

Qing Dynasty

Sample Journal



Official flag of the Qing dynasty

Qing Dynasty Rise

The Qing dynasty (清代) was the ruling power in China from 1644 AD to 1912 AD. Qing was the last dynastic empire to be in power in China.

Ming was the previous ruling dynasty, and collapsed after years of rival tribal feud and all-out fighting. On a side note, we have not really discussed the Mandate of Heaven in recent weeks, since it was not really much of a focal point during these dynasties, but rather just an understood and accepted way of selecting the next ruler (essentially the emperor's son or other family member, in most cases) among the Chinese people. Ming faced many natural disasters and chaotic and difficult times for the people due to famine and loss. Because of this, Ming was viewed as having lost the Mandate of Heaven, which may have led to a less contested fall of power.

As you may recall from previous weeks' information, the Mongols and Jurchens took over China and then lost it some several hundred years later. Manchu people emerged during that time of fighting and intermingling of tribes, and essentially are half Mongol and half Jurchen people. In 1644, the Manchu army attacked Beijing, which was then the Ming capital city. After Beijing fell to the Manchurians, the Qing dynasty started.

Qing Dynasty Rule

The first emperor of the Qing dynasty, Shunzhi (顺治) was a child. His father died the year before the official start of the Qing dynasty, and he was put into place as the emperor. Shunzhi's court's priority during his reign was to conquer the entire empire and establish a government to rule the new empire.

In total, there were 12 rulers during the Qing dynasty. Notice I did not write "emperors" for a reason. There was in fact an empress, CiXi (慈禧), who was most well-known for ruling the empire from behind a curtain. She is also known as Dowager. CiXi was the favorite concubine of one of the last emperors of the Qing dynasty, and although she was uneducated, she was put into power over millions of people. In fact, her son was selected to be the next emperor. CiXi was made a co-empress, but in reality she was involved in a series of plots and assassinations to stay in power.

<http://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/china-history/the-qing-dynasty.htm>



Empress CiXi

Qing Society

The Qing society saw a wide array of changes in religion. Protestant and evangelical religion was introduced to China near the end of the dynasty. These religions sent missionaries to China to spread their religion, and tens of thousands of Chinese people converted during that time. Their focus was to spend time with the common people rather than try to obtain positions on the ruling court to influence the officials. They built schools and places of worship and focused on education, such as teaching western medicine to nurses and doctors.

The Qing dynasty also had a social structure, like some dynasties in the past. The Qing were very strict about where people fell in the structure, which led to abuses of power and plots against others.

The order, from top to bottom, is: Emperor and advisors, then Generals, nobles, and workers, then artists and peasants, then slaves and servitude.

<http://theqingdynasty.com/qing-dynasty-social-structure.html>

This site has a ton of information on the social caste system.



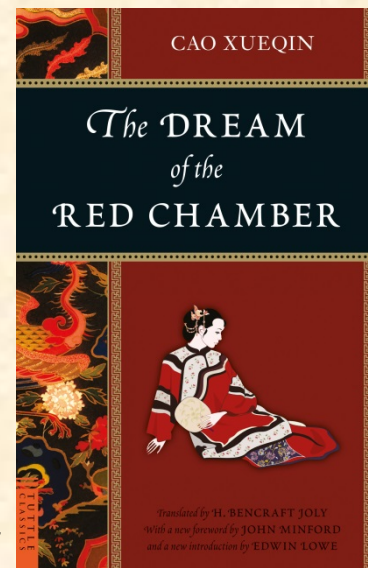
Qing Peasants

Qing Culture

Literature advanced during the Qing dynasty, in the form of huge volumes of written works, large encyclopedias, and popular novels. This was further supported by the Qing court, as they sponsored publishing products for encyclopedias, historical works, and compendiums of literature.

Novels published during this time became world famous. *Dream of the Red Chamber* is one such novel, however the author is actually unknown. It was written in a vernacular language, like many other classic works that were written during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. It was likely written by Cao Xueqin (曹雪芹) due to its detailed portrayal of the people of his clan. They were very wealthy and ruled during the Qing dynasty in the middle 1700s. The original ending of the story was lost, so it is assumed that other contributed to the book before it was first printed. Two editors claimed to have purchased Cao's working manuscripts from a street vendor, and they compiled the book's end.

