

## China 1500-1911

### **China in the Late Ming Period**

During the 1500s there was a European demand for Chinese blue on white porcelain—china—along with silk and lacquered furniture stimulated the economy.

Historians often at a loss to explain what happened to Ming dynasty after 1600—explanations deal with climate, natural disaster, and disease.

As well, the influx of silver from the NW meant that its relative value fell, but the Ming government maintained the ratio between silver and copper—led to economic distress.

Due to some of the aforementioned problems—population at about 100-130 million was not much more than it had been 400 years earlier.

The late 1500s was a time of Mongol reunification—pressure on Ming from the west and the north.

In 1582 Japanese warriors invaded Korea, which was a Ming tributary state, and the Ming rely on Manchus (control N Korea) to protect interests.

### **Rise of the Qing**

The Ming were deposed after a series of events in the 1640s in which a rebellion took place, the Ming fled Beijing and invited the Manchus to restore order, the Manchus restored order but did not restore the Ming—1644. This marks the beginning of the Qing dynasty.

The Qing Empire was ruled by a Manchu family—remembering that it was the Manchus who now led the military.

The highpoint of the Qing Empire came in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when it controlled China proper, Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang; and it received tribute from Burma, Nepal, Laos, Siam, Annam, and Korea.

The Manchus, who numbered only about 1 million, were able to govern what would become 350+ million Chinese by adopting the Ming administrative apparatus, reducing the power of eunuchs, and maintaining their privilege as a class within society. Manchus wore distinctive clothes, did not practice foot-binding, retained their own language, did not intermarry with the Chinese, and forced Chinese men to style their hair in a pigtail.

The Qing government had no ministry of foreign affairs—it does have an Office of Border Affairs.

The family remained an important aspect of Chinese life—performs functions that were rapidly becoming the domain of the State in Europe: care of the sick, indigent, and elderly.

In contrast to European nobility there were fewer social barriers—the elite generally had a combination of wealth, education, lineage, and bureaucratic position—the latter offered upward mobility. There was not a bourgeoisie that was critical of the social order—people accepted the notion that the educated should rule and that scholars, the emperor, parents, heaven, and earth all require special veneration. The scholars were at the top of the social ladder, and beggars, prostitutes, and actors were at the bottom.

The Jesuits are particularly active in China, and they have ties to the court. Jesuits alter teaching to allow ancestor worship

With respect to foreign trade, the Qing use one market point for each foreign sector: Kashgar for overland trade with Central Asia, coastal city near Shanghai for Japan, Canton for the S China sea sector (included Europe).

After the failed Macartney mission, the Dutch, Russians, and French all tried to do the same thing with the same results—leads to growing European frustrations with China.

### **Qing 1800-1911**

Qing Empire became difficult to administrate—given huge population growth, lack of bureaucratic growth, and huge tracts of land that the Qing acquired to protect themselves from Russia.

By 1800, given rapid population increase, there was deforestation, erosion, and soil exhaustion.

The White Lotus Rebellion (1794-1804) was a precursor to the Taiping Rebellion—involved mystical ideology that predicted the restoration of the Ming.

The Opium War—discussed in class—difficult for the Qing to wage. They have no imperial navy—British always tried to use their naval supremacy to their advantage.

The treaties established between China and European powers after the Opium Wars meant that significant pockets of Qing territory where foreign merchants enjoyed extraterritorial rights [this exists as well in the Ottoman Empire]. Foreigners establish enclaves where natives are not even allowed to live. These conditions create much resentment.

The Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) was the culmination of these tensions. The rebellion was led by Hong Xiuquan, someone who had repeatedly failed the civil service examinations and who had contact with missionaries. He came to believe that he was the younger brother of Jesus and that he was to establish a new kingdom, driving the Manchus out. His movement caught on in the Guangxi province where there was agricultural disorder, economic distress, and ethnic strife.

In response to the Taiping Rebellion and the subsequent Nian Rebellion, British and French forces assist the Qing in putting down the bloody civil war.

The Qing are also in major economic crisis, spending ten times more than they were taking in—burden of the war indemnity and unfavorable trading agreements. Things became so bad that the British sent in their own guy to monitor customs and insure that the revenues were split between the British and the Qing. The Americans also sent in advisors.

The last years of Qing rule are characterized by a coalition of reformist elites and military men, powerful civilian governors, and foreign advisors. One of the more powerful individuals at the turn of the century was the Empress Dowager Cixi who seized power in a palace coup in 1898 and encouraged a secret society—Righteous Fists, or Boxers, to rise up and expel foreigners from China. Events in Beijing prompted an international response (including Japan) which made many, esp. students, convinced that the Qing had to go.

After Cixi's death in 1908, Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary alliance prepared to overthrow Qing—combined nationalism, socialism, and Confucian philosophy. He has no military force. Qing are actually overthrown when a regional army unit rebels and the most powerful general refused to defend the Qing—led to the abdication of the last ruler, the boy-emperor Puyi.

Sun Yat-sen and his followers in the Guomindang (National People's Party) have difficulties with the military. Japan begins to assert interest in China.