



# **Complete Essay on the Han (206 BCE-220 CE) and Tang (618-907) Empires in China**

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Twice in Chinese dynastic history, a hard-driving reformist kingdom, led by Turkic-Chinese leaders from northwestern China, united north and south China. Then the unifying kingdom imploded because it overstrained the ability of the Chinese society simultaneously to expand militarily and create massive, labor-intensive public works (roads, canals, and irrigation works). The Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE) was the first of those impressive creator kingdoms. The Han emperors followed immediately in the Qin's footsteps and based their power on gains in agricultural productivity, foreign trade along the Silk Road, and foreign conquest in the northwest and the south. Han China reached its peak in the first century BCE, had a mid-term crisis, and then gradually declined before finally falling in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. The first section of this essay examines the rise, rule, and fall of the Han dynasty, an early peak period of economic and cultural creativity in China.

In many respects, Chinese imperial history then repeated itself. The second part of this essay relates how that occurred. In

the 6<sup>th</sup> century, two short-lived kingdoms brought China back together again. The Northern Zhou kingdom (534-581) forcefully re-united north China, and then the Sui kingdom (581-618) re-unified north and south China through conquest. China's second dynastic empire, the Tang Empire (618-907), began when the Sui over-extended itself and imploded. Under the Tang dynasty, China experienced a century and a half of impressive grandeur, power, and creativity. Tang political power was based on wealth drawn from innovations in agriculture, a revival of foreign trade along the Silk Road, and foreign conquest in southern China and central Asia. The Tang Empire – and, many argue, Chinese intellectual creativity as expressed by poetry, calligraphy, and art – reached its peak between the mid-7<sup>th</sup> and mid-8<sup>th</sup> centuries. After a brief interlude of revolutionary rule, the Tang dynasty re-gained control but slid downhill and disintegrated in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Much has happened in China in the aftermath of the Han and Tang dynasties. The third part of the essay reviews the most recent eleven centuries of Chinese history to draw conclusions about the

impact of the two primary Chinese dynasties on later events. Four major dynasties reigned after the Tang Empire. Two, the Song and Ming dynasties, were Chinese and two, the Yuan and Qing dynasties, were foreign. The Chinese-led Song dynasty (960-1279) surpassed its two famed predecessors in innovation, and China's population doubled (to 120 million) under Song rule. Genghis Khan and his Mongol horse-warriors took over much of north China in the first quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. His grandson, Kublai Khan, proclaimed the Yuan dynasty of China (1260-1368), defeated the Song dynasty in 1279, and re-unified China.

A southern Chinese peasant leader liberated China from Mongol rule and declared himself the first Ming Emperor in 1368. During their nearly three centuries of rule, Ming leaders slipped from reform and creativity to corruption and stagnation.

Westerners identify the Ming period with completion of the massive Great Wall, construction of the Forbidden City as an elegant imperial palace, and development of spectacular blue-and-white porcelain in Jingdezhen. Jurchen invaders from Manchuria

took over north China in 1644 and conquered most of the rest of the country by 1660. Three Manchu Qing emperors (Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong) ruled China capably between 1660 and 1795. During that period, China reached its current territorial boundaries after Qing conquests of Taiwan, Mongolia, Tibet, and Turkestan (modern Xinziang Autonomous Region). But Qing rule and China's prestige declined markedly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Western powers took control of key Chinese ports and Japan defeated China and claimed Taiwan. This essay concludes with a review of China's turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century, the final aftermath of the Han and Tang dynasties. A time line, an annotated bibliography, and a description of sites visited in China are appended at the end.

### **China's Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)**

**The Geography of China.** China incorporates a vast area of diverse geographic regions. Most historians divide the geography of China into Inner China and Outer China, and some choose to refer to human use of these two areas as "the sown" and "the steppe," reflecting their primary uses in crop and animal

agriculture, respectively. Inner China, sometimes referred to as “China proper,” covers the eastern and southern portions of the contemporary land mass identified as China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China\\_Traditional\\_Divisions.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_Traditional_Divisions.png)

### *The Physical and Cultural Divisions of China*

Inner China contains most of the country’s arable land, much of it in the extensive river valleys that drain into the Pacific Ocean.

Chinese civilization began in the Yellow River valley, and its

center gradually shifted southward to the Yangzi River valley, which together form the heartland of Inner China.

Today about 85 percent of China's 1.4 billion people live in Inner China, one of the most densely populated regions in the world. The geography of Inner China is further divided at roughly the Yangzi River into north China, a temperate zone with a strong seasonal pattern and modest rainfall that typically supports only one crop per year, and south China, a semi-tropical region with warmer temperatures and high rainfall that permits Chinese farmers to grow two or even three crops (usually of rice) per year. China's history is marked by the gradual spread of native Chinese people, usually called Han Chinese, from their original heartland in the Yellow River basin southward into the rich rice-growing areas of the Yangzi River valley and then further south into the remainder of fertile Inner China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
 <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ChinaGeography.png>>

## *The Geography of China*

Outer China, or the steppe, has a physical and historical geography that differs greatly from that of Inner China. Outer China is drier, colder, and more rugged than Inner China, and thus it is much less densely populated (containing only 15 percent of contemporary China's people). Four distinct regions constitute Outer China. Manchuria, located in China's northeast and to the west of Korea, is a cold temperate land of forests and grasslands

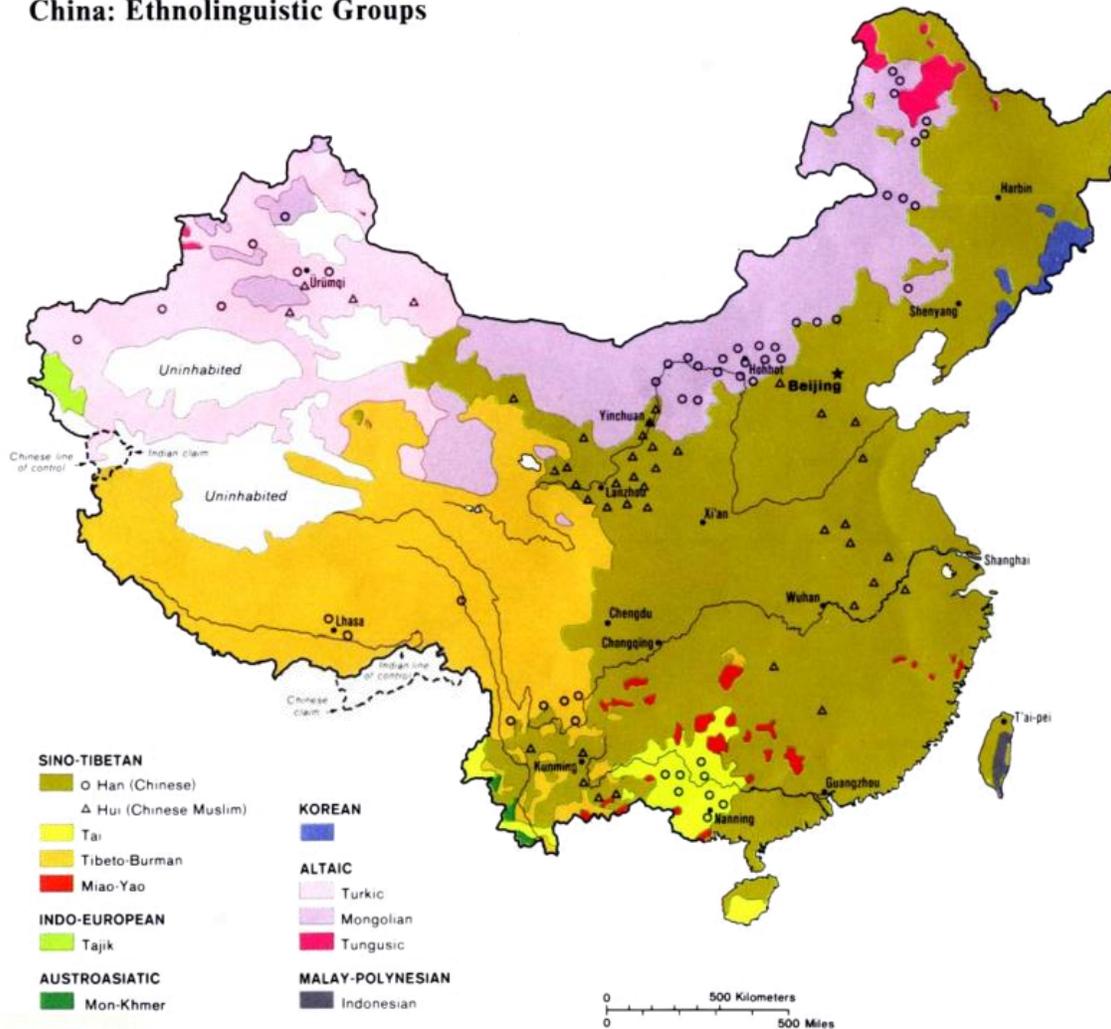
that historically was home to a mixture of sedentary farmers and pastoral nomads and today is also an industrial center. Mongolia, north of China proper and west of Manchuria, is a vast rolling region of steppe grasslands and semi-desert (the Gobi).

Turkestan's geography, steppes and deserts, is similar to that of Mongolia, but its main desert (the Taklamakan) is more arid and its high plateaus are more mountainous. Mongolia's and Turkestan's volatile history is one of rugged horse-warriors who herded sheep and horses on rich natural pastures and raided China proper for cereals and luxuries. Today the region of Mongolia is divided among three nations – China (Inner Mongolia), Mongolia (an independent country), and Russia (part of southern Siberia), whereas nearly all of Turkestan is now Xinjiang Province in northwestern China. The fourth section of Outer China is Tibet, a mountainous high plateau, located west of China proper, which features the world's highest peak (Mount Everest in the Himalayas). The fiercely independent Tibetan people raise yaks for milk, butter, and meat and grow barley in mountain valleys.

Most of Outer China became part of China in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries through Qing conquest.

**The Peopling of China.** Contemporary China houses 1.4 billion people, nearly one-fifth of the world's total. About two-thirds of China's population live in south China (the southern half of Inner China), and only one-sixth live in Outer China. Ninety-two percent of China's people belong to the Han Chinese ethnic group (the technical term for native Chinese people) who live mainly in Inner China. The remaining 8 percent of China's population consists of a diverse range of ethnicities and language groups – Manchus in Manchuria, Mongols in Mongolia, Uighurs and other Turkic-speaking peoples in Turkestan (Xinjiang Province), Tibetans in Tibet, and Miao-Yao, Dai, and numerous others in south China. The settlement of China has been a dynamic process of Han Chinese conquest and expansion during the past two millennia.

## China: Ethnolinguistic Groups



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethnolinguistic\\_map\\_of\\_China\\_1983.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethnolinguistic_map_of_China_1983.png)

### *Linguistic and Ethnic Diversity in Modern China*

Archaeological excavations in China have uncovered evidence of a long and evolving pattern of human settlement.

Much remains to be learned, but some broad trends can be sketched. The discovery of *homo erectus* (Peking Man) dates to

400,000-200,000 years ago. Groups representing another predecessor to current mankind, *Homo sapiens*, inhabited parts of China for about 150,000 years, beginning about 200,000 before the present. Current mankind, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, arrived from Africa at least 50,000 years ago and lived as hunters-gatherers initially in sites along the Yellow River valley, the loess plateaus (of today's Shaanxi Province), and the north China plain.

During the Neolithic age, starting about 9,500 years ago, agriculture was developed independently in at least three regions of China – a millet-based system in north China along the Yellow River (probably by ancestors of Chinese peoples), a rice-based system in south China along the Yangzi River (most likely by ancestors of non-Chinese peoples), and a tuber (taro and yam)-based system in southeastern China (by ancestors of non-Chinese peoples – in modern Guaxi, Guangdong, and Fujian Provinces).



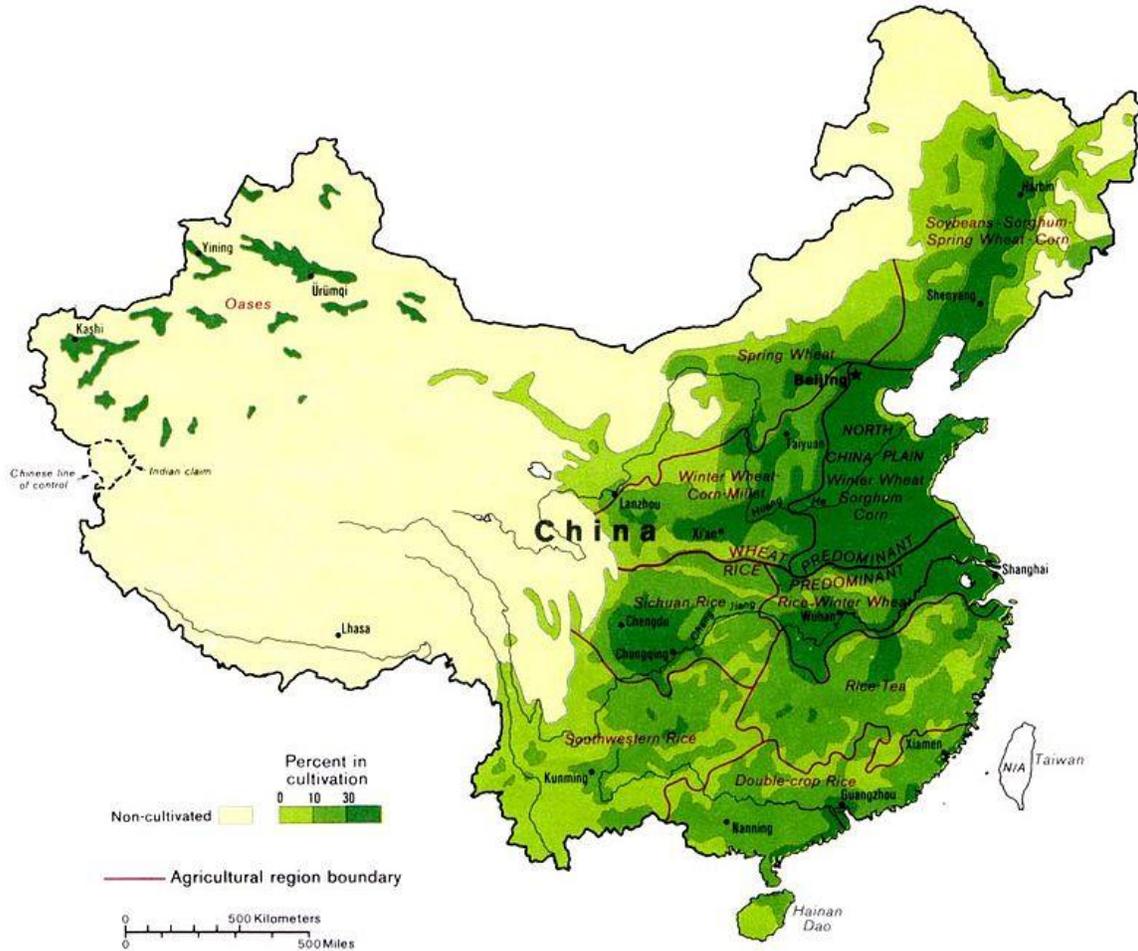
*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese\\_Foxtail\\_millet\\_02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_Foxtail_millet_02.jpg)>

*Foxtail Millet –  
Indigenous to North China and Grown There For 9,500 Years*

Crop agriculture gradually spread throughout Inner China, and the people settled down into villages, towns, and cities. About 7,000 years ago, the people of Inner China began raising pigs and dogs, and about 2,000 years later they added cattle, sheep, and water buffalos (in the south). Meanwhile, animal agriculture entered Outer China from the west (the Fertile Crescent in southwest Asia,

where sheep, goats, cattle, and pigs were first domesticated, and Central Asia where horses were first domesticated). Non-Chinese nomadic peoples in the steppe regions practiced transhumance, moving their herds (mostly of sheep and horses) according to pasture availability, rainfall, elevation, and season.

Neolithic cultures in China proper (Inner China) can be categorized along two gradients. One is the north-south division of agricultural systems, determined by climate, soil, and river systems. The northern millet zone had a harsher climate and less water, but benefited from rich loess soil and natural fertilization in the valleys of the Yellow River tributary system. The southern rice zone had a more favorable climate, heavy rainfall, and natural fertilization from the Yangzi River tributary system and from other river systems further south.



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Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China\\_agricultural\\_1986.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_agricultural_1986.jpg)

### *Agricultural Land Use in Modern China*

The second gradient derives from the artistic styles and burial practices of the Neolithic cultures in north China. In the northwest (modern Shaanxi and Gansu Provinces), the Yangshao Painted Pottery period, with simple burials and pottery painted in

geometrical designs, lasted for two millennia – from about 5000 to 3000 BCE.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
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*Yangshao Painted Pottery Pot, c. 4700-4300 BCE –  
Gansu Provincial Museum*

In the east and northeast (from modern Liaoning province to Shanghai), the Longshan Black Pottery period, with elaborate burials and unpainted yet sophisticated (pedestalled) black pottery and fine jade work, existed between 3000 BCE and 2200 BCE.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Longshan\\_eggshell\\_thin\\_cup\\_VandA.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Longshan_eggshell_thin_cup_VandA.JPG)>

*Longshan Black Eggshell Pottery, Shandong Province, China,  
c. 2400 BCE – Victoria and Albert Museum, London*

China's Bronze Age followed and lasted until about 500 BCE. In addition to improvements in metallurgy (bronze metal-working, alloying copper and tin) and agriculture (the introduction of domesticated horses from Central Asia), the Bronze Age in China was distinguished by the appearance of China's earliest

writing system and the development of political and religious hierarchies.

**Sources of Wealth in Early Chinese Empires.** State wealth and power in ancient China rested on three pillars – agriculture, metallurgy, and trade. China independently developed agriculture at least 9500 years ago, about a millennium after agriculture was first developed in the Fertile Crescent of Western Asia (modern Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and southeastern Turkey). Early sedentary agriculture in northern China centered on rainfed millets (foxtail and broomcorn), in southern China on irrigated rice, and in both regions on tamed animals (pigs and dogs were domesticated by 5000 BCE, and cattle and sheep by 3000 BCE). The Chinese began using metallurgy about 4000 years ago by casting bronze tools, weapons, and ritual objects.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bianzhong.jpg>>

*Bronze Bell Set, 64 Pieces, Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, c. 433  
BCE – Gift from the King of Chu*

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, iron casting became widespread in China, more than 1500 years before the casting of iron began in Europe.

With the improvement of roads and the introduction of money in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, trade expanded, mostly land- and river-based.

China had a large internal market – most people lived in the valleys of the Yellow, Huai, and Wei Rivers – and maritime trade was limited.

**The Shang and Zhou Kingdoms (1600-221 BCE).** The Shang Kingdom (1600-1050 BCE), China's first major polity, was

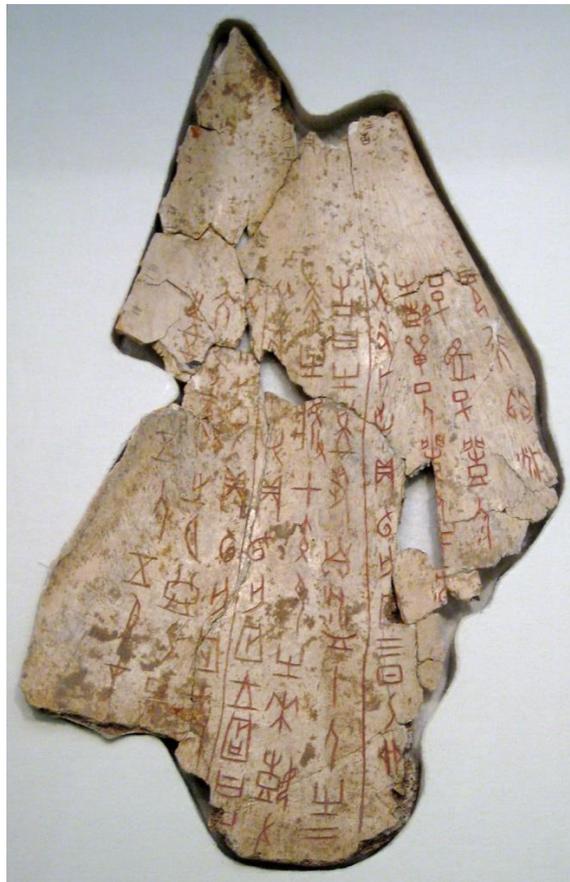
a small northern state in the Yellow River valley. Shang was based on Neolithic agriculture (millet, barley, and wet rice) plus an extensive use of water buffalos and silk textile production. Shang developed large cities, bronze technology, and writing, and the kingdom imported horse-drawn chariots from nomadic peoples on the steppes northwest of China.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La Tigresse, bronze vessel to preserve drink. Hunan, 11th BC. Cernuschi museum.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La_Tigresse,_bronze_vessel_to_preserve_drink._Hunan,_11th_BC._Cernuschi_museum.jpg)>

*Shang Bronze Ritual Vessel To Preserve Drink,  
13 Inches Tall, 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE – Musee Cernuschi, Paris*

Excavations at Anyang, the capital of later Shang, have unearthed impressive quantities of exquisite ritual bronzes (food and wine vessels to commemorate ancestors) and oracle bones (diviners' tools containing examples of early Chinese scripts, written on tortoise underbellies or sheep scapulas).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shang\\_dynasty\\_inscribed\\_scapula.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shang_dynasty_inscribed_scapula.jpg)>

*Oracle Bones, Anyang – Late Shang, 12<sup>th</sup> c. BCE*

The Shang kingdom was a “soft” state, because its kings collected taxes on visitations to their domains rather than developing a sustained governmental bureaucracy for tax collection.

About 1050 BCE, a western frontier state, Zhou, overran the Shang Kingdom and established loose hegemony over northern China’s numerous warring feudal states in the Yellow, Huai, and Wei River valleys. The Western Zhou kingdom (1050-770 BCE) set up its capital in Xi’an and succeeded in bringing relative stability and prosperity to northern China’s contentious fiefdoms. Most of the fiefdoms were ruled by relatives of the kings, and each one consisted of an expanse of agricultural area that supported a fortified city containing its own workshops, military, artists, and musicians.

A new dynasty shifted the capital eastward to Luoyang in 770 BCE and formed the Eastern Zhou kingdom (770-256 BCE). But Eastern Zhou was unstable and lacked clear political direction. For the following five centuries, northern China experienced nearly endless warfare and political fragmentation. In the later part

of this era, known fittingly as the Warring States Period (481-221 BCE), the feudal warlords were fighting with each other during five of every six years.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EN-WarringStatesAll260BCE.jpg>>

*The Warring States Period, 481-221 BCE – Depicted c. 260 BCE*

In spite of the nearly constant warfare, this period was rich in technical innovations and intellectual discovery. Warring rulers, needing to increase taxes from farmers, expanded their irrigation facilities and promoted the use of soybean and other legume rotations to maintain soil fertility (the legumes fixed nitrogen naturally). From the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the innovative use of iron tools (spades, hoes, plows, axes, and chisels) and weapons (spears and chariots), horse-based cavalry, and money (copper or bronze coins and rolls of silk cloth) became widespread.

Confucius (551-479 BCE), China's greatest philosopher, introduced Confucianism (based on benevolence, hierarchy, and education), which later underpinned dynastic Chinese government.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Confucius\\_Tang\\_Dynasty.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Confucius_Tang_Dynasty.jpg)>

*Confucius, Depicted as a Court Official –  
Painting by Tang Artist Wu Daozi, 8<sup>th</sup> century*

From the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Daoism (incorporating spirit worship, individualism, and mysticism) provided an alternative philosophy for poor rural dwellers seeking spiritual comfort. Hence, early China experienced great achievements in technology and thought despite its political instability.

**Qin Unification and the Rise of the Han Dynasty.** During the Warring States Period, the Qin kingdom in northwestern China established a military-agrarian meritocracy and expanded from its western frontier base to conquer most of China. The Qin heartland (west of modern Xi'an) had important geographic advantages – natural defensive barriers, good loess soil (alluvium from the Yellow River network), irrigation potential, and location on a major Central Asian trade route.

Qin military power grew out of the effective use of mass infantry and horse cavalry, strong organization and discipline, and emphasis on merit in determining military promotions. The Qin rulers abolished feudalism, created a free peasantry that owed land taxes (paid in grain) and labor services (corvée) directly to the state (not to feudal landlords), and permitted private sale of land. They enforced this anti-feudal revolution in all areas that they conquered. The Qin government promoted the widespread use of iron plows and constructed irrigation and road networks. Qin leaders thus expanded their tax base – free peasant agriculture.



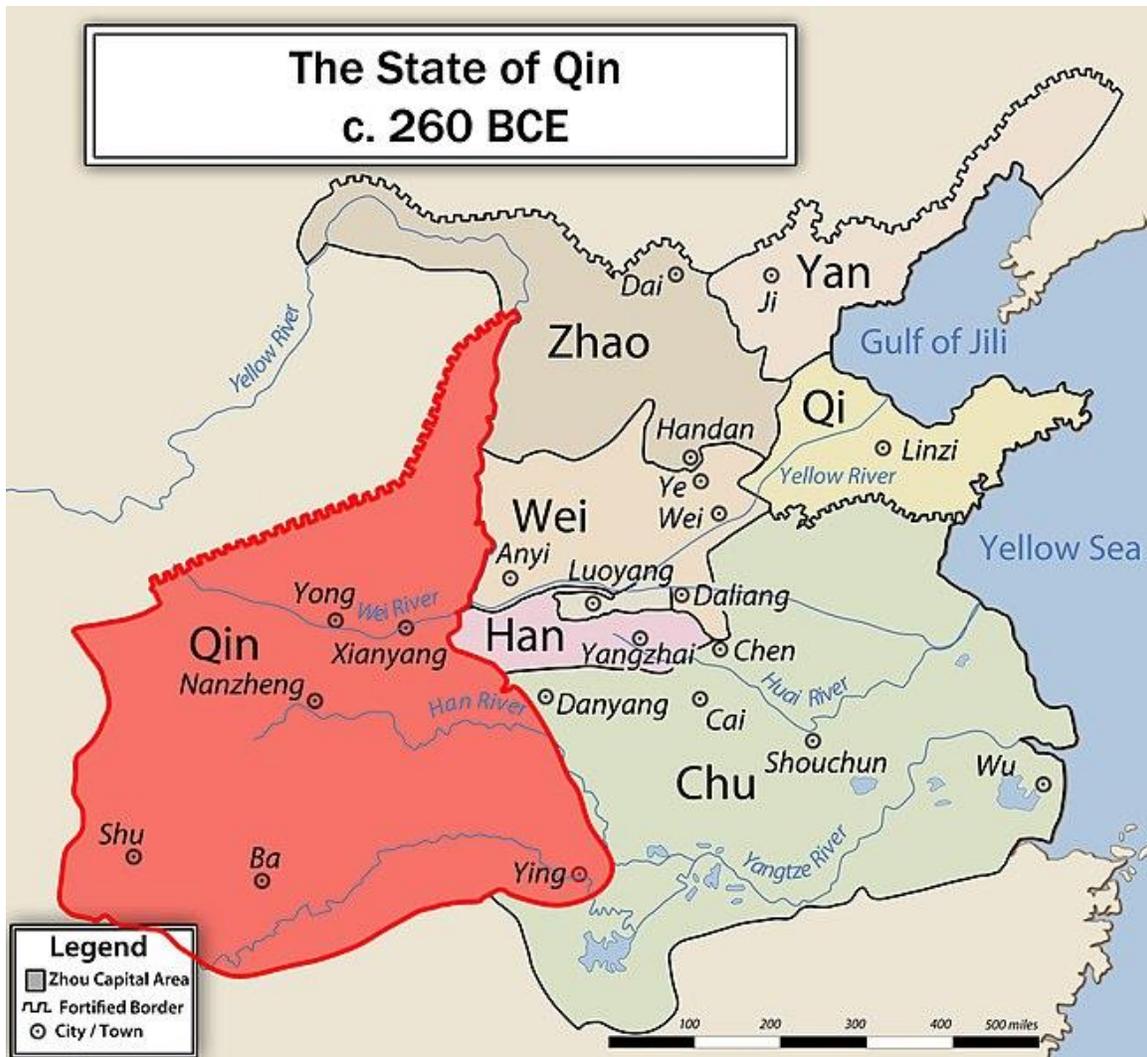
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qinacruballistabolts.jpg>>

*Qin Dynasty Composite Bow Arrows (Top)  
and Crossbow Bolts (Bottom) – 5<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE*

The Qin government had an efficient bureaucracy, based on a Legalist philosophy that stressed written rules and laws (originally developed by Shang Yang in the early Qin kingdom during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Efficient Qin bureaucrats standardized formerly diverse weights and measures, writing systems, coinage, cart axles, tools, and weapons in all conquered regions. Qin rulers and their

advisors in the bureaucracy thus created a near-totalitarian system to underpin their centralized bureaucratic monarchy. Under the Legalist philosophy, the ends justified the means, and very heavy government intervention was rationalized because it produced significant gains in power and wealth.

King Zheng of Qin (246-210 BCE), a brilliant militarist and public administrator, made the final conquests that unified China in 221 BCE. At that time, most Chinese people lived in the north (in or near the valleys of the Yellow and Huai Rivers), and the Yangzi River valley and regions in the south were sparsely occupied by non-Chinese peoples. Upon unifying China for the first time in its history, Zheng took the title, Shi Huangdi (Great August Emperor), and ruled China as a megalomaniacal and increasingly paranoid leader (surviving three assassinations attempts).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
< <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EN-QIN260BCE.jpg> >

### *Qin Unification of China (400-221 BCE) – c. 260 BCE*

Shi Huangdi, who spent his later years searching for an elixir to guarantee his personal physical immortality, refused to delegate political power or to prepare his ruling successor. He had expected his Qin dynasty to endure for 10,000 generations, but instead it

lasted for just 15 years. Shi Huangdi died of natural causes in 210 BCE, and the Qin dynasty disappeared soon thereafter.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2015-09-22-081415 - Terrakotta-Armee, Grosse Halle.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2015-09-22-081415_-_Terrakotta-Armee,_Grosse_Halle.jpg)>

*Terracotta Warriors in the Mausoleum of Qin Shi Huangdi –  
Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China*

Huhai, the second Qin emperor and an incompetent weakling in his father's shadow, was murdered by his ministers in 207 BCE. Qin rule collapsed a year later.

China under the Qin dynasty suffered from economic overstrain caused by extensive military campaigns of conquest within China and massive public works – high quality roads (a 4000-mile network across northern China), workable canals (the first Grand Canal of China stretching for over 1200 miles), immense irrigation schemes (in the Wei River valley and on the Chengdu plain in Sichuan), a lavish new capital (Xianyang near modern Xi'an), a Great Wall across northern China (on which 300,000 corvée workers were employed), and a costly tomb for the first emperor (containing an army of 8,000 terracotta warriors that today attracts more than two million tourists to Xi'an annually).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GreatWallofQinDynasty.png>>

### *Qin Great Wall – Stretched From Lintao to Liaodong*

The Qin government employed harsh administrative measures to expand and build so rapidly. They squeezed the peasantry through heavy taxes and corvée labor services (civilian and military), and they burned all books not deemed to have practical value (books on agriculture, iron-working, and craftsmanship were spared, but philosophical works on

Confucianism or Daoism were happily destroyed by Legalist officials). Under Qin rule, the Legalist bureaucrats imposed a rigid social structure – ranking the royalty on top, followed in order by scholars (government bureaucrats), peasants, artisans, and merchants. In the Legalist philosophy (as in Confucianism), merchants were seen as not providing any productive service since they did not produce goods or administer laws.



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<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:I\\_was\\_impressed\\_with\\_the\\_life-like\\_expression\\_\(35300697030\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:I_was_impressed_with_the_life-like_expression_(35300697030).jpg)>

*Life-sized Warrior – First Qin Emperor's Tomb, 210 BCE*

**Rise of the Han Empire (206 BCE-220 CE).** The free peasantry was at the heart of the Qin Legalist system. Despite their exalted position, China's peasants suffered the most from the economic overstrain created by Qin expansionism. The harsh use of conscripted and penal labor on public works and in military service created widespread resentment that quickly erupted in peasant rebellions. A commoner named Liu Bang led the peasant rebellion that overthrew the Qin government in 206 BCE. He restored order, cut taxes to one-fifteenth of harvests (from one-tenth), created a new dynasty (the Han), named himself King of Han in 206 BCE, and served as the first Han emperor, Gaozu (ruled 202-195 BCE).

The early Han emperors relied mainly on Daoism, using magicians, astrologers, seers, and shamans to interpret omens and set policies. Later, Emperor Wudi (ruled 141-87 BCE) introduced Confucianism as the basis of government, employing highly literate scholar-officials who ran the bureaucracy according to principles, rituals, self-restraint, and loyalty. The resilient Han



peasantry. But Gaozu, the first Han emperor, assigned control of over half of China's land to his relatives, ministers, and friends.

A half century later, Emperor Wudi confiscated and reallocated over half of the aristocratic domains and instituted a policy of partible inheritance to ensure that land would have to be divided among all sons in a family. Wudi's goal was to promote independent, land-owning peasants (who would pay their taxes directly to his government) in preference to tenant farmers on large aristocratic estates (who would pay half their crop as rent to landlords who, in turn, often found ways to evade paying taxes).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor\\_Wu\\_of\\_Han](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor_Wu_of_Han)>

*Han Emperor Wudi (ruled 141-87 BCE) –  
Promoted Independent, Land-owning Peasants*

But the Later Han (23-220 CE) emperors, who had weaker central government control, gradually abandoned Wudi's policy and permitted aristocrats to accumulate vast estates and farm them with tenants. The large estates were able to expand by means of government grants of land (for favors or military successes), purchases of land (especially after natural disasters), investments

to clear undeveloped forests or reclaim swamp land, and free peasant decisions to become tenants in preference to paying taxes and providing corvée labor services. That pattern – popular land reform to aid the free peasantry followed by backsliding as greedy aristocrats regained their large estates – was repeated often in later dynastic Chinese history.

Farm size, freehold or tenant, was small, typically only about four to five acres, and average farm households contained five adult or child workers. Less than one percent of Han China's population was enslaved (usually prisoners of war used in domestic service), and slavery was unimportant in agriculture.

Although tenancy increased in the Later Han period, free peasants operated about three-fourths of China's farmland even at the end of the Han dynasty. Farming households typically had diverse income sources. Most rural incomes derived from planting crops, tending animals, and producing textiles (silk and hemp), but supplemental farm incomes came from food processing, iron working, and leather tanning.

The most important food crops in Han China were wheat and spoked millet in the north and rice in the south. The principal rotations in the north were millet followed by wheat or barley or else millet followed by soybeans. The main cash crops were mulberry trees (for silk), hemp (linen), lac trees (lacquer), sesame (cooking oil), and fish farms (protein).



