The Chinese Labour Corps on the Western Front: Management, Discipline, and Crime

by

Peter Burrows

Canterbury Christ Church University

Thesis submitted

for the degree of MA by Research in History

2018

Contents

Word Count - **29,956**

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisors for their time, guidance, and invaluable advice during the research and write up of this study. Their continued support and encouragement have made writing this dissertation a considerably easier task.

I would also like to thank the University of Leeds' Special Collections Library and the Imperial War Museum for permission to reproduce archival material for the purposes of this research.

Finally, I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to my parents for their continual support and encouragement throughout my academic years, and during the completion of this dissertation. I would also like to thank my partner, Pinchi, for her unremitting patience, understanding, and reassurance while I completed this research. Without them, this work would not have been possible. Thank you.

Author

Peter Burrows

Abstract

This dissertation examines the events surrounding the formation and deployment of the Chinese Labour Corps during the Great War. It covers the period from 1917 to 1922, during which Britain recruited around 100,000 Chinese labourers to offset its severe manpower shortages. In lieu of the fact that the Chinese Labour Corps has been relatively overlooked in histories on the First World War, the dissertation seeks to extend the limited amount of research available. It starts by contextualising the corps in the international framework of the early twentieth century. Next, it assesses a contemporary view, that the Chinese labourers were disobedient, and prone to criminal behaviour. It highlights evidence that British management methods were largely responsible for disciplinary issues, and critically examines the perception of the Chinese as prone to dishonesty and criminal behaviour. Having done this, it also highlights the fact that the labourers were, in many cases, victims of crimes. In an attempt to counterbalance the negative views of the Chinese workers offered by a number of primary sources, an illustration of some of the most positive examples of Chinese contributions to the Allied war effort follows. The dissertation concludes with a final investigation into the philosophy, morality, and legality of British management techniques. It is hoped that this investigation will contribute to a deeper understanding of the Great War, and also to Anglo-Chinese history, race relations, and the British Empire more broadly.

Introduction

In 1917, Britain recruited roughly 100,000 Chinese labourers to work in Europe, behind the frontlines.[1] These labourers completed logistical tasks: managing cargo, digging trenches, clearing explosives, repairing roads and railways, and building huts.[2] These men constituted the Chinese Labour Corps, and their employment meant that significant British manpower could be freed up from labour divisions to reinforce the frontline. During their service, the Chinese earned a mixed reputation in the eyes of their British employers – a reputation heavily tied to contemporary racial stereotypes. They were renowned for their child-like innocence, remarkable endurance, and aptitude for hard work.[3] Simultaneously, they were widely considered to be immoral men, unruly workers, and skilful thieves.[4] In managing this large number of foreign workers, the British enforced military discipline and called upon their experience as imperial administrators. For all this, the relationship of the Chinese labour with their British overseers was turbulent. Upon repatriation in 1921, they were acknowledged as being crucial to victory, and simultaneously airbrushed from history.[5] Until recently, this airbrushing appears to have been the lasting legacy, as accounts of this vital part of Great War history have been all but absent from scholarly discourse on the subject.

---

[1] Dan Waters, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in the First World War: Labourers Buried in France,' *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 35, (1995): pp.199-203, p.199.
[2] Xu Guo Qi, *Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), p.88.
[3] Private Papers of Captain A McCormick, Imperial War Museum (IWM), Documents.11906, p.206; Xu Guo Qi, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.87; Daryl Klein, *With the Chinks* (Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2009), p.35.
[4] W. R. Ludlow War Diary, 19th November 1917, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0984; Douglas Wilson War Diary, 18th May 1918, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1761; Brian C Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France: 1917-1921,' *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 40, (2000): pp.33-111, p.48.
[5] Enclosure in Vice-Consul Archer to Sir Beilby Alston, 13th June, 1921, Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. V, National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK), FO 228/2896; Xu Guo Qi, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.101.

In 1989, David Killingray asserted that 'In the vast literature on warfare… little has been written about the recruitment, organisation and deployment of non-combatant labour required to service and supply the fighting line'.[6] While research on the subject of military labour has accelerated in the approximately thirty years since then, certain components continue to be neglected. The Chinese Labour Corps is one such example. Only a handful of texts even mention the men who made the arduous journey to Europe, relieving the Allied manpower crisis, and allowing for the continuation of a war that would have otherwise been impossible. In a rare, brief account on the subject, Mark O'Neill laments that while Great War 'History books describe military campaigns involving tens of thousands of men', there is very little accounting for the single largest foreign labour corps employed on the Western Front.[7] He expresses a level of bewilderment that they would go under-studied for so long.[8] His surprise is understandable because the Chinese Labour Corps is relevant to a number of other well-studied topics and trends. Not only was it a crucial factor in the Allied victory over the Central Powers (the French, while not a primary topic of this dissertation, also recruited Chinese workers), and therefore presumably of key interest to Great War historians, but its origin, reception, treatment, and ongoing experience was heavily rooted in the long history of British imperialism.[9] It therefore links to themes of colonialism, nationalism, race, slavery, exploitation, and a number of other common tropes which characterised

[6] David Killingray, 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa, 1870-1945,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 3 (1989): pp.483-501, p.483.
[7] Mark O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps: The Forgotten Chinese Labourers of the First World War* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2014): p.3.
[8] Ibid, pp.1-4.
[9] John Starling and Ivor Lee, *No Labour, No Battle: Military Labour During the First World War* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2014), pp.297-298, 302-304; Xu Guo Qi, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.104-108.

nineteenth century imperialism.[10] Of course, all of these topics have been discussed at length by scholars of empire, but the same attention has not embraced the Chinese Labour Corps. It is unclear why this is the case, as all of these themes consistently surface throughout the corps' narrative. Yet the Chinese Labour Corps barely surface in writings on the British Empire, or the First World War specifically.

This oversight is not limited to western research. Chinese histories have neglected this significant part of their twentieth century experience as well.[11] This is surprising as the Chinese Labour Corps played a significant part in influencing internal Chinese politics after the war, primarily as a result of the Chinese government's inability to secure the interests it had hoped for when devising the scheme in the first place.[12] In 1919 a mood of nationalism led many young students in Beijing to protest the government's failure, and this subsequently spread throughout China.[13] This affected Chinese politics at a grass-root level, and also served to undermine an already unstable government.[14] Moreover, the narrative of the Chinese Labour Corps had significant implications for the state of diplomatic relations between China and Britain, France, Japan, and the United States.[15] The faith that the Chinese government had placed on the west, particularly U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, was shown to be naivety, or self-deception.[16] Despite their contribution in terms of labour (and subsequent entry into the war in 1917), China was side-lined at the Versailles peace negotiations, and hopes that the leading powers would

[10] John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2013), passim.
[11] Mark O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.2.
[12] John Keay, *China: A History* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009), pp.503-506.
[13] Ibid, p.503.
[14] Ibid, pp.503-506.
[15] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.109-110; John Keay, *China*, p.503-504.
[16] Keay, *China*, pp.503-504.

allow China an advantageous settlement were thwarted under the international and political realities of the early twentieth century. A marked distrust emerged and lasted long into the century. That this has not grabbed the attention of Chinese scholars is surprising. Given China's rise to pre-eminence in modern world politics, it is remarkable that such a substantial aspect of its journey has gone relatively unremarked. Of course, this can also be said for western scholars of China's history and politics; there having been an increase in the interest generated by China only in recent years.[17]

Where articles and books covering the Chinese Labour Corps do exist, the scope of study is often vague and brief at worst, or generalised at best. Mark O'Neill's *The Chinese Labour Corps* is one such example, providing a brief introductory overview on the subject.[18] Another is John Starling and Ivor Lee's *No Labour, No Battle*. While focusing exclusively on Great War labour, this book includes only thirteen pages on the Chinese Labour Corps, and a few references elsewhere.[19] Nuanced and surgical examinations of key themes, such as those mentioned above, are almost entirely absent from the majority of texts – with only one or two exceptions (the most obvious being Peter Wang's article on the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) with the Chinese Labour Corps in France, and Nicholas Griffin's *Chinese Labor and British Christian Missionaries in France*).[20] Even the most comprehensive work to date – Xu Guo Qi's *Strangers on the Western Front* – while raising and discussing a number of key

[17] Daniel A. Bell, *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp.3-4.
[18] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, passim.
[19] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, pp.297-309.
[20] Peter Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders: The YMCA and Chinese Laborers in World War I Europe,' *Church History* 78, no. 2 (2009): pp.327-349; Nicholas Griffin, 'Chinese Labor and British Christian Missionaries in France, 1917-1919,' *Journal of Church and State* 20, no. 2 (1978): pp.287-304.

issues and themes, fails to explore these in significant depth.[21] Of course, that most texts tend to provide overview based accounts is understandable. After all, the majority of readers are presumably ignorant of the subject, as there has been no easy access to information until recently. But the lack of clinical exploration of precise themes requires remedying given the significance of the Chinese Labour Corps to our understanding not just of European and Chinese military, cultural, or social history, but also race relations, and the international political discourse of the twentieth century.

This dissertation will explore some key issues surrounding the Chinese Labour Corps. Firstly, a more thorough look at the international context surrounding the corps' creation is needed, as previous research lacks contextual depth. Without this background, the Chinese Labour Corps becomes an isolated development, devoid of meaning and implications beyond its impact on the outcome of the war. Moreover, the wider context which surrounded and predated the corps provides the key to understanding. It is, for example, impossible to explain the corps' creation without an understanding of Britain's position in China at the turn of the century. Nor could Chinese proposals to provide labour be understood without knowledge of China's turbulent domestic and international political position. Likewise, it would be impossible to understand the management methods the British employed without reference to its imperial past. Thus, a clear explanation of the wider contextual narrative is crucial before any subsequent themes are discussed.

[21] Xu Guo Qi, *Strangers on the Western Front*, passim.

Secondly, this dissertation will confront a common observation in respect of the Chinese Labour Corps: that the Chinese men involved lacked discipline, were unruly, and prone to criminal behaviour.[22] This issue appears regularly in both primary and secondary literature on the subject. While comments have been made to the effect that British management methods were at least partially to blame, this discussion intends to critically analyse the British administration of the corps, with a view to deepening understanding of the labourers' behaviours, and offering alternative explanations.[23] This is important given that the British often punished the Chinese harshly, and deciding whether or not this punishment was justifiable has considerable implications for how we view British imperial administrative methods. Therefore, the commentary and critique of British management methods will be ongoing and consistent. Additionally, while most texts on the topic point out that the Chinese were responsible for a number of crimes in France, there is less discussion of crimes committed against the labourers. This dissertation will illustrate that criminal activity was a two-way street, and subsequently highlight an important aspect of early twentieth century race relations.

Having completed this examination, there will be a review of the most positive examples of Chinese contributions, and a commentary on how the British rewarded this. This section is brief due to the fact that meritorious behaviour was either uncommon, or frequently unrecorded.[24] The repatriation of the Chinese is tied in with the discussion. There will also be an examination of how the British sought to compensate the Chinese

[22] Report on the Work of Labour During the War, November, 1919, Office of the Commander in Chief and War Office: Quartermaster General's Department: Correspondence and Papers, NAUK, WO 107/37, pp.52-55; Daryl Klein, *With the Chinks*, p.147; Private Papers of Captain A McCormick, IWM, Documents.11906, p.208; Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, pp.304-305; Brian Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.48; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.145-146.
[23] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.83, 146.
[24] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.305.

labourers in cases of injury, or their families in the case of their deaths. Again, this discussion is pertinent to our understanding of British imperial administrative methods, and illustrates a common theme within these. Finally, the dissertation attempts to provide a wider philosophical, moral, and legal analysis of British management. It is hoped that this section will explain some of the decisions the British made, while critically questioning others. It also aims to open up a number of issues surrounding the labour corps to wider discussion, with the intention of providing an alternative way of framing the Chinese Labour Corps, and its relationship with the British.

Before proceeding, it should be mentioned that a number of sources quoted within this dissertation contain language rightfully considered abhorrent by modern standards. This language reflects the racial views of actors and commentators at the time, and is therefore both relevant to the investigation at hand, and our wider understanding of the history of race relations. For this reason, it is necessary to include it in quotes and to reflect contemporary prejudices. It does not, however, in any way reflect the views of the author.

Britain

The First World War saw the greatest mobilisation of manpower Britain had known to date. A war which had begun in 1914, with much the same expectations as other European conflicts within the previous century (mobile campaigns and a quick resolution to hostilities), quickly evolved into a stalemate.[1] Britain spent the first two years of the war attempting to downplay its contribution on land in favour of providing financial and naval support.[2] Having entered the war with a comparatively small professional army (in relation to the continental powers), Britain attempted to expand the size of its army through the recruitment of volunteers.[3] However, following France's costly offensives in 1915 and a German offensive at Verdun the following year, pressure was placed on Britain to play a proactive role.[4] On 1 July 1916, Britain entered the offensive fray at the Somme. The first day of the battle alone saw 57,000 British casualties; the Official History totals the number at the close of battle at 419,654.[5] This devastated the volunteer army recruited over the previous two years.[6] Due to concerns about the manpower issue,

[1] Bernadotte E. Schmitt, 'The First World War, 1914-1918,' *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103, no. 3 (1959): pp.321-331, pp.324-325; J. H. Johnson, *Stalemate! The Great Trench Warfare Battles of 1915-1917* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1995), p.7.
[2] Elizabeth Greenhalgh, 'David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and the 1918 Manpower Crisis,' *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 2 (2007): pp.397-421, p.398.
[3] John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.331.
[4] J. P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.209-210.
[5] Wilfrid Miles, ed., *Official History of the War: Military Operations, France and Belgium 1916, Volume II* (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1992), pp.1, 497.
[6] J. H. Johnson, *Stalemate!*, p.87.

conscription had been introduced for single men in spring that year: it was extended in the winter to include married men, too.[7]

Manpower issues meant that Britain could ill afford to spare men for labour battalions.[8] Therefore, it was forced to look to other nations in hope of meeting its labour requirements. This was far from novel for the British. In the previous two centuries, imperial administrators had often 'employed' foreign labour for the maintenance of the British military and its empire. Robert Johnson illustrates a fundamental reason for this in his article on the Carnatic Wars of the mid-1700s: 'South Asian personnel were critically important to the British military effort… Since European personnel were relatively few in number, they were compelled to augment their strength with… indigenous men'. He continues, 'As in other theatres of war… the recruitment of military labour into armies from beyond the parent state was common'.[9] This was the price of administrating a vast imperial tract with, as John Darwin observes, 'no wish to inject more resources [of manpower and force] than [Britain]… thought required'.[10] The result was that, at varying levels of urgency, British administrators frequently used foreign labour as a 'cost effective' work force.[11] The difference in 1916 was that Britain no longer had the luxury of deciding the level of resources it wished to 'inject'.

[7] Brock Millman, 'A Counsel of Despair: British Strategy and War Aims, 1917-18,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 2 (2001): pp.241-270, p.250.
[8] O' Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.20.
[9] Robert Johnson, ''True to Their Salt', Mechanisms for Recruiting and Managing Military Labour in the Army of the East India Company During the Carnatic Wars in India,' in *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative Study of Military Labour, 1500-2000,* ed. Erik-Jan Zurcher (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), pp.267-290, p.267.
[10] Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.11.
[11] David Killingray, 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns,' pp.486-488.

There was, however, an issue with the traditional sources of overseas labour. While India and Britain's African colonies were commonly 'tapped' to fill the imperial labour pool, the men recruited from these lands were often utilised in either their native regions, or areas of the British Empire, such as the West Indies.[12] In 1916, the idea of introducing black or 'uncivilised' workmen into Europe was repugnant to many. There was a widespread fear that it would 'undermine the image of western civilization and the empire'.[13] There were proposals to use West African labour as early as March 1916: proposals that 'the Colonial Office… strongly resisted'.[14] This feeling of unease and dissatisfaction was shared by the French authorities. For those familiar with European imperialism, this is unsurprising. Both the British and French Empires assumed an intrinsic racial superiority in their pursuit of empire (even French inclusion of the Tirailleurs in its army required careful manipulation of existing racial perceptions of Africans).[15] It afforded them the right to assign an inherent value on people according to their ethnicity, culture, and geographical origin.[16] At the apex of the racial hierarchy were the 'civilised whites'.[17] This belief functioned as a justification for the existence of colonialism: the 'civilised' had a right to rule over the 'uncivilised', for their own good.[18] The belief justified manipulation and exploitation of foreign lands, possessions, and

[12] Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies: 1838-1918* (London: The John Hopkins Press Ltd, 1993), p.19; Kwabena Opare Akurang-Parry, 'Colonial Forced Labor Policies for Road-Building in Southern Ghana and International Anti-Forced Labor Pressures, 1900-1940,' *African Economic History* 28, (2000): pp.1-25, p.1; David Killingray, 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns,' p.489.
[13] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.24.
[14] David Killingray and James Matthews, 'Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War,' *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 13, no. 1/2 (1979): pp.7-23, p.11.
[15] Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, pp.396-399; Nicole M. Zehfuss, 'From Stereotype to Individual: World War I Experiences with 'Tirailleurs Senegalais',' *French Colonial History* 6, no. 1 (2005): pp.137-157, p.141.
[16] Mark Harrison, 'Science and the British Empire,' *Isis* 96, no. 1 (2005): pp.56-63, pp.58-59; Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.266.
[17] R. A. Huttenback, 'The British Empire as a 'White Man's Country' – Racial Attitudes and Immigration Legislation in the Colonies of White Settlement,' *Journal of British Studies* 13, no. 1 (1973): pp.108-137, pp.108-109; Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, pp.396-397.
[18] Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2004), pp.262-263; A. P. Thornton, 'Colonialism,' *International Journal* 17, no. 4 (1962): pp.335-357, p.335; Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.266.

people. By the late 1800s, 'world domination' was a 'racial prerogative': a 'White Man's Burden' that 'must be undertaken for the good of civilisation'.[19] These attitudes had become an intrinsic part of national identity for both Britain and France.[20] The import of foreign labour risked affecting the colonial's perception of the West, and upsetting the status quo – which both powers undoubtedly expected to resume after the war.[21] Having helped them to victory, it was possible that foreigners might demand equal rights to their white 'masters'.[22] Additionally, especially for the French, there was a perceived risk posed by the unavoidable miscegenation between white women and foreign workers – threatening to distort the racial divide, and undermine society.[23] Moreover, the war undermined the colonials' fundamental justification for rule: that they were bringing civilisation to the colonised.[24] Allowing foreign workers to observe the conflict between white Europeans would make it difficult to subsequently uphold this claim. Thus, it was only after alternative options were exhausted that Britain accepted the need for foreign labour.[25]

The issue of race dictated many of the decisions made. Workers were recruited in varying numbers dependent on the views and prejudices the British held towards their nationalities. Brian Fawcett summarises these views: 'Egyptians (thought to be reliable),

[19] Niall Ferguson, *Empire*, p.267.
[20] Stephen Heathorn, ''Let Us Remember That We, Too, Are English': Constructions of Citizenship and National Identity in English Elementary School Reading Books, 1880-1914,' *Victorian Studies* 38, no. 3 (1995): pp.395-427, pp.395, 397, 401, 407-408; Tyler Stovall, 'National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers: Whiteness and the Exclusion of Colonial Labor after World War I,' *Representations* 84, no. 1 (2003): pp.52-72, p.55.
[21] Timothy C. Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.1.
[22] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.19.
[23] Richard S. Fogarty, 'Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing in France during the Great War,' *Historical Reflections* 34, no. 1 (2008): pp.50-72, pp.50-51.
[24] Ferguson, *Empire*, pp.303-304.
[25] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.25.

Indians (considered to be lazy and… affected by the climate), Maltese (who Kitchener thought bad workers)…'.[26] While concern regarding the familiarity of foreigners with cold climates could be a legitimate issue, blanketing an entire nation's workers as 'lazy' seems less warranted. But even the concerns over climate familiarity were at times given a profoundly racial edge. The Inspector General of Communications was recorded as stating that 'black men would die like flies in the winter'.[27] Whether this expression was meant innocently is debatable, although there seems to be a degree of racial degradation in comparing 'black men' to 'flies'. Ultimately, workers were still recruited from far-flung regions, despite prevailing British racial prejudices: 'manpower demands in wartime could overcome peacetime prejudices very rapidly'.[28] This may be true from an administrative standpoint, but it did not reflect civilian attitudes, as will be discussed later.[29]

British attitudes towards China were more complex. Over time, there appears to have been a steady decline in the esteem in which China was held by Britain. In the early-mid 1700s, China was viewed positively. Indeed, 'some commentators contrasted the orderly rule of its rational 'scholar-mandarins' favourably with that of Europe's aristocracies'. [30] Problems seem to have arisen shortly afterwards, as Chinese administrators presented obstacles to British trade and expansion in mainland China.[31] Only one concession was made to foreign merchants: they were allowed to trade in

[26] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.35.
[27] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.96.
[28] Robert Johnson, ''True to Their Salt',' p.270.
[29] Tyler Stovall, 'The Color Line Behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France During the Great War,' *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998): pp.737-769, passim.
[30] Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.122.
[31] Ibid, pp.122-124, 186; David McLean, 'Commerce, Finance, and British Diplomatic Support in China, 1885-86,' *The Economic History Review* 26, no. 3 (1973): pp.464-476, p.465.

