

# Chapter 27 - Tradition and Change in East Asia

Saturday, February 24, 2018 1:21 AM

## The Quest for Political Stability

- During 1200s-1300s, Mongols ruled China and imposed foreign influence, ignoring Chinese tradition.
- After it ended, Ming successors sought to remove all Mongol influence from China.
- They built a powerful imperial state, revived civil service staffed by Confucian scholars, and promoted Confucian thought.

## The Ming Dynasty

### Ming Government

- Emperor Hongwu built strong centralized government with imperial officials (*mandarins*) to oversee implementation of government policies.
- Emperor Yongle launched naval expeditions exploring the Indian Ocean basin as far as East Africa.
- Ming were determined to keep out more invasions; they moved capital to Beijing to more closely watch the Mongols, yet still had issues with them.

### The Great Wall

- Ming organized hundreds of thousands of workers to build a 2,500km wall to protect against northern invaders.
- Ming actively encouraged abandonment of Mongol influence and sponsored study of Chinese traditions (Confucianism, imperial academies, regional colleges).

### Ming Decline

- Pirates terrorized coastal towns and naval defenses were ineffective.
- Emperors began living lives of pleasure, using their eunuch servants and administrators to deal with the outside world, leading to inefficient government.
- Eunuchs used their new power to lead lives of luxury too, causing widespread corruption and inefficiency that weakened the Ming state.

### Ming Collapse

- Famines struck China and Ming government was unable to organize relief efforts, so Chinese people and cities lost their loyalty.
- Manchu invaders then allied with Ming armies to capture Beijing.

## The Qing Dynasty

### The Manchus

- Came from Manchuria, north of the Great Wall.
- A centralized state under Nurhaci (1616-1626) with code of laws and organized military.
- Invaded Ming dynasty, established Qing dynasty in 1640, consolidated power throughout the land by 1680.
- Careful to produce proprietary culture; forbade Chinese men from learning their language, and required them to shave the front of their heads in submission.

### Kangxi and His Reign

- Confucian scholar, ruled by Confucian precepts, reigned from 1661-1722.
- Patron of Confucian schools and academies.
- Also a conqueror, expanded the Chinese empire into central Asia to forestall problems with

nomads.

### **Qianlong and His Reign**

- Continued grandfather's (Kangxi) conquests by putting merchants in central Asia to stabilize the region.
- Made Vietnam, Burma, and Nepal vassal states.
- So much money during his reign that he canceled tax collection four times.

## **The Son of Heaven and the Scholar-Bureaucrats**

- Qing rulers usually appointed Manchus to highest political positions.
- Qing and Ming both had tightly centralized governments staffed by Confucian scholars.

### **The Son of Heaven**

- Both Qing and Ming dynasties held the emperor to be more than mortal, a Son of Heaven.
- Held in utmost respect by subjects with the *kowtow* (or else they'd be flogged on the bare bottom with bamboo sticks [this is not a joke]).
- Everything about his lifestyle commanded authority, from his schedule to his living place in the walled Forbidden City.

### **The Scholar-Bureaucrats**

- Educated higher-class of society that ran the empire's day-to-day affairs.
- Achieved their status through civil service exams; began preparing for these at a young age.
- Only men could take them; they prepared through a local school or private tutor.

### **Civil Service Examinations**

- Grueling conditions, in which candidates had to write long essays for three days with limited provisions.
- Essays were "eight-legged essays," literary compositions with eight distinct sections that answered questions posed by examiners.
- If someone died, they were just thrown over the wall.

### **Examination System and Chinese Society**

- Passing an exam got you a degree but did not guarantee a spot in the bureaucracy.
- Passing a district exam did not guarantee a degree as much as passing a metropolitan exam - district degree-holders ended up becoming tutors.
- Still provided a form of upward social mobility in imperial China since all males could attempt to take the exam and get a powerful, wealthy job.
- Encouraged formal education and ensured Confucians would run the state.

## **Economic and Social Changes**

- Experienced economic and social changes somewhat due to foreign influences.
- Increased agricultural production and population growth.
- Domestic economy simulated by global trade, encouraged increased trade, manufacturing, and global growth - this partly undermined stability in China.

## **The Patriarchal Family**

### **Filial Piety**

- Idea of Chinese people as one large family, extended family values to larger society.
- *Filial piety* - not just duty of child to father, but also from loyal subject to emperor. Children had to make sure parents were happy and taken care of.
- Chinese families were hierarchical, patriarchal, and authoritarian; veneration of ancestors strengthened patriarchy.

