

LESSON 1

The Ming and Qing Dynasties

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What factors help unify a kingdom or dynasty?
- How can external forces influence a kingdom or dynasty?

READING HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

- series
- perspective

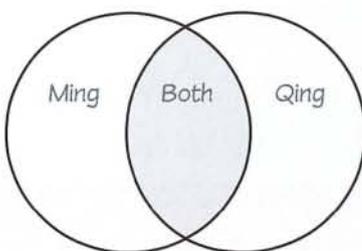
Content Vocabulary

- queue
- clan
- porcelain

TAKING NOTES

Key Ideas and Details

Comparing and Contrasting Use a graphic organizer like this one to compare and contrast the achievements of the Ming and Qing dynasties.



IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The Ming dynasty began a new era of greatness in China, bringing effective government, expansion, and cultural advancements. Under the Qing dynasty, which succeeded the Ming, China continued to prosper, but Qing limits on foreign trade would eventually harm China economically.

The Ming Dynasty

GUIDING QUESTION *What were the achievements of the Ming dynasty?*

The Mongol dynasty in China was overthrown in 1368. The founder of the new dynasty took the title of Ming Hong Wu (the Ming Martial Emperor). This was the beginning of the Ming dynasty, which lasted until 1644.

Under Ming emperors, China extended its rule into Mongolia and central Asia. Along the northern frontier, the Chinese strengthened the Great Wall and made peace with the nomadic tribes that had troubled them for many centuries.

At home, Ming rulers ran an effective government using a centralized bureaucracy staffed with officials chosen by the civil service examination system. They set up a nationwide school system. Manufactured goods were produced in workshops and factories in vastly higher numbers. New crops were introduced, which greatly increased food production. The Ming rulers also renovated the Grand Canal, making it possible to ship grain and other goods from southern to northern China. The Ming dynasty truly began a new era of greatness in Chinese history.

Ming Hong Wu ruled from 1368 until 1398. After his death, his son Yong Le became emperor. In 1406 Yong Le began construction of the Imperial City in Beijing (BAY • JHNG). In 1421 he moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing. The Imperial City was created to convey power and prestige. It is an immense complex of palaces and temples surrounded by six and one-half miles of walls. Because it was off-limits to commoners, it was known as the Forbidden City.

series a group of related things or events

During his reign, Yong Le also sent a **series** of naval voyages into the Indian Ocean that sailed as far west as the eastern coast of Africa. Led by the court official Zheng He (JUHNG • HUH), seven voyages were made between 1405 and 1433. The first fleet, consisting of 62 ships and nearly 28,000 men, passed through Southeast Asia, the western coast of India and the city-states of East Africa. It returned with items unknown in China and with information about the outside world.

In 1514 a Portuguese fleet arrived off the coast of China. It was the first direct contact between the Chinese Empire and Europe since the journeys of Marco Polo. At the time, the Ming government thought little of their arrival. China was at the height of its power, and from the **perspective** of the emperor, the Europeans were only an unusual form of barbarian. To the Chinese ruler, the rulers of all other countries were simply “younger brothers” of the Chinese emperor, who was seen as the Son of Heaven.

perspective viewpoint

The Portuguese soon outraged Chinese officials with their behavior. They were expelled from Guangzhou (Canton) but were allowed to occupy Macao, a port on the southeastern coast of China.

At first, the Portuguese had little impact on Chinese society. Portuguese ships carried goods between China and Japan, but direct trade between Europe and China remained limited. Perhaps more important than trade, however, was the exchange of ideas.

Christian missionaries also made the long voyage to China on European merchant ships. Many of them were highly educated men who brought along instruments, such as clocks, that impressed Chinese officials and made them more receptive to Western ideas.

Both sides benefited from this early cultural exchange. Chinese scholars marveled at their ability to read better with European eyeglasses. Christian missionaries were impressed with the teachings of Confucius, the printing and availability of books, and Chinese architecture. When these reports began to circulate back home, Europeans became even more curious about this great civilization on the other side of the world.

