

## Mings and Ch'ings, 1368-1911

**T**he first half of the fourteenth century, which witnessed the gradual decline of Mongol influence and power, was further marked by the birth of a humble individual destined to achieve a new departure in the history of the empire. At the age of seventeen, Chu Yuan-chang lost both his parents and an elder brother. It was a year of famine, and they died from want of food. He had no money to buy coffins, and was forced to bury them in straw. He then, as a last resource, decided to enter the Buddhist priesthood, and accordingly enrolled himself as a novice; but together with the other novices, he was soon dismissed, the priests being unable to provide even for their own wants. After this he wandered about, and finally joined a party of rebels commanded by one of his own uncles. Rapidly rising to the highest military rank, he gradually found himself at the head of a huge army, and by 1368 was master of so many provinces that he proclaimed himself first emperor of the Great Ming dynasty, under the title of Hung (*Hoong*) Wu, and fixed his capital at Nanking. In addition to his military genius, he showed almost equal skill in the administration of the empire, and also became a liberal patron of literature and education. He organized the present system of examinations, now in a transition state; restored the native Chinese style of dress as worn under the T'ang dynasty, which is still the costume seen on the stage; published a Penal Code of mitigated severity; drew up a kind of Domesday Book under which taxation was regulated; and fixed the coinage upon a proper basis, government notes and copper *cash* being equally current. Eunuchs were prohibited from holding official posts, and Buddhism and Taoism were both made state religions.

This truly great monarch died in 1398, and was succeeded by a grandson, whose very receding forehead had been a source of much annoyance to his grandfather, though the boy grew up clever and could make good verses. The first act of this new emperor was to dispossess his uncles of various important posts held by them; but this was not tolerated by one of them, who had already made himself conspicuous by his talents, and he promptly threw off his allegiance. In the war which ensued, victory attended his arms throughout, and at length he entered Nanking, the capital, in triumph. And now begins one of those romantic episodes which from time to time lend an unusual interest to the dry bones of Chinese history. In the confusion which followed upon the entry of troops into his palace, the young and defeated emperor vanished, and was never seen again; although in after years pretenders started up on more than one occasion, and obtained the support of many in their efforts to recover the throne. It is supposed that the fugitive made his way to the distant province of Yunnan in the garb of a Buddhist priest, left to him, so the story runs, by his grandfather. After nearly forty years of wandering, he is said to have gone to Peking and to have lived in seclusion in the palace there until his death. He was recognized by a eunuch from a mole on his left foot, but the eunuch was afraid to reveal his identity.

The victorious uncle mounted the throne in the year 1403, under the now famous title of Yung Lo (*Yoong Law*), and soon showed that he could govern as well as he could fight. He brought immigrants from populous provinces to repopulate the districts which had been laid waste by war. Peking was built, and in 1421 the seat of government was transferred thither, where it has remained ever since. A new Penal Code was drawn up. Various military expeditions were despatched against the Tartars, and missions under the charge of eunuchs were sent to Java, Sumatra, Siam, and even reached Ceylon and the Red Sea. The day of doubt in regard to the general accuracy of Chinese annals has gone by; were it otherwise, a recent (1911) discovery in Ceylon would tend to dispel suspicion on one point. A tablet has just been unearthed at Galle, bearing an inscription in Arabic, Chinese and Tamil. The Arabic is beyond decipherment, but enough is left of the Chinese to show that the tablet was erected in 1409 to commemorate a visit by the eunuch Cheng Ho, who passed several times backwards and forwards over that route. In 1411 the same eunuch was sent as envoy to Japan, and narrowly escaped with his life.

The emperor was a warm patron of literature, and succeeded in bringing about the achievement of the most gigantic literary task that the world has ever seen. He employed a huge staff of scholars to compile an encyclopaedia which should contain within the compass of a single work all that had ever been written in the four departments of (1) the Confucian Canon, (2) history, (3) philosophy, and (4) general literature, including astronomy, geography, cosmogony, medicine, divination, Buddhism, Taoism, handicrafts and arts. The completed work, over which a small army of scholars--more than two thousand in all--had spent five years, ran to no fewer than 22,877 sections, to which must be added an index occupying 60 sections. The whole was bound up (Chinese style) in 11,000 volumes, averaging over half-an-inch in thickness, and measuring one foot eight inches in length by one foot in breadth. Thus, if all these were laid flat one upon another, the column so formed would rise considerably higher than the very top of St. Paul's. Further, each section contains about twenty leaves, making a total of 917,480 pages for the whole work, with a grand total of 366,000,000 words. Taking 100 Chinese words as the equivalent of 130 English, due to the greater condensation of Chinese literary style, it will be found that even the mighty river of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* "shrinks to a rill" when compared with this overwhelming specimen of Chinese industry.