- *Clans* - members from all social levels, led by gentry, that maintained local order, organized local economies, and provided social welfare. Clans helped members with civil service examinations since getting someone from their clan into the government gave the whole clan prestige.

### **Gender Relations**

- Subordination of females was rampant - parents preferred boys over girls, girls were a financial/social liability.
- Women were more tightly controlled than ever before, sometimes told to follow spouses to the grave.

### **Foot Binding**

- Caused deformity in women's feet that made them unable to support their weight and perform physical labor.
- Was seen as attractive by Chinese men, common among wealthy class.
- Marriage was contractual affair to ensure continuation of male line of descent - women must display complete subservience to her husband.
- Though family life developed from traditional Chinese philosophy, the rest of Chinese society changed dramatically in the 1500s-1700s.

## **Population Growth and Economic Development**

- China was predominantly agricultural because Confucianism held land to be the source of all praiseworthy things.
- Did not have much cultivatable land, so it used highly productive garden-style agriculture to build an agrarian base.

### **American Food Crops**

- Cultivated every available parcel of land to produce large yields of rice, wheat, and millet.
- When they hit the upper limit on productivity, traders in the Philippines introduced them to American crops such as maize, sweet potatoes, and peanuts.
- New food crops let Chinese cultivators use previously unusable land to increase food supply and population growth.

### **Population Growth**

- Rose rapidly due to increased food supply.
- Epidemic diseases, rebellion, and war killed millions but population still grew rapidly.
- Population growth outpaced agricultural production leading to economic and social problems in the 1800s but also provided a large labor force for entrepreneurs.

### **Foreign Trade**

- Chinese workers produced lots of silk, porcelain, lacquerware, and tea for Indian Ocean basin, central Asia, and Europe.
- Imported relatively few items: spices, birds and animal skins from tropical regions, and some woolen textiles from Europe.
- Compensation for exports was **silver bullion**, which fueled the Chinese economy and manufacturing.
- After Yongle, Ming dynasty limited Chinese naval expeditions and exposure to foreign people, to preserve its culture.
- Qing tried banning naval activity; when that didn't work, they closely monitored and limited foreign merchant activity in the region.
- Government policies discouraged organization of large-scale ventures by Chinese merchants such as shipbuilding and joint-stock companies.

### **Trade and Migration to Southeast Asia**

- Chinese merchants worked either individually or in partnerships to link China with global trade

networks.

- Especially prominent in Manila (Philippines), exchanged porcelain and silk for American silver.

### **Government and Technology**

- China's economic expansion took place without technological innovation.
- Chinese innovation stopped, and it borrowed its modern weapon designs from Europe, and made no progress in agricultural and industrial technologies. This can be attributed to their government.
- Government feared new technologies would bring unsettling change so didn't fund it as much as Sung and Tang dynasties. Employers also saw it cheaper to hire more workers than invest in tech.
- **TL;DR** No tech advancement because government was afraid of change and it was more expensive than just hiring more glorious Chinese workers.

## **Gentry, Commoners, Soldiers, and Mean People**

### **Privileged Classes**

- Scholar-bureaucrats and gentry occupied most exalted positions in Chinese society: served as intermediaries between imperial government and local society, managing local society.
- Wore distinctive clothing, received favored legal treatments, exempt from corporal punishment, labor service, and taxes.
- Main source of income was land, sometimes opened small shops or silently invested in merchants. Primary source of income was from government service.
- Different from elsewhere, where wealthy elite lived on rural estates... in China they lived in towns and cities.

### **Working Classes**

- Three broad commoner classes: peasants, artisans/workers, and merchants.
- Peasants were the most honorable of the three in Confucian philosophy because they performed honest labor and provided food for population.
- Artisans/workers had lower status than peasants but enjoyed higher income as employees of the state or gentry, and they were self-employed too.

### **Merchants**

- Merchants were at the bottom level of Confucian social hierarchy and had little legal protection and negative government attention due to being "unscrupulous social parasites."
- Chinese merchants used bribery or profit-sharing techniques with the privileged class to garner official support.
- Merchants used their wealth for social mobility, educating their children for civil service exams and positions.
- Government wanted to preserve agrarian society and not rapid trade-based economic development so merchants did not enjoy same bond with leaders as did the English and Dutch.

### **Lower Classes**

- Military forces and mean (average) people (i.e. slaves, indentured servants, entertainers, prostitutes) were at the bottom.
- Moralists saw armed forces as a necessary evil and gave them low dominance in society at the expense of military effectiveness.

