

commercially. As a result, the Qing rulers focused, for the first century and a half of their rule, on consolidating and expanding their power over China and in Asia rather than worrying about the shifting global, political, and military balances of power occurring in Europe at the time.

RISE OF QING: CONQUEST, CONSOLIDATION, AND PRESERVATION

It is tempting when reading any history of China to accept the beginning and ending dates of an imperial dynasty as absolute. In the case of the Qing dynasty, 1644 marks the year the Qing dynasty was founded, but it would take several more decades of Qing military campaigns and conquests before China completely submitted to Manchu rule. Qing forces continued to battle Ming loyalists and other renegade forces for over 40 years (1.3). Not surprisingly, most Chinese commoners did not immediately accept the new dynasty. As a result, the early Qing emperors expended considerable effort to sway and coerce the Chinese populace into accepting their new rulers (1.1 and 1.2). At the same time, the Manchu elite agonized over how best to preserve their own Manchu identity (1.4).

1.1 SHUNZHI'S HEAD-SHAVING DECREE (1645)

In 1644, the Manchu armies surged out of northeast Asia, captured Beijing, and founded China's last imperial dynasty (1644–1911). Large swathes of China continued to oppose Qing rule, giving the Manchu leaders the awkward task of separating those Chinese who supported them from those who did not. To clarify this process, Dorgon, the uncle of the Shunzhi emperor (r. 1644–1661), issued an imperial edict to the Board of Rites requiring all Chinese males to shave their forehead and wear a queue in the Manchu style. This decree was especially loathsome to most Chinese because Confucian beliefs dictated that “one’s body, hair and skin are inherited from one’s parents, one should not dare to mutilate them.” The stark choice faced by most Chinese is caught in a popular saying of the day “lose your hair and keep your head or keep your hair and lose your head” [liutou bu liufa, liufa bu liutou].

Questions

1. How did the typical Chinese male react to Shunzhi's decree?
2. Why might Qing officials be reluctant to enforce such a decree?

On the fifteenth day of the sixth month [July 7, 1645] this decree was sent to the Board of Rites:

In the past, the head-shaving mandate has not been consistent, and been left unspecified. It had been planned to issue a decree once the empire had been firmly established. Now that the inner and outer [China and Inner Asia] has become one family, with the emperor as the father and all the people as the sons, how can the father and sons be different from each other? If they were not of a single body and had two hearts, then would they not be like foreigners to one another. Such matters do not need further elaboration, every official and person in the empire is undoubtedly already aware of it.

From today forward, with this proclamation, all residents of the capital and its adjacent regions must within ten days—and Zhili with the other provinces within ten days of receiving this proclamation—abide by this order to shave their heads. Those who abide by the order belong to our empire. Those who hesitate will be considered traitorous rebels and be severely punished.

that first established Chinese missions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Successfully operating in the Ming and early Qing era, the Jesuits actively transmitted European knowledge to China and Chinese learning to Europe. Their influence ended when Pope Clement XI decided that Chinese Confucian practices and offerings to the emperor constituted idolatry.

SACRED EDICT—A list of Confucian rules of moral conduct and social relations compiled by the Kangxi emperor in 1670.

KANGXI (1654–1722)—The second emperor of the Qing dynasty. His 61-year reign oversaw the consolidation of Qing rule over China, including the defeat of the renegade General Wu Sangui and other rebel generals of the Three Feudatories.

All who attempt to evade this order trying to keep their hair, and disputing it, will not be dealt with lightly. All local civil and military officers shall rigorously enforce this. Those who respond to this matter by impudently petitioning to ask to be allowed to retain the Ming traditions, and not recognize the authority of this empire, will be immediately executed. A reasonable interval will be allowed for the clothing, hats, and apparel to conform to the authority of this dynasty—exceptions will not be allowed.

The Board of Rites is hereby ordered to make known this decree to the capital and its adjacent regions, all provinces, prefectures, counties, and administrative offices, to ensure that the decree is observed by all officials, officers, teachers and students, soldiers and civilians.

1.2 SACRED EDICT OF THE KANGXI EMPEROR (1670)

Cognizant of their distinct ethnic and cultural background, the Qing emperors sought to portray themselves as overseers of Confucian values. Kangxi's Sacred Edict (later amended and expanded by his son, Yongzheng) is a recapitulation of imperial precepts from earlier dynasties. The edict presents the Qing rulers as concerned about the moral health of their subjects and thus promotes them as ideal Confucian rulers. The Confucian tenets included by Kangxi reflect his own concern with the stability, legitimacy, and morality of his rule. The edict sought to spell out the moral underpinnings of the empire for its subjects. To this end, the Sacred Edict was often posted or read by local officials to foster the Confucian ideal of each individual serving their own role in society.

Questions

1. In an era well before newspapers, television, or the Internet were common, what purpose do you believe the Sacred Edict served in Qing society?
 2. Why do you imagine the emperor would order his officials to read the Sacred Edict in places where disturbances had occurred?
1. Uphold one's filial duties as a son and a brother, so as to strengthen familial relations.
 2. Revere kinship structure and ties, so as to demonstrate harmony.
 3. Strive to create good relations within local communities, so as to prevent disputes and litigation.
 4. Focus on agriculture and silk production, so as to ensure an ample supply of food and clothing.
 5. Adhere to a frugal lifestyle, so as to prevent lavish waste.
 6. Foster and support education, so as to cultivate scholarly habits.
 7. Eliminate heterodoxy so as to promote orthodoxy.
 8. Extol the law, so as to warn the stupid and stubbornly wrong-headed.
 9. Demonstrate courteousness so as to strengthen proper traditions.
 10. Devote oneself to one's proper vocation, so as to satisfy one's ambition.
 11. Guide the younger generations, so as to prevent wrong-doing.
 12. Prevent wrongful accusations, so as to protect the innocent.
 13. Abstain from sheltering criminals, so as to avoid being implicated as an accomplice.
 14. Promptly and fully pay taxes, so as to avoid being penalized for late payment.
 15. Uphold the neighborhood mutual security system [*baojia*], so as to thwart theft and robbery.
 16. Resolve hatred and animosities, so as to value life.