16

The Creation of the Manchu Empire (1600–1800)

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the age of the Manchus (man-choo). As the Ming Dynasty fell into disorder, the Jurchens put together an efficient state beyond Ming's northeastern border and adopted the name *Manchu* for themselves. After they were called in to help suppress peasant rebellions, the Manchus took the throne themselves, founding the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). Many Chinese did all they could to resist the Manchus out of loyalty to the Ming, but by the eighteenth century, Chinese and Manchus had learned to accommodate each other. In many ways, the eighteenth century was the high point of traditional Chinese civilization. The Manchus created a multiethnic empire, adding Taiwan, Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang to their realm, making the Qing Empire comparable to the other multinational empires of the early modern world, such as the Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg empires.

Many historians have been attracted to research on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because it provides a baseline of traditional China before the rapid changes of the modern era. In addition to the usual questions of why the Ming fell and the Qing succeeded, scholars have recently been asking questions about the Manchus themselves. Who were they, and how did their history shape the way they ruled China? How did they compel the allegiance of peoples of different backgrounds? How did they manage to give traditional Chinese political forms a new lease on life? Other historians have focused more on what was going on among the Chinese during these two crucial centuries. Was population growth a sign of prosperity? Or was it beginning to cause problems? How did scholars respond to Manchu rule?

THE MANCHUS

The Manchus were descended from the Jurchens, who had ruled north China during the Jin Dynasty (1127–1234). Although they had not maintained the written language that the Jin had created, they had maintained their hairstyle. A Manchu man shaved the front of his head and wore the rest of his hair in a long braid (called a queue). The language the Manchus spoke belongs to the Tungus family, making it close to some of the languages spoken in nearby Siberia and distantly related to Korean and Japanese.

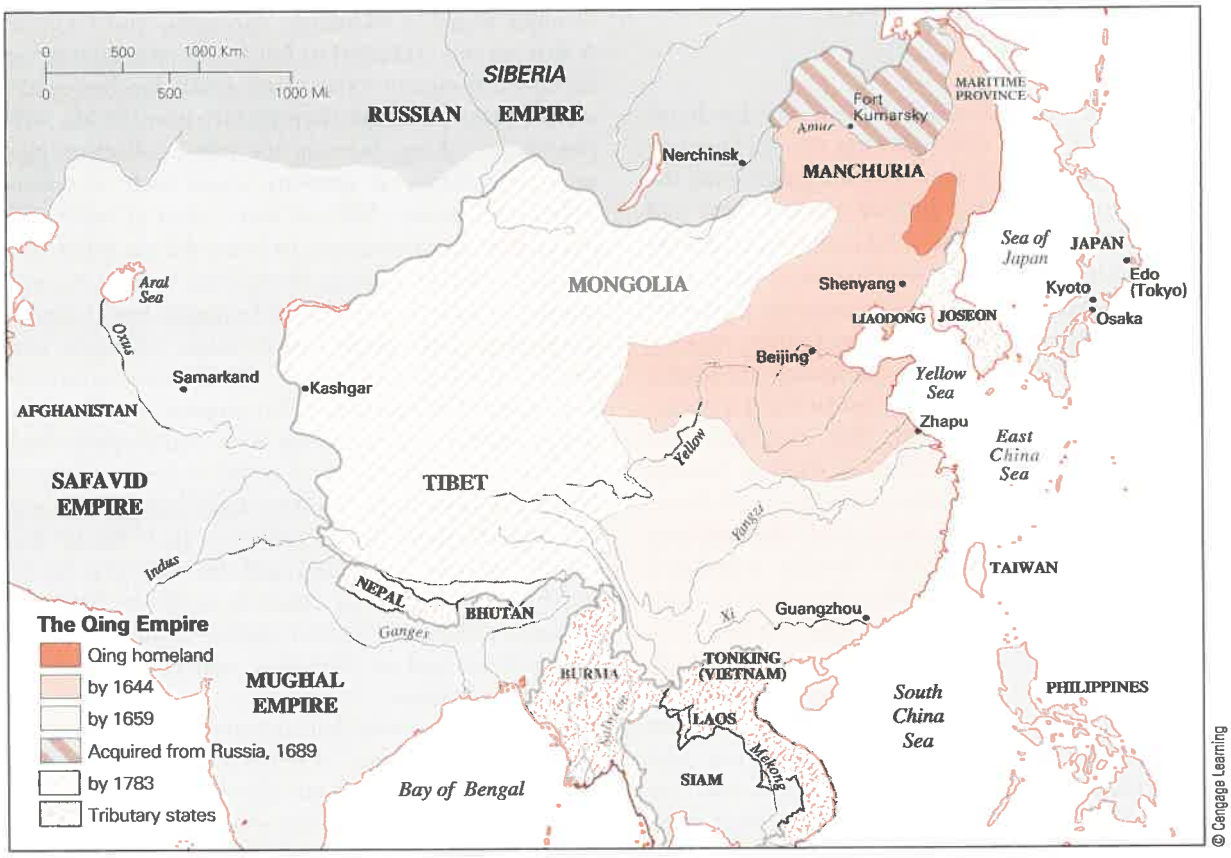
During the Ming Dynasty, the Manchus had lived in dispersed communities in what is loosely called Manchuria (the modern provinces of Liaoning [leeow-ning], Jilin [jee-lin], and Heilongjiang [hay-lung-jyang]). In the more densely populated southern part of Manchuria, Manchus lived in close contact with Mongols, Koreans, and Chinese, the latter especially in the Ming prefecture of Liaodong. (See Map 16.1.) The Manchus were not nomads but rather hunters, fishers, and farmers. Like the Mongols, they had a tribal social structure and were excellent horsemen and archers. Also like the Mongols, their society was strongly hierarchical, with elites and slaves. Slaves, often Korean or Chinese, were generally acquired through capture. From the Mongols, the Manchus had adopted Lamaist Buddhism, originally from Tibet, and it coexisted with their native shamanistic religion. Manchu shamans were men or women who had experienced a spiritual death and rebirth and, as a consequence, could travel to and influence the world of the spirits.

Both the Joseon Dynasty in Korea and the Ming Dynasty in China welcomed diplomatic missions from Manchu chieftains, seeing them as a counterbalance to the Mongols. Written communication was frequently in Mongolian, the lingua franca of the region. Along the border with the Ming were officially approved markets where Manchus brought horses, furs, honey, and ginseng to exchange for Chinese tea, cotton, silk, rice, salt, and tools. By the 1580s, there were five such markets that convened monthly, and unofficial trade occurred as well.

The Manchus credited their own rise to Nurhaci (1559–1626), who in 1583 at age twenty-four became the leader of one group of Manchus. Over the next few decades, he was able to expand his territories, in the process not only uniting the Manchus but also creating a social–political–military organization that brought together Manchus, Mongols, and Chinese. A Korean who traveled to Nurhaci's headquarters in 1595–1596 encountered many small Jurchen settlements, most no larger than twenty households, supported by fishing, hunting for pelts, collecting pine nuts or ginseng, or growing crops such as wheat, millet, and barley. Villages were often at odds with each other over resources, and men did not leave their villages without arming themselves with bows and arrows or swords. Interspersed among these Manchu settlements were groups of nomadic Mongols who lived in yurts in open areas. The Korean visitor observed that Nurhaci had in his employ men from the Ming territory of Liaodong who could speak both Chinese and Manchu and could write in Chinese. Nurhaci's knowledge of China and Chinese ways was not entirely secondhand, however. In 1590, he had led an embassy to Beijing, and the next year he offered to join the Ming effort to repel the Japanese invasion of Korea. Nurhaci and his children married Mongols as well as Manchus, and these marriages cemented alliances.

