

A Test of Qianlong's Place in Chinese History

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Abstract: *Qianlong was an important ruler in the history of the Qing dynasty, and his reign is regarded as the heyday of the Qing dynasty. Through a comprehensive examination and analysis of Qianlong's place in Chinese history, this thesis explores his contributions in the fields of politics, economics, culture and diplomacy. Qianlong demonstrated outstanding political skills and ruling wisdom and consolidated the Qing regime. He adopted an active economic policy that promoted agricultural production and laid the foundation for China's economic development. In addition, Qianlong's promotion and preservation of culture and the arts left a valuable legacy for China's artistic heritage. Qianlong's place in Chinese history cannot be overlooked, and his rule had a profound impact on China.*

Keywords: *Qianlong, Aisinjueluo Hongli, Qing dynasty*

1. Introduction

Qianlong is a name full of brilliance and controversy in Chinese history. As the sixth emperor of the Qing dynasty, Qianlong ruled China for six decades and his reign is generally regarded as one of the most glorious eras of the Qing dynasty. Qianlong's place in Chinese history is a fascinating subject, and the political, economic, cultural and foreign policies implemented during his reign had a profound impact on China and the world. Qianlong demonstrated outstanding political leadership and ruling wisdom. He worked to consolidate the Qing regime and implemented a series of important political reforms that strengthened centralisation. Qianlong's political talents made him one of the most prominent emperors of the Qing Dynasty and had a profound impact on China's political development. Qianlong's contribution to China's economy cannot be ignored either. He implemented a series of positive economic policies that boosted agricultural production. The economic prosperity of the Qianlong period created good opportunities for China's development and contributed to the progress and prosperity of society. In addition to the political and economic spheres, Qianlong also made a significant contribution to culture and the arts. He focused on the development of literature, painting, calligraphy, theatre and music, and appreciated and supported the creativity of cultural artists. Qianlong's commitment to the preservation and restoration of historical sites and cultural heritage has provided an important resource for future generations of cultural heritage and research. The cultural and artistic achievements of the Qianlong period added a glorious chapter to the development of art in Chinese history, highlighting the treasures of traditional Chinese culture.

2. The historical background of the Qianlong period

The Qianlong period, an extremely important period in the history of the Qing dynasty, extended throughout much of the 18th century and was ruled by the Qianlong Emperor. The Qianlong Emperor (1711-1799) was one of the longest reigning emperors in Chinese history and his reign had a profound impact on Chinese history. Before we can understand Qianlong's place in Chinese history, we need to have an understanding of the historical context of the Qianlong period. The political and social environment during the Qianlong period was extremely stable and was the heyday of the Qing dynasty. At the time of his accession to the throne, the Qing dynasty was at the peak of its power, with a vast territory and a relatively prosperous domestic economy. Politically, the Qianlong emperor demonstrated excellent leadership and political wisdom, taking a series of powerful measures to consolidate imperial power and national unity. The social environment during the Qianlong period was relatively harmonious and stable, with a gradually growing population, a relatively stable social class structure, continued development of agricultural production, and a boom in commercial and trade activities. During this period, the population of China exceeded 300 million, making it one of the most populous countries in the world at the time. Social stability and economic prosperity provided a solid foundation

for the reign of the Qianlong Emperor. During the Qianlong period, China's economy developed and prospered significantly. Agricultural production became the backbone of the Chinese economy at the time, and the productivity of the peasants was increased through the improvement of farming tools and the introduction of new crops and cultivation techniques. This contributed to an increase in agricultural production, providing the country with abundant food and tax revenue.

Culture also reached its peak during the Qianlong period, which became an important stage in Chinese cultural history. Literature, painting, poetry and other art forms all developed and flourished greatly. Many important literary figures emerged during the Qianlong period, such as Yuan Mei, Ji Yun and Zheng Banqiao, who enriched the treasure trove of Chinese literature with their talented works. In painting, the Qianlong period saw the emergence of many outstanding painters, such as Zheng Xie, whose distinctive works have become classics in the history of Chinese painting. In addition, many literary figures competed with each other in poetry during the Qianlong period, and there are numerous masterpieces that have been passed down to this day.

