

CHINESE HISTORY – Early Modern Period (1500-1800 CE)

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Overview

China was generally peaceful and largely prosperous in the early and middle years of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Though it took some time and a great deal of effort, north China had recovered from the ravages of the Mongol invasions. The tax base was stable and the government was generally honest and efficiently run. Agriculture flourished and the population doubled in little more than a century. By the year 1500, the total population of China had reached at least 120 million. In foreign policy, the Ming were first very interested in exploration and sent out Admiral Zheng He with a massive fleet to traverse the South China Sea, the Straits of Malacca, the Indian Ocean, and down the coast of Africa as far south as Mozambique. However, they found things more interesting at home and never tried again. On land, the Ming wanted, above all, to keep the northern barbarians out and rebuilt the Great Wall, the edifice we see today in China. The Koreans, Vietnamese and most of the other nearby countries accepted Chinese suzerainty. The idea of a unified China and a Sino-centered world view, first popularized under the Qin in the 3rd century BCE, was alive and well. Culturally and socially, Ming China was as vibrant, innovative and productive as any of the earlier periods. However, in the realm of politics, there is rarely a clearer cautionary tale than what happened to the Ming in the later years of the dynasty. Over a period of two short generations, they forfeited the Mandate of Heaven through empire-wide graft, corruption, incompetence and neglect.

Events

Imperial Neglect. The turning point in the Ming era (1368-1644) was the reign of the Emperor Wan Li. The Emperor Wan Li (1563-1620) is not well remembered in the chronicles of Chinese history. Rarely has so much blame be laid at the feet of one man. The Emperor Wan Li ruled forty-eight years, which unfortunately allowed him ample opportunity to damage China. In the early years of his reign he is described as a ruler who was quite capable and interested in good governance. China prospered economically, militarily and culturally. Indeed, historians consider this to be the high-water mark for the later Ming period. However, as he aged, the Emperor began to neglect his duties and allowed his advisors, many of them eunuchs, to make poor administrative decisions for the realm. Much of the administration on the local level continued to function as before. The Confucian bureaucracy saw to that. But in the 1590s, the country found itself at war with the Japanese over Korea, an expensive campaign which succeeded in spite of poor leadership, planning and funding. In other areas of foreign policy, the Imperial Household also had to subsidize (or buy off) the barbarians in the north and west with increasingly large sums of money which came from a diminishing treasury. To meet this shortfall, taxes were raised significantly. Later, the Emperor Wan Li was mostly an absent ruler and refused to carry out his most basic official duties. By the end of his reign, the empire was in crisis. There were regional and local famines and little stored in the granaries to provide aid. Major rebellions were brewing. In short, there were many, many internal and external threats.

The Conquest. A strong and engaged Chinese emperor would have been able to face the threats posed by the Manchu on the northeastern frontier. The Chinese understood well how to play the

various Manchu tribes off of one another and had done so repeatedly over the centuries. This time, neither Wan Li nor any of his three successors over a period of twenty-four years after his death were able to placate the barbarians. When squeezed between the encroaching Manchu in the northeast and the rebel Li Zicheng at the approaches of Beijing in the south, the last Ming emperor, Chongzhen, committed suicide. The Manchu then moved in to “stabilize” the region in 1644.

The Manchu. The Manchu (also known as Jurchen) were from the area north of the Great Wall and south of the Amur River in what is today northeastern China (sometimes known as Manchuria). This is a vast and unforgiving landscape. Manchuria is known for its long, dark winters and bitter cold. Much like the Mongols in the 13th century, the Manchu seemed to come from nowhere. They lived in small tribal and familial units linked by marriage and alliance to one another. Some lived a semi-nomadic lifestyle; others nearer to the Chinese frontier tilled the fields. There were likely fewer than a million Manchu in total. The first leader of renown from this band of Manchu was named Nurhaci (1559-1626), who unified the warring and unruly clans under his command. He organized the disparate warrior bands into armies, invaded Korea and obtained the allegiance of many of the Mongol tribes. He then began raiding into north China proper. Upon his death, he was succeeded by his son Hong Taiji (1592-1643). Hong is widely credited with establishing the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), although he died the year before his troops moved into Beijing.