Like Chinggis, who had reorganized his armies to reduce the importance of tribal affiliations, Nurhaci created a new social basis for his armies in units called *banners*, identified by their colors. Each banner was made up of a set of military companies but included the families and slaves of the soldiers as well. Each company had a captain whose position was hereditary. Many of the commanding officers were drawn from Nurhaci's own lineage. Over time new companies and new banners were formed, and by 1644 there were twenty-four banners (eight each Manchu, Mongol, and Chinese banners). When new groups of Manchus were defeated, they were distributed among several banners to lessen their potential for subversion.

In 1616, Nurhaci declared war on the Ming Empire by calling himself khan of the revived Jin Dynasty and listing his grievances against the Ming. In 1621 his forces overran Liaodong and incorporated it into his state. After Nurhaci died in 1626, his son Hong Taiji succeeded him. In consolidating the Jin state, then centered on Mukden, Hong Taiji grudgingly made use of Chinese bureaucrats, but his goal was to replace them with a multiethnic elite equally competent in warfare and documents. In 1636, Hong Taiji renamed his state Qing ("pure"). When he died in 1643 at age forty-six, his brother Dorgon was made regent for his five-year-old son, Fulin, the Shunzhi emperor (r. 1643–1661).



Map 16.1 The Manchu Empire at Its Height

The distinguished Ming general Wu Sangui (woo sahn-gway) (1612–1678), a native of Liaodong, was near the eastern end of the Great Wall when he heard that the rebel Li Zicheng (lee dzih-chuhng) had captured Beijing. Dorgon proposed to Wu that they join forces and liberate Beijing. Wu opened the gates of the Great Wall to let the Manchus in, and within a couple of weeks they had occupied Beijing. When the Manchus made clear that they intended to conquer the rest of the country and take the throne themselves, Wu joined forces with them, as did many other Chinese generals.

MING LOYALISM

When word of the fall of Beijing to the Manchus reached the Yangzi valley, Ming officials selected a Ming prince to succeed to the throne and shifted the capital to Nanjing, the Ming secondary capital. They were thus following the strategy that had allowed the Song Dynasty to continue to flourish after it had lost the north in 1126. The Ming court offered to buy off the Manchus, just as the Song had bought off the Jurchens. Dorgon, however, saw no need to check his ambitions. He sent Wu Sangui and several Manchu generals to pursue the rebel forces across north China. Li Zicheng was eliminated in 1645, Zhang Xianzhong (jahng shyen-juhng) in 1647.

At the same time, Qing forces set about trying to defeat the Ming forces in the south. Quite a few able officials joined the Ming cause, but leadership was not well coordinated. Shi Kefa (shih kuh-fah), a scholar-official who had risen to minister of war in Nanjing, took charge of defense and stationed his army at Yangzhou. Many other generals, however, defected to the Manchu side, and their soldiers were incorporated into the Qing armies. As the Qing forces moved south, many local officials opened the gates of their cities and surrendered. Shi Kefa refused

to surrender Yangzhou, and a five-day battle ensued. The Manchu general was so angered at Shi's resistance that he unleashed his army to take revenge on the city, slaughtering hundreds of thousands. As cities in the south fell, large numbers of Ming loyalists committed suicide, their wives, mothers, and daughters frequently joining them.

In the summer of 1645, the Manchu command ordered all Chinese serving in its armies to shave the front of their heads in the Manchu fashion, presumably to make it easier to recognize which side they were on. Soon this order was extended to all Chinese men, a measure that aroused deep resentment and made it easier for the Ming loyalists to organize resistance. When those newly conquered by the Qing refused to shave their hair, Manchu commanders felt justified in ordering the slaughter of defiant cities such as Jiading, Changshu, and Jiangyin. Still, Ming loyalist resistance continued long after little hope remained. The Manchus did not defeat the two main camps until 1661–1662, and even then Zheng Cheng-gong (juhng chuhng-gung, Koxinga) was able to hold out in Taiwan until 1683.

Ming loyalism also took less militant forms. Several leading thinkers of this period had time to think and write because they refused to serve the Qing. Their critiques of the Ming and its failings led to searching inquiries into China's heritage of dynastic rule. Huang Zongxi (hwang dzung-shyee) (1610–1695) served the Ming resistance court at Nanjing and followed it when it had to retreat, but after 1649 he lived in retirement at his home in Zhejiang province. The Manchu conquest was so traumatic an event that he reconsidered many of the basic tenets of Chinese political order. He came to the conclusion that the Ming's problems were not minor ones like inadequate supervision of eunuchs but much more major ones, such as the imperial institution itself.

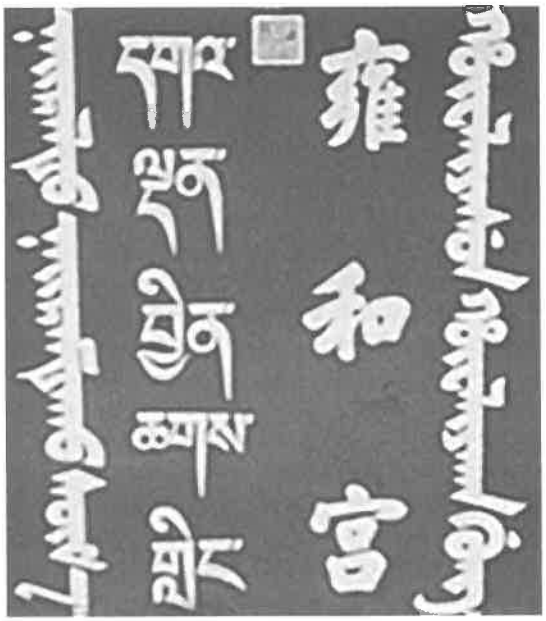
Gu Yanwu (goo yen-woo) (1613–1682) participated in the defense of his native city, then watched his mother starve herself rather than live under Manchu rule. He traveled across north China in search of a better understanding of Ming weaknesses, looking into economic topics Confucian scholars had rarely studied in depth, such as banking, mining, and farming. He had only disdain for scholars who wasted their time on empty speculation or literary elegance when there were so many practical problems awaiting solution. He thought that the Ming had suffered from overcentralization and advocated greater local autonomy.

A third example is Wang Fuzhi (wahng foo-jih) (1619–1692). He had passed the provincial exams under the Ming, but marauding rebels made it impossible for him to get to Beijing to take the *jinshi* exams in 1642. After Beijing fell to the Manchus two years later, Wang joined the resistance. He raised troops in his native Hunan province and held a minor post at the court of the Ming pretender for a while, but he fell victim to factional strife and in 1650 withdrew to live as a retired scholar. Wang saw an urgent need not only to return Confucianism to its roots but also to protect Chinese civilization from the "barbarians." He insisted that it was as important to distinguish Chinese from barbarians as it was to distinguish superior men from petty men. It is natural for rulers to protect their followers from intruders: "Now even the ants have rulers who preside over the territory of their nests, and when red ants or flying white ants penetrate their gates, the ruler organizes all his own kind into troops to bite and kill the intruders, drive them far away from the anthill, and prevent foreign interference."* The Ming rulers had failed in this basic responsibility.

THE QING AT ITS HEIGHT

For more than a century, China was ruled by just three rulers, each of whom was hard working, talented, and committed to making the Qing Dynasty a success. The policies and institutions they put in place gave China a respite from war and disorder, and the Chinese population seems to have nearly doubled during this period, from between 150 and 175 million to between 300 and 325 million. Population growth during the course of the eighteenth century has been attributed to many factors: global warming that extended the growing season; expanded use of New World crops; slowing of the spread of new diseases that had accompanied the sixteenth-century expansion of global traffic; and the efficiency of the Qing government in providing relief in times of famine. Some scholars have recently argued that China's overall standard of living in the mid-eighteenth century was comparable to Europe's and that the standards of China's most developed regions, such as the Jiangnan region, compared favorably to the most developed regions of

*W. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, *Sources of Chinese Tradition from 1600 Through the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 35.



