

Questions and Answer

1. *Compare the Kangxi emperor with the Qianlong emperor, which would you choose as having the most impact on the Qing Empire? Why?*

The Kangxi emperor and the Qianlong Emperor are both considered as the most prominent and successful emperors within the entire history of China. They both carried out significant contributions to the development of the Empire. Furthermore, the emperors were regarded intelligent, persistent, confident and talented country managers. The Kangxi emperor was the fourth representative of the powerful Qing dynasty. According to Crossley (2002) “he started his reigning under the regency and at once showed outstanding talent for politics” (p. 87) and improved largely all spheres of life of the empire.

Furthermore, his reign was the longest among the reigns of other emperors of the Qing dynasty since it continued from 1661 to 1722. The historians assert that his reign was virtually one of the most brilliant and effective that any ruler could claim. The emperor used every possibility to learn new strategies and political initiatives from the leaders of other countries and even from the Europeans. One should point out that the Kangxi emperor was largely interested in literature and is famous for compiling the famous Kangxi dictionary.

At that time the relationships with the Russian Empire were intricate and intense. The Kangxi emperor succeeded to settle the matter and solidified the position of the Qing Empire in the Treaty of Nerchinsk. In order to prevent the strangling the economy and imposing heavy taxes on people the emperor conducted the policy and expansion campaigns spending very little money. Furthermore, the emperor managed to expand the empire in the northwest.

The Qianlong emperor was the sixth representative of the Qing dynasty and the grandson of the Kangxi emperor. He reigned within the period of 1735 – 1795. One of the main achievements of the emperor is a considerable extension of the territory of the Empire. Emperor’s reign was the turning point of feudalism in the Empire. The emperor is credited with

the creation of the universalism conception that was based on the unity of political and religious ideas connecting together Mongolia and Tibet. Crossley (2002) proves that “the emperor made up his mind to alter the capital at Peking into the spiritual center of Lamaist realm” (p. 113).

As a result of his project the Tibetan Tripitaka was rendered into Manchu and Mongolian. Furthermore, in the course of Qianlong’s reign the Tibet performed the role of the ideological resource and, thus; was turned into the protectorate. Moreover, Qianlong is also notable for his assistance and scholarship of the arts. He created many poems in beautiful calligraphy, painted a wide range of pictures and built magnificent temples and palaces. However, the most crucial failure of the emperor was the appointment of the corrupt officials in the last years of the reign. The resulting urgent problems of extortion and poor administration caused the start of the decline of the powerful Qing Dynasty.

To conclude, the Kangxi emperor produced more significant effect on the Qing Empire than the Qianlong emperor. His political initiatives and effective, wise, consistent way of ruling turned the Empire into one of the largest, the wealthiest, and the most vigorous of the early modern empires. Moreover, the Kangxi emperor possessed a unique ability to convince his opponents and people around him, which made him popular with and respected by the population of the Empire. His grandson the Qianlong emperor enlarged the territory of the empire more though in the course of his reign the empire began to fall into decay and lost its dependent territories. Therefore, the Kangxi emperor had tremendous personal impact on the economic and political growth of the Qing Empire.

2. How were the Manchus different from the Chinese and did that change over time?

The Manchus are referred to as the founders of the Qing Empire. The most outstanding representatives of the Manchus are apparently the Emperors of the Qing dynasty. One should highlight that almost till the decline of the Empire in 1912 the Manchus together with Mongols were treated as “Tartars”. Although, these two kinds of people were distinct in the terms of

their origin and development, the cultures and politics of Manchus and Mongols were connected and affected each other.

Many historians of the twentieth and the nineteenth century used to assert that the Manchus were completely foreign to China and caused a wide range of political and social issues that finally led to the impoverishment of the country by the United States and Europe. Crossley argues in her book that “the regarding the Qing dynasty as being Manchus could be connected with the misfortunes that the population of China faced and suffered from in the nineteenth century” (Crossley, 2002, p. 4). The Manchus were the people at the top of the elite during the time of the Qing dynasty. They ruled the county more than two and a half centuries till the destruction of the Empire. The Benners were mostly determined as the military forces of powerful Manchu tribes that managed to conquer and gain the entire control over the territory of China at the very beginning of the 17th century.

The treatment towards the Manchu population has largely altered in the contemporary world. They are not considered as foreigners any more. When the Chinese Republic was established in the twentieth century, only several territories of the country were inhabited by the traditional Manchu people. Eight-Banner system serves as the indispensable ethnic identity of the Manchus in the contemporary world. They are regarded as a large ethnic community that includes the descendants of the original Manchu bannermen.

Moreover, a significant number of assimilated Mongol and Chinese bannermen belong and contribute largely to the community. According to Crossley “only starting from 1980s the revival of the culture and language of the Manchus took place and they returned into the government, social sphere and education producing apparent achievements (2002, 16). The Republic of China started to refer to the Manchus as having the national identity with the Chinese.

