

Primary Sources 13.
Rulership, Intervention, and Rebellion in Asia

1. Enlightened Rule and Popular Resistance in Romanov Russia (1762–1774)

Catherine II, or Catherine the Great (1729–1796), was born as Sophia Augusta Frederica in Prussian-controlled Pomerania, or present-day Poland. She converted to the Russian Orthodox Church and married Peter, the Russian tsarevich, or heir apparent, in 1745. Their relationship soured, and shortly after Peter ascended to the throne in 1762, Catherine had him deposed, becoming the sole Russian ruler in his stead. Peter was assassinated a few days later. Catherine embraced Enlightenment ideals and oversaw an impressive expansion of Russian territory, but her harsh treatment of Russia's peasant population—evidenced here in the first two decrees—reveal her dependence on the landowning elites and the practical limits of absolute rule.

Catherine faced numerous revolts during her rule, some of which were led by pretenders who claimed to be dead husband, Peter III. One of these was Emilian Ivanovich Pugachev (1740s–1775), a Cossack from the Don River area of southwest Russia. In 1773, he took up Peter III's name and led a massive rebellion of Cossacks, peasants, and others in central Russia. After several victories and narrow escapes, Pugachev was seized by his own followers, handed over to Catherine the Great's government, and executed publicly in Moscow. Pugachev's success depended heavily on his appeals to popular discontent with the boyars, or the local nobility. The second two documents highlight popular discontent with Catherine's Russia while also pointing to popular support for a strong but reformed monarchy.

A. Catherine II of Russia, Decree on Peasant Disturbances, July 3, 1762

Upon our accession to the imperial throne of all Russia, we learned, to our great displeasure, that the peasants of some landlords, seduced and deluded by false rumors spread by unscrupulous people, had departed from the obedience due to their landlords and had proceeded to commit many unruly and defiant acts. We are firmly convinced that such false rumors will presently die away by themselves; the deluded peasants will recognize that from thoughtlessness they have fallen into grievous crime and will forthwith repent, endeavoring thereafter to earn forgiveness through mute submission to their masters.

Nevertheless, in order to check the spread of such evil and to prevent any false rumors from being disseminated again and credulous peasants being corrupted thereby, we deem it right to make known herewith that ... inasmuch as the welfare of the state, in accordance with divine and public laws, requires that each and every person be protected in the enjoyment of his well-earned property and his rights, and conversely, that no one step beyond the bounds of his rank or office, we therefore intend to protect the landlords in their estates and possessions inviolably and to keep the peasants in their proper submission to them.

B. Catherine II of Russia, Decree on Forced Labor, January 17, 1765

To be announced for the information of the whole populace: In consequence of the confirmation given by Her Imperial Majesty, on the eighth of January [1765], to a report submitted by the Senate, it has been ordained that, should an estate owner desire to commit any of his people [peasants] who deserve just punishment for recalcitrance [defiant behavior] to penal servitude in Siberia, for the sake of stricter discipline, the College of the Admiralty [the naval ministry] shall take the same in charge and employ them at hard labor for as long as their estate owners wish; and during the time such people remain at hard labor they shall be provided with food and clothing from the

treasury on the same basis as convicts; and whenever their estate owners desire to take them back, they shall be returned without argument, with the sole reservation that if such people during their stay have not worn their clothes and footwear for the full prescribed term, these shall be taken away from them and returned to the treasury.

C. Emilian Ivanovich Pugachev (as Peter III), Decree, September 17, 1773

From the autocratic emperor, our great sovereign Peter Feodorovich of all Russia, etc.

Through this, my sovereign decree, be it expressed to the Iaik [Ural] Cossacks: Just as you, my friends, and your grandfathers and fathers served former tsars to the last drop of blood, now should you serve me, the great and sovereign emperor Peter Feodorovich, for the good of your fatherland. For as you stand up for your fatherland, your Cossack glory and that of your children shall not pass away now or ever. And I, the great sovereign, shall bestow my bounty upon you: Cossacks¹ and Kalmyks and Tartars.² As for those of you who have been at fault before me, the sovereign and imperial majesty Peter Feodorovich, I, the sovereign Peter Feodorovich, forgive you these faults and confer upon you: the river from its source to its mouth,³ and land, and meadows, and a monetary wage, and lead, and gunpowder, and grain provisions.

I, the great sovereign and emperor Peter Feodorovich, bestow my bounty upon you.