TAO Images Limited/Getty Images

Official Languages. The Qing government issued documents in the four main languages of its realm. On this name plaque at a government-sponsored temple in Beijing, the name is given first in Manchu, then Chinese, then Tibetan, and finally Mongolian (reading from right to left).

Europe at the time, such as England and the Netherlands. Life expectancy, food consumption, and even facilities for transportation were at similar levels (see **Biography: Jiang Chun, Salt Merchant**).

Kangxi

After the Shunzhi emperor died of smallpox (which struck many Manchus after they settled in Beijing), one of his sons who had already survived the disease was selected to succeed him. Known as the Kangxi (kahng-shyee) emperor (r. 1661–1722), he lived to see the Qing Empire firmly established.

The Kangxi emperor proved adept at meeting the expectations of both the Chinese and Manchu elites. At age fourteen, he announced that he would begin ruling on his own and had his regent imprisoned. He could speak, read, and write Chinese and appreciated the value of persuading educated Chinese that the Manchus had a legitimate claim to the Mandate of Heaven. Most of the political institutions of the Ming Dynasty had been taken over relatively unchanged, including the examination system, and the Kangxi emperor worked to attract Ming loyalists who had been unwilling to serve the Qing. He undertook a series of tours of the south, where resistance had been strongest, and held a special exam to select men to compile the official history of the Ming Dynasty.

The main military challenge the Kangxi emperor faced was the revolt of Wu Sangui and two other Chinese generals who in the early years of the conquest had been given vast tracts of land in the south as rewards for joining the Qing. Wu was made, in effect, satrap of Yunnan and Guizhou, and it was his armies that had pursued the last Ming pretender into Burma. When the Qing began to curb the power of these generals in 1673, Wu declared himself the ruler of an independent state, and the other two "feudatories" joined him. The south was not yet fully reconciled to Qing rule, but Wu, as a turncoat himself, did not attract a large following. Although it took eight years, the military structure that the Qing had put together proved strong enough to defeat this challenge. At the conclusion of these campaigns, Taiwan, where the last of the Ming loyalists had held out, was made part of Fujian province, fully incorporating it into China proper.

By annexing Mongolia, the Kangxi emperor made sure the Qing Dynasty would not have the northern border problems the Ming had faced. (See Map 16.1.) In 1696 he led an army of eighty thousand men into Mongolia, and within a few years Manchu supremacy was accepted there. Qing forces were equipped with cannons and muskets, giving them military superiority over the Mongols, who were armed with bows and arrows only. They thus could dominate the steppe cheaply, effectively ending two thousand years of northern border defense problems.

The Qing also asserted its presence in Tibet. This came about after a group of Western Mongols tried to find a new place for themselves in Tibet. The army the Qing sent after them occupied Lhasa in 1718. In the 1720s, the Qing presence in Tibet was made firm with the establishment of a permanent garrison of banner soldiers. By this time, the Qing Empire was coming into proximity of the expanding Russian Empire. In 1689 the Manchu and the Russian rulers approved a treaty—written in Russian, Manchu, Chinese, and Latin—defining their borders in Manchuria and regulating trade. Another treaty in 1727 allowed a Russian ecclesiastical mission to reside in Beijing and a caravan to make a trip from Russia to Beijing once every three years. The Russians were especially interested in securing a steady supply of tea.

BIOGRAPHY

Jiang Chun, Salt Merchant

Jiang Chun's (jyahng chun) (1725–1793) great-great-grandfather moved to Yangzhou to enter the salt trade centered there. Salt was a special commodity because the government claimed a monopoly over it and licensed merchants to transport and sell it. Salt merchants could grow exceptionally rich; it has been estimated that the twenty to thirty head merchants could pocket 50,000 to 100,000 taels of silver a year from the salt business alone. Government connections made possible the great wealth of the salt merchants, and the government regularly called on them to contribute huge sums for disaster relief, repair of the waterworks, or visits of the emperor.

As the Jiang family grew rich, many of its men pursued scholarly or official careers (often gaining positions through purchase, a legal but less prestigious route). But in each generation one man, like Jiang Chun, served as one of the head salt merchants. Although there are several biographical sketches of Jiang Chun, they say little about him as a merchant.

A description of the great sites of Yangzhou written in 1795 provides an elaborate description of Jiang Chun's garden, naming its halls, ponds, towers, terraces, and so on. In addition to discussing Jiang and his talented kinsmen, the author added notes on thirty-nine men of talent in his entourage, including scholars, painters, poets, calligraphers, physicians, musicians, connoisseurs able to authenticate antiquities, craftsmen-painters good at portraits, gardeners expert in pruning plum trees, and the architects who had designed the buildings in his garden. Some had lived in different buildings of his estate for years, sometimes decades. Jiang also kept two opera troupes, one that specialized in Kunqu (kun-chyew), the other in Huapu (hwa-poo), which was performed in the local Yangzhou accent. Jiang once organized an archery contest in his Garden of Pure Fragrance. A prominent courtesan was among the guests and scored three bull's-eyes in a row, an event other guests celebrated in poems.

The Qianlong emperor made six visits to Yangzhou on his "southern tours of inspection" (in 1751, 1757, 1762, 1765, 1780, and 1784). Jiang met him every time, and during the last four visits, Jiang hosted the imperial party at one or both of his famous gardens. In fact, the name "Garden of Pure Fragrance" was chosen by Qianlong. The emperor wrote out the three characters of the name, which Jiang then had carved in stone and placed in a special pavilion. On one of his visits, Qianlong put Jiang's seven-year-old son on his lap, patted his head, and took off an ornamental purse and gave it to the boy, which Jiang's biographer Yuan Mei (ywan may) considered an exceptional honor. In 1765, Qianlong gave Jiang Chun four sable skin pelts and two ornamental silk pouches. Jiang Chun's thank-you note has been preserved in the archives. Qianlong must have had some discussions of practical matters with Jiang Chun, because he once told the new director-general handling transport of tax grain to consult the experienced and knowledgeable Jiang Chun if he needed any advice.

In 1768 the top salt administration officials were accused of gross embezzlement and cashiered. Jiang Chun, like the other salt merchants, had to go to the capital to testify during the investigation. Qianlong, Yuan Mei tells us, was impressed by Jiang Chun's demeanor and made sure that the charges against him were dismissed. Nevertheless, by 1771, Jiang was out of money. Qianlong, we are told, personally lent him 500,000 taels as working capital (to be repaid with 10 percent annual interest).

None of Jiang Chun's children lived to adulthood. He adopted his brother's son, but that boy also died young. When Chun was on his deathbed at age sixty-nine, he selected another nephew to succeed him. After Jiang Chun died, on Qianlong's suggestion, the Yangzhou salt merchants purchased his famous garden to use as a clubhouse. The 50,000 taels they paid for the garden became his adopted son's main source of income.

Questions for Analysis

1. Why did the biographers of a merchant concentrate more on how he spent money than on how he earned it?
2. Why was meeting the emperor such an honor?

The Kangxi emperor took a personal interest in the European Jesuit priests who served at court as astronomers and cartographers and translated many European works into Chinese. However, when the pope sided with the Dominican and Franciscan orders in China who opposed allowing converts to maintain ancestral altars (known as the "rites controversy"), he objected strongly to the pope's issuing directives about how Chinese should behave. He outlawed Christian missionaries, though he did allow Jesuit scientists and painters to remain in Beijing.