<http://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/china-history/the-qing-dynasty.htm>



Dream of the Red Chamber

Qing Culture (Continued)

Near the end of the Qing dynasty, the common person's access to foreign literature and western influence was greater than had ever seen in China in the past. Even some Chinese authors began writing literature in the ways western authors wrote.

Students began travelling abroad to study and the schools that had been built by missionaries were put into full use to educate the masses.

Throughout China, there was a sense of crisis (perhaps due to the ever changing and quickly evolving society) and this was clearly reflected in the written works from that time. The fiction was much more like that of Western authors. Foreign works were more frequently translated and became very popular. Works on science, politics, and religion has a huge influence on China's cultural changes.

Protestant Collegiate School of China



Qing Power

Power in China during the Qing dynasty was much like we have seen in the past, with rulers essentially doing whatever was necessary to maintain the grip of control on the country and the court. The rulers were ruthless and acted in ways that devastated and embarrassed the people if they did not conform.

Beijing stayed the capital city and was not destroyed as the Ming fell, likely because so many Ming leaders willingly let the Manchurians enter Ming territory and sided with them.

One of the most well-recognized, but perhaps not well-understood, symbols of power over the people occurred in 1645. The Dorgon, who was the child emperor's regent, forced all Ming men to shave their hair in front of their heads and keep a long braided ponytail in the back, known as the Ming queue. This could help identify the resisters, who were massacred. His famous quote regarding this was "To keep the hair, you lose the head; to keep the head, you cut the hair."

<http://muneerhuda.com/2014/05/chinese-queue/>

This site provides a great amount of information on the queue.

Chinese queue hairstyle



Qing Economy

Although the Qing dynasty did not really have market cities, it did have a lively market system which moved a lot of goods. This helped to make improvements in the economy throughout China. Specialty items moved great distances, such as Chinese herbs for medicine and cotton and rice. The market structure became more complex and essentially turned into a hierarchy with smaller markets paying fees and taxes to larger markets.

Farming was also booming in the Qing economy. More than 80 percent of the population still lived in the countryside and nearly everyone has some tie to farming or farming by-products.

Taxes had been collected in China for many dynasties up to this point, but during Qing, the people had to pay their taxes, at least in part, with actual money. They usually used copper coins or silver rather than using goods-in-kind. This actually led to economic growth, since the only way to get real money was by selling goods.

<http://www.learn.columbia.edu/nanxuntu/html/economy/>

This site has a good deal of information on markets and economy during the Qing dynasty.



Qing dynasty market

Boxer Rebellion

Perhaps the most well-known rebellion in China's recent history is the Boxer Rebellion, which occurred in the year 1900. The rebellion started among the poor and unemployed people who also studied martial arts.

Initially, the Boxer Rebellion was determined to overthrow the government and rid the country of foreigners, either by expelling them or killing them. Secretly, CiXi supported the rebellion, and the leaders decided to support the Qing mutually. As the rebellion continued, it transitioned into an anti-Christian movement and converts were tortured and killed, in the numbers of tens of thousands. Although the indigenous Christians likely did not fight back, it is interesting to note also that Protestant missionaries were generally not attacked.

CiXi later declared war on the foreigners and her troops marched against them in Beijing. Foreign armies sent troops, which defeated the Qing and the Boxers. The United States sent a number of troops to China as well, as the Qing court was mandated to pay war reparations. The US used that money to build the Qinghua University.



Depiction of Boxer Rebellion

Conclusion

The Qing dynasty helped advance China in many ways, such as economy and cultural, but saw many setbacks, such as the Boxer Rebellion. Another crisis that took place in China was the opium wars. I have included a video of side notes on the first opium war, for those that are interested. China was involved in two opium wars, the first being fought against Britain from 1839 to 1842. The second war took place between 1856 and 1860.

China has changed much throughout history, but the Qing dynasty saw the end to dynastical ruling in China, and the start to turmoil and devastation for the country.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9beMOxGOrk>

This video is one of a series about the opium wars, and is pretty informative.