D. Emilian Ivanovich Pugachev (as Peter III), Manifesto, July 31, 1774

By the Grace of God we, Peter III, emperor and autocrat of all Russia, etc., announce the following tidings to all the world:

Through this sovereign decree we declare, in our monarchical and fatherly mercy, that all who were formerly peasants and subjected to landowners shall be faithful subjects and slaves of our crown; we grant you your ancient cross and prayers,⁴ your heads and your beards, and bestow upon you freedom and liberty and the eternal rights of the Cossacks, including freedom from recruiting levies, the soul tax,⁵ and other monetary taxes; we confer likewise the ownership of lands, forests, hayfields, fisheries, and salt lakes without purchase or rent; and we free the peasants and all the people from the taxes and oppression formerly imposed by the villainous nobles and the venal city judges. And we desire the salvation of your souls and a peaceful life on this earth, for which we have tasted and endured many wanderings and many hardships from the above-mentioned villainous nobles.

But since our name now flourishes in Russia by the power of Almighty God, we therefore command through this, our sovereign decree: those who formerly were nobles on their estates and patrimonies, opposing our power, disturbing the empire, and despoiling the peasantry shall be caught, executed, and hanged, and treated just in the same fashion as they, lacking any Christian feeling, dealt with you, the peasants. After the extermination of which enemies and villainous nobles, every man may experience peace and a tranquil life, which shall forever endure.

¹ Cossacks: An ethnic group noted for their skills in mounted combat and traditionally employed by the Russian government in military campaigns.

² Kalmyks and Tartars: Two groups that flourished in the western and central Asian parts of the Russian empire.

³ River: The Iaik River, renamed the Ural River in the aftermath of the rebellion.

⁴ Ancient cross and prayers: A reference to the Old Believers, a sect of Russian Orthodox Christians who separated from the official Russian church in the late 1600s, based on doctrinal differences.

⁵ Soul tax. A tax levied on males by Peter I the Great (r. 1682–1725).

2. Two Views on Women in Asia (1716, 1801)

The following two selections offer contrasting views of women in eighteenth-century Asia. The first selection comes from *The Greater Learning for Women* (*Onna daigaku*). This is a Japanese educational tract for women that was published in 1716. Although the text has traditionally been attributed to the Neo-Confucian scholar Kaibara Ekken (1630–1714), some scholars have proposed that Ekken's wife Tōken (1652–1713) wrote it, while others suggest it was written by an anonymous author who simply wanted to tap into Ekken's fame. The author outlines a strict code of behavior for upper-class women. In contemporary Confucian thought, women were supposed to embody behaviors associated with the yin principle, complementary to the yang principle associated with men. Confucian thinkers typically envision a balance between the two, and some women likely gained a sense of purpose from pursuing these principles. Nonetheless, the text describes an ideal domestic life not pursued by all. Contemporary Japanese encyclopedias, for example, list over 100 occupations held by women.

The second selection was written by Mirza Abu Talib Khan Tabrizi (1752–1805). Abu Talib's father had fled political intrigue in Safavid Persia and joined the court of the Nawab of Oudh, a semi-autonomous region in the northern Mughal Empire. The Mughal court had ceded tax revenues from Oudh to the East India Company after a defeat 1764, and so as Abu Talib rose into service as a court official responsible for taxation and military administration, he also took an appointment with the East India Company. In 1799, Abu Talib took the opportunity to travel to England with a returning Company officer. He stayed in London between 1800 and 1802, delighting social circles with his stories of India. During his stay, he published the short article below, challenging European stereotypes about the role of women in India. He eventually returned to India and published his memoirs shortly before his death.

A. *The Greater Learning for Women*, 1716 (Japan)

Seeing that it is a girl's destiny, on reaching womanhood, to go to a new home, and live in submission to her father-in-law and mother-in-law, it is even more incumbent upon her than it is on a boy to receive with all reverence her parents' instructions. Should her parents, through excess of tenderness, allow her to grow up self-willed, she will infallibly show herself capricious in her husband's house, and thus alienate his affection, while, if her father-in-law be a man of correct principles, the girl will find the yoke of these principles intolerable. ...

More precious in a woman than a beautiful face is a virtuous heart. The vicious woman's heart is always excited; she glares wildly around her; she vents her anger on others; her words are harsh; and her accent [is] vulgar. When she speaks it is to set herself above others, to upbraid others, to envy others, to be puffed up with individual pride, to jeer at others, to outdo others—all things at variance with the way in which a woman should walk. The only qualities that befit a woman are gentle obedience, chastity, tenderness, and placidity. ...