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*Mulberry Tree (Morus alba), Indigenous to North China –  
Foot-long Leaves Fed to Silk Worms (Bombyx mori)*

Labor-intensive agricultural innovations, along with the opening of new land and relative political stability, fostered steady population growth, and Later Han China grew to about 60 million people (the Roman Empire had a population of about 70 million at the same time, the early third century CE). The Han governments made major investments in irrigation and drainage systems, and private farmers built brick-faced wells and water wheels to enhance water supplies, improve water control, and permit movement of water. Government technicians introduced better legume rotations, plant spacing and crop inter-planting, intensive use of natural fertilizers and soil-pulverizing, a ridge and furrow system to improve fertilization, and pit farming to conserve moisture. New farm inputs included curved iron mould-boards on oxen-drawn plows (for land preparation), wheelbarrows (on-farm haulage), and donkeys (off-farm transportation).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at <  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wine\\_shop,\\_China,\\_collected\\_at\\_Yihe,\\_Pehgzhou\\_City,\\_Eastern\\_Han\\_dynasty,\\_25-220\\_AD,\\_tomb\\_tile\\_-\\_Sichuan\\_Provincial\\_Museum\\_-\\_Chengdu,\\_China\\_-\\_DSC04779.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wine_shop,_China,_collected_at_Yihe,_Pehgzhou_City,_Eastern_Han_dynasty,_25-220_AD,_tomb_tile_-_Sichuan_Provincial_Museum_-_Chengdu,_China_-_DSC04779.jpg)>

*Chinese Wheelbarrow, Invented in 1<sup>st</sup> century CE – Depicted on Han Tomb Tile, c. 25-220 CE, Sichuan Provincial Museum*

Han governments set reasonable tax rates in hopes of encouraging agricultural production and avoiding tax evasion. To facilitate tax collection, Han officials maintained annual registers of land and farming households. Land taxes (paid in grain or silk) were light – initially one-thirtieth of the harvest, although they later evolved into fixed rates based on acreage. Poll (head) taxes per adult were set at 120 *cash* (round coins with square holes

containing about 80 percent copper and 20 percent tin, lead, or iron – the main form of money in Han China). Land and poll taxes were affordable in normal times.

But one year in three was not normal. In its 446 years in power, the Han dynasty suffered endless major natural disasters – 43 droughts, 68 floods, and 37 locust and other insect infestations. The government responded with policies of food relief, assistance to resettle farmers in the south or on the northern frontiers (most displaced peasants moved south), and loans of operating capital to free peasant farmers. The Han government also constructed a network of public grain storage depots to provide food in emergencies and to stabilize grain prices. But that system (the ever-normal granary) did not work well. Many free peasants and tenants thus were devastated by the frequent natural disasters. Despite the growing concentration of landholdings in large aristocratic estates and the negative buffeting of natural disasters, the wealth and power of the Han Empire rested on the backs of its millions of small-scale farmers.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yuanyang\\_hani\\_farmer.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yuanyang_hani_farmer.jpg)>

*Chinese Farmer, Yunnan Province –  
His Ancestors Demanded Food Relief During Famines*

**Sources of Wealth – Foreign Conquest and Trade in the North and West.** To its north and west, Han China faced a formidable rival – the Xiongnu steppe nomadic empire. Led by a unifying leader, Maodun, the Xiongnu (Turkic-speaking peoples from Mongolia) had formed an imperial confederacy of nomadic pastoral tribes from a vast expanse of steppe land, incorporating

much of modern southern Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, and Turkestan (Xinjiang Province in northwestern China).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hsiung-nu-Empire.png>

*Xiongnu Steppe Nomadic Empire (209 BCE-155 CE) – Extorted Subsidies and Favorable Trading Terms from Han China*

Although China had more than fifty times as many people as the million or so in the Xiongnu federation, the Chinese could not sustain military control over their steppe adversaries. The Xiongnu were fierce, horse-mounted archers who raided China's borders and then retreated into the endless steppes until Chinese supply lines were hopelessly strained. The Xiongnu adopted an outer

frontier strategy toward Han China – raiding violently, fighting intermittently, refusing to occupy Chinese land permanently, and agreeing to peace in return for subsidies, trading privileges, and Han titles and dynastic marriages.

The first Han emperor, Gaozu, signed a peace agreement with the Xiongnu in 198 BCE and agreed to pay subsidies (usually in bolts of silk cloth) that consumed 5-10 percent of Han state revenues. The Han Chinese thus had ostensible suzerainty over the Xiongnu confederacy, but the Xiongnu received reverse tribute (extorted subsidies) from China in return for their promise not to raid Chinese settlements. The Xiongnu leaders (the Shanyus) enjoyed their annual trips to pay homage to the Han emperors, because those visits were very profitable. China's payments of reverse tribute permitted the Xiongnu to hold their confederacy together by providing resources to the autocratic Shanyu to buy off his internal opponents. The Xiongnu thus had a parasitical attachment to Han China, and stability on China's steppe borders reigned when Han emperors agreed to pay extortionate bribes for

peace. That delicate balance existed intermittently for much of the first 250 years of the Han dynasty.

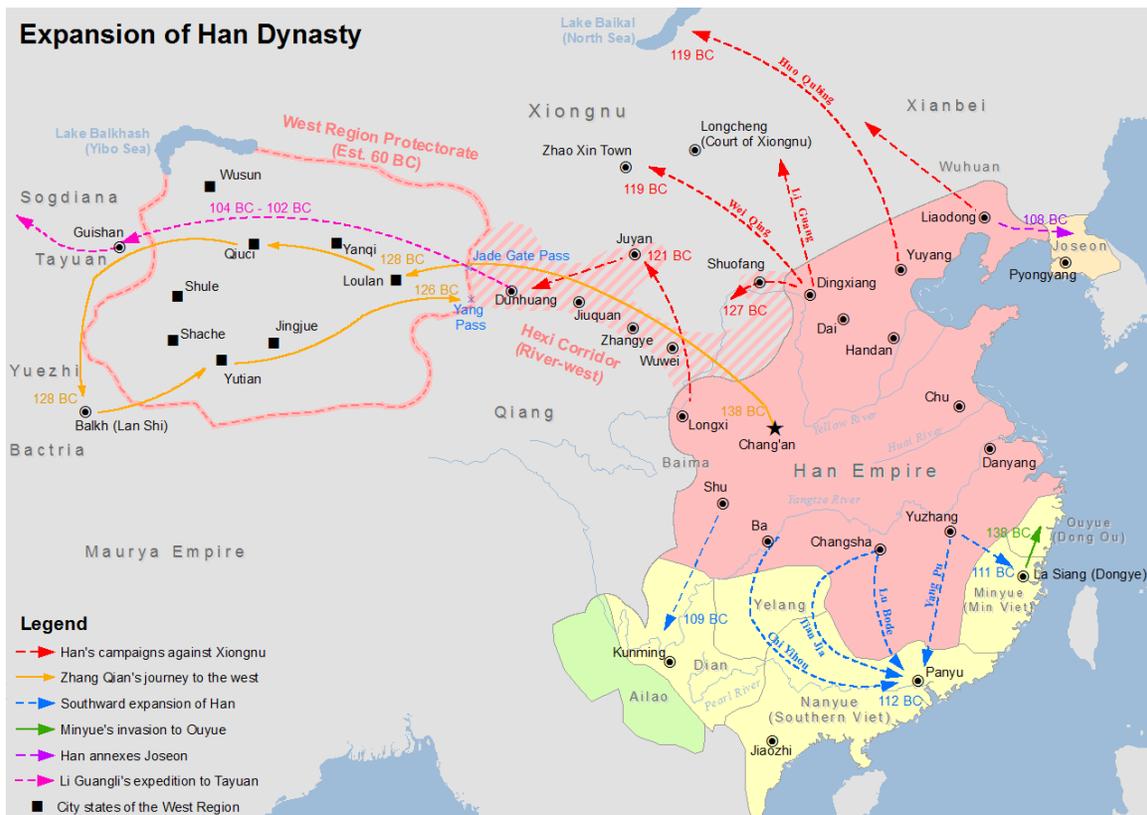


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gansu Museum 2007 257.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gansu_Museum_2007_257.jpg)>

*Han China Paid Extortionary Prices for Xiongnu Horses – The Flying Horse of Gansu, 25-220 CE, Gansu Provincial Museum*

In 166 BCE, however, the Xiongnu broke the peace agreement, and 140,000 horsemen raided to within 10 miles of Chang'an (modern Xi'an), the Han capital. Emperor Wudi subsequently took aggressive action. He reorganized his military forces into cavalry units using sophisticated cross-bows, and he

introduced the stirrup (from the steppe) to permit greater accuracy for his horse archers. Wudi imposed military conscription through which all Chinese males between ages 23 and 56 were required to serve two years in the army without pay (although they received rations, clothing, and equipment). In 133 BCE, he initiated a long campaign of Han western expansion.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han\\_Expansion.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han_Expansion.png)

*Han Chinese Expansion –  
West into Outer China, South within Inner China*

With a force of 300,000 troops, Wudi defeated the Xiongnu and opened the Gansu Corridor, the principal route to Central Asia, bordered by the Tibetan plateau on the south and the Gobi Desert on the north. During the next three decades, he sent additional military expeditions into Turkestan and established Chinese suzerainty over Qiang (Tibet) and several smaller western states. In those tributary states, Wudi installed Chinese governors but allowed local rulers to continue to govern so long as they paid taxes and supplied troops.

Control of the Gansu Corridor was critical for Wudi's military and trade strategies. It permitted China to establish a buffer that separated the Xiongnu in the north from the previously-subjugated Tibetans in the south, and it allowed the Han to gain tenuous control over the main east-west trade route, which later became known as the Silk Road. Wudi and subsequent Han emperors settled a million Chinese migrants to control the Gansu Corridor, the key bottleneck, and paid reverse tribute to the Xiongnu leaders to prevent pillage. In 101 BCE, Wudi's armies

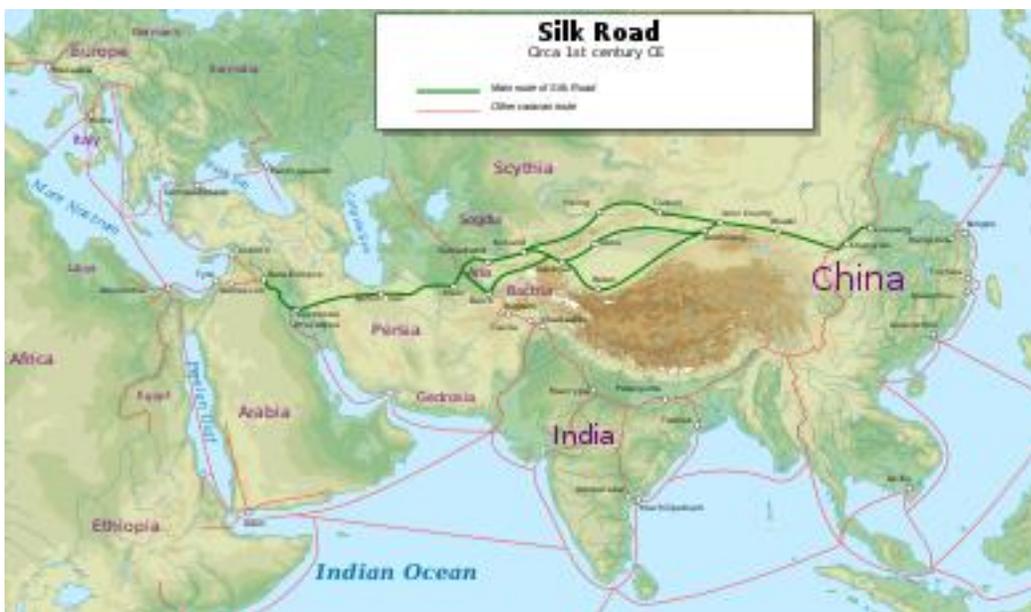
conquered the Central Asian kingdom of Ferghana (in modern Uzbekistan), gained control of its superb stock of warrior horses, and further opened the Silk Road trade route that linked Chang'an (his capital, modern Xi'an) with Rome.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han\\_Dynasty\\_pottery\\_tower2.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han_Dynasty_pottery_tower2.JPG)>

*Concern over Border Insecurity –  
Han Pottery Model of A Multi-story Residential Watchtower*

Though renowned and romanticized in history books, the Silk Road was not a major source of wealth for the Han Empire. During the last three Han centuries, beginning with the first caravan in 106 BCE, trade on the Silk Road was brisk because of relative stability in Turkestan.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk\\_Road\\_in\\_the\\_I\\_century\\_AD\\_-\\_en.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk_Road_in_the_I_century_AD_-_en.svg)

*The Silk Road –  
Linking the Han Chinese and Roman Empires, 1<sup>st</sup> c. BCE-3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE*

The primary exports from Han China, traded along the Silk Road, were luxury items of low bulk and weight – silk (thread, cloth, and textiles), lacquerware, bronze utensils, pottery, and jade. The

highest quality trade goods – silk, lacquerware, bronze, and ceramics – were made in government-owned factories, but the largest quantities of those items were produced in smaller private-owned factories. Han Chinese artwork thus was produced mostly in factories, both government and private.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mawangdui\\_lacquerwares\\_and\\_tray.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mawangdui_lacquerwares_and_tray.jpg)>

*Han Lacquerware, Han Tomb No. 1, Mawangdui, 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE*  
*– Lacquerware Was More Valuable than Bronze*

In return, Han China obtained Silk Road imports of horses, furs, cattle, and sheep from the steppe and of gold, silver, glassware, jewelry, gemstones, and woolen and linen textiles from Rome, Persia, and India. The Xiongnu also traded actively on the Silk

Road, re-exporting much of the silk cloth that they had obtained from China in subsidies and trade.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Green\\_glass\\_Roman\\_cup\\_unearthed\\_at\\_Eastern\\_Han\\_tomb,\\_Guixian,\\_China.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Green_glass_Roman_cup_unearthed_at_Eastern_Han_tomb,_Guixian,_China.jpg)

*Roman Glassware, Green Glass Cup, Han Tomb, Guangxi, China  
– Han Import on the Silk Road*

The Chinese officially banned exports to the Xiongnu of weapons (cross-bows and iron spears) and of goods that they feared would increase Xiongnu economic power (agricultural tools, domestic animals, and metal utensils). But contraband trade was widespread across the open Chinese borders. Agricultural innovations as well as goods moved along the Silk Road. China

received the grape, alfalfa, chives, coriander, cucumber, figs, safflower, and sesame from regions in India or the Middle East, whereas the peach, apricot, rice, and soybeans moved from China westward.

In the north and west, therefore, Han China about broke even. Han governments paid out reverse tribute to the Xiongnu and expended resources on military campaigns to control their raiding and pillaging. Although insufficient data exist to make credible quantitative estimates, those sizeable costs were probably about balanced by government revenues earned in producing trade goods and taxing Silk Road trade. Han emperors thus had to look elsewhere for revenues from conquest and trade to underpin their power.

**Sources of Wealth – Foreign Conquest and Trade in the South and East.** The Han Empire faced much better prospects in its south and east. At the time of the Qin unification of China (221 BCE), about 90 percent of the population lived in the north – mostly in the valleys of the Yellow, Wei, and Huai Rivers – the

heartland of the Han Chinese people. Han migrants had already begun to expand into the Yangzi and nearby river valleys and to drive the weaker indigenous peoples southward and into less productive mountain areas. That process of gradual Han takeover of rich rice-producing regions continued in the Early Han period (206 BCE-23 CE).

But it was interrupted when Wang Mang (ruled 9-23 CE) staged a coup d'état and declared himself the emperor of a new dynasty, the Xin. Wang Mang tried (and failed) to carry out a massive land reform that would have transferred all land from aristocrats to free peasants, and his unstable and brief regime suffered unusually destructive natural disasters – droughts and floods (which re-routed the course of the Yellow River by several hundred miles).

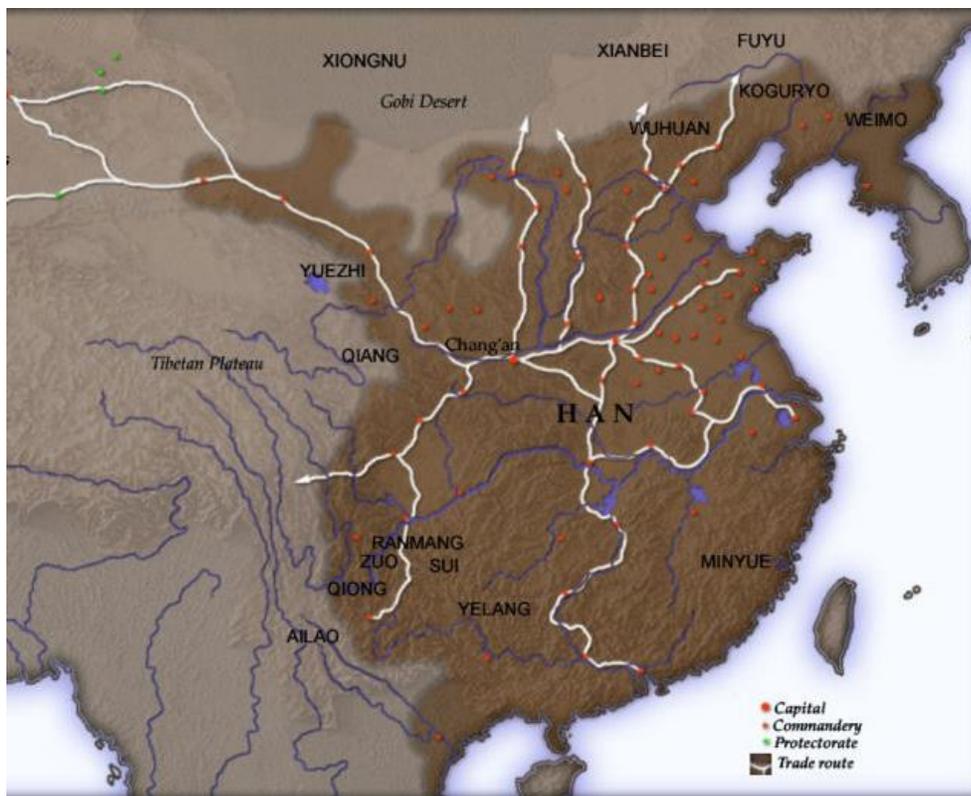


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wang\\_Mang.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wang_Mang.jpg)>

*Xin Emperor Wang Mang (ruled 9-23 CE) –  
China's Only Socialist Emperor*

Following the restoration of considerably weakened Han rule in 23 CE, Chinese migration southward revived. It then accelerated during the Later Han period (23-220 CE), because peasants in the north encountered increased political instability and Xiongnu border incursions. Between the first Han census in 2 CE and a later one in 140, ten million Han Chinese migrants settled in the south (mostly in the Yangzi River valley). Southward

migration was facilitated by the 4000-mile road network, built earlier by Qin Emperor Shi Huangdi, which linked north and south China (the Yellow and Yangzi River valleys). That impressive road system (which matched the later Roman network in size and quality) was constructed in a decade and consisted of a pounded earthen base, five paces wide, reinforced by metal poles, and shaded by pine trees.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han\\_map.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han_map.jpg)>

*Han China's System of Roads and Political Control,  
c. 87 BCE*

The expansionist Han emperor, Wudi (ruled 141-87 BCE), also extended Han direct control southward through military force. Wudi introduced the extensive use of massive fleets of ships for naval warfare in south China's rivers and coasts. In 111 BCE, Wudi conquered the Chinese-ruled kingdom of Yue (Nam Viet) that had been founded a century earlier in the Qin era. Yue was a prosperous state, centered in Panyu (later Canton, now Guangzhou), which included most of contemporary Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces plus northern Vietnam. The non-Chinese inhabitants of Yue had probably migrated there from the Yangzi River valley between about 1000 and 500 BCE. From Yue, in 109 BCE Wudi conquered the Dian, who had created an advanced culture in Yunnan province of southwest China, and forced them to become a tributary state.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CMOC\\_Treasures\\_of\\_Ancient\\_China\\_exhibit\\_-\\_bronze\\_cowrie\\_container.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit_-_bronze_cowrie_container.jpg)

*Dian Bronze Vessel, Oxen Hunted By Tigers – Jinning, Yunnan Province, Before 8 CE, National Museum of China, Beijing*

In the following year, Wudi's forces moved northeastward into southern Manchuria and Korea, subjugated the non-Chinese peoples there, and forced their governments to become Han tributary states. Tributary status meant that subject states had to pay annual tribute (taxes) to the Han emperor, supply conscript

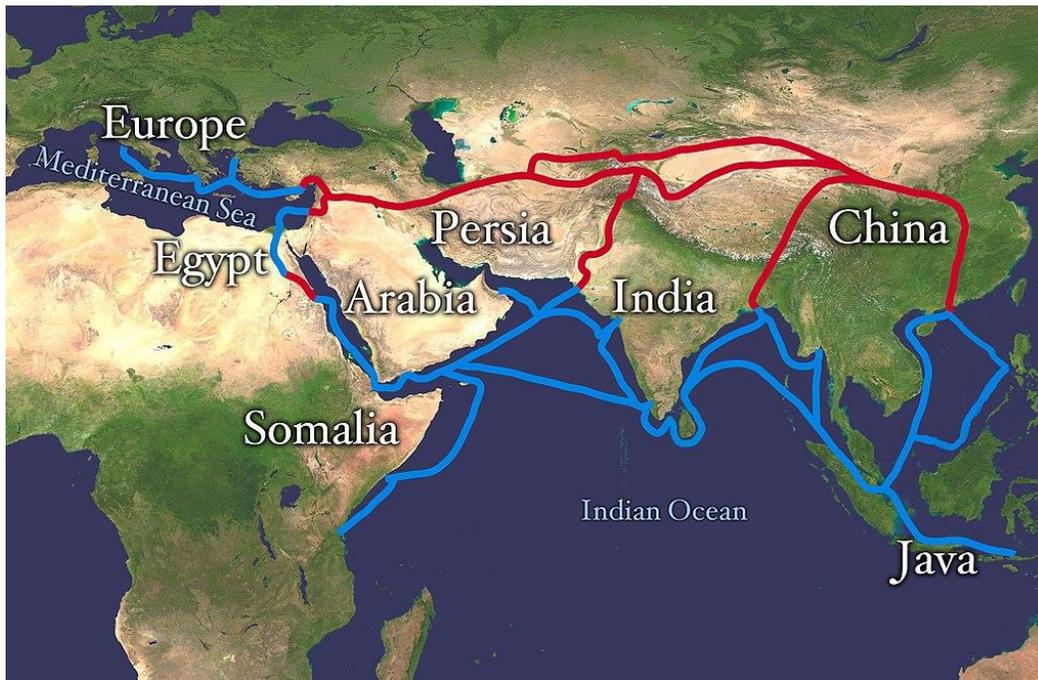
soldiers and corvée laborers, and feed and clothe Han troops occupying their lands. But tribute often served as a cloak for trade. Because the Han officials also made gifts to tributary rulers, two-way tribute in effect became trade. In the northeast, for example, Manchurian and Korean leaders paid tribute to China in grain, furs, animals, and leather, and Chinese rulers returned the favor with shipments of silk, bronze, lacquerware, and iron utensils.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western\\_Han\\_soldiers\\_2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western_Han_soldiers_2.jpg)>

*Han Chinese Ceramic Statues of Cavalry and Infantry –  
Western Han Tomb, Hainan Provincial Museum*

From those conquered areas, Han merchants also expanded foreign trade. Panyu, the Yue capital, was the key southern port on a maritime trade route that connected southern China with India and the Persian Gulf (the maritime Silk Road). This maritime trade route, linking southern China with Indian Ocean ports, became important during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Panyu was renowned for its high quality pearls and tortoise shells and its tasty rice and tropical fruits.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk\\_route.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk_route.jpg)>

*The Spice Trade Route (Blue Lines) Complemented the Silk Road Trade Route (Red Lines) – China Traded on Both Routes*

During the Later Han period, a land-based trade route opened that traversed the Himalayan Mountains to link Dian in Yunnan with the Shan state in Burma and with the numerous kingdoms in fragmented northern India.

Han government officials, imbued with the Confucian philosophy, down-graded the importance of trade and merchants. Because they suspected merchants of profiteering, they attempted to regulate trade and prices through government controls. But trade controls never had much success, in part because the Confucian bureaucrats overcame their anathema about trade to cut private deals with merchants that helped the merchants obtain licenses and avoid taxes and provided the officials with supplementary income.

In 117 BCE, Emperor Wudi established government monopolies on the production and trade of salt and iron. Those monopolies were intended to generate government revenue, assert Han imperial power, and control untrustworthy merchants. The salt and iron monopolies generated sizeable revenues for Han

emperors in the Early Han period, but they were taken over by regional government officials in the Later Han period. Successful monopolization required that the government control the sources of production, because taxes on trade were difficult to collect. That condition was fulfilled for both salt and iron (for which sources of production were limited). But Han government attempts to monopolize and tax the trade in liquor and grain failed because the sources of production of those items were diverse and impossible to monopolize.

In contrast to the north and west, therefore, Han expansion into the south and east contributed substantially to the wealth and power of the Han Empire – by extending its agricultural tax base in the rich Yangzi River valley and in newly conquered areas in south China.

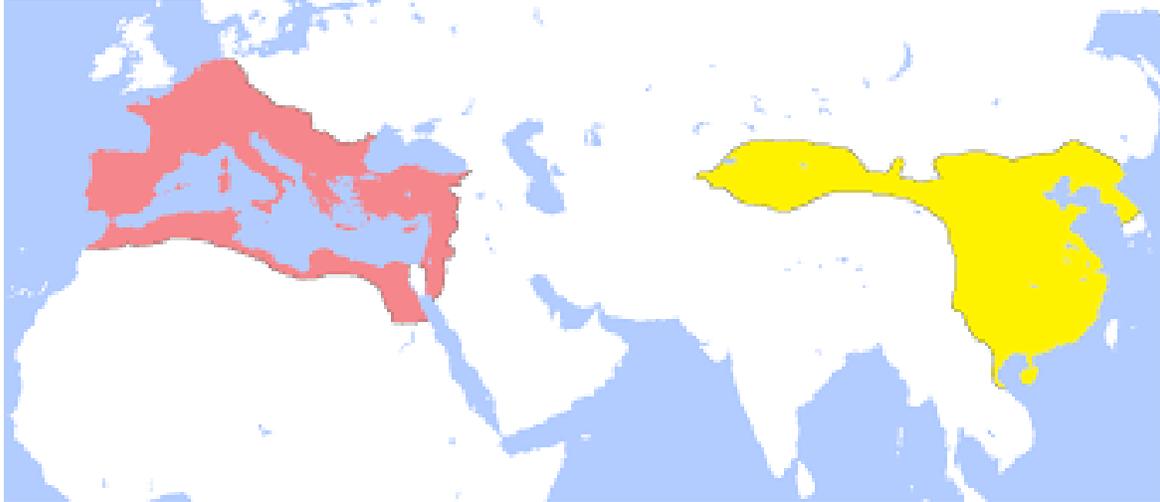


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han\\_Money\\_Tree.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han_Money_Tree.JPG)>

*Han Bronze Money-Tree, Holding “Cash” (Round Copper/Tin Coins with Square Holes) – Hong Kong Heritage Museum*

**Decline of the Han Empire.** The Han Empire reached its peak under Emperor Wudi in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, was shocked by the revolutionary takeover of Wang Mang in 9-23 CE, and then recovered gradually during the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Permanent decline set in during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century due to a succession of weak emperors

and an increasing inability of the Confucian bureaucracy to wield strong oversight.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RomanandHanEmpiresAD1.png>>

*Han China (Yellow) Imploded in 220 CE –  
Two and one-half Centuries Before the Roman Empire (Red) Fell*

Consort family factions (extended families of empresses and would-be empresses) schemed over the succession of emperors and contended for power in the inner court. Scholar-officials squabbled in the outer court, undercutting their bureaucratic authority, and eventually the key office of chief counsel (prime minister) became vacant permanently. This central weakness permitted the aristocrats to create vast estates by evading taxes

(through bribery or falsifying land registers) and enticing free peasants to become tenants (to avoid taxes and labor service). Aristocratic estates, replete with walled cities and urban industries, increasingly usurped land that had been farmed by free peasants. The tax base available to the central government thus shrunk. Remaining free peasants faced increasing tax and labor obligations as the Han government tried to make ends meet.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China\\_Harvest.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_Harvest.jpg)>

*Wheat Harvest in North China –  
Free Peasants Faced Increasing Hardships in the Later Han Era*

Declining revenues meant that the government was unable to provide sufficient food relief following natural disasters.

Desperate peasants turned to Daoist religious cults that set up quasi-governments and led peasant rebellions against central authority. Because the central military was under-funded, regional warlords formed their own armies to take its place and suppress the peasant rebellions. Central authority further splintered.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eastern\\_Han\\_Dynasty\\_tomb\\_fresco\\_of\\_chariots,\\_horses,\\_and\\_men,\\_Luoyang\\_2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eastern_Han_Dynasty_tomb_fresco_of_chariots,_horses,_and_men,_Luoyang_2.jpg)>

*Han Military Warlord with Nine Chariots, 50 Horses and 70 Men  
– Fresco in Tomb, Luoyang*

Four competitors – palace eunuchs, the intelligentsia, the great families, and military warlords – vied for control of the central government. The eunuchs, who served as the emperor's spies and controlled his palace guard, took virtual control of the government in 166 and slaughtered the Confucian intelligentsia. The great families then ran unfettered in the regions. In 184, a Daoist cult, the Way of Great Peace (commonly known as the Yellow Turbans), rebelled, and 360,000 peasant demonstrators killed local officials and nobles in eight northern provinces. Most of the south remained loyal to the central government, but Han China was in tatters.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han\\_tomb\\_figurines,\\_Luoyang.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han_tomb_figurines,_Luoyang.jpg)>

*Rebellious Peasantry Used Ox-drawn Carts –  
Ceramic Figurines, Tomb, Luoyang*

In 189, a warlord slaughtered 2000 palace eunuchs, burned and sacked the Eastern Han capital (Luoyang), and destroyed most official records. One warlord, Cao Cao, finally suppressed the Yellow Turban rebellion and thereafter ran the government as regent, but tax collection and public administration were sporadic. In 220, upon Cao Cao's death, his son, Cao Bei, created a new dynasty, the Wei, ending the Han era. The Han Empire thus imploded through internal decay and nobles' greed leading to

peasant rebellions and regional splintering. Han China was overtaken by internal disintegration, not by a foreign invasion.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:End\\_of\\_Han\\_Dynasty\\_Warlords.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:End_of_Han_Dynasty_Warlords.png)

*Han Chinese Military Warlords, 190s CE – Han China Disintegrated After Peasant Rebellions and Regional Splintering*

**Aftermath of the Han Empire (220-589).** In the aftermath of the Han dynasty, China entered an Age of Division (220-589) that lasted for nearly four centuries. The country split into three

major kingdoms, Wei, Wu, and Shu (220-265), and then was briefly reunified under the Jin dynasty (265-316).



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western\\_Jin\\_Dynasty\\_280\\_CE.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western_Jin_Dynasty_280_CE.png)>

*The Jin Dynasty (265-316) Briefly Reunited China –  
Peak Territorial Extent, 280 CE*

Thereafter, northern China was ruled by a variety of large and small kingdoms, mostly with non-Chinese leadership.

Meanwhile, in the northern steppe, the Xiongnu were succeeded by the Xianbei, a Manchurian tribe that practiced egalitarian rather than centralized tribal leadership. For a century and a half, the

steppe thus faced near anarchy in the absence of strong central leadership that could extort subsidies from China to underpin and fund a steppe empire. Then the Toba Turks from Manchuria set up the Northern Wei kingdom (386-535) in northern China and assisted the conversion of most northern Chinese to Buddhism.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asia\\_500ad.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asia_500ad.jpg)

### *Asia c. 500 – Depicting the Northern Wei Dynasty in North China (386-556) and Its Neighbors*

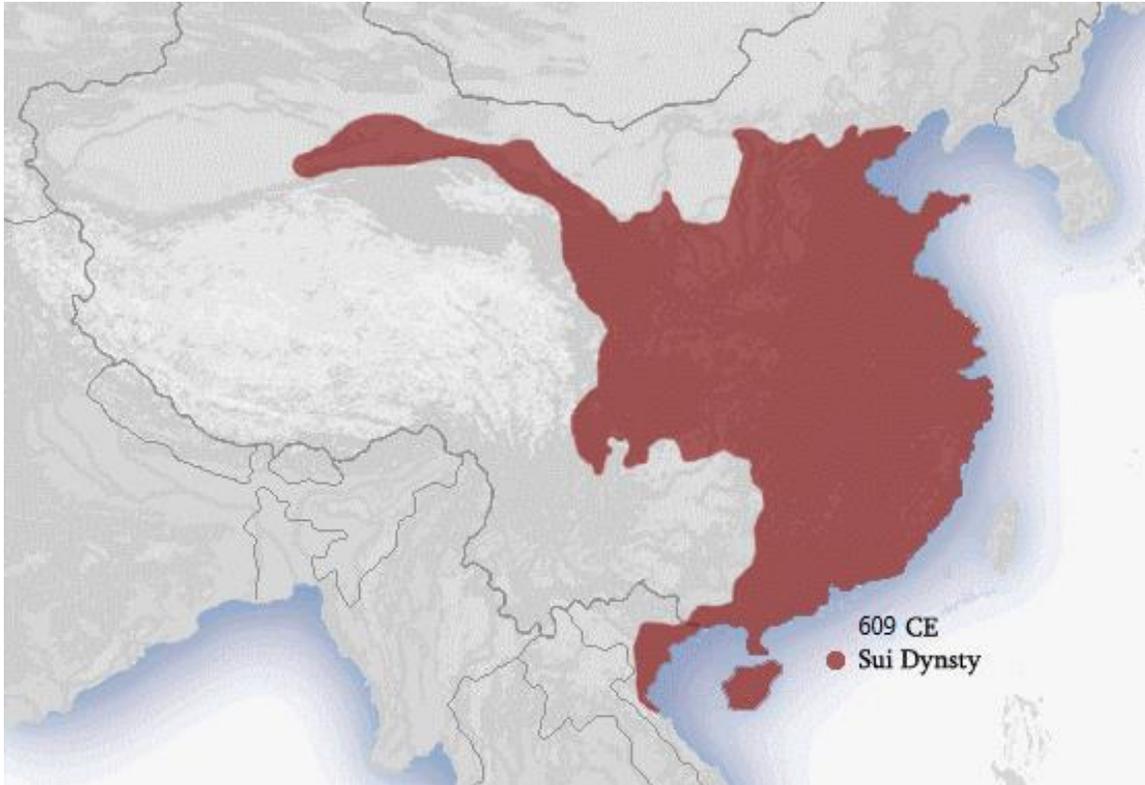
During the Age of Division, the religions that appealed to the downtrodden masses, Buddhism and Daoism, spread in popularity and Confucianism declined in importance. Many Chinese nobles

and peasants migrated south during this period of instability and alien rule. A series of small, unstable regional dynasties ruled south China, often from a capital at Nanjing. With the breakdown of central authority, large landed estates expanded at the expense of the free peasantry, tenancy and personal bondage spread, and social inequality increased. Then, unexpectedly, another leader appeared from the northwest to re-unify China in 589.

### **China's Tang Dynasty (618-907)**

**Sui Reunification.** China was reunified in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. As in the first unification of China eight centuries earlier, the process was led by Turkic-Chinese warrior nobles from the northwest. Reunification was carried out by two short-lived dynasties – the Northern Zhou (534-581) and the Sui (581-618). The Northern Zhou replaced the sinicized and weakened Northern Wei Kingdom in 535 and reunited northern China by conquering the fertile Sichuan basin in 553 and the rich Kingdom of Qi in the northeast in 577. In 581, a Northern Zhou noble military leader,

Yang Jian, engineered a palace coup, ruthlessly killed 59 Zhou princes, and declared himself Emperor Sui Wendi (ruled 581-604).