## **Confucian Tradition and New Cultural Influences**

- Ming and Qing emperors used Chinese traditions to guide them politically, culturally, and socially.
- Provided generous support for neo-Confucianism and sponsored its formal education.
- Demographic and urban growth encouraged vibrant popular culture in China, and Europeans introduced China to their science and technology.

## Neo-Confucianism and Pulp Fiction

- Ming and Qing dynasty cultural policy made neo-Confucian tradition the main imperial ideology from 1300s to 1900s.

### Confucian Education

- Ming and Qing emperors funded Hanlin Academy in Beijing for Confucian scholars, and maintained provincial schools for wealthy students could study for civil service exams.
- Ming and Qing emperors such as Yongle, Kangxi, and Qianlong published books to further the proliferation of neo-Confucianism in society.

### Popular Culture

- Lively popular culture formed in cities of China.
- Most urban people were illiterate and knew little about Confucianism and were entertained in local teahouses and wine shops.
- Merchants were literate and needed more intellectually engaging entertainment, in the form of... (next section)...

### Popular Novels

- Confucian scholars saw these as crude and irrelevant to reality.
- Printing technology allowed books to be printed cheaply in vast quantities, so urban-dwellers could consume it.
- Most had little literary significance but some prompted thought about the world and human affairs.

## The Return of Christianity to China

- Nestorian Christians built churches and monasteries in the 600s, but plague killed them off.
- Roman Catholic missionaries had to start from scratch in the 1500s to win converts again.

### Matteo Ricci

- Jesuits were most prominent Catholic missionaries to China.
- Learned the Chinese language and culture, Ricci attained high status in the Ming court (1601).
- Jesuits responsible for showing China European science, tech, gadgets, and gave them world maps and high-quality bronze cannons.

### Confucianism and Christianity

- Jesuits Chinese-ified their version of Catholicism by arguing it is similar to Confucianism, giving services in Chinese, and spreading European science and technology to China.
- Chinese did not like Christianity that much because it called itself the one true religion, meaning Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism were all wrong.
- Despite Jesuit methods of promotion (technology to capture attention, respect for their hosts), the Chinese did not take to Christianity; only 200,000 of the 225 million Chinese adopted Catholicism.

### End of the Jesuit Mission

- Other Christian missionary groups (Franciscans, Dominicans) were jealous, demanded pope to tell Jesuits to stop allowing Chinese-ification. In response, Emperor Kangxi banned preaching Christianity in china.
- Important cultural effects:
  - European science and technology spread through the Jesuits to China.
  - Jesuits portrayed China as an orderly society to Europe, first time since Marco Polo that Europeans had firsthand accounts of China.
  - Confucian civil service system influenced merit-based bureaucracies in Europe (1700s) and Confucian morals appealed to Enlightenment ideas.

## The Unification of Japan

- Tokugawa shoguns took power in this time, bringing Japan out of civil disorder, and laid foundation for long-term political and social stability.
- Though shoguns limited outside influence in Japan, Japan saw demographic and economic growth, and foreign influences from merchants.

## The Tokugawa Shogunate

- From 1100s to 1500s, shoguns ruled Japan in a feudal system, but clashes with retainers turned into civil war.
- This improved in this time period, as we will see shortly.

### Tokugawa Ieyasu

- Powerful states emerged in Japan, military chieftains united them.
- Tokugawa Ieyasu (1600-1616) started a powerful unified government that lasted until the 1800s. Their goals? To stabilize their land and prevent return of civil war.
- **Daimyos** were powerful landed autocrats over their territories that each maintained militaries, judiciaries, schools, and paper money.

### Control of the Daimyo

- Daimyos had to be controlled so shoguns could rule Japan without them.
- Just like Louis XIV in France, the shogun required Daimyo to be at the capital city, Edo (Tokyo) so that they could keep an eye on them, and to entice them with lavish lives so they wouldn't try to take over more land.
- Daimyo were heavily controlled, requiring marriage between Daimyo families to be approved by the government, and meetings between the Daimyo and Emperor required shogun's permission.

### Control of Foreign Relations

- Shoguns knew that Spanish forces captured Philippines in the 1500s, didn't want the same fate; feared Europeans would ally with daimyo and supply them with weapons to upset power balance.
- Japanese banned foreign books, foreign travel, and foreign merchants except carefully controlled Chinese and Dutch trade at Nagasaki. Heavily enforced this, even beheaded Portuguese merchants who decided to try coming anyway.
- Still carried on flourishing trade with China, Korea, Taiwan, Ryukyu Islands, and Dutch (who also gave news about Europe and the world).

