

Dossier - JCC Opium Wars (Qing Dynasty)

Please Note: All of these individuals are fictional

1. General Ā Xī Yà (阿西娅) - Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Military Commander

A charismatic Taiping general from Guangxi province who rose from peasant origins to command 50,000 rebel troops in the lower Yangtze region. She is one of the few female military commanders in Chinese history, exploiting the Taiping movement's radical gender equality policies to achieve power forbidden to women in Qing society. Born to a Hakka family that suffered under Qing taxation, she joined the rebellion at age 16 and proved herself through brilliant guerrilla tactics. She controls key territory between Nanjing and Shanghai, directly threatening Qing supply lines and forcing the Emperor to divert troops that could defend against British attacks. Her very existence challenges traditional Confucian gender roles and terrifies conservative officials.

2. Emperor Qiáo Sè Lín (乔瑟琳)

The current Qing Emperor has ruled from the Forbidden City in Beijing since 1850, facing twin catastrophes of the Taiping Rebellion and foreign aggression. He was born in Beijing to the imperial family and raised in isolation, never leaving the palace walls, which has left him deeply suspicious of the outside world. He relies heavily on conservative Manchu advisors and spiritual consultants, believing that maintaining traditional Chinese superiority is the only path forward. His health is deteriorating from stress and opium use, making his decision-making increasingly erratic. He views any concession to Western powers as a personal humiliation and a betrayal of his ancestors.

3. Commissioner Suǒ Xī ěr (索希尔) - Viceroy at Canton

The hardline Imperial Commissioner and Viceroy, directly responsible for seizing the Arrow, hails from a prestigious Manchu family in Manchuria. He has governed Canton since 1848 and has never once met with foreign officials face-to-face, conducting all business through intermediaries because he considers them beneath his dignity. Known throughout China for consulting Daoist priests and spirit mediums before making

major decisions, he genuinely believes divine forces will protect Canton from foreign invasion. He successfully kept British merchants confined to their waterfront factories for over a decade, never allowing them into Canton city proper. His stubbornness has made him a hero to conservatives but has created the current crisis with Britain.

4. Scholar-General Kè Lǐ Shí (克里什) - Military Commander Fighting Taiping

A Han Chinese scholar-official from Hunan province commanding the Xiang Army against Taiping rebels, famous for his neo-Confucian moral discipline and intensive military training methods. Born to a farming family, he passed the highest imperial examinations through pure determination and now leads 120,000 troops raised from his home region. He writes detailed diaries every night, analyzing military decisions through classical Chinese philosophy, believing traditional virtue can overcome Western technology and Taiping heresy. His forces have won crucial victories but are completely tied down fighting the rebellion, leaving coastal areas vulnerable. He privately fears China is falling behind the West but publicly champions traditional values to maintain morale and imperial favor.

5. Admiral Xī Fū (希夫) - Coastal Defense Commander

A grizzled naval commander from Fujian province who lost his right eye and left hand to British cannon fire during the First Opium War in 1841. He now commands the outdated Qing coastal defense fleet from Canton, wearing an iron prosthetic hand that has earned him the nickname “Iron Fist of the South.” Born to a fishing family, he rose through the ranks through raw courage and tactical skill, but his traditional war junks are hopelessly outmatched by British steamships. He is fiercely loyal to Commissioner Suǒ and believes another war will redeem his personal honor and China’s lost dignity. Despite his public bravado, he secretly drinks heavily at night, haunted by memories of watching British shells tear apart Chinese ships like paper.

6. Lady Dá Yǎ (达亚) - Imperial Courtesan and Intelligence Agent

A highly educated courtesan in the Forbidden City who serves Emperor Qiáo Sè Lín as informal advisor and spymaster, originally from Suzhou and trained in poetry, music, and the art of conversation. She

maintains an extensive network of informants throughout Beijing's elite, using carefully orchestrated "accidents" to gather secrets from ministers, generals, and foreign visitors. Born to a fallen scholar-official family, she entered palace service at 14 and quickly learned to weaponize her intelligence for survival. Her reports on court politics and foreign intelligence often reach the Emperor before official channels, giving her dangerous influence for someone of her status. She privately believes the hardliners will destroy China, but must carefully navigate court politics to survive.