It is the duty of a girl living in her parents' house to practice filial piety toward her father and mother. But after marriage, her duty is to honor her father-in-law and mother-in-law, to honor them beyond her father and mother, to love and reverence them with all ardor, and to tend them with a practice of filial piety. ...

The Way of the woman is to obey her man. In her dealings with her husband, both the expression of her countenance and the style of her address should be courteous, humble, and conciliatory, never peevish and intractable, never rude and arrogant—that should be a woman's first and principal care. ... A woman should look on her husband as if he were Heaven itself and never weary of thinking how she may yield to him and thus escape celestial castigation. ...

A woman must always be on the alert and keep a strict watch over her own conduct. In the morning she must rise early and at night go late to rest. Instead of sleeping in the middle of the day,

she must be intent on the duties of her household; she must not grow tired of weaving, sewing, and spinning. She must not drink too much tea and wine, nor must she feed her eyes and ears on theatrical performances (kabuki, jōruri), ditties, and ballads. Until she has reached the age of forty, she should go only seldom to Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples and other such places where many people come together. ...

In her capacity as a wife, she must keep her husband's household in proper order. ... However many servants she may have in her employ, it is a woman's duty not to shirk attending to everything herself. She must sew her father-in-law's and mother-in-law's garments and prepare their food. Ever attentive to the requirements of her husband, she must fold his clothes and dust his rug, raise his children, wash what is dirty, be constantly in the midst of her household, and never abroad except when necessary.

Her treatment of her servant girls will require circumspection. Those low-born girls have had no proper education; they are stupid, obstinate, and vulgar in their speech. When anything in the conduct of their mistress's husband or parents-in-law bothers them, they will fill her ears with their invectives, thinking thereby to render her a service. But any woman who listens to this gossip must beware of the resentment it is sure to breed. ...

When there is real wrongdoing [among her servants], she should occasionally notice it and, without anger, point out the path of correction. While in her heart she sympathizes with her subordinates' weakness, she must outwardly admonish them strictly to walk in the path of propriety and never allow them to fall into idleness. ...

Parents! Teach the foregoing maxims to your daughters from their earliest years! Copy them out from time to time so that they may read and never forget them!

B. Mirza Abu Talib Khan Tabrizi, Vindication of the Liberties of Asiatic Women, 1801 (India)

What the Asiatic women have more than the European, both by law and custom, may be ranked under *eight* heads.

First, "Their power over the property and children of the husband, by custom;" for the men of Asia consider the principal objects of marriage [to be] two things—the one to have their money and effects taken care of, and the other to have their children brought up, so that they themselves being left entirely disengaged of these concerns ... The chief part, therefore, of whatever wealth they acquire, they give in charge to their wives, and thus the women have it in their power to annihilate in one day the products of a whole life. Although this seldom happens, yet it is often the case, where the husband having amassed a large fortune in youth and power, has delivered it in charge to his wife, and requires it back in his old age and necessity; she does not allow him more than sufficient for his daily support, and lays the rest up in a place of security for the sake of her children. ...

Second, "Their power, by custom, as to the marriage of their children, and choice of their religious faith;" for if the husband wishes to give one of them in marriage to a person the wife disapproves of, the match does not take place, but the other way it generally does. All the children, both male and female, from being mostly in the company of their mother, and looking upon her as their protector against their father, whom, on account of his wishes to have them educated, they consider their tormentor, follow the religious tenets of their mother, and remain perfect strangers to those of their father. ...

Third, “Their authority over their servants;” for the servants of the male apartments, the keeping and changing of whom are in the hands of the husband, through fear of exposing themselves to the displeasure or complaints of the wife, when she finds a proper opportunity, by their committing some fault, which servants are continually doing, are more obedient to her than to their own master; and the servants of the zenana [the women’s apartments], whom the wife has the care of retaining or turning off, stand so much in awe of their mistress, that many of them pass their whole lives in the zenana, without ever once coming into the presence of the husband. ...

Fourth, “The freedom, by custom, of the Asiatic women from assisting in the business of the husband, or service of his guests;” whereas this is generally the duty of European wives, whether their husbands be of a genteel business, such as jewellery, mercery, or perfumery, or the more servile ones. ...

Fifth, “The greater deference the Asiatic ladies find paid to their humours, and a prescriptive right of teasing their husbands by every pretext,” which is considered as constituting an essential quality of beauty; for if a wife does not put these in practice but is submissive to her husband’s will in every thing, her charms very soon lose their brilliancy in his eyes. ...