Canton.[32] As a result, Britain set up trading posts in the late 1600s.[33] The ensuing trade became lucrative for both parties, but was kept under strict Chinese supervision.[34] The situation deteriorated when Chinese administrators prohibited the import of Britain's most financially valuable commodity: opium.[35] Yet, the diplomacy had always been fragile as a result of conflicting British and Chinese world views. The Chinese government had long appeared arrogant to foreigners: China believing in the superiority of its civilization.[36] British merchants and ambassadors, receiving what they felt to be repeated insults from the Chinese, desired equality in diplomacy and trade.[37] Between 1839 and 1900, Britain went to war with China three times. In 1840 and 1857, two 'Opium Wars' were fought, ostensibly as a result of Chinese interference with the opium trade (the income from which was vital for British rule in India), but arguably they were driven more by a desire to seek redress for insult.[38] In fact, the Treaty of Nanjing, which ended the first war, 'made no explicit reference to opium'.[39] In 1899, the anti-foreign Boxer uprising (and the Chinese government's subsequent approval of the Boxers) led Britain, in alliance with five other nations, to war with China for a third time.[40] These conflicts resulted in an increase in Britain's influence in China. By the twentieth century, Britain had increased its number of trading ports, taken possession of Hong Kong, secured

[32] Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2012), p.18.
[33] Liam D'Arcy-Brown, *Chusan: The Opium Wars and the Forgotten Story of Britain's First Chinese Island* (Kenilworth: Takeaway Publishing, 2012), p.19.
[34] Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.123; Keay, *China*, pp.455-457.
[35] Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, pp.77-87.
[36] Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012), pp.30-31; Bob Carruthers, ed. *The First Opium War: The Chinese Expedition 1840-1842* (Stratford upon Avon: Coda Books Ltd, 2013), p.10.
[37] Keay, *China*, pp.461-462, 464; Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.123.
[38] Ferguson, *Empire*, pp.165, 166; Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p.81.
[39] Ferguson, *Empire*, p.165.
[40] Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China's War on Foreigners that Shook the World in the Summer of 1900* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2000), pp.52, 78-79, 83, 345; Westad, *Restless Empire*, p.129; Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.186.

equality in diplomatic dealings, and levied a mammoth indemnity of £67,500,000 on China.[41] Britain essentially opened China through force.

The turbulent Anglo-Chinese relations of the nineteenth century undoubtedly left a lasting impression on the British. This partially explains why early Chinese proposals for assistance in the Great War were rebuffed by British administrators. In summer 1914, the Chinese president's chief advisor, Liang Shi-Yi, proposed a combined offensive to recover German owned Jiaozhou Bay.[42] Britain declined the offer immediately.[43] As O'Neill explains, 'Britain believed… it did not need the support of China and its weak military. More importantly… Britain was the world's largest imperial power and did not want to disturb the colonial order by forming an alliance with a semi-colonised country'.[44] Chinese proposals in 1915 to contribute both workers and soldiers were also declined.[45] This was for similar reasons as before, but also due to opposition from Japan, Britain's primary ally in East Asia.[46] Japan's imperial expansion in China would be seriously hampered if China became an official ally of Britain.[47] It would be likely that the western powers would pay more attention to China if it entered the war, and Japan was relishing the fact that the leading powers were distracted in Europe.[48]

[41] Robert Nield, 'Treaty Ports and Other Foreign Stations in China,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 50, no. 1 (2010): pp.123-139, p.123; Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p.84; Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p.310.
[42] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.6.
[43] Ibid, p.7.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.23-24.
[46] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.7-8.
[47] Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919* (United States: The Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), p.2.
[48] Ibid, p.2.

There were further obstacles to Chinese involvement in 1915 in the shape of British trade unions.[49] A fear that Chinese workers would be employed in Britain, undermining the jobs of British workers, meant that unions adamantly opposed proposals to use Chinese labour.[50] This concern was not limited to Britain: the United States enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 for the same reason.[51] As early as April 1914, 3000 British workers protested against Chinese labour, 'not because those men were… Chinamen… but because they lowered the standard of living for white men'.[52] Illustrating how concerned the British government was at the prospect of angering the trade unions, Chinese labourers would never work in Britain.[53] Chinese workers did, however, transit through Britain in order to support the military effort in France.[54] But recruitment was conducted in secret by the British government through fear of public outcry.[55]

Government authority to recruit Chinese labour was granted on 3 September, 1916.[56] Despite its desperation for workers, Britain maintained a desire to source men from the areas it believed would provide the best labourers. This was not novel for British recruitment drives.[57] As the Chinese satisfied British concerns regarding work ethic, it was merely a matter of sourcing men most suited to manual labour, and the European

[49] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.24-25.
[50] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.19.
[51] Kenneth Chew, Mark Leach, and John. M. Liu, 'The Revolving Door to Gold Mountain: How Chinese Immigrants Got Around U.S. Exclusion and Replenished the Chinese American Labor Pool, 1900-1910,' *The International Migration Review* 43, no. 2 (2009): pp.410-430, p.411.
[52] Chinese Labour: Protest by the Clyde Transport Workers, *Daily Record and Mail*, 21 April, 1914, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000728/19140421/069/0003?browse=False (accessed 10 September, 2018).
[53] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.25.
[54] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.301.
[55] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.27-28.
[56] Report on the Work of Labour During the War, NAUK, WO 107/37, p.45.
[57] Madhwi, 'Recruiting Indentured Labour for Overseas Colonies, Circa 1834- 1910,' *Social Scientist* 43, no. 9/10 (2015): pp.53-68, p.53.

climate.[58] As a result, most Chinese labourers were recruited in Shandong, North East China.[59] Recruitment was initially slow, which the British believed was due to Chinese fears that they would be used for militaristic ends.[60] The problem was exacerbated by German propaganda pamphlets, suggesting that the Chinese would be used in combat, which were spread in response to French recruitment.[61] Once assurances were given that no workers would be involved in any fighting, recruitment accelerated.[62] Chinese applicants would locate to Weihai Wei, which is where British shipping was centred (although this was moved to Qingdao after it was taken from Germany).[63] Weihai Wei was a convenient location for the British, who had held a lease on the port since 1898.[64] Applicants would undergo a physical examination, whereat, Fawcett estimates 'between 30% and 60% were rejected as medically unfit mostly due to eye troubles'.[65] That so many Chinese were turned down was less out of concern for the Chinamen than for fear of infecting the British.[66] Most of the candidates rejected were suffering from Trachoma: a highly contagious eye disease which, as a senior ophthalmic surgeon wrote later in 1930, was 'practically extinct in England… [while] rampant in some Eastern countries'.[67] The disease spreading among the labourers alone would have caused serious complications. A War Office report from 1917 attests, 'When about 10,000 labourers had arrived, [it was] realised that considerable number of Chinese would have to be dealt with who were

[58] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.35.
[59] Klein, W*ith the Chinks*, pp.7-8.
[60] Staling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.298
[61] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.15-16.
[62] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.298.
[63] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.36; Private Papers of G. E. Cormack, IWM, Documents.1932, p.17.
[64] Robert Nield, 'Treaty Ports and Other Foreign Stations in China,' p.129.
[65] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.36.
[66] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.24.
[67] N. Bishop Harman, 'Observations on the Control of Trachoma,' *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 3637 (1930): pp.457-460, p.457.

suffering from severe disease called Trachoma [sic]'. While these men were cared for, 'Steps were taken… to keep these labourers separate from the clean men'.[68]

Applicants, having passed medical examination, were required to sign a contract. In light of Britain's history of labour exploitation, it is unsurprising that the terms laid out were, '[under] detailed, very brief, and intentionally misleading'.[69] This was an improvement, however, on the 'recruitment' campaigns Britain was conducting elsewhere at this time. Killingray presents the case of Nwose, a Southern Nigerian who was forcibly conscripted for labour use during the Kamerun campaign. Nwose recalls:

> I did not know where we were going to, but the chief and the messenger said that the white man had sent for us and so we must go… The white man wrote our names in a book, tied a brass number ticket round our neck, and gave each man a blanket and food. Then he told us we were going to the great war [sic] to help the king's soldiers who were preventing the Germans coming to our country and burning it… The Government police led the way, and allowed no man to stop behind.[70]

Killingray concludes that, 'his experience was a common one for hundreds of thousands of African peasants'.[71] These workers often earned meagre wages; just enough to avoid the accusation of enslavement.[72] That Britain was recruiting on a contractual basis in China reflects the involvement of the Chinese government in the scheme. The

[68] Report on the Work of Labour During the War, NAUK, WO 107/37, pp.47-48.
[69] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.39.
[70] Killingray, 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns,' p.484.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Kent Fedorowich, 'The British Empire on the Move, 1760-1914,' in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), pp.63-100, p.63; A. R. Dilley, 'The Economics of Empire,' in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), pp.101-129, p.112.

fact that Britain required the co-operation of Chinese administrators before it could begin recruitment, meant it would have been impossible to have obtained workers by employing the same exploitative methods used for indigenous Africans.[73] The Chinese government took an active approach to ensuring the welfare of the Chinese recruits.[74] Britain, therefore, provided a contract – although one seemingly most favourable to itself. The contract merely stipulated the duration of employment, payment (including compensation for death or injury), that the work would involve labour and non-inclusion in any military operations, and that the contract could be terminated at any time by the British authorities.[75] This ambiguity arguably caused a number of later disciplinary issues: strikes and desertions were often due to orders given to complete work under conditions the Chinese felt were in breach of contract.[76] This usually involved work too close to enemy fire.[77]

The French began contractually recruiting Chinese labour slightly earlier, with contracts far more generous than their British equivalents.[78] They provided better pay, provisions, access to care (although British medical care was good), holidays on the same terms as for French labour, and even stipulated that 'their rights and independence would be protected by law on the same basis as French citizens'.[79] The closest the British came to matching this final detail was a Foreign Office memorandum in 1918, which declared that 'All labourers recruited for service in Europe shall receive the same treatment as

[73] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.28.
[74] Ibid, pp.32-35, 41.
[75] G.S. Moss to War Office, 27th November, 1918, Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. III, NAUK, FO 228/2894.
[76] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.304.
[77] W. R. Ludlow War Diary, 26th December, 1917, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0984.
[78] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.34.
[79] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.39; O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.13-14.

European workmen'. [80] But this never manifested itself in action. Contemporary administrative opinion concluded that Britain had secured the better deal. A senior British diplomat noted 'we are getting coolies free of cost as far as Chinese Government [sic] is concerned and also free of conditions as to their employment, while the French under their agreement… pay more than we and are subjected to many conditions'.[81] The ambition to have the most financially economical and exploitative contract possible fits perfectly into the history of British imperialism.[82] Nevertheless, this contract, and the rules that followed, undoubtedly stored trouble for the future.

That the French contract was more inclusive than the British may seem surprising. After all, the French were an imperial nation, just like their British neighbours. However, late French imperialism featured a 'schizophrenic' dualism between the belief that 'all could aspire to be equal citizens of the Republic', and the fact that most colonised peoples had few or no rights at all.[83] French contemporaries drew a contrast between themselves and the British on account of Britain's propensity to distinguish between people of a race 'similar to their own and able to benefit from the institutions of free England', and other races which 'have always had the characteristic of being dominated'.[84] But the French were just as guilty of this – their empire was also exploitative and devised to benefit the economy of the metropole; theirs was an empire also built under the guise of civilising 'lesser' nations.[85] How, then, is it possible to explain the French contract's more inclusive

[80] Agreement for the Recruitment of Chinese Labourers, 3rd November, 1918, NAUK, FO 228/2894.
[81] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front,* p.40.
[82] David Johnson, 'Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1936-46,' *Journal of African History* 33, no. 1 (1992): pp.111-128, pp.120-121; Sunanda Sen, 'Indentured Labour from India in the Age of Empire,' *Social Scientist* 44, no. 1/2 (2016): pp.35-74, p.35.
[83] Margaret A. Majumdar, *Postcoloniality: The French Dimension* (London: Berghahn Books, 2007), p.9.
[84] Ibid, p.9.
[85] Ibid, pp.7-8.

terms? Sudhir Hazareesingh gives a possible answer, citing the popularity of utopian thought in eighteenth century France, and the drive for greater human equality in the following century.[86] Of course, there is still a considerable disconnect between these concepts of egalitarianism and the existence of French colonialism. On this topic, Michael Nicholson provides a framework on which the disparity between utopian thought and French colonialism can be reconciled. He writes:

> The contrast between utopians and realists [is] between 'those who regard politics as a function of ethics and those who regard ethics as a function of politics… In other words, can we direct society in benevolent directions, perhaps to a utopia, or do we take what we are given and try to rationalize this into some form of moral acceptability? In the context of International Relations, the utopian aspires to a world without war and where power is not the primary determinant of relationships. The realist is more sceptical. Broadly, the realist stresses the constraints in life; the utopian stresses the opportunities. At this level, they are not social theories but temperamental attitudes.[87]

Therefore, utopianism is an attitude which may permeate the constraints of reality but does not necessitate the complete submission of reality to its terms. While policy makers and individuals may adopt a utopian attitude in their approach to work and life, this attitude can exist within a contextual dystopia. It is therefore possible to detect French utopian attitudes in their contracts, while France, simultaneously, was seeking to maintain

[86] Sudhir Hazareesingh, *How the French Think* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2016), pp.78-93, 100-101.
[87] Michael Nicholson, 'Realism and Utopianism Revisited,' *Review of International Studies* 24, (1998): pp.65-p.82, p.65.

a colonial empire.[88] Additionally, it is possible to explain the differences between British and French contracts as a direct result of the growth in popularity of utopian concepts in France, which lacked the same appeal in Britain.[89]

Having signed the contracts, labourers were transported from China to France. This happened in stages. Generally, the men were ferried east rather than west to reduce the risk posed by German submarines.[90] The French had lost the *Athos* in this manner, on 17 February 1917, and 543 Chinese recruits lost their lives.[91] Britain transported the men from Weihai Wei to Canada (via Japan for supplies), whereupon they transferred to train, which carried them from coast to coast.[92] Finally, another ship carried them across the Atlantic.[93] The process was anything but simple. Canada alone presented issues, as it had a head tax to the value of $500 on any Chinese national entering the country.[94] The Canadian authorities allowed the passage, and waived the head tax, only on the proviso that the Chinese remain on the train for the entire duration of their journey.[95] There were other factors that influenced this decision. One was a fear among administrators that Canadians would oppose the Chinese crossing the country had they discovered their presence.[96] As a result, the windows on the train were 'blacked out'.[97] This afforded the

[88] Only in 1939 was it obvious that France's empire was decaying; Martin Thomas, 'French Empire Elites and the Politics of Economic Obligation in the Interwar Years,' *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 4 (2009): pp.989-1016, p.991.
[89] Britain favoured utilitarian and laissez-faire attitudes towards society; Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, pp.274-275.
[90] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.29.
[91] Ibid, p.16.
[92] Ibid, p.29; Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.40; Klein, *With the Chinks*, pp.118-119; T. J. Bourne, Report on 8th Contingent C.L.C., Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. II, NAUK, FO 228/2893.
[93] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.40.
[94] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.62.
[95] Ibid, p.62.
[96] Ibid, pp.73-74.
[97] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.30.

Chinese very little comfort. The situation barely changed aboard ship. Many of the Chinese had never been at sea before, and for much of the voyage, they were kept below deck in confined spaces.[98] Daryl Klein, Second Lieutenant with the Chinese Labour Corps, recalls one particular case of rough seas:

> I went down into one of the bunk-holds amidships, where an odd 150 of my company are quartered. I could hear their groans before I got down to them. Like a house of mild torture. The majority collapsed. A few, their strength suddenly gone, lay on the boarded floor, unable to climb to their bunks.[99]

Seasickness was not the only threat the workers faced. Captain V. Stapleton-Cotton writes of the first time the Chinese were ordered onto deck: '[we] found that it took 1/2 hour [sic] for coolies to come up, owing to there being only two small entrances for nearly a thousand men. There are no emergency exits, and in case of fire or accident these men have no chance of escape'.[100] The risk of emergency was great, especially as German submarine attacks were common.[101] According to Xu we can 'conclude that at least 700 lost their lives before they reached France'.[102] One questions whether many Chinese men would have volunteered had the risks been made known to them in advance.

Conditions barely improved upon reaching France. Britain deliberately restricted the freedom of its Chinese labourers. Generally, the Chinese were prevented from leaving

[98] Ibid, pp.32-33; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.52.
[99] Klein, *With the Chinks*, pp.114-115.
[100] V. Stapleton-Cotton Diary, "J J" Party on Board S. S. "Teesta", 18th January, 1918, NAUK, FO 228/2893.
[101] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.40.
[102] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.51.

their camps, even after working hours.[103] No more than ten percent were allowed out at any one time.[104] Moreover, the camps were like prisons; the workers 'kept in barbed wire enclosures'.[105] One source suggests that this was necessary to prevent them from being a 'general nuisance'. [106] However, a more cynical motivation was to ensure racial segregation of Asians and Europeans.[107] Few provisions were made for entertainment, and the Chinese had to find their own way of occupying themselves.[108] Frequently the Chinese indulged in their favourite pastime, gambling.[109] The rigidity of living conditions was a result of disciplinary concerns: the British attitude appears to be a case of 'the tighter the control, the better'.[110] Workers were treated like military men, and were subject to martial law.[111] Any labourer could be court-martialled and sentenced to death.[112] The result, ironically, was that discipline may have suffered. A YMCA report states, 'it was almost criminal to keep 500 strong healthy men in an enclosure week after week with nothing to do in leisure time but twiddle their thumbs. Of course they would get into mischief'.[113] The Chinese were in an almost impossible position. Here were foreign civilians, recruited as workers, but expected to comply with British military discipline standards and receive military style punishments for transgressions.

[103] Peter Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.333.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.114.
[106] W. R. Ludlow War Diary, [19th]? November, 1917, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0984.
[107] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.105.
[108] Ibid, pp.131, 146-147.
[109] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.335.
[110] British administrators boasted the high level of control they kept the Chinese under; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.114.
[111] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.48.
[112] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.62.
[113] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.333.

This stands in complete antithesis to French management methods. French administrators allowed the Chinese relative freedom after working hours.[114] They could mix with other nationalities, including the French.[115] Some even entered into relationships with French women.[116] Wang observes that the French 'treated the Chinese laborers in a democratic and sympathetic manner and did not subject the Chinese to strict military discipline… They were not required to march when they went to work but walked informally to the factories'.[117] But this style of man-management was incompatible with the deep-rooted British psychology that resulted from two hundred years of imperialism. The British Empire had come to project 'a moral and cultural authority, the implication of which was that British values, beliefs, institutions and habits were the norm against which all others should be measured'.[118] Their perceived position at the apex of the cultural hierarchy had generated a profound sense of superiority. For example, Klein recounts his experiences of the preparations at Weihai Wei, and the 'Sausage Machine' which 'turns an ordinary uninviting workaday coolie into a clean, well-clothed and smartly active human being. An astonishing process which is doing a great good for a corner of China. If the whole nation, male and female, could pass through the Sausage Machine it would make the people anew…'.[119] The notion of 'British-ness' turning a 'coolie' into a 'human being' was not an atypical attitude, and the suggestion that such a process would benefit the whole of China essentially summarises British perceptions of the Chinese. Britain was, in the eyes of its administrators and officer class, the model to which other civilisations should aspire.[120] In fact, Klein and his accompanying officers

[114] Ibid.
[115] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.39.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.333.
[118] Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.266.
[119] Klein, *With the Chinks*, p.7.
[120] Ferguson, *Empire*, p.113.

go as far as to assign these beliefs about British superiority onto the Chinese travelling into Canada. Klein writes:

> Canada was on the lips of many coolies before we landed. It meant to them (so their officers had told them) the land of the White Man, a land which flowed with milk and honey, where no poverty was, no disobedience, and therefore no punishment… it appeared a land of promise… Some inquired if it were England; if they were at their journey's end. They did not know any better. How should they? Even if it had been explained, they would not have understood. Inter-continental distances were inconceivable. The earth in her immensity was ungraspable.[121]

Such musings illustrate the fantasised perfection of the West that the British ruling class desired to project to the Chinese. The fear that the idea of a superior British civilisation would be destroyed in the eyes of foreign labour had been a serious deterrent to the initial suggestion of recruitment.[122] The idea of cultural superiority justified British authority over 'lesser' peoples, and vindicated its arrogance.[123] Often, this arrogance surfaced in displays of patronisation, privately or publically. Klein's suggestion that the Chinese were incapable of perceiving a world beyond China is one example. Additionally, the British sense of superiority frequently manifested itself as racial degradation, or cultural paternalism.[124] Sometimes the two overlapped. For example, Sergeant T. V. Haigh shares his thoughts on the Chinese:

---

[121] Klein, *With the Chinks*, p.166.
[122] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.24.
[123] Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, pp.265-266.
[124] Stephen Howe, 'Empire and Ideology,' *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), pp.157-176, p.166; Stuart Ward, 'Imperial Identities Abroad,' in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), pp.219-243, pp.226-227.

> Dreadful morning. 300 Chinks on one of my jobs. These Chinese worry me. They always salute a Corporal or a Sergeant of the British Army but never a British Officer. I don't know why. They apparently consider a Corporal and Sergeant superior to an Officer and perhaps these children are right. A child whether fully grown or not is usually right and these Chinks are children…[125]

The patronising attitude displayed here towards the Chinese was typical of the broad nineteenth and early twentieth-century attitude towards non-white foreigners. There was a strong belief that Asian and African races should be dealt with paternally: these people were 'children, to be firmly dealt with for their own good… they were children to be judged, ruled, and directed'.[126] It was this belief that informed the vast majority of British dealings with the Chinese – which cannot have improved relations between them.[127] It is impossible to see how any Chinese concerns could have been addressed appropriately while their behaviours and emotions were repeatedly reduced to manifestations of 'childishness'.