Han Collaboration. It is telling the extent to which the Confucian elites and Ming aristocrats had come to loathe the Ming emperors in the last years of the Ming era. When the Manchu tribes began to raid into northern China, several Chinese commanders (of Han ethnicity) simply turned on the field of battle to support the Manchu. Amazingly, the Ming had become so despised that many Han generals preferred the unknown barbarian Manchu over the Han monarchs! One after another, Ming generals swore allegiance to the Manchu or fell on the field of battle in north China. The conquest of the rest of China did not come as quickly or as easily. It took several decades for the bloody fighting in the south to be completed. The last Ming claimant to the throne died in 1661. Even then, Qing control of southern China was tenuous. They required the support and collaboration of the Han, Confucian elites and military men of the old regime.

Consolidation. Under the reign of the Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722), the Qing Empire came of age. When three Han generals who had supported the Qing conquest of southern China rose in revolt in what is known as the San Fan Rebellion (War of the Three Feudatories) in 1674, the Emperor Kangxi, in a very risky move, sent armies to destroy them. When this action was taken, it was unclear whether or not this would alienate the Confucian elites and therefore make China ungovernable even if it succeeded militarily. Nonetheless, the success of this campaign consolidated Manchu rule and secured the Qing Dynasty until 1911.

Unparalleled Power. At its height, the Qing Dynasty ruled more territory than any other Chinese dynasty in history, with the possible exception of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). In addition to what today is China proper, the Qing governed Mongolia, portions of Siberia north of Mongolia, portions of the border area between Tibet and South Asia, and portions of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The population of Qing China reached 300 million under the reign of the Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735-1796) and is, without a doubt, one of the most populous

empires ever in world history. By way of comparison, all of the European states together in the year 1800 had a population of approximately 150 million and the Mughal Empire in South Asia never reached a population of more than 150 million at its height. The Qing were without peer in the 18th century.

Government

Maintaining the System. The conquest of China beginning in the 1630s and 1640s required the collaboration of the Confucian elites and the people of the Han ethnicity because the population of ethnic Jurchen (Manchu) was too small to complete the job. The problem of how to govern China as a conquest dynasty was just as perplexing and much more complicated. The Qing had won the war, now they had to win the peace. The first monarchs of Qing China (1644-1911), who theoretically exercised absolute power, determined to maintain, but reform, the moribund Ming system. The early Ming monarchs (1368-1644) had found success using the Civil Service examination to staff and maintain the bureaucracy. The system, however, had ceased to work as effectively in the last few decades of the Ming period as it had earlier. Indeed, the late Ming period is known for graft, corruption and neglect in government. Thus, the Qing sought to reestablish and reinvigorate the Civil Service and the Civil Service examination. In the early years of the Qing period, there were several efforts to root out corruption and the system began to function as designed on the lower levels. But there remained the problem of how to staff the upper levels.

Manchu Ministers. To meet the challenge of staffing at the highest levels, the Qing rulers split the duties of “minister of state” into two theoretically equal positions each with a Han (Confucian) minister and a Manchu minister. In practice, the Manchu ministers sometimes just passed down directives from the Imperial household to the Han ministers. The Manchu ministers were therefore more important but the positions did not require a great deal of attention. Of course, reports back to the imperial household had to be written and the Manchu minister, like his Han counterpart, could be held accountable when things went wrong. There were six ministries of state: civil affairs, finance, rituals, war, justice and public works. Each had two ministers. In this way, the Qing ruled through and maintained the existing Chinese system but rarely had much contact with the dominant Han Chinese ethnicity. The foreign rulers, though not exactly hiding in plain sight, consciously sought to minimize their interaction with the Chinese.