Sixth, “The greater reliance placed by the Asiatic husbands on their wives’ virtue, both from law and custom.” For, as to the European ladies, although they can do out of doors, and discourse with strangers, yet this is not allowed, unless they have a trusty person along with them, either of the husband’s or the father’s; and sleeping out all night is absolutely denied them,—contrary to the way of the Asiatic ladies, who, when they go to the house of a lady of their acquaintance, though their husbands be entire strangers, are not attended by any person of the husband’s or father’s, and they spend not only one or two nights in that house, but even a whole week; and in such a house, although the master is prohibited entering the apartments where they are, yet they young men of fifteen, belonging to the family or relations, under the name of children, have free access, and eat with and enter into the amusements of their guests.

Seventh, “Their share in the children, by law.” For if a divorce happens, the sons go to the father, and the daughters to the mother, contrary to the custom here, where, if a divorce takes place, the mother, who for twenty years may have toiled and consumed herself in bringing up her children, has to abandon all to the father, and full of grief and affliction leave his house.

Eighth, “The case, both by law and custom, with which the wife may separate herself from her husband, when there may be a quarrel between them, without producing a divorce.” Thus the wife, in an hour’s time after the dispute, sets off with the children and her property to the house of her father or relations, and until the husband makes her satisfaction she does not return: and this she can always do without a moment’s delay.

Besides these eight, as above notice, of the superior advantages the Asiatic women enjoy over the European, there are many others here omitted for brevity’s sake. What has been said, is enough for people of discernment. Farewell.

3. Catholicism and Christian Intervention in Korea (1795, 1801)

Although Korea is sometimes discussed simplistically as a peripheral power overshadowed by neighboring Chinese influence, the Joseon dynasty (1392–1897) oversaw a vibrant culture and resisted both Chinese and Japanese attacks. During the early modern period, Korean elites also had to reckon with European influence. Different groups within Korea developed rival visions of what Korea should be, sometimes expressed through competing ideas of what the outside world looked like. The documents below come from one such conflict at the end of the 1700s.

After the Korean official Yi Seung-hun (1756–1801) was baptized in Beijing in 1784, a small Catholic community began to form in Korea. King Chǒngjo (r. 1776–1800) initiated sporadic persecutions, first executing a Christian who refused to participate in traditional Confucian mourning rituals for a deceased parent in 1791. In 1795, he wrote the first document below, a short treatise outlining how Catholic teachings should be suppressed. Chǒngjo also sheds light on wider Korean intellectual connections to both China and Europe. Nonetheless, a Chinese priest—Father Chou Wen-mo (or Jacques Tsiou, 1752–1801)—arrived in Korea that same year, living in hiding and promoting a vast expansion of the Catholic community, which numbered in the thousands by the time of Chǒngjo's death. His successor, the Queen Regent Chǒngsun (r. 1800–1803), oversaw an immediate crackdown on Korean Christians, including the execution of Fr. Chou. Hwang Sayǒng (1775–1801), who had been baptized by Chou and given the Christian name Alexander, wrote the second document in hiding, an appeal for help from the Catholic bishop of Beijing. Hwang was discovered before sending the letter, which proved grounds for his execution. Both Chou and Hwang—executed for subverting the Korean government—are now venerated as martyrs by the Catholic Church.

A. King Chǒngjo, How to Combat the Spread of Catholicism, 1795

Rewards and punishments are the basic tools the state has at its disposal to encourage its subjects to do good and warn them against doing evil. If the state hands out rewards only and never levies punishments, then that is no different from appointing the upright to government office but keeping the corrupt on as well. Ch'ae Chegong [1720–1799]⁶ has made some suggestions regarding how we should deal with this problem of Catholicism spreading among the people, and we were pleased with what he had to say and planned to implement his recommendations quietly. But now this has become a hotly argued issue.

European books have been coming into Korea for hundreds of years. They can be found in all the royal libraries and not in limited numbers either. In years past official envoys picked up some of those European publications while they were in China and brought them back here. So European books in Korea are not a recent phenomenon. Yi Imyǒng [1658–1722], for example, met the Westerner Joseph Suares [1656–1736]⁷ in Beijing and exchanged letters with him, requesting books with more information about what Europeans believed. Yi decided that what the Europeans said about maintaining and attitude of reverence and recovering their original moral nature was not much different from what Confucians have said and had nothing in common with the vacuity of the Taoists or the quietism of the Buddhists. But Europeans did resemble the Buddhists in their search for personal salvation and in the way they believed good deeds were rewarded and evil deeds punished. Yi concluded that, with such ideas, it would be difficult for the Westerners to convert the world to their way of thinking.

