

## China: Qing dynasty (AD 1644-1911)

The Qing ('pure') dynasty was established by Manchurian horsemen. they were sometimes referred to as 'banner-men', because they were organized into banner units, each distinguished by a different coloured flag. The Qing captured Beijing in 1644, bu Ming loyalists in southern China continued fighting and only during the 1680s was there domestic peace again.

As with several other foreign rulers of China, the Manchus were quickly sinicized. The Qing emperors were enthusiastic patrons of all forms of Chinese art. Both the Kangxi (1662-1722) and Qianlong (1736-95) emperors are remembered particularly for their scholarship and promotion of the arts. Kangxi was keen to promote aspects of regional crafts as well as encourage Western participation in the imperial court. Qianlong's reign is remembered as a golden age; he not only patronized the arts but he strengthened the economy and expanded the empire far into Asia.

China was thus a prosperous and powerful empire for the first 150 years of Qing rule. China's bureaucratic system was admired by those Europeans who saw it. The population and trade expanded on an unprecedented scale. Contacts with the West increased, particularly through Christian missionaries.

Diplomatic missions to China were not always successful, however, and in the eighteenth century China put many restrictions on foreign merchants and traders. The nineteenth century was generally a period of decline. Rebellions arose against Christian missionaries. The Opium Wars followed Chinese attempts to stop the opium trade, resulting in humiliation of the Chinese by the British. The Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) led to further cessions of territory by China. These factors and others led to the collapse of the last imperial dynasty in 1911.