The Military. The Qing military was divided into what is known today as “bannermen” armies. The armies were organized in different ways. Some armies were composed mostly of Manchu soldiers with Manchu generals. Others were composed of mostly Han Chinese soldiers with Han generals who worked with Manchu generals who acted as liaisons. A third type of army was composed of a combination of mostly Mongols, Han and other foreigners as soldiers. The armies were stationed in strategic areas of China where they could be called upon in time of emergency. The armies were known by the color of their banner, which could be solid or solid and framed with a different color. Early in the period of conquest there were six banner armies. Later that number was increased to eight. By the reign of the Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735-1796), the Qing could field armies of more than a hundred thousand.

The Treasury. The coffers of the imperial treasury were generally full after the recovery from the War of the Three Feudatories (1674-1681). The Emperor Kangxi (r. 1661-1722) set up a tax system which was based on goods produced, on land and on population (head tax). The tax was carefully collected and put to good use for much of the early Qing years. The peasants had to pay their taxes to the village headmen, who then forwarded it on the authorities on the higher levels. The head tax was also used to determine conscription and corvée quotas. It is worth nothing that though the peasants were not always tied to the land, they were required to provide labor to the state for the purposes of building or rebuilding common infrastructure such as roads, bridges, dikes, irrigation projects and the like. The peasants despised this requirement and did everything they could to shirk this duty. Those who could paid a fee to be freed of this obligation. Others would abscond, making the duty of the remaining peasants that much more difficult. The tax rolls were based initially on Ming surveys and were not regularly updated. By the time the Emperor Qianlong had completed many of his extraordinarily expensive and bloody wars, the treasury was under serious stress.

Culture

Religion. Whereas Confucianism had dominated the religious landscape in China since the late Tang period (618-807) among the Han ethnicity, Buddhism experienced a minor renaissance during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The Buddhism practiced by the Qing monarchs, however, was not like that of most of the previous periods. Instead, the Manchu followed Tibetan Buddhism, a form of the religion which emphasizes Lamaism. Lamaism is a form of meditative Buddhism that transmits knowledge and religious convention from the teacher (Lama) to student. In Tibetan Buddhism, it is believed that a series of great Lamas, such as the Dalai Lama or Panchen Lama, are reincarnated bodhisattvas who bring wisdom and knowledge to their students. The Mongols (Yuan Dynasty, 1271-1368) also practiced Tibetan Buddhism, but, like the Qing, did not impose it on the Confucian population. Nonetheless, it was not proscribed. Buddhist practice is often not monotheistic and the Qing monarchs were very willing to lead in corporate, ritual worship at the Temple of Heaven as an element of the civil religion promoted by the crown. Christianity was also evident in China during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and Qing periods. However, the numbers of adherents was very, very small—much smaller than the number of Christians during the Tang and Yuan periods. Still, a number of Roman Catholic Jesuit missionaries made their way to China and provided accounts of life during their stay. These include men such as Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Adam Schall Von Bell (1591-1666). It is estimated that as many as one-hundred thousand Christians may have existed in China in the late Qianlong period (1735-1796).

The Literary Arts. In literature during the reign of the Emperor Qianlong, a genre of Chinese fiction writing—the detective story—became popular. Though the Chinese have a long history of reporting on criminal behavior as a way of conveying a morality play, detective stories seemed to have been quite common as a form of popular entertainment as well. One of the most well-known is the *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee*, a series of three stories of murder and intrigue. The author of this story is unknown. It depicts a man named Judge Dee and is set in the Tang period, although the cases it used for inspiration came from later periods. The extent of the circulation and appeal to the public of this particular work is not well known. However, it serves as an example of an increasingly popular form of literature in the early modern era.

Several poets of renown also benefited from the considerable support of the Emperor Qianlong. Examples include Shen Deqian (1673-1769) and Weng Fanggang (1733-1818), contemporaries who had no problem criticizing each other, but who were very influential in the writing of poetry, the collection and critique of anthologies and in teaching.