⁶ In 1795, Ch'ae, a member of the Southerner faction and a friend of many of the new Catholics, was serving as one of the king's top advisors.

⁷ Or José Soares, a Jesuit missionary serving as an official in China's Bureau of Astronomical Observation in the early 1700s.

Yi Imyŏng really got to the heart of the matter. He is a true critic of these European teachings. The late Superintendent of Post Stations Yi Sŏ [1662–1723] put it well in a poem. When barbarians introduce strange ideas, there is reason to fear damage to morality. Generally speaking, until recently there were no learned and sophisticated scholars who did not criticize these alien ideas, but their criticism wavered between the scathing and the lukewarm, so it was not enough to stop those ideas from spreading. Consequently, today the truth is not as clear as it should be. That is why the harm these strange ideas are doing is worse than that wrought by wild beasts or perverse tales. If we want to save our way of life from corruption, there is no better course of action than to clarify the truth. We need a policy that gets the general population working with us to encourage proper behavior and discourage evil. Only then can we expect to get some results. If we fall back on relying primarily on harsh punishments to correct the way people behave, are we really teaching the people anything?

B. Hwang Sayŏng, Letter to the Bishop of Beijing, 1801

Because we are sinners filled with heavy sin and wickedness, spiritually, we have become the targets of the Lord's anger, and due to our lack of wisdom and understanding, we have lost the sympathy of other people. Due to these reasons, a persecution has risen, whose destruction has reached the priest [Chou]. ... When our older brothers in China and Europe hear about our dangerous and troubled situation, how will they not feel the pain and have pity on us? ...

In the middle of March [1801], the priest turned himself in. He went directly into the government building and said to the surprised district soldiers: "I am a Catholic priest. I heard that the government is prohibiting Catholicism and is killing many innocent people. The fact that I am alive does not help these people. So I came to give my life." ... In mid April, the government ordered one of the generals to execute the priest. ... The priest was taken out of prison, tortured—his knees were beaten thirty times—and he was made to pass through the crowd. ... When his head was cut off, suddenly great winds blew and dark clouds covered the whole sky. The great noise and the flashing lightning terrified everyone in Seoul. ... When the priest was executed, the officer who pronounced his charges had said that the priest was from Jeju Do Island. The reason was that the government wanted to cover up the fact that they did not report it to the Chinese government and consult them on how to handle such a matter. ...

I know that in the West, the past persecutions were more severe than our own. But the lineage of the priests continued from generation to generation, and the Eucharist was continued. Therefore, Catholicism did not die out, and the souls of the living were saved. But in our country, the situation is so different that there is no hope for the future. ... Our country is located next to Japan. Those islanders are cruel and have forsaken the relationship with the Lord on their own. Our government approves of it and plans to imitate what they have done. Is that not ridiculous? ...

That is why I dare to kneel before you in humble request. Please make a plea for us to other Western nations [as well as the Chinese emperor] ... and whatever the Chinese emperor orders, no one will dare oppose. If your majesty were to send a word to the Chinese emperor and say, "I want to spread the Catholic faith to Chosun [Korea], but I hear that Chosun belongs to China and that it does not communicate directly with other nations. So I write to you. Would you order a special decree to Chosun, and let her receive Western missionaries to teach loyalty and reverence so that she can be faithful to you," then the emperor would not deny your request since he knows that the

Western missionaries are hardworking and faithful. This would be possible, but in view of the current situation in China, I do not know if it would be a good time or not. ...

I hear that there is continuous rising of thieves in western China [perhaps the White Lotus Rebellion], against whom the Chinese army has been defeated several times, but that China keeps losing land. The Chinese emperor is clearly anxious about it. ... Say to the Emperor: "In this chaos, the people are grumbling and sighing. At this time, make Chosun a vassal country. Make the king wear the same robe and free the traffic on the border. Then you can make Chosun part of Yong Go Top [in Manchuria] and enlarge the royal dynasty's lands. Between Pyungyang and Anju, establish a diplomatic center and let the king manage the country. If you show kindness to the people, they will be loyal to you. ... That will establish a foundation for a dynasty for 10,000 years." ... If the Chinese emperor allows it and believers help, the Church will expand greatly. ...