The Kangxi emperor's heir ruled for twelve years as the Yongzheng (yung-juhng) emperor (r. 1723–1735), taking the throne when he was forty-five years old. A hard-working ruler, he tightened central control over the government. He oversaw a rationalization of the tax structure, substituting new levies for a patchwork of taxes and fees.

Qianlong

The Yongzheng emperor's heir, known as the Qianlong (chyen-lung) emperor (r. 1736–1795), benefited from his father's fiscal reforms, and during his reign, the Qing government regularly ran surpluses. It was during the Qianlong reign that the Qing Empire was expanded to its maximum extent, with the addition of Chinese Turkestan (the modern province of Xinjiang [shin-jyahng]). Both the Han and Tang Dynasties had stationed troops in the region, exercising a loose suzerainty, but neither Song nor Ming had tried to control the area. The Qing won the region in the 1750s through a series of campaigns against Uighur and Dzungar Mongol forces. Like Tibet, loosely annexed a few decades earlier, this region was ruled lightly. The local population kept their own religious leaders and did not have to wear the queue.

The Qianlong emperor put much of his energy into impressing his subjects with his magnificence. He understood that the Qing capacity to hold the empire together rested on their ability to speak in the political and religious idioms of those they ruled. In addition to Manchu and Chinese, he learned to converse in Mongolian, Uighur, Tibetan, and Tangut and addressed envoys in their own languages. He was as much a patron of Lamaist Buddhism as of Chinese Confucianism. He initiated a massive project to translate the Tibetan Buddhist canon into Mongolian and Manchu. He also had huge multilingual dictionaries compiled. He had the child Dalai Lamas raised and educated in Beijing. He made much of the Buddhist notion of the "wheel-turning king" (cakravartin), the ruler who through his conquests moves the world toward the next stage in universal salvation (see Color Plate 21).

To demonstrate to the Chinese scholar-official elite that he was a sage emperor, Qianlong worked on affairs of state from dawn until early afternoon, when he turned to reading, painting, and calligraphy. He took credit for writing more than forty-two thousand poems and ninety-two books of prose. He inscribed his own poetry on hundreds of masterpieces of Chinese painting and calligraphy that he had gathered into the palace collections. He especially liked works of fine craftsmanship, and his taste influenced artistic styles of the day. The Qianlong emperor was ostentatiously devoted to his mother, visiting her daily and tending to her comfort with all the devotion of the most filial Chinese son. He took several tours down the Grand Canal to the Jiangnan (jyahng-nahn) area, in part to emulate his grandfather and in part to entertain his mother. Many of his gestures were costly. His southern tours cost ten times what the Kangxi emperor's had cost and included the construction of temporary palaces and triumphal arches.

For all these displays of Chinese virtues, the Qianlong emperor still was not fully confident that the Chinese supported his rule, and he was quick to act on any suspicion of anti-Manchu thoughts or actions (see **Documents: Fang Bao's "Random Notes from Prison"**). After more than thirty years on the throne, when rumors reached the Qianlong emperor that sorcerers were "stealing souls" by clipping the ends of men's queues, he suspected a seditious plot and had his officials interrogate men under torture until they found more and more evidence of a nonexistent plot. A few years after that episode, the Qianlong emperor carried out a huge literary inquisition. During the compilation of the *Complete Books of the Four Treasuries*, an effort to catalogue nearly all books in China, he began to suspect that some governors were holding back books with seditious content. He ordered full searches for books with disparaging references to the Manchus or previous alien conquerors. Sometimes passages were omitted or rewritten, but when the entire book was offensive, it was destroyed. So thorough was the proscription that no copies survive of more than two thousand titles.

The Qianlong emperor lived into his eighties, but his political judgment began to decline in his sixties when he began to favor a handsome and intelligent young imperial bodyguard named Heshen (huh shuhn). Heshen was rapidly promoted to posts normally held by experienced civil officials, including posts with power over revenue and civil service appointments. When the emperor did nothing to stop Heshen's blatant corruption, officials began to worry that he was becoming senile. By this time, uprisings in several parts of the country were proving difficult to suppress. Heshen supplied the Qianlong emperor with rosy reports of the progress in suppressing the rebellions, all the while pocketing much of the military appropriations himself.

The Qianlong emperor abdicated in 1795 in order not to rule longer than his grandfather, the Kangxi emperor, but he continued to dominate court until he died in 1799 at age eighty-nine.

Imperial Bodyguard Zhanyinbao. Dated 1760, this life-size portrait was done by a court artist in the European-influenced style favored by the Qianlong emperor.

The Banner System

The Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors used the banner system to maintain military control and preserve the Manchus' privileges. In the first few decades of the Qing, as the country was pacified, banner forces were settled across China in more than ninety garrisons, usually within the walls of a city. All the Chinese who lived in the northern half of Beijing were forced out to clear the area for bannermen, and Beijing became very much a Manchu city. In other major cities, such as Hangzhou, Nanjing, Xi'an, and Taiyuan (ty-ywan), large sections were cleared for the banners' use. The bannermen became in a sense a hereditary occupational caste, ranked above others in society, whose members were expected to devote themselves to service to the state. They were also expected to live apart from nonbanner Chinese and were not allowed to intermarry with them.

Outside the cities, lands were expropriated to provide support for the garrisons, some 2 million acres altogether, with the densest area in the region around Beijing. In China proper, bannermen did not cultivate the fields (as they had in Manchuria) but rather lived off stipends from the rents, paid part in silver and part in grain. The dynasty supported banner soldiers and their families from cradle to grave, with special allocations for travel, weddings, and funerals. Once the conquest was complete, the banner population grew faster than the need for soldiers, so within a couple of generations, there were not enough positions in the banner armies for all adult males in the banners. Yet bannermen were not allowed to pursue occupations other than soldier or official. As a consequence, many led lives of forced idleness, surviving on stipends paid to relatives. By the time of the Qianlong emperor, this had become enough of a problem that he had most of the Chinese bannermen removed from the banner system and reclassified as commoners, increasing the Manchu dominance of the banner population.

Bannermen had facilitated entry into government service. Special quotas for Manchus allowed them to gain more than 5 percent of the *jinshi* degrees, even though they never exceeded 1 percent of the population. Advancement was also easier for bannermen because many posts, especially in Beijing, were reserved for them, including half of all the top posts. In the middle and lower ranks of the Beijing bureaucracy, Manchus greatly outnumbered Chinese. One

DOCUMENTS

Fang Bao's "Random Notes from Prison"

As more and more varied types of sources survive, it becomes possible to get better glimpses of the less pleasant sides of life. The ordeal of judicial confinement was hardly new to the eighteenth century, but it was not until then that we have a depiction as vivid as that provided by Fang Bao (fahng bow) (1668–1749). In 1711 he and his family members were arrested because he had written a preface for the collected works of one of his friends, and the friend's writings had just been condemned for language implying support for revival of the Ming Dynasty. After Fang spent two years in prison, he was pardoned and went on to hold a series of literary posts. Despite this brush with imperial censorship, Fang was willing in his account of his time in prison to point to the inhumane way people not yet found guilty of a crime were treated and the corruption of prison personnel, who demanded cash in exchange for better treatment.

In the prison there were four old cells. Each cell had five rooms. The jail guards lived in the center with a window in the front of their quarters for light. At the end of this room there was another opening for ventilation. There were no such windows for the other four rooms and yet more than two hundred prisoners were always confined there. Each day toward dusk, the cells were locked and the odor of the urine and excrement would mingle with that of the food and drink. Moreover, in the coldest months of the winter, the poor prisoners had to sleep on the ground and when the spring breezes came everyone got sick. The established rule in the prison was that the door would be unlocked only at dawn. During the night, the living and the dead slept side by side with no room to turn their bodies and this is why so many people became infected. Even more terrible was that robbers, veteran criminals, and murderers who were imprisoned for serious offenses had strong constitutions and only one or two out of ten would be infected and even so they would recover immediately. Those who died from the malady were all light offenders or sequestered witnesses who would not normally be subjected to legal penalties.

