Asian Transitions in an Age of Global Change

(A.D. 1450 – A.D. 1750)
The Indian Ocean
Visual Source Documents 1 & 2

Document 1

Document 2

The Granger Collection, New York
The Ming Empire Restores Chinese Rule

- Heavy taxes, corruption, and natural disasters had led to many uprisings.

- Zhu Yuanzhang, a peasant leader, and his rebel army defeated the Mongols.

- He started the Ming dynasty and restored Chinese culture, including Confucian thought and the civil service.
Fall of the Yuan Dynasty

- In 1368, the Mongol forces retreated here after the Chinese succeeded in overthrowing them.

- In 1374, the new Chinese ruler, Zhu Yuanzhang, sent an envoy to Yunnan, urging the Mongol prince Basalawarmi to accept Ming rule.

- In 1381, the emperor ordered one of his most capable generals and an army of 300,000 to invade Yunnan and subdue the Mongols.

- The Chinese showed no mercy, butchering 60,000 Miao and Yao tribesmen, as well countless Mongols.
Strengthening of Ming Power

- As was custom, since the 1\textsuperscript{st} millennium B.C., young sons of prisoners were castrated and taken to the capital to serve in the court. A young Muslim boy from the Ma family, who became known as Zheng He, was among them.

- Zheng He was placed in the palace, where he was educated and became the companion of the fourth prince, Zhu Di.

- Zhu Di was a competent general and Zheng He learned much from accompanying him on campaigns.

- When Zhu Yuanzhang died in 1399, his grandson, Zhu Yunwen ascended to the throne and began to remove his uncle’s title to their land.

- Zhu Di led a rebellion against him and in July 1402 marched through the imperial gate.

- In 1403, he issued orders to begin construction of an imperial fleet of trading ships, warships, and support vessels to visit ports in the China Seas and Indian Ocean.
How did the Ming Restore Chinese Rule?

Early Ming rulers sought to reassert Chinese greatness after years of foreign rule. To accomplish this, they did the following:

- Restored the civil service system and made the exams more rigorous than ever
- Revived Confucian learning
- Repaired the canal system that linked regions and made trade easier
- Made Chinese cities home to many industries, including porcelain, paper, and tools
- Developed new technologies, which increased output in manufacturing
- Supported a revival of arts and literature
Success of the Ming Dynasty

- Ming China was economically productive.
- Farming prospered, supporting more than 100 million people.

Ming Vase
Imported cobalt ore – high in iron and low in manganese (Chinese ore was just the opposite) – from Kashan, Persia gave Ming porcelain its rich color.
China and the World

- Great China wall rebuilt.
- Between 1405 and 1423, admiral Zheng He commanded seven trade expeditions to West Indies, India, and Africa.
- The first six were authorized by Zhu Di, who wanted to extend his influence throughout the world.
- The goal was to promote trade and collect tribute from lesser powers.
- The Ming emperor saw himself as the Son of Heaven and ruler of *tian xia*, or “all under the heavens.”
- As far as the Chinese knew, in the early centuries of the Christian era, there was no one to rival them beyond the boundaries of their empire.
Chinese Ideas on World Conquest

“If one owned everything, what was the point of going out and conquering it? The European concept of a militant, crusading colonialism beyond the necessity of creating a favorable climate for east-west trade demeans the Chinese ideal of an all-powerful, semi-divine emperor and thus never occurred to Zhu Di. Prosperity was the reward for allegiance to the dragon throne; it would instill a greater loyalty in barbarian people than could be mustered with garrisons and foot soldiers. In any event, . . . it was foolish to try to support garrisons halfway around the world, so neither Zhu Di nor his successors tried. It would take European colonial powers another four hundred years to reach the same conclusion.”