[125] T. V. Haigh War Diary, 4th September, 1917, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0684.
[126] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.104.
[127] Ibid, p.108.

China

China's nineteenth century can be summarised as a gradual descent into turbulence and instability. By the early 1800s, China's trade with the West had flourished, providing a surplus income for all parties.[1] Despite minor conflicts, generally from unpaid debts, trade had been beneficial enough that both China and her trading partners were generally satisfied with the status quo.[2] For Britain, the export of Chinese tea became the most lucrative source of income for the East India Company – and exceeded that from anywhere else.[3] Such purchases were usually made for silver, which provided China with an accessible financial resource.[4] One of the founding issues appears to be the reliance China came to place on the income from foreign trade.[5] When silver ceased to be the primary form of currency paying for Chinese goods, the country began haemorrhaging cash at an annual rate of 9 million taels.[6] As a result of the Chinese population's high demand for opium, opium started to be used as barter for the trade of Chinese goods (particularly tea), replacing silver.[7] The trade of opium credits continued despite an official ban on the import of the drug issued by the Chinese government in 1796.[8] This distortion of trading arrangements was the first of a number of economic afflictions that China confronted during the nineteenth century.

---

[1] Keay, *China*, p.455.
[2] Ibid, pp.455-456.
[3] Ibid, pp.456-457; D'Arcy-Brown, *Chusan*, p.32.
[4] Keay, *China*, p.455; Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca. 1600-1950* (Boston: Brill, 2012), pp.53-54.
[5] Westad, *Restless Empire*, pp.38-39, 40.
[6] Keay, *China*, p.459.
[7] Robert Bickers, 'Britain and China, and India, 1830s-1947,' in *Britain and China, 1840-1970: Empire, Finance and War*, ed. Robert Bickers and Jonathan J. Howlett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp.58-83, p.58; Solomon Bard, 'Tea and Opium,' *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 40, (2000): pp.1-19, p.4.
[8] Keay, *China*, p.459.

By 1839, the Chinese government had become so concerned about the effects opium was having on its population and economic stability that it stepped up efforts to curb the availability of the drug.[9] The means by which they went about achieving this added further friction to an already fractious relationship with the British. For centuries, as far as the Chinese were concerned, China had been the centre of world.[10] The very word for 'China' in Chinese is 中國 ('zhong guo'), and translates as 'middle land'. China was the centre of civilisation, and surrounding peoples paid tribute to the Chinese emperor.[11] When Western traders arrived, China had no interest in their proposals: they were not relevant to China's world politics.[12] In many respects, this dismissive and haughty mentality was similar to the one Britain had come to adopt as it established its empire. Unsurprisingly, this resulted in an uneasy and volatile relationship between the two nations. British administrators often believed the Chinese to be patronising, condescending, and arrogant.[13] When Chinese officials seized opium stores at Guangzhou in April, 1839, the British responded with military force.[14]

[9] Kaori Abe, and 阿部香織, 'The Anglo-Chinese Propaganda Battles: British, Qing and Cantonese Intellectuals and the First Opium War in Canton/英華宣傳戰：英國、滿清及廣東派知識份子與第一次鴉片戰爭,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 56, (2016): pp.172-193, pp.178-179.
[10] Youngmin Kim, *A History of Chinese Political Thought* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), p.6; Lisa R. Wiggins, 'Sino-Tibetan Relations and Tributary Ideology,' *The Tibet Journal* 25, no. 1 (2000): pp.63-73, p.63; Solomon Bard, 'Tea and Opium,' p.6.
[11] Lisa R. Wiggins, 'Sino-Tibetan Relations,' p.63.
[12] Westad, *Restless Empire*, pp.30-32; John M. Carroll, ''The Usual Intercourse of Nations': The British in pre-Opium War Canton,' *Britain and China, 1840-1970: Empire, Finance and War*, ed. Robert Bickers and Jonathan J. Howlett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp.22-40, p.23.
[13] Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, pp.21-22, 44, 48; Peter Ward Fey, *The Opium War: 1840-1942* (United States: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p.31; Dilip K. Basu, 'Chinese Xenology and the Opium War: Reflections on Sinocentrism,' *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 4 (2014): pp.927-940, p.932.
[14] Westad, *Restless Empire*, pp.41-43.

The effects of the Opium War on the stability of China were profound. When the war ended in 1842, China had to pay reparations that worsened the economic instability it had been experiencing.[15] Furthermore, China's defeat highlighted its military deficiencies, and undermined the government's legitimacy in the eyes of Qing rivals.[16] Many rebellions took place in China during the nineteenth century, and increasingly, the Qing government came to rely on Britain in order to maintain its authority.[17] Britain was willing to maintain the Qing, primarily to ensure their trading interests.[18] But ultimately, there were no viable alternatives to Qing rule.[19] Additionally, had a vacuum been created, Russian interests could have been satisfied at Britain's expense.[20] Of all the revolts that took place in China throughout the 1800s, the Taiping rebellion arguably posed the greatest threat to the Qing. Lasting over ten years, and adopting a distinct Christian ideology, the movement came close to toppling the Qing government and creating a new social system and hierarchy.[21] Crucially for the Qing, Britain favoured the current regime, having witnessed the internal feuds and purges that frequently took place in the Taiping movement.[22] This favour, however, did not stop Britain from utilising the situation to pressure the Chinese government into revising the Treaty of Nanjing (which had officially ended the First Opium War).[23] Revision meant Britain claimed 'more treaty ports, commercial access to the interior of China, a permanent ambassador in Beijing, the

[15] Robin Bridge, 'Chusan's Position in the China Trade,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 49, (2009): pp.219-228, p.225; John Keay, *China: A History*, p.466.
[16] Westad, *Restless Empire*, pp.44-45; Keay, *China*, p.467.
[17] Westad, *Restless Empire*, pp.53-54, 56; Keay, *China*, pp.455, 467.
[18] Stephen R. Platt, 'British Intervention in the Taiping Rebellion,' in *Britain and China, 1840-1970: Empire, Finance and War*, ed. Robert Bickers and Jonathan J. Howlett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp.41-57, pp.49-50.
[19] Keay, *China*, p.495.
[20] Westad, *Restless Empire*, pp.33-34; Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, pp.13, 15, 307; Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, pp.147-148.
[21] James T. K. Wu, 'The Impact of the Taiping Rebellion upon the Manchu Fiscal System,' *Pacific Historical Review* 19, no. 3 (1950): pp.265-275, p.265; Stephen R. Platt, 'British Intervention,' pp.54-55.
[22] Keay, *China*, p.474.
[23] Ibid, pp.474-475.

legalisation of the opium trade, the suppression of piracy and the lifting of internal transit duties'.[24] The revision was obstructed by a second opium war in 1856, which brought about similar terms at the Treaty of Tianjin.[25] Foreign trade interests were expanded, and a clause was included to prevent derogatory references to British traders and officials.[26]

The situation deteriorated towards the end of the century. In 1883, China went to war against France following the French capture of Vietnam, which had been a primary tributary to the Chinese government for years.[27] The war ended with the termination of Chinese interests in Vietnam, and French recognition of the Viet-Chinese border.[28] China lost its interests in Korea under similar circumstances, following a war with Japan in 1894.[29] However, it was the Boxer Rebellion, commencing at the turn of the twentieth century, which would prove to be the most disastrous for China. A manifestly anti-foreign movement, opposing all foreign occupation, customs, and influence, the Boxers enjoyed early success.[30] It was this success that persuaded the Qing government to throw its hand in with the Boxers, in an attempt to finally rid China of foreign interference.[31] This disastrous move resulted in imperial abdication following the defeat of the Boxers by a multinational force in Beijing.[32] The indemnity levied against the Chinese government was a mammoth £67,500,000.[33] The Qing were allowed to retain their position, if only for the fact that replacing them was more of an inconvenience than tolerating them.[34] But

[24] Ibid, p.475.
[25] Ibid; Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, pp.152, 154.
[26] Keay, *China*, p.475; Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p.154.
[27] Westad, *Restless Empire*, pp.57-58; Keay, *China*, pp.487-488.
[28] Keay, *China*, p.488.
[29] Kees Van Dijk, *Pacific Strife: The Great Powers and their Political and Economic Rivalries in Asia and the Western Pacific, 1870-1914* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), p.254.
[30] Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, pp.22, 23; Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p.343.
[31] Westad, *Restless Empire*, pp.126-128.
[32] Ibid, p.129.
[33] Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p.310.
[34] Ibid, p.312.

at the conclusion of this final futile attempt at restoring Chinese control, it was plain that China was very much at the mercy of its foreign intruders.

But the Qing would not remain in this unenviable position for long. Military mutinies in autumn, 1911, brought about the end of imperial dynastic China, and the formation of a republican government.[35] For Keay, this change represented a desire for greater modernity which was left unfulfilled by the efforts of the Qing government in its final years.[36] In any case, the Qing had been consistently losing authority throughout the nineteenth century. Its continued existence after 1901 was only due to foreign forbearance. The abdication of Empress Dowager Ci Xi was perhaps the starkest illustration of the dynasty's decline in power, but the process of decay had been in motion for a long time. Not that the new republican government was any more stable. Quite the opposite, the early years of China's republic were fraught with uncertainty and inconsistency.[37] But they appealed to a demographic within the population who wished to see developments in the political structure of the country.[38] There was a mood of nationalism that needed expression, and this meant restoring an element of prestige to China, which had been lost in the previous century.[39]

[35] Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, pp.362-363.
[36] Keay, *China*, pp.495-498.
[37] Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, pp.365-373; Tom Miller, *China's Asian Dream: Empire Building Along the New Silk Road* (London: Zen Books Ltd, 2017), p.7.
[38] Keay, *China*, pp.496-499.
[39] Ibid, p.497; Westad, *Restless Empire*, p.150.

The desire to raise China's international profile was a primary reason for the decision to become entangled in the First World War.[40] Despite not officially entering the war as a belligerent until 1917, Liang Shi-Yi approached Britain proposing military cooperation as early as 1914 in an attempt to recapture Qingdao from German colonisation.[41] As noted above, this was declined, but attempts to offer support to Britain and its allies continued in the following two years.[42] France was the first to accept Chinese labourers, and Britain followed shortly after.[43] For China, the potential benefits of providing assistance were clear. Cooperation with the Allies opened the possibility of fulfilling wider goals. John Keay elaborates,

> China was entitled to a place at the table when… the allied powers sat down to divide the spoils. A sixty-strong delegation made a trip to Paris with high expectations of at least regaining control of those treaty ports and concessions now forfeited by the… Germans. Woodrow Wilson [United States President] disapproved of all colonialisms… there was just a chance that the Japanese would be ordered out of Manchuria and the British out of Hong Kong.[44]

Far from keeping these aspirations under a 'Bismarckian' smokescreen, the Chinese government was transparent in their conditions before recruitment began. When the Chinese Foreign Ministry offered manpower to London in 1917, it requested concessions including a fifty year break from payment of the Boxer indemnity, and the

[40] Stephen G. Craft, 'Angling for an Invitation to Paris: China's Entry into the First World War,' *The International History Review* 16, no. 1 (1994): pp.1-24, p.17; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.12-13.
[41] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.6-7.
[42] Ibid, p.7-9.
[43] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' pp.34-35.
[44] Keay, *China*, p.503.

immediate ability to raise taxes.[45] That these aspirations would not be realised was unknown to the Chinese when recruitment began in 1916, and when they officially declared war on Germany the following year. In the event, German concessions were ceded to Japan.[46] The exceptions were in Hankou and Tianjin, where Germany ceded its concessions back to China.[47] However, China had to declare 'her intention of opening them to international residence and trade' – an unwelcome requirement from a Chinese government perspective.[48] This exemplifies the naivety of the new Chinese government in understanding the complex nature of international politics.[49] Especially as America had followed an 'Open Door' policy in China since 1899, which protected the equal trade opportunities of a number of countries, including Britain, Germany, France, and Japan (in respect of the 1898 'spheres of influence').[50] President Wilson, in whom Chinese hope rested, may have disliked colonialism, but was willing to intervene in other nations where it suited American interests. After 'a petty incident in which the Mexicans refused to fire a fourteen-gun salute to placate an insulted American admiral', the United States moved troops into the Mexican ports of Tampico and Veracruz.[51] Shortly before invading Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Wilson was quoted as saying, 'I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men'.[52] Clearly, Wilson was not the moral bastion of international diplomacy the Chinese government hoped him to be. The failure of the Chinese delegation to see this, and to secure their interests, added to the instability in

[45] O'Neill, T*he Chinese Labour Corps*, p.23.
[46] Treaty of Peace with Germany: Treaty Of Versailles, Article 156, 'Shantung', 28 June, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0043.pdf (accessed 10 September, 2018).
[47] Ibid, Article 132.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Stephen G. Craft, 'Angling for an Invitation to Paris,' pp.22-23, passim.
[50] Paul Hibbert Clyde, 'The Open Door,' *Pacific Affairs* 3, no. 9 (1930): pp.834-841, p.835.
[51] Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900* (London: The University of Chicago Press Ltd, 1999): p.51.
[52] Ibid, pp.52-53.

China, prompting student strikes in Beijing, and doing little to increase its international prestige.[53]

But there were some issues regarding the Chinese Labour Corps over which the Chinese government was more successful. The efforts they made to improve the welfare provisions of the Chinese labour force illustrate a level of competence and consideration. This can be seen in regards to the level of care and compensation Chinese labourers received in respect of injury and illness while serving in France. Britain was initially prepared to pay only meagre levels of compensation for injured parties, and failed to offer a satisfactory pension.[54] Following repeated interventions from the Chinese government, the British War Office eventually altered the compensation plan after the war ended.[55] But Britain repeatedly appears to have made a habit of treating Chinese labourers like a resource, or livestock, rather than humans entitled to fair treatment and respect. There was often a decided lack of consideration, especially in regards to cultural differences, which the Chinese government was incapable of affecting. These insensitivities were often the root cause of the disputes that took place between the labourers and their British officers, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

[53] Keay, *China*, p.504.
[54] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.40-41.
[55] Ibid, p.41.

The 'Children' Lack Discipline

The men leaving China as part of Britain's Chinese Labour Corps were expected to conform to strict military standards of discipline.[1] Considering the men were mainly uneducated peasants, it would be difficult to suggest that this expectation was realistic.[2] The French held the Chinese to military rule too, although their lives were less regimented and their treatment more liberal.[3] This might be due to the means by which the French recruited the Chinese. Here, the French recruited using private companies, while Britain's recruitment campaign was pursued by the War and Foreign Offices.[4] Therefore their treatment reflected a more militaristic ethos. In any case, Britain applied strict standards of discipline in the interest of control.[5] Post was censored, uniforms were to be warn at all times on duty, the men marched to and from work, and acts of indiscipline could be subject to court-martial.[6] The Chinese were confined to barbed-wire encampments after working hours, and only allowed out on pass for good behaviour (but not allowed more than three miles from their camp).[7] The militaristic expectations the British placed on untrained civilians was undoubtedly too high, and their means of control insensitive. The British could sometimes stretch the boundaries of what could be justified in the name of 'discipline'. For example, the Chinese were prevented from mixing with 'white' people when possible: a precaution that was in 'the interest of discipline'.[8] Chinese labourers were 'employed by themselves, and not where they are in a position to judge or criticize

[1] Directorate of Labour: Notes for Officers of Labour Companies, 2 April, 1917, IWM, Documents.9039, p.6.
[2] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.330.
[3] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.120-121; O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.53.
[4] Report on the Work of Labour During the War, NAUK, WO 107/37, p.45.
[5] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.110, 114.
[6] Ibid, pp.82-83; O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.50-51; Directorate of Labour: Notes for Officers of Labour Companies, IWM, Documents.9039, pp.16-21.
[7] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.333; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.114.
[8] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.302.

the same class of work performed by white men'.[9] British concerns about disrupting the 'racial hierarchy' were a primary determinant of their administrative policies. By the end of their service, an estimated 3000 Chinese coolies had died in France, many of these deaths were due to poor treatment and misuse by the British.[10]

Chinese labourers were treated more like prisoners than workers. Such comparisons are all the more valid in respect of the numbering system the British applied to Chinese recruits.[11] While clearly an attempt to simplify the process of recording and keeping track of a large number of people with foreign names, these numbers were the only form of address used between British officers and Chinese workers. There is a wealth of scientific research to support the argument that such a system may have caused resentment, and encouraged indiscipline. Doctor Philip Zimbardo has written extensively on the deindividuation and dehumanisation that can occur as a result of such systems. Most famously, his Stanford Prison Study examined the effect of a mock prison environment on the psychology of volunteer university students. Prisoners were given numbers, and this replaced their names for the duration of the study. Guards were largely given a free hand in their management styles. By the end of the study, both guards and prisoners were so enmeshed into the simulation, that they became unable to separate it from reality. The prisoners in particular began to show signs of acute psychological distress. Zimbardo, reflecting on the study notes:

> … Guards and prisoners showed a marked tendency toward increased negativity of affect, and their overall outlook became

[9] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.83.
[10] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.82.
[11] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.36.

> increasingly negative… Prisoners expressed intentions to do harm to others more frequently… The characteristic nature of their encounters [guards and prisoners] tended to be negative, hostile, affrontive and dehumanizing. Prisoners immediately adopted a generally passive response mode while guards assumed a very active initiative role in all interactions… verbal exchanges were strikingly impersonal, with few references to individual identity… The most dramatic evidence of the impact of this situation upon the participants was seen in the gross reactions of five prisoners who had to be released because of extreme emotional depression, crying, rage, and acute anxiety… as early as the second day of imprisonment… Various coping strategies were employed by our prisoners as they began to react to their perceived loss of personal identity and the arbitrary control of their lives. At first they exhibited disbelief… Their next response was rebellion... They then tried to work within the system by setting up an elected grievance committee. When that collective action failed to produce meaningful changes in their existence, individual self-interests emerged.[12]

In one case, a prisoner surrendered to authority and admitted to a crime which had never happened.[13] These results were from a simulation in which prisoners were aware they were part of a study. For the Chinese labourers, treated in a similar vein, such a component was absent: they were trapped in their situation, and could not get out had they wanted to. This could only have exacerbated the negative effects of their treatment. The Chinese, like the prisoners, used a variety of means to express their unhappiness. At

[12] Craig Haney, Curtis Banks and Philip Zimbardo, 'A Study of Prisoners and Guards in a Simulated Prison,' *Naval Research Reviews* (1973): pp.1-17, pp.9-10, 15.
[13] Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil* (United Kingdom: Rider, 2009), p.134.

first, they attempted to resolve dissatisfaction through dialogue.[14] When the British dismissed or could not understand these pleas, strikes and riots followed.[15] The violence displayed towards other labourers, and indeed non-labourers, is in line with the findings of the Zimbardo study.[16] When all options were exhausted, some labourers, clearly suffering from acute emotional distress, committed suicide.[17]

The effects of replacing a person's identity with a number are central to the experience of the Chinese Labour Corps. A system which removes names dehumanises its subjects. The situation is exacerbated by anything else that reduces a person's own sense of identity, such as matching uniforms or treatment as 'merely part of a group'.[18] Zimbardo reflects,

> … Anything, or any situation, that makes people feel anonymous… reduces their sense of personal accountability, therefore creating the potential for evil action… Anonymity can be conferred on others… by the way that people are treated in given situations. When others treat you as if you are not a unique individual but just an undifferentiated "other" being processed by the System, or your existence

[14] The Directorate of Labour's notes made it quite clear that the Chinese 'are accustomed to seek redress of grievances by means of written petitions'; Directorate of Labour: Notes for Officers of Labour Companies, IWM, Documents.9039, p.36.
[15] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.98, 108-109, 110; Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.332.
[16] Physical violence was prohibited in Zimbardo's study. However, it can be seen in real-life parallels, such as the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq; Craig Haney et al., 'A Study of Prisoners and Guards,' p.10; Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect*, pp.408-411.
[17] W. A. Dent War Diary No. V, 23rd February, 1919, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0453; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.113.
[18] Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect*, p.219

> is ignored, you feel anonymous. The sense of a lack of personal identifiability can also induce antisocial behaviour…[19]

Despite criticism of Zimbardo's study as lacking real-world validity (although there are real-life parallels with the Abu Ghraib prison during the 2002 Iraq War), the theory of deindividuation has been supported by a number of subsequent experiments and is a widely accepted theory among modern social psychologists.[20] When the British treated the Chinese as prisoners, rather than equal human workers, this created a manifest potential for disaster. The Chinese were more likely to act inappropriately, and without discipline, because they would have felt a reduced sense of identifiability, and therefore, accountability.[21] But the numbering system also impacted on the attitudes the British displayed towards the Chinese. As numbering a person creates a statistic of them, they are in essence no longer 'human': they are only a number.[22] And this was over and above the perceived racial and cultural superiority of British administrators at the time.[23] The result of this can be seen in the responses to behavioural issues with the Chinese. Generally, the British adopted a policy of putting down disruptions in a harsh manner. Often, shooting was an accepted response.[24] In fact, so prevalent did shooting become that concerns were raised regarding the image of British prestige if it continued – especially as incidents were often a result of the labourers' 'inability to make themselves

[19] Ibid, p.301.
[20] For further research on deindividuation, see; Neil R Carlson, G. Neil Martin and William Buskist, *Psychology* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), p.666; Chen-Bo Zhong, Vanessa K. Bohns and Francesca Gino, 'Good Lamps are the Best Police: Darkness Increases Dishonesty and Self-Interested Behavior,' *Psychological Science* 21, no. 3 (2010): pp.311-314, pp.311-312, passim; Dominic Abrams and Rupert Brown, 'Self-Consciousness and Social Identity: Self-Regulation as a Group Member,' *Social Psychology Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (1989): pp.311-318, p.311; Jacob B. Hirsh, Adam D. Galinsky and Chen-Bo Zhong, 'Drunk, Powerful, and in the Dark: How General Processes of Disinhibition Produce Both Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior,' *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 5 (2011): pp.415-427, p.420.
[21] Chen-Bo Zhong et al., 'Good Lamps are the Best Police,' pp.311-312, 311.
[22] Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect*, pp.17, 18, 301.
[23] Racism and discrimination is dehumanising in and of itself; ibid, p.307.
[24] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.112.

understood to their superior officers.'[25] In Les Fontinettes, four labourers were shot following unrest with a bullying sergeant.[26] In October 1917, 'five were killed and fourteen wounded after a dispute over discipline'.[27] Perceiving the Chinese as a dehumanised 'other' made it easier to carry out these reprisals.[28] Such 'punishments' could only have deepened the Chinese' sense of powerlessness and victimisation, and increased the probability of conflict or despair.