I said: "In the capital there are the metropolitan prefectural prison and the censorial prisons of the five wards. How is it then that the Board of Punishment's prison has so many prisoners?" [My fellow prisoner, the magistrate] Mr. Du answered: "...The chiefs and deputy heads of the Fourteen Bureaus like to get new prisoners;

study suggests that about 70 percent of the metropolitan agencies' positions were reserved for bannermen and less then 20 percent for Chinese (the rest were unspecified). In the provinces, Manchus did not dominate in the same way, except at the top level of governors and governors-general, where they held about half the posts.

Bannermen had legal privileges as well. They fell under the jurisdiction of imperial commissioners, not the local magistrate or prefect. If both a Chinese and a Manchu were brought into court to testify, the Chinese was required to kneel before the magistrate, but the Manchu could stand. If each were found guilty of the same crime, the Manchu would receive a lighter punishment—for instance, wearing the cangue (a large wooden collar) for sixty days instead of being exiled for life.

Despite the many privileges given to Manchu bannermen, impoverishment of the banner population quickly became a problem. Although the government from time to time forgave all bannermen's debts, many went bankrupt. Company commanders sometimes sold off banner land to provide stipends, which made it more difficult to provide support thereafter. The Qianlong emperor also tried resettling Manchus back in Manchuria, but those used to urban life in China rarely were willing to return to farming, and most sneaked back as soon as possible.

Within a generation of settling in China proper, bannermen were using the Chinese dialect of the Beijing

the clerks, prison officials, and guards all benefit from having so many prisoners. If there is the slightest pretext or connection they use every method to trap new prisoners. Once someone is put into the prison his guilt or innocence does not matter. The prisoner's hands and feet are shackled and he is put in one of the old cells until he can bear the suffering no more. Then he is led to obtain bail and permitted to live outside the jail. His family's property is assessed to decide the payment and the officials and clerks all split it. Middling households and those just above exhaust their wealth to get bail. Those families somewhat less wealthy seek to have the shackles removed and to obtain lodging [for the prisoner relative] in the custody sheds outside the jail. This also costs tens of silver taels. As for the poorest prisoners or those with no one to rely on, their shackles are not loosened at all and they are used as examples to warn others. Sometimes cellmates guilty of serious crimes are bailed out but those guilty of small crimes and the innocent suffer the most poisonous abuse. They store up their anger and indignation, fail to eat or sleep normally, are not treated with medicine, and when they get sick they often die.

"I have humbly witnessed our Emperor's virtuous love for all beings which is as great as that of the sages of the past ages. Whenever he examines the documents related to a case, he tries to find life for those who should die. But now it has come to this [state of affairs] for the innocent. A virtuous gentleman might save many lives if he were to speak to the Emperor saying: 'Leaving aside those prisoners sentenced to death or exiled to border regions for great crimes, should not small offenders and those involved in a case but not convicted be placed in a separate place without chaining their hands and feet?'"...

My cellmate Old Zhu, Young Yu, and a certain government official named Seng who all died of illness in prison should not have been heavily punished. There was also a certain person who accused his own son of unfiliality. The [father's] neighbors [involved in the case only as witnesses] were all chained and imprisoned in the old cells. They cried all night long. I was moved by this and so I made inquiries. Everyone corroborated this account and so I am writing this document.

Questions for Analysis

1. What gave Fang Bao the courage to report on prison conditions?
2. Does Fang suggest any solution to the prison problem? What made reform difficult?

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area as their common language. The Qing emperors repeatedly called on the Manchus to study both spoken and written Manchu, but it became a second language learned at school rather than a primary language. Other features of Manchu culture were more easily preserved, such as the use of personal names alone to refer to people. (Manchus had names for families and clans but did not use them as part of their personal names.)

The elements of Manchu culture most important to the state were their martial traditions and their skill as horsemen and archers. Life in the cities and long stretches of peace took a toll on these skills, despite the best efforts of the emperors to inspire martial spirit. The Qianlong emperor himself was fully literate in Chinese, but he discouraged the Manchu bannermen from developing interests in Chinese culture. He knew the history of the Jin Dynasty and the problems the Jurchens had faced with soldiers living in China taking up Chinese ways, and he did everything he could think of to prevent this. Although the Qing court was as opulent as any other in Chinese history, the emperor tried to convince the bannermen that frugality was a Manchu characteristic, to be maintained if they were not to lose their ethnic identity.

Perhaps because they were favored in so many ways, the bannermen proved a very loyal service elite. Unlike their counterparts in other large empires, the banner armies never turned on the ruling house or used the resources that had been assigned to them to challenge central authority.

CONTACTS WITH EUROPE

The Qing regulated its relations with countries beyond its borders through a diplomatic system modeled on the Ming one. Countries like Korea, Ryukyu, Japan, Vietnam, and many of the other states of Southeast Asia sent envoys to the court at Beijing. Europeans were not full players in this system, but they had a marginal presence.

Trading contacts with Europe were concentrated at Guangzhou in the far south (see **Connection: Europe Enters the Scene**). Soon after 1600, the Dutch East India Company had largely dislodged the Spanish and Portuguese from the trade with China, Japan, and the East Indies. Before long, the British East India Company began to compete with the Dutch for the spice trade. In the seventeenth century, the British and Dutch sought primarily porcelains and silk, but in the eighteenth century, tea became the commodity in most demand. By the end of the century, tea made up 80 percent of Chinese exports to Europe.

In the early eighteenth century, China enjoyed a positive reputation among the educated in Europe. China was the source of prized luxuries: tea, silk, porcelain, cloisonné, wallpaper, and folding fans. The Manchu emperors were seen as wise and benevolent rulers. Voltaire wrote of the rationalism of Confucianism and saw advantages to the Chinese political system as rulers did not put up with parasitical aristocrats or hypocritical priests.

By the end of the eighteenth century, British merchants were dissatisfied with the restrictions imposed on trade by the Qing government. The Qing, like the Ming before it, specified where merchants of particular countries could trade, and the Europeans were to trade only in Guangzhou, even though tea was grown mostly in the Yangzi valley, adding the cost of transporting it south to the price the foreign merchants had to pay. The merchants in Guangzhou who dealt with Western merchants formed their own guild, and the Qing government made them guarantee that the European merchants obeyed Qing rules. As the system evolved, the Europeans had to pay cash for goods purchased and were forbidden to enter the walled city of Guangzhou, ride in sedan chairs, bring women or weapons into their quarters, and learn Chinese.

As British purchases of tea escalated, the balance of trade became more lopsided, but British merchants could not find goods that Chinese merchants would buy from them. The British government also was dissatisfied. It was becoming suspicious of the British East India Company, which had made great fortunes from its trade with China, and wanted to open direct diplomatic relations with China in part as a way to curb the company. To accomplish all this, King George III sent Lord George Macartney, the former ambassador to Russia and former governor of Madras, to China. Macartney was instructed to secure a place for British traders near the tea-producing areas, negotiate a commercial treaty, create a desire for British products, arrange for diplomatic representation in Beijing, and open Japan and Southeast Asia to British commerce as well. He traveled with an entourage of eighty-four and six hundred cases packed with British goods that he hoped would impress the Chinese court and attract trade: clocks, telescopes, knives, globes, plate glass, Wedgwood pottery, landscape paintings, woolen cloth, and carpets. The only member of the British party able to speak Chinese, however, was a twelve-year-old boy who had learned some Chinese by talking with Chinese on the long voyage.