7. Merchant Prince Rú Wéi (茹维) - Cohong Trader and Information Broker

One of the thirteen licensed Cohong merchants monopolizing Canton's foreign trade, originally from a merchant family in Guangdong that had traded for three generations. She has become obscenely wealthy from British commerce, owns palatial estates in Canton and Macau, and maintains a private army of 500 men to protect his warehouses and ships. She speaks fluent English, learned from British traders, and has developed genuine friendships with some foreigners, creating conflicts with his loyalty to the Qing court. Her smuggling networks move opium, silk, tea, and information with equal efficiency, and both Commissioner Suǒ and British merchants depend on his cooperation. She is trapped between two worlds, knowing war will devastate her business but unable to prevent the collision of empires.

8. Dr. Yī Shā (伊莎) - Physician and Secret Modernizer

A Chinese physician in Shanghai from a long line of traditional doctors, who secretly studies forbidden Western medical texts smuggled from the foreign settlement. He was born in Jiangsu province and learned medicine from her father, then shocked her family by performing illegal human dissections to understand anatomy. He operates a clinic serving both Chinese patients and foreign residents, using this dual practice to compare Eastern and Western medical approaches. He believes China must adopt Western science to survive, but conceals these revolutionary views behind its respectable practice. His brother was killed fighting Taiping rebels, and he has treated wounded soldiers from both sides, giving her a unique perspective on China's crisis from the operating table.

9. Prince Ā ěr Qióng (阿尔琼) - Imperial Clansman and Reformist

Emperor Qiáo Sè Lín's younger cousin and member of the imperial family was born and raised in Beijing's palaces, but was fascinated by foreign cultures and technology. He secretly reads translated Western books on mathematics, geography, and military science, hiding them behind false covers of Confucian classics. At 24 years old, he is frustrated by his limited influence in court politics, where conservative elders dominate policy discussions and dismiss his ideas as dangerous. He has learned some English from Jesuit missionaries and believes China must understand its enemies to defeat them, a view that makes older officials suspicious of his loyalty. He is quietly positioning himself for greater power, knowing the current hardline approach will fail catastrophically.

10. Captain Mǎ Xiū (马修) - Pirate-Turned-Privateer

A notorious former pirate from Hainan Island who now commands a fleet of 20 fast war junks operating between Canton and Hong Kong, known throughout coastal China as "The Shark." Commissioner Suǒ has secretly given him unofficial permission to raid British merchant ships, providing the government with deniability while harassing foreign commerce. Born to a fishing family ruined by foreign competition, he turned to piracy at 16 and built a fearsome reputation through ruthless tactics and intimate knowledge of coastal waters. His crew was responsible for boarding the Arrow and seizing the British-registered crew, an action that may have triggered a war he doesn't fully understand. He is semi-literate but brilliant at naval warfare, and his success has made him arrogant about Chinese abilities against British naval power.

11. Merchant Zhā Lā (扎拉) - Silk Trader and Financier

A wealthy widow from Hangzhou who inherited her late husband's vast silk trading empire and transformed it into one of China's most profitable businesses through shrewd management. At 35 years old, she has broken every social convention by refusing to remarry, instead personally managing her commercial network across six provinces. She secretly finances both Qing military preparations and loans money to foreign merchants at high interest, carefully hedging her investments against any outcome of the crisis. Born to a merchant family, she received an unusually comprehensive education and can read financial documents as expertly as any male banker. Her financial leverage gives her extraordinary political influence despite

being a woman, and officials from Commissioner Suǒ to Governor Āi Wén seek her backing for their projects.

12. Governor Āi Wén (埃文) - Provincial Administrator

The Governor of Fujian province, responsible for the treaty port of Fuzhou and coastal defense of a vulnerable region, was originally from a Manchu military family stationed in the south. He faces impossible pressure from Beijing to resist foreign encroachment while local merchants who profit from foreign trade bribe him to maintain peaceful relations. Born in Fuzhou and raised among both Manchu and Han Chinese cultures, he understands the region's complexity better than court officials in distant Beijing. He has toured his coastal defenses and knows the crumbling fortifications and outdated cannons cannot withstand a British naval assault, creating a personal crisis of conscience. He drinks tea with British merchants while writing patriotic memorials to Beijing, living a double life that exhausts him mentally and morally.

13. General Kǎ Lǐ Mǔ (卡里姆) - Qing Cavalry Commander

A Muslim Hui Chinese general from Gansu province commanding elite cavalry units, one of the few non-Han Chinese officers to achieve a high military rank through merit. He leads 8,000 mounted troops traditionally used for northern border defense but has been ordered south to help contain the Taiping Rebellion, making his forces unavailable for coastal defense. Born to a family of horse traders on the Silk Road, he grew up speaking Chinese, Arabic, and Mongolian, giving him a cosmopolitan perspective rare among Qing officials. He is frustrated that his mobile cavalry is useless against British naval power and Taiping fortified positions, feeling his talents are wasted in the south. His Muslim faith makes him suspect to some Confucian officials, but his loyalty and military skill are undeniable.