## Economic and Social Change

- Shoguns ended instability and readied Japan for economic growth which eventually undermined their power.
- Agriculture largely contributed to economic growth; new crop strains, new irrigation methods, and fertilizer increased rice yields.
- Villages moved from subsistence farming to market production farming, doubling agricultural production with cotton, silk, indigo, and sake.

### Population Growth

- Population grew naturally due to more food but rate of change slowed.
- Due to population control and infanticide since Japan was "land poor" and less people meant everybody could have a little bit more resources than they would if they had to share.

### Social Change

- Japanese social hierarchy followed Confucian style, with privileged class being shogun, daimyo, and samurai; peasants and artisans next; merchants at the bottom (like China, due to Chinese influence in fact).
- Daimyo and samurai encouraged to take up scholarship and bureaucratic positions, the loss of traditional societal role meant less wealth; they became indebted to brokers (they traded rice

from their land for money) and experienced genteel poverty.

- Merchants saw an opposite effect, eventually gathering more wealth than the gentry as rice dealers, pawnbrokers, and sake merchants.

## Neo-Confucianism and Floating Worlds

### Neo-Confucianism in Japan

- Tokugawa shoguns promoted neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi due to its emphasis on filial piety and loyalty to superiors.
- Education system based on neo-Confucianism, so sons of merchants and government officials were largely exposed to neo-Confucian philosophy.

### Native Learning

- Near-isolationist Japan did not depend on Chinese cultural kinship so "native learning" scholars sought to build up Japanese identity by scorning neo-Confucianism and promoting folk tradition and traditional Shinto religion.
- Japanese were superior to all others, foreign influence is terrible, and Japanese must maintain purity from decadent foreigners.

### Floating Worlds

- Prosperous merchant class promoted vibrant popular culture with prose fiction and new forms of theater.
- Ukiyo (floating worlds) were places with teahouses, theaters, brothels, and public baths for the public to forget about the rigidity of their society.
- New genre of prose literature: books of the floating world, which focused on the theme of love for erotic appeal and wrote brief stories instead of long neo-Confucian treatises.
- *Kabuki* theater featured several acts of lively skits with crazy singing, dancing, and staging.
- *Bunraku*, puppet theater, where chanters told a story with music with intricate puppets controlled by a team of three.

## Christianity and Dutch Learning

### Christian Missions

- Christian missionaries came in 1549 and converted many (300,000) Japanese to Jesuit Catholicism by converting powerful daimyo who forced their people to convert too, which alarmed Japanese government.
- Japanese government thought that Christianity would allow destabilization of Japanese empire because Christian daimyo and European outsiders could make alliances to upset power balance.
- Some converts even disliked it, because they weren't allowed to become priests.

### Anti-Christian Campaign

- Shoguns banned Christianity and began torturing and killing European missionaries who would not leave and Japanese Christians who would not leave it.
- Some Europeans even left Christianity due to the torture, and helped Japanese interrogate other Europeans.

### Dutch Learning

- Dutch merchants became Japan's source of information about the world beyond east Asia.
- Brought considerable knowledge from the outside world to Japan, especially after shoguns lifted foreign book ban in 1720.
- European art, medicine, science, and astronomy replaced Chinese influences that were not as advanced; shoguns even became proponents of Dutch learning and promoted schools of European medicine and Dutch studies.

*Summary:* Both China and Japan controlled their own affairs throughout the early modern era and

avoided the turmoil that afflicted societies in the Americas and much of sub-Saharan Africa. After driving the Mongols to the steppe lands of central Asia, rulers of the Ming dynasty built a powerful centralized state in China. They worked diligently to eradicate all vestiges of Mongol rule and restore traditional ways by reviving Chinese political institutions and providing state sponsorship for neo-Confucianism. In the interest of stability, authorities also restricted foreign merchants' access to China and limited the activities of Christian missionaries. The succeeding Qing dynasty pursued similar policies. The Ming and Qing dynasties both brought political stability, but China experienced considerable social and economic change in early modern times. American food crops helped increase agricultural production, which fueled rapid population growth, and global trade stimulated the Chinese economy, which improved the position of merchants and artisans in society. The experience of the Tokugawa era in Japan was much like that of the Ming and Qing eras in China. The Tokugawa bakufu brought political order to the Japanese islands and closely controlled foreign relations, but a vibrant economy promoted social change that enhanced the status of merchants and artisans.