Porcelain. In the late Ming era, porcelain was perhaps the finest expression of artistry in China. Indeed, Ming vases and other items made of porcelain made during the period are still among the most highly valued in the world. Chinese potters and sculptors were well known before the Ming period. But, it is during the Ming period that, for example, round, white plates with blue motifs of Chinese landscapes and other objects painted on them became the norm for export objects, although white and blue porcelain existed before. The skill and craftsmanship of these artists was unmatched around the world for decades to come and the secrets of Chinese porcelain manufacturing were carefully guarded.

The Fine Arts. Other objects of art such as monochrome painting and woodblock printing continued to develop. Some Ming and early Qing era innovations included the expanded use of color. In wood block printing, for example, Chinese artists developed a process whereby color could be added in stages to an image. Multiple copies of a single image, when complete, could have five or six different hues, creating the impression of depth and fullness rarely seen earlier.

Society

Structure. Society was structured in the early modern period much as it was in the early Ming period (1368-1644). Though the ruling household had changed in 1644 and a barbarian conquest dynasty had seized power, not a great deal changed in society. There were monarchs, aristocrats, artisans, clergy, peasants, laborers, etc. Each played their role in an organized and generally stable society. Mandarins or degree holders acted as the administrative class and governed much as they had during the early Ming period. The vast majority of the population worked the land just as their ancestors had and most had very little contact with their foreign conquerors. The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) simply created an additional layer of administration at the very top. This, of course, led to the problem of the government being administratively top-heavy. But, given just how prosperous China was in the 17 and 18th centuries, this structural weakness was not evident until well into the 19th century.

The Retention of Culture. The Qing sought to maintain their distinct culture as members of the Jurchen/Manchu ethnicity. They were well aware just how quickly China had assimilated other conquest dynasties and were determined not to lose their identity. They used the Manchu language in the imperial household and kept two different sets of records for many years: one in Manchu for household deliberations and one in Mandarin for civil administration. They handed down laws which separated all the different ethnicities of China from the Jurchen. For example, during much of the Qing period, it was not legal for a member of the Jurchen/Manchu ethnicity to marry or have sexual relations with someone from any other ethnicity. This was an extremely problematic restriction, however, when one considers that several bannermen armies were stationed long-term far away from Manchuria. Indeed, it was a law that was often broken, particularly later in the Qing period. Interaction, in general, between the ethnicities was not encouraged. This was made somewhat possible because Qing armies often lived in garrison

towns when not on campaign. Members of the Manchu ethnicity were also treated differently from the Han under the law. Among the imperial family, it is generally understood that the Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722) lived and acted in a way which reflected his Jurchen/Manchu heritage, but his grandson, the Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) struggled to maintain Jurchen/Manchu traditions. Nonetheless, in the late Qing period, it was still possible to distinguish the Manchu ethnicity from the Han ethnicity.

The Queue. Perhaps the most recognizable element of the Manchu conquest in the early modern period was the appearance of the queue in China. It was also one of the most hated symbols forced upon the Han Chinese. The queue is a type of hairstyle. In the Ming period, it was customary for men to have long, flowing hair. Indeed, it was a badge of honor. When the Manchu began the conquest of China, they required all Chinese men to adopt the Jurchen hairstyle, often referred to as the “pigtail.” But it is more than that. One also had to shave one’s hair from the forehead to at least half-way back on the scalp. Often the pigtail was trimmed only to keep it from dragging the ground when walking. The Han ethnicity chafed under this rule. However, as early as the first raids across the north China/Manchuria frontier in the early 17th century, they forced this upon the Han. It symbolized the acceptance of Qing authority. If, however, a man refused to adopt the queue, he was considered to be in open and visible revolt against the Qing and subject to summary execution. Early in the dynasty, thousands were killed because they refused. A famous slogan of the era was, “keep your hair and lose your head, lose your hair and keep your head.” Within a few years, the queue had become customary.

