How did Japan respond to domestic social changes and the challenges posed by contact with foreign cultures?

How did China deal with military and political challenges both inside and outside its borders?

To what extent was Russia's expanding empire influenced by relations with western Europe in this period?
The three centuries between 1500 and 1800 saw the rise of the Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan, the Qing Empire in China, and the Russian Empire. Each of these states experienced turbulence as they consolidated power domestically, faced challenges from their neighbors, and made new contacts with commercially and militarily powerful European governments.

In 1603, after a period of civil war and a devastating, if short-lived, conquest of Korea, Japanese rulers united under Tokugawa Ieyasu and established a centralized government. The Tokugawa Shogunate welcomed trade with European merchants for a time, but religious controversy arose when Catholic missionaries began to convert large numbers of Japanese. By the early seventeenth century there were...
some 300,000 Japanese Christians; the government responded with massive persecutions and in 1639 it cut off all trade with Europe.

An intriguing look at the rise of the Qing Empire is provided by the story of Li Zicheng, an apprentice ironworker who lost his job, along with many other government employees, when the emperor needed money to fund more troops to defend Beijing against attacks by Manchu armies. By 1630 Li had found work as a soldier, but he and his comrades mutinied when the government failed to provide them with needed supplies. A natural leader, Li headed a group of several thousand Chinese rebels. They captured towns, conscripted young men into their army, and won popular support with promises to end imperial abuses. In April 1644 they took Beijing without a fight, and the last Ming emperor hanged himself in the palace garden. Their success was short-lived: educated, violent men like Li and the Ming general Wu Sangui joined forces with the Manchus, and they retook Beijing in June.¹

Shortly before his death in 1576, presiding over a Holy Roman Empire on the brink of collapse, Maximilian II met with Russian ambassadors to Holland who had come to show off their sable coats and caps. Within a century the Netherlands became the world's greatest commercial power, while the princes of Muscovy, led by Ivan IV, engaged in wars of conquest that laid the foundations of the Russian Empire. Under Tsar Peter the Great and his successors, Russia expanded its territory westward to Poland and eastward to Alaska.

JAPANESE REUNIFICATION

Like China and Russia in the centuries between 1500 and 1800, Japan experienced three major changes: internal and external military conflicts, political growth and strengthening, and expanded commercial and cultural contacts. Along with its culturally homogenous population and natural boundaries, Japan's smaller size made the process of political unification shorter than in the great empires of China and Russia. Japan also differed in its responses to new contacts with Western Europeans.

Civil War and the Invasion of Korea, 1500–1603

In the twelfth century Japan's imperial unity had disintegrated, and the country fell under the rule of numerous warlords known as daimyo. Each of the daimyo had his own castle town, a small bureaucracy, and an army of warriors, the samurai. Daimyo pledged a loose allegiance to the hereditary commander of the armies, the shogun, as well as to the Japanese emperor residing in the capital city of Kyoto. The emperor and shogun were symbols of national unity but lacked political power.

Warfare among the different daimyo was common. In the late 1500s Japan experienced a prolonged civil war that brought the separate Japanese islands under powerful warlords. The most successful of these warlords was Hideyoshi. In 1592, buoyed by his success in Japan, the supremely confident Hideyoshi launched an invasion of the Asian mainland with 160,000 men. His apparent intention was not just to conquer the Korean peninsula but to make himself emperor of China as well.

The Korean and Japanese languages are closely related, but the dominant influence on Korean culture had long been China. Korea generally accepted a subordinate relationship with its giant neighbor and paid tribute to the Chinese dynasty in power. In many ways the Yi dynasty that ruled Korea from 1392 to 1910 was a model Confucian state. Although Korea had developed its own system of writing in 1443 and made extensive use of printing with movable type from the fifteenth century on, most printing continued to use Chinese characters.

Against Hideyoshi's invaders the Koreans employed all the technological and military skill for which the Yi period was renowned. Ingenious covered warships, or "turtle boats," intercepted a portion of the Japanese fleet. The mentally unstable Hideyoshi countered with brutal punitive measures. The Koreans and their Chinese allies could not stop the Japanese conquest of the peninsula and their invasion of the Chinese province of Manchuria. However, after Hideyoshi's death in 1598, the other Japanese military leaders withdrew their forces, and the Japanese government made peace in 1606.

Li Zicheng (lee ZIH-cheng)  Beijing (bay-JING)

daimyo (DAH-mee-oh)  samurai (SAH-moo-rye)
Kyoto (KYOH-toh)  Hideyoshi (HAY-dee-oh-HEE-shee)
### CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Korea and Japan</th>
<th>China and Central Asia</th>
<th>Russia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1500</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1543 First Portuguese contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td>1517 Portuguese embassy to China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1600</strong></td>
<td>1601 Matteo Ricci allowed to reside in Beijing</td>
<td>1533-1584 Rule of Prince Ivan IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1592 Japanese Invasion of Korea</td>
<td>1604 Qing conquest of Beijing</td>
<td>1582 Russians conquer Khanate of Sibir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1603 Tokugawa Shogunate formed</td>
<td>1622-1722 Rule of Emperor Kangxi</td>
<td>1613-1645 Rule of Mikhail, the first Romanov tsar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1633-1639 Edicts close down trade with Europe</td>
<td>1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk with Russia</td>
<td>1649 Subordination of serfs complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1700</strong></td>
<td>1691 Qing control of Inner Mongolia</td>
<td>1689-1725 Rule of Peter the Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1702 Trial of the Forty-Seven Ronin</td>
<td>1736-1795 Rule of Emperor Qianlong</td>
<td>1712 St. Petersburg becomes Russia’s capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1762-1796 Rule of Catherine the Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1792 Russian ships first spotted off the coast of Japan</td>
<td></td>
<td>1799 Alaska becomes a Russian colony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Korea was severely devastated by the invasion. In the confusion after the Japanese withdrawal, the Korean yangban (nobility) and lesser royals were able to lay claim to so much tax-paying land that royal revenues may have fallen by two-thirds. But the most dramatic consequences of the Japanese invasion were in China. The battles in Manchuria weakened Chinese garrisons there, permitting Manchu opposition to consolidate. Manchu forces invaded Korea in the 1620s and eventually compelled the Yi to become a tributary state. As already related, the Manchu would be in possession of Beijing, China’s capital, by 1644.

**The Tokugawa Shogunate, to 1800**

After Hideyoshi’s demise, Japanese leaders brought the civil wars to an end, and in 1603 they established a more centralized government. A new shogun, Tokugawa leyasu (1543–1616), had gained the upper hand in the conflict and established a new military government known as the Tokugawa Shogunate. The shoguns created a new administrative capital at Edo (now Tokyo). Trade along the well-maintained road between Edo and the imperial capital of Kyoto promoted the development of the Japanese economy and the formation of other trading centers (see Map 24.3).

Although the Tokugawa Shogunate gave Japan more political unity than the islands had seen in centuries, the regional lords, the daimyo, still had a great deal of power and autonomy, leyasu and his successor shoguns had to work hard to keep this decentralized political system from disintegrating.

In some ways, economic integration was more a feature of Tokugawa Japan than was political centralization. Because Tokugawa shoguns required the daimyo to visit Edo frequently, good roads and maritime transport linked the city to the castle towns on three of the four main islands of Japan. Commercial
traffic also developed along these routes. The shogun paid the lords in rice, and the lords paid their followers in rice. To meet their personal expenses, recipients of rice had to convert much of it into cash. This transaction stimulated the development of rice exchanges at Edo and at Osaka, where merchants speculated in rice prices. By the late seventeenth century Edo was one of the largest cities in the world, with nearly a million inhabitants.

The domestic peace of the Tokugawa era forced the warrior class to adapt itself to the growing bureaucratic needs of the state. As the samurai became better educated, more attuned to the tastes of the civil elite, and more interested in conspicuous consumption, they became important customers for merchants dealing in silks, sake (rice wine), fans, porcelain, lacquer ware, books, and moneylending. The state attempted—unsuccessfully—to curb the independence of the merchants when the economic well-being of the samurai was threatened, particularly when rice prices went too low or interest rates on loans were too high.

The 1600s and 1700s were centuries of high achievement in artisanship, and Japanese skills in steel making, pottery, and lacquer ware were joined by excellence in the production and decoration of porcelain (see Environment and Technology: East Asian Porcelain), thanks in no small part to Korean experts brought back to Japan after the invasion of 1592. In the early 1600s manufacturers and merchants amassed enormous family fortunes. Several of the most important industrial and financial companies—for instance, the Mitsui companies—had their origins in sake breweries of the early Tokugawa period, then branched out into manufacturing, finance, and transport.

Wealthy merchant families usually cultivated close alliances with their regional daimyo and, if possible, with the shogun himself. In this way they could weaken the strict control of merchant activity that was an official part of Tokugawa policy. By the end of the 1700s the merchant families of Tokugawa Japan held the key to future modernization and the development of heavy industry, particularly in the prosperous provinces.