Building, Expeditions, & Campaigns

- Zhu Di commissioned the building of the Forbidden City in Beijing, moving the capital from Nanjing.
- In addition to sending out the Treasure Fleet on six voyages, Zhu Di also fought three military campaigns to defend the northern territories from Mongol intrusion.
- All of these ventures were a great burden on China in terms of manpower and money.
An End to the Treasure Fleet

- Zhu Di’s son, Zhu Gaozhi, moved the capital back to Nanjing. He followed the advice of his Confucian advisors and promoted agriculture as the basis for government policy. He ruled that “the building and repair of all treasure ships [was] to be stopped immediately.”

- Zhu Di’s grandson, Zhu Zhanji, moved the capital back to Beijing and in 1430 commissioned the seventh and last voyage of the Treasure Fleet out of concern about the noticeable decline in China’s tribute.

- Then in 1433, the year Zheng He died, the Ming emperor began a policy of isolation.

- Confucian scholars had little interest in overseas ventures. To them, Chinese civilization was superior to all others.

- The Chinese wanted to preserve ancient traditions, which they saw as the source of stability.

- Fleets of seagoing ships were costly and did not produce any profits.
A display at the Ibn Battuta Mall in Dubai purports to compare the size of ships used by Zheng He and by Christopher Columbus.
European Footholds in Southeast Asia and India

- The desire for spices led Europeans to seek control of the Indian Ocean network.
- The Portuguese lead the way by rounding Africa.
- By the late 1500s, the Dutch replaced the Portuguese as the major European power in Asia.
- In the 1700s, England and France vied for dominance.
Southeast Asia

- In 1498, Vasco da Gama and his Portuguese crews succeeded in rounding the Cape of Good Hope, and reaching the Indies.
- They were forced to use the little silver bullion they had to purchase the fine textiles, spices, and other goods.
- In so doing, they proved that Columbus had not found the Indies.
- But the Muslims, hostile to Christians, already controlled the Asian sea trading network.
Portugal’s Empire in the East

- In 1511, Afonso de Albuquerque led a Portuguese fleet to conquer Malacca.
- Superior firepower allowed Portugal to win control of the rich Indian Ocean spice trade.
- Within 50 years, Portugal had built a trading empire with numerous military and merchant outposts and controlled the Indian Ocean.
- Intolerance of Portuguese missionaries caused resentment and led Portuguese to introduce the Inquisition.
- Despite their sea power, the Portuguese were not strong enough to conquer much territory on land.

Portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque in Goa (India), 16th century painting on wood, National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon, Portugal.
Rise of the Dutch

- The **Dutch** were the first Europeans to challenge Portuguese domination in Asia, using their sea power to set up colonies and trading posts around the world.
- At Southwestern tip of Africa, they set up the colony of Cape Town settlement to repair and resupply their ships.
- In 1602, the **Dutch East India Company** was created and in 1641, they captured Malacca from Portuguese and opened trade with China.
- They soon realized that the greatest profits were to be gained from peacefully working themselves into the trade network.
- Soon after, they were able to create a monopoly in the Spice Islands, controlling shipments to as much of the Southeast Asia.
- Trade brought the Dutch enormous wealth.

The shipyard of the Dutch West India Company in Amsterdam around 1750
Europeans Begin to Settle Coastal Areas in Southeast Asia

- The English also adopted peaceful trade practices by settling along the coast of India and concentrating on the cloth trade.

- While the Dutch and English had little interest in spreading Christianity during the early centuries of global expansion, spreading Roman Catholicism was an important part of the Portuguese and Spanish mission.

- From the 1540s onward, Franciscan, Dominican missionaries, and the Jesuit Francis Xavier, ministered to the poor, low-caste fishers and untouchables along the southwest coast of India converting tens of thousands.

