**Qing dynasty,** Wade-Giles romanization Ch’ing, also called Manchu dynasty, Pinyin Manzu,  last of the imperial dynasties of [China](http://www.britannica.com/place/China), spanning the years 1644 to 1911/12. Under the Qing the territory of the empire grew to treble its size under the preceding [Ming dynasty](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Ming-dynasty-Chinese-history) (1368–1644), the population grew from some 150 million to 450 million, many of the non-Chinese minorities within the empire were Sinicized, and an integrated national economy was established.

**History**

The Qing dynasty was first established in 1636 by the [Manchus](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Manchu) to designate their regime in [Manchuria](http://www.britannica.com/place/Manchuria) (now the Northeast region of China). In 1644 the Chinese capital at [Beijing](http://www.britannica.com/place/Beijing) was captured by the rebel leader [Li Zicheng](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Li-Zicheng), and desperate [Ming dynasty](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Ming-dynasty-Chinese-history) officials called on the Manchus for aid. The Manchus took advantage of the opportunity to seize the capital and establish their own dynasty in [China](http://www.britannica.com/place/China). By adopting the Ming form of government and continuing to employ Ming officials, the Manchus pacified the Chinese population.

To guarantee [Manchu](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Manchu) control over the administration, however, the Qing made certain that half the higher-level officials were Manchus. Chinese military leaders who surrendered were given ranks of nobility, and troops were organized into the Lüying, or Army of the Green Standard, which was garrisoned throughout the country to guard against local rebellions. The regular Manchu Banner System troops (Qibing, or Baqi) were kept at the capital and in a few selected strategic spots throughout the country.

Under [Kangxi](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Kangxi) (reigned 1661–1722), the second Qing [emperor](http://www.britannica.com/topic/emperor-title), the Manchus forced the Russians to abandon their fort at Albazin, located along the Manchurian border on the [Amur River](http://www.britannica.com/place/Amur-River). In 1689 a [treaty](http://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Nerchinsk) was concluded with [Russia](http://www.britannica.com/place/Russia) at [Nerchinsk](http://www.britannica.com/place/Nerchinsk) demarcating the northern extent of the Manchurian boundary at the [Argun River](http://www.britannica.com/place/Argun-River). Over the next 40 years the [Dzungar](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Dzungar) Mongols were defeated, and the empire was extended to include Outer [Mongolia](http://www.britannica.com/place/Mongolia), [Tibet](http://www.britannica.com/place/Tibet), Dzungaria, [Turkistan](http://www.britannica.com/place/Turkistan), and [Nepal](http://www.britannica.com/place/Nepal). Under the two succeeding emperors, [Yongzheng](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Yongzheng) (reigned 1722–35) and [Qianlong](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Qianlong) (reigned 1735–96), commerce continued to thrive, handicraft industries prospered, and [Roman Catholic](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism) missionaries were tolerated and employed as astronomers and artists. In addition, painting, printmaking, and [porcelain](http://www.britannica.com/art/porcelain) manufacture flourished, and scientific methods of philology were developed.

Subsequent rulers, however, were unable to meet the problems caused by increased population pressure and concentration of land ownership. The Manchu armies deteriorated, and popular unrest, aggravated by severe floods and famine, were factors contributing to the [Taiping](http://www.britannica.com/event/Taiping-Rebellion) (1850–64) and [Nian](http://www.britannica.com/event/Nian-Rebellion) (1853–68) rebellions in the south and north, respectively. Efforts at modernization and Westernization met opposition from conservative officials especially through the efforts of the dowager empress [Cixi](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Cixi). Bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption became widespread, a notable example being the diversion of funds intended for building a Chinese navy to instead construct an ornamental marble warship at the imperial Summer Palace outside [Beijing](http://www.britannica.com/place/Beijing).

