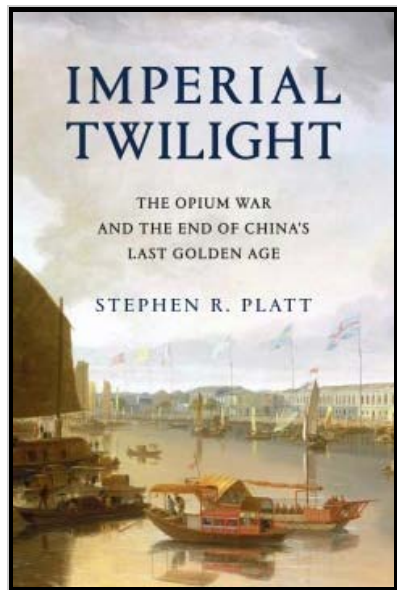


[Home](#) > [Top Picks: All Books](#) > [Imperial Twilight: The Opium War](#)



# Imperial Twilight: The Opium War

by Stephen R. Platt

**Price: \$35.00**(Hardcover)

Published: May 15, 2018



Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

**From the Publisher:** As China reclaims its position as a world power, Imperial Twilight looks back to tell the story of the country's last age of ascendance and how it came to an end in the nineteenth-century Opium War. "This thoroughly researched and delightful work is essential for anyone interested in Chinese or British imperial history." --Library Journal (Starred Review) When Britain launched its first war on China in 1839, pushed into hostilities by profiteering drug merchants and free-trade interests, it sealed the fate of what had long been seen as the most prosperous and powerful empire in Asia, if not the world. But internal problems of corruption, popular unrest, and dwindling finances had weakened China far more than was commonly understood, and the war would help set in motion the eventual fall of the Qing dynasty--which, in turn, would lead to the rise of nationalism and communism in the twentieth century. As one of the most potent turning points in the country's modern history, the Opium War has since come to stand for everything that today's China seeks to put behind it. In this dramatic, epic story, award-winning historian Stephen Platt sheds new light on the early attempts by Western traders and missionaries to "open" China--traveling mostly in secret beyond Canton, the single port where they were allowed--even as China's imperial rulers were struggling to manage their country's decline and Confucian scholars grappled with how to use foreign trade to China's advantage. The book paints an enduring portrait of an immensely profitable--and mostly peaceful--meeting of civilizations at Canton over the long term that was destined to be shattered by one of the most shockingly unjust wars in the annals of imperial history. Brimming with a fascinating cast of British, Chinese, and American individuals, this riveting narrative of relations between China and the West has important implications for today's uncertain and ever-changing political climate.

## Share This Book

## About The Author

Stephen R. Platt

STEPHEN R. PLATT is a professor of Chinese history at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His last book, Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War, was a Washington Post Notable Book, a New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice, and won the Cundill History Prize. Platt lives with his wife and children in Northampton, Massachusetts.

## Release Info

List Price: \$35.00 (Hardcover)

Published: May 15, 2018

Publisher: Knopf

Pages: 592

ISBN 10: 0307961737

ISBN 13: 9780307961730

## Rate This Book

☆☆☆☆☆ | [Rate/Review](#)

[Add To Wishlist](#)

[Add To Bookshelf](#)

## Get This Book

Go to your preferred retailer, click to choose a format and you'll be taken directly to their site where you can get this book.

	<a href="#">BUY</a>		<a href="#">BUY</a>
	<a href="#">BUY</a>		<a href="#">BUY</a>
	<a href="#">BUY</a>		<a href="#">BUY</a>

[Personalize / Add More Choices](#)

## What We Say

Perhaps they should call this book "What Happened Before The Opium Wars." The actual war may have lasted three years but it was quite uneventful and one-sided in favor of the British. Its military superiority was so great that sailors and soldiers alike felt dismay over the devastation they wrought. So this is no military history. Instead, Stephen Platt tells the entertainingly comic and tragic story of the events that led to the United Kingdom launching a war against China to protect illegal drug smuggling. I would say Platt retells the events that led to the inevitable clash of civilizations. But one point the author makes clear is how easily war might have been avoided. The story is wide-ranging and never boring. Platt shows missionaries probing the interior of China in disguise while merchants desperate to break the monopoly of the East India Trading Company found their fortune by smuggling in opium. Toss in officious officials on both sides (though really, the British come off more poorly) and strained relations are hardly a surprise. it certainly doesn't help delicate negotiations when it takes a year for a message to sail from China to England and back again. "Imperial Twilight" is insightful, illuminating and draws upon Chinese letters and documents either unavailable to or ignored by Western historians in the past. Perhaps a clash really was inevitable. After all, both sides saw the other as barbarians. Maybe the story here is not the tragedy of the Opium War but the miracle of hundreds of years of peaceful business that existed before it. Platt has plenty of guilt to lay on both countries for the insidious spread of opium; not just the British are to blame. But it's typical of this engrossing narrative that he can share the perspective of both sides on many issues large and small, make their cases for them, offer his own take and yet never confuse the matter at hand. One can easily imagine high drama or low comedy being made of all this by Hollywood. The better film would surely include both. -- Michael Giltz

## What Others Say

"Everyone with experience in China has heard about the legacy of the Opium War and subsequent 'Century of Humiliation.' But Stephen Platt presents the buildup to this confrontation in a vivid and fascinating way, which challenges many prevailing assumptions in both China and the West (including some of my own). This is narrative and analytic history of a high order, which will be read with enjoyment by audiences around the world." — James Fallows, author of Our Towns and China Airborne "A vivid picture of the history of relations between Britain and China from the mid-18th century up to the outbreak of the war... This thoroughly researched and delightful work is essential for anyone interested in Chinese or British imperial history." —Joshua Wallace, Library Journal (Starred Review) "A deeply researched study of an early clash of civilizations, when England attempted to impose its will on East Asia... A fluent, well-written exercise in revisionism, one of interest to students of modern geopolitics as well as 19th-century history." —Kirkus "A fresh perspective on the first Opium War, the conflict that allowed Western merchants to pry open China's riches and gain unprecedented trading privileges... Platt's research is impeccably presented in this winning history of British and Chinese trade." —Publishers Weekly

## What You Say

Filter by

No Reviews Found .....