After a period of prosperity and growth, the Ming dynasty gradually began to decline. During the late sixteenth century, internal power struggles led to a period of government corruption. High taxes, caused in part by this corruption, led to peasant unrest. Crop yields declined because of harsh weather. In the 1630s, a major epidemic greatly reduced the population in many areas. The suffering caused by the epidemic helped spark a peasant revolt led by Li Zicheng (LEE DZUH • CHUHNG). The revolt began in central China and then spread to the rest of the country. In 1644 Li and his forces occupied the capital of Beijing. When the capital fell, the last Ming emperor committed suicide in the palace gardens. Many officials took their own lives as well.

The overthrow of the Ming dynasty created an opportunity for the Manchus. They were a farming and hunting people who lived northeast of the Great Wall in the area known today as Manchuria. The forces of the Manchus conquered Beijing, and Li Zicheng’s army fell. The victorious Manchus then declared the creation of a new dynasty called the Qing (CHIHNG), meaning “pure.” This dynasty, created in 1644, remained in power until 1911.

▼ A section of the Imperial City in Beijing, China



✓ **READING PROGRESS CHECK**

Evaluating Explain the importance of three achievements of the Ming dynasty.

The Qing Dynasty

GUIDING QUESTION *How did the Qing adapt to gain acceptance of the people?*

queue the braided pigtail that was traditionally worn by Chinese males

When some Chinese resisted their new rulers and seized the island of Taiwan, the Manchu government prepared to attack them. To identify the rebels, the government ordered all males to adopt Manchu dress and hairstyles. They had to shave their foreheads and braid their hair into a pigtail called a **queue**. Those who refused were assumed to be rebels and were executed: “Lose your hair or lose your head.”

Gradually accepted as legitimate rulers, the Qing flourished under a series of strong early rulers who pacified the country, corrected serious social and economic ills, and restored peace and prosperity. The Qing maintained the Ming political system but faced one major problem: the Manchus were ethnically and culturally different from their subject population. The Qing rulers dealt with this reality in two ways.

First, the Qing tried to preserve their distinct identity within Chinese society. The Manchus, only 2 percent of the population, were defined legally as distinct from everyone else in China. The Manchu nobility maintained large landholdings and received revenues from the state treasury. Second, the Qing dealt with this problem by bringing Chinese into the imperial administration to win their support. Chinese held more than 80 percent of lower posts, but a much smaller share of the top positions.

Kangxi (KAHNG • SHEE), who ruled from 1661 to 1722, was perhaps the greatest of the emperors who ruled China during the Ming and Qing dynasties. A person with political skill and a strong character, Kangxi took charge of the government while still in his teens and reigned for 61 years.

Kangxi rose at dawn and worked until late at night. He wrote: “One act of negligence may cause sorrow all through the country, and one moment of negligence may result in trouble for thousands of generations.” Kangxi calmed the unrest along the northern and western frontiers by force. As a patron of the arts and letters, he gained the support of scholars in China.

In 1689, during Kangxi’s reign, China and Russia signed the Treaty of Nerchinsk. Beginning in the 1620s, Russian traders had pushed eastward into land under China’s protection in search of trade routes and goods. The treaty stopped Russia’s push east, ended the frontier wars, and established trade between the two empires. This gave the Russians a special status with the Qing. Other European powers were limited to trade at certain ports.

Also during Kangxi’s reign, the efforts of Christian missionaries reached their height. The emperor was quite tolerant of the Christians. Several hundred officials became Catholics, as did an estimated 300,000 ordinary Chinese. Ultimately, however, the Christian effort was undermined by squabbling among the Western religious orders. After the death of Kangxi, his successor began to suppress Christian activities.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Categorizing Explain how Kangxi exemplifies the adaptability of the Qing leaders.

