

# Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20161]

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## Proposed title of the session

Opening of Treaty Ports Reconsidered: The Chinese Maritime Customs and Modern Chinese Economy

## Abstract

In contrast to the conventional view that asserts that the British abruptly opened China to the western powers by defeating her at the Opium War (1840-1842), recent studies point out that Chinese economy had long been integrated with the global economy by exchanging her handcrafts and agricultural products to silver. Still, we have not yet fully comprehended how China adjusted herself to “free trade,” the dominant regime of the global trade during the “long 19th century,” from the late 18th century to the eve of the World War I. How did China change her trade administrations and what impacts did those changes have on Chinese economy and governance? This session investigates these questions by examining the Chinese Maritime Customs (CMC), the key organization governing Chinese trade from 1854 to 1949.

Although China abolished traditional regulations on foreign trade and opened the five coastal ports with Nanjing Treaty in 1842, specifics of the new trade administration were not clear and transactions at the treaty ports were vastly disturbed. Only after foreign inspectors general took over the CMC in 1854, the Chinese government seized the control of the foreign trade. The rise of the CMC was significant; while the value of foreign trade trifold increased from the 1870’s to 1910’s, the tax on foreign trade came to supply one fourth of the Chinese government revenue. Although the CMC led by the foreign inspectors general had long been regarded as the outcome of political and military interventions by the western powers, recent studies including Takeshi Hamashita’s pioneering work re-evaluate the roles played by the CMC by arguing that although the inspector generals were foreigners hired by the Chinese government, the CMC was the multinational organization including a significant number of Chinese employees and had critical impacts on not only trade but also shipping, postal services, diplomacy, and finance.

To test this newly presented “positive effects of CMC” thesis, this session first examines the trends of foreign and domestic trade centering on the coastal and riverside port cities by analyzing the trade statistics compiled by CMC. With this macro-statistical overview of the trade, we turn to the trade administration and transactions by both foreign and domestic merchants at the treaty ports. Using specific case studies, this session demonstrates the transformation of trade system in the expansion of China’s foreign trade. Thirdly, we examine the fiscal reform initiated by the CMC with the secure revenue from the foreign trade tax.

Examining the treaty ports and the key roles played by the CMC there, this session will provide new insights into the long-term trajectory of Chinese economy and governance which also has critical implications on the transformation of global economy from the 19th century.

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## I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Prof. Songdi Wu (Fudan University [China])

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## II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
  2. Dr. Robert Bickers (University of Bristol, Department of History [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
  3. Prof. Tomoko Shiroyama (The University of Tokyo [Japan])
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## III. Expected Participant(s)

1. same as correspondent.
2. Robert Bickers (University of Bristol [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
3. Takeshi Hamashita (Sun Yat-sen University [China])
4. Yoshinori Kigoshi (Osaka Sangyo University [Japan])
5. Zhiyun Zhang (Shanghai Jiaotong University [China])
6. Liehui Wang (East China Normal University [China])
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9. Yongchao Yao (Shanghai Customs College [China])
10. Lei Yang (Shandong Normal University [China])
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12. Philip Thai (Northeastern University [United States of America])
13. Tomoko Shiroyama (The University of Tokyo [Japan])
14. No input.
15. No input.