Economy

Agriculture. The economy of early modern China functioned very well in the reign of the Emperor Kangxi (1667-1722) and early in the reign of the Emperor Qianlong (1735-1796). There was a well-established system with peasants and agriculture being the engine of the economy and a high-functioning administrative class. Advances in infrastructure in the early Ming period (1368-1644) and the will to maintain engineering marvels such as the Grand Canal and the Yellow River dikes meant that irrigation and the transportation of bulk commodities by barge were available to facilitate agricultural and economic development. Advances in rice production were significant and the economy grew quickly. Indeed it was transformed in other ways as well. The early modern period saw the importation of important food stuffs from the new world: potatoes, peanuts and corn via the Spanish-controlled Philippines. Many of these food-stuffs were grown in soil that was not conducive to the growing of rice or other traditional Chinese foods. This had the effect of bringing marginal land under cultivation. These calorie-rich items allowed the Chinese population to explode. I might add that these newly productive fields could also be taxed as well. By the end of the reign of the Emperor Qianlong, the population of China had risen to approximately 300 million. Of course, it also freed increasingly larger percentages of the population from subsistence farming and allowed for increased specialization in the economy.

Commerce. With increased specialization came advances in commerce and industry. The late Ming and Qing periods are well known for the creation of guilds for non-agricultural products. Guilds oversaw the supply of goods to make sure that the market was neither flooded nor without goods to sell. Guilds also dispersed and protected trade secrets and provided guidance on the

training of apprentices and the like. Artisans and skilled craftsmen, in particular, mentored apprentices for many years until they had developed sufficient expertise. Certain areas of the Chinese economy in the early modern era were particularly well-known for the production of export items. Among them were silk and porcelain producers. Tea was also produced for export. But it was silk and porcelain that distinguished Chinese commerce. Indeed, fine porcelain in the early modern era so dominated the world market, to say nothing of the domestic market, that in much of the western world, it is still simply called “china.” In addition to it being of very high quality, it was also produced in vast quantities.

Industry. In order to meet world demand for fine porcelain, small producers ramped up production. Whereas, in earlier periods, very small cottage-industries had been sufficient to meet demand, these were greatly expanded in the 18th century. Factories began to be built and the production process came to dominate entire villages. Though the Chinese were not among the world leaders in the development of the steam engine, they were producing on a massive scale. It is clear that the Chinese economy in the 18th century was undergoing a fundamental change which can best be described as early industrialization.

Self-Sufficiency. The Chinese economy was largely self-contained. Virtually all of the items needed for consumption by the Chinese: food, energy, raw materials, pharmaceuticals, clothing, building supplies and the like were produced domestically. The importation of goods from abroad was largely unnecessary. (Foreign ideas were equally unwelcome.) It is because of international commerce that China began to encounter a group of people who had heretofore been known to them, but who had not really been very important or influential: Europeans. Because the Chinese exported so many goods and products but imported virtually nothing, the Europeans began to become concerned about the imbalance of trade. Chinese merchants demanded payment in silver, the specie in which one paid tax, and when denominated, the unit of currency. Silver therefore began to be in short supply in other parts of the world. The Europeans wanted to parley with Chinese representatives, but the Chinese were totally uninterested. This set off a series of diplomatic rows which left the Europeans seething for decades. In a well-known exchange between the Emperor Qianlong and King George III (1738-1820) of Great Britain, Qianlong rebuffed the British request to trade by saying “I set no value on objects strange or ingenious and have no use for your country’s manufactures.”

Early Signs of Economic Trouble. Despite the presence of a vibrant and growing economy during the early reign of the Emperor Qianlong, the tax base was unable to keep up with spending demands. Qianlong’s military adventurism brought Xinjiang, an enormous and unruly new territory, under Chinese control. But the occupation was extraordinarily expensive and placed serious strain on the treasury. Qianlong was unaccustomed to working within a limited budget and was unwilling or incapable of scaling back. More troubling, as the population grew, there was a commensurate need to expand the bureaucracy. Early in the 18th century, this was understood to be a problem to be overcome with the discovery of efficiencies and with an increase in productivity. However, by the end of the 18th century, there simply weren’t enough government officials to administer the realm causing the vaunted Chinese economy to slow and to begin to show signs of distress.

