March 2008
Third Thursdays
For Teachers

• 1601–82 The Dutch dominate international trade in porcelains and other goods from their headquarters in Batavia (Jakarta). Over 12 million ceramics are shipped to Europe during their tenure.

• 1610–95 During his lifetime, the influential political philosopher and historian Huang Zongxi writes biographies of important Ming leaders and several analyses of government structure.

• 1626–1705 Zhu Da, called Bada Shanren (1626–1705), and other painters such as Shitao (1642–1707) revitalize traditional Chinese painting with highly expressionistic renderings of a wide range of subjects. Their work is often contrasted with the more traditional work of artists such as Wang Hui (1632–1717), one of the so-called four Wangs of Chinese painting.

• 1620 Nurhachi (1559–1616) establishes the Manchu Jin dynasty in the northeast. His son and successor changes the name to Qing, the dynasty under which the Manchus control all of China. Nurhachi’s grandson is the first Manchu emperor and rules under the name Shunzhi (r. 1644–1661).

• ca. 1620–83 Lack of imperial patronage or control has a profound impact on the Chinese ceramic industry, which adapts to produce a new range of wares for domestic consumption and export to Japan, Southeast Asia, and, to some extent, Europe.

• 1628 Severe famine and widespread banditry lead to rebellion in several regions, further weakening the crumbling Ming dynasty.

• ca. 1630 Sino-Spanish trade, conducted via the Philippines, expands considerably, as does trade with Japan.

• 1645 The Manchus decree that all Chinese men shave their foreheads and wear their hair in a long queue or plait, as a means of controlling the people they have just conquered.

• 1662–1722 The Kangxi emperor, the first of three powerful and efficient Manchu rulers, ameliorates the relationship between Manchus and Chinese, changing the status of the latter from that of a subject race to one of parity. He commissions much historical writing, as well as dictionaries and other reference tools, and reestablishes imperial workshops for the production of porcelain, lacquer, metalwork, and other goods.

• 1673–81 The Kangxi emperor takes several inspection tours throughout China at the end of a long period of civil war.

• ca. 1683 The imperial kilns are rebuilt at Jingdezhen, leading to a renaissance in the production of high-quality porcelains.

• 1683 The island of Taiwan is added to the Qing empire. Long a refuge for Ming loyalists, Taiwan had been under the control of the pirate Zheng Chenggong (known in Western sources as Koxinga, ca. 1624–1662) and his sons since their defeat of Portuguese and Dutch traders in the middle of the century.
• 1712–22 Letters written by the Jesuit Pere d'Entrecolle provide descriptions of the organization of the porcelain factories and the techniques used in the making of ceramics, which are still traded to the West in gargantuan quantities.

• 1715 The Jesuit missionary Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766) arrives in Beijing. He works as a painter at the Chinese court under the name Lang Shining, and produces works noted for the blending of European and Chinese technique and themes.

• 1717 The Qing halt the Zunghar Mongol invasion of Tibet. By 1720, the Chinese have gained control, installing a new Dalai Lama loyal to the court.

1816–34 Britain's Lord Amherst and Lord Napier, like their predecessor Lord Macartney, fail to obtain China's consent to open its markets for international trade.

• ca. 1821–1911 Between the reign of Emperor Daoguang (r. 1821–50) and the end of the Qing dynasty, new discoveries and publications of stone and bronze artifacts inspire an unprecedented variety of styles within the Stele School. Representative masters of this period include Wu Ranzhi (1799–1870), Xu Sangeng (1826–1890), and Zhao Zhiquan (1829–1884). Zhao extends the composition of seal carving and the brushwork of calligraphy to his paintings.

• 1823 Ruan Yuan (1764–1849) publishes Nanbei shupai lun (Discussion of the Calligraphy Schools in the South and the North) and Beipai nantei lun (Discussion of the Stelae in the North and Model Books in the South), which lay down the theoretical foundation for the Stele School.

• 1839 Emperor Daoguang sends a commission to stop the trafficking of opium by the British East India Company and a network of Chinese merchants. This prompts Britain's attack on China in 1840–42, an event known as the Opium War. The war concludes with the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing, which opens new ports for international trade. By this treaty, Hong Kong becomes a British colony.

• 1851–66 Discontent among the impoverished peasantry culminates in the Taiping Rebellion. Its leader, Hong Xiuquan (1814–1864), casts himself as a Christian savior and the younger brother of Jesus. Protracted violence and banditry force many Chinese to flee their homes. Artists in search of a stable income gravitate toward Shanghai, a rising commercial city protected by Western interests. “The Four Rens”—Ren Xiong (1820–1857), Ren Xun (1835–1893), Ren Yu (1853–1901), and Ren Yi (1840–1896)—are among those who make their reputation in Shanghai, painting accessible subjects such as flowers and characters from popular legends.

• 1860 French and British troops burn Yuanming Yuan, a Western-style imperial garden and a symbol of Qing splendor completed by Emperor Qianlong.

• 1862–95 The Western Enterprises Movement (also called the Self-Strengthening Movement) invests millions of yuan to train Chinese experts in Western knowledge and technology.

• 1883–85 China sends troops to help Vietnam resist French advances in the Annam and Tonkin provinces, but the effort ends in vain.

• 1888–1910 Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) misuses navy funds on an expansion of Yihe Yuan (pleasure garden) in Beijing.

• 1894–95 Japan prevails in the First Sino-Japanese War. China turns over the sovereignty of Taiwan, the Penghu Islands (the Pescadores), and the vassalage of Korea. For several decades afterwards, the Chinese view Japan as both an imperialist threat and an exemplar of modernization.
• 1898 Kang Youwei (1858–1927) convinces Emperor Guangxu (r. 1875–1908) to launch a program of modernizing reforms inspired by the Meiji Restoration in Japan. Empress Dowager Cixi, supported by ultraconservatives, stages a coup and halts the program after about only one hundred days of implementation.

• 1899 The first tortoiseshells and animal bones bearing incised writings are identified as oracle bones used in ancient divination.

• 1900 An international force of eight treaty powers—the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Britain, Austria-Hungary—marches into Beijing and ransacks the Forbidden City in reaction to the Chinese violence against foreigners in the Boxer Rebellion.

• 1911 Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) leads the Xinhai Revolution that topples the Qing dynasty, ending 5,000 years of imperial rule.