The situation was made worse by other British methods of punishment and discipline. Wang notes that there was competition between British officers 'for the greatest number of canes broken on backs, legs, shins and heads. Humiliation, however, was found to be the most effective type of punishment, and it was used liberally'.[29] Such behaviour encourages and creates a mentality of 'us' versus 'them', where 'they' are the 'enemy'. Similarly, Baaz and Stern have discussed a 'spiral of violence' that takes place in those who 'feel humiliated, mistreated, and victimised by the enemy'. This can lead such individuals to respond with violence.

> Facets of such a spiral include the perpetrators [of responsive violence] viewing themselves as victims, finding "justification" for violent behaviour (i.e., they "deserve" it and therewith it is "right" to seek

[25] Paul J. Bailey, ''Coolies' or Huagong? Conflicting British and Chinese Attitudes Towards Chinese Contract Workers in World War One France,' in *Britain and China, 1840-1970: Empire, Finance and War*, ed. Robert Bickers and Jonathan J. Howlett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp.103-129, pp.113-114; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.110, 112.
[26] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.55.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect*, p.223.
[29] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' pp.333-334.

> revenge), shifting blame away from oneself, and distancing oneself from ones victims through a process of Othering.[30]

Baaz and Stern were primarily referring to wartime atrocities, particularly rape. But the effects of victim mentality can be applied to Chinese labour. Wherever there is a victim mentality, there is the potential for resistance to authority. In the case of the Chinese Labour Corps, resistance often took the form of strikes, insubordination, fleeing, mutiny, and in some cases, suicide. W. A. Dent refers to one case of a Chinese worker who went missing. He was later 'found hanging from a tree by some Canadians'.[31] He also describes an incident of another worker who was found hanging in a forest by some French foresters, and a third who 'wanted to hang himself as he did not like the head ganger' (a ganger was equivalent to the rank of sergeant). Dent 'had to have him tied up all night'.[32] There are even more obvious examples in Dent's diaries of the cause and effect relationship between British management styles and Chinese suicides. In 1917,

> About two dozen aeroplanes flew over the camp from the line. One hundred coolies ran away terrified that they were Hun planes: they had experienced the Folkestone raid which had left them very nervous. We had police out all over the countryside looking for them… [when found] Forty five coolies were tied up to the barbed wire undergoing field punishment. Each had a card tied around his neck to show the other coolies what the punishment was for… One coolie tried to hang himself on the barbed wire but was found in time.[33]

[30] Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, 'Why Do Soldiers Rape? Masculinity, Violence, and Sexuality in the Armed Forces in the Congo (DRC),' *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2009): pp.495-518, p.498.
[31] W. A. Dent War Diary No. V, 14th June, 1918, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0453.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

The lack of empathy here illustrates the propensity of British officers to prioritise discipline over understanding and humanity. This was a common method of treatment between officers and men of all nationalities, including British soldiers, but it is clear that a number of Chinese responded badly to it. That a worker was driven to attempt suicide so soon after arriving in France speaks volumes of the failure of British man-management methods. A YMCA report details a conversation between an officer and his interpreter following a suicide in a dugout:

> This coolie had nursed a grudge against the captain and had decided to show his displeasure in this distasteful manner… The coolies expected their captain to be deeply moved over the affair… But no. The captain was too astute, he did not even deign to speak directly to the coolies, though he knew their language well. "Tell the coolies," he said to the interpreter, "that last night one of them hung himself in the officers' dugout. Tell them if any more of them must hang themselves to be so good as to do it in their own dugouts. We don't like such a mess in ours".[34]

It is easy to see why issues arose when British officers decided to antagonise the Chinese in ways such as this. Perhaps these unfeeling attitudes, displayed by a number of British officers, were merely a result of British 'Othering'. In assigning a diminished value to the Chinese, a distance was created which was only enlarged by the indifference of the British to resulting losses of life, and perceiving the workers as a resource or statistic. If dehumanizing a victim makes it easy to commit atrocities and crimes against them, then the treatment and consideration the Chinese workers received was to be

[34] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.113.

anticipated.[35] There was little chance of the British reacting with compassion to the deaths of men when the British administration had already decided that the Chinese were unworthy of respect. [36]

More common than suicide, strikes and mutinies were frequent responses to poor management. A regular cause of mutiny was deploying the Chinese in areas coming under direct German fire. Often the coolies would panic when shelling or bombing commenced, and generally flee and refuse to work as a result. H. E. Cornwall describes one particular case of a Chinese rout:

> A quantity of Chinese labourers were imported into Dunkirk… They had been there but a short while when the German bombing planes located their camp and bombed it, killing a number of them. For days after they were panic stricken and ran amok, scattering all over the country: nothing seemingly could be done with them, the military authorities had them rounded up, but could not induce them to return on any account to the town. I heard that some of them resisted with violence; for several days they were quite out of hand... Eventually, they were arranged for in a camp some miles out of the town and taken to the Docks in the daytime… If a hostile machine appeared in the daytime over the district you would see them running for their lives with terror depicted on their faces.[37]

[35] An extreme example of an atrocity committed as a result of dehumanisation would be the Rape of Nanking; Ferguson, *Empire,* p.339.
[36] Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect*, pp.17, 18; Paul J. Bailey, ‘‘Coolies’ or Huagong?,’ p.109.
[37] Private Papers of H. E. Cornwall, IWM, Documents.15139, pp.18-19.

This sort of scenario was commonplace. T. V. Haigh describes another scene in 1917,

> Heavy shells over… Very heavy explosions… Had 250-300 Chinks working... One shell came, every Chinamen straightened his back and then they went. Blue uniforms, tied at waist, otherwise like balloons in breeze, all tearing down field. They did not know where to go – only to get away from shells… All discipline gone. I lay down on the wet ground and laughed. [38]

Second Lieutenant J. Harrison refers to a group of Chinese that 'fled into the woods and lived there from then on' following a German bombing raid. 'They came in by day to work and scuttled back to the woods to sleep'.[39] But this is not a simply fear or cowardice. The British are arguably largely to blame for the routing that took place. This was something Lieutenant S. F. Hopwood of the Royal Field Artillery believed to be the case too. He writes:

> Raid on Dunkirk by 'planes… One of these raids bombed the Chinese camp at Dunkirk, killing one of the white officers and some Chinks. Chinamen bolted for the country and were all over the place for the next few days. They had evidently been very badly managed.[40]

Man management was consistently the issue. Put simply, the British did not know how to deal with the Chinese workers. They were often uncompassionate and insensitive, refusing to account for differences between western and Chinese experiences.[41] Not only

[38] T. V. Haigh War Diary, 1st September, 1917, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0684.
[39] Private Papers of J. M. Harrison, IWM, Documents.15276, p.6.
[40] S. F. Hopwood War Diary, 5th September, 1917, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0796.
[41] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.106, passim.

were the Chinese afraid of being killed in German bombing attacks, but practically none of the labourers had ever seen an aircraft before arriving in France. G. E. Cormack, travelling with the Chinese to Europe, remarked in his memoirs, 'The mental strain on the coolies of the new environment in many instances proved too great, as we introduced the raw coolie in rapid succession to the novelty of a railway engine; then a steamer; and finally – wonder of wonders – dirigibles and aeroplanes in the sky'.[42] These were poor, working-class men from China. Many would have been rural farmers.[43] That they might respond with fear when coming under attack should have been anticipated. But the British expected too much, and when these expectations were not met, officers tended to respond harshly.[44] In any case, the Chinese had further reason to react the way they did. Due to contractual ambiguities, the Chinese questioned why they were employed under German fire anyway.[45] Their contracts stipulated that they would not be used in 'military operations', and the Chinese considered being bombed as such.[46] Xu comments, 'The British were selective about complying with contract conditions. So while the standard contract stipulated that Chinese should not be employed inside danger zones, the British rarely paid attention to this crucial term'.[47] This, understandably, led to resentment.

If the workers became aware they were being used too close to German shelling, they would often threaten to strike rather than mutiny outright. Ludlow describes a couple of examples of this: 'The shelling went on continuously all night and also the bombing [sic]… To add to my troubles the Chinese are threatening to mutiny'.[48] Previously,

[42] G. E. Cormack, IWM, Documents.1932, p.18.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.112.
[45] O' Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.54-55.
[46] Contract for the Hiring of Chinese Labour, NAUK, FO 228/2894.
[47] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.84.
[48] W. R. Ludlow War Diary, [21st]? March, 1918, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0984.

following some heavy shelling, Ludlow 'Visited the Chinese', and continues, 'I am afraid there is going to be trouble, so we put a strong barbed wire fence all round their Camps'.[49] In between these two diary entries, the Chinese did in fact mutiny:

> The Chinks had broken out of their camps and were scattered all over the country. It was caused by the discontent among them at having been brought so close to the trenches and exposed for so many days to bombing and shelling, which their Leaders said was contrary to their engagement with our Government.[50]

References to strikes abound. One protest took place at Arras following injuries as a result of German shells.[51] Another took place in Boulogne, after the workers heard of a mutiny which had taken place at Étaples.[52] The British, for their part, dismissed the complaints and protests. When a colonel questioned whether the Chinese could be moved to quieter areas, 'the British military authority pointed out that many places where Chinese worked were subject to air raids and that they were not able to regard all those places as danger zones'.[53] As logical as this argument is, there can be little dispute that the British had caused the issue by designing a deliberately imprecise contract with ambiguous terms. In trying, as they had often done when recruiting foreign labour, to secure themselves an advantageous contract, the British had stored trouble for the future. Some definition of what the British considered to be 'military operations' would have been reasonable, especially considering the language barriers between the British and the Chinese. It is impossible to know whether the Chinese would have reacted the same way under fire had the contacts stipulated that the work might involve these dangers. Certainly,

[49] Ibid, 12th September, 1917.
[50] Ibid, 26th December, 1917.
[51] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.301.
[52] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.54-55.
[53] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.86.

it would have given them less opportunity to protest. But one imagines that fewer Chinese would have signed up had this been the case, and recruitment levels very much concerned the British government and recruitment officers in China.

When strikes and mutinies did take place, the methods the British used to restore order were often unreasonably extreme. O'Neill mentions that the Chinese received disproportionate punishments to those of British soldiers for comparable offences:

> Only one Briton was executed for attempted mutiny; three men received ten years' penal servitude, ten were sentenced to one year in prison with hard labour, and thirty-three received… field punishment… [as for the Chinese] On 10 October 1917, five men were killed and fourteen wounded after a dispute over discipline. On 16 December 1917, there was a mutiny at Les Fontinettes because of bullying by British NCOs. An armed guard killed four Chinese and wounded nine… Those convicted of mutiny and striking were given one or two years' hard labour.[54]

Even where labourers were 'rounded up' without violence, it was often at gun point.[55] Considering the Chinese mutinies consisted of labourers rather than soldiers, there can be little justification for these sorts of reprisals. One imagines that such excessive punishments were a manifestation of British racial attitudes. It is also probable that the idea of treating the Chinese as 'children' came to the fore, and harsh punishments were preferred because they 'taught valuable lessons'.[56] The problem with that reasoning,

[54] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.55.
[55] W. R. Ludlow War Diary, 26th December, 1917, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0984.
[56] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.104.

and the severity of punishments given, is that the Chinese were often driven to the point of mutiny because of their treatment at the hands of British officers.

Protests were known to take place over rations and food shortages, especially in 1917.[57] The Chinese preferred their native cuisines, and rice shortages in May and June led to a series of complaints.[58] There were cases of legitimate protest on the part of the Chinese, such as the lack of a canteen at Cambrai in 1918.[59] But often the Chinese were known to be adamant that they received what they wanted.[60] A riot took place in November 1919 over perceived inadequacies in the rations. The Chinese involved threw 'lumps of wood at the N. C. O.s.'[61] They were fined twenty francs each as punishment.[62] Another case of discontent was at being given 'oatmeal' for breakfast.[63] Something must be said for the 'pickiness' of the Chinese labourers. They were quite prepared to vocalise their discontent when they felt aggrieved, and some situations (such as being given porridge for breakfast) left little excuse for disruptive behaviour. In this case, the Chinese actually enjoyed the 'oatmeal', but one imagines a protest would have followed had they not.

Other protests were known to take place as a result of poor communication. Testament to the lack of planning and preparation the British undertook before recruiting the Chinese, there was a severe lack of interpreters and translators.[64] To compensate for

[57] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.303.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid, p.304.
[60] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.134.
[61] W. A. Dent War Diary No. VII, [28th]? November, 1919, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0453.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.53.

this, British officers were issued with a phrasebook which detailed a number of Chinese phrases.[65] The issue with using a phrasebook to translate orders and requests is that Chinese is an especially tonal language. Merely articulating the words does not guarantee their meaning will be understood. To make matters worse, the phrasebook was written without any point of reference as to its accuracy.[66] A disconcerting number of limitations then. Misunderstandings went both ways. On one occasion, a British officer bellowed 'go' at the labourers, instructing them to move. In Chinese, the word for 'dog' sounds very similar to the English word 'go'. The Chinese went on strike for the rest of the day.[67] This example demonstrates the volatility of the situation, and it was not until the YMCA got involved that the situation improved.[68] It should be noted that the French also experienced similar issues of communication with their Chinese labourers, so the problem was not exclusively British.[69]

Differences in culture presented a constant barrier to effective communication and direction. The lack of interpreters exacerbated many of the issues faced.[70] Even where interpreters were available, the problem was not necessarily solved. A French report found that, 'Many Chinese especially disliked the French interpreters, who were generally unfriendly and often abused them'.[71] Both Britain and France experienced Chinese strikes and riots as a result of poor communication.[72] Interestingly, even on the rare occasions where a British officer could speak Chinese, they would hardly ever communicate directly

[65] Report on the Work of Labour During the War, NAUK, WO 107/37, p.55.
[66] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.84.
[67] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.334.
[68] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.177-178, 179, 187.
[69] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.36.
[70] Work efficiency was undermined because of communication issues. Disputes escalated through misunderstandings; Report on the Work of Labour During the War, NAUK, WO 107/37, p.55; Xu, *Strangers*, pp.110, 177-178.
[71] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.121.
[72] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.53; Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.332.

with the Chinese labourers, and orders were generally passed down to gangers.[73] Gangers were Chinese labourers given responsibility for a small number of regular coolies. Promotion to ganger was unpopular, 'for it meant translating and implementing the orders of the British officers'.[74] It was recognised at the time that 'the Chinese ganger is the most important link between the Officers and the labourers'.[75] But officers had to be very careful in how they dealt with gangers. If orders were not carried out, carried out incorrectly, or if quotas were not met, officers could not punish or discipline gangers in front of the other men as this would cause the ganger to lose face.[76] The concept of 'face' is more relevant to Chinese social standards than to British. It is also more complex. Nevertheless, if they were made to lose face, the gangers would lose authority over their men – who would then refuse to work.[77] This created a volatile situation, especially as British officers were fond of using humiliation to discipline the men.[78]

However, officers who made an effort to communicate with the labourers, in person and in adequate Chinese, were often loved by the men they commanded. While a minority, officers that showed sympathy and understanding could develop harmonious relationships with the Chinese. When F. W. Corke left for the front, the Chinese wrote a letter 'heartily' thanking him for his kindness, and expressing their sorrow that he has been chosen to 'go to fight'.[79] Wang gives another example, and highlights the dangers of poor management in respect of cultural differences:

[73] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.303.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.83.
[76] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.37.
[77] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.303.
[78] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' pp.333-334.
[79] He was sadly killed shortly after; Head Ganger Letter to Mr. Corke, F. W. Corke, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0366.

> In one company, one of the officers knew a little Chinese and was greatly appreciated by the men. The men grew fond of him and when the announcement was made that he was to be transferred… they decided to accompany him to the station. It happened that he left early in the morning, but in their desire to show a proper Chinese spirit they were mustered out before daylight on the parade ground… (The) major in charge ordered the men to return to their headquarters. The rudeness of the command was greatly resented by the men, all of whom went on strike.[80]

Wang goes on to explain the polite custom whereby the Chinese would 'song' a friend off, and that they had meant no harm, nor intended to break any rules.[81] It is possible that such a display might have been understood for what it was, despite lacking an understanding of Chinese cultural standards. But many British officers preferred to stress discipline, and the result was often poor in relation to motivation to work and the relationships between worker and commander.

There were, of course, disciplinary issues which cannot be so easily attributed to British mismanagement. Conflicts between Chinese labourers and men of other nationalities are well documented. Usually provoked, these conflicts could have fatal consequences. There are reports of Chinese labourers throwing live grenades at captured German prisoners of war, in retaliation for the loss of Chinese life through shelling and bombing:

[80] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.335.
[81] Ibid.

> One night in Calais, German airplanes dropped a bomb into a Chinese compound, killing several men. Then Australian soldiers quietly went to the aggrieved Chinese and told them, "The German swine killed your friends. See? There are some of the Germans' friends," pointing toward a camp of German prisoners. "You take these hand grenades and get even." So the Chinese took the grenades from the Australians… and threw them among the German prisoners. Those Chinese got even.[82]

Clearly, this was a heinous crime by all standards. It does, however, reflect a common tendency that the Chinese labourers had to seek revenge for perceived wrongs. A number of Chinese appeared to believe in 'an eye for an eye'.[83] Disconcertingly, there is no mention of whether the labourers in question were reprimanded or punished for this crime. There are, of course, many cases of soldiers committing similar acts during wartime. Accounts detail soldiers that were murdered by advancing troops, as they had no means to hold captured men.[84] Machine gunners also commonly had their surrender 'rejected', especially if they had held their firing position for too long. One source mentions a wounded machine gunner left with a live hand grenade by advancing men.[85] In the Chinese case, such violence was generally rare. That said, there are accounts of Chinese conflicts with Canadians and Australians. T. V. Haigh gives a couple of examples of this:

> In late afternoon… saw two Canadians throw a Chinaman from the camp adjoining ours into a ditch, roll him over and hold his head under the mud and water. I released him. He was screaming like a child and some of

[82] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.95.
[83] Ibid, p.96.
[84] Christopher Duffy, *Through German Eyes: The British & The Somme, 1916* (London: Orion Books Ltd, 2006), p.35.
[85] Ibid, p.36.

> his pals came up… I knew enough to see that he considered his assailants were Australians and not Canadians… The Australians were in occupation of Caestre and I found out that the Chinese intended to attack the Australians in Caestre to-night. I do not know why it is but the sight of a Chinaman to an Australian is like a red flag to a bull and I presume the Chinaman knows this and therefore jumped to conclusions.[86]

The mistake resulted in the death of an Australian soldier, who was shot by one of the coolies.[87] The Australians responded by throwing grenades into the Chinese camp 'and caused a lot of damage and many casualties'.[88] Disconcertingly, instead of trying to prevent this conflict, Haigh and his fellow sergeants went to the village of Caestre to 'see the fight'.[89] It is interesting to see the lack of effort made to maintain disciplinary standards, especially considering the potential disaster of letting the situation 'play out'. Regardless, the fact remains that the Chinese generally did not attack others unless they perceived some form of provocation. In another case, a group of New Zealanders deliberately antagonised some Chinese labourers to the point of provoking violence. A number of the Chinese were later executed for this.[90] That Australians and New Zealanders took badly to the Chinese is unsurprising. Since the mid-1800s, many white nationals from these countries feared the import of Chinese migrant workers.[91] This was partly due to a fear that foreign workers would undercut the wages and jobs of the local white population (as seen with the British Trade Unions).[92] But Australian and New Zealander societies had 'come to stress the importance of moral and religious reform,

[86] T. V. Haigh War Diary, 22nd November, 1917, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0684.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.142.
[91] Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p.115.
[92] Ibid.

intense social discipline and democratic equality'.[93] Chinese migrants were seen as 'a threat to moral cohesion, an unwelcome reminder of the crude and coarse past'.[94] Just as Canada had raised an almost insurmountable head-tax on Chinese immigrants, New Zealand and Australia had enacted laws preventing the settling of Asian migrants.[95] But British soldiers also antagonised the Chinese labourers, behaving 'badly toward the Chinese… and even egg[ing] them into violating the rules'.[96] None of this was taken into account when punishments were handed out to the Chinese.