Readings

Harold Tanner, *China: A History, Volume 1. From Neolithic Cultures through the Great Qing Empire*, (Hackett Publishing, 2010), pp. 310-377.

Susan Naquin and Evelyn Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (Yale University Press, 1989).

Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*, (University of California Press, 1999), pp. 86-262.

Evelyn Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Institutions*, (University of California Press, 1998).

Mark Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*, (Stanford University Press, 2001).

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Continuity and change has long been a theme of the transition period between the Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty. To what extent is this description true? What does it mean? Did Ming institutions, ideas and philosophies continue to dominate Qing China, or was there a meaningful cultural and social break at the time of change in leadership? Did the concept of “China” change as China entered the early modern period?
- 2) Many historians have depicted ethnic relations between the Manchu and Han to be unimportant until the late 19th century? To what extent do you agree with this notion? Were the Manchu able to maintain their ethnic identity until the end? Or at what point in the Qing period were the governing Manchu effectively assimilated into Han Chinese society? Is the issue of ethnicity even an important question to ask of Qing China?
- 3) Historians of China like to write about the greatness of the Kangxi and Qianlong periods. How does one define what is or is not great about one particular reign or another? What are the criteria—the economy, military, population, structure, religion, culture, the arts—or something else altogether? Is it even possible to compare empires effectively? If so, what would you argue is the most important criteria?
- 4) History indicates that after the reign of the Emperor Qianlong, the Chinese empire began to decline and never recovered. Were there early indicators of decline during Qianlong’s life? If so, what were they? Under Qianlong, did China suffer from misrule, corruption or neglect, or did China decline due to factors not under the control of any ruler? If one is to blame Qianlong, were his failings due to any moral or personal shortcoming? Or was the job of ruling the empire effectively too big for any single individual?

Texts

1) Nurhaci's seven grievances against the Ming Dynasty, proclaimed on April 13, 1618 and used as justification for the Manchu invasion. [Found in the public domain.]

1. The Ming killed the father and grandfather of Nurhaci for no reason.
2. The Ming favored Yehe and Hada while suppressing Jianzhou.
3. Violating agreement of territories by both sides, the Ming forced Nurhaci to make up for the lives of the people who crossed the border and were killed by Nurhaci.
4. The Ming sent troops to defend Yehe against Jianzhou.
5. Backed by the Ming, Yehe broke its promise to Nurhaci and married its "elder daughter" to Mongolia instead of Jurchen.
6. The Ming court forced Nurhaci to give up harvesting the reclaimed lands in Chaihe, Sancha and Fuan.
7. The East Liaoning government of the Ming appointed an official Shang Bozhi to perform garrison duty in Jianzhou; however, he abused his power and rode roughshod over the people.

2) The Emperor Qianlong's response to George III of Great Britain asking for the trade and the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1793. [Found in the public domain.]

You, O King, live beyond the confines of many seas, nevertheless, impelled by your humble desire to partake of the benefits of our civilization, you have dispatched a mission respectfully bearing your memorial. Your Envoy has crossed the seas and paid his respects at my Court on the anniversary of my birthday. To show your devotion, you have also sent offerings of your country's produce.

I have perused your memorial: the earnest terms in which it is couched reveal a respectful humility on your part, which is highly praiseworthy. In consideration of the fact that your Ambassador and his deputy have come a long way with your memorial and tribute, I have shown them high favor and have allowed them to be introduced into my presence. To manifest my indulgence, I have entertained them at a banquet and made them numerous gifts. I have also caused presents to be forwarded to the Naval Commander and six hundred of his officers and men, although they did not come to Peking, so that they too may share in my all-embracing kindness.

As to your entreaty to send one of your nationals to be accredited to my Celestial Court and to be in control of your country's trade with China, this request is contrary to all usage of my dynasty and cannot possibly be entertained. It is true that Europeans, in the service of the dynasty, have been permitted to live at Peking, but they are compelled to adopt Chinese dress, they are strictly confined to their own precincts and are never permitted to return home. You are presumably familiar with our dynastic regulations. Your proposed Envoy to my Court could not be placed in a position similar to that of European officials in Peking who are forbidden to leave China, nor could he, on the other hand, be

allowed liberty of movement and the privilege of corresponding with his own country; so that you would gain nothing by his residence in our midst.