It was never printed; even a Chinese emperor, and enthusiastic patron of literature to boot, recoiled before the enormous cost of cutting such a work on blocks. It was however transcribed for printing, and there appear to have been at one time three copies in existence. Two of these perished at Nanking with the downfall of the dynasty in 1644, and the third was in great part destroyed in Peking during the siege of the Legations in 1900. Odd volumes have been preserved, and bear ample witness to the extraordinary character of the achievement.

This emperor was an ardent Buddhist, and the priests of that religion were raised to high positions and exerted considerable influence at court. In times of famine there were loud complaints that some ten thousand priests were living comfortably at Peking, while the people of several provinces were reduced to eating bark and grass.

The porcelain of the Ming dynasty is famous all over the world. Early in the sixteenth century a great impetus was given to the art, owing to the extravagant patronage of the court, which was not allowed to pass without openly expressed remonstrance. The practice of the pictorial art was very widely extended, and the list of Ming painters is endless, containing as it does over twelve hundred names, some few of which stand for a high level of success.

Towards the close of the sixteenth century the Portuguese appeared upon the scene, and settled themselves at Macao, the ownership of which has been a bone of contention between China and Portugal ever since. It is a delightful spot, with an excellent climate, not very far from Canton, and was for some time the residence of the renowned poet Camoens. Not far from Macao lies the island of Sancian, where St. Francois Xavier died. He was the first Roman Catholic missionary of more modern times to China, but he never set foot on the mainland. Native maps mark the existence of "Saint's Grave" upon the island, though he was actually buried at Goa. There had previously been a Roman Catholic bishop in Peking so far back as the thirteenth century, from which date it seems likely that Catholic converts have had a continuous footing in the empire.

In 1583, Matteo Ricci, the most famous of all missionaries who have ever reached China, came upon the scene at Canton, and finally, in 1601, after years of strenuous effort succeeded in installing himself at Peking, with the warm support of the emperor himself, dying there in 1610. Besides reforming the calendar and teaching geography and science in general, he made a fierce attack upon Buddhism, at the same time wisely leaving Confucianism alone. He was the first to become aware of the presence in China of a Jewish colony, which had been founded in 1163. It was from his writings that truer notions of Chinese civilization than had hitherto prevailed, began to spread in the West. "Mat. Riccius the Jesuite," says Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1651), "and some others, relate of the industry of the Chinaes most populous countreys, not a beggar, or an idle person to be seen, and how by that means they prosper and flourish."

In 1625 an important find was made. A large tablet, with a long inscription in Chinese and a shorter one in Syraic, was discovered in central China. The inscription, in an excellent state of preservation, showed that the tablet had been set up in A.D. 781 by Nestorian missionaries, and gave a general idea of the object and scope of the Christian religion. The genuineness of this tablet was for many years in dispute--Voltaire, Renan, and others of lesser fame, regarding it as a pious fraud--but has now been established beyond any possibility of doubt; its value

indeed is so great that an attempt was made quite recently to carry it off to America. Nestorian Christianity is mentioned by Marco Polo, but disappears altogether after the thirteenth century, without leaving any trace in Chinese literature of its once flourishing condition.

The last emperor of the Ming dynasty meant well, but succumbed to the stress of circumstances. Eunuchs and over-taxation brought about the stereotyped consequence--rebellion; rebellion, too, headed by an able commander, whose successive victories soon enabled him to assume the Imperial title. In the capital all was confusion. The treasury was empty; the garrison were too few to man the walls; and the ministers were anxious to secure each his own safety. On April 9, 1644, Peking fell. During the previous night the emperor, who had refused to flee, slew the eldest princess, commanded the empress to commit suicide, and sent his three sons into hiding. At dawn the bell was struck for the court to assemble; but no one came. His Majesty then ascended the Coal Hill in the palace grounds, and wrote a last decree on the lapel of his robe: "WE, poor in virtue and of contemptible personality, have incurred the wrath of God on high. My ministers have deceived me. I am ashamed to meet my ancestors; and therefore I myself take off my crown, and with my hair covering my face await dismemberment at the hands of the rebels. Do not hurt a single one of my people." He then hanged himself, as also did one faithful eunuch; and his body, together with that of the empress, was reverently encoffined by the rebels.

So ended the Ming dynasty, of glorious memory, but not in favour of the rebel commander, who was driven out of Peking by the Manchus and was ultimately slain by local militia in a distant province.