A large percentage of the disciplinary issues presented by the Chinese labourers were, then, a direct result of British management choices. This was acknowledged later in a War Office report.[97] There was a lack of sympathy displayed by British officers for the situation the Chinese found themselves in. Rather than showing compassion and understanding to men in a stressful and alien environment, the British held the Chinese to stringent military discipline, for which they had no preparation. Officers repeatedly gave orders which violated the terms by which the Chinese were employed, and where objections did arise, reprisals were often fierce; the expectation that British authority should be observed and followed in all circumstances left little room for a nuanced flexibility. The British were generally unable to dissociate themselves from their imperial heritage, and treated foreign labour as they had other colonial and indigenous peoples over the previous two centuries. British racial beliefs resulted in a system of organisation that was based around the concept of control: the Chinese needed to 'be controlled, instructed, and disciplined'. By the same racial standards, the Chinese workers also

[93] Ibid, p.116.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.143.
[97] Report on the Work of Labour During the War, NAUK, WO 107/37, pp.55-56.

received harsher punishments for their crimes than their western counterparts. In most cases, the Chinese were treated as a sub-human group of workers, and were expected to accept this without complaint. That disciplinary issues were not more widespread is very surprising.

Crime

During their stay in France, a number of Chinese workers committed crimes which fell outside the sphere of military discipline. For many of these crimes the Chinese were liable for sentencing by the military courts.[1] The majority of Chinese labourers did not behave disruptively, but petty 'crimes' such as gambling were quite common among the workers.[2] So prevalent was gambling that it was considered 'the most serious vice among the Chinese laborers. The gambling was so rampant that a great number of laborers lost their salaries in one or two days after payday'.[3] Gambling was popular among the Chinese, and not something they were likely to give up on arriving in France.[4] The likelihood of gambling was only increased by the dearth of entertainment, or other recreational opportunities the Chinese had to occupy their free time (at least until the YMCA got involved).[5] The issue with gambling was that it had a tendency to encourage further crimes, and conflicts over debts were frequent. If caught, gambling was often punished with a hefty fine.[6]

Gambling often led to conflicts which were known to bring about fatal outcomes. In April, 1919, Coolie No. 44735 was charged with the murder of Coolie No. 44724. On the 2 February, a witness, Coolie No. 66956, awoke to the sound of a gunshot:

[1] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle,* p.301.
[2] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.145.
[3] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.335.
[4] John A. Price, 'Gambling in Traditional Asia,' *Anthropologica* 14, no. 2 (1972): pp.157-180, p.170.
[5] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.342.
[6] W. A. Dent War Diary No. III, 7th September, 1917, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0453.

> I called out "Who fired that shot." [sic] The accused Coolie 44735, Wang Chun Chih, then entered the dug out with the rifle in his hand. I said, "You are Wang Chun Chih", he replied "Yes, I don't dislike you, you had better cover your head with blankets or I will shoot you". Coolie 69390 then told 44735 that 44724 was killed. Accused then became very excited and dealt 69390 heavy blows on the head with the butt of the rifle. Coolie 69390 was lying down and I thought he was killed as well. I then made an effort to grapple with the accused, but he struck me severe blows on the head rendering me unconscious. When I regained consciousness… I heard him outside trying to work the bolt of the rifle. I then went outside and made another attempt to secure the rifle. Coolie 69390 then came out of the dug out calling for help, whereupon accused ran away leaving the rifle in my hands.[7]

The accused coolie was later apprehended, and his confession revealed the cause of the incident.

> I went to the dug out where the deceased Coolie 44724 slept at about 20:00 hours, and asked him to pay me eighty francs which he owed me. He replied by saying "I don't owe you any thing [sic], and if you say I do I will get a knife and kill you". I went out and found a rifle and shot 44724 about 23:00. I struck out at the other coolies in self defence.[8]

Unpaid debts could escalate quickly into violent confrontations. It is quite telling that one of the witnesses at the trial was absent from the dugout, as he was 'watching

[7] Summary of Evidence in the Case of Coolie No. 44735 of 107 Company C.L.C., 14th April, 1919, Judge Advocate General's Office: Courts Martial Proceedings and Board of General Officers' Minutes (JAGO/CMP), NAUK, WO 71/680.
[8] Ibid.

other coolies gambling'.[9] The accused coolie, No. 44735, was found guilty of murder. A similar situation had occurred the previous year when Coolie No. 53497 struck No. 53512 in the head with an axe, killing him outright. A police investigation uncovered that the deceased coolie owed money, was 'very quarrelsome, and was constantly bullying the accused'.[10] No. 53497 confessed to the murder and was sentenced to death. A third example also came in 1918, where Coolie No. 46090 confessed to the murder of No. 45662. He recalls,

> I went out of Camp with Coolie No. 45662... We walked along the Railway on the Sand dunes near my Company's Compound… He asked me for the money I owed him, which was One thousand three hundred francs. On my stating that I had no money he picked up a stone and threw it at me, but did not hit me. I was afraid that he might kill me, so I pulled a revolver from my clothes, and as he turned to run away, I shot him in the back, and he fell down with his face turned upwards. I then shot him again just above the left eye. I searched the body but did not find any money, but found one gold watch and one silver watch which I took [sic].[11]

The accused was sentenced to death. A word of caution, however, in taking this and subsequent reports to be verbatim accounts of the true course of events. It should be appreciated that the racial prejudices of those investigating the crimes and issuing punishment may have impacted on the findings and outcomes of the trials. A level of cynicism should be applied when reviewing the details of these reports; they are not windows on the true nature of events. Nevertheless, it is possible to glean significant

[9] Ibid.
[10] Summary of Evidence in the Case of Coolie No 53497, Tseng Sung Kung, 60th Company C.L.C., 13th June, 1918, JAGO/CMP, NAUK, WO 71/651.
[11] Trial of Coolie No. 46090, 161st Company C.L.C., 23rd July, 1918, JAGO/CMP, NAUK, WO 71/655.

information about the nature of the trials, and the crimes for which the labourers were charged. It is also possible to infer a considerable amount about the causes of crimes, and the meaning behind them.

In this case, the cause of the crime was again a matter of unresolved debt. So great was the threat of violence regarding unpaid debts that 'some… would try to escape their creditors by submitting themselves to the authorities, expecting to be transferred somewhere else to work'.[12] It is understandable that the British authorities tried to stamp out gambling among the Chinese labourers. But it remained a most prevalent activity. Incidentally, the theft of two watches from the murdered labourer might not have been unusual. It is possible the issue was overstated by British sources, but the Chinese workers had a reputation for stealing. G. S. Wilson wrote in 1918 that,

> Contact with the nearby Chinese Labour Corps was forbidden… Why the objection? The simple answer is that after hobonobbing [sic] the loss of equipment and small articles seemed invariable. No matter how closely he was watched the Chink seemed to succeed in making some sort of secret haul, and we just weren't clever enough to catch him... His reputation as a skilled and inveterate thief was well founded: it was common experience for our own men to be "crimed" for losses after almost every contact.[13]

Ludlow also mentions that the Chinese were 'most persistent thieves'.[14] While not discrediting these claims, it would be unwise to take them at face value. Neither of these

[12] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.335.
[13] Douglas Wilson War Diary, 18th May, 1918, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1761.
[14] W. R. Ludlow War Diary, [19th]? November, 1917, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0984.

sources refer to a specific case of theft, but rather give views on the Chinese in general. Given that the British harboured a number of racial prejudices toward the Chinese, it is probable that these contributed to the reputation the Chinese had for theft. Stapleton-Cotton's ship log details a number of offenses on board during the transportation of Chinese labour to Europe. Between January and February 1918, there were only two cases of theft.[15] Xu makes an important point when he advises readers 'to keep in mind that most of the Chinese laborers did not commit crimes… It was not fair to jump to the conclusion that the Chinese in France were a debauched people'.[16] And this contradicts British sources which imply that the Chinese were incorrigible burglars. Thefts did occur, but the majority of them tended to be food stuffs – what could arguably be described as 'a crime of need' rather than greed. That said, Captain A. McCormick details a particularly amusing case in which an entire company was caught stealing,

> We were then at a village recently vacated by the French population. About a quarter of an hour after the arrival of the Chinese Company I happened to look up the village street, and out of almost every door proceeded a Chink carrying a bed, or a chair, or a mattress, or a table, and indeed every conceivable kind of furniture. They were proceeding down the village street toward the camp when the Captain of the Company appeared on the scene, volleyed forth something apparently easily understood by the Chinks, for each Chink ran in to the nearest house and deposited his load – with results disastrous to the poor French civilians –

[15] Chinese Labour Corps, "J J" Party on Board S. S. "Teesta", Crimes and Punishments, NAUK, FO 228/2893.
[16] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.149.

> and in a few moments the Chinks were walking down the street as sanctimoniously as if they had been returning from a Church service.[17]

Higher value theft was perpetrated by far fewer of the Chinese. While exact statistics are unavailable, records indicate that 'generally speaking, the Chinese give little trouble' – implying that serious crimes were infrequent.[18] But of the more serious crimes which were committed, the outcomes could be extreme. June 1918 saw two coolies, Nos. 10272 and 10299, court-martialled for theft and murder. The two labourers left their work at 2 p.m., and arrived at a wine shop at around 3. They ordered bread and coffee, which sent the owner, a French woman, down into the cellar to fetch it. No. 10272 then asked a third coolie, No. 10196, to provide rope with which they could secure her in the cellar, but he had failed to bring it. They followed the woman downstairs, and proceeded to stab her in the throat with a knife, making off with 22,000 francs, and promissory notes to the value of 8,000 francs.[19] That they had intended to bring rope would imply that this was a planned robbery rather than an opportunistic crime. The two coolies were subsequently found guilty of both charges, and sentenced to death. This represents one of the most extreme examples tried by the military courts.

Of those crimes that went to trial, murder was by far the most frequent. One scholar has pointed out that, 'Of the fifteen Chinese sentenced to death, thirteen were as a result of murder either during a robbery or due to an argument over money'.[20] Labourer

[17] Private Papers of Captain A McCormick, IWM, Documents.11906, p.206.
[18] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.145.
[19] Testimony of Coolie No. 10299, Court Martial for the Trial of Coolie Nos. 10272 and 10299, 11th June, 1918, NAUK, JAGO/CMP, WO 71/654.
[20] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.304.

No. 16174, in this case named as 'Chang Ju Chih', was tried and found guilty on four charges of murder in April, 1919. The labourer had been a close acquaintance of Madame Mionnet, to the point where he was speaking to her in French, and walking with her 'arm in arm'.[21] That was until the 29 November, 1918, when he murdered her and her three young children, making off with a few bank notes.[22] The fact that the bank notes were bloodstained was one of the primary details that led to a successful conviction, and 'Chang Ju Chih' was sentenced to death in 1920. Another murder was that of Sergeant Penfold. Coolie Nos. 44340 and 97170 were found guilty of breaking into an estaminet where 'two young French women were sleeping [with] British N.C.O.s'.[23] Armed with a knife and a revolver, they entered the room where Sgt. Penfold slept. They jumped him, firing two shots at his head – one through the lower jaw and the other on the right side of his neck – and inflicting two stab wounds to the left side of his neck. Nothing was stolen – murder was the sole intent of the attack. It was revealed that the labourers had taken umbrage at being denied entry to an inn by the sergeant two weeks prior.[24] As it happens, sergeants were not only unpopular with the Chinese. A Sergeant Major was found dead in a well near Boisingham. Chinese labourers pulled him up, and it was revealed that 'he had been hit on the head and thrown down the well as his division left the line… three weeks' ago'. Haigh commented that 'This shows how Sergeant Majors were loved'.[25]

The Sgt. Penfold case gives an interesting glimpse into the trials of Chinese labourers. In an opening address, the court was informed that two of the five coolies

[21] Statement of Evidence in the case of Coolie Nos. 16174 and 30165, 150 Company Chinese Labour Corps, 24th April, 1919, JAGO/CMP, NAUK, WO 71/681.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Prosecution Statement, Case of Numbers 30193, 44340 and 97170, 13th January, 1920, JAGO/CMP, NAUK, WO 71/688.
[24] Further Evidence in the Case of Registered Nos. 30193, 44340 and 97170, NAUK, WO 71/688.
[25] T. V. Haigh War Diary, 8th April, 1918, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0684.

involved were absent from the trial as they were turning 'King's Evidence'.[26] That two of the labourers were giving evidence is surprising, as official guidelines on the Chinese state that they 'could be "sworn," [but] their evidence must be accepted with considerable reserve', implying that the Chinese were untrustworthy.[27] Given that the British believed the Chinese to be untrustworthy, it is remarkable that they were used to give evidence in a trial, the outcome of which would be a matter of life or death. Perhaps the evidence was so powerful that the testimony was superfluous to the prosecution's case. However, that seems unlikely if they were willing to excuse two men from the trial in lieu of their evidence. A more cynical explanation is that the men on trial were not considered important enough to require the reliability of the testimony. Perhaps the reality is somewhere between the two. There clearly were a number of misunderstandings with regards to Chinese labourers giving evidence at trials. In one scenario, a British officer brought 'a supply of plates' to a court-martial, 'because the British got the idea somewhere that a Chinese way of taking an oath was to break a plate, after which he would speak the truth'.[28] Cross-cultural misunderstandings such as this are most disconcerting when the context of it concerns decisions of life and death.

The Chinese also committed a number of minor misdemeanours while they were in France. As previously mentioned, gambling was by far the most common. A second was the use of prostitutes. In the Directorate of Labour's view, the average Chinese coolie 'is not addicted to violence or drunkenness, but is an inveterate gambler and indulges freely in immorality with women, if opportunity offers'.[29] The Chinese were forbidden

[26] Prosecution Statement, NAUK, WO 71/688.
[27] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.108.
[28] Ibid, p.110.
[29] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.48.

from meeting with prostitutes, although, as with men of other nationalities (including the British), this does not seem to have inhibited them.[30] Testament to their popularity, 'When five hundred Chinese laborers were relocated to another area, some French prostitutes moved along with them'.[31] Of all the 'crimes' committed by the Chinese, using prostitutes was perhaps one of the more understandable. In China, access to the opposite sex was uncommon, while 'in France, French women were all around and socially available everywhere – in factories, cafes, and villages'.[32] A YMCA report on the subject sheds light on one particular case:

> Across the street was the compound that sheltered over a hundred women munitions workers who… worked… side by side with the Chinese. These women were… were forward with Chinese… unquestionably seeking their money out of hours.[33]

Like many young men who had never been away from home before, the Chinese found it difficult to resist temptation. The situation they were in was new to them, and restrictive. That they gave in to their natural desires is not surprising, and can hardly be judged when so many soldiers on both sides of the frontline indulged likewise.[34] Prostitution was, after all, legal in France.[35] Moreover, the lack of opportunity the Chinese had for recreation, and the cumulative salaries each had as a result of few opportunities to spend it, meant that the Chinese had surplus finances to buy such services. The British are partly to blame for the situation, just as they were with regards to gambling.

---

[30] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.50; Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.303; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.147-148.
[31] Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.335.
[32] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.147.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid, p.148.
[35] Timothy J. Gilfoyle, 'Prostitutes in History: From Parables of Pornography to Metaphors of Modernity,' *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 1 (1999): pp.117-141, pp.121-123.

Of course, there were a number of incidents in France of which the Chinese were the victims. Tyler Stovall has written on the subject of racial violence towards non-white persons in France during the First World War. He explains that,

> While many received a warm reception… others encountered suspicion and hostility. During the latter years of the war, conflicts between the French and these non-white newcomers escalated into a wave of racial violence, ranging from numerous small-scale incidents to a few major riots.[36]

Suspicion was widespread. A court-martial case provides an example of a French citizen's wariness of the Chinese. The witness mentions that a coolie paid for a drink with a ten franc note, which he then took 'into the kitchen to obtain change', as he 'did not wish to open the cash-box… in the presence of the Chinamen'.[37] Captain McCormick gives another example of a French peasant's disdain for the Chinese. He writes,

> The French folks liked them not. A French peasant woman who had agreed to give a field, for monetary consideration, as a camp for a Chinese Company was so pleased to see them depart that she refused to collect her rent… she kept saying to me, "Chinois pas bon. Parti. Je suis contente", and then added as if assessing their comparative value, "cinq cent Chinois = cent Anglais." That was her idea of their respective value…[38]

[36] Tyler Stovall, 'The Color Line Behind the Lines,' p.737.
[37] Trial of Coolies Nos. 4976, 5884, and 5898 of No 9 Company C.L.C, Witness Testimony, 27th January, 1919, JAGO/CMP, NAUK, WO 71/676.
[38] Private Papers of Captain A McCormick, IWM, Documents.11906, p.209.

The Chinese were treated with apprehension. Arguing that this was due to their reputation as thieves is a poor defence for this type of discriminatory behaviour, especially as such stereotypical views were largely unfounded. It is possible that some of the French still opposed their involvement in the war effort, as nineteenth century stereotypes 'frequently targeted their perceived inadequacies as workers'.[39] These stereotypes may have persisted, but would have stood in antithesis to the reputation the Chinese had earned in their short time on the Western Front as highly competent and hard working men.[40] It is more likely that nineteenth century concerns regarding Chinese labour undercutting the wages and available jobs for French citizens was a prominent catalyst for the violence that followed – especially given their acquired status as good workers.[41] This helps explain why Britain's deportation process was so aggressive after the job was done. By September 1919, approximately 15,000 had already been repatriated. By the beginning of 1920, the number was roughly 59,300.[42] This was despite the War Office's desire to maintain as many Chinese as possible in France until the battlefields had been cleared.[43] This repatriation was in sharp contrast to the Chinese working under the French, who could choose to remain in France after the war's end.[44]

But violence and verbal abuse were inflicted by both civilians, and French soldiers alike, and these were rarely provoked by the Chinese.[45] The Chinese could sometimes be aggravated into violence as a result of French antagonism.[46] In these cases, it was not

[39] Stovall, 'The Color Line Behind the Lines,' p.743.
[40] Report on the Work of Labour During the War, NAUK, WO 107/37, pp.55-56; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.91-92.
[41] Stovall, 'The Color Line Behind the Lines,' p.744.
[42] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.309.
[43] Ibid.
[44] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.13.
[45] Stovall, 'The Color Line Behind the Lines,' pp.751-752.
[46] Ibid, p.754.

unusual for French trials to rule in favour of the offended Chinese – testament to the attempts the French made to be fair. In one such example, 'two French women [were] flirting with several Chinese in a bar. A local Frenchman… got jealous and started a fight in which one of the Chinese was hurt. They went to court, and the judge sentenced the… Frenchman to several months in jail.'[47] But despite authorities generally accepting that the issue was with the French rather than the Chinese, disputes did not always reach such a favourable carriage of justice. This was an ongoing issue with other colonial workers as well. Stovall explains,

> Military authorities invariably undertook investigations of racial violence, which usually concluded that the colonial workers were the victims of French aggression and often recommended their isolation from the surrounding population. Yet they made few arrests… and no records exist of any judicial proceedings against the rioters. The objects of these attacks knew little of the French legal system and generally had no recourse beyond appealing to their commanders. Given a desire to downplay any indications of lack of discipline among their subjects, or conflict and disunity among the French population as a whole, the military authorities in charge of colonial labor seem to have done little to punish the instigators of racial violence. This failure to administer justice… sent a message to those most hostile to the presence of colonial workers in France that such attacks would be tolerated, or even, sanctioned, by public authorities. Moreover, dealing with the problem by segregating colonial

[47] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.121.

> workers not only punished the victims of this violence but made them a more convenient and visible target for future assaults.[48]

Significant issues surrounded the resolution of crimes. For victims, justice is often a key factor in overcoming the trauma of the experience. That the Chinese and colonial labourers were expected to endure the incessant failure of the French justice system in pursuing fairly serious crimes, speaks volumes for their status in France. If anything, the sense of injustice could have had the propensity to trigger personal acts of retaliation – thus encouraging further crimes and violence.[49] Moreover, the effects of segregating the Chinese, and confining them to their camps, would have had the same detrimental effects already discussed at length above. It also framed Chinese labourers as a distinct 'Other' from the French population.[50] This is a far cry from the equality the French government purported to uphold.

Stovall explains this contradiction, arguing that French identity always made a distinction between the metropole and its colonies. This distinction 'was not just one of culture, let alone of levels of "civilization," but a racial one as well'.[51] Slavery was illegal in France, but unlike Britain, it still flourished in French colonies.[52] The fact that French citizens were 'free people' while colonised populations were enslaved 'meant that the very nature of Frenchness was conditioned by race'.[53] The French identity then became radicalised as a result of 'two particular developments' which were brought about by the First World War.

---

[48] Stovall, 'The Color Line Behind the Lines,' pp.756-757.
[49] Gerry Wallace, 'Wild Justice,' *Philosophy* 70, no. 273 (1995): pp.363-375, p.363.
[50] Tyler Stovall, 'National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,' p.56.
[51] Ibid, p.53.
[52] Ibid, p.54.
[53] Ibid.