Moreover, our Celestial dynasty possesses vast territories and tribute missions from the dependencies are provided for by the Department for Tributary States, which ministers to their wants and exercises strict control over their movements. It would be quite impossible to leave them to their own devices. Supposing that your Envoy should come to our Court, his language and national dress differ from that of our people, and there would be no place in which to bestow him. It may be suggested that he might imitate the Europeans permanently resident in Peking and adopt the dress and customs of China, but, it has never been our dynasty's wish to force people to do things unseemly and inconvenient. Besides, supposing I sent an Ambassador to reside in your country, how could you possibly make for him the requisite arrangements? Europe consists of many other nations besides your own: if each and all demanded to be represented at our Court, how could we possibly consent? The thing is utterly impracticable. How can our dynasty alter its whole procedure and system of etiquette, established for more than a century, in order to meet your individual views? If it be said that your object is to exercise control over your country's trade, your nationals have had full liberty to trade at Canton for many a year, and have received the greatest consideration at our hands. Missions have been sent by Portugal and Italy, preferring similar requests. The Throne appreciated their sincerity and loaded them with favors, besides authorizing measures to facilitate their trade with China. You are no doubt aware that, when my Canton merchant, Wu Chao-ping, who was in debt to foreign ships. I made the Viceroy advance the monies due, out of the provincial treasury, and ordered him to punish the culprit severely. Why then should foreign nations advance this utterly unreasonable request to be represented at my Court? Peking is nearly two thousand miles from Canton, and at such a distance what possible control could any British representative exercise?

If you assert that your reverence for Our Celestial dynasty fills you with a desire to acquire our civilization, our ceremonies and code of laws differ so completely from your own that, even if your Envoy were able to acquire the rudiments of our civilization, you could not possibly transplant our manners and customs to your alien soil. Therefore, however adept the Envoy might become, nothing would be gained thereby.

Swaying the wide world, I have but one aim in view, namely, to maintain a perfect governance and to fulfil the duties of the State: strange and costly objects do not interest me. If I have commanded that the tribute offerings sent by you, O King, are to be accepted, this was solely in consideration for the spirit which prompted you to dispatch them from afar. Our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated unto every country under Heaven, and Kings of all nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea. As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures. This then is my answer to your request to appoint a representative at my Court, a request contrary to our dynastic usage, which would only result in inconvenience to yourself. I have expounded

my wishes in detail and have commanded your tribute Envoys to leave in peace on their homeward journey. It behooves you, O King, to respect my sentiments and to display even greater devotion and loyalty in future, so that, by perpetual submission to our Throne, you may secure peace and prosperity for your country hereafter. Besides making gifts (of which I enclose an inventory) to each member of your Mission, I confer upon you, O King, valuable presents in excess of the number usually bestowed on such occasions, including silks and curios-a list of which is likewise enclosed. Do you reverently receive them and take note of my tender goodwill towards you! A special mandate.

3) From the *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee*, found in Robert Van Gulik's translation, Dover Press, 1976, pg. 5.

In the end, as a general rule, no criminal escapes the laws of the land. But it is up to the judge to decide who is guilty and who is innocent. If, therefore, a judge is honest, then the people in his district will be at peace; and if the people are at peace, their manner and morals will be good. All vagabonds and idlers, all spreaders of false rumors and all trouble makers will disappear, and all of the common people will cheerfully go about their own affairs. And if some wicked people from outside should happen to settle down in such a district, they will better their lives and reform of their own accord; for they see with their own eyes, and hear with their own ears, how strictly the laws are enforced, and how sternly justice is meted out. Therefore, it can be said that the amelioration of the common people depends on the honesty of the magistrate; never yet has a dishonest official improved the people under him.