Osaka (OH-sah-kah) sake (SAH-kay)

Mitsui (MIT-soo-e)
East Asian Porcelain

By the 1400s artisans in China, Korea, and Japan were all producing high-quality pottery with lustrous surface glazes. The best quality, intended for the homes of the wealthy and powerful, was made of pure white clay and covered with a hard translucent glaze. Artisans often added intricate decorations in cobalt blue and other colors. Cheaper pottery found a huge market in East Asia.

Such pottery was also exported to Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Middle East. Little found its way to Europe before 1600, but imports soared once the Dutch established trading bases in East Asia. Europeans called the high-quality ware "porcelain." Blue and white designs were especially popular.

One of the great centers of Chinese production was at the large factory at Jingdezhen (JING-deh-JUHN). No sooner had the Dutch tapped into this source than the civil wars and Manchu conquests disrupted production in the middle 1600s. Desperate for a substitute source, the Dutch turned to porcelain from Japanese producers at Arita and Imari, near Nagasaki. Despite Japan's restriction of European trade, the Dutch East India Company transported some 190,000 pieces of Japanese ceramic ware to the Netherlands between 1653 and 1682.

In addition to a wide range of Asian designs, Chinese and Japanese artisans made all sorts of porcelain for the European market. These included purely decorative pottery birds, vases, and pots as well as utilitarian vessels and dishes intended for table use. The serving dish illustrated here came from dinnerware sets the Japanese made especially for the Dutch East India Company. The VOC logo at the center represents the first letters of the company's name in Dutch. It is surrounded by Asian design motifs.

After the return of peace in China, the VOC imported tens of thousands of Chinese porcelain pieces a year. The Chinese artisans sometimes produced imitations of Japanese designs that had become popular in Europe. Meanwhile, the Dutch were experimenting with making their own imitations of East Asian porcelain, right down to the Asian motifs and colors that had become so fashionable in Europe.

Japanese Export Porcelain Part of a larger set made for the Dutch East India Company. (Photograph courtesy Peabody Essex Museum, #83830)
Japan and the Europeans

Direct contacts with Europeans beginning in the mid-sixteenth century presented Japan with new opportunities and problems. The first major impact was on Japanese military technology. Within thirty years of the arrival of the first Portuguese in 1543, the daimyo were fighting with Western-style firearms, copied and improved upon by Japanese armorer. Japan's civil conflicts of the late sixteenth century launched the first East Asian “gunpowder revolution.”

The Japanese also welcomed new trade with merchants from distant Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and England, but the government closely regulated their activities. Aside from the brief boom in porcelain exports in the seventeenth century, few Japanese goods went to Europe, and not much from Europe found a market in Japan. The Japanese sold the Dutch copper and silver, which the Dutch exchanged in China for silks that they then resold in Japan. The Japanese, of course, had their own trade with China.

Portuguese and Spanish merchant ships also brought Catholic missionaries. One of the first, Francis Xavier, went to India in the mid-sixteenth century looking for converts and later traveled throughout Southeast and East Asia. He spent two years in Japan and died in 1552, hoping to gain entry to China.

Japanese responses were decidedly mixed to Xavier and other Jesuits (members of the Catholic religious order the Society of Jesus). Large numbers of ordinary Japanese found the new faith deeply meaningful, but members of the Japanese elite were inclined to oppose it as disruptive and foreign. Nevertheless, by 1580 more than 100,000 Japanese had become Christians, and one daimyo gave Jesuit missionaries the port city of Nagasaki. In 1613 Date Masamune, the fierce and independent daimyo of northern Honshu, sent his own embassy to the Vatican by way of the Philippines (where there were significant communities of Japanese merchants and pirates) and Mexico.

Nagasaki (NAH-guh-SAHK-kee)  Date Masamune (DAH-tay mah-sah-MOO-nay)  Honshu (HOHN-shoo)
City. Some daimyo converts ordered their subjects to become Christians as well. Other Japanese were won over by the Jesuit, Dominican, and Franciscan missionaries.

By the early seventeenth century there were some 300,000 Japanese Christians and a few newly ordained Japanese priests. But these extraordinary events could not stand apart from the fractious politics of the day and suspicions about the larger intentions of the Europeans and their well-armed ships. The new shogunate in Edo became the center of hostility to Christianity. In 1614 a decree charging the Christians with seeking to overthrow true doctrine, change the government, and seize the land ordered the movement eliminated. Some missionaries left Japan, but others took their movement underground. The government began its persecutions in earnest in 1617, and the beheadings, crucifixions, and forced recantations over the next several decades destroyed almost the entire Christian community.

A series of decrees issued between 1633 and 1639 went much farther, ordering an end to European trade as the price to be paid for eliminating Christian influences. Europeans who entered illegally faced the death penalty. A new government office made sure Christianity did not reemerge; people were required to produce certificates from Buddhist temples attesting to their religious orthodoxy and thus their loyalty to the regime.

The closing of Japan to European influence was not total. A few Dutch were permitted to reside on a small artificial island in Nagasaki’s harbor, and a few Japanese were licensed to supply their needs. The information these intermediaries acquired about European weapons technology, shipbuilding, mathematics and astronomy, anatomy and medicine, and geography was known as “Dutch studies.”

The Tokugawa government also placed restrictions on the number of Chinese ships that could trade in Japan, but these were harder to enforce. Regional lords in northern and southern Japan not only pursued overseas trade and piracy but also claimed dominion over islands between Japan and Korea to the east and between Japan and Taiwan to the south, including present-day Okinawa. Despite such evasions, the larger lesson is the substantial success of the new shogunate in exercising its authority.

**Elite Decline and Social Crisis**

During the 1700s population growth put a great strain on the well-developed lands of central Japan. In more remote provinces, where the lords promoted new settlements and agricultural expansion, the rate of economic growth far outstripped the growth rate in central Japan.

Also destabilizing the Tokugawa government in the 1700s was the shogunate’s inability to stabilize rice prices and halt the economic decline of the samurai. To finance their living, the samurai had to convert their rice to cash in the market. The Tokugawa government realized that the rice brokers might easily enrich themselves at the expense of the samurai if the price of rice and the rate of interest were not strictly controlled. Laws designed to regulate both had been passed early in the Tokugawa period, and laws requiring moneylenders to forgive samurai debts were added later. But these laws were not always enforced, sometimes because neither the lords nor the samurai wished them to be. By the early 1700s members of both groups were dependent on the willingness of merchants to provide credit.

The Tokugawa shoguns sought to protect the samurai from decline while curbing the growing power of the merchant class. Their legitimacy rested on their ability to reward and protect the interests of the lords and samurai who had supported the Tokugawa conquest. But the Tokugawa government, like the governments of China, Korea, and Vietnam, accepted the Confucian idea that agriculture should be the basis of state wealth and that merchants should occupy lowly positions in society because of their reputed lack of moral character.

Governments throughout East Asia used Confucian philosophy to attempt to limit the influence and power of merchants. The Tokugawa government, however, was at a special disadvantage. Its decentralized system limited its ability to regulate merchant activities and actually stimulated the growth of commercial activities. From the founding of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603 until 1800, the economy grew faster than the population. Household amenities and cultural resources that in China were found only in the cities were common in the Japanese countryside. Despite official disapproval, merchants and others involved in the growing economy enjoyed relative freedom and influence in eighteenth-century Japan. They produced a vivid culture of their own, fostering the development of kabuki theater, colorful woodblock prints and silk-screened fabrics, and restaurants.

The ideological and social crisis of Tokugawa Japan’s transformation from a military to a civil society is captured in the “Forty-Seven Ronin” incident of 1701–1703. A senior minister provoked a young daimyo into drawing his sword at the shogun’s court. For this offense the young lord was sentenced to commit seppuku, a

---

ronin (ROH-neen)  seppuku (SEP-poo-koo)
the supremacy of law. The purity of purpose of the ronin is still celebrated in Japan, but since then Japanese writers, historians, and teachers have recognized that the self-sacrifice of the ronin for the sake of upholding civil law was necessary.

The Tokugawa Shogunate put into place a political and economic system that fostered innovation, but the government itself could not exploit it. Thus, during the Tokugawa period the government remained quite traditional while other segments of society developed new methods of productivity and management.

THE LATER MING AND EARLY QING Empires

Like Japan, China after 1500 experienced civil and foreign wars, an important change in government, and new trading and cultural relations with Europe and its neighbors. The internal and external forces at work in China were different in detail and operated on a much larger scale, but they led in similar directions. By 1800 China had a greatly enhanced empire, an expanding economy, and growing doubts about the importance of European trade and Christianity.

The Ming Empire, 1500–1644

The brilliant economic and cultural achievements of the early Ming Empire continued during the 1500s. Ming manufacturers had transformed the global economy with their techniques for the assembly-line production of porcelain. An international market eager for Ming porcelain, as well as for silk and lacquered furniture, stimulated the commercial development of East Asia, the Indian Ocean, and Europe. But this golden age was followed by many decades of political weakness, warfare, and rural woes until a new dynasty, the Qing, from Manchuria, guided China back to peace and prosperity.