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cheui\\_Dynasty\\_581\\_CE.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cheui_Dynasty_581_CE.png)>

### *Sui Dynasty, 609 CE*

Wendi solidified his power and tax base by forcing all subjugated nobles to cede their lands and move to his new capital, Chang'an. In 589, Wendi amassed an enormous military force – 500,000 troops, a huge naval fleet, and an extensive system of grain supplies – and mounted eight massive sailing assaults up the

Yangzi River to conquer the kingdom of Qen in south China.

After nearly four centuries of division, China was again united.

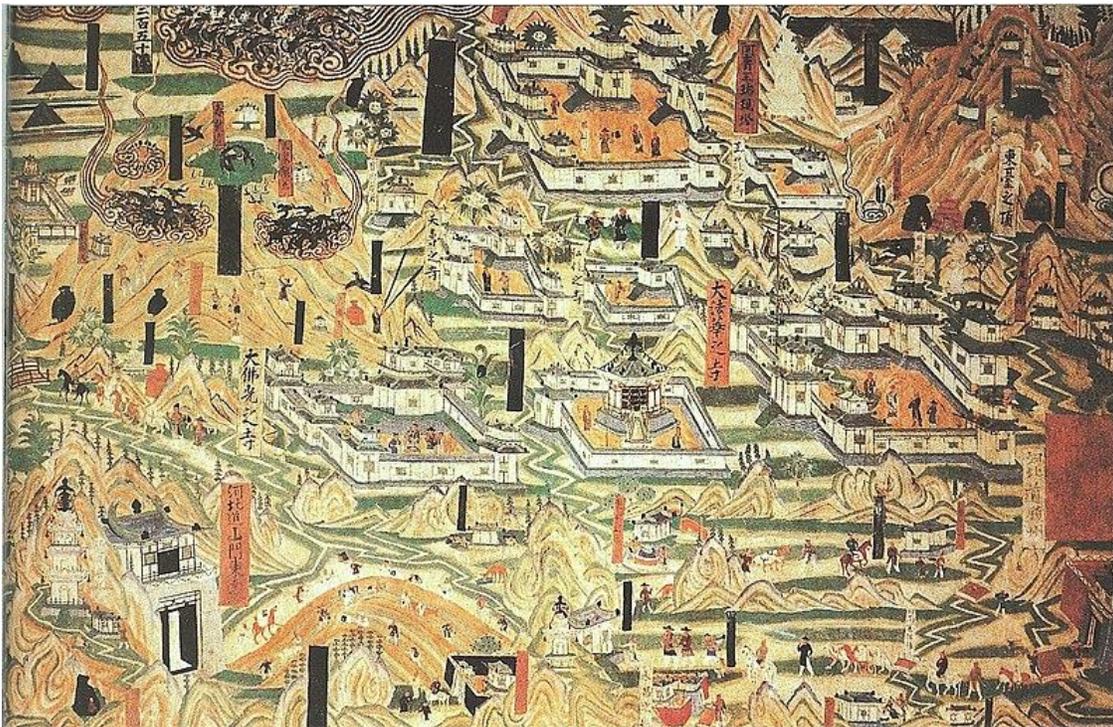


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sui\\_Wendi\\_Tang.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sui_Wendi_Tang.jpg)>

*Emperor Sui Wendi (ruled 581-604) – Reunited China*

To protect his new conquests, Emperor Wendi introduced a military innovation – a divisional militia (*fu ping*) of 200,000 volunteer farmer-soldiers, who farmed land in government settlements and in lieu of paying land rent served in military rotations between the capital, Chang’an, and the frontiers. Wendi

legitimized his rule by claiming he was a Buddhist Cakravartin king (a leader ordained to rule by a decision of the Buddha), promoted the establishment of Buddhist monasteries and temples, and hoped to unify China's mixed population by popularizing Buddhism as a universalistic religion with appeal for everyone seeking eternal salvation.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mogao\\_Cave\\_61,\\_painting\\_of\\_Mount\\_Wutai\\_monasteries.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mogao_Cave_61,_painting_of_Mount_Wutai_monasteries.jpg)>

*Buddhist Monastic Complex, Sui Era –  
Mural, Mogao Cave 61, Dunhuang, Gansu Province*

Wendi was a popular leader who planned to integrate China through a massive program of public works, constructed by millions of conscripted laborers (who were paying their corvée labor service obligation to the state). He initiated – and his son, Emperor Sui Yangdi (604-618), completed – the restoration or new construction of two capitals (Chang’an and Luoyang), the 1200-mile Grand Canal system (linking the Yellow and Yangzi River valleys to Beijing in the north and Hangzhou in the south by 609), an expanded Great Wall, a new road network to the northern frontiers, and a series of public grain depots. Those public projects required enormous expenditures of forced labor service – 5.5 million workers were employed to repair and extend the Grand Canal and another 1 million to reconstruct the Great Wall (when the entire population of China was no more than 60 million).

Yangdi added guns to butter when he became emperor in 604 upon the death of his father, the Sui founding king. In 609, Yangdi embarked on expensive military campaigns in northern Vietnam and Champa (modern central and southern Vietnam) and in

Chinese Turkestan (modern Xinjiang Province in northwestern China). Between 612 and 614, he suffered disastrous defeats at the hands of the Koguryo kingdom in Korea, when he stubbornly mounted annual failed assaults that overstretched his supply lines. Like Qin Shi Huangdi, Sui Yangdi was a harsh and megalomaniacal leader who greatly overstrained the resources of his empire. Yangdi, widely viewed as an oppressive tyrant, was assassinated in 618.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sui\\_Yangdi\\_Tang.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sui_Yangdi_Tang.jpg)>

*Sui Emperor Yangdi (ruled 604-618) – Assassinated Tyrant*

**Rise of the Tang Empire (618-907).** Immediately after the second Sui emperor's death, Li Yuan, a Sui military commander of Turkic-Chinese noble origins and a first cousin of Yangdi, founded a new dynasty, the Tang (618-907), and declared himself Emperor Gaozong (618-624). During the first two centuries of Tang rule, China entered its Golden Age – a period of political power, expanding wealth, and artistic creativity. Tang emperors installed a centralized bureaucracy, collected taxes efficiently, created a powerful military, and expanded Chinese territory to its greatest historical extent.

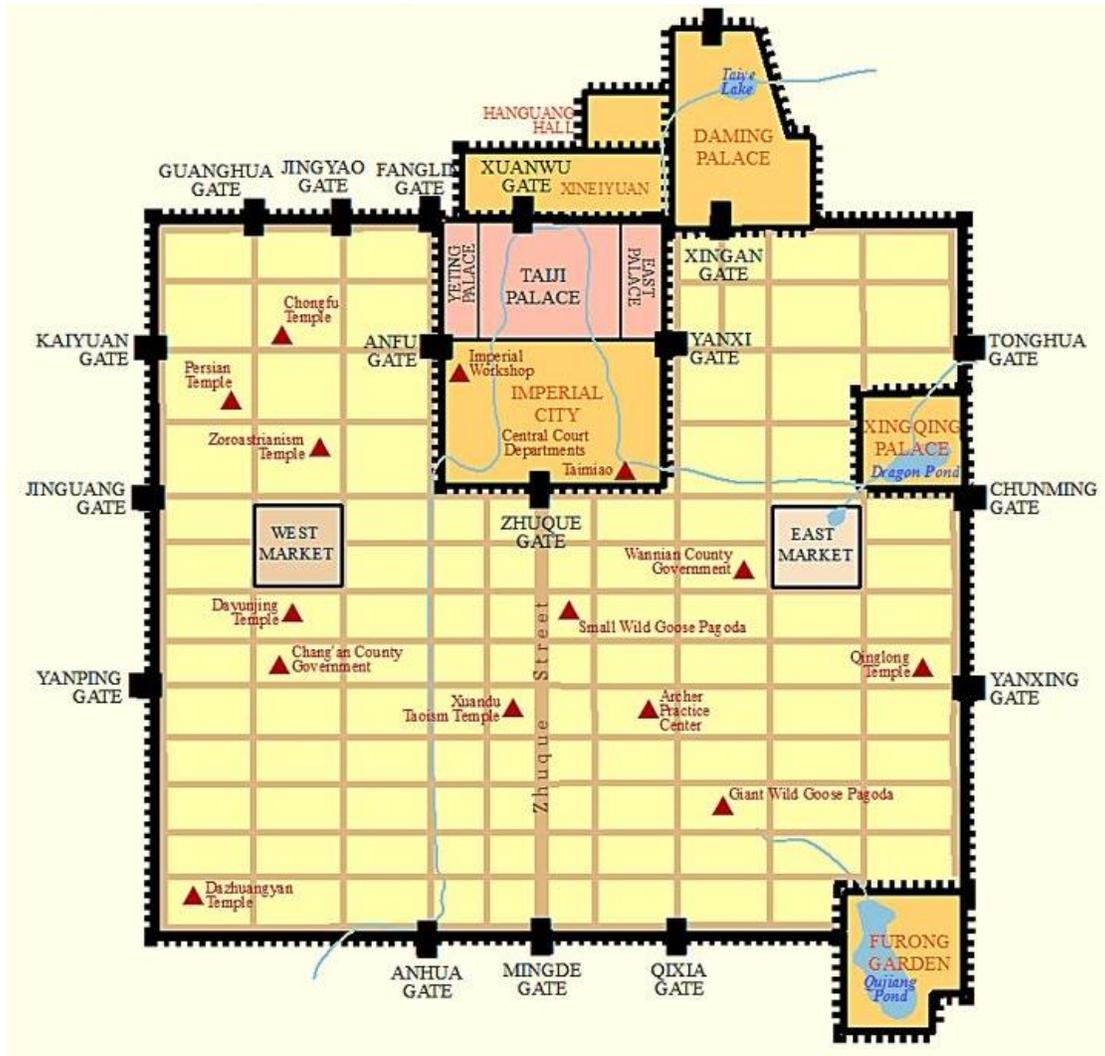


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tang\\_Dynasty\\_circa\\_700\\_CE.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tang_Dynasty_circa_700_CE.png)>

### *Tang Chinese Empire (618-907) – c. 700*

The Tang Empire was eclectic – accommodating two million Buddhist monks in 30,000 monasteries, powerful exam-based Confucian officials in its government bureaucracy, and Daoist cults for its urban and rural masses. The Tang government also was cosmopolitan – welcoming foreign merchants, technologies,

and ideas and creating in Chang'an the world's largest (one million inhabitants) and wealthiest city.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chang%27an\\_of\\_Tang.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chang%27an_of_Tang.jpg)

### *Chang'an – World's Most Populous City During the Tang Era*

Sui-Tang economic expansion was based on improvements in agriculture, expanded trade within the wider market of reunified

China, huge public investments in transportation (the Grand Canal system, the road network, and upgraded ports), a remarkable openness to foreign influences, the effective intermarriage of two cultures (Chinese and Turkic), and the promotion of artistic creativity (especially poets, such as Li Bo, Du Fu, and Wan Wei).

**Agriculture in the Tang Empire (618-907).** The operation of agricultural land underwent a transition during the Tang era similar to that experienced in Han times. During the first half of each dynasty, the central government wielded significant power, controlled land allocations, and protected the interests of the free peasantry (its main tax base). But during the second half of each dynasty, acquisitive aristocrats took advantage of a weakened central government to encroach on free peasant landholdings and expand their sizeable estates. In effect, both Han and Tang governments faced the same difficult dilemma – how to promote and maintain control over their main tax base (the free peasantry) while fending off the avaricious demands of the royal family and other aristocrats for increased productive estate land farmed by

tenants. The landholding dilemma for Tang emperors was exacerbated by the demands of Buddhist temples and monasteries for tax-free estates.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palefrenier\\_menant\\_deux\\_chevaux\\_par\\_Han\\_Gan.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palefrenier_menant_deux_chevaux_par_Han_Gan.jpg)>

*Tang Agriculture – A Man Herding Horses,  
Painting By Han Gan (706-783), Tang Court Artist*

In the Early Tang period (618-755), the emperors owned the land and allocated lifetime tenure in small parcels (3-5 acres) to

free peasants. The government instituted an “equal-field system” and used annual household registers to determine land allocations and tax obligations. Depending on the size of its workforce and the number of its draft animals, each household received a “personal” land allotment, reviewed every three years and returned to the state upon death, and a “perpetual” allotment (for mulberry orchards and other perennial crops) that the household could hold in perpetuity.

During the Later Tang period (755-918), land registers became inoperative, and land was bought and sold freely. Powerful aristocratic clans and Buddhist monasteries expanded their estate holdings and leased them in small parcels to tenants. The Han and Tang patterns of landholding thus were parallel – early land reforms to benefit free peasants were gradually undercut by acquisitive, land-grabbing aristocrats. But by the end of the Tang era (907), the free peasantry and the estates each held about half of China’s agricultural land, whereas at the close of the Han

era (220) the peasantry controlled about three-fourths of arable land and the estates only one-fourth.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Three\\_men,\\_two\\_hoes,\\_one\\_shovel,\\_Tang\\_Dynasty.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Three_men,_two_hoes,_one_shovel,_Tang_Dynasty.JPG)>

*Free Peasantry Lost Land During the Tang Era – Three Men, Two Hoes, and One Shovel, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*

Significant agricultural innovations occurred during Tang times. In north China (principally, the regions around the Yellow, Huai, and Wei Rivers), wheat milling techniques were improved,

leading to the expansion of wheat production at the expense of millet. The most important increases in agricultural productivity took place in south China (the regions around and south of the Yangzi River valley), which, by the 7<sup>th</sup> century, was producing about half of Chinese agricultural output. The Tang government invested in irrigation infrastructure, and farmers imported improved rice varieties from Southeast Asia, which had higher yields and shorter growing times. Better water control, more fertilizer, and quick-maturing seeds allowed farmers to plant two crops of rice per year. Southern farmers also rotated rice with legumes to maintain soil fertility. With the introduction of those innovations, rice in southern China achieved the highest yields of any major grain crop grown in the world during Tang times.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oryza\\_sativa -  
K%C3%B6hler%E2%80%93Medizinal-Pflanzen-232.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oryza_sativa_-_K%C3%B6hler%E2%80%93Medizinal-Pflanzen-232.jpg)>

*Rice (Oryza sativa), Indigenous to South China –  
Source of Much Wealth During the Tang Dynastic Era*

The newly refurbished Grand Canal extended for 1,200 miles and permitted easy south-to-north movement of crops from the Yangzi rice bowl to the northern population centers (connecting to China's rivers, which permitted convenient east-to-west movement of commodities). In spite of those important innovations, the diet of all but the richest Chinese remained very basic – in the north,

wheat or millet gruel plus vegetables, in the south, rice plus vegetables, and in both regions, meat only during annual festivals.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China-Grand\\_canal,\\_Sui\\_and\\_Tang.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China-Grand_canal,_Sui_and_Tang.svg)

### *The Grand Canal under the Sui and Tang Dynasties*

Tang agricultural tax policies also were in transition. In the Early Tang period, the strong central government imposed fixed head taxes (paid in grain, cloth, and labor services) on rural households. But the aristocratic and Buddhist estates and most merchants and artisans (who did not own land) were exempt from paying taxes. In the Later Tang period, the weakened central government introduced a progressive two-tax system (paid twice per year, in the Spring and the Autumn), levying taxes on land (paid in grain) and on property (paid in money). The central government assigned quotas of tax revenues that it expected each province to pay and allowed the provincial administrations to decide how to collect the funds.

Tang bureaucrats also revived Han Emperor Wudi's ever-normal granary scheme, constructing public grain-storage depots throughout the country to provide food relief in emergencies and purchasing and selling grain in an attempt to stabilize grain prices. Tang peasants were compelled to pay a tax in grain to supply the government grain depots. But, as in Han times, that scheme was

largely ineffective because it was abandoned during natural disasters, just when it was most needed.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dignitaire\\_civil\\_Chine\\_Tang\\_Mus%C3%A9e\\_Mariemont\\_08112015\\_2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dignitaire_civil_Chine_Tang_Mus%C3%A9e_Mariemont_08112015_2.jpg)>

*Tang Official, Musée de Mariemont, Belgium – Han and Tang Governments Starved Peasants and Caused Rebellions*

Agriculture thus generated most of the wealth in the Tang Empire, as it had for all previous Chinese dynasties. But in Later

Tang times, agricultural tax revenues gradually shifted from the central government to regional military governors. This shift in power from the center to the regions followed an interim revolutionary takeover of the central government that split the Tang era in two – parallel to the Wang Mang interlude (9-23 CE) that divided the Han dynasty into two very different eras of strength followed by decline.

### **Foreign Conquest and Trade in the Early Tang Period**

**(618-755).** The strength and territorial expanse of the Tang Empire peaked in its first century and declined thereafter. The second emperor, Taizong (626-649), was the principal empire builder. His successful, expansionary reign was marked by strong bureaucratic control, effective taxation, and development of a powerful, centrally-controlled military (reflective of Taizong's warlike inheritance from his earlier experiences as a Turkic-Chinese general in the Sui dynasty).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TangTaizong.jpg>>

*Tang Emperor Taizong (ruled 626-649) –  
Principal Empire Builder*

Taizong embarked on an aggressive foreign policy against the Eastern Turks in Mongolia and Turkestan, conquering along the Silk Road into Central Asia. Although the Chinese had invented gunpowder (probably in the 7<sup>th</sup> century), for several centuries gunpowder was used only in fireworks and thus the

cross-bow continued to be the main weapon in Tang warfare.

Taizong, employing a skilled cavalry of horse archers in stirrups, absorbed the key trading oases of Hami (630) and Turfan (640) and other small western states as Chinese protectorates.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang-PolychromeGlazedPotteryFigurineOfEquestrian-ShanghaiMuseum-May27-08.jpg>>

*Tang Conquest in the West – Tang Horseman, Three-color (Yellow, Green, and Brown) Funerary Pottery, Shanghai Museum*

The Tang military machine crossed the Pamir Mountains and claimed Sogdiana on the eastern border of Iran. However, Tibet, a

rising power, defeated China in 663 and became a persistent threat on the Tang's western border for the next 150 years. In the northeast, the Tang armies bogged down in exhausting battles with the Koguryo kingdom (in contemporary Korea) and finally won a hollow victory in 668 (the cost of conquest exceeded the later tribute paid to China by Koguryo).

In the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century, central tax revenues fell, the military became weaker, and the Tang Empire contracted. The Second Turkic Empire (680-740), a steppe nomadic confederation led by Mongolian Turks, grew to be a formidable foe in the north and west. The Turks resurrected the outer frontier strategy – used by the Xiongnu steppe nomadic empire against the Han Empire eight centuries earlier – to raid Chinese border towns, retreat in the face of Chinese retaliation, force favorable peace terms after Chinese armies overstretched their supply lines in the endless steppes, and extort subsidies and trading privileges from the Chinese.

Central Asia was lost to China in 751, when an Islamic Arab army defeated the Tang army at Talas River (north of Samarkand

in modern Uzbekistan). Two powerful border allies, Tibet and Nanzhao (contemporary Yunnan), put a stinging defeat on the Tang army in 752. Foreign conquest thus proved to be a mixed blessing for the Tang. It originally provided tributary resources for China, but soon became a major drain on government revenues.



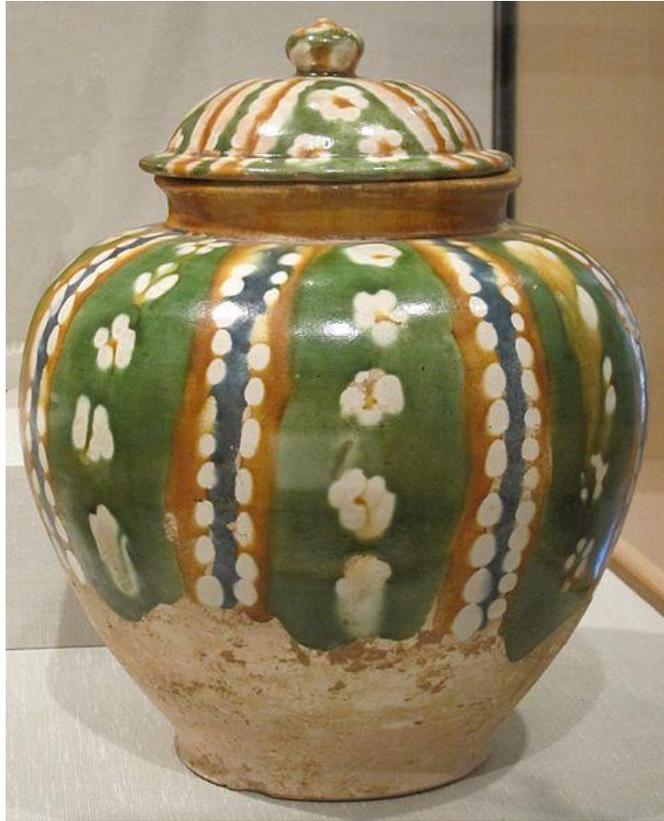
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang\\_Protectorates.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang_Protectorates.png)

### *Tang Foreign Conquests and Protectorates*

Meanwhile, foreign and domestic trade provided a significant supplemental source of wealth for the Tang – despite government policy. In the Confucian philosophy of the government’s scholar-

officials, merchants ranked at the bottom of the social ladder (beneath royalty, scholar-officials, peasants, and artisans, ranked in that order). The Tang government thus was suspicious of merchants and attempted to regulate trading (by controlling commodity prices – resetting them at ten-day intervals) and markets (by limiting marketing sites).

When Turkestan (modern Xinjiang Province in northwestern China) was pacified, because of Chinese conquest or subsidies, the Silk Road provided a valuable trade link between China (Chang'an) and India, Central Asia, and Byzantium (Constantinople). China exported silk (textiles, cloth, and thread), porcelain (first made in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when the Chinese learned how to super-heat pottery to temperatures above 1200 degrees Centigrade), tea (domesticated in China and first consumed widely in the 7<sup>th</sup> century), and copper coins (mostly to the Persian Gulf, after the price of copper had risen to the extent that the value of the copper in the coins exceeded the monetary value of the coins).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese\\_covered\\_jar,\\_Tang\\_dynasty,\\_earthenware\\_with\\_sancai\\_glaze,\\_HAA.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese_covered_jar,_Tang_dynasty,_earthenware_with_sancai_glaze,_HAA.JPG)>

*Tang Porcelain Was A Major Export Item –  
Covered Jar With Sancai Glaze, Honolulu Museum of Art*

Although the technology of making silk and the silk worms (*Bombyx mori*) were smuggled out of China in the 5<sup>th</sup> century to Persia, India, and Byzantium (Constantinople, modern Istanbul), silk continued to be China's leading export commodity because Chinese silk was of much higher quality than silk produced elsewhere. The main imports entering China via the Silk Road

were horses (from the steppe), gold, silver, woolen and linen cloth, glass beads, copper, and furs. But neither conquest nor trade contributed significantly to Tang tax revenues or wealth during the first half of the dynasty.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SeidenstrasseGMT.JPG>

### *Major Silk Road Trade Routes, 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE-15<sup>th</sup> century CE*

### **Foreign Conquest and Trade in the Later Tang Period**

(755-907). In the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century, the Tang government was hit by a thunderbolt from which it never fully recovered. An Lushan, a power-hungry general, instigated a rebellion in 755 that took eight years to subdue. Much of the north and northeast was controlled

by military governors who were allies of An Lushan. The central government had to hire Uighur mercenaries (4000 expert Mongolian-Turkic cavalry) to defend Chang'an in 757. After killing An Lushan in 757, the Uighurs turned against their Tang allies and sacked Luoyang (the second Tang capital) to gain booty and extort future subsidies. For their protection of the Tang, the Uighurs extracted a very high price – extortionate subsidies (paid in bolts of silk) and trading privileges (highly inflated prices for their horses).

The An Lushan Rebellion upset the political, economic, and military balances in Tang China. In a compromising peace, the Tang allowed rebel military governors to continue ruling in north and northeast China. Those governors created their own fiefdoms with hereditary succession, paid little or no tax revenues to the central government, and controlled their own military forces. In the absence of a centrally-controlled military capacity, Tang foreign policy necessarily turned defensive.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:An\\_Lu\\_Shan.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:An_Lu_Shan.jpeg)>

*An Lushan – Rebel Leader of Tang China (755-763)*

The Uighur Empire (744-840) was a steppe nomadic confederation led by Turkic-speaking people and based in Mongolia (the Uighur capital, Karabalghasun, was sited near the location of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century capital of the future Mongol Empire, Karakorum). The Uighur leaders depended on Chinese subsidies (reverse tribute) and trading privileges (Uighur horses exchanged for Chinese silk at extortionate terms) to hold their loose confederation together. Like its predecessor steppe confederacies, the Uighur Empire employed an outer frontier strategy of

threatening raids to extort resources from China. Lacking sufficient resources on the steppes to maintain its loose confederation of independent-minded steppe tribes, the Uighur Empire was dependent on revenues from China – either booty from raids or extorted subsidies and trading privileges.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Uyghur\\_Khaganate.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Uyghur_Khaganate.png)>

*The Uighur Empire (744-840), A Steppe Nomadic Confederation –  
At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, c. 820*

Another powerful Chinese neighbor, Tibet, could not be bought off so easily. At the close of the An Lushan Rebellion (763), the Tibetans invaded China and captured, plundered, and

sacked the magnificent Tang capital city, Chang'an. The million residents of wealthy Chang'an, about a fifth of them foreigners, were shell-shocked. For two decades thereafter, the Tibetans annually looted Chang'an. Tibet's military power disintegrated in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century because of internal squabbles – not Tang victories. These foreign threats drained the Tang Empire's resources and undercut its military capacity.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tibetan\\_Empire.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tibetan_Empire.png)>

*The Tibetan Empire At Its Greatest Extent, c. 790*

The weakened Tang central government had little choice but to abandon most of its attempts to control foreign and domestic trade. The government retained its profitable monopoly over the production and trade of salt, but gave up its mostly unsuccessful efforts to impose monopolies on lacquer, tea, timber, and liquor. The consequent open trading system permitted many merchants to become wealthy and seek noble social status. Facing the loss of tax revenues from northern and northeastern provinces, the Tang government imposed *ad valorem* duties on trade turnover. To expand this new source of revenue, Tang bureaucrats promoted the development of urban markets, regional trade centers, and rotational trade fairs. Unfettered trade on the Silk Road boomed until 840, when the Uighur Empire disintegrated, the steppe entered another period of anarchy, and caravan trade became risky.

Secure and prosperous south China grew to contain half of China's population in the Tang era. The river port, Yangzhou, became the leading commercial center of southern China and began to rival the northern Tang capitals, Chang'an and Luoyang,

in commercial importance. The Tang increasingly depended on the south for tax revenues, food supplies, weapons, export commodities (silk), and salt.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang\\_Pottery\\_Warrior.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang_Pottery_Warrior.jpg)>

*Tang Warriors Came Increasingly from South China –  
Tomb Figure of A Warrior, Duan's Tomb, Shaanxi*

The north and northeast were controlled by military governors who sent little tax revenue to the Tang center. Tax revenues collected from the northwest had to be expended for frontier military protection. During the second half of the Tang

dynasty, therefore, China lost resources in its foreign relations. Silk Road trade remained profitable and provided tax revenues until the Uighur Empire fell apart in 840, but declined rapidly thereafter. China's territory shrunk (along the Silk Road in the west), and in the remaining tributary states (Koguryo in Korea) China expended more resources to retain control than it received in tribute. Declining Tang China was sliding into final extinction.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YiJingMap2.jpg>>

*China during the Later Tang Period (755-907) –  
40 Provinces, Mostly Ruled by Military Governors*

**Prime of the Tang Empire (660-755).** Between 660 and 755, the Tang Empire rose to the peak of its power. In 660, Empress Wu Zhao took control of the empire after her husband, Emperor Gaizong (649-683), suffered a debilitating stroke. Once a

concubine, Empress Wu murdered her two emperor sons to retain her own power and had scandalous affairs, often with much younger men. She was the only woman to serve as emperor of China (690-705), after proclaiming herself the head of a new dynasty, the Zhou (a name she chose to link her regime to pre-Qin/Han and pre-Sui/Tang glory in Chinese history).

Most of the Chinese aristocracy, especially the Confucian scholar-officials, viewed the female emperor as a “violation of the natural order.” To solidify her power base at court, Empress Wu went around the bureaucracy and created her own advisors and bureaucrats – the North Gate Scholars. To legitimize her rule with the commoners, she installed one of her lovers as a Buddhist monk and had him write the *Great Cloud Sutra* to establish her role as a female Maitreya Buddha (a Buddha of the future).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A\\_Tang\\_Dynasty\\_Empress\\_Wu\\_Zetian.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_Tang_Dynasty_Empress_Wu_Zetian.JPG)

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*Empress Wu Zetian – Tang China’s Only Woman Ruler*

Empress Wu proved to be a strong and effective ruler until she was deposed by another son in 705. She broke (at least temporarily) the power of the old aristocracy, promoted men from the provinces to important governmental positions, and protected the Tang central power base. Wu Zhao died of natural causes in late 705, a few months after she was deposed. She was then eighty-two years old.

Empress Wu's grandson, Emperor Xuanzong (712-756), introduced military and tax reforms and promoted the arts. Under his capable rule, Tang China reached the height of its power, wealth, and creativity. Xuanzong was a very talented emperor who improved tax collections, reduced the size and power of the military, created prosperity, and reigned in largely peaceful times.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang\\_XianZong.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang_XianZong.jpg)>

*Emperor Xuanzong (712-756) –  
Led Tang China To Its Greatest Power, Wealth, and Creativity*

During Xuanzong's long reign, Tang China reached the acme of its cultural prowess and creativity. Xuanzong promoted state

ceremonies and ritual, spread Tantric Buddhism, created an academy for poets, encouraged music at court, and even had a troupe of dancing horses. Some say this admirable leader lived too long. Late in his rule, he became infatuated with China's most infamous *femme fatale*, Yang Guifei (Precious Consort Yang), his favorite concubine, and he became her doting lackey.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yang Gui-fei by Takaku Aigai.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yang_Gui-fei_by_Takaku_Aigai.jpg)>

*Yang Guifei (Precious Consort Yang), Femme Fatale for Tang Emperor Xuanzong – Painting By Takaku Aigai, 1821*

With Yang's connivance, Xuanzong's later court was dominated by sycophantic advisors, palace eunuchs, and alien generals. Her adopted son and likely lover, An Lushan (a Sogdian Turk), exploited his position as a regional military commander to precipitate the Tang regime's defining rebellion.

**Decline of the Tang Empire (755-907).** After the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763), ex-rebel regional military governors in the north and northeast created fiefdoms and remitted little tax revenue to the center. But the Tang central government retained control over the provinces in the northwest and the south and managed to prolong the dynasty for another century and a half in a smaller and weaker China.

In the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Tang faced a series of peasant rebellions that exhausted the imperial treasury. The most serious uprising, led by a salt merchant, Huang Chao, spread throughout much of China between 875 and 884. Desperate peasants, lacking government food relief after a series of floods and droughts, refused to pay taxes, looted cities, and captured the

two Tang capitals, Luoyang and Changan. The government was able to quell the rebellion in 884 but only with military aid from Turkic mercenary troops. In 904, a Tang commander, Zhu Wen, murdered the imperial entourage in a coup, and in 907 he declared the formation of a new dynasty, the Liang, ending the crippled Tang Empire.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang\\_dynasty1.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang_dynasty1.PNG)

*Tang Dynasty At Its Collapse, c. 907*

A series of interlocking changes undercut Tang central control during the second half of the dynasty's rule. The structure of the military shifted from volunteer militias to mercenary forces, often led by alien (Turkic or Manchurian) generals, and regional military governors in the north and northeast controlled their own armies. The end of household registers meant that the central government lost control of land allocations and tax burdens, and the central government's political and revenue bases were weakened. With a free land market, tenancy arrangements evolved into long-term semi-servile agreements through which aristocratic estate owners exploited peasants. Peasant resentment increased as free peasants lost their land and as remaining free peasants were forced to pay higher taxes. Buddhist monasteries created tax-exempt estates with tenants and used the profits to venture into grain-milling and money-lending, thereby removing a growing portion of China's economy from government control and taxation.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spring\\_Outting\\_of\\_the\\_Tang\\_Court.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spring_Outting_of_the_Tang_Court.jpg)>

*Tang Nobles Exploited Peasants –  
Spring Outing of the Tang Court, by Zhang Xuan (713-755 CE)*

Palace eunuchs exploited their roles as the emperor's personal spies to foster court intrigue, gain control of the emperor's palace army, and manipulate the inner court (enthroning, controlling, and murdering eight emperors in the 9<sup>th</sup> century).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prince\\_Zhanghuai%27s\\_tomb,\\_eunuchs.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prince_Zhanghuai%27s_tomb,_eunuchs.JPG)

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*Tang Palace Eunuchs, Mural in Tomb of Prince Zhanghuai, 706 –  
Manipulated the Tang Inner Court*

When the Uighur Empire fell in 840, the Tang government lost its steppe protector and became more vulnerable to devastating border incursions. Facing these cumulatively negative forces of change, the Tang Empire was a toothless dragon in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and disintegrated in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CMOC Treasures of Ancient China exhibit - tri-coloured figure of a civil official.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit_-_tri-coloured_figure_of_a_civil_official.jpg)>

*Confucianist Tang Bureaucrat, Tomb Figure –  
Lost Power Struggle to Court Eunuchs As Peasants Rebelled*



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang\\_Dynasty - Greatest\\_Extent.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tang_Dynasty_-_Greatest_Extent.PNG)>

*The Tang Empire At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, c. 750*

## **The Aftermath of the Han and Tang Empires in China (907-present)**

**Song Dynasty (960-1279).** China recovered quickly in the aftermath of the Tang eclipse. When the Song dynasty (960-1279) reunited China, the Yangzi River valley became the economic heart of the country.



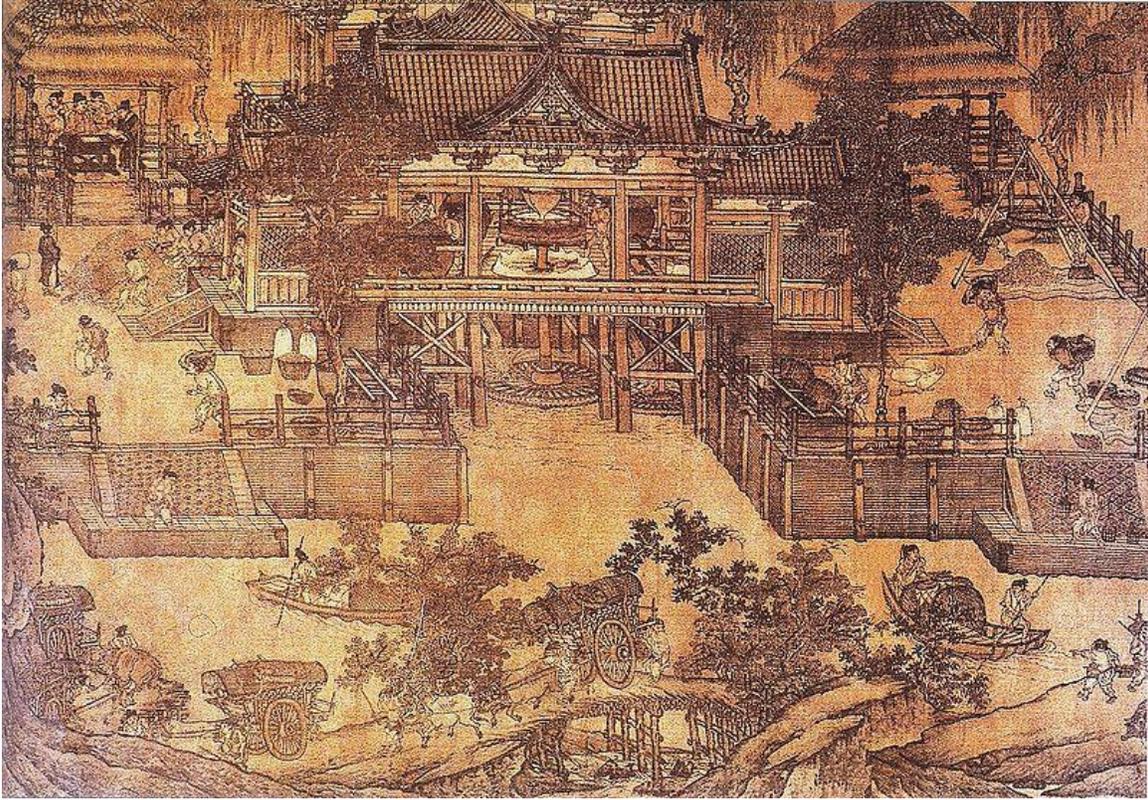
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China - Song\\_Dynasty-en.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China - Song_Dynasty-en.svg)>

*The Song Dynasty At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, c. 1111*

The population of China had peaked at about 60 million during both the Han and Tang dynasties. Then between 900 and 1200, the number of people in China doubled – from 60 million to 120 million – indicating growing prosperity. Whereas three-fourths of

China's population resided in the north at the beginning of the Tang dynasty (607), nearly two-thirds lived in the south at the end of the Song dynasty (1279).