> One was the conclusive triumph of Republican values and institutions in France, emphasizing the global significance of Revolutionary ideology. The other was the creation of a significant nonwhite presence in France, a presence of both actual individuals and cultural representations of the Other. [This led] to an understanding of whiteness as a muted but nonetheless real part of French national identity during the early twentieth century.[54]

The introduction of large numbers of colonial workers into France during the First World War only exacerbated the festering sense of racial and cultural superiority inherent in the French national identity. The government's official line may have been one promoting equality and fairness, but this attitude was not shared at the grassroots level. Given the sense of racial superiority shared among French citizens, it did not take much to encourage acts of discrimination and violence. Stovall continues,

> While there are some indications of cordial relations between French and colonial workers… the majority of reports indicate distance and hostility toward the newcomers. Laborers from the empire were criticized for taking French jobs, consorting with French women, breaking strikes, and enabling the government to draft more French workers out of the war plants and send them to the front lines.[55]

This explains why Chinese labourers received so much hostility while in France. Instead of being perceived as a resource helping the French war effort, they were stereotyped as making the living conditions of French citizens worse. In an effort to conceal this unappealing aspect of French society, the government overlooked French

[54] Ibid, p.53.
[55] Ibid, p.57.

crimes at the expense of the Chinese and colonial labourers. Despite outward appearances, and French governmental claims to the contrary, France was not a haven of fairness and equality to those who failed to qualify as white 'French' citizens. And those of an ethnic background were treated far worse than white foreigners.[56]

The British, despite their failures as effective administrators of foreign labour, were far less hypocritical in their management; the illusion of equality never existed. British management was openly based on the concepts of educating, civilising, or controlling the 'child-like' coolie.[57] Certainly, there were some variations in this approach: British officers individually did not necessarily display every facet of this assumed superiority. Some dealt with the Chinese with a paternal care, which embodied the more patronising aspects of the British colonial mentality.[58] Others treated coolie labour with disdain, personifying the conceitedness of the British world-view, and its propensity to dismiss and sweep aside other cultures and nationalities.[59] Neither was an appropriate or effective methodology for dealing with foreign labour, but to be clear, it made no presumptions that Chinese or other foreign labourers were on any kind of equal footing with British men. The French, for their part, gave the illusion of just leadership, but failed to provide such in practice when doing so would have jeopardized their national prestige. Neither overt nor covert racism is 'better' or 'worse' than the other. But the whole process does expose something malignant in French Republicanism and early twentieth century race politics.

[56] Ibid.
[57] Nicholas Griffin, 'Chinese Labor and British Christian Missionaries in France,' p.287; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.104, 105; Bailey, ''Coolies' or Huagong?,' p.111.
[58] Klein, *With the Chinks*, passim.
[59] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.104.

The Chinese were at a disadvantage in that their commanders often exercised an imperialistic approach which favoured 'teaching the Chinese lessons', and civilising them.[60] Perceiving a need to 'improve' the Chinese arguably made minor crimes less likely to be overlooked. A secondary effect of this is that misdemeanours which had a reasonable cause (gambling, prostitution, or petty theft), were often punished despite the circumstances which should have, in good conscience, excused the act. Gambling was prevalent not only because it was a Chinese pastime, but also because the British failed to provide adequate entertainment resources for the labourers, insisted on keeping them confined in camps, and failed to give them any better recreational outlet to spend their wages on. Paying for sex was understandable from a biological and social perspective, but was undoubtedly condemned, because amongst other reasons, it contradicted the Christian ethos that British were fond of trying to instil in the Chinese.[61] Given the popularity of prostitutes among British soldiers, this is an example of British hypocrisy. Food thefts were also understandable, given the variable supply of rations at times.[62]

The effects of the punishments meted out undoubtedly encouraged further crimes and acts of indiscipline, which promoted a sense of injustice among the Chinese labourers. Because of this sense of injustice, some became depressed and took their own life as a result. Others went on strike or became violent. Whatever events unfolded, British authorities rarely gave due consideration to the cause. Responses were often harsh, escalated quickly, and were generally unwarranted. This created a cycle of antagonism between the Chinese and their commanders for which, given the subordinate status of the

[60] Bailey, ''Coolies' or Huagong?,' pp.109-110; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.104.
[61] Griffin, 'Chinese Labor and British Christian Missionaries in France,' p.287.
[62] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.303.

Chinese and their relatively weak capacity for affecting change, responsibility must fall on the British administrators. Were better support apparatuses in place, and if British officers avoided exerting their perceived cultural and racial superiority over the Chinese, greater harmony between worker and manager might have been possible. This is proven in the cases where British officers did treat the Chinese with more tolerance, and made an effort to understand and sympathise with them. If British administrators could have put their imperial attitudes aside, productivity may have been increased, strikes and mutinies may have been reduced, and the effectiveness of the labour corps significantly improved.

Arguably, heinous crimes such as murder and armed robbery could have been avoided had the British exercised more effective leadership. Some cases, such as murders committed over gambling debts, were undoubtedly avoidable had the British authorities provided access to alternative means of entertainment, thereby discouraging gambling more effectively. From a socio-psychological perspective, other murders could probably have been prevented had the living conditions and treatment of the Chinese been better. There is sufficient research on the subject of social and environmental conditioning to argue that the behaviour of the Chinese workers was negatively affected as a result of their experiences in France. The novelty of the situation, and the sense of shock that must have accompanied it, may have caused the Chinese to lose touch with the ethical standards they were brought up to observe. Given the perceived anonymity of their existence, and the impersonal treatment they received from their commanders, rational and otherwise moral behaviour could have been suspended. It is therefore possible to assign a proportion of the blame to the British management for 'priming' the Chinese to commit these crimes – just as they were also responsible for encouraging dissent, strikes, suicides, and mutiny.

Meritorious Behaviour and Repatriation

For all the issues experienced with regards to discipline and crime, the Chinese contribution on the Western Front was vital for the Allied war effort.[1] A YMCA document stated that 'the Chinese' labourers work was as essential as that of the men in the trenches'.[2] They worked an average of ten hours a day, seven days a week (this could be shorter, if the work was completed early).[3] During the war, work for the British consisted of cargo handling, digging trenches and graves, repairing railways and roads, and building 'huts and aerodromes'.[4] They were renowned experts in trench digging.[5] After hostilities, they had the job of clearing away live ammunition, bodily remains, and general clear-up.[6] A number of them died from improper handling of explosives, as they received no training on handling procedures.[7] For the French, the work was generally in factories, manufacturing 'munitions, ships, aircraft, metal goods and petrochemicals'.[8] Although they also worked in mines, and fulfilled a similar role to those working for the British.[9]

All Chinese labourers, except criminals, were granted a British War Medal.[10] In an unsurprising display of arrogance, Sir William Bull remarked to the Chinese that, 'It should be regarded by you as a distinct honour to receive a British War Medal – the same

[1] Report on the Work of Labour During the War, NAUK, WO 107/37, pp.55-56.
[2] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.88.
[3] Contract for the Hiring of Chinese Labour, NAUK, FO 228/2894; Report on the Work of Labour During the War, NAUK, WO 107/37, p.52.
[4] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.42.
[5] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.89.
[6] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.309; O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.72-74.
[7] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.99.
[8] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.35.
[9] Ibid, pp.35-36.
[10] Enclosure in Vice-Consul Archer to Sir Beilby Alston, NAUK, FO 228/2896.

that will be received by British Officers and other ranks who served in France'.[11] Following the war's closure, Chinese contributions would be minimalised and all but forgotten.[12] Perhaps this was a ploy to undermine the Chinese' political bargaining position. Certainly, there were political realities that had to be contended with in the Versailles treaty, and more 'prominent' nations were not about to sacrifice their interests to appease the Chinese. Japan would keep Manchuria, and take Qingdao from Germany.[13] Britain would keep Hong Kong.[14] Chinese ambitions for striking an advantageous deal would be thwarted, and in this sense, their wartime contributions were largely in vein.

But Chinese contributions were being overlooked before this. Meritorious achievements carried out by the Chinese were repeatedly unacknowledged. Starling and Lee address this fact: 'The work and bravery of the Chinese… was rarely recognised. Of the 52 MSMs [Meritorious Service Medals] awarded to members of the CLC only five have been identified as Chinese'.[15] Xu has remarked that while 'The Chinese reputation for bravery was an important legacy of the Great War', it has all but vanished from memory.[16] This is troubling, especially in light of the number of sources degrading the Chinese during their time in France. But then, it is possible that acknowledging the significant contribution of the Chinese to the British war effort would have undermined the British attitude towards them. Clearly, the British did not anticipate any acts of gallantry from the Chinese, as no award could be given to the Chinese prior to March 1918.[17] Where awards were given, receiving them was not easy. A number of MSMs were

[11] Ibid.
[12] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.101.
[13] Keay, *China*, p.503.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.305.
[16] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.93.
[17] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.305.

given after repatriation, and the ex-labourers were expected to locate to the nearest British consulate for receipt of their awards.[18] In one example the coolie lived 186 miles from the consulate. The medal was eventually delivered to the Post Office instead.[19]

But existing accounts provide a glimpse into Chinese acts of heroism on the Western Front. Given that a number of the Chinese labourers spent a good deal of time disgruntled with their British administrators, it is remarkable that some were prepared to risk their lives for the Allied cause in the manner they did. Such acts contradict labour guidelines, stating that the Chinese have 'no interest in the war'.[20] Clearly, some Chinese labourers did take a vested interest at times, and not necessarily because of China's entry into the war in 1917.[21] There are even reports that the Chinese were involved in combat. T. Tarlton recorded in his diary:

> I hear there is to be a large attack tomorrow and that the Chinese are to take part in the actual fighting… I'm not liking the idea of the slit eyed soldiers but it may be that they will turn out alright.[22]

While there was no further mention of whether the Chinese were involved, there are other examples of the Chinese in action. Xu refers to a *New York Times* report on the issue, in which an improvised battalion of soldiers and labourers was used to plug a gap during the Ludendorff Offensive in 1918. He concludes, 'although we do not know how many Chinese were involved in the fighting, we are quite certain that at least some

[18] G. Tollefson to William Bull, 10th March, 1921, NAUK, FO 228/2896.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Directorate of Labour: Notes for Officers of Labour Companies, IWM, Documents.9039, p.36.
[21] China's declaration of war was purely a governmental tactic to strengthen its position Versailles, and secure its interests in mainland China; Alison Adcock Kaufman, 'In Pursuit of Equality and Respect: China's Diplomacy and the League of Nations,' *Modern China* 40, no. 6 (2014): pp.605-638, p.613.
[22] T. Tarlton Diary, 16th October, 1918, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1569.

Chinese laborers were there'.[23] If true, then there were substantial efforts from some labourers to exceed that stipulated in their contracts. Reports of the Chinese workers' involvement in the fighting are also important in striking a balance against accounts of labourers running at the first sight of planes, or when coming under German shelling. Liu Dien Chen was awarded the MSM for gallantry under such conditions:

> On Wednesday 13 March, 1918, he was in charge of a party of 60… During the morning the enemy began to shell the town at some distance beyond the yard… the Chinese coolies became panicky and only by constant effort were kept at their work. Early in the afternoon the range was shortened and the shells began to burst near the yard. The Chinese immediately scattered, some of them running right into the danger zone. These he followed and led out of danger, then bringing all the others back he set them to work. They continued to work for a short time, but as the range was again shortened they dispersed for a second time. Again he persuaded them to return and going among them, by his fearlessness and disregard for his own safety set such an example they remained at their work and completed it.[24]

This was the first MSM was awarded to a Chinese labourer. That the Chinese were able to continue working with sufficient guidance and leadership, despite breaking twice, highlights the fact that most issues lay with poor British leadership. Another MSM was given to First Class Ganger Yen Teng Feng for working 'continually for four hours removing tarpaulins from unexploded stacks of ammunition and drenching them with

[23] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.93.
[24] D. A. Directorate of Labour, XV Corps, 1917-19, War Diary, 18 March, 1918, Headquarters Branches and Services: Deputy Assistant Director Labour, NAUK, WO 95/929/6.

water' during an explosion.[25] In another case, two labourers received the MSM for braving a barrage three times in order to bring supplies back to their company after it was cut off.[26] Wang Yu Shan received the award for similarly life threatening deeds. On 22 June, 1919,

> He observed a fire on a dump of ammunition... On his own initiative he rushed to the dump with two buckets of water which he threw on the fire and then seized a burning British 'P' Bomb… and hurled it to a safe distance from the dump. He then continued to extinguish the burning dump which had spread to the surrounding grass, in which Rifle Grenades and German shells were lying. By his initiative, resource, and disregard of personal safety this Coolie averted what might have been a serious explosion.[27]

Wang Yu Shan's case is interesting, as attempts to deliver his award were confounded by the revelation that he was imprisoned in China. The Consul-General reported that '… just as I had fixed a day for Wang to come to this Consulate and receive his decoration, I learned that he was in prison… for stealing firewood and threatening the owner with a sword'.[28] An interesting contrast to the moral deeds that had led to his award. Nevertheless, in a show of faith, Bull decided to intervene in the issue:

> As the result of representations made by me… the man's sentence was eventually reduced… The offense for which Wang was convicted does not appear to have been of a very serious nature, and as he reports

[25] Extract from Supplement to the London Gazette, 13 July, 1920, Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol IV, NAUK, FO 228/2895.
[26] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.94.
[27] Extract from Supplement to the London Gazette, 13 July, 1920, NAUK, FO 228/2895.
[28] W.P. Ker to William Bull, 25th July, 1921, NAUK, FO 228/2896.

himself to be now destitute, I have recommended him to the authorities of the British Municipal Police who have engaged him on probation as a policeman.[29]

This colourful act of compassion was not a common occurrence. In almost every other case, the British provided little support for those who had given their services for the Allied cause. For the average worker, the British paid no long-term pension for their service.[30] Even the compensatory pension payable to families of deceased labourers was a target for British negotiators to 'bargain down'.[31] And financial compensation for wounds or dismemberment, defined in their contract as $150 in the case of death and $70 in the case of partial dismemberment, was low.[32] Especially so, given that these men would be expected to support their families financially in the future – which they may no longer be able to do. A number of labourers became dependent on their family for survival, and a few, having no home, 'resorted to living in a temple'.[33]

A letter written in 1919 summarised the compensation options available to the British government as either 'an *ex gratia* present', where the amount payable 'may be fixed arbitrarily by the British', or 'full compensation', which 'should be equal to that considered equitable by the Chinese Government'.[34] The letter suggests that the second option might be more favourable, as there was a chance that the Chinese government would seek to pay it, and recover the costs from Germany.[35] Neither eventuality was fair to the Chinese labourers, especially given the questionable circumstances under which

[29] Ibid.
[30] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.40.
[31] Ibid, p.101.
[32] Contract for the Hiring of Chinese Labour, NAUK, FO 228/2894.
[33] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.95.
[34] G. S. Moss to Sir John N. Jordan, 24th February, 1919, NAUK, FO 228/2895.
[35] Ibid.

many received their injuries. The following table outlines the gratuities payable if the British chose to provide full compensation in line with Chinese regulations:

The Chinese Republican Army Wound Gratuity Regulations	
First Class Soldiers	
First Class Wound	$80 annually
Second Class Wound	$60 annually
Third Class Wound	$35 annually
Second Class Soldiers	
First Class Wound	$60 annually
Second Class Wound	$50 annually
Third Class Wound	$30 annually
Third Class Soldiers	
First Class Wound	$50 annually
Second Class Wound	$40 annually
Third Class Wound	$25 annually
Lowest Rate for Officer Wearing Sword	
First Class Wound	$200 annually
Second Class Wound	$100 annually
Third Class Wound	$60 annually
First Class Wound	Totally blind; loss of one foot, one hand or worse; totally dumb; unable to eat; unable to move without assistance; &c, &c.
Second Class Wound	Totally deaf; foot or hand rendered useless; urinatory function difficult [sic]; loss of independent locomotion; &c, &c.
Third Class Wound	Loss of one eye, nose; unable to speak or digest properly; loss of thumb and forefinger; three fingers or more; loss of 4 toes or more; stiff neck; &c, &c.[36]

[36] Ibid.

Chinese labourers would be considered 'Third Class Soldiers', and payment was expected to last annually for about ten years as this was the estimated life expectancy of a wounded ex-labourer in China.[37] By this logic, an average labourer suffering with complete paralysis, and unable to move without assistance would receive only $500 all told. A labourer who lost an eye might only expect $250. In the event, most labourers received substantially less. A 'man who lost sight in one eye from a shell splinter, and another who was blinded while working in a trench, received only 75 dollars each… Another man who lost an eye due to trachoma was paid only 30 dollars, although his condition was aggravated while he was in service'.[38] The Chinese were originally told that they would not be used in combat, but a number of injuries were sustained as a result of German explosives.[39] The British government simply ignored this moral quandary. That compensation did improve owed much to pressure from the Chinese government, vocal administrators, and medical officers on the British side.[40] However, the final British settlement was still unreasonable. Men with 'First Class Wounds' were given allotment pay for a period of eighteen months.[41] In the case of death, this was paid to their family. For wounds received as a result of general service, workers could expect pay for the duration of one year.[42] Those wounded by German action received up to six months allotment, depending on the severity of the wound.[43] Further payments were considered impossible due to the 'difficulty of administering such pensions in China'.[44] Perhaps further payments would have been possible had the British made an agreement with the Chinese government to transfer payments to them for distribution among the ex-labourers.

[37] Ibid.
[38] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.41.
[39] Fawcett, 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France,' p.45.
[40] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.41.
[41] G. S. Moss, Report on the Demobilization of the Chinese Labour Corps, 31st October, 1920, NAUK, FO 228/2895, p.7.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid, pp.7-8.
[44] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.41-42.

If the British, after 200 years of imperial administration, were struggling with issuing pensions in China, payments via the Chinese government might have been a feasible alternative. Of course, the likelihood is that the British government simply did not want to pay any more than necessary – something that by this stage has become all too familiar.

The speed with which the British began repatriating the Chinese labourers back to China appears to indicate indecent haste. The first Chinese men to depart did so in November, 1918.[45] Of them, 365 were ill before embarkation.[46] Sending sick men on the long voyage to China was a policy that continued into 1919, resulting in twenty-five deaths, and two suicides aboard ship.[47] The British wanted only to keep able-bodied men to help with clearing up in the aftermath of the war.[48] Sick men would tap British coffers and so were among the first to depart, with little to no regard for their ability to endure the voyage.[49] The British continued to send the Chinese men back as soon as they had exhausted their usefulness. The final workers to depart France did so by September, 1920.[50] Absolutely none were permitted to stay after serving with the British.[51] The French, however, allowed workers the option of remaining in France, and some 3000 ex-labourers stayed behind.[52] They were not, however, warmly received by the local French population, or those returning home from the frontlines. Hostility and suspicion held sway. That said, a number of them embarked on relationships with French women, and started families in France.[53] Of those being shipped by the French authorities, the last left France

[45] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.309.
[46] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.123.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.78.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid, p.79.
[53] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.100-101.

in 1922 – two years later than those serving with the British.[54] While it is true that the French had more authority to permit Chinese workers to stay in France for longer, the speed with which the British deported the men was still remarkable. In twenty-two months after the war's end, the British had shipped all of the approximately 100,000 men back to China. Their efforts and achievements would henceforth be underplayed; their sacrifices forgotten.[55]

[54] Ibid, p.79.
[55] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.101.

The Philosophy, Morality, and Legality of British Leadership

In 1917, the British devised a contract for the hiring of Chinese workers who would be deployed in France. The British, long-time imperial administrators, were in a position of some advantage in formulating its terms. Not only had they superior legal and bureaucratic knowledge, but they also possessed a greater understanding of what the labourers could expect during their employment, as well as almost two centuries of experience in exploitation of peoples, nations, and resources. The British bargaining position was strengthened by the relative weakness of the Chinese government and its inability to intervene forcefully in regards to contractual disputes and imbalances due to distance and lack of military weight.[1] Additionally, the Chinese government's eagerness to assist the British war effort in an attempt to reap subsequent national reward and advantage, meant that the British 'need' for manpower was neutralised from the perspective of relative 'leverage'. The Chinese men who were presented with this contract hailed mainly from the lower echelons of Chinese society. They were principally farmers, and had few other options in accessing a subsistence living. They sought to support their families with the salaries Britain was offering, expected to see the world, and were sold the idea of an adventure.[2] That many would spend their time either working, or confined to a barbed-wire camp, was as yet not known to them. This created an imbalance in the contract, whereby the British had far greater knowledge of the situation than the Chinese. As Michael J. Sandel argues, this fundamentally undermined the contract:

> Contracts derive their moral force from two different ideals, autonomy and reciprocity. But most actual contracts fall short of these

[1] Stephen G. Craft, 'Angling for an Invitation to Paris,' p.4.
[2] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.49-51.

> ideals. If I'm up against someone with a superior bargaining position, my agreement may not be wholly voluntary, but pressured or, in the extreme case, coerced. If I'm negotiating with someone with greater knowledge of the things we are exchanging… I may be defrauded or deceived.[3]

For the Chinese, the main anxiety was that they would be used in the fighting, and these concerns were salved with the clause: 'Not to be employed in military operations'.[4] There are, of course, various ways this clause could be interpreted – an issue that carries moral implications regarding the use of vague clauses, without definition of their meaning. The problem with vague clauses is all the more relevant considering the fact that the Chinese lacked legal expertise and advice, and signed the contract from a position of considerable naïvety and disadvantage.