The Europeans whose ships began to seek out new contacts with China in the early sixteenth century left many accounts of their impressions. Like others before them, they were astonished at Ming China’s imperial power, exquisite manufactures, and vast population. European merchants bought such large quantities of the high-grade blue-on-white porcelain commonly

Qing (ching)
used by China’s upper classes that in English all fine dishes became known simply as “china.”

The growing integration of China into the world economy stimulated rapid growth in the silk, cotton, and porcelain industries. Agricultural regions that supplied raw materials to these industries and food for the expanding urban populations also prospered. In exchange for Chinese porcelain and textiles, tens of thousands of tons of silver from Japan and Latin America flowed into China in the century before 1640. The influx of silver led many Chinese to substitute payments in silver for various land taxes, labor obligations, and other kinds of dues.

Ming cities had long been culturally and commercially vibrant. Many large landowners and absentee landlords lived in the cities, as did officials, artists, and merchants who had purchased ranks or prepared their sons for the examinations. The elite classes had created a brilliant culture in which novels, operas, poetry, porcelain, and painting were all closely interwoven. Owners of small businesses catering to the urban elites could make money through printing, tailoring, running restaurants, or selling paper, ink, ink-stones, and writing brushes. The imperial government operated factories for the production of ceramics and silks. Enormous government complexes at Jingdezhen and elsewhere invented assembly-line techniques and produced large quantities of high-quality ceramics for sale in China and abroad.

Despite these achievements, serious problems were developing that left the Ming Empire economically exhausted, politically deteriorating, and technologically lagging behind both its East Asian neighbors and some European countries. Some of these problems were the result of natural disasters associated with climate change and disease. There is evidence that the climate changes known as the Little Ice Age in seventeenth-century Europe affected the climate in China as well (see Issues in World History: The Little Ice Age on page 632). Annual temperatures dropped, reached a low point about 1645, and remained low until the early 1700s. The resulting agricultural distress and famine fueled large uprisings that speeded the end of the Ming Empire. The devastation caused by these uprisings and the spread of epidemic disease resulted in steep declines in local populations.

Along with many benefits, the rapid growth in the trading economy also led to such problems as rapid urban growth and business speculation. Some provinces suffered from price inflation caused by the flood of silver. In contrast to the growing involvement of European governments in promoting economic growth, the Ming government showed little interest in developing the economy and pursued some policies that were inimical to it. Despite the fact that paper currency had failed to find general acceptance as far back as the 1530s, Ming governments persisted in issuing new paper money and promoting copper coins, even after abundant supplies of silver had won the approval of the markets. Corruption was also a serious government problem. By the end of the Ming period the factories were plagued by disorder and inefficiency. The situation became so bad during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that workers held strikes with increasing frequency. During a labor protest at Jingdezhen in 1601, workers threw themselves into the kilns to protest working conditions.

Yet the urban and industrial sectors of later Ming society fared much better than the rural agricultural sector. Following a period of economic growth and recovery from the population decline of the thirteenth century, the rural Ming economy did not maintain strong growth. After the beginning of the sixteenth century, China had knowledge, gained from European traders, of new crops from Africa and America. But they were introduced very slowly, and neither rice-growing regions in southern China nor wheat-growing regions in northern China experienced a meaningful increase in productivity under the later Ming. After 1500 economic depression in the countryside, combined with recurring epidemics in central and southern China, kept rural population growth in check.

### Ming Collapse and the Rise of the Qing

Rising environmental, economic, and administrative problems weakened the Ming Empire but did not cause its fall. That was the result of growing rebellion within and the rising power of the Manchu outside China’s borders.

Insecure boundaries were an indication of the later Ming Empire’s difficulties. The Ming had long been under pressure from the powerful Mongol federations of the north and west. In the late 1500s large numbers of Mongols were unified by their devotion to the Dalai Lama⁴, or universal teacher, of Tibetan Buddhism, whom they regarded as their spiritual leader. Building on this spiritual unity, a brilliant leader named Galdan restored Mongolia as a regional military power around 1600. The Manchu, an agriculturally based people who controlled the region north of Korea, grew stronger in the northeast.

Dalai Lama (DAH-lee LAH-mah)
In the southwest, repeated uprisings occurred among native peoples crowded by the immigration of Chinese farmers. Pirates based in Okinawa and Taiwan, many of them Japanese, frequently looted the southeastern coastal towns. Ming military resources, concentrated against the Mongols and the Manchu in the north, could not be deployed to defend the coasts. As a result, many southern Chinese migrated to Southeast Asia to profit from the sea-trading networks of the Indian Ocean.

As the previous section related, the Japanese invasion of 1592 to 1598 set the Ming collapse in motion. To stop the Japanese the Ming brought Manchu troops into an international force and eventually paid a high price for that invitation. Weakened by the strain of repelling the Japanese, Chinese defenses in the northeast could not stop the advance of Manchu troops, who had already brought Korea under their sway.

Taking advantage of this situation, as the opening of this chapter related, the Chinese rebel leader Li Zicheng advanced and captured Beijing. With the emperor dead by his own hand and the imperial family in flight, a Ming general invited Manchu leaders to help his forces take Beijing from the rebels. The Manchu did so in the summer of 1644. Rather than restoring the Ming, they claimed China for their own and began a forty-year conquest of the rest of the Ming territories (see Diversity and Domination: Gendered Violence: The Yangzhou Massacre). By the end of the century, the Manchu had gained control of south China and incorporated the island of Taiwan into imperial China for the first time (see Map 20.1). They also conquered parts of Mongolia and Central Asia.

Map 20.1 The Qing Empire, 1644–1783 The Qing Empire began in Manchuria and captured north China in 1644. Between 1644 and 1783 the Qing conquered all the former Ming territories and added Taiwan, the lower Amur River basin, Inner Mongolia, eastern Turkestan, and Tibet. The resulting state was more than twice the size of the Ming Empire.
A Manchu family headed the new Qing Empire, and Manchu generals commanded the military forces. But the Manchu were a very small portion of the population, and one of several minorities. The overwhelming majority of Qing officials, soldiers, merchants, and farmers were ethnic Chinese. Like other successful invaders of China, the Qing soon adopted Chinese institutions and policies.

For the European mariners who braved the long voyages to Asia, the China trade was second in importance only to the spice trade of southern Asia. China's vast population and manufacturing skills drew a steady supply of ships from western Europe, but enthusiasm for the trade developed more slowly, especially at the imperial court.

A Portuguese ship reached China at the end of 1513, but it was not permitted to trade. A formal Portuguese embassy in 1517 got bogged down in Chinese protocol and procrastination, and China expelled the Portuguese in 1522. Finally, in 1557 the Portuguese gained the right to trade from a base in Macao. Spain's Asian trade was conducted from Manila in the Philippines, which served as the terminus of trans-Pacific trade routes from South America. For a time, the Spanish and the Dutch both maintained outposts for trade with China and Japan on the island of Taiwan, but in 1662 they were forced to concede control over the island to the Qing, who incorporated Taiwan for the first time as a part of China.

By then, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) had displaced the Portuguese as the major European trader in the Indian Ocean and, despite the setback on Taiwan, was establishing itself as the main European trader in East Asia. VOC representatives courted official favor in China by acknowledging the moral superiority of the emperor. They performed the ritual kowtow, in which the visitor knelt on his head on the floor while crawling toward the throne.

Catholic missionaries accompanied the Portuguese and Spanish merchants to China, just as they did to Japan. While the Franciscans and Dominicans sought to replicate the conversion efforts at the bottom of society that had worked so well in Japan, the Jesuits concentrated their efforts among China's intellectual and political elite. In this they were far more successful than they had been in Japan—at least until the eighteenth century.

The outstanding Jesuit of late Ming China, Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), became expert in the Chinese language and an accomplished scholar of the Confucian classics. Under Ricci's leadership, the Jesuits sought to adapt Catholic Christianity to Chinese cultural traditions while enhancing their status by introducing the Chinese to the latest science and technology from Europe. From 1601 Ricci was allowed to reside in Beijing on an imperial stipend as a Western scholar. Later Jesuits headed the office of astronomy that issued the official calendar.

Emperor Kangxi (r. 1662–1722) The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—particularly the reigns of the Kangxi (r. 1662–1722) and Qianlong (r. 1736–1796) emperors—were a period of great economic, military, and cultural achievement in China. The early Qing emperors wished to foster economic and demographic recovery in China. They repaired the roads and waterways, lowered transit taxes, mandated comparatively low rents and interest rates, and established economic incentives for resettlement of the areas devastated during the peasant rebellions of the late Ming period. Foreign trade was encouraged. Vietnam, Burma, and Nepal sent regular embassies to the Qing tribute court and carried the latest Chinese fashions back home. Overland routes of communication from Korea to Central Asia were revived, and through its conquests the Qing Empire gained access to the superior horses of Afghanistan.