After Lord Macartney arrived in Guangzhou in 1793, he requested permission to see the emperor in order to present a letter to him from George III. Although the letter had been written in Chinese, its language was not appropriate for addressing an emperor. Still, the British party was eventually allowed to proceed to Beijing. Once there, another obstacle emerged: when instructed on how to behave on seeing the emperor, Macartney objected to having to perform the kowtow (kneeling on both knees and bowing his head to the ground).

Finally Macartney was permitted to meet more informally with the Qianlong emperor at his summer retreat. No negotiations followed this meeting, however, because the Qing court saw no merit in Macartney's requests. It was as interested in maintaining its existing system of regulated trade as Britain was interested in doing away with it.

Several members of the Macartney mission wrote books about China on their return. These books, often illustrated, contained descriptions of many elements of Chinese culture and social customs, less rosy than the reports of the Jesuits a century or two earlier. The official account of the embassy, prepared by George Staunton, depicted Chinese women as subjugated: "Women, especially in the lower walks of life, are bred with little other principle than that of implicit obedience to their fathers or their husbands." Although the wives of the peasantry worked very

hard at domestic tasks and did all the weaving in the country, they were treated badly: "Not withstanding all the merit of these helpmates to their husbands, the latter arrogate an extraordinary dominion over them, and hold them at such distance, as not always to allow them to sit at table, behind which, in such case, they attend as handmaids."* From books like these, Europeans began to see more of the complexity of China. The Chinese, by contrast, did not learn much about Europe or Britain from this encounter.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CROSSCURRENTS

During the late Ming, Chinese culture had been remarkably open and fluid. Especially in the cities of Jiangnan, new books of all sorts were being published; the theater flourished; and intellectuals took an interest in ideas of Buddhist, Daoist, or even European origin and, encouraged by Wang Yangming's teachings, pursued truth in individualistic ways.

The Conservative Turn

With the collapse of the social order in the early seventeenth century and the conquest by the Manchus, many Confucian scholars concluded that the Ming fell as a result of moral laxity. Wang Yangming and his followers, by validating emotion and spontaneity, had undermined commitment to duty and respect for authority. The solution, many thought, was to return to Zhu Xi's teachings, with their emphasis on objective standards outside the individual.

This conservative turn was manifested in several ways. Laws against homosexuality were made harsher. Because literati argued that drama and fiction were socially subversive, theaters were closed and novels banned. Qian Daxian (chyen dah-shyen), a highly learned scholar, went so far as to argue that the vernacular novel was the main threat to Confucian orthodoxy. The cult of widow chastity reached new heights, with local histories recording more and more widows who refused to remarry, including those who lived their entire lives as the celibate "widows" of men to whom they had been engaged but who had died before they had even met.

*George Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (London: W. Bulmer, 1798), 2:109.

The conservative turn in scholarship fostered a new interest in rigorous textual analysis. Some Confucian scholars turned back to the Han commentaries on the classics, hoping that they could free their understandings of the texts from the contamination of Buddhist and Daoist ideas that had infiltrated Tang and Song commentaries. Others wanted to rely solely on the classics themselves and to concentrate on verifiable facts. Yan Ruoju (yen rwaw-jyu) compiled a guide to the place names in the Four Books and proved that the "old text" version of the *Book of Documents* could not be genuine. Research of this sort required access to large libraries, and it thrived primarily in Jiangnan, with its high densities of both books and scholars.

There are always those who resist calls for decorum and strenuous moral effort, and in the eighteenth century, both the Manchu rulers and the Chinese intellectual elite provided room for the less conventional to contribute in creative ways. Exploration of the potential of ink painting for self-expression reached a high point in the eighteenth century with a closely affiliated group of painters known as the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou (see **Material Culture: Jin Nong's Inscribed Portrait of a Buddhist Monk**). These painters had no difficulty finding patrons, even among social and cultural conservatives. Similarly, Yuan Mei, on familiar terms with the great classicists and philologists of his day, was willing to risk their censure by taking on women as poetry students. One of his female poetry students, Luo Qilan (law chee-lahn), wrote in 1797 to defend him from charges of impropriety, arguing that if Confucius had believed in the principle that women's words spoken inside a chamber must stay indoors, he would have removed poems by women from the *Book of Poetry*.

The Dream of Red Mansions

Women with poetic talents figure prominently in an eighteenth-century novel, *The Dream of Red Mansions* (also called *Story of the Stone*), considered by many the most successful of all works of Chinese fiction. Concerned with the grand themes of love and desire, money and power, life and death, and truth and illusion, it is at the same time a psychologically sensitive novel of manners. The author of the first eighty chapters was Cao Xueqin (tsow shwe-chin) (1715–1764). He died before the novel was completed, but another writer added forty chapters to complete it before it was published in 1791. Cao Xueqin came from a

MATERIAL CULTURE

Jin Nong's Inscribed Portrait of a Buddhist Monk

Chinese painters often combined words and images, sometimes inscribing poems or explanations of the occasions that gave rise to the paintings on the paintings themselves. The highly individualistic painters of the eighteenth century, known as the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou, sometimes carried this practice to the extreme, filling all the space on a painting with their writing. The painting shown here, by Jin Nong (jin nung) (1687–1764), is dated 1760. Writing in his highly distinctive calligraphy, Jin Nong fills the space around the Buddha with a history of the painting of images of Buddhas followed by personal remarks:

> I am now a man beyond seventy years of age who has no false ideas and desires. Though physically I am in the dusty world, I earnestly try to live cleanly. I wash my ten fingers, burn incense, and hold the brush to record the dignity and seriousness of humanity. What I do is not far from the ancient tradition. I offer good wishes to all men on earth.
>
> In the second lunar month, 1760, on the date when Buddha achieved enlightenment, I painted several Buddha images, four Bodhisattvas, sixteen Lohans, and distributed these sacred materials. These works are the product of my deep conviction, not in the style of famous masters of the Jin and Tang. My inspiration came from the Longmen caves that were carved a thousand years ago. When my priest friend, Defeng commented, "These paintings found [a new school] and will be followed by the coming generations," I roared with laughter.*

*Tseng Yuho, trans., *A History of Chinese Calligraphy* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1993), p. 94, slightly modified.

Tianjing Museum/Cultural Relics Press

Portrait of a Monk. This hanging scroll, painted by Jin Nong in 1760 in ink and colors on paper, measures 133 by 62.5 cm.

Chinese family that had risen with the Manchus. As bondservants of the ruling house, his family was in a position to gain great wealth and power managing enterprises for the rulers. In the eighteenth century, however, the family lost favor and went bankrupt.

The *Dream* portrays in magnificent detail the affairs of the comparably wealthy Jia family. The central characters of the novel are three adolescents: Jia Baoyu (jya bow-yew) and his two female cousins of other surnames who come to live with his family. One

of the cousins, Lin Daiyu (lin dy-yew), is sickly and difficult; the other, Xue Baochai (shwe bow-chy), is capable and cheerful. A magnificent garden is built in the family compound in order to receive a visit from Baoyu's sister, who had become an imperial consort. After the visit, Baoyu, his cousins, and their personal servants move into the garden, an idyllic world of youth and beauty. This magical period comes to an end when Baoyu is tricked into marrying Baochai (thinking he is marrying Daiyu). While the wedding is taking place, Daiyu is on her sickbed, dying of consumption. The novel ends with Baoyu passing the *jinshi* examinations, only to leave his wife and family to pursue religious goals.