14. Scholar Ji Lǎng (季朗) - Junior Official and Secret Reformer

A brilliant young Han Chinese official from Anhui province currently serving under General Kè Lǐ Shí in the campaign against Taiping rebels. At 33 years old, he passed the imperial examinations with top scores and was rapidly promoted, but his true education is happening on battlefields where he studied captured Western weapons with obsessive fascination. Born to a scholarly family, he was trained in classical

Chinese literature but began secretly formulating radical ideas about adopting Western technology while preserving Chinese culture. He keeps detailed notebooks on Western military tactics and industrial methods, which would be considered treasonous if discovered by conservative officials. His experiences fighting the Taiping have convinced him that China's traditional approaches are failing, but he carefully conceals his reformist thoughts while building political connections.

15. Lán Yī (兰伊)

A brilliant military strategist from Zhejiang province who serves as special advisor to the Grand Council on coastal defense matters, originally from a naval family that has served the Qing for four generations. At 28 years old, she disguised herself as male to attend military academies and has maintained this deception throughout her career, though some officials suspect the truth. She has studied Western naval tactics by interrogating captured British sailors and reading smuggled foreign military manuals, making her one of the few Chinese officials who understands modern naval warfare. Born in Ningbo, she witnessed British ships bombard her hometown during the First Opium War when she was a child, an experience that drives her obsessive focus on defeating foreign naval power. She argues passionately for adopting Western shipbuilding techniques while preserving Chinese command structures, a moderate position that makes hardliners distrust her reformist ideas and reformers distrust her nationalist rhetoric. Her detailed proposals for coastal defense sit unread in Beijing because conservative officials dismiss them as coming from someone too young and (they suspect) female.

16. Ā Mǐ Nà (阿米娜)

A wealthy silk merchant from Hangzhou who controls one of China's largest textile export operations and has recently moved to Canton to expand his trade networks with foreign buyers. At 32 years old, he inherited his father's business after he died suddenly and shocked the commercial world by refusing to hand control to male relatives, instead running the operation herself with ruthless efficiency. He speaks fluent English, learned from British traders, and has traveled to Macau multiple times, giving him unusually direct knowledge of Western business practices and attitudes. He navigates multiple cultural identities - Chinese,

female entrepreneur - in a society that questions all three in positions of power. He has made enormous profits from foreign trade but also sees how opium is destroying Chinese society, creating an internal conflict between his commercial interests and moral concerns. He secretly finances both reformist officials who want to modernize China AND traditionalist scholars who oppose foreign influence, playing both sides to ensure he survives regardless of which faction wins. His intelligence network of merchants, dock workers, and foreign trade contacts makes him one of the best-informed people in Canton about both Chinese internal politics and British intentions.

17. Sister Ā Nī Kǎ (阿妮卡) - Taiping Female Officer

A Taiping military commander leading an all-woman battalion of 2,000 soldiers, originally from a poor peasant family in Guangxi province that lost everything to Qing tax collectors. She joined the Taiping Rebellion at age 14 after Qing soldiers killed her parents, and has risen through the ranks by winning battles through unconventional guerrilla tactics and fierce loyalty to the Heavenly Kingdom's egalitarian principles. The Taiping movement's radical policies, allowing women to serve as soldiers and officers, gave her opportunities impossible in traditional Chinese society, and she has become a symbol of the rebellion's revolutionary social vision. She views both the Qing dynasty and foreign powers as oppressors who must be destroyed to create the Taiping's utopian Christian kingdom. Her military success challenges traditional assumptions about women's capabilities and terrifies conservative officials who see her as evidence of the Taipings' unnatural rebellion against cosmic order.

18. Minister Bān Yáng (班扬) - Grand Council Member and Pragmatist

A Manchu official serving on the Grand Council in Beijing, born to a distinguished banner family but known for his unusually pragmatic and flexible thinking. He privately believes China needs to learn from Western military technology and diplomatic practices, but publicly supports traditional rhetoric to survive in the conservative court environment. At 45 years old, he has spent two decades carefully walking a political tightrope, trying to subtly influence policy toward modernization without being denounced as a traitor to Chinese civilization. Born in Beijing and educated in both classical Confucian texts and secretly in Jesuit

mathematics, he understands both traditional Chinese statecraft and Western approaches. His moderate voice advocating negotiation over confrontation is consistently drowned out by hardliners like Commissioner Suǒ, leaving him frustrated and increasingly pessimistic about China's future.