Europeans in China

GUIDING QUESTION *How did the changing economy affect society during the Ming and Qing dynasties?*

Under Qianlong (CHEE • UHN • LUNG), who ruled from 1736 to 1795, the Qing dynasty experienced the greatest period of prosperity and reached its greatest physical size. It was during this great reign, however, that the first signs of decay appeared. Why did this happen?

As the emperor grew older, he fell under the influence of destructive elements at court. Corrupt officials and higher taxes led to unrest in rural areas. Population growth also exerted pressure on the land and led to economic hardship. In central China, unhappy peasants launched a revolt, the White Lotus Rebellion (1796–1804). The revolt was suppressed, but the expenses of war weakened the Qing dynasty.

Unfortunately for China, the Qing dynasty was declining just as Europe was seeking more trade. At first, the Qing government sold trade privileges to the Europeans, but to limit contacts between Europeans and Chinese, the Qing confined all European traders to a small island just outside Guangzhou. Traders could reside there only between October and March and only deal with a limited number of Chinese firms licensed by the government.

At first, the British accepted this system. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, some British traders had begun to demand access to additional cities, as Russian traders already enjoyed, along the Chinese coast. Likewise, the Chinese government was under pressure from its own merchants to open China to British manufactured goods.

Britain had an unfavorable, or negative, trade balance with China. That is, Britain imported more goods from China than it exported to the country. For years, Britain had imported tea, silk, and **porcelain** from the Chinese. To pay for these imports, Britain had sent Indian cotton to China, but this did not cover the entire debt, and the British had to pay for their imports with silver. The British sent ever-increasing quantities of silver to China, especially in exchange for tea, which was in great demand by the British.

In 1793 a British mission led by Lord George Macartney visited Beijing to seek more liberal trade policies. However, Emperor Qianlong responded that China had no need of “your country’s manufactures.”

porcelain a ceramic material made of fine clay baked at very high temperatures

GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

China expanded its borders during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

1 THE WORLD IN SPATIAL

TERMS How large was the Qing Dynasty in comparison to the Ming?

2 HUMAN SYSTEMS

How did the location of the rebellion of Li Zicheng help the Qing conquest of Ming China?

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Constructing a Thesis How did the Qing dynasty adapt to the presence of Europeans?



Economy and Daily Life

GUIDING QUESTION *How did the changing economy affect society during the Ming and Qing dynasties?*

Between 1500 and 1800, China remained a mostly agricultural society. Nearly 85 percent of the people were small farmers. Nevertheless, the Chinese economy was changing.

The first change for China involved an increase in population, from less than 80 million in 1390 to more than 300 million at the end of the 1700s. The increase had several causes. These included a long period of stability under the early Qing dynasty and improvements in the food supply due to a faster growing species of rice from Southeast Asia.

The population increase meant that less land was available for each family. The imperial court tried to make more land available by limiting the amount wealthy landowners could hold. By the eighteenth century, however, almost all the land that could be was already being farmed. Rural land shortages led to unrest and revolts.

Another change in this period was a steady growth in manufacturing and increased trade between provinces. Taking advantage of the long era of peace and prosperity, merchants and manufacturers expanded their trade in silk, porcelain, cotton goods, and other products.

Despite the growth in trade and manufacturing, China did not develop the same attitude toward business that was emerging in Europe. Middle-class merchants and manufacturers in China were not as independent as those in Europe. Also, the government controlled commercial activity and saw business as inferior to farming. Due to Confucian ideals, merchants bought land rather than reinvesting their profits in their businesses.

Chinese society was organized around the family. The family was expected to provide for its members' needs, including the education of children, support of unmarried daughters, and care of the elderly. At the same time, all family members were expected to sacrifice their individual needs to benefit the family as a whole. This was based on Confucian ideals.

The ideal family unit in Qing China was the extended family, in which several generations lived under the same roof. When sons married, their wives, no longer considered members of their original families, lived with them in the husband's family home. Unmarried daughters also remained in the house, as did parents and grandparents. Chinese society held the elderly in high regard. Aging parents knew they would be cared for in their home by their children.