Southern China, increasingly the economic heart of the country, experienced an agricultural revolution by 1100 – productive crop rotations to conserve soil fertility, improved seeds to raise yields and permit the planting of two rice crops per year, better water control through canal irrigation and manual pumps, and crop specialization encouraged by improvements in water and canal transportation. Coal and iron production boomed, engineering (marine, construction, and hydraulic) progressed, and armament production expanded. The Song government moved the capital to Kaifeng (the country's commercial center), maritime trade increased, and the government earned significant revenues from taxing trade.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Song\\_Dynasty\\_grain\\_mill.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Song_Dynasty_grain_mill.jpg)>

*Song-Dynasty Agriculture –  
Water-powered Grain Mills, Silk Painting, 11<sup>th</sup> century*

During the Song period, the Chinese invented paper money, movable type printing, the use of gunpowder in weapons, and the magnetic compass. Paper money initially went into circulation in the 11<sup>th</sup> century alongside copper coinage. The great economic expansion in Song times is reflected in the quadrupling of copper coins in use even as the use of paper money spread.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hue-tzu\\_\(Song\\_Dynasty\\_government\\_issue\),\\_1023\\_-\\_John\\_E.\\_Sandrock.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hue-tzu_(Song_Dynasty_government_issue),_1023_-_John_E._Sandrock.jpg)>

*Jiaozi (Promissory Note), 11<sup>th</sup> century, Chengdu, Sichuan –  
The World's First Paper Money*

The practice of Confucianism in China was re-invigorated, and Song Neo-Confucianism stressed individual responsibility, moral judgment, government bureaucracy, and social control. Social mobility increased, and commoners gained access to political power by passing Confucian civil service examinations.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zhou\\_Wenju%27s\\_A\\_Literary\\_Garden.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zhou_Wenju%27s_A_Literary_Garden.jpg)>

*Confucianism Stressed Literary Achievement and Examinations –  
A Literary Garden, Zhou Wenju, 12<sup>th</sup> century*

But the Song experienced political fragmentation in the north, losing northern territory to Manchurian-led kingdoms (Khitan Liao (907-1125), Tangut Xixia (990-1227), and Jurchen Jin (1115-1234)). Ultimately, the Southern Song dynasty was overrun in 1279 by Kublai Khan's powerful Yuan Mongol Empire (1271-1368).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China - Southern Song Dynasty-en.svg?](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_-_Southern_Song_Dynasty-en.svg?)

*Southern Song (1127-1279), Jin (1115-1234),  
 and Xixia (990-1227)*

**Rise of the Mongol Empire.** In the late 12th century, the Jurchen Jin (“Golden”) dynasty (1115-1234) ruled north China and Manchuria, the Chinese Song dynasty (960-1279) ruled south

China, and Mongolia was contested by several nomadic tribes.

The Mongols were one of many tribes in Mongolia that might have reunified the nomadic steppe. The Tatar, Kereyid, Naiman, Merkid, and Onggud steppe tribes all harbored hopes of being the unifying power. Steppe unification was made difficult by the Jurchen strategy of playing one tribe against another with shifting alliances and bribes.

Temujin (lived 1155-1227), a minor Mongol chieftain, combined appropriate lineage, political guile, survivor skills, harsh brutality, military acumen, personal charisma, strong leadership, and suspicion of kinsmen to rise through the ranks and become Genghis Khan (sometimes spelled Chinggis Qan), supreme leader of the Mongols. Genghis created a unified steppe nomadic empire against heavy odds.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YuanEmperorAlbumGenghisPortrait.jpg>>

*Genghis Khan (1155-1227), Brilliant, Brutal, and Fortunate –  
Yuan Era Album, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan*

Genghis Khan (ruled 1206-1227) had three main objectives – to control the Mongolian nomads politically, to deflect other steppe nomads militarily, and to extract resources from richer, settled areas. Genghis thus set out to extort resources from China and other sedentary regions, not to conquer them. At first, Genghis tried to employ the outer frontier strategy of threatening raids to extort subsidies and trading privileges from China and other agricultural and urban societies. But the Jurchens, the Manchurian

Jin dynasty that ruled northern China, chose to fight rather than comply. Genghis thus was forced to alter his strategy. After annihilating his foes, Genghis had to govern and tax rather than to raid and extort.



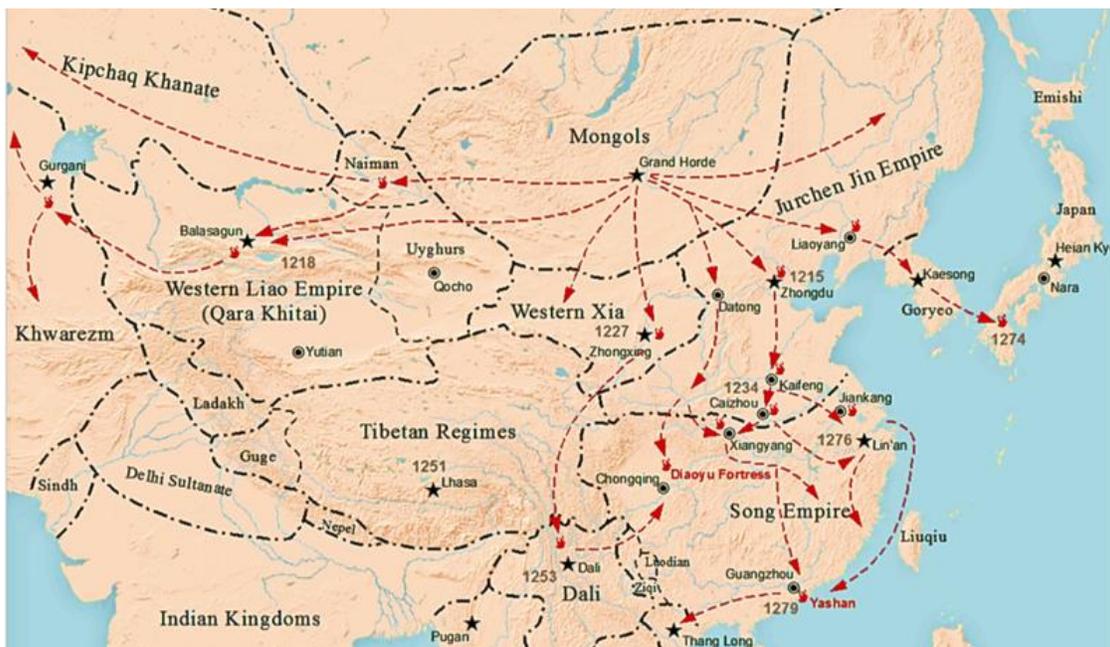
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Empire\\_of\\_Genghis\\_Khan\\_at\\_his\\_death.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Empire_of_Genghis_Khan_at_his_death.png)>

### *Mongol Empire at Genghis Khan's Death, 1227*

Genghis Khan's sons and grandsons expanded Mongol territory and created four Khanates. The Mongol leaders gradually shifted their strategy from raiding and looting to taxing and

trading.

In 1234, in alliance with Song dynasty forces, the Mongols took the Jin capital at Kaifeng and established their rule in northern China. The Mongols then turned against the Song leaders and began incursions into their wealthy territory. The Song ruled a southern Chinese empire, rich in silk, porcelain, and jade, from their capital, Hangzhou, the world's largest city with at least one million people.

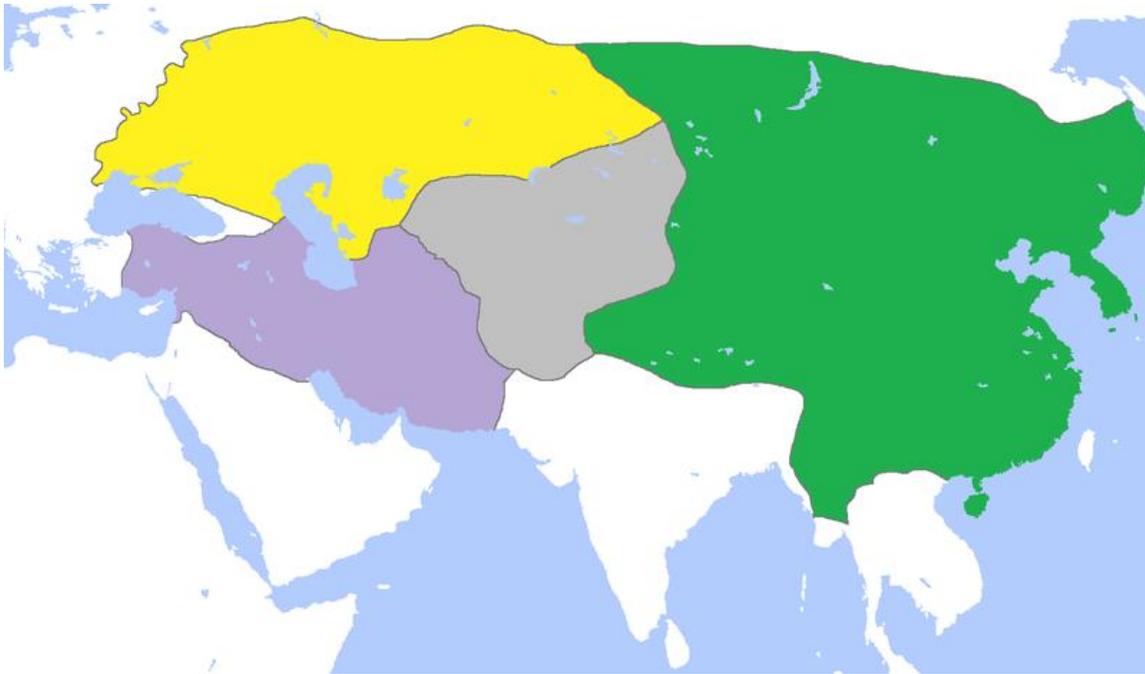


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mongol\\_Invasion\\_of\\_China.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mongol_Invasion_of_China.png)>

### *The Mongols' Conquest of China, 1218-1279*

Thereafter, in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, the Mongols established

four huge khanates (sub-empires) in Eurasia – Chaghatai (western Turkestan and Central Asia), Ilkhanate (Iran, Iraq, and western Asia), Golden Horde (Russia and southwestern Siberia), and Empire of the Great Khan (China, Mongolia, and Manchuria).



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MongolEmpireDivisions1300.png>>

*Four Khanates of the Mongol Empire -- Yuan Dynasty (Green), Chaghatai (Gray), Ilkhanate (Purple), and Golden Horde (Yellow)*

By 1280, Mongol rule extended from the Yellow Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Each of those khanates was governed by grandsons of Genghis Khan and their descendants, and each was based on the taxation of sedentary agriculture.

Kublai Khan (ruled 1260-1294), a grandson of Genghis Khan and a skilled public administrator, established the Yuan Dynasty in China (1271-1368), became the first alien ruler of all China, and subsequently ruled simultaneously as a Chinese emperor and a steppe khagan. Kublai defeated his younger brother, Arigh Boke, in a civil war and then chose to rule from China, not from Karakorum, his grandfather's capital in Mongolia. In 1264, he built a new capital in Daidu (Beijing).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YuanEmperorAlbumKhubilaiPortrait.jpg>

*Kublai Khan, 1260s –  
Portrait by Anige, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan*

Kublai's army captured Hangzhou in 1276, finally crushed the Song dynasty in 1279, and unified China under Mongol rule. His Yuan government eventually controlled an empire that combined all of China with most of Mongolia and Manchuria and incorporated as tributary vassals the neighboring states of Korea, Tibet, and Annam and Champa (in central-southern Vietnam).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
< [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yuen\\_Dynasty\\_1294 -  
\\_Goryeo\\_as\\_vassal.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yuen_Dynasty_1294_-_Goryeo_as_vassal.png) >

*Yuan Empire of Kublai Khan and Heirs (1271-1368) –  
Territorial Extent in 1294 with Korea as a Tributary*

Kublai's officials created an agriculture ministry that

distributed seeds and animals to promote agricultural development, introduced sorghum as a new food crop, and expanded the output of cotton. Between 1283 and 1293, three million laborers extended the Grand Canal 135 miles to Beijing to ensure movement of food (mainly rice) and military supplies from the Yangzi Valley to the north. The famed Italian explorer and adventurer, Marco Polo, (along with his father and uncle), was in Kublai's service in Daidu between 1275 and 1292. But Kublai suffered major military losses trying to conquer Japan in 1274 and 1281, when his navies were struck by typhoons. In the 1281 typhoon, the Mongols lost 70,000 troops at sea, their worst military disaster. Japan retained its independence.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Takezaki\\_suenaga\\_ekotoba3.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Takezaki_suenaga_ekotoba3.jpg)>

*Japanese Samurai Boarding Mongol Ships, 1281 –  
Before Kamikaze Destroyed the Mongol Fleet*

**Sources of Power and Wealth in the Mongol Empire.** The Mongolian economic system provided a marginal base of wealth but complete mobility in warfare. The Mongols' economy in the arid steppe created a very limited surplus for empire building. Most people gained their subsistence from herding sheep and horses.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zhao Mengfu 1254 1322 A 1%27unisson \(Tiaoliang tu\) Peinture, encre sur papier feuille d%27album 22,7x49cm.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zhao_Mengfu_1254_1322_A_1%27unisson_(Tiaoliang_tu)_Peinture,_encre_sur_papier_feuille_d%27album_22,7x49cm.jpg)

*Horse and Groom, Buffeted by Wind on the Steppe –  
Silk Painting, Zhao Mengfu, c. 1280*

Herding generated little taxable surplus, and taxes were difficult to enforce. But the Mongols' lack of permanent settlements gave them complete mobility to escape from military incursions by

retreating from invasions into the endless steppe. Their foes had to worry about supplying their troops during invasions of the steppe, but the Mongol troops were largely self-sufficient, subsisting on dried meat and fermented mare's milk (*kumiss*).

Mongol power derived from military strength and leadership. Integral to Mongol society were skilled horsemanship and demonstrated bravery in battle. Mongol conquests succeeded due to speed, organization, and discipline, skilled deployment of cavalry, accurate use of bows and arrows, and adroit military tactics, especially the feigned retreat and the blitzkrieg attack.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mongol\\_warrior\\_of\\_Genghis\\_Khan.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mongol_warrior_of_Genghis_Khan.jpg)>

*Mongol Horse-Archer – Shooting Arrows On His Moving Horse*

The Mongols made great use of feigned flight, ambushes, and surprise attacks from unexpected directions – capitalizing on their exceptional maneuverability and excellent communications between widespread units. Later, when they successfully attacked walled cities, the Mongols added effective siege craft, using mangonels (catapults).



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mural\\_of\\_siege\\_warfare,\\_Genghis\\_Khan\\_Exhibit,\\_Tech\\_Museum\\_San\\_Jose,\\_2010.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mural_of_siege_warfare,_Genghis_Khan_Exhibit,_Tech_Museum_San_Jose,_2010.jpg)>

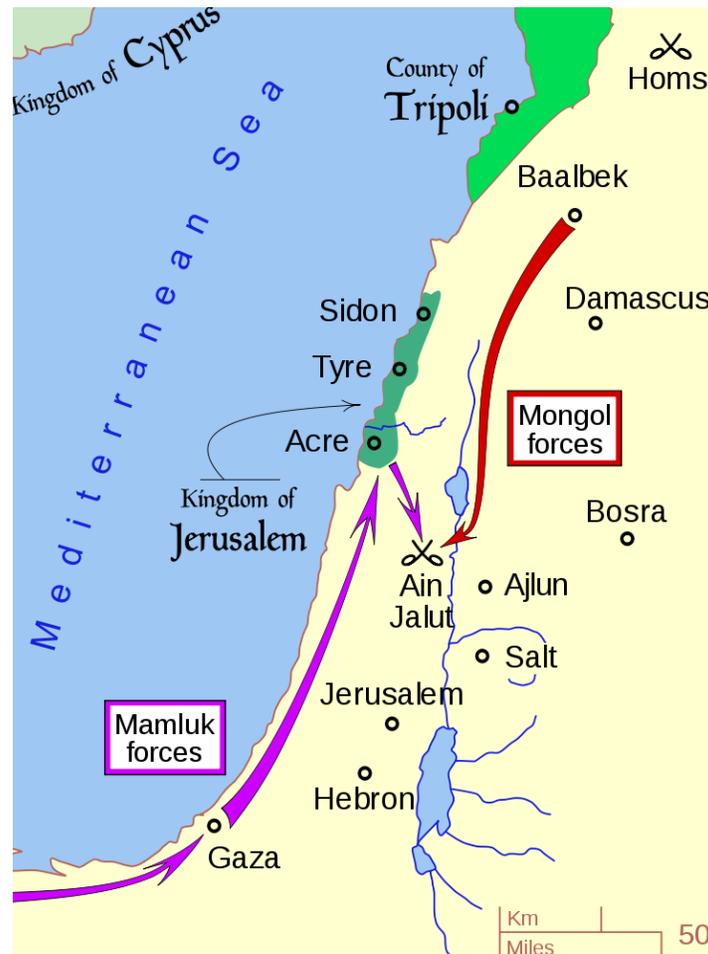
*Mural of Mongolian Siege Warfare –  
Genghis Khan Exhibit, Tech Museum, San Jose, California, US*

The Mongols acquired resources and power through raiding,

trading, and taxing. Lacking a strong home economic base, the Mongols needed external resources (grain, luxury goods, manpower, technicians, and capital) to expand militarily and survive politically. They added resources and acquired wealth by raiding – for booty, slaves, and technicians – in unconquered areas, trading throughout on favorable terms, and taxing heavily and regularly in the regions that they conquered.

**Decline and Fall of the Mongol Empire.** Like most steppe empires, the Mongol Empire suffered from succession disputes. Because the Mongols did not have clear rules on succession following the death of an emperor, each succession brought vicious struggles among contenders. Those struggles created political uncertainty, consumed military resources, and weakened the empire. Eventually, succession disputes splintered the four large khanates into four nearly independent sub-empires. The separate khanates were often rivals and sometimes warred with each other. In 1260, for example, when the Mongols suffered their first major military setback at the battle of Ain Jalut (in Galilee, on the site

where the Biblical David is believed to have killed Goliath), warriors from the Golden Horde Khanate helped an army of Egyptian Mamluks defeat the invading army of the Ilkhanate.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Campaign\\_of\\_the\\_Battle\\_of\\_Ain\\_Jalut\\_1260.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Campaign_of_the_Battle_of_Ain_Jalut_1260.svg)>

### *The Battle of Ain Jalut, 1260 – Mongols from Golden Horde Aided Victory of Egyptian Mamluks Over Ilkhanate Mongols*

With the exception of Kublai Khan, the Mongol leaders were better conquerors than governors. Internal administrative decay

was evidenced by poor governance, weak accountability, nepotism, and widespread corruption.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Theatre\\_actors,\\_Yuan\\_Dynasty.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Theatre_actors,_Yuan_Dynasty.jpg)>

*Squabbling Officials –  
Yuan Dynasty Mural, Temple in Hongtong, Shanxi*

Over-spending led to over-taxation of farmers and peasant revolts.

Mongol military advantages did not assist regular governance or help suppress organized political opposition. Common people in China and elsewhere, as well as opposing steppe tribes, rose

against inept Mongol rule. Sedentary peoples eventually expelled their Mongol rulers in all four khanates – Chaghatai (Transoxiana, 1334), Ilkhanate (Persia, 1335), Empire of the Great Khan (China, 1368), and Golden Horde (Russia, 1502).

The “Mongol moment in history” was brief. Following Kublai Khan's death in 1294, the political foundations of the Mongol Empire crumbled and the empire splintered and then disintegrated. Mongol rule in Yuan China deteriorated throughout the first decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The effectiveness of government was undercut by succession disputes, palace intrigues, military weakness, bureaucratic hassles, and neglect of irrigation programs. A series of natural disasters in the 1340s culminated in uncoordinated peasant revolts and the secession of parts of the rich Yangzi Valley region in the 1350s. Mongol factions fought a civil war among themselves in northern China during the 1360s.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Liu-Kuan-Tao-Jagd.JPG>>

*Inadequate Funds to Avoid Peasant Rebellions – Kublai Khan On A Hunting Expedition, Painting By Liu Guandao, c. 1280*

In 1368, a Chinese commoner, Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1368), gained control over the Yangzi Valley and invaded northern China with his peasant followers who desired to rid themselves of inept alien rule, widespread corruption, and burdensome taxes. The Mongols staged a strategic retreat and disappeared into the steppes

of Mongolia, almost without putting up resistance, probably to retain their option of a mobile defense. Zhu then established a new, native Chinese dynasty, the Ming, and became its first emperor. Two decades later, in 1388, a vengeful Ming army invaded Mongolia and burned Karakorum, the former Mongol capital, to the ground.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turtle-Karakorum.jpg>>

*Stone Turtle, Karakorum, Mongol Capital, 13<sup>th</sup> century*

**Legacies of the Mongol Empire.** The Mongol warriors left the cruelest and most devastating path of destruction the world had

ever experienced. Some regions under Mongol attack – Manchuria, Korea, and the Uighur oases – chose to accept the Mongols' terms, avoid destruction, and retain their own leaders. The Mongols typically destroyed cities or regions that refused to honor their rules or that broke diplomatic promises – Jin north China and Tangut Xixia. They also devastated cities – Samarkand, Herat, and Baghdad – for little explicable reason, except possibly to set an example of terror and preempt the rise of future opposition. Some cities and regions ceased to exist, especially in Central Asia where the Mongols destroyed the underground *qanat* system of irrigation canals. Most areas, however, eventually recovered from the costly Mongol devastations.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Khubilai\\_statue.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Khubilai_statue.jpg)>

*Statue of Aging Kublai Khan –  
Sükhbaatar Square, Ulan Bator, Mongolia*

Despite their brutal methods of conquest, the Mongols created the largest contiguous land empire the world had ever known. The Mongol Empire included much of Eurasia, stretching from the Pacific Ocean to Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean Sea. The Mongols were the only steppe people to unify the steppe and to rule in both north and south China and Manchuria. During the 150 years of the *Pax Mongolica* (ending in 1368), trade flourished along the Silk Road linking Beijing with

Constantinople. Commerce on the Silk Road peaked when Chinese dynasties were at peace with the steppe nomads. When Turkestan (western China) was pacified, unhindered trade followed. Three peaks of trade on the Silk Road occurred – under the Han, Tang, and Yuan Dynasties. But Chinese exports on the Silk Road – of silk (yarn, cloth, and textiles), tea, porcelain, and jade – reached a maximum under the Yuan Mongol Dynasty.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yuan\\_Provinces.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yuan_Provinces.png)

*Yuan Empire of Kublai Khan and Heirs (1271-1368) – c. 1330*

**Rise of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).** Chinese leaders regained control of China in an unexpected fashion. The Yuan Mongol government had become impotent by the 1340s. For the first time in Chinese dynastic history, the overthrow of an alien-led government and its replacement by a Chinese-led successor began in south China and spread north, eventually to Beijing. Spreading peasant rebellions led to the Mongols' loss of control in the Yangzi valley in the 1350s. In 1366, a dominant peasant leader, Zhu Yuanzhang (lived 1328-1398), gained control of the peasant movement and established his capital in Nanjing on the Yangzi River. Two years later, he took advantage of a civil war among Mongol factions, invaded Beijing, and drove the Yuan Mongols out of China. They departed without strong resistance, retreating into the Mongolian steppe to plan later incursions.

Zhu Yuanzhang, a poverty-stricken peasant at birth, declared himself the first Ming emperor (ruled 1368-1398), and assumed the names Taizu (his temple name) and Hongwu (his reign period name that meant "Boundless Martial Spirit"). Under his rule, the

population of Nanjing grew tenfold to one million residents and the Ming capital quickly became China's (and the world's) leading city.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hongwu2.jpg>>

*Ming Emperor Hongwu (ruled 1368-1398) – As Zhu Yuanzhang, He Led the Peasant Rebellion To Overthrown the Yuan Dynasty*

Hongwu ruled powerfully, brutally, and, near the end of his reign, unpredictably. The third Ming emperor, Yongle (“Eternal Happiness”) moved the Ming capital to Beijing, the site of the former Yuan center of government, because his power base was in

the north. Yongle consolidated central government authority and simplified provincial control. Under his rule, the Mings began construction of the Forbidden City, an elaborate, moated imperial palace, located in the middle of a nested set of concentric rectangles that housed the center of Chinese imperial authority for the next seven centuries.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anonymous-Ming\\_Chengzu.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anonymous-Ming_Chengzu.jpg)>

*Ming Yongle Emperor (ruled 1402-1424) – Sponsored Foreign Trade Missions Before Ming China turned Autarkic*

## **Agriculture and Foreign Trade during the Ming Era.**

Reflecting his peasant origins, Ming Emperor Hongwu introduced a significant set of agricultural reforms upon Ming succession in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. His government confiscated Yuan imperial and large noble estates, rented out the appropriated land to landless peasants, set the land tax at a modest rate of 10 percent per year, and abolished slavery. The success of Ming agricultural policies and political stability permitted the population of China to more than double during the Ming era – from about 70 million in 1368 to perhaps 160 million in 1644.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ming\\_Dynasty\\_1368\\_%E2%80%93\\_1644\\_\(AD\).PNG?>](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ming_Dynasty_1368_%E2%80%93_1644_(AD).PNG?>)

### *Ming China, 1368-1644 – China's Population Increased From 70 Million In 1368 To 120 Million In 1644*

Agricultural productivity increased modestly during this period as changes originally introduced in South China under the Song dynasty (960-1279) spread to the center and north. Chinese farmers made more intensive use of their land by taking advantage of irrigation schemes, planting labor-intensive rice and vegetables,

and using more draft animals and human fertilizer (night soil). However, as had occurred during the Han and Tang dynasties, large landowners gradually regained their control of estates through bureaucratic backsliding, corruption, and spreading land tenancy, especially in the late Ming period. Once again, a common theme in Chinese dynastic history recurred – corrupt officials helped elite landowners undercut the free peasantry and hence the government’s tax base.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gugong.jpg>>

*Corrupt Officials Undercut the Peasantry – Forbidden City, Beijing, Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing Rulers, 1420-1912*

The inward-looking, land-oriented Ming leaders took an entirely different official view of foreign trade from those of their predecessors. Foreign trade under the Song dynasty had been virtually free of government restrictions, and the Yuan dynasty had controlled trade largely to obtain revenue. In contrast, the Ming Emperor Hongwu banned foreign trade and decreed that all foreign transactions should be official exchanges of tribute and imperial gifts, underscoring the centrality of the Chinese emperor.

The tribute system reached its peak between 1405 and 1433 when Emperor Yongle dispatched a trusted aide, Grand Eunuch Zheng He, to lead a series of seven diplomatic expeditions to countries bordering the Indian Ocean. Zheng He's fleets were the largest the world had ever seen. The first, for example, consisted of 27,000 men and 317 ships (huge Chinese junks). The purpose of the Zheng He expeditions was to establish diplomatic relations, ideally tributary arrangements, and the Chinese opened new links with 30 countries, reaching as far as the port of Malindi in East Africa (now in Kenya).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Voyages\\_of\\_Zheng\\_He.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Voyages_of_Zheng_He.png)

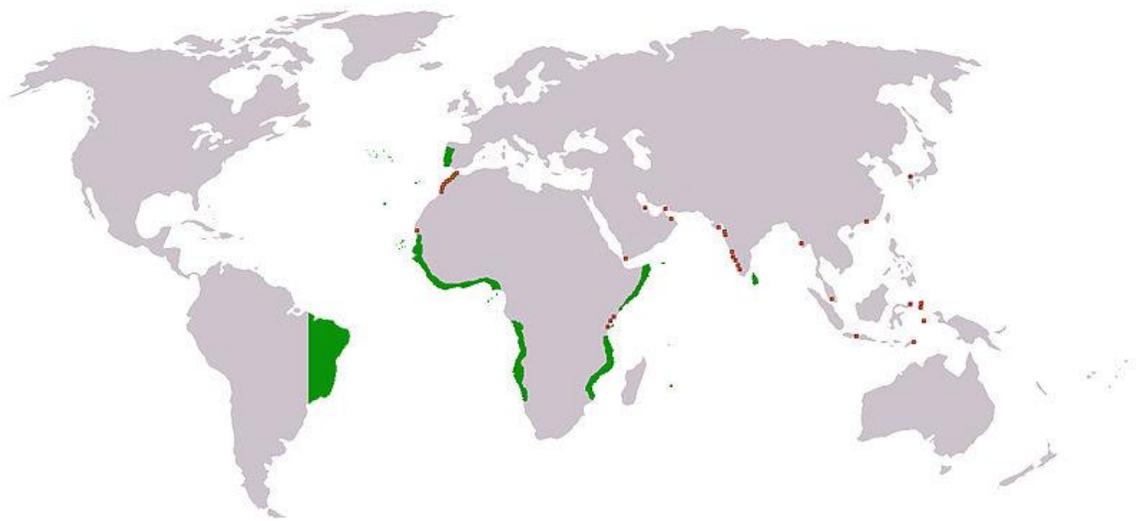
### *Zheng He's Exploratory Voyages, 1405-1433*

Although trade was not the primary focus, Zheng He's ships brought back to China huge quantities of luxury goods and exotic animals, including zebras and giraffes. After the seventh voyage in 1433, Ming leaders suddenly ended the tribute-seeking expeditions and turned inward, never to follow up on their early maritime advantages.

Ming isolationism began early in the dynasty. Through a set of policies known collectively as the Maritime Interdict (1371-1567), the Ming leaders banned non-official overseas trade and travel and interdicted maritime transportation, even coastal shipping – in the vain hope of controlling smuggling and undercutting the power of potentially rival coastal regions. That narrow-minded policy made it difficult for Chinese merchants to benefit from trading opportunities and for Ming governments to earn trade revenues, and it caused the land-based Silk Road to disappear from history.

But it did not stop international commerce entirely. After rounding Africa and reaching India in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, Portuguese traders settled in Macao (on southern China, near contemporary Hong Kong) in 1535 and created a colony there in 1557. At the same time, Spain conquered the Philippines and opened the Manila Galleon trade route, linking China with Mexico and Peru (via Manila and Acapulco). Chinese traders sold mostly silk cloth or apparel and porcelain and received New World silver

in return. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, English and Dutch trading companies replaced the Portuguese and competed with the Spanish. The European incursion into China had begun.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
< [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portuguese\\_Empire\\_map.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portuguese_Empire_map.jpg) >

*Portugal's Maritime Settlements, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries –  
Portuguese Colony in Macao, Southern China, 1557-1999*

**The Ming Outer Frontier Strategy.** The Ming was the only Chinese-led dynasty in imperial history that was not accompanied by a strong steppe nomadic confederation. That outcome was not an historical accident. Ming emperors were paranoid about a feared re-invasion by Mongol or other nomadic warriors. They chose to resist rather than accommodate Mongol demands for

bribes, because they viewed earlier Song attempts at accommodation as abject failures. The Ming court thus refused to pay subsidies or provide trading privileges to the Oirats and Eastern Mongols, the leading steppe tribes. The Ming court chose to fight the steppe nomads, rather than bribe them, because they feared that subsidies and trading rights would help the nomads to re-conquer China. That policy led to great instability on China's borders, especially in western China, and prevented Ming expansionism in the north and west.

Ming leaders responded in two ways. To control incursions by the nomads, they re-built and connected earlier walls to create the Great Wall (the wall observed today), one of the world's most impressive man-made objects. The Great Wall of China is an enormous structure, roughly 25 feet high and 25 feet wide, and it is about 1500 miles long, stretching from Jiayuguan (in modern Gansu Province) in the west to Shanhaiguan (on the coast near Beijing) in the east. The long wall is brick-and-stone-faced, and it features hundreds of watchtowers. Despite its impressive

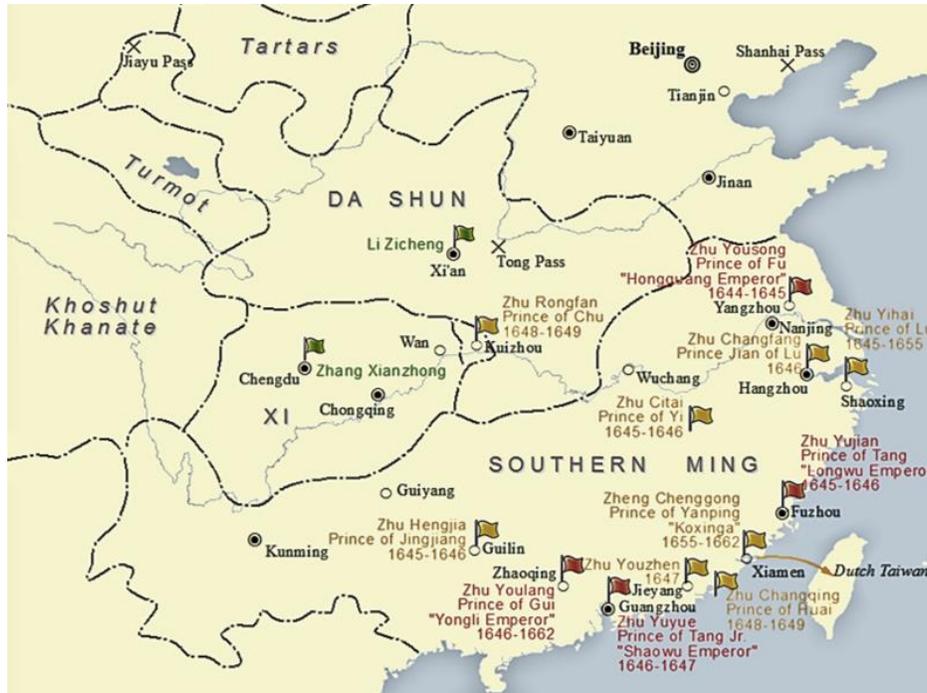
appearance, the Great Wall was primarily a reflection of Ming siege mentality because it was largely ineffective in walling out raiders and invaders.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chemin\\_de\\_ronde\\_muraille\\_long.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chemin_de_ronde_muraille_long.JPG)>

*Ming Dynasty Feared Mongol Invasion, Built 1500-mile Great Wall – Great Wall At Mutianyu, Near Beijing*

The second Ming response was to expand to the south and southwest – into the areas that are now Yunnan and Guizhou Provinces. In those regions, the Mings sponsored soldier-settlers to open non-cultivated land – despite the strong opposition of non-Chinese inhabitants. Gradually, the Chinese settlers became the majority of the population in the southwestern region.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southern\\_Ming.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southern_Ming.png)

### *Ming China's Southern Expansion Into Today's Yunnan and Guizhou Provinces – Map As of 1644*

In spite of the loss of their Eurasian empire, the Mongols remained a serious military threat. Facing Ming hostility, the nomads engaged in almost continuous frontier warfare and raiding. Confrontation resulted in great loss of lives and booty to the nomads' persistent raids plus the inability to seek military protection from the nomads against rebellions from within and incursions from Manchuria. In 1571, the Ming government reversed its Outer Frontier Strategy and negotiated a peace

agreement with the steppe nomads (the Eastern Mongols). They re-introduced the long-practiced system, known from Han and Tang times, of bribing the nomads (with subsidies, trading privileges, border markets, and noble titles) in return for guarantees of China's border security and cessation of raiding. But that change of heart proved to be too little and too late.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ming\\_dynasty-map-small.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ming_dynasty-map-small.jpg)>

*Ming Dynasty of China (1368-1544) – Feared Mongol Re-invasion and Turned Inward On the Advice of Sycophantic Advisors*

**Decline and Fall of the Ming Dynasty.** Despite the temporary accommodation on the northern and northwestern frontier, the Ming dynasty continued to experience enormous difficulties in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Under the Ming dynasty, China lost its international leadership in scientific and technological advances, and it watched Europeans begin to make productive use of Song Chinese inventions – the magnetic compass, gunpowder, and the printing press. The Ming’s long-held policies of anti-commercialism (banning foreign trade and throttling maritime commerce) and xenophobia (limiting foreign contact and ignoring foreign inventions) began to have a deleterious effect on the ability of the Ming economy to generate growing tax revenues.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blue and white jar Ming Wanli 1573 1620.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blue_and_white_jar_Ming_Wanli_1573_1620.jpg)>

*Ming China Produced the World's Finest Porcelain at Jingdezhen,  
But Innovation Slowed – Blue and White Jar, 1573-1620*

Very poor public administration and corrupt tax collection compounded this problem and precipitated a fiscal crisis in the 1590s. The central government was shot through with factional jealousies among 70,000 palace eunuchs vying for power. Resources were wasted on ceremonial spending and palace renovations. Military spending rose as the peace agreement with

the Mongols broke down, expansion into the southwest faced local resistance, and wars were fought against Japan over control of Korea. By 1600, the Ming government was nearly bankrupt, fiscally as well as intellectually.