In two thousand years, the faith has spread to all nations in the West, and all have turned toward the Lord. But only this small sized country is disobeying the command of the Lord, cruelly killing the believers and even executing the priest. Would it not be right to raise up an army to inquire after their offense? Even if our country is destroyed, the reputation of the Church will not be harmed. This plan is only to raise the magnitude of the threat so that they would accept the Church. It will not harm the common people. It will not extort any wealth. It is modeled after mercy and righteousness. It reflects the most excellent image of the Church.

4. Company and Empire in India (1759, 1766)

As conflicts between the French and English escalated into the Seven Years War, both governments dispatched forces to India, where each country had granted a trade monopoly to its own East India Company. The French seemed poised for rapid success, with more troops initially in India and the faster mobilization of reinforcements from France. But the French reinforcements were delayed in sailing, and the governor of the French East India Company adopted a defensive posture. By the time the French fleet arrived, British troops under Lord Clive had won important victories over French allies in Bengal. Despite these setbacks, the French ground commander, Count Lally, had initial successes before his campaign ground to a halt. Ultimately, the British defeated Lally at Pondicherry, where the French East India Company had its offices.

The first document comes from *Memoirs* of Count Lally (1702–1766), which he wrote to defend himself against detractors in France. Lally attributed the failure of his campaign to a lack of support from the French government, the corruption of the French East India Company, and the negligence of the French admiral Count d'Aché. His arguments went unheeded, and he was executed for treason in 1766, although many saw him as a scapegoat and he was subsequently exonerated. The second document is a letter written by Lord Clive (1725–1774) to William Pitt, who was then British Secretary of State. Clive celebrated his recent victories, which had made the ruler of Bengal dependent on British support, and he correctly anticipated Lally's impending defeat. Clive urged Pitt to have the government take over operations from the East India Company. He optimistically expected support from the mogul, or the Mughal emperor, and the loyalty of Indian troops, who were typically described as "Black" in documents from 1700s Britains.

A. Thomas Arthur, Count Lally, Memoirs, 1766

In the month of August 1756, Count Lally [the author, who refers to himself in the third person] was appointed to command an expedition to the East Indies, for which the court had destined six millions of livres in money, six battalions, and three men of war [ships], to be joined by what ships the [French East India] Company could fit out for the same purpose. ...

Count Lally did not set out for the Indies without the strictest orders to enquire into the abuses committed there, and punish them. The persons guilty of these abuses were even pointed out to him. At his arrival, he found every thing in the most shocking disorder. ... Bengal [now east India and Bangladesh] was the most precious, indeed the only lucrative settlement the [French East India] Company had in the Indies. This settlement had been lost [to British forces under Lord Clive] a year before Count Lally's arrival. The loss of it could not but be followed by that of Pondichery [the port of Puducherry, in southeast India] ... The Governor and the Council of Pondichery might have prevented the loss of Bengal, the forces the French Company then had in the Indies being twice stronger than those of the English Company. ...

The English sent twice as many men, twice as many vessels, and ten times as much money to the Indies, as the French did [under Lally]. ... The preservation of Pondichery required a reinforcement of men and ships, and, of course, an extraordinary expence. The Council of Pondichery, who now attack Count Lally on the score of this loss, are the selfsame Council, who wrote to the Directors before his arrival, that, let them send what men or ships they pleased, Count Lally could hope for no success, if they did not send ten millions of livres along with him. ...

Count Lally will not, in this place, take upon him to lay open the misbehaviour of a Governor and a Council, who could and should have prevented the loss of Bengal; and who, by their negligence to take the necessary precautions for that purpose, and their criminal squandering of the Company's money, accelerated the loss of Pondichery. He contents himself with proving, that, with

land forces equal, or even superior, to those of the enemy, it was impossible to save Pondichery without a [naval] squadron, as long as the enemy had one. ...

Let any military man judge, what disposition can be made with only 2200 men to defend a coast of one hundred and thirty leagues, against a squadron of fourteen ships of the line, even if these 2200 men had no army to make head against. Let him judge, how, with 2200 men, it is possible to hinder such a squadron from making a descent at one or the other extremities of such an extent; and, at the same time, defend twenty-three places or forts up the country; a country from which, it is well known, no revenue or subsistence can be drawn without an armed force? No doubt, a few Europeans, with a great many Blacks [i.e. Indians], are sufficient to defend these posts; but the Blacks don't serve without pay; and Mousieur de Leyrit [a Company officer] did not give them any. ...