The subjugation of the empire by the victors, who had the disadvantage of being an alien race, was effected with comparative ease and rapidity. It was carried out by a military occupation of the country, which has survived the original necessity, and is part of the system of government at the present day. Garrisons of Tartar troops were stationed at various important centres of population, each under the command of an officer of the highest military grade, whose duty it was to co-operate with, and at the same time watch and act as a check upon, the high authorities employed in the civil administration. Those Tartar garrisons still occupy the same positions; and the descendants of the first battalions, with occasional reinforcements from Peking, live side by side and in perfect harmony with the strictly Chinese populations, though the two races do not intermarry except in very rare cases. These Bannermen, as they are called, in reference to eight banners or corps under which they are marshalled, may be known by their square heavy faces, which contrast strongly with the sharper and more astute-looking physiognomies of the Chinese. They speak the dialect of Peking, now regarded as the official or "mandarin" language, just as the dialect of Nanking was, so long as that city remained the capital of the empire.

In many respects the conquering Tartars have been themselves conquered by the people over whom they set themselves to rule. They have adopted the language, written and colloquial, of China; and they are fully as proud as the purest-blooded Chinese of the vast literature and glorious traditions of those past dynasties of which they have made themselves joint heirs. Manchu, the language of the conquerors, is still kept alive at Peking. By a fiction, it is supposed to be the language of the sovereign; but the emperors of China have now in their youth to make a study of Manchu, and so do the official interpreters and others whose duty it is to translate from Chinese into Manchu all documents submitted to what is called the "sacred glance" of His Majesty. In a similar sense, until quite a recent date, skill in archery was required of every Bannerman; and it was undoubtedly a great wrench when the once fatally effective weapon was consigned to an unmerited oblivion. But though Bannermen can no longer shoot with the bow and arrow, they still continue to draw monthly allowances from state funds, as an hereditary right obtained by conquest.

Of the nine emperors of the Manchu, or Great Ch'ing dynasty, who have already occupied the dragon throne and have become "guests on high," two are deserving of special mention as fit to be ranked among the wisest and best rulers the world has ever known. The Emperor K'ang Hsi (*Khahng Shee*) began his reign in 1662 and continued it for sixty-one years, a division of time which has been in vogue for many centuries past. He treated the Jesuit Fathers with kindness and distinction, and availed himself in many ways of their scientific knowledge. He was an extraordinarily generous and successful patron of literature. His name is inseparably connected with the standard dictionary of the Chinese language, which was produced under his immediate supervision. It contains over forty thousand words, not a great number as compared with European languages which have coined innumerable scientific terms, but even so, far more than are necessary either for daily life or for literary purposes. These words are accompanied in each case by appropriate quotations from the works of every age and of every style, arranged chronologically, thus anticipating to some extent the "historical principles" in the still more wonderful English dictionary by Sir James Murray and others, now going through the press. But the greatest of all the literary achievements planned by this emperor was a general encyclopaedia, not indeed on quite such a colossal scale as that one produced under the Ming dynasty and already described, though still of respectable dimensions, running as it does in a small-sized edition to 1,628 octavo volumes of about 200 pages to each. The term encyclopaedia must not be understood in precisely the same sense as in Western countries. A Chinese encyclopaedia deals with a given subject not by providing an up-to-date article written by some living authority, but by exhibiting extracts from authors of all ages, arranged chronologically, in which the subject in question is discussed. The range of topics, however, is such that the above does not always apply--as, for instance, in the biographical section, which consists merely of lives of eminent men taken from various sources. In the great encyclopaedia under consideration, in addition to an enormous number of lives of men, covering a period of three

thousand years, there are also lives of over twenty-four thousand eminent women, or nearly as many as all the lives in our own *National Dictionary of Biography*. An original copy of this marvellous production, which by the way is fully illustrated, may be seen at the British Museum; a small-sized edition, more suitable for practical purposes and printed from movable type, was issued about twenty years ago.

Skipping an emperor under whose reign was initiated that violent persecution of Roman Catholics which has continued more or less openly down to the present day, we come to the second of the two monarchs before mentioned, whose long and beneficent reigns are among the real glories of the present dynasty.

The Emperor Ch'ien Lung (*Loong*) ascended the throne in 1735, when twenty-five years of age; and though less than two hundred years ago, legend has been busy with his person. According to some native accounts, his hands are said to have reached below his knees; his ears touched his shoulders; and his eyes could see round behind his head. This sort of stuff, it should be understood, is not taken from reliable authorities. It cannot be taken from the dynastic history for the simple reason that the official history of a dynasty is not published until the dynasty has come to an end. There is, indeed, a faithful record kept of all the actions of each reigning emperor in turn; good and evil are set down alike, without fear or favour, for no emperor is ever allowed to get a glimpse of the document by which posterity will judge him. Ch'ien Lung had no cause for anxiety on this score; whatever record might leap to light, he never could be shamed. An able ruler, with an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and an indefatigable administrator, he rivals his grandfather's fame as a sovereign and a patron of letters. His one amiable weakness was a fondness for poetry; unfortunately, for his own. His output was enormous so far as number of pieces go; these were always short, and proportionately trivial. No one ever better illustrated one half of the cynical Chinese saying: "We love our own compositions, but other men's wives." He disliked missionaries, and forbade the propagation of the Christian religion.

