*, drew attention to British prize laws. Drawing upon an 1864 Parliamentary commission on army prize procedures, which investigated instances dating back to 1807, MacDonnell argued that rather than acting as a deterrent, prize procedures, because they gave a disproportionate amount of a prize fund to officers, encouraged common soldiers to loot more.[60] But British prize procedures were only part of the issue. MacDonnell also pointed to the contradictory relationship between prize law and international agreements involving warfare that had emerged since France's defeat by Prussia in 1871.

Following that war, many European countries had acted to professionalize their armies by integrating new organizational and weapons technologies into them and improving their officer corps.[61] Over the same period of time, the rapid change in military technology led to discussions concerning the establishment of international standards for the conduct of warfare. The results of these discussions were embodied in the Hague Convention of 1899. In the sections dealing with rules of land warfare, as MacDonnell pointed out, plunder and the seizure of private property were outlawed without qualification.[62] All of the nations that invaded China in 1900 were parties to the convention, as was the Qing government.[63] While these developments did nothing to prevent a spectacular instance of looting in Beijing, they could not help but call into question the behavior of the allied armies.

For MacDonnell, therefore, the "letter and the spirit of the Hague Convention" had been violated in China. As he put it, the theory of the convention was "all that could be desired," but when dealing with "Oriental nations," if opportunity presented itself, "the old outrages were repeated." Those outrages, he added, were rooted in the practices of the British army in India, which had not only shaped prize law in the nineteenth century, but produced the most extreme examples of plunder to date.[64]

MacDonnell was not alone in pointing out that the Hague Conventions had been violated by the allied powers. Plunder was, however, only part of the issue. The *North-China Herald*, for example, while finding little fault in British prize procedures, did point to what it thought were a number of specific violations concerning "Rules and Usages of War." These included the atrocities committed by Russian forces, the punitive expeditions launched by the allied powers, the looting of the Beijing observatory, and the "charity from loot practiced by some American and British missionaries."[65] Like the *Herald*, George Lynch was also disturbed by the violation of the Hague Conventions, but perhaps more importantly, Lynch used the issue of

lawlessness to raise questions about the level of and kinds of violence directed at China by Western powers over the course of the nineteenth century.[66] Lynch's ruminations on this issue led him to conclude that the West had mistaken speed for progress, which was "propelling us like a herd of Gadarene swine over an abyss of God knows what."[67]

In "The Chinese Wolf and the European Lamb," published in the *Contemporary Review* in early 1900, E. J. Dillon also drew attention to the scale of violence leveled against the population of north China by the armies of "civilization." Like contemporary articles published by Chinese observers,[68] Dillon provided a detailed account of executions, slaughter, and all other manner of atrocities committed by the allied forces. The catalog ran from July into September and drew occasionally for emphasis on the graphic interviews about German atrocities published in the *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in October and November. Dillon concluded his piece with the following question: "Why should cultured and more or less truth-loving people persist in speaking of the glorious work of civilising China, when it is evident that they are ruining her people and demoralizing their own troops besides?"[69]

Dillon's concerns were repeated by Thomas F. Millard, an old China hand, in the pages of *Scribner's Magazine*. The allies' insistence upon revenge, Millard charged, was criminal. "Seized with a vertigo of indiscriminating vengeance," he wrote, "the powers are trifling with the peace of the world. Events such as the months of September, October and November brought to China have carried war back to the Dark Ages, and will leave a taint in the moral atmosphere of the world for a generation to come."[70]

These critical interventions into discussion of civilization and barbarism are quite significant; they indicate that neither the events that transpired in China nor the way Euro-Americans, to say nothing of Chinese, thought about them existed in a vacuum. A central element in explaining and justifying the sorts of activities that disturbed many of the writers cited here was the issue of racial difference, and especially the link between race and the progress of civilization. Directly or indirectly, race was not far from the thinking of either critics of or apologists for the actions of the allied powers in China. Moreover, race was a continual undertone throughout the campaign and the occupation of Beijing. Few accounts could not, for example, avoid mention of how surprisingly impressive the Japanese army was or ignore the presence of large numbers of Indian soldiers that made up the British contingent. One British officer even thought that contempt was being shown the British due to their having "practically no white troops" among the occupation forces.[71] Yet, whether or not this was actually the case, one cannot help but be reminded of one of the central "racial" issues of empire—were whites altered by contact with "lesser" races? Did

racial degeneration occur through contact with "brown" men, "black" men, and "yellow" men?