The early Qing conquest of Beijing and north China was carried out under the leadership of a group of Manchu aristocrats who dominated the first Qing emperor based in China and were regents for his young son, who was declared emperor in 1662. This child-emperor, Kangxi, spent several years doing political battle with his regents, and in 1669 he gained real as well as formal control of the government by executing his chief regent. Kangxi was then sixteen. He was an intellectual prodigy who mastered classical Chinese, Manchu, and Mongolian at an early age and memorized the Chinese classics. His reign, lasting until his death in 1722, was marked not only by great expansion of the empire but by great stability as well.

Macao (mah-KOW) Kangxi (KAHN-see) Qianlong (chee-YEN-loong)
Gendered Violence: The Yangzhou Massacre

After the fall of Beijing to the Manchu, the rest of China felt the dominance of the conquerors. The Qing were not eager for reminders of their brutal takeover to circulate. This rare eyewitness account, which survived because it was smuggled out of China, reveals not just the violence of the conquest but also the diversity of its impact on men and women.

The account begins in 1645 as rumors of approaching Manchu soldiers spread through Yangzhou, an important city near the junction of the Yangzi River and the Grand Canal, and the soldiers charged with its defense begin to flee.

Crowds of barefoot and disheveled refugees were flocking into the city. When questioned, they were too distraught to reply. At that point dozens of mounted soldiers in confused waves came surging south looking as though they had given up all hope. Along them appeared a man who turned out to be the commandant himself. It seems he had intended to leave by the east gate but could not because the enemy soldiers outside the wall were drawing too near; he was therefore forced to cut across this part of town to reach the south gate. This is how we first learned for sure that the enemy troops would enter the city.

My house backed against the city wall, and peeping through the chinks in my window, I saw the soldiers on the wall marching south then west, solemn and in step. Although the rain was beating down, it did not seem to disturb them. This reassured me because I gathered that they were well-disciplined units.

...For a long time no one came. I retreated again to the back window and found that the regiment to whom I had broken ranks; some soldiers were walking about, others standing still.

All of a sudden I saw some soldiers escorting a group of women dressed in Yangzhou fashion. This was my first real shock. Back in the house, I said to my wife, "Should things go badly when the soldiers enter the city, you may need to end your life."

"Yes," she replied, "Whatever silver we have you should keep. I think we women can stop thinking about life in this world." She gave me all the silver, unable to control her crying... Soon my younger brother arrived, then my two older brothers. We discussed the situation and I said, "The people who live in our neighborhood are all rich merchants. It will be disastrous if they think we are rich too." I then urged my brothers to brave the rain and quickly take the women by the back route to my older brother's house. His home was situated behind Mr. He's graveyard and was surrounded by the huts of poor families...

Finally, my eldest brother reappeared and said, "People are being killed in the streets! What are we waiting for here? It doesn't matter so much whether we live or die, as long as we brothers stay together." Immediately I gathered together our ancestral tablets and went with him to our second brother's house...

The cunning soldiers, suspecting that many people were still hidden, tried to entice them out by posting a placard promising clemency. About fifty to sixty people, half of them women, emerged. My elder brother said, "We four by ourselves will never survive if we run into these vicious soldiers, so we had better join the crowd. Since there are so many of them, escape will be easier. Even if things do not turn out well, as long as we are together, we will have no cause for regret." In our bewilderment we could think of no other way to save our lives. Thus agreed, we went to join the group.

The leaders were three Manchu soldiers. They searched my brothers and found all the silver they were carrying, but left me untouched. At that point some women appeared, two of whom called out to me. I recognized them as the concubines of my friend Mr. Zhu Shu and stopped them anxiously. They were disheveled and partly naked, their feet bare and covered with mud up to the ankles. One was holding a girl whom the soldiers hit with a whip and threw into the mud. Then we were immediately driven on. One soldier, sword in hand, took the lead; another drove us from behind with a long spear; and a third walked along on our right and left flanks alternately, making sure no one escaped. In groups of twenty or thirty we were herded along like sheep and cattle. If we faltered we were struck, and some people were even killed on the spot. The women were tied together with long chains around their necks, like a clumsy string of pearls. Stumbling at every step, they were soon covered with mud. Here and there on the ground lay babies, trampled by people or horses. Blood and gore soaked the fields, which were...
filled with the sound of sobbing. We passed gutters and ponds piled high with corpses; the blood had turned the water to a deep greenish-red color and filled the ponds to the brim.

... We then entered the house of [a] merchant... which had been taken over by the three soldiers. Another soldier was already there. He had seized several attractive women and was rifling their trunks for fancy silks, which he piled in a heap. Seeing the three soldiers arrive, he laughed and pushed several dozen of us into the back hall. The women he led into a side chamber. ...

The three soldiers stripped the women of their wet clothing all the way to their underwear, then ordered the seamstress to measure them and give them new garments. The women, thus coerced, had to expose themselves and stand naked. What shame they endured! Once they had changed, the soldiers grabbed them and forced them to join them in eating and drinking, then did whatever they pleased with them, without any regard for decency.

[The narrator escapes and hides atop a wooden canopy over a bed.] Later on a soldier brought a woman in and wanted her to sleep with him in the bed below me. Despite her refusal he forced her to yield. "This is too near the street. It is not a good place to stay," the woman said. I was almost discovered, but after a time the soldier departed with the woman. ... [The narrator flees again and is reunited with his wife and relatives.]

At length, however, there came a soldier of the "Wolf Men" tribe, a vicious-looking man with a head like a mouse and eyes like a hawk. He attempted to abduct my wife. She was obliged to creep forward on all fours, pleading as she had with the others, but to no avail. When he insisted that she stand up, she rolled on the ground and refused. He then beat her so savagely with the flat of his sword that the blood flowed out in streams, totally soaking her clothes. Because my wife had once admonished me, "If I am unlucky I will die no matter what; do not plead for me as a husband or you will get caught too," I acted as if I did not know she was being beaten and hid far away in the grass, convinced she was about to die. Yet the depraved soldier did not stop there; he grabbed her by the hair, cursed her, struck her cruelly, and then dragged her away by the leg. ... Just then they ran into a body of mounted soldiers. One of them said a few words to the soldier in Manchu. At this he dropped my wife and departed with them. Barely able to crawl back, she let out a loud sob, every part of her body injured. ...

Unexpectedly there appeared a handsome looking man of less than thirty, a double-edged sword hung by his side, dressed in Manchu-style hat, red coat, and a pair of black boots. His follower, in a yellow jacket, was also very gallant in appearance. Immediately behind them were several residents of Yangzhou. The young man in red, inspecting me closely, said, "I would judge from your appearance that you are not one of these people. Tell me honestly, what class of person are you?"

I remembered that some people had obtained pardons and others had lost their lives the moment they said that they were poor scholars. So I did not dare come out at once with the truth and instead concocted a story. He pointed to my wife and son and asked who they were, and I told him the truth. "Tomorrow the prince will order that all swords be sheathed and all of you will be spared," he said and then commanded his followers to give us some clothes and an ingot of silver. He also asked me, "How many days have you been without food?"

"Five days," I replied.

"Then come with me," he commanded. Although we only half trusted him, we were afraid to disobey. He led us to a well-stocked house, full of rice, fish, and other provisions. "Treat these four people well," he said to a woman in the house and then left. ...

The next day was [April 30]. Killing and pillaging continued, although not on the previous scale. Still the mansions of the rich were thoroughly looted, and almost all the teenage girls were abducted. ... every grain of rice, every inch of silk now entered these tigers' mouths. The resulting devastation is beyond description.

[May 2]. Civil administration was established in all the prefectures and counties; proclamations were issued aimed at calming the people, and monks from each temple were ordered to burn corpses. The temples themselves were clogged with women who had taken refuge, many of whom had died of fright or starvation. The "List of Corpses Buried" records more than eight hundred thousand, and this list does not include those who jumped into wells, threw themselves into the river, hanged themselves, were burned to death inside houses, or were carried away by the soldiers. ...

When this calamity began there had been eight of us: my two elder brothers, my younger brother, my elder brother's wife, their son, my wife, my son, and myself. Now only three of us survived for sure, though the fate of my wife's brother and sister-in-law was not yet known. ...