Sandel observes that there is a tendency to assume that mutual acceptance of a contract renders it fair.[5] Clearly, the contract presented to the would-be Chinese labourers was not fair. By Britain's own admission, the contract was advantageous to the British.[6] This has substantial ramifications for how we perceive the subsequent behaviour of the Chinese coolies, and indeed the corps as a whole. Consent is not enough to ensure a contract is morally binding.[7] If the contract is immoral, forced upon someone with few alternatives, or is inherently unfair, it is unreasonable to expect someone to honour it.[8] This was the case for the Chinese contract. It was immoral in its ambiguity, in its

[3] Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to do?* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2010), pp.149-150.
[4] Contract for the Hiring of Chinese Labour, NAUK, FO 228/2894.
[5] Michael J. Sandel, *Justice*, p.142.
[6] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.40.
[7] Sandel, *Justice*, p.146.
[8] B. C. Postow, 'Coercion and the Moral Bindingness of Contracts,' *Social Theory and Practice* 4, no. 1 (1976): pp.75-92, pp.75-76, 87; Sandel, *Justice*, pp.145-146.

bargaining advantage over financially desperate Chinese men, and was unfair in that it was drawn up by a side intending to reap disproportionate benefit at the expense of the other. However, the contract depended on the compliance of the Chinese in order for its objectives to be met. Even if the Chinese followed the contract in good faith, the British undermined any moral weight the contract had by deploying the Chinese in combat zones, and dismissing complaints from the workers that the British were in breach of contract. The Chinese, who had little legal recourse to challenge the infractions they experienced, could only refuse to comply with the contract. From a Chinese viewpoint, the British had in fact acted in breach of contract. So why should the Chinese be expected to act in good faith?[9] Roger V. Gould, writing on the subject of social hierarchies, has suggested that conflicts between parties arise as a result of continued negotiation regarding the terms of an arrangement. In this sense, it was not the terms of the contract that provoked conflict between the labourers and officers per se, but the repeated disputes between conflicting interpretations of the contractual terms that eventually prompted the labourers' reaction.[10] They protested with the only power they had: they went on strike or deserted. According to Sandel's account of contractual validity, the Chinese were a wronged party. Their striking was moral and one of the few options they had once the British administrators had ignored their protestations.[11] British responses to this must in turn be immoral: punishing the Chinese was unethical. Another effect of the British administration's undermining of the contract was that the Chinese became aware of the moral corruptibility of the British, and in experiencing the unfairness of their treatment at British hands, were

[9] Non-performance may be 'excused by reason of conduct of the other party… A frustrating act operates to terminate the contract automatically whereas a major breach gives the innocent party a choice whether to terminate or not'; M. P. Furmston, 'Breach of Contract,' *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 40, no. 3 (1992): pp.671-674, pp.671-672.

[10] Roger V. Gould, *Collision of Wills: How Ambiguity about Social Rank Breeds Conflict* (London: The University of Chicago Press Ltd, 2003), p.38.

[11] 'When a man who has a moral excuse is punished… that is as much a failure of the system of criminal law as a guilty verdict on an innocent man'; Laurence Stern, 'Deserved Punishment, Deserved Harm, Deserved Blame,' *Philosophy* 45, no. 174 (1970): pp.317-329, p.320.

all the more likely to break other rules and regulations – after all, group conflict is often attributed to distrust and resentment.[12] If the British did not follow their own rules and tenets, why should the Chinese labourers?

Had the contract been clearer, or had each signatory been given some sort of forewarning as to what was awaiting them before signing, then the British administration would be in a more justifiable position morally and legally.[13] As this was not the case, the contract borders on pure deception and exploitation. One seriously questions whether the Chinese would have willingly risked their lives for 1 franc a day. Given the reputation the British had for exploiting indigenous populations, it becomes much harder to perceive the Anglo-Chinese agreement as a morally binding, legitimate contract. And if the contract were illegitimate, if the Chinese were being exploited, to what extent morally could they be expected to work? There are few who would suggest that Nwose, the Southern Nigerian forcibly conscripted for labour (introduced above in 'Context: Britain'), should feel morally obligated to work for the British. So why should the Chinese? If their contract is nothing more than a disguise for exploitation, then the Chinese have no moral obligation – legally or otherwise.[14] A response to this might be that the Chinese are obliged to work because they are being paid. But this ceases to be a matter of a 'consent-based' obligation, and becomes one of 'benefit-based' obligation.[15] As Sandel notes, the receipt of benefits can in some circumstances confer obligations but this is a very different

[12] Roger V. Gould, *Collision of Wills*, p.148.
[13] Susan M. Chesler, 'Drafting Effective Contracts,' *GPSolo* 27, no. 2 (2010): pp.10-11, passim.
[14] B. C. Postow, 'Coercion and the Moral Bindingness of Contracts,' pp.82, 84.
[15] Sandel, *Justice*, p.148.

matter to the contractual commitment originally entered into by the Chinese labourers: as noted above, the workers would not have agreed to risk their lives for 1 franc a day.[16]

If we accept this fundamental problem with the Anglo-Chinese contract, it also becomes easier to justify the behaviour of a number of Chinese workers who acted contrary to British standards of discipline. The moral quandary of using military discipline to control foreign civilians is transparent enough. But there are further problems with having done so. As the Chinese were not informed that they would be held to military discipline before they joined the labour corps, in what sense is it justifiable that Britain subsequently enforced this model? The issue extends further, as the Chinese labourers were also bound to British and French civil laws too. Is it, as John Locke theorised, a case of 'tacit consent'?[17] This argument suggests that by merely signing up to work with the British, the Chinese gave consent for any standard of treatment they might receive: they would thereby agree to the terms, laws, and punishments laid out.[18] But as Sandel illustrates, this concept is fundamentally weak. The argument, as he sees it, is that 'anyone who enjoys the benefits of government, even by traveling on the highway, implicitly consents to the law, and is bound by it. But tacit consent is a pale form of the real thing. It is hard to see how just passing through town is morally akin to ratifying the Constitution'.[19] Ergo, simply joining the Labour Corps and travelling to France is not enough to suggest that the Chinese accepted that they would be compelled to follow British disciplinary standards – especially as they had no concept of these standards in

[16] Ibid, pp.147-149.
[17] Craig L. Carr, 'Tacit Consent,' *Public Affairs Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (1990): pp.335-345, p.335.
[18] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1991), pp.89-90.
[19] Sandel, *Justice*, p.140.

the first place.[20] The contract contained no reference to how infractions and disciplinary issues would be dealt with.[21] The Chinese labourers had no priming for how they would be expected to behave before they joined. Nor did they have any awareness of how the British would treat them. This makes the idea of the Chinese tacitly consenting to British disciplinary standards morally untenable, as well practically flawed. It is unethical to expect someone to comply with a standard of discipline if they had no comprehension of what this would be. If the Chinese did not tacitly consent, and no detail of management protocol was written into their contracts, how is it possible to justify British disciplinary methods?

The simple answer is that, for reasons already discussed, it is not morally possible – and it impossible to discount the fact that morality may not have factored into pragmatic British thinking. Legally, however, justification for their methods was easier as the British had the advantage of being the only authority on the issue. There was little the Chinese government was able to do, other than appeal the conditions.[22] But the British could rely on their belief that such methods were necessary in ensuring control, order, and productivity.[23] The Chinese workers in France had no legal counsel, and those westerners suggesting that conditions needed improving were a minority, easily dismissed.[24] In 1917, these were largely accepted standards and protocols, especially within imperialistic

[20] The Chinese labourers 'knew nothing about Europe and… and had not had any opportunity to become familiar with European culture'. It is therefore unlikely they would have been aware of the disciplinary standards they were expected to live by; Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.332.
[21] Contract for the Hiring of Chinese Labour, NAUK, FO 228/2894.
[22] The Chinese government openly admitted to have no responsibility for the men; Nicholas J. Griffin, 'Britain's Chinese Labor Corps in World War I,' *Military Affairs* 40, no. 3 (1976): pp.102-108, p.105.
[23] Directorate of Labour: Notes for Officers of Labour Companies, IWM, Documents.9039, p.6; Wang, 'Caring Beyond National Borders,' p.330; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.110, 112, 114-115, 116-117.
[24] Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.41, 106, 123.

nations such as Britain and France. [25] In fact, the treatment the Chinese received was far from the worst ever meted out by Britain in her long colonial past: slavery being common until its abolition in 1833.[26] Historically then, the methods used are easily understood. What remains is how the British themselves would have sought to explain their behaviour towards the Chinese, and there are a number of possibilities in relation to this.

It may be possible to suggest that British methods were utilitarian in nature, despite the fact that British discipline did not straightforwardly seem to maximise welfare or utility ('welfare or utility', defined as 'the greatest good for the greatest number of people').[27] In fact, a number of Chinese men suffered from the treatment and punishments they received for even mild disciplinary infractions. British management methods benefitted the British commanders the most, and they were the minority party in comparison to the Chinese labourers. One possible argument would be to suggest that British disciplinary methods were devised to maximise Chinese welfare, but on a long-term scale. For this argument to work, it would be necessary to account for British imperialistic and racial attitudes towards the Chinese, and to appreciate the belief the British had that they were civilising, cultivating, and improving the 'dirty', 'mean', or 'childlike' Chinese through their methods of control.[28] Harsh discipline may have seemed the best method for achieving this, and would perhaps enhance the character of the Chinese in the long run. This concept is often a founding belief of military discipline in general: stringent levels of discipline makes better soldiers, increases their capacity for

[25] Timothy C. Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples*, p.14.
[26] Ronald Quinault, 'Gladstone and Slavery,' *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (2009): pp.363-383, p.363.
[27] Robert Audi, 'Can Utilitarianism be Distributive? Maximization and Distribution as Criteria in Managerial Decisions,' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (2007): pp.593-611, p.593.
[28] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.50; Bailey, ''Coolies' or Huagong?,' p.111; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.104, 105-107.

facing the potential challenges ahead, and inculcates a sense of duty and worth into recruits.[29] Perhaps in this vein, British management could be considered utilitarian in nature. It was for the 'greatest good for the greatest number', but over a longer period of time.

Of course, the likelihood is that few officers made this calculation when they meted out punishments. More probable was that they acted out of instinctive authority, and a desire to see order maintained at any given moment. Here, it is possible to consider their behaviour in two different ways. On the one hand, perhaps British disciplinary methods were applied from a pragmatic desire to ensure efficiency. But this argument falls down in light of the fact that unhappy Chinese workers could be notoriously inefficient workers.[30] On the other hand, it is possible to consider British administrative attitudes as Aristotelian in nature, and as such, reach a more sinister conclusion as to the intentions behind them. If this view is adopted, the British applied strict military discipline because they believed the Chinese were morally deserving of it.

> For Aristotle, justice means giving people what they deserve, giving each person his or her due… Justice involves two factors: "things, and the persons to whom things are assigned." And in general we say that "persons who are equal should have assigned to them equal things.[31]

The Chinese men were not considered equal, which is why scholars have freely claimed that the Chinese were punished more harshly than their British counterparts for

[29] Mark J. Osiel, *Obeying Orders: Atrocity, Military Discipline, and the Law of War* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1999), pp.26, 216; Regina F. Titunik, 'The Myth of the Macho Military,' *Polity* 40, no. 2 (2008): pp.137-163, p.150.
[30] As illustrated in previous chapters, mismanagement often resulted in various disruptions; Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, p.87.
[31] Sandel, *Justice*, p.187.

the same 'crimes'.[32] Race and cultural hierarchy were clearly factors in British administrative decision making, as they had been for over two hundred years. This idea explains the wider decisions the British made in their handling of the Chinese men, such as keeping them in camps and separating them as much as possible from westerners. Men of other nationalities received similar treatment.[33] It was precisely because these men were foreign, and therefore of an inferior cultural, racial, and social standing, that there were perceived dangers in allowing them any freedom – lest they might get ideas above their station, or pollute the local population.[34] The prisonlike camps in which the Chinese were confined violated their basic human right of freedom – the concept of which has been around since the 1700s – because the Chinese were not considered equal humans: 'that was their due'.[35] It was therefore acceptable to treat these men with substandard levels of care, and force them into undesirable living standards. The spread of liberalism that came about as a result of Enlightenment philosophy may have revolutionised western politics, but the same principles of freedom, democracy, and tolerance were not yet extended to men of foreign cultures or race.[36] However, the British were not the worst manifestation of this imperialist attitude. Twenty years' later, the Japanese would earn that accolade upon their capture of Nanjing.[37] One scholar has juxtaposed British and Japanese colonial rule as 'an Empire that had some conception of human rights and one that regarded alien races as no better than swine'.[38] At least the British perceived the Chinese as human, rather than animals.

---

[32] O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.55.
[33] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, pp.227, 276-277; Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples*, p.176.
[34] Starling and Lee, *No Labour, No Battle*, p.225, Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp.104-105; O'Neill, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, pp.39-40.
[35] Burns H. Weston, 'Human Rights,' *Human Rights Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1984): pp.257-283, p.259; O'Niell, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, p.29.
[36] Jose Maria Rosales, 'Liberalism's Historical Diversity: A Comparative Conceptual Exploration,' *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 8, no. 2 (2013): pp.67-82, p.69.
[37] Ferguson, *Empire*, p.338.
[38] Ibid, p.339.

The belief in the manifest responsibility of the British in civilising non-western peoples, and that these societies should not be treated as equals, went hand-in-hand in defining British management styles and policies. A primary driver of this was the belief in Britain's duty to fulfil its religious obligations: 'to build a Protestant empire', and redeem the world.[39] Here, it is possible to discern the enduring hold religion has had on British political discourse for hundreds of years. This religious mission predated and survived the philosophy of Enlightenment thinkers, and combined the goal of attaining the 'perfect man' in line with theological beliefs, and the increase in governance based on reason, freedom, and faith in scientific empiricism.[40] Over two centuries, Britain fused the two into a working model for justifying its imperial endeavours, and understanding its place in the world. A conviction that Britain's dominant position in the world was God-given, and a pseudo-scientific belief in the biological superiority of the white man meant that the goal of realising the 'ideal man' – specifically one modelled on British values, with a Christian ethos – survived.[41] It is in this light that it is possible to make sense of the methods employed by the British in dealing with the Chinese labourers. The British justified their perceived pre-eminence both on a belief in their 'superior' culture, society, intellect, and morality, and through a 'scientific' theory of racial hierarchies, and a belief that God had brought about British supremacy in order that they might achieve their moral, just, and indeed religious mission to Anglicise the world. As such, the Chinese were treated as inferior people, while the British adopted a paternalistic approach toward controlling and disciplining them. Demonstrating the prominence of religion,

[39] Ibid, pp.4, 113.
[40] Michael Foster, 'Contemporary British Philosophy and Christian Belief,' *The Christian Scholar* 43, no. 3 (1960): pp.185-198, p.185.
[41] Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, pp.281, 397; Gregory Claeys, 'The 'Survival of the Fittest' and the Origins of Social Darwinism,' *Journal of the History of Ideals* 61, no. 2 (2000): pp.223-240, pp.238-240.

attempts were even made to covert the Chinese to Christianity, and instil in them a lasting Christian ethos.[42]

It is reasonably easy to understand British management techniques through this lens. The Chinese Labour Corps was another object onto which the British administration could impress its imperialistic philosophy and morality. The labourers might have expected more, given the semblance of professionalism associated with the provision of contracts, but British mentality was generally too imprinted with notions of cultural superiority, racial hierarchies, and moral pre-eminence. This, coupled with a long standing sense of administrative supremacy, meant that it was unsurprising that British administrators expected their rules and policies to be obeyed without question. Nor is it surprising that when conflicts did arise, they were dealt with in much the same way as the British had learnt to deal with other disputes throughout its imperial history: with swift and often harsh shows of force, rather than discussing resolutions that may have compromised British dominance. The British did not want to display weakness, nor take a backward step. They consistently abused the complete authority of their position at the expense of the Chinese labourers. Chinese concerns were mostly dismissed, and their dissent was punished rather than acknowledged as highlighting deficiencies in the British management system. Consistently, the British purported to hold the cultural, evolutionary, and moral high ground, while simultaneously acting in barbaric and immoral ways. The Chinese were not perfectly behaved, and there are records of individuals committing serious crimes at times, but this did not justify British ignorance and arrogance when

[42] Christian missionaries had hoped that wartime conversions to Christianity would prompt further conversions among the Chinese population upon repatriation. This was not the case; Griffin, 'Chinese Labor and British Christian Missionaries in France,' pp.287, 289.

legitimate concerns were raised. The Chinese were treated as second-rate people, to be taught and disciplined by the British. In the minds of many administrators, this was the natural order of things. This arrogance arguably harmed the enterprise, and encouraged far more disputes and indiscipline than would have been the case had the British extended mutual respect to the Chinese labourers, and given their concerns fair hearing.

Discussion: Management, Discipline & Crime

Most disciplinary issues associated with the Chinese Labour Corps can be reduced to questionable management choices on the part of the British administrators. Interestingly, by anticipating challenging conduct from the Chinese, and pre-emptively attempting to deal with this through imposing restrictive conditions, the British had essentially encouraged the very disruption they sought to prevent. From the very formulation of the ambiguous employment contract, throughout the confining of men in prison-like camps, to the forced transportation and repatriation of men unfit to travel, decisions were taken which coalesced to create an unhappy, abrasive environment in which discontent was allowed to fester. Complaints were frequently ignored, and problematic issues were overlooked in favour of maintaining the simplicity of rigid inflexibility. Indeed, it was rare for British administrators to give any consideration to disgruntled Chinese labourers. Therefore, many Chinese workers felt ignored, and unable to express their dissatisfaction through legitimate channels. Whatever their concerns, they felt they had little recourse but to strike or mutiny in an attempt to have their grievances heard. To this, the British often responded forcefully in an attempt to restore order, rather than address the root cause of the issue. Faced with such a dire situation, it is unsurprising that some were driven to despair and/or suicide. An individual driven to despair might take his own life, but equally he could chose to take another's. The British expected too much of civilians, requiring them to adhere to strict military discipline without prior training. Had they followed a regimen more in line with the French, it is possible that the Chinese would have had less cause to protest, or indulge in other acts the British regarded as 'indiscipline'.

Psychological processes that have subsequently been understood help to explain the behaviour of the Chinese workers in response to their experiences at the hands of the British. The deindividuation they underwent served as a catalyst for inflaming the general sense of dissatisfaction. The fact that the Chinese were made to feel anonymous actively encouraged behaviours that were either disruptive or confrontational. The friction between labourer and officer was compounded by the divisive attitude the British took in their dealings with the Chinese. A contrast between the 'superior' British and 'uncivilised' Chinese meant that two sides were created with conflicting interests. Evidence cited above suggests that this would have encouraged acts of indiscipline, and even a number of the 'crimes' that the Chinese were reported to have committed. Likewise, the methods the British used to control and manage the Chinese only served to reinforce their prejudiced and discriminatory views. They dehumanised the Chinese by numbering them, and reduced their perception of the Chinese as individuals. This served to facilitate the process of punishing the workers: it is much easier to shoot someone whom you regard as a number, rather than a fellow human being.

But the methods the British employed resulted from their understanding of imperial administration, and considerable pressure arising from the urgent need for additional manpower. These factors help to explain the many inadequacies of the management culture that was adopted. The British were more concerned with productivity than with ethical considerations. Despite occasional improvements in some areas, such as the addition of the YMCA to allow the Chinese some means of entertainment, recreation and support, dissatisfaction otherwise went unaddressed. The

result was that productivity was undermined, and indiscipline increased. Of course, some of the methods used by the British were hard to avoid. For example, despite the negative effects of using numbers as a means to replace names, there was no obvious way the British could have used Chinese names in practice: it would have most certainly been a logistical nightmare for the administrators. Not to mention the fact that the British would not have perceived any problems with using numbers, as it was only through subsequent research that the detrimental effects of this practice have become known. However, treating the Chinese with more dignity and respect, would probably have increased welfare, productivity and discipline.

Positive change was not, however, very forthcoming. Explaining why this was the case is relatively straightforward. The management of the Chinese Labour Corps was inextricably linked with the imperialist culture of the nineteenth century. While the decisions the British made were intended to maximise administrative simplicity and overall productivity, they were also tied up with imperialistic values in of race, culture, and religion. Policies often reflected a British belief in racial hierarchies, the superiority of their culture, and the deep-seated conviction that God actively willed the paternal Anglicanisation of other peoples. The policies that were applied then, while not being the most productive or efficient in regards to work rate, appealed to these features of imperial mentality. So long as these beliefs were held, there was no need to question the appropriateness of their management style. By the philosophical standards the British used, the Chinese were relegated to a diminished status owing to their 'inferiority' of race and culture. This meant that Chinese appeals could be easily dismissed, allowed for their exploitation as a resource, and significantly shaped the type of treatment they could expect. The Chinese received the same treatment that so many other foreign peoples had

undergone at the hands of imperialist oppressors. Indeed, in many cases there was little other than 1 franc a day to separate 'contract worker' from slave – the treatment was often indistinguishable.

The motivations of the British leadership were complex. They wanted to achieve results efficiently, but not at the expense of their imperial dominance. They applied standards of common decency only where these did not compromise management efficiency. Policies were functional so long as they exerted dominance, enforced control, and produced results. Anything that threatened the racial status quo was rejected outright. So too were concepts which may have threatened the power dynamic between the British and Chinese. Making changes and backtracking would have damaged British prestige. Instead, the British relied on the belief that they were civilising the Chinese through their leadership, and disciplining them into being better human beings. Ethics were considered, for example in the form of access to jurisprudence and certain welfare provisions, only so long as these did not challenge wider imperial beliefs. In situations where there was no clear contradiction, the British could be expected to back whichever policy provided them with the greatest returns. Unfortunately for the Chinese, this meant working in active war zones, handling live explosives without training, and spending their 'free time' imprisoned. The disciplinary and criminal issues that arose from this never reached a point where the British would have struggled to manage them by force, and were therefore not perceived as a real threat – they were more of an inconvenience. Moreover, the issues with discipline and crime only served to reinforce the British conviction that the Chinese men were uncivilised and immoral, thereby justifying their treatment.

