Russian and Chinese Empire-Building [1450-1750]

AP World History Notes
Chapter 14
Making the Russian Empire

- Russian state centered on the city of Moscow
- Conquered a number of neighboring Russian-speaking cities
- Continued to expand south and east of Moscow
- Brought together a wide variety of different peoples and cultures
Making the Russian Empire

Map 14.2 The Russian Empire
Chapter 14, Ways of the World: A Brief Global History with Sources, First Edition
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Motivations for Russian Expansion

- Motivation #1 = security from the nomadic pastoral peoples
  - Lived in the grasslands south and east of the Russian heartland
  - Russians = afraid one of these groups will rise to power like the Mongols
  - These nomads frequently raided Russia’s neighbors and sold many of them into slavery
Motivations for Russian Expansion

- Motivation #2 = Pelts of fur-bearing animals
  - To the east across the vast expanse of Siberia
  - Very valuable and in-demand item
  - Nickname = "soft gold"
To Russians, their empire meant:

- Defending the Russian frontiers
- Enhancing the power of the Russian state
- Bringing Christianity, civilization, and enlightenment to "savages"
Life in the Russian Empire

- Everyone had to swear an oath of allegiance to the grand tsar
- Everyone had to pay yasak = tribute paid in cash or valuable goods
- New diseases accompanied Russian conquest → ex: smallpox and measles
- People felt the pressure to convert to Christianity
  - Tax breaks, tribute exemptions, and the promise of land if they did
Huge influx of Russian settlers to conquered territories within the empire

- Began to outnumber the native peoples
- Ex: By 1720 = population of Siberia = 70% Russian and 30% native Siberian
Native peoples were “Russified” = adopted the Russian language and culture, converted to Christianity, gave up their traditional hunting & gathering lifestyle, etc.
Impact on the Environment

- Loss of hunting ground and pasturelands to Russian agricultural settlers
- Result = native peoples became dependent on Russian markets for crops and luxury goods
The Russian Empire

- By the 18th century = Russia became one of the great powers of Europe
- Power stemmed from wealth found in: rich agricultural lands, valuable furs, and mineral deposits
- Russia became a highly militarized state as well
- Russian Empire stayed intact until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991
The Russian Empire

- Established a tradition of autocratic government with a powerful monarchy
  - Belief = only a strong ruler could hold together such a large empire with such a diverse population
  - Ruled by monarchies until the early 1900s

Peter the Great
Reign: 1682 - 1725
## Russian Empire vs. those of other Western European Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RUSSIAN EMPIRE</th>
<th>OTHER EUROPEANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquired territories next to them that they had been in contact with for a long time</td>
<td>Acquired territories far away from them that they didn’t know about until 1492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquired territories <em>at the same time</em> that a Russian state was taking shape</td>
<td>Acquired overseas empires <em>AFTER</em> establishing themselves as solid European states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Russia <em>was</em> an empire.”</td>
<td>“The British <em>had</em> an empire.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Making China an Empire

- Done by the Qing (aka Manchu) Dynasty
  - Ruled from 1644 to 1912
  - Foreigners → invaders from Manchuria
- Enlarged the size of China and incorporated a lot of non-Chinese peoples as they expanded to the north and west
# Qing Rulers: Cultural Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAINTAINED</th>
<th>ADOPTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic distinctiveness → forbade intermarriage between themselves and native Chinese</td>
<td>Chinese language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confucian teachings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese government techniques</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Major motivation = security concerns
To China = expansion was viewed as a defensive necessity
Result = Qing dynasty China undertook an 80-year military effort (1680-1760) to bring together surrounding regions under Chinese control
In general the Qing rulers:

- Showed respect for other cultures
- Did not force people to assimilate to Chinese culture

Chinese settlers did not flood the other regions of the empire