From the 25th of the fourth month to the 5th of the fifth month was a period of ten days. I have described here only what I actually experienced or saw with my own eyes; I have not recorded anything I picked up from rumor or hearsay.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What accounts for the soldiers' brutal treatment of the women?
2. What did different women do to protect themselves?
3. Having conquered, what did the Manchu do to restore order?
The Qing rulers were as anxious as the Ming to consolidate their northern frontiers, especially as they feared an alliance between Galdan's Mongol state and the expanding Russian presence along the Amur River. In the 1680s Kangxi sent forces to attack the wooden forts on the northern bank of the Amur that hardy Russian scouts had built. Neither empire sent large forces into the Amur territories, and the contest was partly a struggle for the goodwill of the local Evenk and Daur peoples. The Qing emperor emphasized the importance of treading lightly in the struggle and well understood the principles of espionage:

Upon reaching the lands of the Evenks and the Dagurs you will send to announce that you have come to hunt deer. Meanwhile, keep a careful record of the distance and go, while hunting, along the northern bank of the Amur until you come by the shortest route to the town of Russian settlement at Alazin. Thoroughly reconnoiter its location and situation. I don’t think the Russians will take a
chance on attacking you. If they offer you food, accept it and show your gratitude. If they do attack you, don’t fight back. In that case, lead your people and withdraw into our own territories. For I have a plan of my own.2

That delicacy gives a false impression of the intensity of the struggle between these two great empires. Qing forces twice attacked Albazin. The Qing were worried about Russian alliances with other frontier peoples, while Russia wished to protect its access to the furs, timber, and metals concentrated in Siberia, Manchuria, and Yakutsk. The Qing and Russians were also rivals for control of northern Asia’s Pacific coast. Continued conflict would benefit neither side. In 1689 the Qing and Russian Empires negotiated the Treaty of Nerchinsk, using Jesuit missionaries as interpreters. The treaty fixed the border along the Amur River and regulated trade across it. Although this was a thinly settled area, the treaty proved important since the frontier it demarcated has long endured.

The next step was to settle the Mongolian frontier. Kangxi personally led troops in the great campaigns that defeated Galdan and brought Inner Mongolia under Qing control by 1691.

Kangxi was distinguished by his openness to new ideas and technologies from different regions. Unlike the rulers of Japan, who drove Christian missionaries out, he welcomed Jesuit advisers and put them in important offices. Jesuits helped create maps in the European style as practical guides to newly conquered regions and as symbols of Qing dominance. Kangxi considered introducing the European calendar, but protests from the Confucian elite were so strong that the plan was dropped. The emperor frequently discussed scientific and philosophical issues with the Jesuits. When he fell ill with malaria in the 1690s, Jesuit medical expertise (in this case, the use of quinine) aided his recovery. Kangxi also ordered the creation of illustrated books in Manchu detailing European anatomical and pharmaceutical knowledge.

To gain converts among the Chinese elite, the Jesuits made important compromises in their religious teaching. The most important was their toleration of Confucian ancestor worship. The matter caused great controversy between the Jesuits and their Catholic rivals in China, the Franciscans and Dominicans, and also between the Jesuits and the pope. In 1690 the disagreement reached a high pitch. Kangxi wrote to Rome supporting the Jesuit position. Further disagreement with a papal legate to China led Kangxi to order the expulsion of all missionaries who refused to sign a certificate accepting his position. Most of the Jesuits signed, but relations with the imperial court were irreparably harmed. Jesuit presence in China declined in the eighteenth century, and later Qing emperors persecuted Christians rather than naming them to high offices.

Chinese Influences on Europe

The exchange of information between the Qing and the Europeans that Kangxi had fostered was never one-way. When the Jesuits informed the Qing court on matters of anatomy, for instance, the Qing were able to demonstrate an early form of inoculation, called “variolation,” that had been used to stem the spread of smallpox after the Qing conquest of Beijing. The technique helped inspire the development of other vaccines later in Europe.

Similarly, Jesuit writings about the intellectual and cultural achievements of China excited admiration in Europe. The wealthy and the aspiring middle classes of Europe demanded Chinese things—or things that looked to Europeans as if they could be Chinese. Not only silk, porcelain, and tea were avidly sought, but also cloisonné jewelry, tableware and decorative items, lacquered and jeweled room dividers, painted fans, and carved jade and ivory (which originated in Africa and was finished in China). One of the most striking Chinese influences on European interior life in this period was wallpaper—an adaptation of the Chinese practice of covering walls with enormous loose-hanging watercolors or calligraphy scrolls. By the mid-1700s special workshops throughout China were producing wallpaper and other consumer items according to the specifications of European merchants. The items were shipped to Canton for export to Europe.

In political philosophy, too, the Europeans felt they had something to learn from the early Qing emperors. In the late 1770s poems supposedly written by Emperor Qianlong were translated into French and disseminated through the intellectual circles of western Europe. These works depicted the Qing emperors as benevolent despots who campaigned against superstition and ignorance, curbed the excesses of the aristocracy, and patronized science and the arts. European intellectuals who were questioning their own political systems found the image of a practical, secular, compassionate ruler intriguing. The French thinker Voltaire proclaimed the Qing emperors model philosopher-kings and advocated such rulership as a protection against the growth of aristocratic privilege.
Tea and Diplomacy

The Qing were eager to expand China’s economic influence but were determined to control the trade very strictly. To make trade easier to tax and to limit piracy and smuggling, the Qing permitted only one market point for each foreign sector. Thus Europeans were permitted to trade only at Canton.

This system worked well enough for European traders until the late 1700s, when Britain became worried about its massive trade deficit with China. From bases in India and Singapore, British traders moved eastward to China and eventually displaced the Dutch as China’s leading European trading partner. The directors of the East India Company (EIC) believed that China’s technological achievements and gigantic potential markets made it the key to limitless profit. China had tea, rhubarb, porcelain, and silk to offer. By the early 1700s the EIC dominated European trading in Canton.

Great Pagoda at Kew Gardens  A testament to Europeans’ fascination with Chinese culture is the towering Pagoda at the Royal Botanic Gardens in London. Completed in 1762, it was designed by Sir William Chambers as the principal ornament in the pleasure grounds of the White House at Kew, residence of Augusta, the mother of King George III. (Martin Mckeny/Alamy)

Tea from China had spread overland on Eurasian routes in medieval and early modern times to become a prized import in Russia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, all of which knew it by its northern Chinese name, cha—as do the Portuguese. Other western Europeans acquired tea from the sea routes and thus know it by its name in the Fujian province of coastal China and Taiwan: té. In much of Europe, tea competed with chocolate and coffee as a fashionable drink by the mid-1600s.

Great fortunes were being made in the tea trade, but the English had not found a product to sell to China. They believed that China was a vast unexploited market, with hundreds of millions of potential consumers of lamp oil made from whale blubber, cotton grown in India or the American South, or guns manufactured in London or Connecticut. Particularly after the loss of the thirteen American colonies, Britain feared that its markets would diminish, and the EIC and other British merchants believed that only the Qing trade system—the
"Canton system," as the British called it—stood in the way of opening new paths for commerce.

The British government also worried about Britain's massive trade deficit with China. Because the Qing Empire rarely bought anything from Britain, British silver poured into China to pay for imported tea and other products. The Qing government, whose revenues were declining in the later 1700s while its expenses rose, needed the silver. But in Britain the imbalance of payments stirred anxiety and anger over the restrictions that the Qing placed on imported foreign goods. To make matters worse, the East India Company had managed its worldwide holdings badly, and as it teetered on bankruptcy, its attempts to manipulate Parliament became increasingly intrusive. In 1792 the British government dispatched Lord George Macartney, a well-connected peer with practical experience in Russia and India, to China. Including scientists, artists, and translators as well as guards and diplomats, the Macartney mission showed Britain's great interest in the Qing Empire as well as the EIC's desire to revise the trade system.

China was not familiar with the European system of ambassadors, and Macartney struggled to portray himself in Chinese terms as a "tribute emissary" come to salute the Qianlong emperor's eightieth birthday. He steadfastly refused to perform the kowtow to the emperor, but he did agree to bow on one knee as he would to his own monarch, King George III. The Qianlong emperor received Macartney courteously in September 1793, but he refused to alter the Canton trading system, open new ports of trade, or allow the British to establish a permanent mission in Beijing. The Qing had no interest in changing a system that provided revenue to the imperial family and lessened serious piracy problems. Qianlong sent a letter to King George explaining that China had no need to increase its foreign trade, had no use for Britain's ingenious devices and manufacturers, and set no value on closer diplomatic ties.

Dutch, French, and Russian embassies soon attempted to achieve what Macartney had failed to do. When they also failed, European frustration with the Qing mounted. The great European admiration for China faded, and China was considered despotism, self-satisfied, and unrealistic. Political solutions seemed impossible because the Qing court would not communicate with foreign envoys or observe the simplest rules of the diplomatic system familiar to Europeans. In Macartney's view, China was like a venerable old warship, well maintained and splendid to look at, but obsolete and no longer up to the task.

Population and Social Stress

The Chinese who escorted Macartney and his entourage in 1792-1793 took them through China's prosperous cities and productive farmland. The visitors did not see evidence of the economic and environmental decline that had begun to affect China in the last decades of the 1700s. The population explosion had intensified demand for rice and wheat, for land to be opened for the planting of crops imported from Africa and the Americas, and for more thorough exploitation of land already in use.