The narrative of the Chinese Labour Corps rests in the twilight years of Britain's empire, and it is in this imperial sunset that it must be framed. The labourers were hired on a contractual basis, but expected to work and live like indentured labour. For the British there was, after all, little separating the Chinese from other races and cultures they had exploited during their imperial tenure. And exploitation is a prominent theme with the Chinese Labour Corps, their meagre salaries seemingly conferring legal obligations rather than fair compensation for their work and contribution. The Chinese were consistently treated as a resource rather than human beings, and their concerns were often dismissed as a result. Under the harsh and uncompassionate treatment the Chinese received, it is small wonder that there were acts of indiscipline. What is surprising is that they were not more rebellious. Perhaps fear that desertion or protestation would be met with the barrel of a gun was enough to pacify the discontent that rumbled among the labourers. Perhaps the reputation the Chinese had for being optimistic, if not another stereotype of the 'childlike coolie', was a factor. This however does not match up with the number of suicides that occurred. The various misdemeanours that took place, such as gambling and the use of prostitutes, were unsurprising given the conditions the Chinese were expected to endure, without entertainment or distraction. That the Chinese had a penchant for gambling, or that they had (among the British) a reputation for theft, only lends weight to the argument that the British should have done more to satisfy the needs of the Chinese, to help stave off boredom. The British were asking for trouble. For more serious crimes, there is certainly a case for argument that the perpetrators may have been depersonalised, desensitised, and abused enough by the system in which they found themselves to provoke behaviours they would otherwise not have carried out. But equally, it may simply have been a case of a few 'bad apples' given the number of labourers recruited and the small number of serious crimes.

Ultimately, for their assistance in winning the war, the Chinese labourers, much like the Chinese government, were taken for granted and their contribution downplayed by the British. Given what they were made to endure, this may be the greatest injustice. Perhaps acknowledging a contribution so significant from an inferior people would have damaged British prestige. Perhaps it would have changed the dynamic at Versailles, and altered the status quo regarding British interests in China. Regardless, the decision to underplay Chinese contributions only serves to re-inforce the evidence of exploitation involved in the story of the Chinese Labour Corps. Whatever their faults, and the Chinese were by no means perfect, they were frequently a wronged party. British management was not the worst example of imperial leadership, but it certainly should have been better. Better provisions, sources of entertainment, and fairer pay should have been provided. So also should mutual respect, and compassionate understanding for Chinese concerns. The Chinese, after all, were contract workers – not indentured labour. But the British were unable and unwilling to forgo their imperial attitudes and methods, much to the cost of the Chinese workers.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Agreement for the Recruitment of Chinese Labourers. 3rd November, 1918. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. III. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2894.

Bourne, T. J. Report on 8th Contingent C.L.C. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. II. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2893.

Carruthers, Bob, ed. *The First Opium War: The Chinese Expedition 1840-1842*. 1st Edition. Stratford upon Avon: Coda Books Ltd, 2013.

Chinese Labour Corps, "J J" Party on Board S. S. "Teesta", Crimes and Punishments. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. II. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2893.

Chinese Labour: Protest by the Clyde Transport Workers. *Daily Record and Mail*. 21st April, 1914. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000728/19140421/069/0003?browse=False. Accessed 10th September, 2018.

Contract for the Hiring of Chinese Labour. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. III. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2894.

Cormack, G. E. Private Papers. Imperial War Museum (IWM). Documents.1932.

Cornwall, H. E. Private Papers. Imperial War Museum (IWM). Documents.15139.

D. A. Directorate of Labour, XV Corps. 1917-19. War Diary. Headquarters Branches and Services: Deputy Assistant Director Labour. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 95/929/6.

Dent, W. A. War Diary No. III. Liddle Collection. University of Leeds. LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0453.

Dent, W. A. War Diary No. V. Liddle Collection. University of Leeds. LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0453.

Dent, W. A. War Diary No. VII. Liddle Collection. University of Leeds. LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0453.

Directorate of Labour: Notes for Officers of Labour Companies. 2 April, 1917. Imperial War Museum (IWM). Documents.9039.

Enclosure in Vice-Consul Archer to Sir Beilby Alston. 13th June, 1921. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. V. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2896.

Extract from Supplement to the London Gazette. 13 July, 1920. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol IV. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2895.

Further Evidence in the Case of Registered Nos. 30193, 44340 and 97170. Judge Advocate General's Office: Courts Martial Proceedings and Board of General Officers' Minutes. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 71/688.

Haigh, T. V. War Diary. Liddle Collection. University of Leeds. LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0684.

Harrison, J. M. Private Papers. Imperial War Museum (IWM). Documents.15276.

Head Ganger Letter to Mr. Corke. Corke, F. W. Liddle Collection. University of Leeds. LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0366.

Hopwood, S. F. War Diary. Liddle Collection. University of Leeds. LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0796.

Ker W.P. to William Bull. 25th July, 1921. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. V. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2896.

Klein, Daryl. *With the Chinks*. Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2009.

Ludlow, W. R. War Diary. Liddle Collection. University of Leeds. LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0984.

McCormick, A. Private Papers. Imperial War Museum (IWM). Documents.11906.

Miles, Wilfrid ed., *Official History of the War: Military Operations, France and Belgium 1916, Volume II*. London: The Imperial War Museum, 1992.

Moss, G. S. Report on the Demobilization of the Chinese Labour Corps. 31st October, 1920. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol IV. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2895.

Moss, G. S. to Sir John N. Jordan. 24 February, 1919. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol IV. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2895.

Moss, G.S. to War Office. 27th November, 1918. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. III. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2894.

Prosecution Statement. Case of Numbers 30193, 44340 and 97170. 13th January, 1920. Judge Advocate General's Office: Courts Martial Proceedings and Board of General Officers' Minutes. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 71/688.

Report on the Work of Labour During the War. November, 1919. Office of the Commander in Chief and War Office: Quartermaster General's Department:

Correspondence and Papers. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 107/37.

Stapleton-Cotton, V. Diary. “J J” Party on Board S. S. “Teesta”. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. II. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2893.

Statement of Evidence in the case of Coolie Nos. 16174 and 30165, 150 Company Chinese Labour Corps. 24th April, 1919. Judge Advocate General’s Office: Courts Martial Proceedings and Board of General Officers’ Minutes. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 71/681.

Summary of Evidence in the Case of Coolie No. 44735 of 107 Company C.L.C. 14th April, 1919. Judge Advocate General’s Office: Courts Martial Proceedings and Board of General Officers’ Minutes. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 71/680.

Summary of Evidence in the Case of Coolie No 53497, Tseng Sung Kung, 60th Company C.L.C. 13th June, 1918. Judge Advocate General’s Office: Courts Martial Proceedings and Board of General Officers’ Minutes. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 71/651.

Tarlton T. Diary. Liddle Collection. University of Leeds. LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1569.

Testimony of Coolie No. 10299. Court Martial for the Trial of Coolie Nos. 10272 and 10299. 11th June, 1918. Judge Advocate General's Office: Courts Martial Proceedings and Board of General Officers' Minutes. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 71/654.

Tollefson, G. to William Bull. 10th March, 1921. Dossier 14: Chinese Labour Corps Vol. V. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). FO 228/2896.

Treaty of Peace with Germany: Treaty Of Versailles. Article 156, 'Shantung'. 28th June, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0043.pdf. Accessed 10th September, 2018.

Trial of Coolie No. 46090, 161st Company C.L.C. 23rd July, 1918. Judge Advocate General's Office: Courts Martial Proceedings and Board of General Officers' Minutes. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 71/655.

Trial of Coolies Nos. 4976, 5884, and 5898 of No 9 Company C.L.C. Witness Testimony. 27th January, 1919. Judge Advocate General's Office: Courts Martial Proceedings and Board of General Officers' Minutes. National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). WO 71/676.

Wilson, Douglas. War Diary. Liddle Collection. University of Leeds. LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1761.

Secondary Sources

Abe, Kaori and 阿部香織, 'The Anglo-Chinese Propaganda Battles: British, Qing and Cantonese Intellectuals and the First Opium War in Canton/英華宣傳戰：英國、滿清及廣東派知識份子與第一次鴉片戰爭.' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 56, (2016): pp.172-193.

Abrams, Dominic, and Rupert Brown. 'Self-Consciousness and Social Identity: Self-Regulation as a Group Member.' *Social Psychology Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (1989): pp.311-318.

Akurang-Parry, Kwabena Opare. 'Colonial Forced Labor Policies for Road-Building in Southern Ghana and International Anti-Forced Labor Pressures, 1900-1940.' *African Economic History* 28, (2000): pp.1-25.

Audi, Robert. 'Can Utilitarianism be Distributive? Maximization and Distribution as Criteria in Managerial Decisions.' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (2007): pp.593-611.

Baaz, Maria Eriksson and Maria Stern. 'Why Do Soldiers Rape? Masculinity, Violence, and Sexuality in the Armed Forces in the Congo (DRC).' *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2009): pp.495-518.

Bailey, Paul J. ''Coolies' or Huagong? Conflicting British and Chinese Attitudes Towards Chinese Contract Workers in World War One France.' In *Britain and China,*

1840-1970: Empire, Finance and War, edited by Robert Bickers and Jonathan J. Howlett, pp.103-129. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Bard, Solomon. 'Tea and Opium.' *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 40, (2000): pp.1-19.

Basu, Dilip K. 'Chinese Xenology and the Opium War: Reflections on Sinocentrism.' *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 4 (2014): pp.927-940.

Bickers, Robert. 'Britain and China, and India, 1830s-1947.' In *Britain and China, 1840-1970: Empire, Finance and War*, edited by Robert Bickers and Jonathan J. Howlett, pp.58-83. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Bell, Daniel A. *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy*. 1st edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Bickers, Robert. *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914*. 2nd edition. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2012.

Bridge, Robin. 'Chusan's Position in the China Trade.' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 49, (2009): pp.219-228.

Carlson, Neil R, G. Neil Martin and William Buskist. *Psychology*. 2nd edition. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2004.

Carr, Craig L. ‘Tacit Consent.’ *Public Affairs Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (1990): pp.335-345.

Carroll, John M. ‘‘The Usual Intercourse of Nations’: The British in pre-Opium War Canton.’ In *Britain and China, 1840-1970: Empire, Finance and War*, edited by Robert Bickers and Jonathan J. Howlett, pp.22-40. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Chesler, Susan M. ‘Drafting Effective Contracts.’ *GPSolo* 27, no. 2 (2010): pp.10-11.

Chew, Kenneth, Mark Leach, and John. M. Liu. ‘The Revolving Door to Gold Mountain: How Chinese Immigrants Got Around U.S. Exclusion and Replenished the Chinese American Labor Pool, 1900-1910.’ *The International Migration Review* 43, no. 2 (2009): pp.410-430.

Claeys, Gregory. ‘The ‘Survival of the Fittest’ and the Origins of Social Darwinism.’ *Journal of the History of Ideals* 61, no. 2 (2000): pp.223-240.

Clyde, Paul Hibbert. ‘The Open Door.’ *Pacific Affairs* 3, no. 9 (1930): pp.834-841.

Craft, Stephen G. ‘Angling for an Invitation to Paris: China’s Entry into the First World War.’ *The International History Review* 16, no. 1 (1994): pp.1-24.

D'Arcy-Brown, Liam. *Chusan: The Opium Wars and the Forgotten Story of Britain's First Chinese Island*. 1st edition. Kenilworth: Takeaway Publishing, 2012.

Darwin, John. *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain*. 2nd edition. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2013.

Derks, Hans. *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca. 1600-1950*. Boston: Brill, 2012.

Dickinson, Frederick R. *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919*. 1st edition. United States: The Harvard University Asia Center, 1999.

Dilley, A. R. 'The Economics of Empire.' In *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, edited by Sarah Stockwell, pp.101-129. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Duffy, Christopher. *Through German Eyes: The British & The Somme, 1916*. 2nd edition. London: Orion Books Ltd, 2006.

Fawcett, Brian C. 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France: 1917-1921.' *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 40, (2000): pp.33-111.

Fedorowich, Kent. 'The British Empire on the Move, 1760-1914.' In *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, edited by Sarah Stockwell, pp.66-100. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Ferguson, Niall. *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*. 2nd edition. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2004.

Fey, Peter Ward. *The Opium War: 1840-1942*. 2nd edition. United States: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Fogarty, Richard S. 'Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing in France during the Great War.' *Historical Reflections* 34, no. 1 (2008): pp.50-72.

Foster, Michael. 'Contemporary British Philosophy and Christian Belief.' *The Christian Scholar* 43, no. 3 (1960): pp.185-198.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 3rd edition. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1991.

Furmston, M. P. 'Breach of Contract.' *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 40, no. 3 (1992): pp.671-674.

Gilfoyle, Timothy J. 'Prostitutes in History: From Parables of Pornography to Metaphors of Modernity.' *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 1 (1999): pp.117-141.

Gould, Roger V. *Collision of Wills: How Ambiguity about Social Rank Breeds Conflict*. London: The University of Chicago Press Ltd, 2003.

Greenhalgh, Elizabeth. ‘David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and the 1918 Manpower Crisis.’ *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 2 (2007): pp.397-421.

Griffin, Nicholas. ‘Chinese Labor and British Christian Missionaries in France, 1917-1919.’ *Journal of Church and State* 20, no. 2 (1978): pp.287-304.

Griffin, Nicholas J. ‘Britain’s Chinese Labor Corps in World War I.’ *Military Affairs* 40, no. 3 (1976): pp.102-108.

Haney, Craig, Curtis Banks and Philip Zimbardo. ‘A Study of Prisoners and Guards in a Simulated Prison.’ *Naval Research Reviews* (1973): pp.1-17.

Harman, N. Bishop. ‘Observations on the Control of Trachoma.’ *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 3637 (1930): pp.457-460.

Harris, J. P. *Douglas Haig and the First World War*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Harrison, Mark. ‘Science and the British Empire.’ *Isis* 96, no. 1 (2005): pp.56-63.

Hazareesingh, Sudhir. *How the French Think*. 2nd edition. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2016.

Heathorn, Stephen. ‘‘Let Us Remember That We, Too, Are English’: Constructions of Citizenship and National Identity in English Elementary School Reading Books, 1880-1914.’ *Victorian Studies* 38, no. 3 (1995): pp.395-427.

Hirsh, Jacob B., Adam D. Galinsky and Chen-Bo Zhong. ‘Drunk, Powerful, and in the Dark: How General Processes of Disinhibition Produce Both Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior.’ *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 5 (2011): pp.415-427.

Howe, Stephen. ‘Empire and Ideology.’ In *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, edited by Sarah Stockwell, pp.157-176. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Huttenback, R. A. ‘The British Empire as a ‘White Man’s Country’ – Racial Attitudes and Immigration Legislation in the Colonies of White Settlement.’ *Journal of British Studies* 13, no. 1 (1973): pp.108-137.

Johnson, David. ‘Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1936-46.’ *Journal of African History* 33, no. 1 (1992): pp.111-128.

Johnson, J. H. *Stalemate! The Great Trench Warfare Battles of 1915-1917*. 1st edition. London: Arms and Armour Press, 1995.

Johnson, Robert. ‘‘True to Their Salt’, Mechanisms for Recruiting and Managing Military Labour in the Army of the East India Company During the Carnatic Wars in

India.' In *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative Study of Military Labour, 1500-2000*, edited by Erik-Jan Zurcher, pp.267-290. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013.

Kaufman, Alison Adcock. 'In Pursuit of Equality and Respect: China's Diplomacy and the League of Nations.' *Modern China* 40, no. 6 (2014): pp.605-638.

Keay, John. *China: A History*. 2nd edition. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009.

Killingray, David and James Matthews. 'Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War.' *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 13, no. 1/2 (1979): pp.7-23.

Killingray, David. 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa, 1870-1945.' *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 3 (1989): pp.483-501.

Kim, Youngmin. *A History of Chinese Political Thought*. 1st edition. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

Lai, Walton Look. *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies: 1838-1918*. 1st edition. London: The John Hopkins Press Ltd, 1993.

Madhwi. ‘Recruiting Indentured Labour for Overseas Colonies, Circa 1834- 1910.’ *Social Scientist* 43, no. 9/10 (2015): pp.53-68.

Majumdar, Margaret A. *Postcoloniality: The French Dimension*. 1st edition. London: Berghahn Books, 2007.

McLean, David. ‘Commerce, Finance, and British Diplomatic Support in China, 1885-86.’ *The Economic History Review* 26, no. 3 (1973): pp.464-476.

Miller, Tom. *China’s Asian Dream: Empire Building Along the New Silk Road*. 1st edition. London: Zen Books Ltd, 2017.

Millman, Brock. ‘A Counsel of Despair: British Strategy and War Aims, 1917-18.’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 2 (2001): pp.241-270.

Nicholson, Michael. ‘Realism and Utopianism Revisited.’ *Review of International Studies* 24, (1998): pp.65-p.82.

Nield, Robert. ‘Treaty Ports and Other Foreign Stations in China.’ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 50, no. 1 (2010): pp.123-139.

Ninkovich, Frank. *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900*. London: The University of Chicago Press Ltd, 1999.

O'Neill, Mark. *The Chinese Labour Corps: The Forgotten Chinese Labourers of the First World War*. 1st edition. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2014.

Osiel, Mark J. *Obeying Orders: Atrocity, Military Discipline, and the Law of War*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1999.

Platt, Stephen R. 'British Intervention in the Taiping Rebellion.' In *Britain and China, 1840-1970: Empire, Finance and War*, edited by Robert Bickers and Jonathan J. Howlett, pp.41-57. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Postow, B. C. 'Coercion and the Moral Bindingness of Contracts.' *Social Theory and Practice* 4, no. 1 (1976): pp.75-92.

Preston, Diana. *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China's War on Foreigners that Shook the World in the Summer of 1900*. 2nd edition. New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2000.

Price, John A. 'Gambling in Traditional Asia.' *Anthropologica* 14, no. 2 (1972): pp.157-180.

Quinault, Ronald. 'Gladstone and Slavery.' *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (2009): pp.363-383.

Rosales, Jose Maria. ‘Liberalism’s Historical Diversity: A Comparative Conceptual Exploration.’ *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 8, no. 2 (2013): pp.67-82.

Sandel, Michael J. *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to do?*. 2nd edition. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2010.

Schmitt, Bernadotte E. ‘The First World War, 1914-1918.’ *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103, no. 3 (1959): pp.321-331.

Sen, Sunanda. ‘Indentured Labour from India in the Age of Empire.’ *Social Scientist* 44, no. 1/2 (2016): pp.35-74.

Starling, John and Ivor Lee. *No Labour, No Battle: Military Labour During the First World War*. 2nd edition. Stroud: Spellmount, 2014.

Stern, Laurence. ‘Deserved Punishment, Deserved Harm, Deserved Blame.’ *Philosophy* 45, no. 174 (1970): pp.317-329.

Stovall, Tyler. ‘National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers: Whiteness and the Exclusion of Colonial Labor after World War I.’ *Representations* 84, no. 1 (2003): pp.52-72.

Stovall, Tyler. ‘The Color Line Behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France During the Great War.’ *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998): pp.737-769.

Thomas, Martin. ‘French Empire Elites and the Politics of Economic Obligation in the Interwar Years.’ *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 4 (2009): pp.989-1016.

Thornton, A. P. ‘Colonialism.’ *International Journal* 17, no. 4 (1962): pp.335-357.

Titunik, Regina F. ‘The Myth of the Macho Military.’ *Polity* 40, no. 2 (2008): pp.137-163.

Van Dijk, Kees. *Pacific Strife: The Great Powers and their Political and Economic Rivalries in Asia and the Western Pacific, 1870-1914*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015.

Wallace, Gerry. ‘Wild Justice.’ *Philosophy* 70, no. 273 (1995): pp.363-375.

Wang, Peter. ‘Caring Beyond National Borders: The YMCA and Chinese Laborers in World War I Europe.’ *Church History* 78, no. 2 (2009): pp.327-349.

Ward, Stuart. ‘Imperial Identities Abroad.’ In *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, edited by Sarah Stockwell, pp.219-243. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Waters, Dan. ‘The Chinese Labour Corps in the First World War: Labourers Buried in France.’ *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 35, (1995): pp.199-203.

Westad, Odd Arne. *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750*. 1st edition. London: The Bodley Head, 2012.

Weston, Burns H. ‘Human Rights.’ *Human Rights Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1984): pp.257-283.

Wiggins, Lisa R. ‘Sino-Tibetan Relations and Tributary Ideology.’ *The Tibet Journal* 25, no. 1 (2000): pp.63-73.

Winegard, Timothy C. *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Wu, James T. K. ‘The Impact of the Taiping Rebellion upon the Manchu Fiscal System.’ *Pacific Historical Review* 19, no. 3 (1950): pp.265-275.

Xu, Guo Qi. *Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War*. 1st edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Zehfuss, Nicole M. ‘From Stereotype to Individual: World War I Experiences with ‘Tirailleurs Senegalais’.’ *French Colonial History* 6, no. 1 (2005): pp.137-157.

Zhong, Chen-Bo, Vanessa K. Bohns and Francesca Gino. ‘Good Lamps are the Best Police: Darkness Increases Dishonesty and Self-Interested Behavior.’ *Psychological Science* 21, no. 3 (2010): pp.311-314.

Zimbardo, Philip. *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil*. 2nd edition. United Kingdom: Rider, 2009.