It is, therefore, plain, that there is no succeeding on a sea coast without a squadron. ... The Black Princes, seeing the English masters of the sea, concluded from thence, as it was very natural they should, that the Count d'Aché had been defeated. They knew too well the importance of a sea victory to put it in the same scale with any little advantage obtained by an army, the fruits of which might be every moment blasted by a victorious squadron. And, accordingly, the Black Princes took part with the English against Count Lally. ... Ships alone, therefore, can decide and realize the advantages and disadvantages of all the military operations carried on by land in the East Indies.

B. Lord Clive, Letter to William Pitt, Calcutta, January 7, 1759

The great revolution that has been effected here by the success of the English arms, and the vast advantages gained to the [British East India] Company by a treaty concluded in consequence thereof, have, I observe, in some measure engaged the public attention; but much more may yet in time be done, if the Company will exert themselves in the manner the importance of their present possessions and future prospects deserves. ...

The reigning Subah [i.e. the British-backed ruler of Bengal], whom the victory at Plassey [that is, Clive's victory in 1757] invested with the sovereignty of these provinces, still, it is true, retains his attachment to us, and probably, while he has no other support, will continue to do so; but Mussulmans [Muslims] are so little influenced by gratitude, that should he ever think it his interest to break with us, the obligations he owes us would prove no restraint ... Moreover, he is advanced in years; and his son is so cruel and worthless a young fellow, and so apparently an enemy to the English, that it will be almost useless trusting him with the succession. So small a body as two thousand Europeans will secure us against any apprehensions from either the one or the other, and in case of their daring to be troublesome, enable the Company to take the sovereignty upon themselves.

There will be the less difficulty in bringing about such an event, as the natives themselves have no attachment whatever to particular princes; and as, under the present government, they have no security for their lives or properties, they would rejoice in so happy an exchange as that of a mild for a despotic government; and there is little room to doubt our easily obtaining the mogul's sannud (or grant) in confirmation thereof, provided we agree to pay him the stipulated allotment out of the revenues. ...

But so large a sovereignty may possibly be an object too extensive for a mercantile company; and it is to be feared they are not of themselves able, without the nation's assistance, to maintain so wide a dominion. I have therefore presumed, Sir, to represent this matter to you, and submit it to your

consideration, whether the execution of a design, that may hereafter be still carried to greater lengths, be worthy of the government's taking it into hand.

I flatter myself I have made it pretty clear to you, that there will be little or no difficulty in obtaining the absolute possession of these rich kingdoms; and that with the mogul's own consent, on condition of paying him less than a fifth of the revenues thereof. ... Add to these advantages the influence we shall thereby acquire over the several European nations engaged in the commerce here, which these could no longer carry on but through our indulgence, and under such limitations as we should think fit to prescribe [i.e. we can dictate the terms by which other Europeans trade in India].

It is well worthy consideration, that this project may be brought about without draining the mother country [England], as has been too much the case with our possessions in America. A small force from home will be sufficient, as we always make sure of any number we please of black [i.e. Indian] troops, who, being both much better paid and treated by us than by the country [native Indian] powers, will very readily enter into our service. ...

Notwithstanding the extraordinary efforts made by the French in sending out M. Lally with a considerable force the last year, I am confident, before the end of this, they will be near their last gasp in the Carnatic [southwest India], unless some very unforeseen event interpose in their favour. The superiority of our squadron, and the plenty of money and supplies of all kinds which our friends on the coast will be furnished with from this province, while the enemy are in total want of every thing, without any visible means of redress, are such advantages as, if properly attended to, cannot fail of wholly effecting their ruin in that as well as in every part of India.

5. Imperialism and Resistance in East Asia (1798)

The documents below offer two perspectives on imperialism. The first was written by Hong Liangji (1746–1809), a minor Chinese official from Changzhou in the lower Yangzi valley. The passage below comes from his “Memorial on the War against Heterodoxy,” which Hong submitted in the spring of 1798 for an imperial examination. His theme was the “White Lotus” rebellion that had broken out against the abuses of local officials in Hubei, Sichuan, and other western provinces. By 1798, the rebellion had taken on religious dimensions as well. Hong believed that once local government in these areas was reformed and local officials were properly rewarded or punished, the rebellion would end of its own accord.

The second document was written by Honda Toshiaki (1744–1822), a Japanese scholar who pursued studies in Nagasaki, which was then Japan’s only port open to foreigners. There, he learned Dutch and studied European math, astronomy, and physics. Honda later became more interested in practical issues connected to shipping, commerce, and government reform. In 1798, he published *A Secret Plan of Government*, a book in which he argued that Japan needed to develop a maritime empire. His emphasis on education resonates with Enlightenment thinking, and some of his proposals parallel financial reforms attempted among European empires after the Seven Years War (1756–1763). Honda shows little knowledge of the stresses and revolutions these policies inspired. Honda’s recommendations were not adopted and remained little known during his lifetime, though they attracted greater attention in the late 1800s, as the Japanese Empire (1868–1947) began to expand in the Pacific.