These questions existed, in turn, in a far broader context than the China coast, and it is probably best contextualized in widely diffused apprehensions about atavistic primitivism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As a kind of repressed element within bourgeois sensibilities about the stark division between the civilized and the savage, such concerns focused not only on "racial" mixing,[72] but on the possibility that contact with "inferior" civilizations or peoples would awaken latent desires or primitive remnants in the European psyche.[73] Thus, when real events such as the spectacular plunder of Beijing and north China or the violence directed against Chinese people exceeded rational expectations and seemed to converge with fiction, tropes from the latter were readily available for representing the meaning of European and American behavior in other than triumphalist terms. And, although there was not a thorough inversion of meaning, insofar as atrocities and plunder could serve as signs of degeneration, it was more difficult to construct the events of 1900 in the clear terms of European moral superiority that had dominated the constructs and rationales of the 1860 invasion of China.

There is a disturbing sense, evident in contemporary critiques, that the line between civilization and savagism, perhaps more than anything else, distinguishes 1860 from 1900. It also distinguishes the latter episode from earlier imperialist incursions into China and helps to explain why no great public display of 1900 occurred in Europe, North America, or Japan and why it remains difficult to identify actual 1900 loot—the bulk of it was apparently "laundered" through the art market. At the same time, some of the plunder is not completely invisible. Various objects still sit on display as "legitimate" trophy from the Boxer "Rebellion" in national and regimental museums of the countries that invaded China in 1900. However, as far as I have been able to discern, since the government of France refused to accept the "trophies" of General Frey, there has been only one instance of repatriation. In 1955, Otto Grotewohl, an official of the now defunct German Democratic Republic, returned a Boxer banner and other artifacts taken by the German army in 1900 to Zhou Enlai at a ceremony held in Beijing.[74]

Outside of this gesture of socialist solidarity, looting in China by civilian and military representatives of Euro-American imperial powers and Japan has been forgotten or ignored. As is the case with objects taken from colonial Africa and Asia, public institutions that hold verified or suspected China loot cloak themselves in the garb of curators of human heritage and seldom acknowledge the dubious provenance of their collections. This remains a curious stance, especially at a time when the issue of looting during World War II in Europe has not only been raised, but repatriation and

monetary compensation has occurred. The failure to address the issue of plunder will continue to haunt relations between the West and the former colonial world until contemporary nation-states find an equitable way to deal with the legitimate grievances stemming from past wars. This is no less an issue for postcolonial African and Asian nationalists today than it is for their counterparts in China.

NOTES

Portions of this essay appeared in James L. Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth Century China* (Durham and Hong Kong: Duke University Press, 2003).