[.](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Qing-dynasty/images-videos/Puyi/161171)The first [Opium War](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Opium-Wars) (1839–42), the Anglo-French War (1856–58), the [Sino-Japanese War](http://www.britannica.com/event/Sino-Japanese-War-1894-1895) (1894–95), and the [Boxer Rebellion](http://www.britannica.com/event/Boxer-Rebellion) (1900) all resulted in defeats for China and the granting of major concessions to foreign powers. By 1900 revolutionary groups had begun to form throughout the country. The October 10, 1911, Republican Revolution led to the abdication of the boy emperor Xuantong (better known as [Puyi](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Puyi)) and the transfer of authority to the provisional republican government under [Yuan Shikai](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Yuan-Shikai).

**Cultural achievements**

The efforts of the Manchu rulers, from the beginning of their rule, to become assimilated into Chinese culture bred strongly conservative [Confucian](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Confucianism) political and cultural attitudes in official society and stimulated a great period of collecting, cataloging, and commenting upon the traditions of the past. Decorative crafts declined to increasingly repetitive designs, although techniques, notably in jade carving, reached a high level. Much architecture survives; although it is often grandly conceived, it tends to an inert massiveness with overwrought ornamentation. The two major visual [art](http://www.britannica.com/art/visual-arts) forms of the period were painting and porcelain.

[.](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Qing-dynasty/images-videos/White-Clouds-over-Xiao-and-Xiang-hanging-scroll-after-Zhao/7427)Despite the prevailing attitude of conservatism, many Qing dynasty artists were both individualistic and innovative. Based largely on the dicta of a late Ming dynasty artist-critic, [Dong Qichang](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Dong-Qichang), Qing painters are classified as “individualist” masters (such as Daoji and [Zhu Da](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Zhu-Da)) and “orthodox” masters (such as the [Six Masters of the early Qing](http://www.britannica.com/art/Six-Masters-of-the-early-Qing-period) period). In addition, there are “schools” of painting (though painters so classified share more a common location than a single style), such as the [Four Masters of Anhui](http://www.britannica.com/art/Four-Masters-of-Anhui), the [Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou](http://www.britannica.com/art/Eight-Eccentrics-of-Yangzhou), and the [Eight Masters of Nanjing](http://www.britannica.com/art/Eight-Masters-of-Nanjing). The attitude shared by most artists, in spite of obvious differences, was a strong preference for “literati painting” (*[wenrenhua](http://www.britannica.com/art/wenrenhua)*), which emphasized personal expression above all.

 Qing [porcelain](http://www.britannica.com/art/porcelain) displays a high technical mastery even to the almost total obliteration of any mark of the potter’s hand. Among the innovations of the period was the development of coloured glazes such as copper red, called “blown red” (*jihong*) by the Chinese and “oxblood” (*sang-de-boeuf*) by the French, and two classes of painted porcelain ware, known in Europe as *famille verte* and *famille rose,* from their predominant green and rose colours.

The [literature](http://www.britannica.com/art/literature) of the Qing dynasty resembled that of the preceding Ming period in that much of it focused on classical forms. The Manchu conducted a literary inquisition in the 18th century to root out subversive writings, and many suspect works were destroyed and their authors jailed, exiled, or killed. Novels in the vernacular—tales of romance and adventure—developed substantially. After Chinese ports were opened to overseas commerce in the mid-19th century, translation of foreign works into Chinese increased dramatically.

[](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Qing-dynasty/images-videos/Excerpt-from-a-jingxi-performance/168929) In music, the most notable development of the dynasty probably was the development of *[jingxi](http://www.britannica.com/art/jingxi)*, or Peking opera, over several decades at the end of the 18th century. The style was an amalgam of several regional music-theatre traditions that employed significantly increased instrumental accompaniment, adding to flute, plucked lute, and clappers, several drums, a double-reed wind instrument, cymbals, and gongs, one of which is designed so as to rise quickly in pitch when struck, giving a “sliding” tonal effect that became a familiar characteristic of the genre. *Jingxi*—whose roots are actually in many regions but not in Beijing—uses fewer melodies than do other forms but repeats them with different lyrics. It is thought to have gained stature because of patronage by the empress dowager [Cixi](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Cixi) of the late Qing, but it had long been enormously popular with