Beyond the extended family was the **clan**, which consisted of dozens, or even hundreds, of related families. These families were linked by a clan council of elders and common social and religious activities. This system made it possible for wealthier families to help poorer relatives.

Women were considered inferior to men in Chinese society. Only males could have a formal education and pursue a career in government or scholarship. Within the family, Chinese women often played strong roles. Nevertheless, the wife was clearly subordinate to the husband. Legally, she could not divorce her husband or inherit property. The husband could divorce his wife if she did not produce sons. He could also take a second wife. Husbands were expected to support their wives and children.

A feature of Chinese society that restricted the mobility of women was the practice of footbinding. Scholars believe it began among the wealthy and was later adopted by all classes. Bound feet were a status symbol. Women who had bound feet were more marriageable than those who did



▲ Emperor Qianlong, in full ceremonial armor

clan a group of related families

Women in China

“How sad it is to be a woman! Nothing on earth is held so cheap. . . . No one is glad when a girl is born: By her the family sets no store.”

—Fu Hsüan, from “Woman”

DBQ READING CLOSELY

Based on what you have read, does this seem like a fair assessment of the role of women in China?



▲ Porcelain vase from the Ming Dynasty, fifteenth century

not; thus, there was a status incentive as well as an economic incentive. An estimated one-half to two-thirds of the women in China bound their feet.

The process, begun in childhood, was very painful. Women who had their feet bound could not walk; they were carried. Not all clans looked favorably on footbinding. Women who worked in the fields or in occupations that required mobility did not bind their feet.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Summarizing How did population increases cause unrest?

Chinese Art and Literature

GUIDING QUESTION *What artistic advancements did China experience during the Ming and Qing dynasties?*

During the late Ming and the early Qing dynasties, traditional culture in China reached new heights. The Ming economic expansion increased standards of living, providing many Chinese with money to purchase books. Also, new innovations in paper manufacturing encouraged the growth of printing throughout China.

During the Ming dynasty, a new form of literature arose that evolved into the modern Chinese novel. Works in this literary form were quite popular, especially among well-to-do urban dwellers.

One Chinese novel, *The Golden Lotus*, is considered by many to be the first realistic social novel. *The Golden Lotus* depicts the corrupt life of a wealthy landlord in the late Ming period who cruelly manipulates those around him for sex, money, and power.

The Dream of the Red Chamber, by Cao Xueqin, is generally considered even today to be China’s most distinguished popular novel. Published in 1791, it tells of the tragic love between two young people caught in the financial and moral disintegration of a powerful Chinese clan.

During the Ming and the early Qing dynasties, China experienced an outpouring of artistic brilliance. In architecture, the most outstanding example is the Imperial City in Beijing. The decorative arts also flourished in this period. Perhaps the most famous of all the arts of the Ming Era was blue-and-white porcelain. Europeans admired the beauty of this porcelain and collected it in great quantities. Different styles of porcelain were produced during the reign of individual emperors.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Identifying Relate advances in literature to economic advances during the period.

LESSON 1 REVIEW

Reviewing Vocabulary

1. Summarizing Write a paragraph explaining how the queue functioned as an effective political tool during the Qing dynasty.

Using Your Notes

2. Comparing and Contrasting Use your notes on the Ming and Qing dynasties to write a paragraph comparing and contrasting their achievements.

Answering the Guiding Questions

3. Listing What were the achievements of the Ming dynasty?

4. Synthesizing How did the Qing adapt to gain acceptance of the people?

5. Summarizing How did the changing economy affect society during the Ming and Qing dynasties?

6. Summarizing What artistic advancements did China experience during the Ming and Qing dynasties?

Writing Activity

7. Informative/Explanatory Write a paragraph that evaluates the positive and negative features of the traditional family-centered values of Chinese society.