1. Among recent Chinese scholarship, the most comprehensive account is Li Decheng, Su Weizhi, and Liu Tianlu, *Baguo lianjun qinhua shi* [A history of the Eight Power invasion] (Ji'nan: Shandong University Press, 1990). Also see articles and materials collected in Su Weizhi and Liu Tianlu, eds., *Yihetuan yanjiu yibai nian* [One hundred years of Boxer studies] (Ji'nan: Qi-Lu shushe, 2000).
2. Reverend Roland Allen, *The Siege of the Peking Legations* (London: Smith, Elder & Co. Allen, 1901), 231.
3. The *Herald* cited in Bob Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers: Australia Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising* (Sidney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 111, and W. A. P. Martin, *The Siege of Peking* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1900), 134.
4. See Polly Condit Smith's account of succumbing to the lure of plunder in Mary Hooker, *Behind the Scenes in Peking* (1910; reprint edition, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1987), 189–90.
5. Garnet Wolseley, *Narrative of the War With China in 1860* (1862: reprint edition, Willmington, DE.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1972), 225–27.
6. *The Celestial Empire*, March 6, 1901, notes that a British private had sold some items through the Stevens house. In 1913, Stevens sold a Chinese drum said to have been captured by the 39th Regiment at Beijing during the Boxer Rebellion. See National Art Library, London, auction house catalogues, 23.ZZ.
7. On London and Paris auctions see James L. Hevia, "Loot's Fate," *History and Anthropology* 6, no. 4 (1994): 326, 341–42, and *English Lessons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 91–95.
8. See Hevia, "Loot's Fate," 326–31.
9. See James L. Hevia, "Looting Beijing: 1860, 1900," in *Tokens of Exchange*, ed. Lydia Liu (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 201–3.
10. Most of the contemporary sources acknowledge as much. The American periodical *Harper's Weekly* even ran two pieces on the sack of Tianjin that discussed different patterns of looting among the various armies. See Oscar King Davis, "The Looting of Tientsin," *Harper's Weekly* 44 (September 15, 1900): 863–64, and Charles Denby, "Loot and the Man," *Harper's Weekly* 44 (27 October 1900): 1008–9.
11. Lady MacDonald's involvement in looting was reported by Peter Fleming, *The Siege of Peking* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 243. G. E. Morrison, *Times* correspondent in Beijing, noted in his diary that General Norman Stewart complained in the officers' mess about the MacDonalds' having at least 185 crates of plunder by November; see Cyril Pearl, *Morrison of Peking* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson Ltd., 1967), 151. The number of crates comes from Whiting's unpublished journal cited in Frederic Sharf and Peter Harrington, *China, 1900* (London: Greenhill Books, 2000), 222–23. Also see Susanna Hoe, *Women at the Siege, Peking 1900* (Oxford: Holo Books, 2000), 196.
12. Alfred Waldersee, *A Field Marshal's Memoirs*, trans. Frederic White (London: Hutcheson & Co., 1924), 221, and W. Meyrick Hewlett cited in Sterling Seagrave, *Dragon Lady* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 367.
13. Stanley Smith, *China From Within: Or the Story of the Chinese Crisis* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1901), 128; Richard Steel, *Through Peking's Sewer Gate*, ed. George W. Carrington (New York: Vantage Press, 1985), 59; and the diary of Lieutenant Colonel Gartside-Tipping, National Army Museum (London), 6902/3, no. 2, p. 20.
14. B. L. Putnam Weale [pseud. Bertram Lenox Simpson], *Indiscreet Letters from Peking: Being the Notes of an Eye-witness, Which Set Forth in some Detail, from Day to Day, the Real Story of the Siege and Sack of a Distressed Capital in 1900, the Year of Great Tribulation* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1907; reprinted, New York: Arno Press & the *New York Times*, 1970), 334, 349, 354.
15. Hevia, "Loot's Fate," 321–24.
16. Norman Stewart, *My Service Days* (London: John Ouseley, 1908), 241–42.
17. Rules for prize commissions had been well established by parliamentary law and military regulations for some time; see Hevia, "Looting Beijing," 194–96. According to a War Office report of 1903, investigators found only a few instances of prize funds actually being allocated in any military actions from the Crimean War forward. This led them to conclude that prize was "a thing of the past." It had gradually been phased out and replaced by a cash gratuity for hardship and campaigning; see WO33/6338. This could also explain why Gaselee expressed doubts and confusion over invoking prize procedures.
18. The War Office's *Manual of Military Law* (first edition 1884), in a section entitled "The Customs of War," noted that the seizure of scientific or art objects was "incompatible with the admitted restrictions" of depriving the enemy of war-making resources, and "could only be justified as a measure of retaliation." Within a page, however, the editors acknowledged that officers should attempt to prevent pillage *and* noted procedures, identical to those found in prize law, for dealing with its results. At the same time, they indicated that the regulations therein were compiled only for the use of officers and had no official authority. See War Office, *Manual of Military Law* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1887), 311–13. This is the second edition. The sections cited here are the same in the third and fourth editions of 1893 and 1899.

This seeming uncertainty and confusion over the status of plunder in time of war was also evident in army regulations. *The Queen's Regulations* of 1868, for example, forbade plunder and indicated that officers had a duty to prevent it—no mention was made of prize money; see *Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Army* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1868), vol. 2, 186. In contrast, the *King's Regulations* of 1901 contained a section on prize, noting that it was the property of the crown and therefore subject to acts of parliament; see *King's Regulations and Orders for the Army* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1901), 50.