- They had little success with the high-caste groups, because they did not want to worship with low-caste groups and give up their traditional beliefs and traditions.
Ibn Battuta on 14th-Century Dhufar

“The people of Dhufar are traders and have no other means of livelihood. When a ship arrives from India, the sultan’s slaves go out to meet it in little boats, taking a full set of robes for the owner and captain, as well as for the kirani, the ship’s accountant... Everyone on board is granted hospitality for three days; when the three days are up, they are fed in the sultan’s residence. The people do this in order to win the friendship of the ship-owners. They wear cotton clothes imported from India, fastening a length of cloth around their waist in place of trousers... They manufacture silk, cotton, and linen cloth of excellent quality.”

- Using this passage alone, describe as much of Dhufar’s social structure as you can

- What details in this passage prove how extensive the Indian Ocean trading network was at this time?
Small Group Activity

Answer the assigned question below. Be sure to address causes leading to the assigned countries response to foreign traders and effects or consequences of those responses. Be prepared to present your finding during the last 15 minutes of class.

1. How was European trade established with China and what factors led to the decline of the Ming dynasty?

2. What factors led Korea to isolate itself from other nations and what were the consequences?

3. What attitude did the Tokugawa shoguns have toward foreign traders and why? How did it change over time?
The Europeans who reached Asia in the 1500s were very impressed by what they saw. The Chinese, however, saw the Europeans as “southern barbarians,” lacking civilized ways.

The Ming dynasty had ended overseas exploration in 1433.

Portuguese traders reached China by sea in 1514. The Ming eventually allowed them a trading post at Macao. Because they were uninterested in European trading products, the Ming demanded payment for Chinese goods in gold or silver.

After the Manchus conquered China, in 1644, the Manchu Qing dynasty maintained the Ming policy of restricting foreign trade.

The Europeans continued to press to expand trade to other areas of China.
Korea and Isolation

- Several events led Korea to turn inward for a period of about 250 years.
- As in China, the low status of merchants in Confucianism led Koreans to look down on foreign trade.
- A pair of Japanese invasions from 1592 to 1598 (Imjin War or the Seven Years war), during the Joseon Dynasty, devastated the land of Korea.
- In 1636, the Manchus conquered Korea before overrunning China. Korea was forced to become a tributary state to the Manchu’s Qing dynasty.
Spain Seized the Philippines

- In 1521, Magellan claimed the Philippine archipelago for Spain.
- Within 50 years, Spain had conquered and colonized the islands, renaming them for the Spanish king, Philip II. In 1521, Magellan had claimed the Philippines for Spain.
- Unlike other people in Southeast Asia, the Filipinos were not united. As a result, they were easily conquered.
- The Philippines became a key link to Spain’s overseas trading empire. The Spanish shipped silver mined in Mexico and Peru across the Pacific to the Philippines. From there, they used the silver to buy goods in China.
- Missionaries tried to spread Catholic teachings to the Philippines and later, China and Japan.
- Silver mined in Mexico and Peru were carried to the Philippines and used to purchase Chinese goods.
Japan and Foreign Traders

The Japanese at first welcomed western traders. They acquired western firearms and built castles modeled on the European design.

- The Tokugawa shoguns grew increasingly hostile toward foreigners. They saw the foreigners as agents of an invading force.
- They suspected that the many Japanese Christians were loyal to the pope, rather than to Japanese leaders.
- They disliked the competition among Christian missionaries.

By 1638, the Tokugawas had barred all western merchants and forbidden Japanese to travel abroad. They also ended foreign trade, except for a limited number of Dutch and Chinese ships, which were allowed to carry on commerce on the small island of Deshima in Nagasaki Bay.
Venetian Girolamo Priuli’s Diary Entry

“Whence it is that the King of Portugal has found this new voyage, and that the spices which were expected which should come from Calicut, Cochin, and other places in India, to Alexandria or Beyrout, and later come to Venice, and in this place become monopolized, whence all the world comes to buy such spicery and carry gold, silver, and every other merchandise, with which money the war is sustained…”

- Not everyone in Europe was pleased with Portugal for what it did to take business away from Muslim merchants in the Indian Ocean. Why?

- What does this source suggest about the role of competition between Europeans as a factor in European success in trade and empire in these centuries?