In terms of heritage conservation, the Qianlong emperor showed great concern and attention. He ordered the investigation and protection of monuments and cultural relics throughout China, and strongly supported their collection and restoration. The Qianlong emperor himself was a keen collector of art and cultural relics, and he built up an extensive collection that included many valuable relics such as paintings and calligraphy, porcelain and jade. In summary, the historical context of the Qianlong period provides important background information for our understanding of Qianlong's place in Chinese history. The achievements of political stability, social prosperity, economic development, and cultural flourishing earned the Qianlong emperor a lofty status and a distinguished reputation in Chinese history. The historical context of the Qianlong period is an important foundation for our in-depth study of Qianlong's position and influence in Chinese history.

3. Qianlong's political talents and economic development and contributions

The Qianlong Emperor enjoys a high status in Chinese history, and his political talents and ruling philosophy have had a profound impact on Chinese history. As a wise ruler of the Qing dynasty, the Qianlong emperor demonstrated outstanding leadership and political wisdom, consolidating imperial power and promoting national stability and prosperity through a series of powerful measures. Firstly, the Qianlong emperor possessed outstanding political wisdom. He understood and put into practice the concept of 'the rule of a wise ruler' and focused on the transmission and practice of Confucianism. The Qianlong emperor attached great importance to his own academic training and studied extensively in the scriptures, history and scriptures, and ordered the compilation of the Sikuquanshu, among other great works. This gave him a solid theoretical foundation for political decision-making and state governance. With his thoughtful decision-making and wise judgement, the Qianlong Emperor dealt with many key political issues. His focus on power and strategy and his skill in balancing different interest groups maintained the stability of state power. His accurate grasp of dynastic affairs and thoughtful consideration of major decisions brought relatively long-term peace and prosperity to the Qing dynasty with his wise and decisive leadership style. Secondly, the Qianlong emperor's philosophy of rule was based on the principle of ruling by virtue. He emphasised the benevolent ideology of Confucianism, and ruled with respect for the interests and well-being of the people by putting the people first and focusing on ruling with virtue. He worked to improve the efficiency and fairness of the state's governance through reform policies and institutional innovations. Qianlong also paid great attention to the rule of law, strengthening the legal system and reforming the judicial system. He ordered the revision and codification of many codes and legal regulations, allowing the rule of law to play a more important role in the governance of the country. The Qianlong Emperor also attached importance to the military construction and defence affairs of the country. He strengthened the defence system of the border areas and stabilised the situation on the frontiers. He focused on the training and equipping of military forces, improving the combat power and operational capability of the army. This enabled the Qing dynasty to deal with external threats and maintain national security and stability during the Qianlong period.

Overall, the Qianlong emperor was able to bring the Qing dynasty to its peak under his reign with his remarkable political skills and ruling philosophy. His thoughtful and wise decisions contributed to the stability of state power and the prosperity of society. Focusing on ruling with virtue, Qianlong was committed to improving the effectiveness and fairness of state governance and promoting the country's development through reform and innovation. Qianlong's political talents and ruling philosophy have left a deep mark on Chinese history and have important lessons for future generations.

The Qianlong period was one of the most prosperous periods of economic development in the history of the Qing Dynasty, and the reign of the Qianlong Emperor had a profound impact on the contribution and development of the Chinese economy. He took a series of powerful measures in the areas of economic policy, agricultural development and trade, which contributed to the prosperity and growth of China's economy. Firstly, the Qianlong Emperor implemented a series of active economic policies. He focused on reducing taxes and improving fiscal management, and took measures to promote commercial activity and investment. He encouraged farmers to reclaim and cultivate farmland, which contributed to the growth of agricultural production. In terms of agricultural development, Qianlong took a number of measures to improve the efficiency and productivity of agricultural production. Agricultural production and the quality of agricultural products were improved. This provided the country with abundant food and tax revenue, stabilised domestic market supply and maintained social stability. In addition, Qianlong also focused on reforming the financial management and taxation system. He strengthened the supervision and management of the treasury, practised economy and regulated taxation rationally. He advocated clean government and anti-corruption, strengthened fiscal discipline, reduced corruption, and improved the stability and sustainability of fiscal revenue. Overall, the Qianlong Emperor made a huge contribution to China's economic development. He implemented a series of active economic policies that promoted the development of agricultural production and official trade. For example, the Qing court traded with the Kazakh Khanate. The establishment and development of the official silk and horse trade in the Qing-Ha not only opened up the Qing dynasty and the north-western frontier, but also, and more importantly, enlivened the frontier trade and promoted a high degree of economic development on the frontier, allowing the northern and southern frontiers to gradually develop their own unique economic patterns and characteristics.^[1]In addition, During the Qianlong period, as there were no large-scale wars in the Central Plains, production was restored and developed, and the economic prosperity of the end of feudal society emerged, with the palace in this period also showing a correspondingly prosperous scene.^[2]At the same time, he focused on fiscal management and reform of the taxation system, improving the stability of revenue and the effectiveness of management. The economic prosperity of the Qianlong period laid a solid economic foundation for China and had a profound impact on future generations.