Fiscal strain meant that the Ming government was unable to provide food relief during periodic droughts and floods. The government exacerbated rural poverty and vulnerability to food crises by raising tax rates (in the vain hope of solving its fiscal crisis). The inevitable consequence of higher taxes and fewer governmental emergency services was peasant rebellion. Starting in the 1620s, peasants in the poverty-stricken northwest rebelled against Ming rule nearly continuously. At considerable expense, the government could contain the rebellions, but it could not eliminate them.

In 1639, incompetent Ming administrators raised taxes again during a period afflicted with floods, drought, locust infestations, and smallpox epidemics. Peasant rebellions spread and became more violent, and in 1642 peasant rebels cut the dikes of the



set up four (later expanded to eight) “banners” to control tribes and organize military units, and declared independence from Chinese rule.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait\\_of\\_the\\_Imperial\\_Bodyguard\\_Zhanyi\\_nbao.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_of_the_Imperial_Bodyguard_Zhanyi_nbao.jpg)

*Manchu Warrior –  
Portrait of the Imperial Bodyguard Zhanyi nbao, 1760*

Upon his death in 1626, Nurhaci was succeeded by his extremely capable son, Abahai (1592-1643, known also by his Chinese name, Hung Taiji). Abahai was both a good military leader and an able

administrator. In 1636, he declared a new Qing (“Pure”) dynasty, changed the name of his tribal people from Jurchen to Manchu, and had the Manchu language written down. By 1640, Abahai had conquered all of northeastern China outside of the Great Wall and all of Manchuria north to the Amur River.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hong\\_Taiji.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hong_Taiji.jpg)>

*Abahai (1592-1643) –  
Founder of the Qing Dynasty in Manchuria*

The Manchus had the great advantage of being able to build their state structure in a remote area, beyond the Great Wall, that

was not under direct Ming control. In 1644, they carefully monitored the chaos in northern China, accepted the invitation of some Chinese leaders to help put down the rebellion led by Li Zicheng, and invaded Beijing. To the chagrin of their Chinese collaborators, the Manchus then refused to leave and instead moved their capital to Beijing from Mukden (in central Manchuria). By 1660, the Manchu military machine (consisting mostly of Chinese troops and assisted by Chinese commanders who viewed the Manchus as liberators) had conquered all of China except for a part of the Fujian coast and the island of Taiwan, which they took in 1683.

This Manchu takeover of north China was the third in Chinese history, but the Qing were the first Manchu dynasty to control all of China. The Manchu Qing dynasty ruled China for more than two-and-one-half centuries (1644-1911). During much of the first 150 years of Manchu rule, China had only three emperors, all of them highly capable. All three portrayed

themselves as both Manchu military leaders and defenders of the Chinese cultural heritage.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at

< [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qing\\_Dynasty\\_1820.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qing_Dynasty_1820.png) >

### *Qing China, 1644-1911*

The Kangxi Emperor (ruled 1662-1722) has gained nearly legendary status as one of China's all-time leading rulers, even among Chinese historians critical of most non-Chinese rulers, because of his capacity for hard work, honest administration, and

intellectual curiosity (his interests spanned Chinese poetry and Western science and technology).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E5%BA%B7%E7%86%99%E5%9D%90%E5%83%8F.jpg>>

*The Qing Kangxi Emperor (1662-1722) – Warrior and Scholar*

The Yongzheng Emperor (ruled 1722-1736) is best known as a reformer of state financial administration and a builder of sound revenue bases at both central and provincial levels. Under his sponsorship, in 1726 China printed 64 copies of a massive,

800,000-page Encyclopedia, *Synthesis of Books and Illustrations, Past and Present*, encompassing all aspects of knowledge.

The Qianlong Emperor (ruled 1736-1795) ran a healthy fiscal surplus during most of his reign. But in his senile later years he fell under the influence of a highly corrupt civil servant, Heshen, who stole assets worth about \$1 billion in today's money, a record for China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qianlong11.jpg>>

*The Qing Qianlong Emperor (1662-1722), Warrior and Administrator – Painting By Giuseppe Castiglione, 18<sup>th</sup> century*

Qing China declined markedly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and featured only one leader of note – Li Hongzhang, who attempted, unsuccessfully, to modernize China’s then backward economy by establishing joint state-and-private ventures to produce weapons, coal, and cotton spinning and weaving machinery, and to build railroads, a telegraph system, and navigation lines.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hubert\\_Vos%27s\\_painting\\_of\\_Li\\_Hongzhang.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hubert_Vos%27s_painting_of_Li_Hongzhang.jpg)>

*The Qing Emperor Li Hongzhang (ruled 1871-1895) – Portrait By Hubert Vos, Court Painter of Empress Dowager Cixi, 1899*

**Agriculture during the Qing Era.** Agriculture remained the primary source of Chinese wealth in the Qing era. The success of agricultural expansion is best reflected in the growth of China's population during the two-and-one-half Qing centuries. From an initial level of about 160 million in 1644, China's population more than doubled to around 380 million in 1820 and then expanded modestly to 437 million in 1913 (despite suffering a severe decline in the unstable period between 1850 and 1875). Between 1820 and 1913, China's share of total world population fell from one-third to one-fourth. Although quantitative estimates are sketchy at best, most historians of China's agricultural economy argue that food supplies and agricultural production kept pace with population growth during the first 150 years of the Qing era (about 1644-1800), but that the rural standard of living dropped during the tumultuous 19<sup>th</sup> century.

When the Manchus conquered China, they emulated the Mongols and appropriated huge chunks of valuable farmland in northern China (from both the Ming government and nobles). The

rationale for that land grab was to feed the huge Manchu standing armies. They thus assigned most of the confiscated land to the military banners, although some land found its way to privileged noblemen and clansmen who then subdivided their landholdings among numerous small-scale tenants. The heartland of Chinese agriculture, in central and southern China, was mostly unaffected by this policy. Landholdings in Manchu times were a hodgepodge of private owners and tenant farmers, all operating small farms usually of less than five acres.



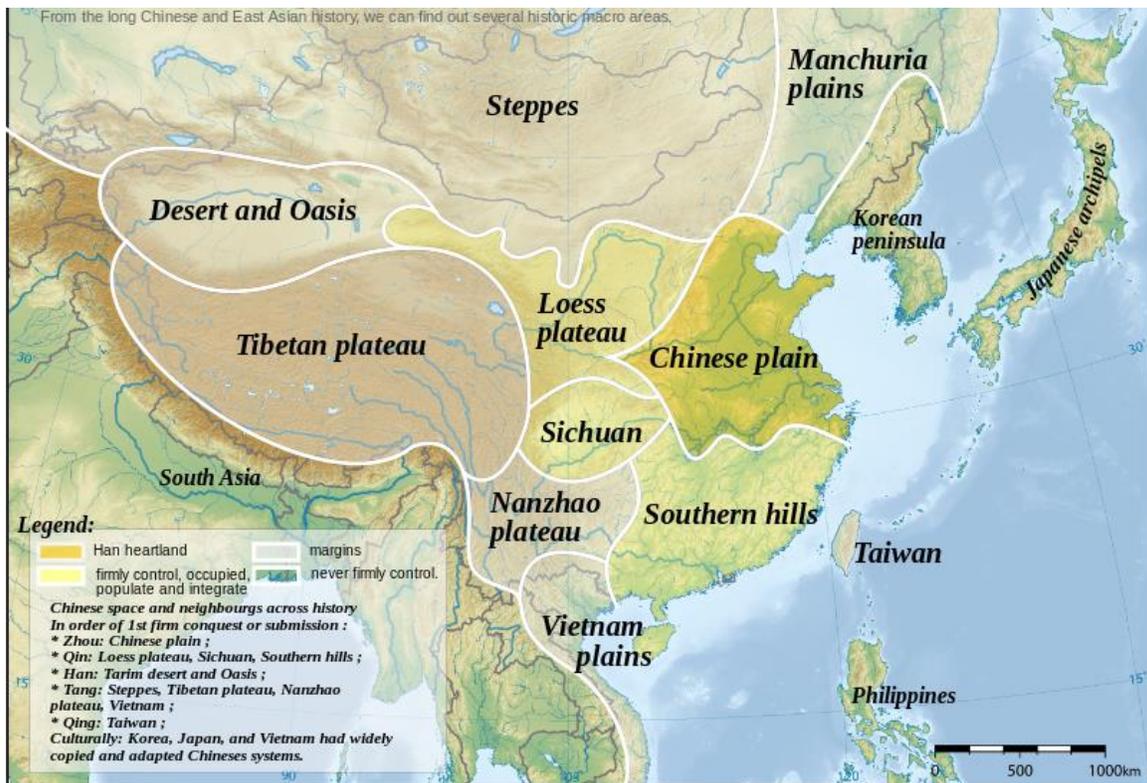
*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Xianning-fields-9731.jpg>>

*Plowing With A Water Buffalo (Carabao), Hubei, China*

Increases in agricultural productivity came from the spread of known crops (rice from southern to northern China), the appearance of new crops (maize, sweet potatoes, potatoes, peanuts, and tobacco from the Americas), the introduction of improved seeds (rice from Vietnam that permitted two crops a year of rice in south China and a crop of rice followed by one of wheat in the north), and a tripling of irrigated area (necessary especially for rice). During periods of rapid population growth, especially the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, agricultural production grew because of intensification – the use of more labor, draft animals, and human fertilizer per land area.

The increases in yields (output per land area) also were accompanied by the opening of new farmland. Between 1660 and 1760, the area cultivated rose by more than one-third, although China thereafter ran out of new lands that could be opened easily to farming without the development of expensive infrastructure (roads or irrigation facilities). Qing leaders greatly benefited from the introduction of new crops from the Americas, but their

xenophobic tendencies prohibited looking to other countries for additional crops or improved agricultural techniques. Hence, the growth of Chinese agriculture could not keep pace with the growth of the population in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China-Historic\\_macro\\_areas.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China-Historic_macro_areas.svg)

*Qing China's Key Agricultural Regions –  
 Chinese Plain, Sichuan Basin, Yangzi Valley, and South China*

**Foreign Trade during the Qing Era.** Emperor Kangxi facilitated foreign trade in 1685 by opening customs houses in four key Chinese ports – Guangzhou (then called Canton by the

Europeans), Zhangzhou, Ningbo, and Yuntaishan. European trade with China, which had been entirely Portuguese and Spanish in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was dominated by two government monopolies in the 17<sup>th</sup> century – the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC, operating from Batavia in the Dutch East Indies) and the English East India Company (EEIC, operating from Calcutta in India).

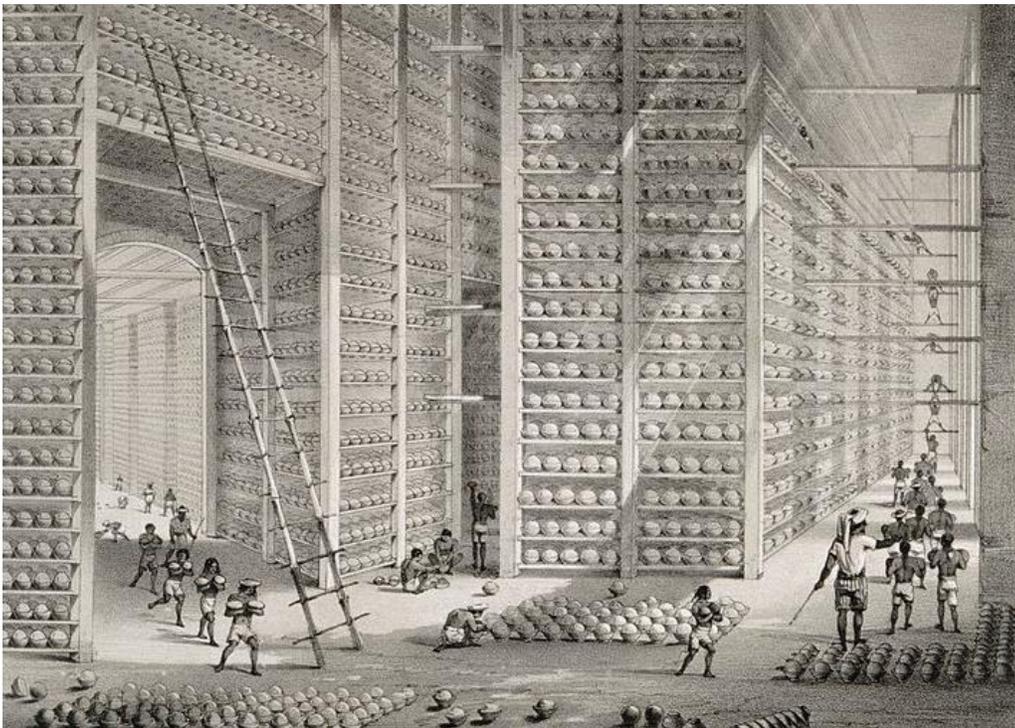


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:16th\\_century\\_Portuguese\\_Spanish\\_trade\\_routes.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:16th_century_Portuguese_Spanish_trade_routes.png)

### *Global Trade Routes to China, 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries*

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, EEIC merchants expanded trade between China and British India. The principal exports from China were tea (exports to Britain expanded from nothing in 1700 to 23 million pounds in 1800 as the British acquired their taste for tea),

silk, porcelain, and lacquerware. To balance the trade and prevent a large flow of silver (or gold) into China to pay for the tea, the English expanded their sales of opium – produced in British-controlled Bengal (eastern India) – into China. Many Chinese became addicted to the drug.

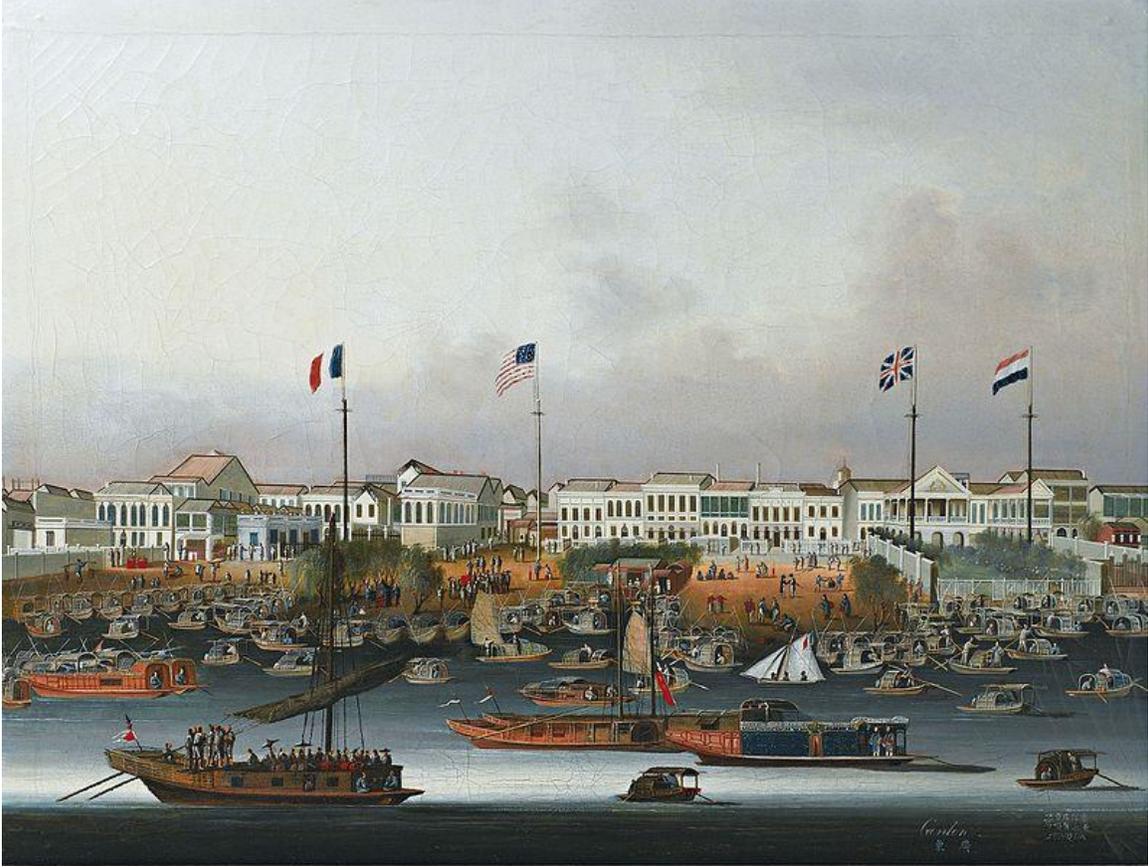


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A\\_busy\\_stacking\\_room\\_in\\_the\\_opium\\_factory\\_at\\_Patna,\\_India.\\_L\\_Wellcome\\_V0019154.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_busy_stacking_room_in_the_opium_factory_at_Patna,_India._L_Wellcome_V0019154.jpg)>

*Stacking Room in An Opium Factory, Patna, India, c. 1850*

To control European traders, the Chinese Government limited them to the port of Guangzhou in southern China. There a

monopoly group of Chinese merchants, the Cohong, heavily regulated and taxed the European traders. The English merchants wanted the British Government to set up a colony so that they could conduct international trade in the accepted European manner (with commercial treaties, trade envoys, and published tariffs), avoid the Cohong's monopoly, and have a secure, deep-water port from which to trade with China. The EEIC was particularly anxious to expand the lucrative export of opium from India to China. In the 1830s, the opium trade, mostly carried out with fast clipper ships, expanded strongly, as did merchant conflicts in Guangzhou. Because the British Government was unsuccessful in forcing the Chinese to open other ports to their merchants, the insignificant island of Hong Kong was considered as a site for a new trading colony.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Port\\_of\\_Canton.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Port_of_Canton.jpg)>

*Guangzhou (Canton), Key Opium Port –  
Painting by Sunqua, c. 1830*

The Chinese Government had banned opium imports in 1800, but Chinese corruption and British greed largely circumvented that ban during much of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Opium imports into Guangzhou skyrocketed, expanding nine-fold between 1800 and 1838. In 1839, the Chinese Government sent an incorruptible administrator, Lin Zexu, to Guangzhou to end the opium trade.

Lin forced foreign merchants to turn over their opium stocks and held hostages to ensure compliance. Those strong actions sparked the First Opium War, 1840-1841. Britain, with the most powerful navy in the world, easily defeated China.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Destroying\\_Chinese\\_war\\_junks,\\_by\\_E.\\_Duncan\\_\(1843\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Destroying_Chinese_war_junks,_by_E._Duncan_(1843).jpg)>

*First Opium War, 1840-1841, Guangzhou (Canton) Harbor – English East India Company Steamship Destroyed Chinese Junks*

In 1841, the British navy occupied Hong Kong Island, then home to 7,500 Chinese farmers and fishermen. Under the Treaty of Nanjing, ratified in 1843, China ceded Hong Kong Island to

Great Britain in perpetuity, opened five “treaty ports” (including Shanghai) to foreign trade, agreed to end the Cohong monopoly in Guangzhou, and paid severe reparations (\$21 million). The new colony of Hong Kong became a trading port, naval base, and administrative center for British merchant operations in the Chinese treaty ports.

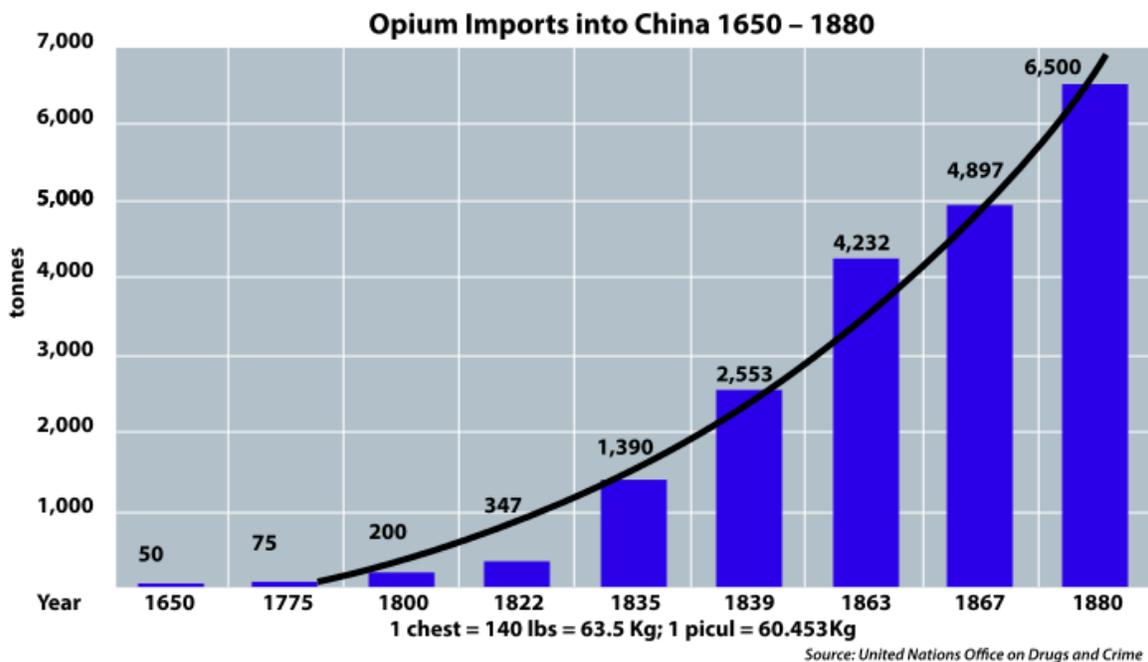


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*Opium Clipper Ship, Water Witch – British Barque, Built In 1831*

During the 1850s, opium exports to China flourished. To extract further Chinese concessions, the British (this time joined by

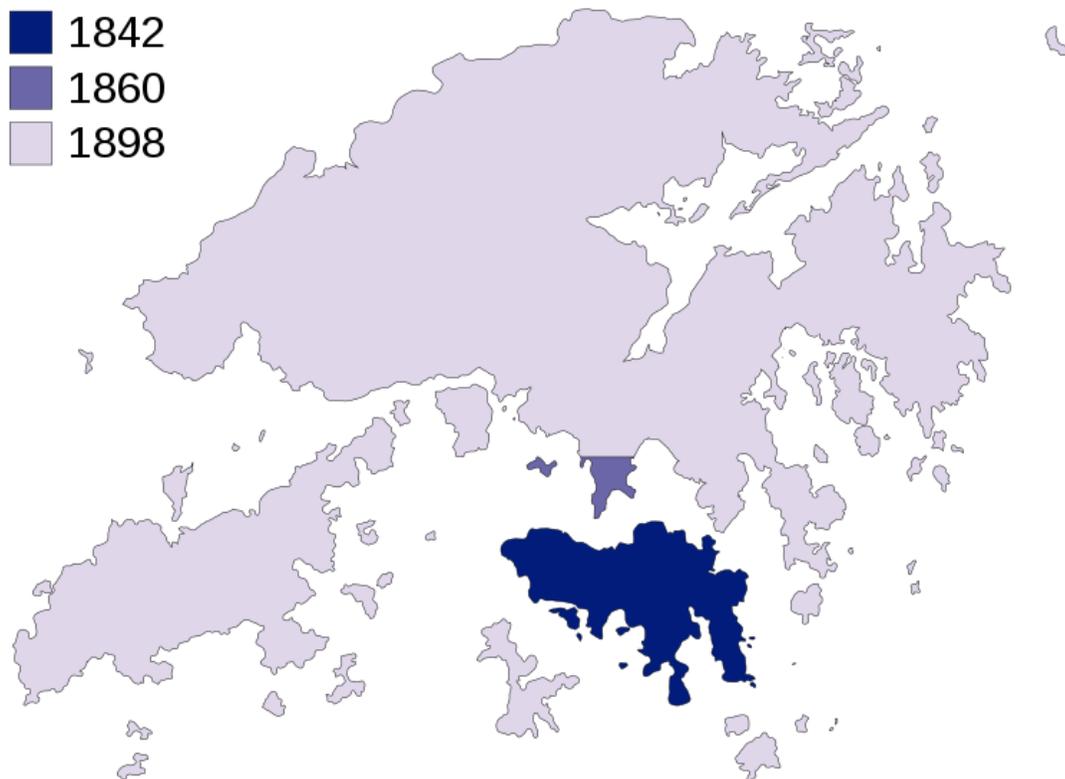
France) fought the Second Opium War from 1856 to 1860. Under the terms of the Beijing Convention of 1860, China ceded the Kowloon peninsula (north of Hong Kong Island) to Britain in perpetuity, legalized opium trade, and opened up several more treaty ports to European merchants. Hong Kong then had a population of over 80,000 people, mostly Cantonese-speaking Chinese.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Opium\\_imports\\_into\\_China\\_1650-1880\\_EN.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Opium_imports_into_China_1650-1880_EN.svg)>

*Opium Imports Into China, 1650-1880 –  
 Expansion in 19<sup>th</sup> century promoted By British Exporters*

Under the terms of the Convention of Beijing (1898), China leased the New Territories to Great Britain for 99 years (until June 30, 1997), adding 100,000 people to Hong Kong's population and increasing the colony's land area by ten times. By 1900, Hong Kong handled about 40 percent of China's total foreign trade – half of British exports to China (of which 45 percent was opium) and one-fifth of Chinese exports to Britain (still principally tea).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Acquisition\\_of\\_Hong\\_Kong\\_2.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Acquisition_of_Hong_Kong_2.svg)>

*British Acquisition of Hong Kong – 1842, 1860, and 1898*

## **The Qing Outer Frontier Strategy and Foreign Conquest.**

Like that of earlier invaders from Manchuria, the strategy of the Qing leadership was to await political turmoil in China and then to take over. But unlike the earlier Manchurian dynasties (the Toba Wei (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the Liao and Jin (10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries)), the Manchu Qing dynasty adopted an aggressive and successful strategy of foreign conquest. Much of the territory of contemporary China outside of China proper – Taiwan (1683), Mongolia (1697), Tibet (1720), and Turkestan (modern Xinziang Province, 1757) – was added during the golden age of Qing rule (1662-1795) under the first three emperors (Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong).

Taiwan was the first area of Qing expansion. The native settlers of Taiwan were non-Chinese, Austronesian-speaking peoples (related to contemporary speakers of Malay and Polynesian languages). The Dutch East India Company (VOC) colonized a small portion of southern Taiwan in 1620. A Ming loyalist, Koxinga, drove the Dutch out in 1662 and ran Taiwan for

two decades until the Qing Dynasty took control of the island in 1683.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Portrait\\_of\\_Koxinga.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Portrait_of_Koxinga.jpg)

*Koxinga, Ming Ruler of Taiwan (1662-1683), Defeated by Qing Army (1683) – National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan*

The Qing Outer Frontier Strategy differed from that of the two earlier Manchu dynasties that ruled northern China. The Wei and Liao/Jin dynasties both attempted to create anarchy in the steppe to prevent unification and creation of a steppe nomadic confederation. The Qing leaders, instead, played competing steppe groups off against each other to keep the steppe divided yet under

their loose control. Emperor Kangxi subdued the rebelling Khalkas in northern Mongolia in 1675. He then entered into a three-way contest to control northern Mongolia. The Zunghars (Western Mongols from the steppe region west of the Altai Mountains in Turkestan) were attempting to conquer the region from the west, and the Russians (recent conquerors of Siberia) hoped to expand southward into Mongolia. Through the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689), Kangxi obtained the Russians' agreement to stay neutral in the struggle for northern Mongolia in return for yielding trading rights in the Amur region to the Russians.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qing\\_Empire\\_circa\\_1820\\_EN.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qing_Empire_circa_1820_EN.svg)>

*Qing China in 1820 – Acquired Disputed Land from Russia in Northeast Manchuria (Pink Area) In Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689)*

Kangxi then held off the Zunghars and conquered most of Mongolia in 1697. The Zunghars also had designs on Tibet, but the Qing armies of the aging Kangxi (then nearly 90) drove the Zunghars out of Tibet in 1720 and thereafter loosely controlled the Buddhist mountain kingdom. After several decades of further sparring with the Zunghars, the Qing, under Emperor Qianlong,

successfully conquered them in 1757 with the help of the Zunghar's traditional enemies, the Eastern Mongols. Thereafter, the military significance of the steppe nomads ended, and future controversies on the steppe involved mainly China and Russia.

**Decline and Fall of the Qing Dynasty.** Qing China was in steady decline during much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In retrospect, it is surprising that the ailing dynasty did not fall even sooner than it did. Only the desire of Western powers to maintain a semblance of political stability in China propped up the weak dynasty in its final decades. Decline began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when the aging and senile Emperor Qianlong allowed his young ally, Heshen, to lead by example and instill widespread corruption throughout the ruling bureaucracy. Corruption led to inefficient tax collection and fiscal pressures on the central government. The first major peasant rebellion to afflict the Qing government, the White Lotus Rebellion (1796-1804), was ignited by rural grievances over taxation. Suppression of the rebellion was extremely costly,

amounting to five years of central government revenue. But that rebellion was only the beginning.

From the 1850s through the 1870s, the Qing government was faced with rebellions that affected about half of the areas under its control (except Manchuria and Tibet). The Qing rule survived only because the rebel groups were too dissimilar to constitute a united opposition and made little effort to coordinate their efforts against the central government. The longest and costliest was the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), an uprising of a religious cult that blended fanatic beliefs drawn from the Christian Old Testament, Confucian philosophy, and Daoist mysticism. The Taiping's "Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace," a brutally militaristic and strongly dedicated cult, was based in Nanjing and ruled large areas of the lower Yangzi valley for more than a decade.



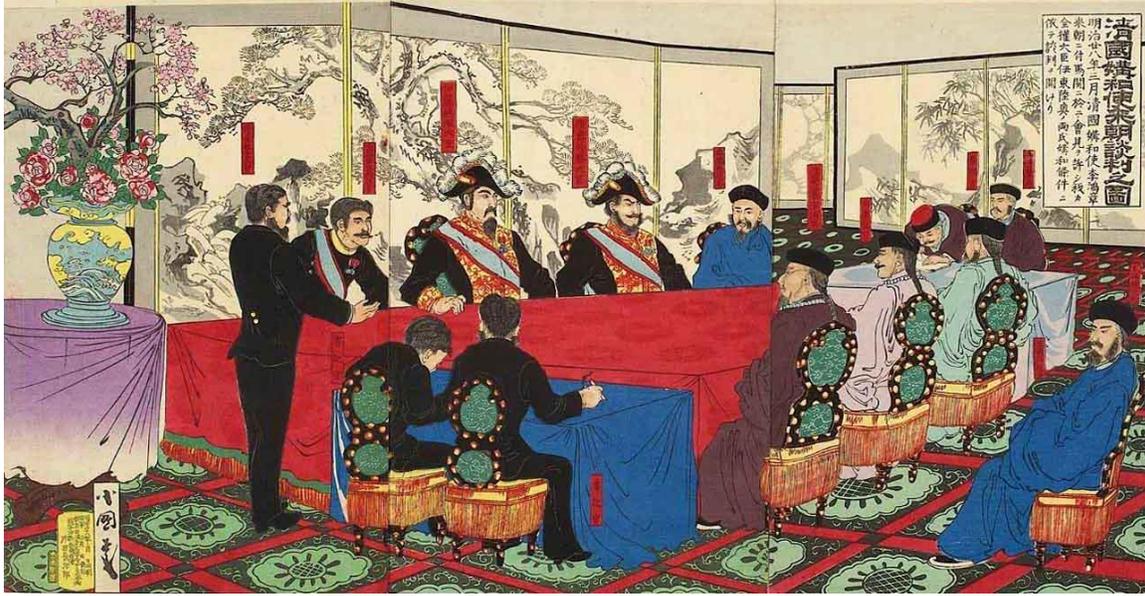
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Regaining\\_Jinling.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Regaining_Jinling.jpg)>

### *Qing Armies Retake Nanjing From Taiping Rebels, 1864*

Other significant rebel groups during that period included the Islamic separatists of Du Wenxiu (Yunnan Province), the tribal Miao people (southern China), the secret society of the Red Turbans (Guangdong Province), the Small Sword Society (Shanghai), and the marauding Nian bandits (Huai region).

China's population declined drastically between 1850 and 1875 as a result of the civil wars and societal shocks precipitated by those bloody rebellions.