In the peaceful decades of Qing rule, China's population had grown to three times its size in 1500. If one accepts an estimate of some 350 million in the late 1700s, China had twice the population of all of Europe. Despite the efficiency of Chinese agriculture and the gradual adoption of New World crops such as corn and sweet potatoes, population growth led to social and environmental problems. More people meant less land per person for farming. Increased demand for building materials and firewood sharply reduced China's remaining woodlands. Deforestation, in turn, accelerated wind and water erosion and increased the danger of flooding. Dams and dikes were not maintained, and silted-up river channels were not dredged. By the end of the eighteenth century parts of the thousand-year-old Grand Canal linking the rivers of north and south China were nearly unusable, and the towns that bordered it were starved for commerce.

The result was misery in many parts of interior China. Some districts responded by increasing production of cash crops such as tea, cotton, and silk that were tied to the export market. Some peasants sought seasonal jobs in better-off agricultural areas or worked in low-status jobs such as barge puller, charcoal burner, or night soil carrier. Many drifted to the cities to make their way by begging, prostitution, or theft. In central and southwestern China, where serious floods had impoverished many farmers, rebellions became endemic. Often joining in revolt were various indigenous peoples, who were largely concentrated in the less fertile lands in the south and in the northern and western borderlands of the empire (see Map 20.2).

The Qing government was not up to controlling its vast empire. Though twice the size of the Ming geographically, the Qing Empire employed about the same
The Russian Empire

From modest beginnings in 1500, Russia expanded rapidly during the next three centuries to create an empire that stretched from eastern Europe across northern Asia and into North America. Russia also became one of the major powers of Europe by 1750, with armies capable of mounting challenges to its Asian and European neighbors.

The Drive Across Northern Asia

The Russians were a branch of the Slavic peoples of eastern Europe, and most were Orthodox Christians like the Greeks. During the centuries just before 1500, their history had been dominated by Asian rule. The Mongol Khanate of the Golden Horde had ruled the Russians and their neighbors from the 1240s until 1480.

Under the Golden Horde Moscow became the most important Russian city and the center of political power. Moscow lay in the forest that stretched across northern
Eurasia, in contrast to the treeless steppe (plains) favored by Mongol horsemen for pasture. The princes of Muscovy, the territory surrounding the city of Moscow, led the movement against the Golden Horde and ruthlessly annexed the great territories of the neighboring Russian state of Novgorod in 1478.

Once free from Mongol domination, the princes of Moscovy set out on conquests that in time made them masters of the old dominions of the Golden Horde and then of a far greater empire. Prince Ivan IV (r. 1533–1584) pushed the conquests south and east, expanding Russia's borders far to the east through the conquest of the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan and the northern Caucasus region (see Map 20.3).

At the end of the sixteenth century, Russians ruled the largest state in Europe and large territories on the Asian side of the Ural Mountains as well. Since 1547 the Russian ruler used the title tsar (from the Roman imperial title "caesar"), the term Russians had used for the rulers of the Mongol Empire. The Russian church promoted the idea of Moscow as the "third Rome," successor to the Roman Empire's second capital, Constantinople, which had fallen to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. But such foreign titles were a thin veneer over a very Russian pattern of expansion.

Online Study Center
Improve Your Grade
Interactive Map: Expansion of Russia, to 1725

These claims to greatness were also exaggerated: in 1660 the Russian Empire was poor, backward, and landlocked. Only the northern city of Arkangelusk was connected by water to the rest of the world—when its harbor was not frozen. The independent Crimean peoples to the south were powerful enough to sack Moscow in 1571. Beyond them, the still vigorous Ottoman Empire controlled the shores of the Black Sea, while the Safavid rulers of Iran dominated the trade routes of southern Central Asia. The powerful kingdoms of Sweden and Poland-Lithuania to the west turned back Russian forces trying to gain access to the warmer waters of the Baltic Sea and pummeled them badly.

A path of less resistance lay to the east across Siberia, and it had much to recommend it. Many Russians felt more at home in the forested northern part of Siberia than on the open steppes, and the thinly inhabited region teemed with valuable resources. Most prominent of these resources was the soft, dense fur that forest animals grew to survive the long winter cold. Like their counterparts in Canada (see Chapter 17), hardy Russian pioneers in Siberia made a living from animal pelts. The merchants from western Europe and other lands who came to buy these furs in Moscow provided the tsars with revenues and access to European technology.

Early Russian exploration of Siberia was not the work of the state but of the Stroganovs, a wealthy Russian trading family. The small bands of hunting and fishing peoples who inhabited this cold and desolate region had no way of resisting the armed adventurers hired by the Stroganovs. Their troops attacked the only political power in the region, the Khanate of Siber, and they used their rifles to destroy the khanate in 1582. Taking advantage of rivers to move through the almost impenetrable forests, Russian fur trappers reached the Pacific during the seventeenth century and soon crossed over into Alaska. Russian political control followed at a much slower pace. In the seventeenth century Siberia was a frontier zone with widely scattered forts, not a province under full control. Native Siberian peoples continued to resist Russian control fiercely, and the Russians had to placate local leaders with gifts and acknowledge their rights and authority. From the early seventeenth century the tsar also used Siberia as a penal colony for criminals and political prisoners.

The trade in furs and forest products helped ease Russian isolation and fund further conquests. The eastward expansion of the Russian state took second place during the seventeenth century to the tsars' efforts to build political and military power and establish control over the more numerous peoples of Siberia and the steppe.

In the 1640s Russian settlers had begun to move into the valley of the Amur River east of Mongolia in order to grow grain. The government's wooden forts aroused the concerns of the Ming about yet another threat on their northern frontier. As seen already, by the time the Qing were in a position to deal with the Russian presence, the worrisome threat of Galdan's Mongol military power had arisen. Equally concerned about the Mongols, the Russians were pleased to work out a frontier agreement with China. The 1689 Treaty of Nerschinsk recognized Russian claims west of Mongolia but required the Russians to withdraw their settlements east. Moreover, the negotiations showed China's recognition of Russia as an important and powerful neighbor.

Russian Society and Politics to 1725

Russian expansion produced far-reaching demographic changes and more gradual changes in the relations of the tsar with the elite classes. A third transformation was in the freedom and mobility of the Russian peasantry.

As the empire expanded, it incorporated people with different languages, religious beliefs, and ethnic identities. The emerging Russian Empire included peoples who
Map 20.3 The Expansion of Russia, 1500–1800  Sweden and Poland initially blocked Russian expansion in Europe, while the Ottoman Empire blocked the southwest. In the sixteenth century, Russia began to expand east, toward Siberia and the Pacific Ocean. By the end of the rule of Catherine the Great in 1796, Russia encompassed all of northern and northeastern Eurasia.
spoke Asian languages and who were not Christians. Language differences were not hard to overcome, but religious and other cultural differences often caused tensions, especially when differences were manipulated for political purposes. Orthodox missionaries made great efforts to turn people in Siberia into Christians, in much the same way that Catholic missionaries did in Canada. But among the more populous steppe peoples, Islam eventually replaced Christianity as the dominant religion. More fundamental than language, ethnicity, or religion were the differences in how people made their living. Russians tended to live as farmers, hunters, builders, scribes, or merchants, while those newly incorporated into the empire were mostly herdsmen, caravan workers, and soldiers.

As people mixed, individual and group identities could become quite complex. Even among Russian speakers who were members of the Russian Orthodox Church there was wide diversity of identity. The Cossacks are a revealing example. The name probably came from a Turkic word for a warrior or mercenary soldier and referred to bands of people living on the steppes between Moscovy and the Caspian and Black Seas. In practice, Cossacks became highly diverse in their origins and beliefs. What mattered was that they belonged to close-knit bands, were superb riders and fighters, and were feared by both the villagers and the legal authorities. Cossacks made temporary allegiances with many rulers but were most loyal to their bands and to whoever was currently paying for their military services.

Many Cossacks were important allies in the expansion of the Russian Empire. They formed the majority of the soldiers and early settlers employed by the Stroganovs in the penetration of Siberia. Most historians believe that Cossacks founded all the major towns of Russian Siberia. They also manned the Russian camps on the Amur River. The Cossacks west of the Urals performed distinctive service for Russia in defending against Swedish and Ottoman incursions, but they also resisted any efforts to undermine their own political autonomy. Those in the rich and populous lands of the Ukraine, for example, rebelled when the tsar agreed to a division of their lands with Poland-Lithuania in 1667.

In the early seventeenth century Swedish and Polish forces briefly occupied Moscow on separate occasions. In the midst of this “Time of Troubles” the old line of Muscovite rulers was finally deposed, and the Russian aristocracy—the boyars—allowed one of their own, Mikhail Romanov, to become tsar (r. 1613–1645). The early Romanov rulers saw a close connection between the consolidation of their own authority and successful competition with neighboring powers. They tended to represent conflicts between Slavic Russians and Turkic peoples of Central Asia as being between Christians and “infidels” or between the civilized and the “barbaric.” Despite this rhetoric, it is important to understand that these cultural groups were defined less by blood ties than by the way in which they lived.