Much of the power of *Dream* comes from the many subplots and the host of minor characters from all walks of life—officials, aristocrats, monks and nuns, pageboys, gardeners, country relatives, princes, gamblers, prostitutes, actors, and innkeepers. The seamier side of political life is portrayed through memorable cases of abuse of power. The machinations of family politics are just as vividly captured through numerous incidents in which family members compete for advantage. The maids in the family are often unable to keep the lustful men away, in the process attracting the anger of the men's wives. A concubine of Baoyu's father plots demon possession against both Baoyu and his sister-in-law, the household manager Xifeng (shee-fung). One of Baoyu's mother's maids commits suicide after Baoyu flirts with her. This incident, coupled with Baoyu's dalliance with an actor, provokes his father into administering a severe beating.

At one point Baochai notices that Daiyu has unconsciously quoted a line from a play. She then confesses that since she was seven or eight, she and the other children in her family had read plays:

> *All of us younger people hated serious books but liked reading poetry and plays. The boys had got lots and lots of plays:* The Western Chamber, The Lute-Player, A Hundred Yuan Plays—*just about everything you could think of. They used to read them behind our backs, and we girls used to read them behind theirs. Eventually the grown-ups got to know about it and then there were beatings and lectures and burnings of books—and that was the end of that.**

*Cao Xueqin, *The Story of the Stone*, vol. 2, trans. David Hawkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 333.

THE LESS ADVANTAGED AND THE DISAFFECTED

The eighteenth century is considered one of the most prosperous periods in Chinese history, when the government frequently ran a surplus and the population grew rapidly. General prosperity, however, did not mean that everyone benefited equally or that conflict and strife disappeared.

Qing China was both huge and economically diverse. Regions varied in density of population, types of crops grown, extent of trade, and so on. The most advanced area, with the highest level of wealth and commercial development, is generally referred to as the Jiangnan ("south of the Yangzi River") region or sometimes just as "the south." In that region, cultivation was intensive and farmers often sold much of what they grew. It was common for cultivators to rent land from absentee landlords for fixed cash amounts, agreed to in written contracts. In most places in north China, a majority of the farmers owned their own land, but their farms were often tiny, and they might well be no richer than tenant farmers in the south. There were also differences within regions between core areas centered on major cities and more peripheral areas, where population density was much lower because the land was harder to farm. During the course of the eighteenth century, as the population grew, people pushed into these peripheral areas, clearing upland areas and moving to the frontiers, in the process often pushing out aboriginal peoples who had lived in the area for centuries. New World crops, such as sweet potatoes, white potatoes, peanuts, and tobacco, made possible exploitation of land previously rejected as too hilly or infertile.

Villages all across China were "open," not closed corporate villages as in Japan (see Chapter 17). That is, villages held no land in common and had little say in who could buy or sell land or houses there. Because small farmers could easily fall into debt and sell or mortgage all or part of their land, the wealth of village families could vary markedly. Families whose land was not adequate for their support often put effort into sideline work—their women and children weaving mats and baskets, for instance. During the winter, when there was little work to be done in the fields, the men might go into nearby towns to look for temporary jobs.

In some parts of the country, single-surname villages were common, with all males descended

from a common patrilineal ancestor who had settled in the area centuries earlier. In those cases, village organization and lineage organization would overlap, with the lineage ancestral hall serving as the center of village life. In villages or clusters of villages where families with several surnames lived, the temple to a local god often served as the focus for communal activities.

Villages were connected to each other through marriages and marketing. Villagers normally married people from another village, so their mother's brothers and sisters and their father's sisters would reside in other local villages. Men and boys made regular trips to market towns, sometimes several hours away by foot, in order to sell agricultural surplus and buy needed tools or foodstuffs such as salt and oil. Farmers also needed to cooperate across village lines in order to maintain water-control systems, whether the diking of rivers prone to flooding or the diverting of water into irrigation canals or reservoirs. For projects of this sort, the local village heads might get together, or each village might be represented by several of its larger landowners. Written agreements would be drawn up recording what the different parties had pledged to do. When one party thought another was diverting more water than agreed upon, a complaint could be taken to the county magistrate to adjudicate.

By Qing times, there was relatively little in the way of legal status distinctions among the rural population. Slavery was insignificant (a contrast with Korea), and there were no nationwide outcast groups (a contrast with Japan). But that does not mean that there was no discrimination. In certain localities, particular groups might be treated as lower than commoners—such as the so-called Boat People in Guangdong and the Duomin (daw-min) in Zhejiang who worked as musicians, funeral managers, and yamen runners. In addition, ethnic differences were a common basis for discrimination. Throughout the south, local indigenous peoples—called Miao, Yao, Zhuang, and many other names—were often exploited and treated with contempt.

The routine of village life was from time to time disrupted by calamity, most often in the form of too little or too much water—flooding or drought. North China was particularly subject to drought, though occasionally heavy rains led to breaks in the dikes along the Yellow River, leading to devastating floods. In the drainage area of the Yangzi River, floods were more common than droughts.

When lack of rain ruined a harvest, better-off farmers might be able to hold out till the next harvest, but those without much in the way of reserves would have to try other strategies—ranging from pawning their clothes, tools, and land, to foraging for edible plants in forests, to sending out able-bodied men to look for work in nearby towns, to the entire family's taking to the roads in search of food. When a drought lasted through two harvests or covered a large geographical area, the numbers of refugees on the road would swell. Bands of hungry men might well seize the grain stores of the rich or crops in the field. Starving peasants would also descend on cities, expecting local officials to open soup kitchens and refugee camps. The lack of sanitation in these camps, coupled with the weakened condition of the refugees, made it all too easy for epidemics to spread, adding to the famine's death toll.

Bad harvests hurt townsfolk as well because they led to rapid escalation in the price of food. Understanding the law of supply and demand, townspeople would gather to prevent merchants from sending their grain to areas with severe shortages, fearing price rises. They would also protest officials who did not keep government granaries open long enough to bring down prices. Sometimes officials called on troops to quell these sorts of food riots.

The Qing government was remarkably successful in curbing the death toll of major famines by careful administration of granaries and provision of direct relief. Its success contributed to the rapid rise in population in the eighteenth century.

This population growth, coupled with the practice of partible inheritance, led to the proliferation of farms too small to support a family. In addition, many men could not marry because of a shortage of marriageable women—caused not only by the rich taking extra women as concubines but also by sex-selective infanticide practiced by poor families unwilling to rear another daughter. Men with little or no land and unable to marry commonly would leave their villages in search of work. Some would travel with their tools to do carpentry or farm work. Others found jobs pulling the boats that carried grain up the Grand Canal or working in cities as dockhands, sedan chair carriers, or night-soil collectors. When copper mines were opened in the southwest, unemployed men traveled long distances to get work as miners. Both the government and settled villagers were wary of these rootless men. They were quick to suspect strangers when crimes occurred.

Single men often found support in groups called brotherhoods or secret societies. The best known of these brotherhoods was called the Heaven and Earth Society, but other names were also used, such as the Three Harmonies Society or the Three Dots Society. (In English they are often called the Triads.) To marginalized men, the attraction was security, mutual aid, and empowerment. Drawing on ideas from Daoism and popular religion, the groups promised access to supernatural powers through rituals and cultivation. Appearing first in the 1760s, the Heaven and Earth Society spread quickly through Taiwan, Fujian, Jiangxi, Guangdong, and Guangxi (gwahng-shee). Government functionaries and urban workers were among their members. The societies were explicitly anti-establishment in that they espoused a rhetoric of "overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming." Members away from home could get in touch with members elsewhere through secret signals or passwords. Lodge brothers helped each other with loans, funeral costs, and lawsuits. Lodges would arbitrate disputes between members and mete out punishments for cheating at gambling and other offenses. But their morality was not Confucian. Many lodges controlled gambling, narcotics, prostitution, and smuggling in their region. The first uprising led by the Heaven and Earth Society occurred in the 1780s in Taiwan, after which the Qing government tried without much success to suppress the society.