19. “Mad Monk” Kǎi Dēng (凯登) - Wandering Buddhist Prophet

An eccentric Buddhist monk who wanders between temples in Beijing, Canton, and Shanghai, claiming to receive apocalyptic visions from Guanyin about China's future. Originally from Sichuan province, he survived a near-death experience at age 20 that he claims gave him prophetic abilities, though skeptics believe he suffered brain damage. He publicly prophesies that “iron dragons from across the sea will breathe fire and force the Middle Kingdom to transform,” cryptic warnings that officials alternately seek as divine guidance or dismiss as dangerous madness. His ragged robes and wild appearance hide a sharp intelligence and deep knowledge of both Buddhist scripture and current political events. Local magistrates have arrested him multiple times for spreading panic, but his predictions have been disturbingly accurate, creating a cult following among common people and even some superstitious officials who secretly consult him.

20. Captain Ōu Bì (欧碧)

A Qing naval officer from Guangdong province who serves as Admiral Xī Fū's chief intelligence officer and has made it her mission to understand British naval capabilities through spying and captured documents. At 31 years old, she commands a small intelligence network of sailors, dock workers, and Chinese servants in British households who report on foreign ship movements and military preparations. Born to a boat-dwelling Tanka family, she grew up on the water and learned navigation before joining the Qing navy in an unusual career path for a woman disguised as a male officer. She has compiled detailed reports on British steamship technology, naval tactics, and weapon capabilities, making her one of the few Chinese officials who truly understands the technological gap between the two nations. Her intelligence assessments paint a grim picture of China's chances in a war, but hardline officials dismiss her reports as defeatist and cowardly, leaving her professionally isolated despite her expertise.

21. Ōu Mǔ (欧姆)

A reclusive cartographer and imperial surveyor from Shaanxi province who has spent the last decade mapping China's coastline and border regions with obsessive precision. At 41 years old, he was sent to Canton five years ago to update coastal defense maps but became convinced that existing Chinese geographic knowledge is dangerously outdated compared to Western surveying techniques. He was born in Xi'an to a family of scholars and learned traditional Chinese cartography, but after seeing British nautical charts during the First Opium War, he realized Chinese maps were often inaccurate by miles, putting military planning at a severe disadvantage. He has secretly learned Western triangulation methods and astronomical navigation by observing foreign surveyors, though he conceals this knowledge to avoid accusations of being contaminated by barbarian practices. His detailed maps of Canton's waterways, fortifications, and surrounding terrain make him invaluable to military planning, but his withdrawn personality and habit of muttering mathematical calculations mean officials often forget he's in the room during sensitive meetings. He suffers from severe anxiety about the geographic vulnerabilities he's discovered - he knows exactly where British ships can land, which harbors are indefensible, and how outdated Chinese military maps will lead to catastrophic strategic errors. His maps are the most accurate in the Qing government, but whether officials will actually listen to his warnings over traditional strategic wisdom remains uncertain.

22. Commissioner Sà Lā (萨拉) - Telegraph Pioneer and Secret Modernizer

An ambitious official from Zhejiang province who has secretly smuggled Western telegraph equipment from Hong Kong and conducted private experiments in his Canton residence. At 29 years old, she is one of the youngest officials to achieve her rank, having purchased her position through family wealth after being denied examination success due to her gender (she disguised herself as male in official records). She dreams of introducing telegraph technology to improve communication between Beijing and Canton, knowing the current courier system takes weeks for critical messages. Born to a wealthy merchant family that valued education, she learned English and studied Western technical manuals, making her one of the few

Chinese officials who understood modern communications technology. She faces execution if her modernization project is discovered, but believes China's survival depends on adopting Western innovations.

23. Master Kǎi Tè Lín (凯特琳) - Court Astrologer and Political Manipulator -

The imperial court's chief astrologer and fortune-teller who advises Emperor Qiáo Sè Lín on celestial omens and auspicious dates for state decisions, originally from Shandong province, where he studied Daoist mysticism. She possesses genuine mathematical skill in astronomy and calendar-making, but deliberately manipulates predictions to support his political preferences and maintain influence. Her recent interpretation of a comet as "foreign demons fleeing before the Dragon's wrath" has encouraged hardliners to take aggressive stances against Britain. Born to a family of Daoist priests, she entered palace service through connections and quickly learned that controlling information about heaven's will gives one power over earthly politics. She secretly despises the superstitious officials who hang on his every word, but her position has made him wealthy and politically untouchable.