Some Qing officials, led by Li Hongzhang, attempted to reform the government and modernize the Chinese economy. But it was an effort that was doomed to failure because of the shortage of government revenues and the opposition of most Manchu and Chinese nobles. China was embarrassed by the forced “openings” to Western trade after the two Opium Wars (1840-1841 and 1856-1860). But it was mortified when Japan, seen as an inferior Asian country, leaped ahead of China, industrially and militarily, following the Meiji Restoration (1868). When Japan precipitated a war with China (the Sino-Japanese War, 1894-1895), Chinese military forces were annihilated. According to the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895) that ended the war, China was forced to cede Taiwan to Japan and to open Chinese ports to Japanese trade and investment.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scene\\_of\\_signing\\_Treaty\\_of\\_Shimonoseki\\_pictorial.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scene_of_signing_Treaty_of_Shimonoseki_pictorial.jpg)>

*Signing the Treaty of Shimonoseki, 1895 –  
China Ceded Taiwan to Japan*

That cession triggered another wave of Western incursions into Chinese territory and jurisdiction. In 1897-1898, Germany (Jiaozhou Bay and Qingdao on the south coast of Shandong), Russia (Port Arthur and Dalian), Britain (Weihaiwei in Shandong and the New Territories of Hong Kong), and France (Guangzhou Bay) all demanded and received control over “treaty ports” in which their firms would have special rights and they would have extraterritorial jurisdiction over their resident citizens.



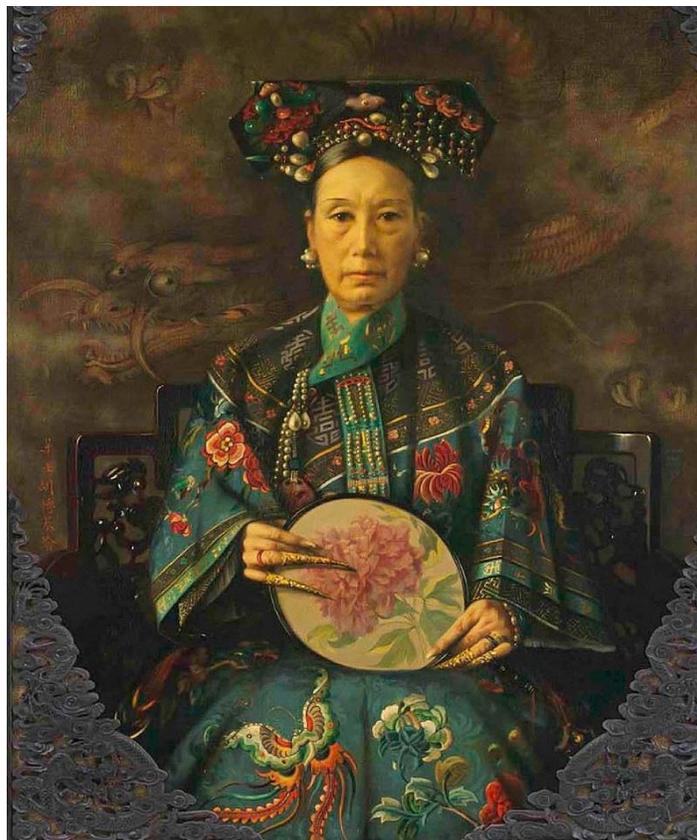
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1899\\_United\\_States\\_Government\\_Commercial\\_map\\_of\\_China,\\_showing\\_treaty\\_ports,\\_ports\\_of\\_foreign\\_control,\\_railways,\\_telegraphs,\\_waterways.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1899_United_States_Government_Commercial_map_of_China,_showing_treaty_ports,_ports_of_foreign_control,_railways,_telegraphs,_waterways.jpg)

### *Treaty Ports in China, 1899 – Following Western and Japanese Imperialism*

The United States, preoccupied in its imperialistic struggle with Spain over control of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, did not participate in that imperialist scramble for Chinese territory.

China escaped full colonization because the Western powers could not agree on how best to divide up the rest of the pie.

During that period of crisis and decline, the Qing suffered from misguided and selfish leadership. Empress Dowager Cixi (ruled 1861-1908) held effective power as regent for two young and weak emperors. She made a series of unfortunate decisions in her desire to retain power for herself and the Manchu elite.

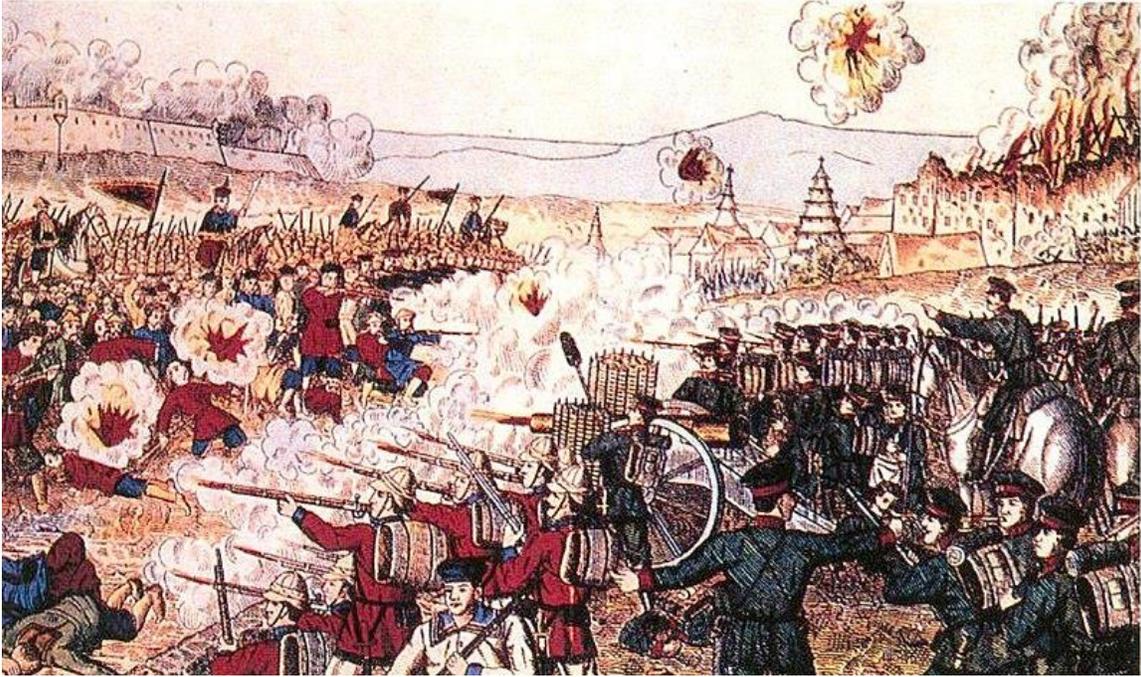


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Empress-Dowager-Cixi1.jpg>>

*Empress Dowager Cixi (in power 1861-1908)*

In the late 1880s, Cixi diverted government revenues intended for the navy to re-build her summer palace in western Beijing, a decision that resulted in military weakness during the war with Japan.

In 1900, Cixi made an even more egregious decision. The Boxer Rebellion (1900-1901) was a xenophobic and anti-Christian martial arts movement (“Harmonious Fists”) that murdered foreigners and Chinese Christians in a violent response to China’s embarrassed plight. In 1900, the Boxers invaded Beijing and besieged the foreign legations of more than 20 countries. Empress Dowager Cixi sided with the Boxers and declared war on all of the foreign nations. After the siege had continued for two months, the foreign countries finally amassed an army of 21,000 soldiers and marched on Beijing to relieve their legations. The victorious foreign powers defeated the Boxers, looted Beijing, and demanded a heavy indemnity of \$333 million. The need to pay this indemnity put additional fiscal pressures on the already tottering Qing government.

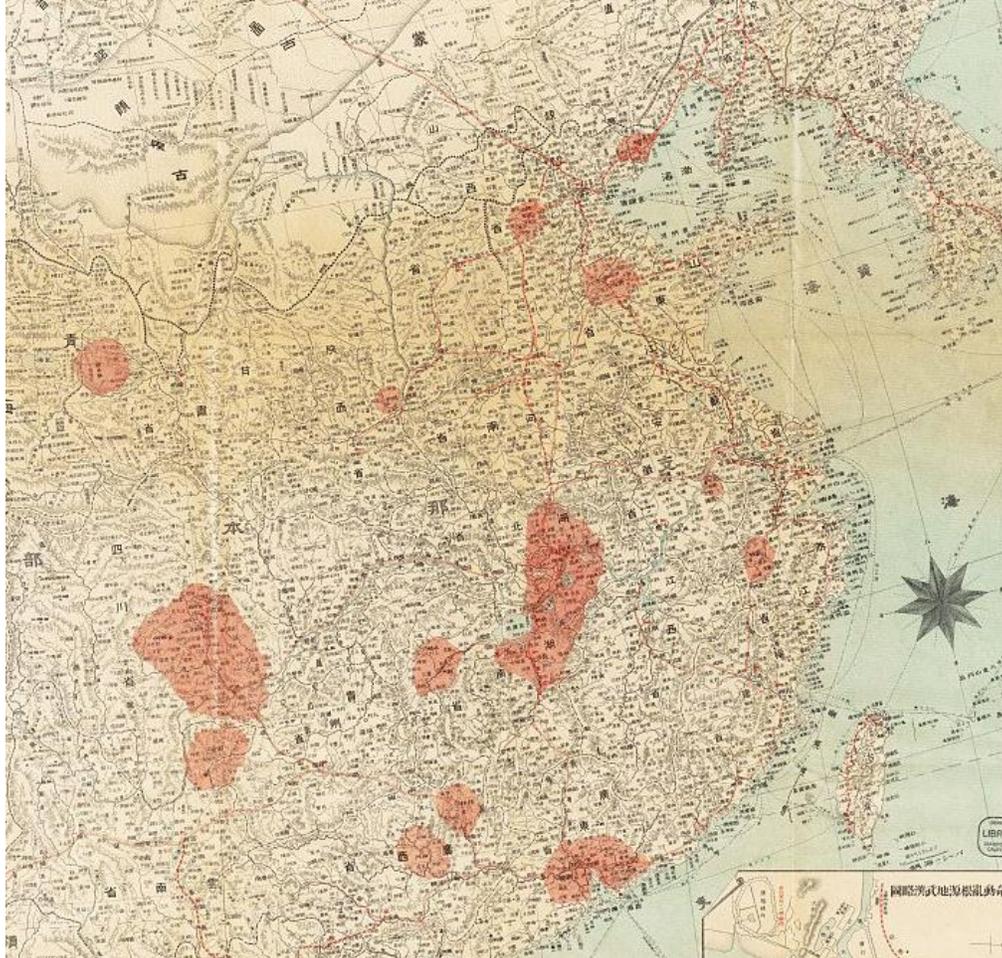


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boxer\\_Rebellion.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boxer_Rebellion.jpg)>

*Boxer Rebellion, 1901 –  
British and Japanese Troops Engage Boxers in Battle*

**Republican Revolution and Civil War (1911-1937).** The unpopular Qing dynasty crumbled in late 1911 when military revolts in the provinces led to secessionist movements in opposition to the central government. A massive military mutiny in Wuhan, in early October 1911, ignited the collapse of the Qing dynasty. Sun Yat-sen's followers in the Revolutionary Alliance

organized popular, mostly urban uprisings and support for the breakaway provincial governments.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qing\\_Dynasty\\_Map\\_durnig\\_Xinhai\\_Revolution.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qing_Dynasty_Map_durnig_Xinhai_Revolution.JPG)

### *Principal Areas of Uprisings in China's 1911-1912 Revolution*

The five-year-old last emperor, Puyi, abdicated in early 1912, thereby ending more than two millennia of Chinese dynastic rule.

The Chinese had at last succeeded in throwing off the yoke of two-

and-one-half centuries of Manchu rule. But the ensuing governments proved no more effective.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dr. Sun in London.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dr._Sun_in_London.jpg)>

*Sun Yat-sen, Leader of China's Revolution, 1911-1912 –  
In Exile in London, 1896*

The Republican Revolution instead initiated nearly four decades of warlordism and civil war in China. Yuan Shikai, a former governor-general during the Qing dynasty, exiled Sun Yat-sen, banned his Nationalist Party (Guomindang), and ruled brutally

and ineffectively from 1912 until his death in 1916. During World War I, China's non-agricultural economy fared quite well, because new Chinese industries arose to replace European enterprises.

China was allied with the victorious Allies in the war and sent non-combat troops to Europe (including a young Deng Xiaoping).

When the Treaty of Versailles awarded Germany's concessions in China to Japan, outraged urban protesters overthrew the government.

Thereafter, political power splintered among provincial warlords who extorted peasants and workers with their private militias. Chiang Kai-shek assumed leadership of the Guomintang soon after Sun's death in 1925. Alarmed at the rising strength of the Communist Party, Chiang turned against his former allies in 1927 and nearly destroyed the Communists. By 1928, Chiang loosely controlled nearly all of China, except Manchuria (ruled by an independent warlord) and limited areas of Communist control.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chiang\\_Kai-shek\\_%26\\_Mme.\\_Chiang\\_Time\\_Cover.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chiang_Kai-shek_%26_Mme._Chiang_Time_Cover.jpg)>

*Chiang Kai-shek and His Wife, Song Meiling –  
Time Magazine Cover, 1931*

Mao Zedong led the Communists' Long March in 1934-1935 and consolidated his control of the Party after establishing a base in Yan'an (in northern Shaanxi province). The Nationalists and Communists continued to oppose each other while nominally in alliance to fight the Japanese invading army. China was shattered by revolution and war. Because of this instability, the Chinese

economy appears to have grown only moderately between the two world wars (1918 and 1937).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_the\\_Long\\_March\\_1934-1935-en.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_Long_March_1934-1935-en.svg)>

### *Long March of China's Communists, 1934-1935*

**World War II and the Communist Revolution (1937-1949).** In 1932, Japan established the puppet state of Manchukuo in Manchuria. As part of its scheme for a “Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere,” Japan invaded China in 1937, conquered large

sections of eastern China, and inadvertently spared the Chinese Communists from further assaults by the Nationalists. But the Japanese army soon was stalemated in a Napoleonic quagmire because it could not defeat the Nationalists in the west at Chongqing or the Communists in the north at Yan'an.

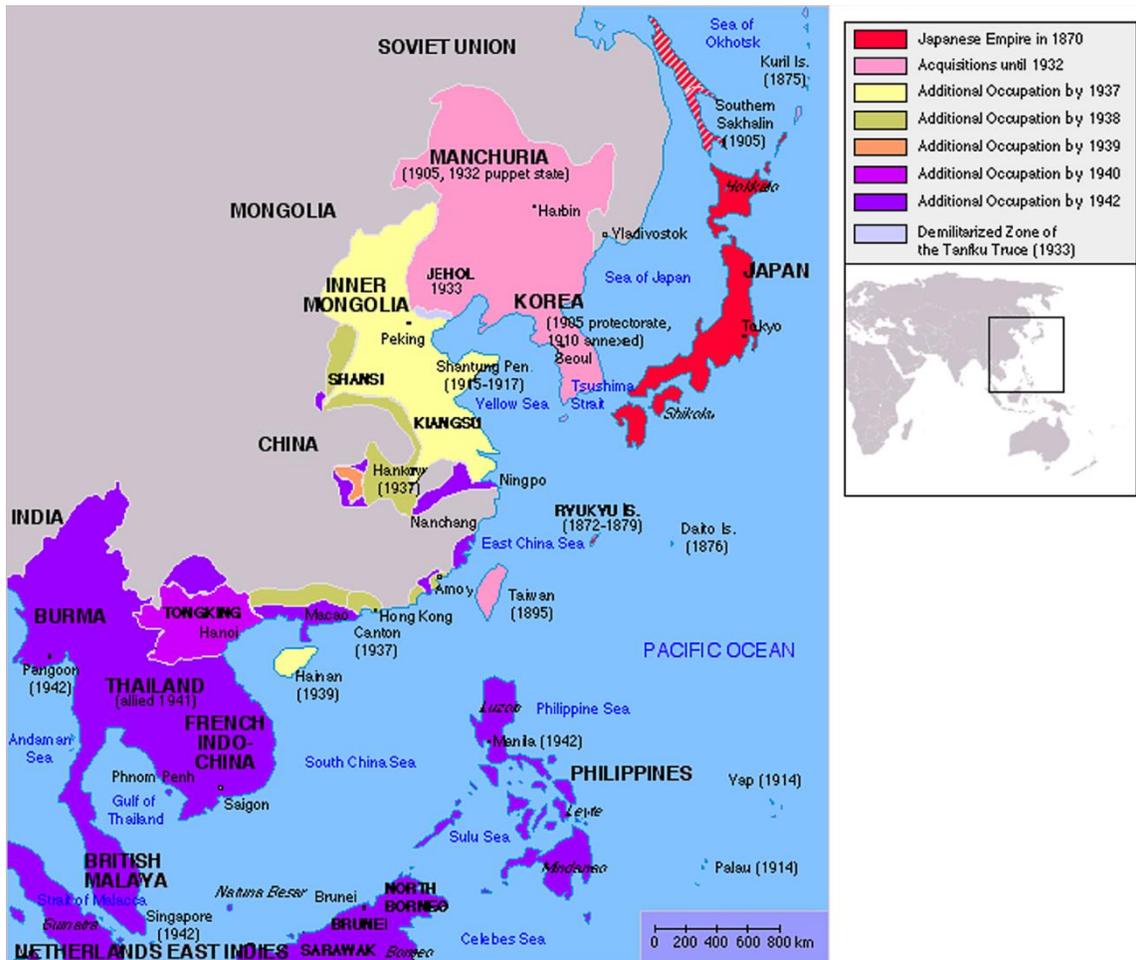


*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at <  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1946\\_Mao\\_in\\_Yan'an3.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1946_Mao_in_Yan'an3.jpg)>*

*Mao Zedong, Leader of the Chinese Communist Party –  
Yan'an, c. 1940*

Neither Japan nor China could win the war, and Japan was forced to tie down nearly a million troops to fight it. China aligned with the Allied Forces in World War II, and the American military

provisioned the Nationalist army. But in 1944, the Nationalists suffered 146,000 casualties in the Ichigo Campaign against Japan, severely weakening Nationalist military strength.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese\\_Empire2.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_Empire2.png)

### *Japan's Conquered Territories, 1895-1945*

When the Allies defeated Japan in 1945, most observers expected Chiang Kai-shek to emerge as China's leader. The civil

war between the Nationalists and the Communists resumed shortly after the Second World War ended.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gu%C3%A8rra\\_Civila\\_Chinesa\\_\(1946-1950\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gu%C3%A8rra_Civila_Chinesa_(1946-1950).png)>

*The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950 – The Chinese Communists Began in Manchuria and Advanced Southward*

The Nationalists had three-and-one-half times as many troops as the Communists (4.3 million versus 1.2 million). However, the

Communists had adroitly moved into Manchuria as the Japanese moved out, aided by transportation and supplies provided by the retreating Soviet military. The Communists used Manchuria as a launching pad from which to move south and conquer the country.

The Nationalists under Chiang had faced extreme revenue constraints, created rampant inflation, carried out military brutalities, and permitted corrupt public administration. In contrast, the Communists under Mao Zedong had enacted popular land reforms, disciplined their troops, and were efficient, though brutal, administrators. Nationalist resistance crumbled quickly, and the Communists took over China in 1949. They inherited a catastrophe – millions of people were displaced, infrastructure was destroyed, and the economy was in a shambles. The challenges of economic recovery were daunting.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E9%87%8D%E6%85%B6%E6%9C%83%E8%AB%87%E8%94%A3%E4%BB%8B%E7%9F%B3%E8%88%87%E6%AF%9B%E6%BE%A4%E6%9D%B1.jpg>>

*Chiang Kai-Shek (left) and Mao Zedong, Victory Over Japan, 1945 – Chiang Is Smiling But Mao Had the Last Laugh*

**Maoist Politics (1949-1976).** Mao Zedong (1893-1976) epitomized the Communist Party during its first quarter century of rule in China. Mao led the Long March to Yan'an in the 1930s, the victory over the Nationalists in the 1940s, and the turbulent restructuring of Chinese society in the 1950s and 1960s. Mao

declared a peasant-led revolution, broke landlord power in a thorough land reform, centralized power in the Communist Party and the state, and buttressed his leadership through strong military and police control. During 1950-1953, China intervened on the side of North Korea in the Korean War to support its Communist ally, protect its borders, and supplant Soviet influence. Because of that war against the United States and its United Nations allies, the Americans embargoed trade with China and did not lift the embargo until diplomatic relations resumed in 1972.

Mao introduced two disastrous social experiments. The Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) was a foolhardy attempt to make a technological leap by taxing rural labor to create urban industry. Twenty thousand giant agricultural communes replaced 700,000 rural cooperatives in a naïve attempt to achieve economies of scale. Soil erosion resulted from hasty and ill-advised efforts to plant hillsides in grain. Politically-inflated estimates of harvests led to large increases of government procurement and export of grain.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Backyard\\_furnace4.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Backyard_furnace4.jpg)>

*Great Leap Forward, 1958-1961 –  
Backyard Steel Furnaces*

Those drastic organizational errors plus serious droughts resulted in crop shortfalls, famines, and at least 30 million deaths through starvation. That cataclysmic outcome can be contrasted with the twentieth century's second worst famine – about 8 million deaths occurred in Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan during 1932 and 1933 after Stalin's forced collectivization of agriculture.

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) resulted from Mao's attempt to regain power within the Party hierarchy and revive revolutionary spirit. During that reign of terror, two million people were officially investigated and countless others suffered persecution, hardship, rural exile, property raids, or death from unofficial harassment by Red Guards and military person



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cultural\\_Revolution\\_poster.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cultural_Revolution_poster.jpg)>

*Propaganda Poster From the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976 –  
“The Chinese People’s Liberation Army Is The Great School of  
Mao Zedong Thought,” 1969*

Mao aimed to destroy and then simplify China's bureaucratic system. Four of every five central ministry personnel were sent to rural re-education centers to study Mao Zedong Thought. At least 1.5 million alleged counter-revolutionaries died, about half in the Cleansing of the Class Ranks campaign. What began as Mao's attempt to regain power ended with near chaos as young revolutionaries sought to purge China of "capitalist order" influences from the "four olds" – old ideas, old customs, old culture, and old habits.

Only after Mao died in 1976 could Party leaders begin to repair the damage. Just five years later, in 1981, the Chinese Communist Party in its "Resolution on Party History" tersely summarized the impact of the Cultural Revolution: "The 'cultural revolution,' which lasted from May 1966 to October 1976, was responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state and the people since the founding of the People's Republic. It was initiated and led by Comrade Mao Zedong."

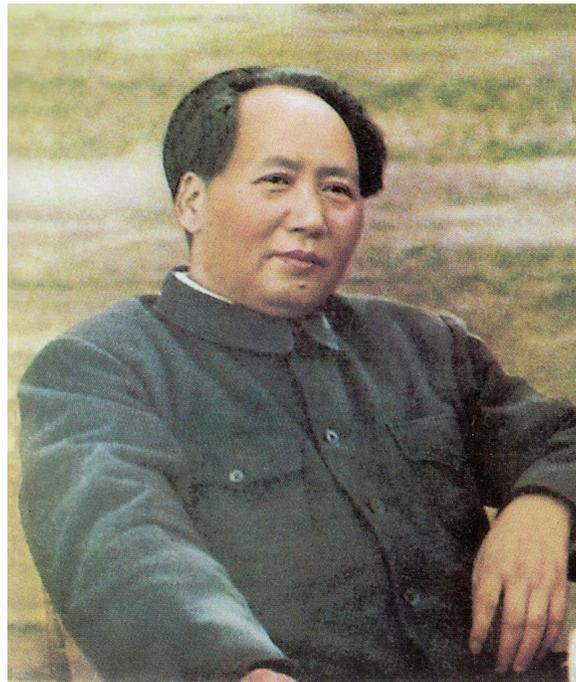


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mausoleum\\_of\\_Mao\\_Zedong\\_P1090218.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mausoleum_of_Mao_Zedong_P1090218.jpg)>

*Mausoleum of Mao Zedong, Beijing – The Chinese Communist Party Concluded that Mao was 70% Correct and 30% Wrong*

**Maoist Economics (1949-1976).** The new Communist government quickly stabilized the economy – balancing the government budget, quelling inflation, and reviving the commercial economy. Maoist economic policies were patterned on Stalinist policies in the Soviet Union. The state set prices through allocations of inputs and goods in a network of central planning, owned most of the land and industry, and controlled the allocation of labor. Central planning began in 1953, after the Korean War ended.

China took its first modern census in that year and counted 594 million people. From the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, China welcomed 10,000 advisors and received 300 large industrial projects. China established output targets and input allocations within 5-year development plans. Like those of the Soviets, the Chinese plans stressed the primacy of heavy industry – steel and mining – and gave only secondary importance to the production of consumer goods and food.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mao\\_Zedong\\_sitting.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mao_Zedong_sitting.jpg)>

*Mao Instituted Soviet Planning in 1953 – Mao Zedong, In  
“Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung,” c. 1955*

The state controlled agricultural production by establishing collectives – first producer cooperatives and later huge communes. Bureaucrats set output targets and distributed inputs to meet them. Farm workers were compensated according to work accomplished through a system of “work points.” All workers, rural and urban, were required to carry identity cards so that the state could control the allocation of labor to jobs and the movement of people.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Visit\\_to\\_the\\_People%27s\\_Commune\\_named\\_Chinese-Hungarian\\_Friendship-3.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Visit_to_the_People%27s_Commune_named_Chinese-Hungarian_Friendship-3.jpg)>

*Peoples' Agricultural Commune in China, 1982*

The Communist government under Mao followed an autarkic international economic policy. Maoist economic policy sought maximum control. The state transacted all foreign trade. Exports were made of goods deemed to be surplus, and imports were made only to the extent that foreign exchange was earned by exporting. Foreign direct investment by private firms was banned, and the government severely limited its foreign borrowing. China's share of world exports fell from 1.5 percent in 1953 to only 0.6 percent in 1977. China thus walled itself off from the rest of the world and thereby missed a golden opportunity to participate in the global economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yangshan-Port-Balanced.jpg>>

### *Modern Port of Shanghai – Limited Use in the 1970s*

Between 1949 and 1976, Maoist economic policy brought mixed results for the Chinese economy. On the positive side of the balance sheet, there was a considerable growth in national income (GDP per capita grew at a rate of 2.9 percent per year), a massive land reform, new technology and industry, enhanced military strength, increased public health services (urban and rural), a sharp

reduction in infant mortality, a large increase in life expectancy, and an impressive growth of education facilities and literacy rates.

On the negative side, there was no gain in rural consumption standards and nutrition after 1957, 30 percent of China's rural population subsisted at incomes beneath the official poverty level, much of urban industrial output was of low quality, inward-looking China experienced a widening technological gap in comparison with neighboring East Asian countries, most Chinese people misunderstood the outside world, and higher education was massively disrupted during the Cultural Revolution. Despite the disastrous Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, through its emphasis on land reform, literacy, education, public health, and public infrastructure, Maoist economic policy set the stage for China's later economic success.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Revolutionary\\_opera.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Revolutionary_opera.jpg)>

*The Red Detachment of Women, Revolutionary Opera – Maoist Reformist Policies Set the Stage for Later Rapid Economic Growth*

**Liberalization of Agriculture (1978-present).** In December 1978, Deng Xiaoping, China’s new leader, altered the country’s economic policy. His initiative markedly reduced the role of the state in allocating resources through central planning, created incentives for farmers and firms to make and retain profits, and encouraged private leasing of land and ownership of factories. This creation of “market Socialism” increasingly mimicked

capitalism. Deng’s “second revolution” also reversed China’s foreign economic policies by encouraging international trade, providing incentives for exporters, and opening China to private direct foreign investment.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Deng\\_Xiaoping\\_statue\\_in\\_Shenzhen.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Deng_Xiaoping_statue_in_Shenzhen.JPG)>

*Deng Xiaoping, Statue in Shenzhen – “To Get Rich Is Glorious.”*

China’s economic reforms occurred in two phases. During the first phase (1978-1993), Chinese leaders dismantled the command economy, introduced product markets, and diversified

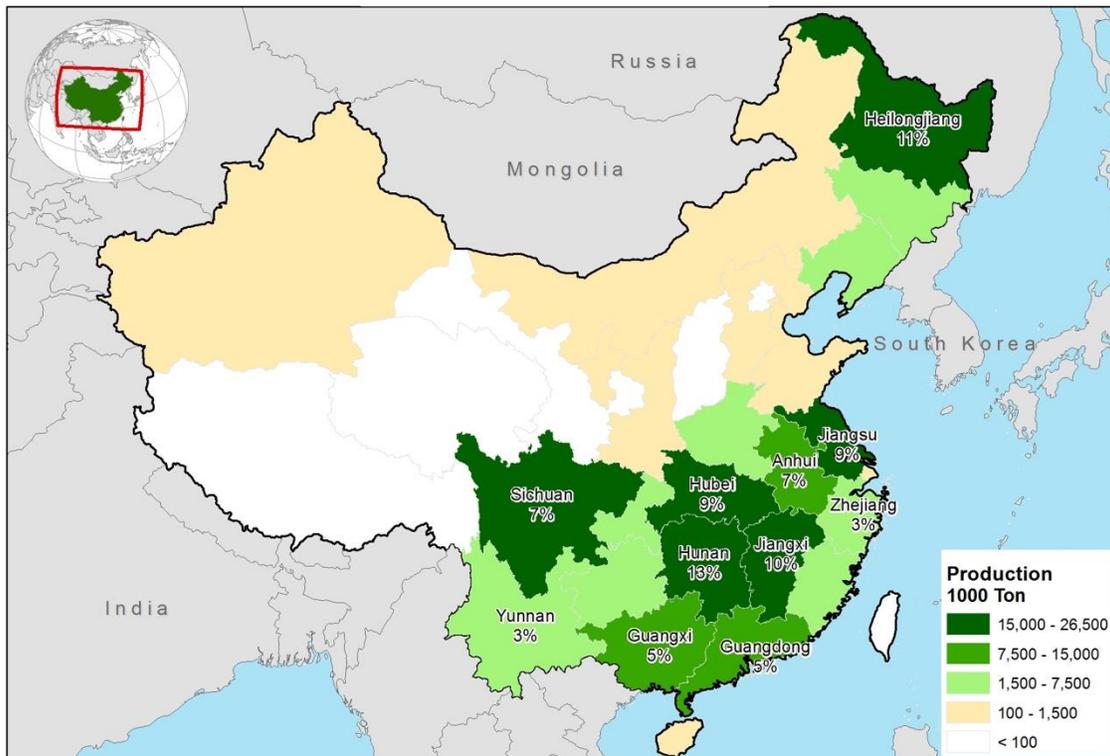
ownership. In the second phase (1993-present), which is still ongoing, they changed governmental institutions to make them compatible with a market economy, reduced state ownership of productive assets, and introduced rules and regulations to increase competition.

Deng revolutionized China's agriculture by dissolving the inefficient communes, leasing land to private farm households (often for 50 years), and reducing (and later eliminating) the tax implicit in the compulsory deliveries of grain at below-market prices. Those agricultural reforms initiated China's economic miracle and helped the country to achieve the world's highest growth rate of income (8.5 percent annually in constant prices) between 1980 and 2019. Agricultural income grew at an annual rate of 4 percent in this period (after stagnating under Mao).

But because non-agricultural income and employment grew much faster, China enjoyed a rapid rate of structural transformation. The share of agricultural employment in the total workforce declined from two-thirds in 1978 to one-third in 1999,

as rural workers found better-paying jobs outside of farming. Chinese farmers began to shift away from producing low-value grains (rice, wheat, and corn) to growing high-value horticultural crops (vegetables, fruits, and flowers). That shift accelerated following China's elimination of its 20-30 percent protection of grains in 1999.

### China: Rice Production



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (data excluding Taiwan)  
Average Crop Production 2013-2017

Foreign Agriculture Service  
Office of Global Analysis  
International Production Assessment Division

Source: US Department of Agriculture available at  
[https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/rssiws/al/crop\\_production\\_maps/China/China\\_rice.jpg](https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/rssiws/al/crop_production_maps/China/China_rice.jpg)

*China's Rice Production, Average 2013-2017*

## China: Total Wheat Production



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (data excluding Taiwan)  
Average Crop Production 2013-2017

Foreign Agriculture Service  
Office of Global Analysis  
International Production Assessment Division

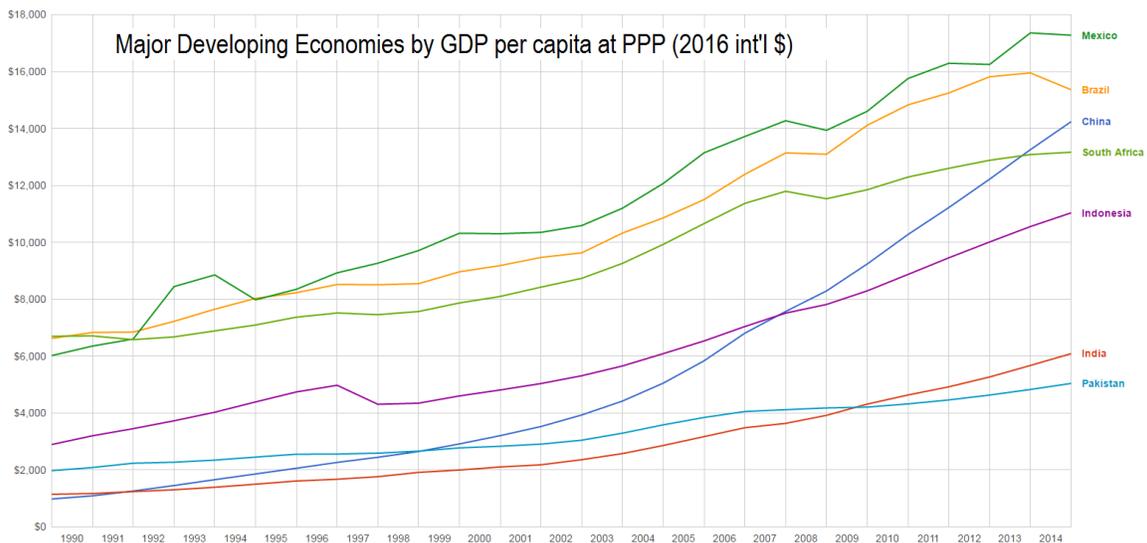


Source: US Department of Agriculture available at  
<[https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/rssiws/al/crop\\_production\\_maps/China/China\\_wheat.jpg](https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/rssiws/al/crop_production_maps/China/China_wheat.jpg)>

### *China's Wheat Production, Average 2013-2017*

**Manufactured Exports and the China Circle (1980s-present).** Between 1980 and 2019, China's economy grew 8.5 percent each year on average. Much of that impressive growth was due to China's new openness to international trade and investment. China's share of rapidly growing world export earnings exploded from 1 percent in 1980 to a massive 11 percent in 2019. At the

same time, China's share of global exports of manufactures rose from less than 1 percent to over 14 percent. The composition of Chinese exports altered significantly. Manufactures, which made up less than a third of total Chinese exports in 1980, accounted for 93 percent in 2019. China's total exports expanded from only \$15 billion in 1977 to \$2,641 billion in 2019, and its leading manufactured exports in 2019 were electronics equipment (\$671 billion) and machinery, including computers (\$417 billion).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Graph\\_of\\_Major\\_Developing\\_Economies\\_by\\_Real\\_GDP\\_per\\_capita\\_at\\_PPP\\_1990-2013.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Graph_of_Major_Developing_Economies_by_Real_GDP_per_capita_at_PPP_1990-2013.png)

*Major Developing Economies by GDP Per Capita at Purchasing Power Parity (2016 International \$), 1990-2013 – China (Blue Line) Surpassed All But Mexico and Brazil*

Moreover, foreign direct investment in China sky-rocketed after 1994. In 2014, China received \$156 billion of foreign direct investment, more than any other country and 12 percent of the world total. But China saved so much domestically that foreign investment made up only 3 percent of China's total investment expenditure (gross capital formation) of \$6,110 billion in 2019. What explains this impressive expansion of exports of manufactured goods and growth of foreign and domestic investment in China?