The Qing government was also wary of the White Lotus Society, which drew on folk Buddhist teachings that dated back to the Song period. This society had been an important element in the rebellions at the end of the Yuan Dynasty. It was not approved by regular Buddhist clergy because of its syncretic teachings, married clergy, and noncanonical scriptures. It incorporated millenarian doctrines derived from both Manichaeism and the Buddhist idea of the future Maitreya Buddha who would usher in an era of peace. Its central deity was the Eternal Mother, the original progenitor of all humankind. Grieving that her earthly children had lost their way, she wanted to bring them back to the Original Home, identified with nirvana. She sent Buddhas to earth to teach people the true way to salvation. When the end was near, floods, fires, and winds would destroy everyone who lacked faith in the Eternal Mother. Adherents were taught that repeating the mantra "Eternal Progenitor in Our Original Home in the World of True Emptiness" would bring blessings and protection from calamities. Martial arts exercises and breathing techniques that circulated *qi* were also taught as other ways to cure illnesses and promote health.

White Lotus teachings had particular appeal to women, who were welcomed as members on the same terms as men. When leaders were arrested or executed, often their wives took over. A Qing official whose city was seized by White Lotus forces described the woman who led the local group:

> *When she emerges in a home, five or six young women will hold tobacco bags and towels for her, and she will be seated at the center of the hall. Both men and women make obeisance: the man puts the palm of his right hand on the back of his left hand and the woman, the palm of her left hand on the back of her right hand. They kowtow in reverence.**

The White Lotus sect survived repeated attempts by the government to suppress it, probably because local congregations did not depend on a central establishment. The sect was especially strong in the central provinces, from Sichuan and Shaanxi to Shandong. Itinerant prophets and teachers carried the message to new places. Leaders of these sects often combined talk of salvation with martial arts and herbal healing. In 1774 a White Lotus leader in Shandong convinced his followers that he was the Future Buddha and that his techniques would make them invulnerable, even though they were armed only with spears. They were able to capture several small towns before the Qing sent in massive armies to quell them.

Many White Lotus adherents were pious vegetarians who tried to live good lives. An offshoot of the White Lotus called the Luo sect established a mission to help canal boatmen far from their homes who normally had no means of support for several months in the winter. The sect set up hostels in Suzhou and Hangzhou where the boatmen could stay for free and could get meals on credit, to be repaid when they were paid in advance for the next year's work. Because many of these men were never able to marry, the hostels also served as retirement homes for elderly boatmen. The Qing government, however, was deeply suspicious and had all the hostels destroyed.

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*Cited in Kwang-ching Liu, "Religion and Politics in the White Lotus Rebellion of 1796 in Hubei," in *Heterodoxy in Late Imperial China*, ed. K. Liu and R. Shek (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), pp. 295–296.

In 1793 the Qing government initiated a major investigation of White Lotus congregations, which soon had to take up arms to protect themselves from predatory elements in the local government. In 1796 open revolt began in Hubei and soon spread to Sichuan and Shaanxi. White Lotus forces held fortified villages and towns, and they used those bases to raid larger cities. Armed bands often joined them—martial arts groups and bandits alike. It took the government more than eight years to fully annihilate White Lotus forces.

Non-Han ethnic groups constituted another segment of society that often felt aggrieved. As the Han Chinese population swelled, more and more settlers moved into Miao (myow) territories, often expropriating Miao land. The Miao aborigines put up fierce resistance beginning in the 1720s, and officials repeatedly tried to find ways to separate the Miao and the Han settlers, but with little success. In 1795 there was a great revolt of Miao along the Hunan-Guizhou border, where a Han ethnic group called the Hakka had recently been moving in. The Qing government found the Miao uprisings to be as difficult to suppress as the concurrent White Lotus ones.

SUMMARY

The Qing Dynasty was founded by the Manchus, the new name given to the descendants of the Jurchens of the Jin Dynasty, which had held north China before the rise of the Mongols. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Manchus organized a strong state outside the Ming borders. They organized their armies into divisions called "banners" as a way to limit the importance of tribal affiliations; in addition to Manchu banners, there were also Mongol and Chinese banners. After a Ming general asked the Manchus to help suppress the rebels who had captured Beijing, the Manchus not only took the capital but went on to conquer the rest of the country.

Many of the Chinese educated elite alive during the conquest did everything in their power to resist the Manchus in deep dread of another "barbarian" dynasty. Yet the Manchus proved to be very different sorts of rulers than the Mongols had been. For more than a century, from 1662 to 1795, three very competent emperors reigned, the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors. They presided over a huge expansion of the empire with victories over the Mongols and Tibetans. They depended on Chinese officials and soldiers to help administer their empire, but they perfected ways to ensure that the Manchus would maintain their dominance. These included special quotas and legal privileges for bannermen and the requirement that they live separately from the Chinese. Mastery of reading and writing in Manchu was strongly encouraged, but in time most Manchus living in China came to use Chinese more than Manchu.

In an effort to win over the Chinese elite, the Manchu rulers made a point to patronize Chinese culture, and many facets of Chinese culture thrived during this period, ranging from historical research to manufacturing technology. However, the Manchu rulers were highly sensitive to ethnic slights, which may have made Chinese in high office especially cautious. In intellectual circles, the spontaneity and openness of the late Ming gave way to a more conservative turn. The cult of widow chastity reached such extremes that girls whose fiancés had died would commit themselves to stay chaste their entire lives as "widows" of men they had not yet married. Some scholars even argued that fiction was a threat to the Confucian social order. Fortunately, they did not succeed in suppressing fiction; to the contrary, perhaps the greatest Chinese novel was written in the eighteenth century, *The Dream of Red Mansions*.

In the early eighteenth century, interest in China was widespread in Europe. Not only was the taste for tea growing steadily, but taste for things Chinese extended to silk, porcelain, and even wallpaper. China's political system was viewed positively because it seemed to be a land where government was in the hands of the educated, rather than an aristocracy or a church hierarchy.

The standard of living in the eighteenth century was high, and the population was growing. The Qing government contributed to population growth through its efforts to deal with famines caused by droughts and floods. As the number of people who wanted to farm increased, more and more people moved into peripheral areas, both upland and along the frontiers, often displacing the original inhabitants, such as the Miao or Yao. New World crops such as potatoes and peanuts made possible exploitation of land previously considered unsuited to agriculture. Those who could not support themselves by farming found jobs pulling boats on the Grand Canal, working in mines, or sought work in cities as dockworkers.

Benefits were not spread evenly, of course, and as in prior periods, many people struggled. The marginalized and disaffected were particularly likely to join secret societies such as the Heaven and Earth Society (Triads) or religious sects such as the White Lotus Society. The Qing government from time to time tried to suppress these societies, which were often anti-establishment.

How different was China in 1800 than in 1600? By 1800, China had been under alien rule for a century and a half. Most Chinese of all social levels had gotten used to the Manchus, who administered the country through institutions much like those earlier Chinese dynasties had employed. The geographic scope of the empire was much bigger: for the first time, China was administered as part of the same polity as Tibet and Xinjiang. The population was significantly larger, probably reaching at least 300,000 by 1800. Culture was more conservative than it had been in the last decades of the Ming Dynasty, with standards of proper behavior more rigid. Contact with Europe was increasing, to a large extent because Europeans wanted to buy China's tea, silk, and porcelains, but few people in China were aware of these trade relations.