After ten years of internal reorganization, his reign became a succession of wars, almost all of which were brought to a successful conclusion. His generals led a large army into Nepal and conquered the Goorkhas, reaching a point only some sixty miles distant from British territory. Burma was forced to pay tribute; Chinese supremacy was established in Tibet; Kuldja and Kashgaria were added to the empire; and rebellions in Formosa and elsewhere were suppressed. In fifty years the population was nearly doubled, and the empire on the whole enjoyed peace and prosperity. In 1750 a Portuguese embassy reached Peking; and was followed by Lord Macartney's famous mission and a Dutch mission in 1793. Two years after the venerable emperor had completed a reign of sixty years, the full Chinese cycle; whereupon he abdicated in favour of his son, and died in 1799.

Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, pt. 1 - [etc.] 1. China — History. — Key to numbered prefectures YUNNAN 1 Che-le-tien ssu 2 Chen-yuan fu 3 Ch'eng-chiang fu 4 Ho-ch'ing fu 5 Hstn-huachou 6 Hsun-tien fu 7 Kan-yai Hsuan-fussu 8 Lung-ch'uan Hsuan-fu ssu 9 Mang-shih ssu 10 Meng-hua fu 11 Nan-tien Hsuan-fu ssu 12 Ta-houchou 13 Wan-tien. chou. NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION 1 Yen-ch'ingchou SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION 1 Ch'ang-chou fu 2 Chen-chiang fu 3 Kuang-tefu CHEKIANG 1 Chia-hsing fu 2 Ning-po fu KWANGTUNG 1 Nan-hsiung fu KIANGSI 1 Chiu-chiang fu. Ch'en Wen-shih, "Ch'ing ju-kuan-ch'ien-ti shou-kung-yeh," CYYY v. 34.1 (1962), pp. [Show full abstract] 291-321. David M. Farquhar, "The origins of the Manchus' Mongolian policy," in J. K. Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 198-205. — Kuan Tung-kuei, "Man-tsu ju-kuan-ch'ien-ti wen-hua fa-chan tui t'a-men-ti hou-lai han-hua-ti ying-hsiang," CYYY v. 40 (1968), pp. 255-279. Kuang-lu and Li Hsueh-chih, "Ch'ing T'ai-tsu ch'ao 'Lao Man-wen yān-tang' yān Man-wen lao-tang' chih pi-chiao yen-chiu," *Chung-kuo Tung-ya hsueh-shu yen-chiu chi-hua wei-yān-hui nien-pao* v. 4 (Taipei, 1965), pp. 154-157. Franz Michael, *The Origins of Manchu Rule in China* (Baltimore, 1942). Both the Ming and the Ch'ing made Khanbaliq of Yān their permanent capital, and it was during the successive rule of these two dynasties that the city under the new name Peking (北京) reached its golden age. Keywords. Ming Dynasty North Wall City Wall West Wall Great City. These keywords were added by machine and not by the authors. This process is experimental and the keywords may be updated as the learning algorithm improves. This is a preview of subscription content, log in to check access. References. Ming and Ch'ing dynasties remained schools in name only. Little actual teaching took place in them, and state schools became simply way-stations for students to prepare on their own for civil service examinations (Teng 1967:140-48; Lee 1985:55-137; Miyazaki 1981:18-19, 116-17, 124). — From 1000 until 1900, learned Confucians became government officials; after 1911, they were increasingly replaced by party functionaries. Twentieth-century intellectuals thus were subjected to political forces they no longer could effectively influence (Wakeman 1972:35-70; Keenan 1974:226-37; Goldman 1981). — High-minded officials often appealed for the relative autonomy of education in private academies as an antidote to the warping of Confucian educational goals by the cut-throat examination process. Social mobility in traditional China, particularly during the last two dynasties, Ming (1368—1644) and Ch'ing (1644—1911), for which ample data are available, deserves systematic study by both Chinese and Western historians and social scientists. It is remarkable to observe that in a meticulously regulated society such as traditional China's, there was probably a greater amount of vertical mobility, both upward and downward, than is usually found in pre-modern and modern societies of the West.