Deng Xiaoping tested the international waters in 1980 by setting up four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in southern coastal cities, all intended to appeal to overseas Chinese investors. Shenzhen, the most successful one sited near Hong Kong, served as the location for duty-free manufacturing and then became the base for foreign firms to expand their operations to the entire Pearl River Delta. In a visit to the Shenzhen SEZ in 1992, Deng famously opined that “Development is the only hard truth.”



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lo\\_Wu\\_District\\_201701.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lo_Wu_District_201701.jpg)>

*Shenzen Special Economic Zone, Luohu District, 2017*

From this modest start emerged the China Circle, an integrated economic unit encompassing Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Guangdong and Fujian provinces of southern China. The China Circle economies accounted for 2.8 percent of world exports in 1985; a decade later that share had increased to 6.6 percent.

Manufacturers of labor-intensive goods (initially, textiles and apparel, footwear, and toys) relocated their operations from Hong

Kong and Taiwan to Guangdong and Fujian to take advantage of the much lower labor costs there. The products were exported largely to the United States (China's total exports to the United States amounted to \$200 billion in 2004, peaked at \$540 billion in 2018, and declined to \$452 billion in 2019). As labor costs in Hong Kong and Taiwan continued to rise, their manufacturers of high-technology products relocated to China. In 2000, China surpassed Taiwan as the world's third leading exporter (behind the United States and Japan) of information technology hardware (especially computers), mostly produced by Taiwanese firms that had relocated their manufacturing operations to China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Electronics\\_factory\\_in\\_Shenzen.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Electronics_factory_in_Shenzen.jpg)>

*Foxconn Factory in Shenzhen, South China –  
Taiwanese-owned Firm Produces Apple iPhones*

China's rapid transformation to become the world's industrial workshop was based on a second pillar, in addition to the China Circle – township and village enterprises (TVEs). TVEs are publicly-owned enterprises, owned by local governments or rural communes, which invested profits generated from newly-opened agriculture. In 1978, most industry in China was state-owned and operated, but TVEs employed 28 million workers and produced 6 percent of GDP and 9 percent of industrial output. TVEs then

became the most dynamic dimension of Chinese industry. At their peak in 1996, TVEs employed 135 million workers and produced 26 percent of GDP and 28 percent of industrial output.

China began to encourage private investment in the mid-1990s. By 1996, China's industrial structure reflected that change. About one-third of industrial output then was produced by state-owned enterprises (SOEs), one-third by collectively-owned firms (including TVEs), and one-third by domestic and foreign private firms. The opening to private firms also resulted in a shift of China's manufactured product mix – from light, labor-intensive goods (garments, textiles, leather goods, plastic products) to higher-technology products (electronics, telecommunications equipment, machinery).



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shanghai - Pudong - Lujiazui.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shanghai_-_Pudong_-_Lujiazui.jpg)>

### *Pudong – Shanghai’s New Commercial Center*

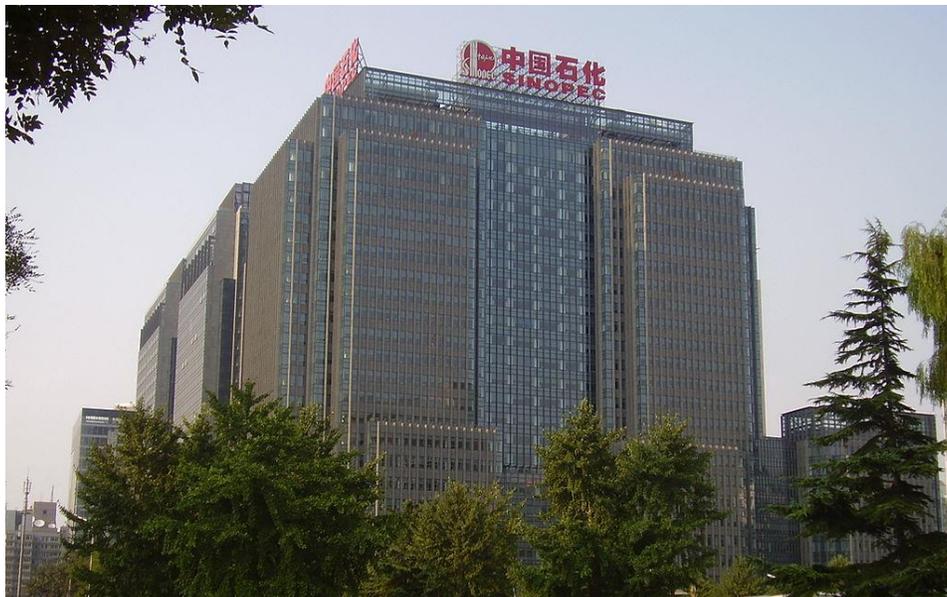
#### **Restructuring State-owned Enterprises (1990s-present).**

China saves and invests a very high percentage of its national income (43 percent in 2018). But that investment often is used inefficiently, especially when it goes into state-owned enterprises (SOEs). One of the great ironies of China’s conversion to “market Socialism” is the albatross of SOEs left over from the Maoist period, since state ownership of the assets of production is a central

tenet of hardline Communism. China's SOEs have been saddled with numerous problems – redundant employees, poor management, obsolete equipment, and meddling by Party officials. The SOE performance during the first two decades of the reform period (1978-1998) was dismal. The pre-tax profits (returns on assets) of SOEs in China fell from 25 percent to 5 percent, and the SOE share of the country's manufacturing output declined from 80 percent to 28 percent (even though the end-period SOE share of industrial assets was 70 percent). As a result, the government massively subsidized the SOEs, which absorbed between 15 and 30 percent of the total state budget between 1978 and 1990. The government then shifted to aiding SOEs indirectly through tax breaks, interest rate subsidies, and non-commercial bank loans.

For fifteen years, even China's staunchest reformers shied away from tackling the political hornet's nest of restructuring the SOEs – which would appear to be both anti-Socialist and anti-worker. Then in 1993, the government began laying off redundant workers in SOEs. In 1998, Premier Zhu Rongji took severe

measures to reform the bloated SOEs. By 2001, the state had laid off 30 million SOE employees, about two-fifths of total SOE employment, mostly in the enterprises that were the biggest money-losers. In consequence, the profits for all SOEs improved significantly. In 2018, SOEs owned about 40 percent of China's manufacturing assets, but accounted for only about one-fifth each of employment and profits in the manufacturing sector. A central challenge for China's new leadership is to continue to restructure inefficient SOEs and reduce their drain on China's economy.



*Source: The Economist available at*  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SinopecHQChaoyang.JPG>>

*Headquarters of Sinopec, Beijing – Sinopec Group Was China's Largest Company By Revenue in 2014 (\$450 Billion)*

**China's and the World Trade Organization (2001-present).** China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, following 14 years of tough bilateral negotiations with WTO member countries, especially the United States. China fought hard and agreed to many difficult compromises in those negotiations. The Chinese leaders (notably President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji) underscored the importance they attached to economic growth as a political goal of the Party. Through WTO membership, China facilitated its export market access into WTO countries. By joining, China also forced itself to carry out extensive economic reforms desired by reformist leaders, especially the opening of Chinese banking, insurance, and other service activities to foreign operators. In turn, the WTO members gained access to an export market in the world's most populous and fastest growing economy.

China's commitments exceed those made by any existing WTO member. Between 1992 and 1999, China cut its average (unweighted) tariff level from 43 percent to 17 percent. By 2004,

China fulfilled its WTO commitment and reduced non-agricultural tariffs to an average of 9 percent (from 15 percent) and agricultural tariffs to an average of 15 percent (from 22 percent). It agreed to phase out non-tariff barriers (which affected half of Chinese imports by value) by 2005. Foreign investors gained permission to invest in service industries (banking, insurance, telecommunications, and distribution) in China. The ability of China to comply with these commitments is clouded by their extensiveness, the weak legal system in China, and the change in China's top leadership in 2003. Most benefits for China will come from the dynamic effects of new trade and investment.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cwr\\_lake\\_facade2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cwr_lake_facade2.jpg)>

*Headquarters of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Geneva,  
Switzerland – China Joined the WTO in 2001*

Hu Jintao, the President (2003-2013), and Wen Jiabao, the Premier (2003-2013), consistently supported their predecessors' foreign economic policies, delivered on China's obligations within the WTO, defended China's right to tie its exchange rate loosely to the US dollar, and negotiated hard to maintain open markets for China's exports.

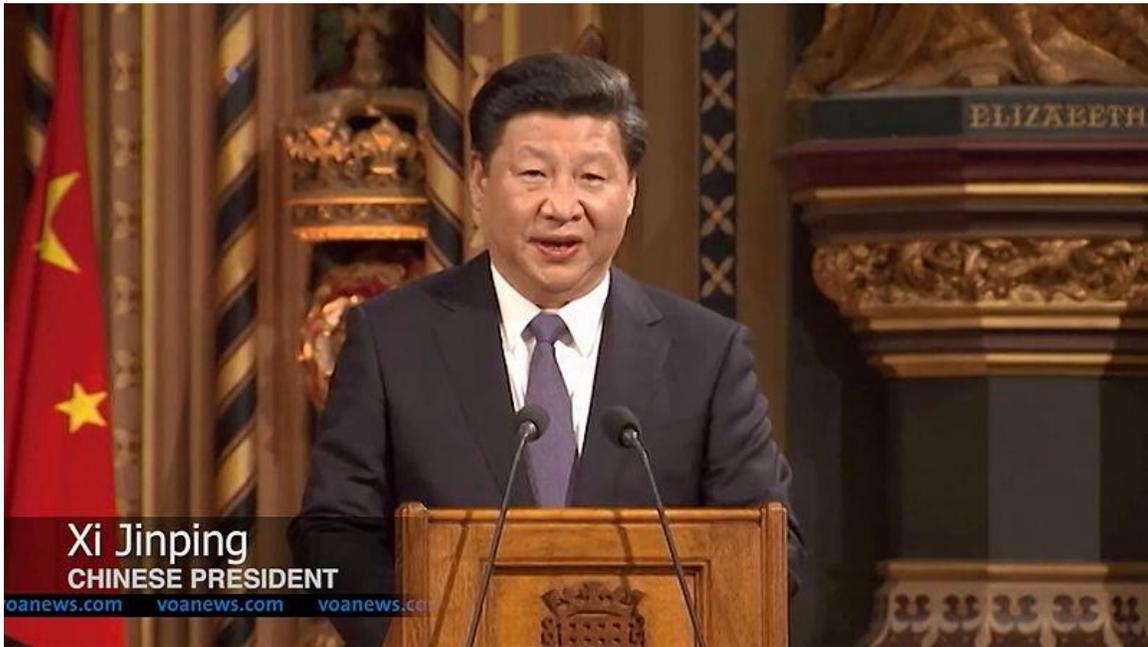


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hu\\_Jintao\\_Cannes2011.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hu_Jintao_Cannes2011.jpg)>

*Hu Jintao, President of China (2003-2013)*

In 2013, Xi Jinping became President and General Secretary of the Communist Party and Li Keqiang became Premier. The new leadership has steered China on a course of greater nationalism, assertiveness in foreign policy, anti-corruption, and continued market reforms. By the end of 2017, the Xi government had punished more than 1 million allegedly corrupt Chinese officials (including many of Xi's political rivals). In 2018, the National People's Congress unanimously elected Xi to serve a second five-year term as president and amended the constitution to abolish

term limits, enabling Xi to continue serving as president indefinitely, and to enshrine Xi’s ideology into China’s constitution.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Xi\\_Jinping\\_in\\_British\\_Parliament.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Xi_Jinping_in_British_Parliament.jpg)>

*Xi Jinping, President of China (2013-present) –  
Speaking At the British Parliament, 2015*

Xi Jinping and his supporters have enacted an aggressive foreign policy – claiming territorial sovereignty over nearly all of the South China Sea, promoting its “One Belt, One Road Initiative” (for joint trade, infrastructure, and development projects with countries in East Asia, Central Asia, and Europe), establishing

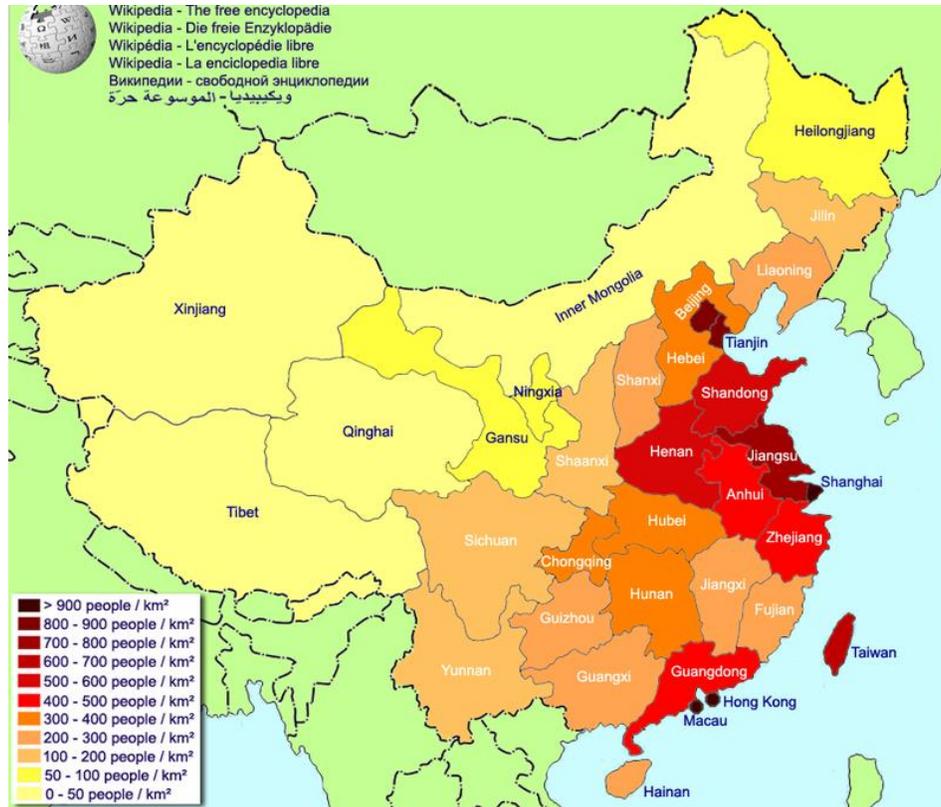
the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (in opposition to the World Bank), and championing the BRICS group (in alignment with Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa). Xi has also entered assertively into the US-China trade war, initiated by American President Donald Trump in 2018, by retaliating to new US tariffs on 1,300 Chinese export products with new Chinese tariffs on 106 US products (including automobiles and soybeans). As a result, US soybean exports to China fell from \$12.2 billion in 2017 to \$3.1 billion in 2018.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at*  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soybeans\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soybeans_01.jpg)>

*American Soybeans For Sale in A Chinese Supermarket, 2020*

**Sources of China's Economic Growth.** Between 1990 and 2019, China experienced rapid income growth (8.7 percent per year in constant prices, according to World Bank figures), the most rapid sustained growth in world history. In 2019, China's per capita income, measured in purchasing power by the World Bank, was \$16,785, 36 percent of the level in the United States. In 1990, that figure was just \$980. Income growth depends on the rates of growth of population, human capital, and physical capital, and on increases in the productivity of human and physical capital. China's population, 1.4 billion in 2019, grew at an annual rate of only 0.5 percent (2008-2019). China's total fertility rate (births per woman) has fallen to 1.7, less than the 2.1 level required for replacement. China thus faces an aging population problem.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Population\\_density\\_of\\_China\\_by\\_first-level\\_administrative\\_regions\(English\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Population_density_of_China_by_first-level_administrative_regions(English).png)

### *Population Density in Regions of China, 2006*

One measure of human capital is adult literacy. By 2018, the Communist government of China had increased Chinese adult literacy to 97 percent (from 66 percent in 1982). China also has had an extremely high rate of capital formation. The share of national income devoted to physical capital formation increased from 36 percent in 1990 to 45 percent in 2013 before declining to 43 percent in 2018.

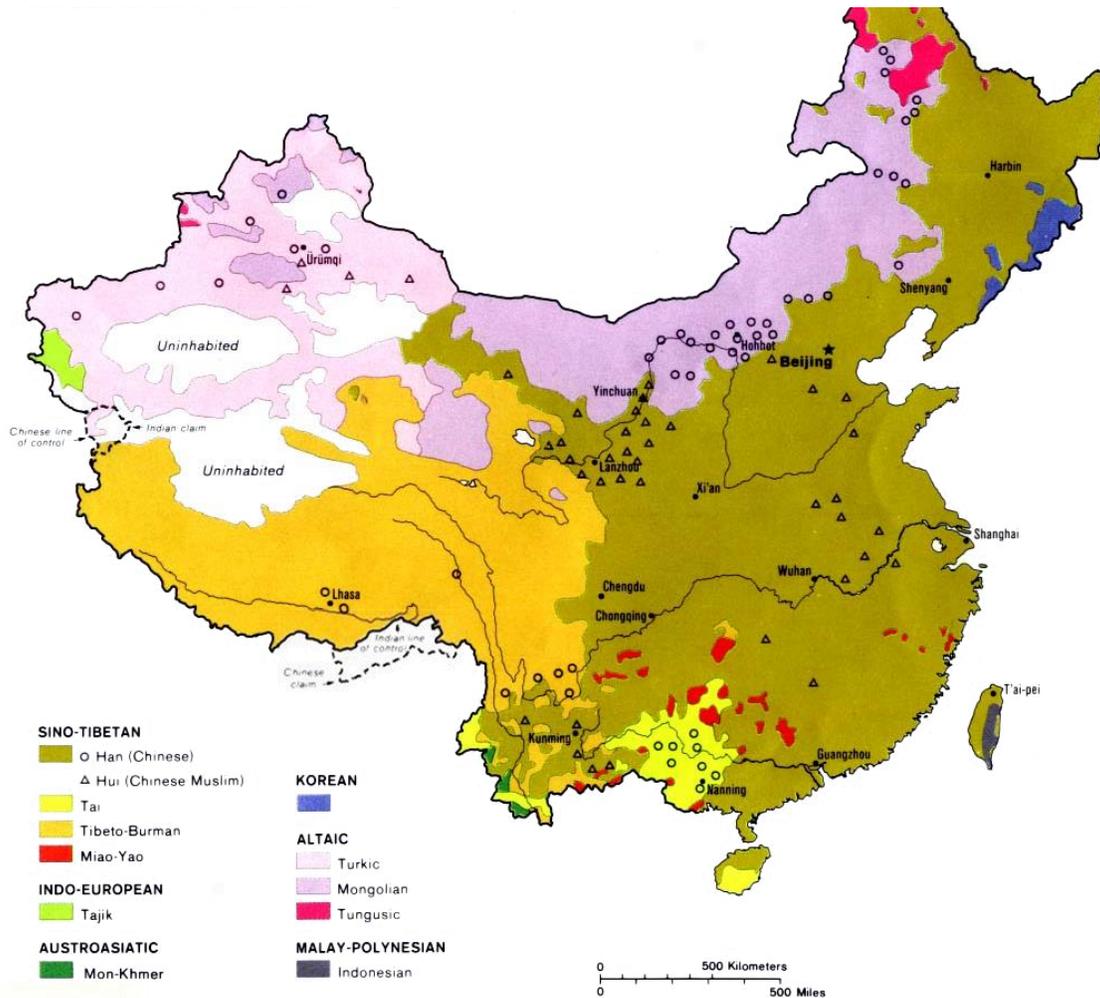
Income growth depends not only on quantities of labor and capital, but also on how productive those additional factors of production are in generating output and income. Total Factor Productivity (TFP) is a measure of the national income generated by all factors of production (labor, capital, and land) in a year. The annual percentage increase in TFP shows gains in productivity from innovations, technical change, management, and education. Income growth in China has come mostly from more quantity rather than better quality of factors. According to a World Bank study, the average annual increase in Chinese TFP (1978-2009) was only 3.5 percent. Most of China's rapid economic growth has resulted from increases in quantities of factors of production, especially capital investment (providing 6.8 percentage points of growth per year).

### **Indicators of Improvement in China's Quality-of-life.**

China's land area, 3,705,387 square miles, is nearly identical to that of the United States. The Chinese population of 1.4 billion is primarily Han Chinese (92 percent), and 55 minority ethnic

groups receive official recognition by the Chinese government.

Religions are not recognized in Communist China, where atheism is the official religion.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethnolinguistic\\_map\\_of\\_China\\_1983.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethnolinguistic_map_of_China_1983.png)

### *Ethno-linguistic Groups in China, 1983*

Between 1990 and 2019, China's GDP per capita (adjusted for purchasing power) grew at an annual rate of 10.3 percent and

reached \$16,875 in 2019 (95 percent of the world average). That income indicator grew at the astonishing rate of 12.1 percent between 1990 and 2007 and then slowed to a still-impressive rate of 7.5 percent between 2008 and 2019.

Following significant investments in public health and literacy campaigns, China's life expectancy improved from 66 years (1979) to 77 years (2018). But China's level of mean years of schooling (7.9 years) is low by international standards.



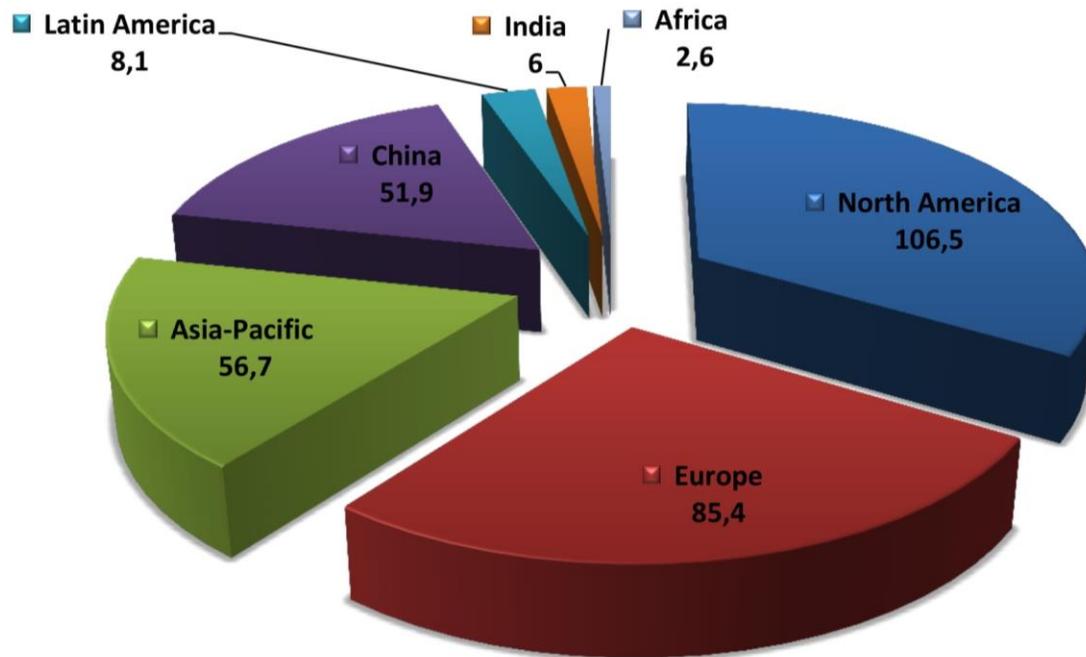
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:13\\_Peking\\_University.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:13_Peking_University.jpg)>

*Peking University, Beijing –  
One of China's Top-ranked Universities*

Accordingly, China's ranking in the UNDP's Human Development Index (85<sup>th</sup> of 189 countries) – the gold standard of quality-of-life indicators because it incorporates income, health, and education data – is lower than its ranking in the World Bank's listing of per capita incomes (78<sup>th</sup> of 187 countries). Only 54 percent of China's people use the Internet (2017). In spite of its reputation for tight government controls, China ranked 31<sup>st</sup> of 190 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index. However, China suffers from a high level of corruption, ranking only 80<sup>th</sup> of 198 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International.

The Chinese economy depends heavily on exports (\$2.6 trillion in 2019). Its leading export products are machinery, including electronics and computers (44 percent), furniture (4 percent), and plastics (3 percent). China also relies on foreign direct investment (\$155.8 billion, 12 percent of the world total in

2019) and international tourism (\$40.4 billion from 62.9 million international-tourist arrivals in 2018).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Worlds\\_regions\\_by\\_total\\_wealth\(in\\_trillions\\_USD\),\\_2018.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Worlds_regions_by_total_wealth(in_trillions_USD),_2018.jpg)

*World Regions By Total Wealth, 2018 –  
China (Purple) Had \$51.9 Trillion*

China has done a very effective job of alleviating poverty. The World Bank credits China with lifting 850 million people out of poverty during the past 40 years. A World Bank study in 2004 estimated that the share of China’s population living in poverty declined from 22 percent in 1991 to 8 percent in 2001. The

percentage of the population in China believed to have income levels beneath a poverty line (based mostly on food and housing needs) was estimated by another World Bank study in 2012 at 7 percent (99 million people). A later World Bank study, in which the poverty line was defined as \$1.90 per day (in 2011 PPP dollars), concluded that only 1 percent of China's population lived in poverty in 2018. Prior to China's four decades of extremely rapid economic growth, the poverty rate had been estimated at 88 percent in 1981. China thus has enjoyed an impressive improvement of its quality-of-life indicators.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ROC\\_PRC\\_comparison\\_eng.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ROC_PRC_comparison_eng.jpg)

### *Administrative Regions of China*

## **Lessons for Contemporary Powers**

What lessons for contemporary powers can be drawn from the experiences of the two early Chinese empires? One key lesson emerges from the experiences of the Han, Tang, and all other Chinese dynasties – to avoid peasant rebellions and protect their primary tax bases, political leaders must contain the greed of the

rich and powerful. A common pattern can be observed in land policy in Chinese dynastic history. Popular land reform to aid the free peasantry, carried out early in the dynasty, was followed by backsliding to allow powerful aristocrats to amass large estates and transfer wealth away from the government to themselves. That policy error had two fatal outcomes for the ruling dynasts. The governments undercut their own tax bases, since most wealth came from agriculture and it was easier to tax peasant farmers than aristocratic landowners. Consequently, revenue-short governments were increasingly unable to provide emergency food relief to peasants and to support their armies and thus maintain their ability to control rebellions and foreign border incursions. Politically convenient, but short-sighted, land policy also angered free peasants who lost their land and were forced to become tenant farmers on large estates. Food emergencies – caused by droughts, floods, or pestilence – triggered rebellions among angry, landless peasants. Although peasant farmers had no ability to vote in

elections, in calamitous situations they could threaten or end dynasties through violent rebellions.

A second lesson can be drawn from the paranoid isolationism of the Ming dynasty. Ming isolationism began early in the period of Ming rule (1368-1644). Through the Maritime Interdict (1371-1567), the Ming leaders banned non-official overseas trade and travel and interdicted maritime transportation, even coastal shipping, to try to limit the power of coastal regions. That extreme, inward-looking policy caused Chinese scholars and practitioners to ignore advances made outside of China and thus to lose their technological and scientific prominence. Ming emperors and their advisors were paranoid about the possibility of another Mongol invasion and takeover of China. They allowed commerce on the Silk Road to atrophy because of their reluctance to negotiate with the steppe nomadic warrior states. The Ming dynasty's policies of anti-commercialism (banning foreign trade and throttling maritime commerce) and xenophobia (limiting foreign contact and ignoring foreign inventions) had a deleterious effect on

the Ming economy and thus on tax revenues. Isolationist policies were convenient in the short-term for Ming leaders, but they proved to be disastrous for China in the long run. Ultimately, starting in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, they culminated in two centuries of economic weakness, military decline, and international impotence.

A related lesson is the danger of self-righteous smugness among a country's leaders and their technical advisors. Confucianist ideology placed China and its emperor at the center of the world. That degree of nationalistic self-confidence might have been warranted when China led the world in technological innovations and artistic creativity. But under the Ming and Qing dynasties, both Chinese and Manchu emperors relied too heavily on reassurances from their Confucian bureaucrats that China indeed was invincible. They all began to believe their own rhetoric and ignore external signs of increasing Chinese political, economic, and military weakness. Triggered by Ming myopia and Qing self-confidence, China retrogressed from international leadership in science and technology in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to lagging

traditionalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Self-inflicted weakness thus led to the nadir of China's dynastic era – the cession to Western powers of Chinese ports in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Republican Revolution in China in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## China Time Line

- c.* 50,000 BCE      mankind, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, from Africa – hunters-gatherers – Yellow River Valley, loess plateaus, north China plain
- c.* 7000 BCE      first agriculture – millet-based system in north China – rice-based in south China – tuber-based in southeastern China
- c.* 5000 BCE      first domestication of animals – pigs, dogs – in north China
- c.* 5000-3000 BCE      Yangshao Painted Pottery Period – geometrical – northwest China
- c.* 3000 BCE      first domestication of cattle, sheep, water buffalos – in south China
- c.* 3000-2200 BCE      Longshan Black Pottery Period – pedestalled – in northeast China
- c.* 2000-500 BCE      China's Bronze Age – bronze metallurgy – earliest writing system
- c.* 1600-1050 BCE      Shang Kingdom – small state – Yellow River valley – agriculture, silk textiles – cities, writing – ritual bronzes, oracle bones
- c.* 1050-770 BCE      Western Zhou Kingdom – Yellow, Huai, and Wei River Valleys – agricultural fiefdoms – fortified cities – capital in Xi'an

770-256 BCE	Eastern Zhou Kingdom – north China – unstable, lacked clear political direction – capital in Luoyang
551-479 BCE	Confucius’s lifetime – China’s greatest philosopher – introduced Confucianism (benevolence, hierarchy, and education)
c. 500 BCE	China’s Iron Age began – iron casting became widespread
481-221 BCE	Warring States Period – north China – warfare, political fragmentation – iron tools, weapons, horse-based cavalry, money
246-210 BCE	King Zheng ruled Qin Kingdom – brilliant militarist, public administrator – expanded rule across north, central China
221 BCE	King Zheng unified China – Shi Huangdi (great august emperor) – megalomaniacal, paranoid leader – terra cotta warriors
221-206 BCE	Qin Dynasty – expanded militarily – unified China – created massive public works (roads, canals, irrigation) – taxed peasants
210-206 BCE	decline of Qin Dynasty – Huhai, second Qin emperor – murdered by his ministers in 207 BC – succession crisis, collapse
206 BCE-220 CE	Han Empire – longest-ruling dynasty in Chinese history – comparable to Roman Empire in population, size, wealth

206-195 BCE	Gaozu, first Han emperor, ruled – Liu Bang, commoner – led peasant rebellion – restored order, cut taxes, created Han dynasty
141-87 BCE	Emperor Wudi ruled – peak of Han power – used Confucianist scholar-officials to run bureaucracy – promoted free peasantry
133-101 BCE	Wudi expanded westward – took Gansu Corridor – claimed suzerainty over Tibet, Turkestan, Central Asia – opened Silk Road
111-108 BCE	Wudi conquered Kingdom of Yue (south China, north Vietnam), Dian Kingdom (southwest China), Manchuria, Korea
106 BCE	first caravan on Silk Road trade route – China exported silk, lacquerware, bronze, ceramics – imported horses, gold, glassware
2 CE	first census in China – population of China was 60 million
9-23 CE	Wang Mang ruled – rebellion, coup d'état – declared new Xin dynasty – radical land reform failed – destructive droughts, floods
166	palace eunuchs slaughtered Confucian bureaucrats – seized control
184	Daoist cult, Way of Great Peace (Yellow Turbans), rebelled – 360,000 peasants killed officials, nobles in north China

- 220 Cao Cao, Han regent and warlord, died – Cao Bei, his son, created new Wei Dynasty – ended Han era
- 220-589 Age of Division – Wei, Wu, Shu Kingdoms (220-265) – reunified under Jin Dynasty (265-316) – diverse kingdoms (316-589)
- 386-535 Northern Wei Kingdom – Toba Turks from Manchuria – in northern China – most northern Chinese converted to Buddhism
- 534-581 Northern Zhou Kingdom – re-united north China – conquered Sichuan basin in 553, Kingdom of Qi in northeast in 577
- 581 Yang Jian, Northern Zhou military leader – palace coup – declared himself Emperor Sui Wendi (ruled 581-604)
- 581-618 Sui Kingdom – re-unified China through conquest – re-built two capitals, Grand Canal, Great Wall, road network
- 604-618 Sui Yangdi ruled – overstrained China's resources – defeated by Koguryo kingdom in Korea – assassinated in 618
- 618-907 Tang Empire – innovations in agriculture, revival of trade on Silk Road, conquests in southern China and central Asia
- 618-624 Emperor Gaozong ruled – was Li Yuan, Sui military commander, Turkic-Chinese noble, cousin of Yangdi – founder of Tang dynasty

- 626-649 Emperor Taizong ruled – principal empire builder – effective bureaucratic control, effective taxation, strong central military
- 630-640 Taizong seized western trading oases of Hami (630), Turfan (640)
- 649-683 Emperor Gaizong ruled – Tang Empire increased its power
- 663 Tibet defeated China – persistent threat in west for next 150 years
- 680-740 Second Turkic Empire – steppe nomadic confederation, Mongolian Turks – extorted subsidies, trade privileges from China
- 690-705 Empress Wu Zhao ruled China – only woman emperor of China – strong, effective ruler – broke power of old aristocracy
- 712-756 Emperor Xuanzong ruled – Tang China reached height of power, wealth, creativity – reformed military, taxation – promoted arts
- 744-840 Uighur Empire – powerful steppe nomadic confederation, Turkic-speakers – extorted Chinese subsidies, trading privileges
- 751 Battle of Talas River (Uzbekistan) – Islamic Arab army defeated Tang army – China lost Central Asia

- 752 Tibet and Nanzhao (Yunnan) defeated Tang army – border allies
- 755-763 An Lushan Rebellion – north controlled by allies of An Lushan – Tang officials hired Uighur mercenaries to defend Chang’an
- 763-783 annual Tibetan raids – plundered Chang’an, Tang capital
- 875-884 Huang Chao Peasant Rebellion – peasants lacked food relief – captured capitals – rebellion quelled by Turkic mercenaries
- 900 population of China was about 60 million
- 907 Zhu Wen, Tang commander, formed Liang Dynasty – ended Tang Empire
- 907-1125 Liao Kingdom – north China – led by Manchurian invaders
- 960-1279 Song Dynasty – Chinese-led – population doubled – Yangzi Valley economic heart – printing, gunpowder, magnetic compass
- 990-1227 Xixia Kingdom – north China – led by Manchurian invaders
- 1100 population of China was about 100 million
- 1115-1234 Jin Kingdom – north China – led by Manchurian invaders
- 1200 population of China was about 120 million

1204-1227	Genghis Khan ruled – Mongolia, north China – Mongol horse warriors – governed and taxed rather raided and extorted
mid-13 <sup>th</sup> century	4 Mongol khanates in Eurasia – Chaghatai (Central Asia), Ilkhanate (Western Asia), Golden Horde (Russia), Empire of the Great Khan (China, Mongolia, and Manchuria)
1260-1294	Kublai Khan – first alien ruler of all China – promoted agricultural development, extended Grand Canal to Beijing
1271-1368	Yuan Dynasty – Mongol-led – ruled all of China – effective under Kublai Khan – corrupt, ineffective under his successors
1274-1281	Kublai tried to conquer Japan – suffered major military losses – navies struck by typhoons – lost 70,000 troops at sea
1275-1292	Marco Polo – Italian explorer, adventurer – emissary of Kublai Khan
1279	Kublai Khan defeated Song Dynasty – re-unified China
1368	Zhu Yuanzhang, southern Chinese peasant leader, liberated China – established Ming Dynasty – became Ming Emperor Hongwu
1368	population of China was about 70 million