4. Qianlong's promotion of culture and the arts

The Qianlong emperor is known throughout Chinese history for his promotion of culture and the arts. He placed great emphasis on the transmission and development of culture and actively supported art forms in all fields, including literature, painting, calligraphy, drama and music. The reign of Qianlong witnessed the flourishing and innovation of culture and the arts, and played an important role in the preservation and promotion of traditional Chinese culture. Firstly, Qianlong made an important contribution in the field of literature. He was himself a lover of literature and wrote a large number of poems and texts himself. He revered Confucianism and valued the status of literary scholars and appreciated and supported their talents. He recruited a wide range of literati to the court and organised literary journals and poetry competitions to encourage creativity and exchange among them. Qianlong also devoted himself to compiling and collating literary collections, historical books and canonical texts, such as the Siku Quanshu, and other great works, so that future generations could study and research them. Secondly, Qianlong played an important role in the promotion of painting and calligraphy. He greatly admired the art of painting and calligraphy, collected a large number of works by famous artists, and held many exhibitions of painting and calligraphy. He was personally involved in the creation of paintings and calligraphy, leaving behind many fine works. Qianlong respected traditional painting and calligraphy techniques, but also encouraged artists to innovate and develop new artistic styles and forms of expression. His appreciation and support for painting and calligraphy left a colourful page in the history of Chinese art. Qianlong was also concerned with the heritage of folk art and folk culture. He valued the preservation and development of traditional folk arts and crafts. The Qianlong emperor also made an important contribution to the transmission of folk art and folk culture. He was very concerned with the preservation and development of traditional folk arts and crafts, particularly the production of ceramics, embroidery and wood carving. The Qianlong emperor supported artisans and craftsmen in the transmission and innovation of their skills, promoting the prosperity of folk crafts. In addition, the Qianlong emperor was committed to the preservation and restoration of historical sites and cultural heritage. He focused on the restoration of ancient buildings and cultural relics and the reconstruction of destroyed temples and palaces. He appointed special officials to be responsible for the conservation and management of cultural relics and to enhance their identification, collation and conservation measures. The Qianlong emperor's restoration projects not only preserved historical heritage, but also provided an important resource for future generations to study and appreciate. In

addition, the Qianlong has a great deal to his credit in the reform of the imperial examinations. The reform of the imperial examinations in the Qianlong dynasty had the significance of succeeding the reform of the imperial examinations in the Kangxi dynasty and establishing the imperial examination system in the middle and late Qing dynasties, and was the biggest reform adjustment after the establishment of the imperial examination 'permanent system' in the early Ming dynasty.^[3]

Qianlong's promotion of culture and the arts not only contributed to the development of traditional Chinese culture, but also laid the foundation for cultural prosperity and innovation in later generations. His support and appreciation inspired countless cultural artists to create and nurtured a number of outstanding cultural talents. The cultural and artistic achievements of the Qianlong period have left a colourful page in Chinese history and have had a profound impact on the cultural heritage and innovation of later generations.