The political and economic transformations of the Russian Empire had serious repercussions for the peasants who tillled the land in European Russia. As centralized power rose, the freedom of the peasants fell. The process was longer and more complex than the rise of slavery in the Americas. The Muscovite rulers and early tsars rewarded their loyal nobles with grants of land that included obligations of the local peasants to work for these lords. Law and custom permitted peasants to change masters during a two-week period each year, which encouraged lords to treat their peasants well, but the rising commercialization of agriculture also raised the value of these labor obligations.

The long periods of civil and foreign warfare in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries caused such disruption and economic decline that many peasants fled to the Cossacks or across the Urals to escape. Some who couldn’t flee sold themselves into slavery to ensure a steady supply of food. When peace returned, landlords sought to recover these runaway peasants and bind them more firmly to their land. A law change in 1649 completed the transformation of peasants into serfs by eliminating the period when they could change masters and removing limitations on the length of the period during which runaways could be forced to return to their masters.

Like slavery, serfdom was a hereditary status, but in theory the serf was tied to a piece of land, not owned by a master. In practice, the difference between serfdom and slavery grew finer as the laws regulating serfdom became stricter. By 1723 all Russian slaves were transformed into serfs. In the Russian census of 1795, serfs made up over half the population of Russia. The serfs were under the control of landowners who made up only 2 percent of Russia’s population, similar to the size of the slave-owning class in the Caribbean.

**Peter the Great**
The greatest of the Romanovs was Tsar Peter the Great (r. 1689–1725), who made major changes to reduce Russia’s isolation and increase the empire’s size and power. Tsar Peter is remembered for his efforts to turn Russia away from its Asian cultural connections and toward what he deemed the civilization of the West. In fact, he accelerated trends under way for some time. By the time he ascended the throne, there

---

**boyar (BOY-ar)**

**Romanov (ROH-man-oh or roh-MAN-oh)**
Peter the Great  This portrait from his time as a student in Holland in 1697 shows Peter as ruggedly masculine and practical, quite unlike most royal portraits of the day that posed rulers in foppish elegance and haughty majesty. Peter was a popular military leader as well as an autocratic ruler. (Collection, Countess Bohrinsky/ Michael Holford)

were hundreds of foreign merchants in Moscow; western European soldiers had trained a major part of the army in new weapons and techniques; and Italian architects had made an impression on the city's churches and palaces. It was on this substantial base that Peter erected a more rapid transformation of Russia.

Peter matured quickly both physically and mentally. In his youth the government was in the hands of his half-sister Sophia, who was regent on behalf of him and her sickly brother Ivan. Living on an estate near the foreigners' quarter outside Moscow, Peter learned what he could of life outside Russia and busied himself with gaining practical skills in blacksmithing, carpentry, shipbuilding, and the arts of war. He organized his own military drill unit among other young men. When Princess Sophia tried to take control of the government in 1689, Peter rallied enough support to send her to a monastery, secure the abdication of Ivan, and take charge of Russia. He was still in his teens.

Peter concerned himself with Russia's expansion and modernization. To secure a warm-water port on the Black Sea, he constructed a small but formidable navy that could blockade Ottoman ports. Describing his wars with the Ottoman Empire as a new crusade to liberate Constantinople from the Muslim sultans, Peter also saw himself as the legal protector of Orthodox Christians living under Ottoman rule. Peter's forces had seized the port of Azov in 1696, but the fortress was lost again in 1713, and Russian expansion southward was blocked for the rest of Peter's reign.

In the winter of 1697–1698, after his Black Sea campaign, Peter traveled in disguise across Europe to discover how western European societies were becoming so powerful and wealthy. The young tsar paid special attention to ships and weapons, even working for a time as a ship's carpenter in the Netherlands. With great insight, he perceived that western European success owed as much to trade and toleration as to technology. Trade generated the money to spend on weapons, while toleration attracted talented persons fleeing persecution. Upon his return to Russia, Peter resolved to expand and reform his vast and backward empire.

In the long and costly Great Northern War (1700–1721), his modernized armies broke Swedish control of the Baltic Sea, establishing more direct contacts between Russia and Europe. Peter's victory forced the European powers to recognize Russia as a major power for the first time.

On land captured from Sweden at the eastern end of the Baltic, Peter built St. Petersburg, a new city that was to be his window on the West. In 1712 the city became Russia's capital. To demonstrate Russia's new sophistication, Peter ordered architects to build St. Petersburg's houses and public buildings in the baroque style then fashionable in France.

Peter also pushed the Russian elite to imitate western European fashions. He personally shaved off his noblemen's long beards to conform to Western styles and ordered them to wear Western clothing. To end the traditional seclusion of upper-class Russian women, Peter required officials, officers, and merchants to bring their wives to the social gatherings he organized in the capital. He also directed the nobles to educate their children.

Another of Peter's strategies was to reorganize Russian government along the lines of the powerful German state of Prussia. To break the power of the boyars he sharply reduced their traditional roles in government
and the army. The old boyar council of Moscow was replaced by a group of advisors in St. Petersburg, whom the tsar appointed. Members of the traditional nobility continued to serve as generals and admirals, but officers in Peter’s modern, professional army and navy were promoted according to merit, not birth.

The goal of Peter’s westernization strategy was to strengthen the Russian state and increase the power of the tsar. A decree of 1716 proclaimed that the tsar “is not obliged to answer to anyone in the world for his doings, but possesses power and authority over his kingdom and land, to rule them at his will and pleasure as a Christian ruler.” Under this expansive definition of his role, Peter brought the Russian Orthodox Church more firmly under state control, built factories and iron and copper foundries to provide munitions and supplies for the military, and increased the burdens of taxes and forced labor on the serfs. Peter was an absolutist ruler of the sort then popular in western Europe, and he had no more intention of improving the conditions of the serfs, on whose labors the production of basic foodstuffs depended, than did the European slave owners of the Americas.

Consolidation of the Empire

Russia’s eastward expansion also continued under Peter the Great and his successors. The frontier settlement with China and Qianlong’s quashing of Inner Mongolia in 1689 freed Russians to concentrate on the northern Pacific. The Pacific northeast was colonized, and in 1741 an expedition led by Captain Vitus Bering crossed the strait (later named for him) into North America. In 1799 a Russian company of merchants received a monopoly over the Alaskan fur trade, and its agents were soon active along the entire northwestern coast of North America.

Far more important than these immense territories in the cold and thinly populated north were the populous agricultural lands to the west acquired during the reign of Catherine the Great (r. 1762–1796). A successful war with the Ottoman Empire gave Russia control of the rich north shore of the Black Sea by 1783. As a result of three successive partitions of the once powerful kingdom of Poland between 1772 and 1795, Russia’s frontiers advanced 600 miles (nearly 1,000 kilometers) to the west.
(see Map 20.3). When Catherine died, the Russian Empire extended from Poland in the west to Alaska in the east, from the Barents Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south.

Catherine also made important additions to Peter’s policies of promoting industry and building a canal system to improve trade. Besides furs, the Russians had also become major exporters of gold, iron, and timber. Catherine implemented administrative reforms and showed a special talent for diplomacy. Through her promotion of the ideas of the Enlightenment, she expanded Peter’s policies of westernizing the Russian elite.

### Comparative Perspectives

China and Russia are examples of the phenomenal flourishing of empires in Eurasia between 1500 and 1800. Already a vast empire under the Ming, China doubled in size under the Qing, mostly through westward expansion into less densely populated areas. In expanding from a modestly sized principality into the world’s largest land empire, Russia added rich and well-populated lands to the west and south and far larger but less populous lands to the east. Russia and China were land based, just like the Ottoman and Mongol Empires, with the strengths and problems of administrative control and tax collection that size entailed.

Japan was different. Though nominally headed by an emperor, Japan’s size and ethnic homogeneity do not support calling it an empire in the same breath with China and Russia. Tokugawa Japan was similar in size and population to France, the most powerful state of western Europe, but its political system was much more decentralized. Japan’s efforts to add colonies on the East Asian mainland had failed.

China had once led the world in military innovation (including the first uses of gunpowder), but the modern “gunpowder revolution” of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was centered in the Ottoman Empire and western European states. Although the centuries after 1500 were full of successful military operations, Chinese armies continued to depend on superior numbers and tactics for their success, rather than on new technology. As in the past, infantrymen armed with guns served alongside others armed with bows and arrows, swords, and spears.

The military forces of Japan and Russia underwent more innovative changes than those of China, in part through Western contacts. In the course of its sixteenth-century wars of unification, Japan produced its own gunpowder revolution but thereafter lacked the motivation and the means to stay abreast of the world’s most advanced military technology. By the eighteenth century Russia had made greater progress in catching up with its European neighbors, but its armies still relied more on their size than on the sophistication of their weapons.