A. Hong Liangji, Memorial on the War against Heterodoxy, 1798

The [county officials] have betrayed the laws of the Son of Heaven [the Chinese emperor] and exhausted the resources of the common people. From what I have heard, although there are heterodox sects in such places as Yichang in Hubei and Dazhou in Sichuan, the people there value their lives and property and love their wives too much to dare to violate the law. The county officials were not able to prevent the spread of heterodoxy by exerting good influences on the people, and when sectarianism spread, the officials would use the pretext of investigating heterodoxy to make demands on the people and threaten their lives, until the people joined the rebels.

I would humbly suggest that in locations where heterodox rebellions have arisen, inquiry must be made into the causes of conflict, to see whether the rebellion was precipitated by the officials, who should be punished according to the facts of each case. County magistrates have incriminated themselves in three ways.

1. Funds authorized by the court for disaster relief were pocketed by the officials, who would declare that the funds were intended for making up deficiencies in what was due the government—in this way, the beneficence [generosity] of the court never reached the people.

2. In ordinary times, the local officials would appropriate taxes and military funds [for their own use]. But when troubles arose, they would try to conceal their failure and even claim some merit. County officials would conceal the facts from the prefects and circuit intendants; prefects and circuit intendants from the governors-general and governors; governors-general and governors from even Your Imperial Majesty. Thus the sentiments of those on the lower level have no way of reaching the higher levels.

3. When there is some success, even personal servants and secretaries [of the county magistrate] claim a share of the merit. But in the case of failure, the blame is fixed on the good people who are in distress as roving migrants. Failure, to be sure, is not the fault of the county officials alone. High officials at the provincial level and the high military commanders and officers all behave in this way without even making a secret of it. It is no surprise that the county officials imitate them.

B. Honda Toshiaki, A Secret Plan of Government, 1798

In Europe kings govern their subjects with care. It is considered to be the appointed duty of a king to save his people from hunger and cold by shipping and trading. Such measures are especially applicable to Japan, which is a maritime nation, and it is obvious that transport and trade are essential functions of government. ...

If the islands near Japan were colonized they would make highly desirable places. By such colonization numerous possessions—some sixty or more—would be created, which would serve not only as military outposts for Japan, but would also produce in abundance metals, grains and fruit, as well as various other products, thus greatly adding to Japan's strength. ...

The order to be followed in colonizing territories is as follows: First, ships are sent to identify the location of the islands to be taken and to measure their extent. The natural products of the islands are investigated and the native population estimated. Then, when it is known about how many provinces the islands would make if colonized, the actual work is begun. If the natives are still living in caves, they are taught about houses. A house should be built for the tribal chief. Those natives without tools or implements should be supplied with them. By helping the natives and giving them everything they desire, one will inspire a feeling of affection and obedience in them, like the love of children for their parents. This is true because they are motivated by the same feelings that pervade the rest of the world, even though they be considered barbarians.

The way to compensate for the expenses involved in colonization lies in taking the natural products of the islands and shipping them to Japan. Trading marks a beginning of compensation for those expenses. Even barbarians do not expect to ask favors and give nothing in return. The products they offer represent a commencement of taxation. Since every island has wooded areas there will always be some value in the lumber which can be taken from the islands, even after a great many years. The value of other products besides lumber would be too great to calculate.

It is the task of the ruler-father to direct and educate the natives in such a manner that there will not be a single one of them who will spend even one unprofitable day. This matter should not be put off for another moment; it is a vital state duty. ...

The key to colonization is to establish a system with long-range objectives as to future profit and loss. By encouraging the good customs of the natives and eliminating their bad ones, it is possible to have them maintain human dignity. They should never be permitted to forget the generosity of the Japanese ruler. This is how colonization should be set about, but Japan persists in her bad habit of imitating old Chinese ways.

Very few of the government authorities possess any real knowledge of astronomy or mathematics, and it is because of their ignorance that whenever there is talk of colonizing the northern territories, as occasionally happens, the project is never carried through. It is Japan's misfortune that her officials are misled by foolish tales about these great countries, which are actually far superior to Japan, and consequently do not take advantage of great opportunities for profitable ventures. This is a matter of especial regret because there have been Russian officials in the islands inhabited by the Ainu since about 1765.