5. Qianlong's legacy and evaluation

The Qianlong emperor left a profound legacy on Chinese history, and his rule had a significant impact on various areas including politics, economics, culture and the military. The Qianlong period is known as the heyday of the Qing dynasty, and his reign has been widely praised and evaluated. Firstly, his political rule is considered to be one of the strongest and most stable periods of the Qing dynasty. He took a number of strong measures to consolidate imperial power and strengthen centralisation, maintaining the country's unity and stability. He introduced an effective bureaucratic system, strengthened the rule of officials and improved the effectiveness of government administration. Qianlong valued virtuousness and selected and appointed many talented officials. Secondly, Qianlong's contribution to China's economy and its development cannot be ignored. The Qianlong period was one of the periods of economic prosperity in the Qing dynasty, and he implemented a series of positive economic policies that promoted the development of agricultural production. His focus on reducing taxes and improving fiscal management encouraged farmers to reclaim and cultivate farmland, which boosted the growth of agricultural production. The economic prosperity of the Qianlong period laid a solid economic foundation for China. In the arts and culture, Qianlong's promotion was also significant. He focused on the development of literature, painting, calligraphy, drama and music, encouraged the talents of literary scholars and was personally involved in literary creation. He appreciated and supported the arts of painting and calligraphy, and collected a large number of works by famous artists. Qianlong was also concerned with the transmission of folk art and folk culture, and was committed to the preservation and restoration of historical sites and cultural heritage. His promotion of culture and the arts made an important contribution to the transmission and development of traditional Chinese culture. Qianlong's legacy is also reflected in his foreign relations and geopolitics. His cumulative Qianlong legacy is also reflected in foreign relations and geopolitics. He also adopted a series of military measures to strengthen the defence of the frontier and protect the country's frontier security.

Qianlong's reign is generally regarded as a period of relative peace and stability. He successfully dealt with a number of internal and external challenges and upheavals, allowing the Qing dynasty to continue and remain unified. He adhered to the Confucian philosophy of rule, promoting manners, morality and edification, and advocating a harmonious and stable social order. Qianlong focused on the rule of officials and the rule of law, cracking down on corruption and upholding social justice and fairness. In addition, there was the system of official revision of books that was inherited from the Qianlong period. Because of the robustness of the book-revision mechanism established during the Qianlong reign, it was possible to create the appearance of cultural 'prosperity' for the Jiaqing dynasty without the emperor taking the lead or participating in it.^[4]

Overall, the legacy of Qianlong is complex and diverse. His reign was a period of relative strength and prosperity in Chinese history, and he made important contributions in the political, economic, cultural and military spheres. His impetus and measures provided the opportunity and foundation for China's development and progress. However, his reign also faced some problems and challenges, and there are different views and interpretations of his evaluation. Regardless, Qianlong's legacy as an outstanding ruler in Chinese history, who had a profound impact on the development and evolution of China, will continue to be evaluated and studied by future generations.

6. Conclusion

As an important ruler in the history of the Qing Dynasty, Qianlong occupies a unique position in

Chinese history. His reign is considered to be the heyday of the Qing dynasty and brought about far-reaching effects in the political, economic, cultural and military spheres of China. Firstly, Qianlong's political talents and ruling philosophy made him one of the most outstanding emperors of the Qing dynasty. He maintained the unity and stability of the country by consolidating imperial power, strengthening centralisation and implementing a series of reforms. He focused on the selection of wise and capable people and on the rule of officials and the rule of law. Qianlong's political talents enabled him to manage the affairs of state effectively and to keep the Qing regime strong. Secondly, Qianlong's contribution to the economy and its development cannot be ignored. He implemented an active economic policy that promoted agricultural production. Qianlong's promotion of culture and the arts also added to his place in Chinese history. He focused on the development of literature, painting, calligraphy, theatre and music, and appreciated and supported the creativity of cultural artists. He preserved and restored historical monuments and cultural heritage, providing an important resource for cultural transmission and research for future generations. The cultural and artistic achievements of the Qianlong period have left a colourful page in Chinese history, highlighting the excellence of traditional Chinese culture. To sum up, Qianlong's place in Chinese history is extremely important. His political talents and ruling philosophy made him one of the most distinguished emperors of the Qing dynasty. However, there are different views and controversies regarding the evaluation of Qianlong. Some argue that he placed too much emphasis on personal power and court politics, leading to increased centralisation of monarchical power and the entrenchment of social classes. His reign also faced a number of internal and external challenges and social problems. Regardless of how one evaluates Qianlong's place in Chinese history, he left a profound political, economic, cultural and geopolitical legacy as an outstanding ruler. Qianlong's legacy will continue to be evaluated and studied by future generations in order to understand his place and influence in Chinese history in a more comprehensive and objective light.

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