Naval power provides the greatest military contrast among the three. Eighteenth-century Russia constructed modern fleets of warships in the Baltic and Black Seas, but neither China nor Japan developed navies commensurate with their size and coastlines. China’s defenses against pirates and other sea invaders were left to its maritime provinces, whose small war junks were armed with only a half-dozen cannon. Japan’s naval capacity was similarly decentralized. In 1792, when Russian ships exploring the North Pacific turned toward the Japanese coast, the local daimyo used his own forces to chase them away. All Japanese daimyo understood that they would be on their own if foreign incursions increased.

The expansion of China and Russia incorporated not just new lands but also diverse new peoples. Chinese society had long been diverse, and its geographical, occupational, linguistic, and religious differences grew as the Qing expanded (see Map 20.2). China had also long used Confucian models, imperial customs, and a common system of writing to transcend such differences and to assimilate elites. Russia likewise approached its new peoples with a mixture of pragmatic tolerance and a propensity for seeing Russian ways and beliefs as superior. The Russian language was strongly promoted. Religion was a particular sore point, as Russian Orthodox missionaries, with the support of the tsars, encouraged conversion of Siberian peoples. Russia absorbed new ideas and styles from western Europe, although even among the elite
The formation of the Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan is a clear example of a society changing from within. Hideyoshi failed in his attempt to conquer Korea and China, and the Shogunate arose from the resolution of civil wars between rival daimyo. A decentralized government led to the rise of a powerful merchant class, but the Shogunate's inability to stabilize rice prices contributed to the economic decline of the samurai, who became dependent on merchants to extend them credit. The decisions of government to suppress the Christianity that some Japanese had adopted from European missionaries and to severely curtail commercial and intellectual contacts with distant Europe illustrate how readily Japan could control its dealings with outsiders.

China's history illustrates a more complex interplay of internal and external forces. In the world's most populous state, the already faltering Ming dynasty was greatly weakened by Hideyoshi's Japanese invasion through Korea, overthrown by Li Zicheng's rebels from within, and replaced by the conquering armies of the Manchu from across the northern frontier. The Qing's settlement of the Amur frontier with Russia illustrates how diplomacy and compromise could serve mutual interests. Finally, the Chinese added new European customers to already extensive internal and external markets and developed both positive and problematic cultural relations with the Jesuits and some other Europeans. From a Chinese perspective, European contacts could be useful but were neither essential nor of great importance.

The internal and external factors in Russia's history are the hardest to sort out. Especially problematic is assessing the rising importance of the West in light of Russia's growing trade in that direction, Russia's emergence as a European Great Power, and the stated policies of both Peter the Great and Catherine the Great to Westernize their people. Clearly, Western influences were important, but their importance can easily be exaggerated. The impetus for Muscovy's expansion came out of its own history and domination by the Mongols. Trade with western Europe was not the center of the Russian economy. Tsar Peter was interested in imitating Western technology, not the full range of Western culture. The Russian church was quite hostile to Catholics and Protestants, whom it regarded as heretics. Peter banned the Jesuits from Russia, considering them a subversive and backward influence.
KEY TERMS

Manchu  p. 558  
daimyo  p. 556  
samurai  p. 559  
Tokugawa shogunate  p. 559  
Ming Empire  p. 564  
Qing Empire  p. 567

Kangxi  p. 567  
Amur River  p. 570

Macartney mission  p. 573  
Muscovy  p. 575

Ural Mountains  p. 575

tsar  p. 575  
Siberia  p. 575  
Cossacks  p. 577  
serfs  p. 577

Peter the Great  p. 577

SUGGESTED READING

A fascinating place to begin is with John E. Wills, Jr., 1688: A Global History (2001), Part III, “Three Worlds Apart: Russia, China, and Japan.”


For Jesuits in East Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Michael Cooper, S.J., Rodrigues the Interpreter: An Early Jesuit in Japan and China (1974); David E. Mungello, Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology (1989); and Jonathan D. Spence, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci (1984). Still useful are C. R. Boxer, The Christian Century in Japan, 1549–1650 (1951), and Cornelius Wesoloski, Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia, 1693–1721 (1924). On European images of and interactions with China connected to the Jesuits, see the relevant portions of Jonathan D. Spence, The China


On the development of global commerce in tea, coffee, and cocoa, see the relevant chapters in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, Drugs and Narcotics in History (1995).

NOTES

1. Adapted from Jonathan D. Spence, The Search for Modern China (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 21–25.

The Little Ice Age

A giant volcanic eruption in the Peruvian Andes in 1600 affected the weather in many parts of the world for several years. When volcanic ash from the eruption of Mount Huaynaputina (hoo-AY-nah-poo-TA-TEF-uh) shot into the upper atmosphere and spread around the world, it screened out sunlight. As a result, the summer of 1601 was the coldest in two hundred years in the northern hemisphere.

Archaeologist Brian Fagan has pointed out that Mount Huaynaputina’s chilling effects were a spectacular event in a much longer pattern of climate change that has been called the Little Ice Age. Although global climate had been cooling since the late 1200s, in the northern temperate regions the 1590s had been exceptionally cold. Temperatures remained cooler than normal throughout the seventeenth century.

The most detailed information on the Little Ice Age comes from Europe. Glaciers in the Alps grew much larger. Trade became difficult when rivers and canals that had once been navigable in winter froze solid from bank to bank. In the coldest years, the growing season in some places was as much as two months shorter than normal. Unexpectedly late frosts withered the tender shoots of newly planted crops in spring. Wheat and barley ripened more slowly during cooler summers and were often damaged by early fall frosts.

People could survive a smaller-than-average harvest in one year by drawing on food reserves, but when cold weather damaged crops in two or more successive years, the consequences were devastating. Deaths due to malnutrition and cold increased sharply when summer temperatures in northern Europe registered 2.7°F (1.5°C) lower than average in 1674 and 1675 and again in 1694 and 1695. The cold spell of 1694 and 1695 caused a famine in Finland that carried off a quarter to a third of the population.

At the time people had no idea what was causing the unusual cold of the Little Ice Age. Advances in climate history make it clear that the cause was not a single terrestrial event such as the eruption of Mount Huaynaputina. Nor was the Little Ice Age the product of human actions, unlike some climate changes such as today’s global warming.

Ultimately, the earth’s weather is governed by the sun. In the seventeenth century astronomers in Europe reported seeing fewer sunspots, dark spots on the sun’s surface that are indicative of solar activity and thus the sun’s warming power. Diminished activity in the sun was primarily responsible for the Little Ice Age.

If the sun was the root cause, the effects of global cooling should not have been confined to northern Europe. Although contemporary accounts are much scarcer in other parts of the world, there is evidence of climate changes around the world in this period. Observations of sunspots in China, Korea, and Japan drop to zero between 1639 and 1700. China experienced unusually cool weather in the seventeenth century, although the warfare and disruption accompanying the fall of the Ming and the rise of the Qing probably were much more to blame for the famines and rural distress of that period.

By itself, a relatively slight decrease in average annual temperature would not have a significant effect on human life outside the northern temperate areas. However, evidence suggests that there was also a significant rise in humidity in this period in other parts of the world. Ice cores drilled into ancient glaciers in the Arctic and Antarctic show increased snowfall. Information compiled by historian James L. A. Webb, Jr., shows that lands south of the Sahara received more rainfall between 1550 and 1750 than they had during the previous era. Increased rainfall would have been favorable for pastoral people, whose herds found new pasture in what had once been desert, and for the farmers farther south, whose crops got more rain.

In the eighteenth century the sun’s activity began to return to normal. Rising temperatures led to milder winters and better harvests in northern Eurasia. Falling rainfall allowed the Sahara to advance southward, forcing the agricultural frontier to retreat.

NOTES


Revolution Reshape the World, 1550–1870

Chapter 1: The World, 1550–1600

Chapter 2: The World, 1600–1750

Chapter 3: The World, 1750–1800

Chapter 4: The World, 1800–1870

Chapter 5: The World, 1870–1914

Appendix A: World Wars

Appendix B: Economic Transformations in the Postwar Era

Appendix C: World War II: Europe, 1939–1945

Appendix D: World War II: Asia, 1939–1945

Appendix E: The Cold War

Appendix F: The Cold War

Appendix G: The Cold War

Appendix H: The Cold War

Appendix I: The Cold War

Appendix J: The Cold War

Appendix K: The Cold War

Appendix L: The Cold War

Appendix M: The Cold War

Appendix N: The Cold War

Appendix O: The Cold War

Appendix P: The Cold War

Appendix Q: The Cold War

Appendix R: The Cold War

Appendix S: The Cold War

Appendix T: The Cold War

Appendix U: The Cold War

Appendix V: The Cold War

Appendix W: The Cold War

Appendix X: The Cold War

Appendix Y: The Cold War

Appendix Z: The Cold War

Index

About the Authors

Acknowledgments

Notes

References

About the Author

About the Illustrator

About the Cover Illustrator

About the Design

About the Production

About the Publisher

About the Distributor