- 1368-1644 Ming Dynasty – early reform – Great Wall – Forbidden City palace – Jingdezhen porcelain – later corruption, stagnation
- 1368-1398 Ming Emperor Hongwu ruled – powerful, brutal, unpredictable – agricultural reforms – confiscated ex-Yuan imperial, noble estates
- 1371-1567 Maritime Interdict – Ming isolationism – banned non-official overseas trade, travel – interdicted maritime transportation
- 1388 vengeful Ming army invaded Mongolia – leveled Karakorum, Mongol capital
- 1405-1433 Grand Eunuch Zheng He led 7 expeditions – countries on Indian Ocean – established diplomatic relations, tributary arrangements
- 1620s-1630s peasant rebellions against Ming rule – in poor northwest
- 1626-1643 Abahai conquered, ruled Manchuria – declared Qing Dynasty in 1636 – conquered northeastern China by 1640 – capable leader
- 1642 peasant rebels cut dikes of Yellow River – caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, enormous losses of cropland – full crisis
- 1644 Li Zicheng, rebel leader, captured Beijing – last Ming emperor hung himself – Chinese officials sought help from Manchus

- 1644 Manchus invaded Beijing – put down rebellion led by Li Zicheng – refused to leave – moved Qing capital to Beijing
- 1644 population of China was about 160 million
- 1644-1912 Qing Dynasty – Manchu-led – conquered Taiwan, Mongolia, Tibet, Turkestan – expanded China to current boundaries
- 1662-1722 Kangxi Emperor ruled – one of China’s greatest emperors – hard work, honest administration, intellectual curiosity
- 1683 Qing army took Fujian coast, Taiwan – finished conquest of China
- 1685 Kangxi opened customs houses in 4 key Chinese ports – Guangzhou (Canton), Zhangzhou, Ningbo, Yuntaishan
- 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk – Kangxi obtained Russians’ agreement – stayed neutral as Qing expanded into northern Mongolia
- 1697-1757 Qing foreign conquest – expanded to China’s current borders – Mongolia (1697), Tibet (1720), Turkestan (Xinziang, 1757)
- 1722-1736 Yongzheng Emperor ruled – reformed state administration, built sound revenue base, created 800,000-page encyclopedia
- 1736-1795 Qianlong Emperor ruled – ran large fiscal surplus

1796-1804	White Lotus Rebellion – major peasant rebellion – rural grievances over taxation – suppression cost 5 years of revenue
1800	Chinese Government banned opium imports – circumvented by Chinese corruption, British promotion of Indian exports to China
1820	population of China was about 380 million
1840-1841	First Opium War – Britain, with world’s most powerful navy, easily defeated China – British navy occupied Hong Kong Island
1843	Treaty of Nanjing – China ceded Hong Kong Island to Britain, opened 5 “treaty ports” to foreign trade, paid reparations
1850-1864	Taiping Rebellion – peasant revolt – uprising of fanatic religious cult – brutally militaristic, strongly dedicated – Nanjing
1856-1860	Second Opium War – Britain, France defeated China again
1860	Beijing Convention – China ceded Kowloon peninsula to Britain, legalized opium trade, opened more treaty ports to European trade
1861-1908	Empress Dowager Cixi ruled – weakened navy – diverted revenues from navy to rebuild her summer palace in western Beijing

1894-1895	Sino-Japanese War – Japan annihilated Chinese military forces
1895	Treaty of Shimonoseki – China ceded Taiwan to Japan – opened Chinese ports to Japanese trade, investment
1897-1898	China forced to cede more “treaty ports” – Germany (Jiaozhou Bay, Qingdao), Russia (Port Arthur, Dalian), Britain (Weihaiwei, New Territories), France (Guangzhou)
1898	Convention of Beijing – China leased New Territories to Great Britain for 99 years – increased colony’s land area by ten times
1900	Boxer Rebellion – 2-month siege of 20 foreign legations in Beijing – foreign powers defeated Boxers, looted Beijing, indemnity
1911-1912	Republican Revolution – military mutinies, secessionist movements – Puyi, 5-year-old Qing emperor abdicated
1912-1916	Yuan Shikai ruled – brutal, ineffective Republican leader – exiled Sun Yat-sen, banned Nationalist Party (Guomindang)
1913	population of China was 437 million
1925	Sun Yat-sen died – Chiang Kai-shek assumed leadership of Guomindang

- 1928 Chiang controlled nearly all of China – except Manchuria (independent warlord), limited areas of Communist control
- 1932 Japan established puppet state of Manchukuo in Manchuria
- 1934-1935 Mao Zedong led the Communists' Long March – consolidated his control of Party – set up base in Yan'an (northern Shaanxi)
- 1937-1945 Japan invaded China – conquered large parts of eastern China – but could not defeat Nationalists in west or Communists in north
- 1941-1945 China aligned with Allied Forces in World War II – American military provisioned Nationalist army
- 1949 Communists defeated Nationalists – Nationalists had mismanaged economy, carried out brutalities, permitted corruption
- 1949-1976 Mao Zedong led Communist China – centralized power – restructured Chinese society – had strong military, police control
- 1950-1953 China supported North Korea in Korean War – supported Communist ally, protected its borders, supplanted Soviet influence
- 1953 central planning began – output targets, input allocations within 5-year development plans – heavy industry (steel, mining)

- 1953 population of China was 594 million
- 1960-1963 Great Leap Forward – taxed rural labor to create urban industry – led to crop shortfalls, famines, 30 million deaths from starvation
- 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution – Mao’s attempt to regain power – 2 million people investigated – countless others harassed by Red Guards
- 1976 Mao Zedong died – Gang of Four prosecuted
- 1978-1997 Deng Xiaoping led China – market-oriented economic policies – tight political repression – Special Economic Zones in south
- 1978 liberalization of agriculture – Deng Xiaoping dissolved communes, leased land to private farm households, reduced taxes
- 1978 reversal of foreign economic policies – encouraged trade, private foreign investment – provided export incentives
- 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square – world-wide television coverage – brutal crackdown by government
- 1990 population of China was 1.132 billion
- 1997 Deng Xiaoping died – Jiang Zemin became President, Zhu Rongji became Premier – deepened Deng’s reform-for-growth policies

- 2001 China joined World Trade Organization – access to export markets of WTO countries – opened parts of China’s economy
- 2003-2013 Hu Jintao served as President, Wen Jiabao served as Premier – negotiated hard to maintain open markets for China’s exports
- 2004 population of China was 1.288 billion
- 2013 Xi Jinping became President, Li Keqiang became Premier – steered China on a nationalist path seeking greater world power
- 2017 Xi government had punished 1 million allegedly corrupt Chinese officials
- 2018 National People’s Congress unanimously re-elected Xi for second five-year term – amended constitution to abolish term limits
- 2018 US-China Trade War – US imposed new tariffs on 1,300 Chinese goods – China imposed new tariffs on 106 American goods
- 2019 population of China was 1.398 billion

## **Bibliography**

I am offering below annotations on selected books that I found particularly helpful in understanding China's political and economic history. I have divided my recommendations into five categories – books that cover all of China's history, specialized books on early Chinese history, specialized books on modern Chinese history, books on Chinese culture, and biographical, narrative, and fictional books on China. In each category, I list two highly suggested readings and two supplementary readings.

### **Books that Cover All of China's History**

#### Highly Suggested Readings

1. John Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China, A New History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006. This remarkable book is the leading history of China. Fairbank was America's premier historian of China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Goldman, a protégé, updated the book after Fairbank died in 1992. The authors chronicle 4000 years of Chinese history – from China's early settlement through the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 – in spell-binding fashion.
2. Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Ebrey, a Song dynasty specialist, teaches history at the University of Washington. Her book comprehensively covers the social, political, and economic history of eight millennia of Chinese development. This illustrated history in the Cambridge series contains exquisite colored photographs and helpful maps. It serves as an excellent complement to the Fairbank and Goldman book.

#### Supplementary Readings

1. Caroline Blunden and Mark Elvin, *Cultural Atlas of China*, Abingdon, England: Andromeda Oxford Limited, 1998. Blunden, an art historian in England, and Elvin, a historian in Australia, collaborate elegantly in this important cultural atlas of Chinese history. Their colored maps and illustrations are magnificent. Together, they successfully investigate and illustrate numerous dimensions of China's remarkably rich past – space (geography and people), time (history), and symbols and society (culture).

2. Stephen G. Haw, *A Traveller's History of China*, New York: Interlink Books, 2003. Haw's book is written for intelligent travelers who are seeking a concise yet comprehensive short history of China. In just 250 pages, Haw provides a competent and well-presented synthesis of the major events and trends in China's past. This small paperback book is very well-organized and serves as a helpful and convenient reference. Haw avoids scholarly debate and presents his information clearly and accessibly.

### **Specialized Books on Early Chinese History**

#### Highly Suggested Readings

1. Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier, Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1992. Barfield, an anthropologist at Boston University, is a leading expert on nomadic pastoralism in central Asia and western China. In this study, Barfield identifies a 600-year cycle of alternating rule by Chinese and alien dynasties in north China and he analyzes the complex symbiotic linkages between Chinese empires and steppe nomadic confederacies.

2. Valerie Hansen, *The Open Empire, A History of China to 1800*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015. Hansen is a historian at Yale University and an expert on Chinese cultures along the Silk Road. In this very well-written book, she provides a

refreshing and innovative approach to China's pre-modern history. By focusing on Chinese art, archeology, and fiction, Hansen eschews a traditional emphasis on dynasties and argues that early Chinese empires were vibrant and open to outside influences.

### Supplementary Readings

1. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (ed.), *Perspectives on the T'ang*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1973. Among the several books on the Tang dynasty, this edited volume of essays stands out because it neatly links cultural and economic interpretations. Wright was a specialist on Buddhism and Twitchett on economic history. This book explores why the Tang dynasty was so open, cosmopolitan, and eclectic and how those traits affected economic progress and artistic creativity.

2. Cho-yun Hsu, *Han Agriculture, The Formation of Early Chinese Agrarian Economy (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)*, Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1980. Hsu is an award-winning historian and sociologist who taught for 30 years at the University of Pittsburgh. His book on Han agriculture revolutionized the study of early Chinese agrarian history. In it, he analyzes the sources of increased agricultural production – growth of planted area and increases in productivity – during the Han era.

### Specialized Books on Modern Chinese History

#### Highly Suggested Readings

1. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013. Spence, the Sterling Professor of History Emeritus at Yale University, is a leading expert on Chinese civilization from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present. This monumental book reigns as the standard text on the past four centuries of Chinese history. Spence writes with compelling

insight and compassion. His deep understanding of the intricacies of Chinese culture makes this 700-page tome nearly a page-turner.

2. Andrew G. Walder, *China Under Mao, A Revolution Derailed*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Walder, a Stanford University sociologist, is a renowned expert on Chinese history and institutions. His latest book shows how Mao Zedong brutally led the building of a Stalinist state in China. But by focusing on heavy industry and class struggle, Mao in the Great Leap Forward created history's worst famine and in the Cultural Revolution brought near anarchy to China for a disastrous decade.

### Supplementary Readings

1. Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy, Transitions and Growth*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007. Naughton, an economist specializing in the Chinese economy, teaches at the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies at the University of California, San Diego. This masterful book introduces non-specialists to all aspects of China's rapidly evolving economy in 500 pages. Naughton is at his best in explaining how China quickly became the world's workshop.

2. Cai Fang, *Beyond Demographic Dividends*, Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2014. Cai is a professor of economics in the prestigious Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a highly-regarded economic analyst and advisor. This book is a collection of several of his most influential essays on recent changes in China's economy. Cai argues that China has reached a turning point and can no longer rely on low-cost labor to fuel its industrial growth. He also shows how China's population is rapidly aging.

### **Books on Chinese Culture**

### Highly Suggested Readings

1. Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things, Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000. Ledderose, a world-renowned authority on the art of China, is a professor of the History of Art of Eastern Asia at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. In this book, he explains how Chinese artists used modular systems, based on the characters of Chinese calligraphy, to create ritual bronzes, Qin Shi Huangdi's terracotta army, printing, lacquerware, and porcelain.

2. Charles O. Hucker, *China's Imperial Past*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975. Hucker, who spent most of his career teaching Chinese history at the University of Michigan, was an acclaimed authority on imperial China for four decades prior to his death in 1994. This book is his masterpiece. In it, he divides China's imperial past into three eras and in each he integrates Chinese culture – religion, philosophy, literature, and the arts – with key political and socioeconomic trends.

### Supplementary Readings

1. Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1959. Before his death in 1976, Wright was a renowned expert on Chinese Buddhism and Tang imperial history. This 130-page book is a collection of six lectures that he presented at the University of Chicago in the late 1950s. Nearly half a century old, the book remains a classic short survey of thought and society in imperial China, especially of the impact of Buddhism on the transformation of Chinese culture.

2. Michael Loewe, *Everyday Life in Early Imperial China*, New York: Harper & Row, 1968. Loewe spent much of his career teaching Chinese history at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. He remains a leading scholar of and a prolific writer on Chinese culture, especially on events during the Han period. This 200-page

paperback, which was reprinted in 1988 and 2005, is written for non-specialists. It synthesizes a variety of topics on Han culture – art, literature, religion, writing, and rural and urban life.

## **Biographical, Narrative, and Fictional Books on China**

### Highly Suggested Readings

1. John E. Wills, Jr., *Mountain of Fame, Portraits in Chinese History*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994. Wills, a professor of Chinese history at the University of Southern California, is a leading analyst of Chinese philosophy and of the transition period between the Ming and Qing dynasties. In this biographical book, he refreshingly tells the life stories of twenty of China's most prominent figures – emperors, philosophers, concubines, writers, and poets – from Confucius to Mao Zedong.

2. Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong*, New York: Penguin Group, 1999. Yale's Spence gives us a highly insightful biography of Chairman Mao, the leading figure in China's turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century. This beautifully conceived, short book provides in only 180 pages a gripping introduction to the enigmatic Mao and his impact on modern China – his skillful, stubborn leadership in the struggle for power, his woeful miscalculations in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and his extreme vanity.

### Supplementary Readings

1. Jung Chang, *Wild Swans, Three Daughters of China*, New York: Anchor Books, 1991. Jung Chang grew up in Sichuan Province, worked as a Red Guard, peasant, and steelworker, and received her doctorate in linguistics from York University in the UK. This classic book has sold more than nine million copies and has been translated into 30 languages. *Wild Swans* is a moving

story of three generations in one Chinese family – from warlordism in 1929 through the Japanese invasion and the Cultural Revolution.

2. Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *China Wakes, The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995. Kristof and WuDunn are a husband-and-wife team of journalists who write for the New York Times. In 1990, they were the first married couple to receive the Pulitzer Prize for collaborative journalism – for reporting on the rise and suppression of China’s democracy movement in 1989. This book examines why China is torn between economic reform and political control.

## **Sites Visited in China**

### **Marco Polo Expedition**

#### **Stanford Travel/Study Program**

**October 2-25, 2016**

#### **Land-based and International and Domestic Flights**

### **Urumqi and Kashgar, China**

Urumqi, a city of 3 million residents, is the capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. It was an insignificant village in the Silk Road era and became important after the Qing takeover of Western China in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. There we visited the Xinjiang Regional Museum, a wonderful display of the cultural heritage of the Uighurs and other largely Turkic-speaking peoples who constitute the majority in Xinjiang (formerly Turkestan). The museum also houses the Lop Nor mummies, the remains of Indo-European-speaking people who inhabited the Taklamakan Desert 3800 years ago.

Kashgar, today a small city of 400,000, was a key oasis town at the conjunction of the two branches of the Silk Road located either north or south of the forbidding Taklamakan. Marco Polo stopped there in 1274 and noted that its Uighur inhabitants were mostly Nestorian Christians. Kashgar is renowned for its fascinating Sunday live-animal market in which Bactrian (two-humped) camels, horses, yaks, cattle, sheep, and goats are traded through a commission-agent system rather by auction. Uighur merchants travel to the Pamir Mountains and the Taklamakan Desert to bring animals to this extensive market. In Kashgar, we also visited the Abakh Khoja Mausoleum complex, a holy pilgrimage site for Xinjiang Muslims, which contains the tombs of five generations of Sufi saints and political leaders.

## **Dunhuang, China**

Dunhuang, a town of 200,000 residents, is strategically located at the eastern end of the Taklamakan Desert in Gansu Province. Emperor Wudi, the greatest of all Han Chinese emperors, built Dunhuang as a military garrison in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to protect the Hexi Corridor and open the Silk Road trade route across Turkestan (today's western China). To control the Xiongnu steppe nomads in Turkestan, Wudi bribed them with subsidies that cost 10 percent of his revenues.

In Dunhuang, we visited the outstanding Dunhuang City Museum (opened in 2012), featuring historical artifacts from 15 centuries of Silk Road activity. The Mogao Grottoes contain the finest display of early Buddhist art in China. We watched two new films that explained how the caves were carved between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries to permit Silk Road merchants to “buy insurance” for their Taklamakan crossings. They donated funds to support the creation of the caves and their breathtaking wooden statues and mural art of the Buddha with his supporters. We then visited nine of the caves, created between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most outstanding one, cave #45, contained perfectly-preserved, original mural paintings from the 8<sup>th</sup> century (early Tang Dynasty). Later, we rode Bactrian (two-humped) camels for an hour over sand dunes in the Taklamakan to experience what the Polos endured for three years (1272-1275).

## **Shangdu (Xanadu) and Duolun, China**

Shangdu was the summer capital of Kublai Khan's Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Because of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famed 1797 poem (“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan, a stately pleasure-dome decree ...”), the Chinese government today calls the site, Xanadu. We visited the excellent Xanadu Sites Museum (opened in June 2016), which displays historical artifacts from Kublai's elegant city of

120,000. Xanadu was destroyed in 1368 when Ming warriors defeated the Mongols and ended the Yuan Dynasty. We then drove to the site of Xanadu, which was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012. The Chinese government opened Xanadu for tourism in 2013. Although only a few walls and foundations remain, it is possible to gain a good understanding of what Xanadu must have been like. The inner square housed the six-story ceremonial hall (where Kublai first entertained Marco, Niccolo, and Maffeo Polo in 1275), a large residential building for the emperor and his retinue, a temple complex, an embassy section, and a market area.

Duolon is a nearby town of 30,000 mostly Han Chinese residents, which services Xanadu tourism and pastoral agriculture. There we visited two Qing Dynasty complexes – the Shanxi Guild Hall (1745), which once housed Shanxi merchants working in Mongolia, and the Huizong Temple (1691), a Tibetan Buddhist Temple that once was home to 3,000 Mongolian monks.

## **Beijing, China**

Kublai Khan moved his capital to Daidu (today's Beijing) in 1275 and extended the Grand Canal to provision the remote, northern capital with foodstuffs from the Yangtze River Valley. The location in far northern China made good sense for the Mongol emperors, because they also ruled Mongolia and Manchuria. Following a peasant rebellion against Mongol rule in 1368, the Han Chinese Ming Dynasty established their capital in Nanjing on the Yangtze River. But they built the Forbidden City (between 1406 and 1420) to house the Ming emperor and his entourage and moved the capital back to Beijing in 1421. The city has served as China's capital since then. Today, Beijing is booming almost beyond comprehension. Beijing's population has expanded to over 21 million, and new housing is being constructed in all directions.

The new wealth in China is visibly expressed in the throngs of Chinese tourists from outside of Beijing who are visiting the same sites that attract Westerners. The heart of contemporary Beijing was built by emperors in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) on top of the plans originally laid out by Kublai's architects, Liu Bingzhong and Ikhtiyar al-Din. The Stanford group spent a delightful half-day visiting the Forbidden City (the emperor's home and ruling capital) and speculating what central Beijing might have been like in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century when it was Kublai's Daidu.

## **Hangzhou, China**

When Marco Polo arrived in North China in 1275, Hangzhou was the capital of Song (Southern) China and the largest (1.5 million people) and richest city in the world. Its Han Chinese population was polytheistic (Mahayana Buddhist, Confucian, and Muslim). Hangzhou then was a major port city and the center of silk production and tea cultivation. Innovative Song Chinese invented the magnetic compass, gunpowder, paper money, and the printing press. Kublai Khan's army conquered Hangzhou in 1276 and united China, Mongolia, and Manchuria under the Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty. Today, Hangzhou is a booming city of 9 million people and the second wealthiest in China (after Guangzhou). Its diverse economy is based on information technology, and it is home to Alibaba with 30,000 employees.

Four intrepid travelers joined me on the extension in Hangzhou. We visited the Lingyin Temple (for 17 centuries, one of the three most significant Buddhist temples in China), cruised on magnificent West Lake (a UNESCO World Heritage site), toured the classic gardens in the Xiling Seal Engraving Society's complex and Guo's villa (both created in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century), and enjoyed our visit to the highly instructive China National Tea Museum. Little remains from the Song and Yuan eras, but we

walked down ancient Hangzhou's Imperial Road, which once led to the Song Dynasty's Palace.

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## **A Cruise in East Asia, Aboard the *Silver Whisper***

### **Silversea Cruises**

**February 26 - March 8, 2009**

**Ship-based, Aboard the *Silver Whisper***

### **Hong Kong–China, China**

Britain defeated China in the First Opium War (1840-1841), and in the Treaty of Nanking (1843), Hong Kong Island was ceded to Britain. For a century and a half (1841-1997), Hong Kong was a British colony. Between 1841 and 1950, Hong Kong served as an entrepôt for British and other Western trade with China, providing commercial, financial, and shipping services, and as a coaling station for the British navy. With the emergence of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Hong Kong was forced to change its role and emerged as a leading manufacturer and exporter of labor-intensive goods (textiles, garments, shoes, toys, and electronic products) for three decades. Then about 1980, Deng Xiaoping reversed China's economic policies and Hong Kong shifted back to its original role as an entrepôt servicing trade and investment transactions for China.

On July 1, 1997, British rule ended and Hong Kong again became part of China. Hong Kong-China is now a Special Administrative Region of China, governed under a 1984 agreement between China and Britain that established the "one country, two systems" principle. The government of China appoints the Chief Executive (governor) of Hong Kong, but all other dimensions of Hong Kong's previous capitalist system are to continue until 2047.

Many Hong Kong Chinese feared reversion, and in the 1990s about one-tenth of the population emigrated, taking about a third of Hong Kong's capital with them. Hong Kong now is one of the world's richest countries, and its per capita income is 92 percent of that in the United States. Since 2000, Hong Kong's economy has grown at an annual rate of 5 percent.

We spent two days in Hong Kong (the *Silver Whisper* was docked downtown in Kowloon at the Ocean Terminal). It is easy to understand why Hong Kong attracts 14 million tourists each year. Sarah and I mixed new adventures (eating a dim sum lunch on Hong Kong Island) with a nostalgic replay of memorable previous visits to Hong Kong (the Star Ferry, the Kowloon promenade, Hong Kong Island, and dinner at the Spring Deer). The Spring Deer Restaurant remains one of my most favorite restaurants in the world, because of its spectacular Cantonese food and its unusual, family-oriented ambience. Since Hong Kong reverted to China in mid-1997, there have been few visible changes. Hong Kong business leaders hope that their close links with China will help buffer Hong Kong during the global economic downturn.

## **Shanghai, China**

Shanghai has a short history, at least by Chinese standards. For centuries, it was a small, unimportant port and fishing village, first mentioned in history books during the Song Dynasty (960-1271). Shanghai became an important port only during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Britain defeated China in the First Opium War (1840-1841) and forced China to open five treaty ports, including Shanghai, to Western trade and extra-territoriality. Canton (Guangzhou), then China's key port, was the most important of the treaty ports, but Shanghai gradually grew in importance. Britain and France divided the city into preferential concessions, and by the 1930s Shanghai was one of the world's most multi-national and free-wheeling port cities. Since 1980, when China began its

economic boom, Shanghai has been expanding at a break-neck pace.

Contemporary Shanghai is the most in-your-face city in all of China. New skyscrapers appear regularly, as risk-taking Chinese entrepreneurs build ahead of demand and bet that China's economic miracle will continue. The island of Pudong, east of old Shanghai, was undeveloped farmland 20 years ago. Now it is home to Shanghai's stock exchange and to endless, impressive new buildings, including two of the world's tallest skyscrapers. Shanghai's population, estimated at 18 million, is growing rapidly as former rural residents seek jobs in construction, manufacturing, and port-handling. Shanghai is located on the Huampu River, a few miles south of its confluence with the Yangtze River, and it is China's most important port city. The city is everywhere a beehive of activity, especially in the newly re-built old city, now a tourist haven.

Our two-day visit to Shanghai focused on the Shanghai Museum, the MagLev train (which connects downtown Shanghai with the new Pudong airport), and the Yu Yuan Gardens. The Shanghai Museum, opened in 1995, is the best teaching museum in China. The explanations on the audio tour are extremely good in providing instruction on the history of Chinese classical bronzes, art, ceramics, furniture, jade objects, coins and money, and ethnic minorities. Riding the MagLev (Magnetic Levitation) train is an amazing experience. The electrically-powered elevated train accelerates from zero to 260 miles per hour in about two minutes, and the entire journey to the airport takes only seven minutes. The Yu Yuan Gardens are located in the heart of old Shanghai. The buildings and gardens, constructed during the 1550s, reflect the artistic style of the Ming period.

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**China Suitcase Seminar**  
**Stanford Travel/Study Program**  
**April 10-April 25, 2008**  
**Land-based, with 3 Nights Aboard the *Victoria Empress***

**Beijing**

Beijing is booming almost beyond comprehension. Nearly every city block seems to be under re-construction in preparation for the Summer Olympics (which will open on 8/8/08, since 8 is the most auspicious number in Chinese numerology). The bicycles and motorbikes of the recent past have almost all disappeared, and the city is choked with new automobiles and busses. Beijing's population has expanded to over 14 million, and new housing is being constructed in every direction. The new wealth in China is visibly expressed in the throngs of Chinese tourists from outside of Beijing who are visiting the same sites that attract Westerners. The vibrant city now has a diverse night life (though I did not sample it). Beijing feels like an entirely different city from the one in which Sandra and I lived for three months in late 1997.

Although we had earlier done thorough tourism in Beijing, it was great fun to see how much the sites had changed a decade later. Most of the city's highlights date to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) – the Forbidden City (the emperor's home and ruling capital), the Temple of Heaven (visited by the emperors twice annually to ensure good harvests and harmonious rule), the Great Wall (constructed by the paranoid Mings to prevent a second Mongol take-over of China), and the Ming Tombs and Sacred Way (the burial place of all Ming emperors who ruled after the relocation of the capital to Beijing). The sites today are much better maintained than they were a decade ago, and the supplemental touristic facilities around the sites have expanded widely to accommodate more tourists. We also went to a colorful Cirque de Soleil-like performance, "The Legends of Kungfu."

## **Xian**

Xian (formerly Chang'an) was the capital of China during the Han (206 BC-220 AD) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, ancient China's two most glorious eras. At the peak of Han (1<sup>st</sup> century BC) and again at the Tang acme (8<sup>th</sup> century AD), Xian was the largest (about 1 million residents) and (arguably) the most cosmopolitan city in the world. Xian is located in northwestern China on the Wei River, an important tributary of the Yellow River in the ancient heartland of the Han Chinese people. The city is sited in an agricultural basin, and, as Chang'an, it was the eastern terminus of the Silk Road (which had its initial caravan in 106 BC and linked China with Central Asia, India, and the Mediterranean region). When it was the Han and Tang capital, Chang'an was a vibrant center for government, commerce, innovation, religion, poetry, and calligraphy.

Modern Xian reflects its impressive past, but it now is a modest-sized Chinese regional city of about 5 million inhabitants. The city sits in a basin that experiences temperature inversions, so it suffers from heavy fog and air pollution. The prominence of coal-fired power plants and heavy industry greatly adds to the natural problem. Despite its heavy air, Xian maintains a certain charm. It is the capital of Shaanxi Province, and its people are justifiably proud of the city's history. The regional government has reconstructed the former city wall around the entire city, and the Shaanxi Museum in Xian is one of the two best in all of China. Sandra and I spent several days in Xian in 1997, and I could barely recognize the city now. Fortunately, the officials have taken care to protect and improve the city's history while totally making over the rest of the buildings.

The Xian area contains three of the most exciting attractions in China – the Terra Cotta Warriors, the Han Yangling Tombs

Museum, and the Shaanxi Museum. The first unifier of China, Qin Emperor Shi Huangdi (ruled 246-210 BC), created numerous, life-sized terra cotta warriors and placed them upright in his massive funerary monument. Over 7,000 have been excavated, each one with a different facial expression. The less-well-known Yangling Tombs house the massive burial sites of ten Han emperors. The magnificent museum is entirely underground. It displays, *in situ*, the burial objects in the enormous pits that the fourth Han emperor had created to assist his salvation. The Shaanxi Museum contains exhibitions of objects unearthed in recent excavations around Xian, focusing on the past four millennia. For historians, Xian is China's richest city.

## **Guilin**

Tourists visit the Guilin region because of its scenic beauty, not for its historical significance. Guilin, a municipal region of about 5 million residents, is the capital of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Province in southern China. The Zhuang people are the largest ethnic minority in China. Until about 2,000 years ago, all of southern China was inhabited by non-Chinese ethnic groups. With the rise of the Han Dynasty in 206 BC, the Han Chinese people began their gradual expansion into south China (the region around and below the Yangtze River). Today, about two-thirds of China's 1.3 billion people live in south China. But the major attraction of the area is natural, not cultural. The Li River, which runs through Guilin before its southern confluence with the Pearl River, is renowned in classical Chinese poetry as the most beautiful in all of China.

The Guilin region is one of the best places in the world to see unusual karst rock formations – massive jagged limestone sculptures covered by greenery. The karsts once were on the ocean floor, but over eons rose and were sculpted by rainfall erosion into their current eerie shapes. A boat ride from Guilin city southward

to Yangshuo town provides a wonderful viewing of Guangxi's fabled karsts. In October 1997, Sandra and I spent one of the most memorable days of our stay in China in Yangshuo, bicycling through the karsts to have lunch in a village south of town. Today, the natural beauty is intact, but I could hardly recognize the cities due to the expansion of buildings and tourist facilities. Now large river boats move up to 20,000 tourists daily down the Li River. But somehow the karst landscapes retain their charm despite the explosion of tourism.

Our group stayed in a remarkable hotel near Guilin – the Hotel of Modern Art. Amid rice paddies in a bucolic area, a Taiwanese businessman created a sculpture park and residence for modern artists and built two hotels in the complex to generate income. The massive sculptures in the expansive “Fool's Paradise” art complex vary from quite magnificent to truly garish. But the experience of being there was great fun. We had perfect weather for our four-hour boat cruise down the Li River, and photo opportunities were everywhere. Colorful farmers with their water buffalos, plowing in terraced rice paddies, were set against the back-drop of endless spectacular karst rock formations. Near Guilin, we visited the Reed Flute Cavern, an enormous series of underground natural rooms, featuring limestone stalagmites and stalagmites in picturesque formations.

### **The Yangtze River (Chongqing to Yichang)**

With a length of 1800 miles, the Yangtze River is the third longest in the world. The Yangtze River valley has played a major role in China's history. When the Han Dynasty took China's first census in AD 2, more than 90 percent of the 60 million people lived north of the Yangtze, mostly in the Yellow, Wei, and Huai River valleys (the heartland of the Han Chinese people). By the time of the second census, in 140, 10 million Han Chinese had migrated to the Yangtze valley, absorbing or replacing the indigenous settlers.

The Yangtze region eventually became the main rice bowl and center of China's population and politics. At the end of the Tang Dynastic era (the early 10<sup>th</sup> century), more than half of China's people (still about 60 million) lived in the Yangtze region or south of it and Tang emperors depended on the south for food, silk, and taxes.

In 1992, the Chinese Government began construction of the Three Gorges Dam and that dam is expected to be completed at the end of this year. The project is highly controversial. The cost of the dam, \$25 billion, is twice the original budget. The principal expected benefits of the project are flood control, hydro-electric power (10 percent of China's total consumption of electricity), tourism, and improved transportation. The main non-budgetary costs are the relocation of 1.5 million people, environmental threats, loss of archaeological sites, and the threat of a national calamity if the dam were to fail (due to earthquakes or terrorism). Politicians in Chongqing lobbied successfully for a very high dam (115 meters (380 feet) above the original river level of 60 meters) to provide enough water for Chongqing to become an ocean port.

Our group spent three nights and two and one-half days cruising 400 miles down the Yangtze River (from Chongqing to Yichang) on the *Victoria Empress*, a comfortable river boat that accommodates 150 passengers. We sailed through the Three Gorges (Qutang, Wu, and Xiling) of the Yangtze and also diverted up the Daning River, a tributary, to observe the Lesser Gorges. In October 1997, Sandra and I had sailed up the Yangtze from Wuhan to Chongqing, and I was curious to see the differences. They were phenomenal. The main dam was under construction in 1997 and completed in 2003. The water level behind the dam is now more than 100 feet higher than it was in 1997. Much of the impressive grandeur of the Three Gorges is now under water and gone forever. I hope that Chinese confidence in their engineering of the high dam will be rewarded.

## **Suzhou**

Suzhou has been an important urban center in China for 2,500 years. Located northwest of contemporary Shanghai on the Yangtze River, Suzhou lies in a very fertile agricultural region, naturally fertilized by rich Yangtze silt, and sits at the crossroads of important trade and transportation routes, connecting both central and northern China and eastern and central-western China. Suzhou was founded in 514 BC to be the capitol of the regionally powerful Wu Kingdom. Because its agro-climate and rich soils support mulberry trees, Suzhou has been a leading production center for silk since its founding. The city historically was protected by a wide moat, and it is sometimes called the “Venice of the East” because of its numerous canals and bridges. Suzhou maintained its agricultural and commercial importance throughout China’s dynastic and republican eras.

Today, Suzhou continues to be one of China’s wealthiest and most admired cities. About 2 million people reside in the bustling city. One-fourth of Suzhou’s residents live in the old city, an area legally required to preserve traditional architectural styles. The city’s economy depends on agricultural processing, light manufacturing, and tourism. I visited this very pleasant city in 1997 and again in 2002. The changes that have occurred in Suzhou, as in most of urban China, have been breath-taking. Most of the office and residential buildings are new or reconstructed. Fortunately, the 100 or so historical garden homes in the old city have been preserved, and the old city retains its relaxed charm despite endless numbers of new vehicles on the streets. Suzhou continues to be an important center of silk production, and it now attracts large numbers of Chinese tourists.

It is very challenging to try to experience Suzhou in only one day of tourism, but our group managed to see a great deal. We visited

two of Suzhou's renowned gardens – the Humble Administrator's Garden (the largest in town) and the Master of Nets Garden (the smallest). Classical Chinese gardens in Suzhou feature trees, water, rocks, and buildings – all blended into artistic designs. Those we visited contain elements from the past 650 years (the Ming and Qing Dynasties). In the evening we returned to the Master of Nets Garden to listen to demonstrations of numerous varieties of classical Chinese music, each performed in a different part of the garden. We also went to a silk-reeling factory to observe how high-quality Chinese silk is made, and we toured the impressive Suzhou Museum – in a marvelous new structure designed by Suzhou native, I. M. Pei.

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**The Himalayas By Air  
Bushtracks Expeditions  
March 21-April 6, 2008  
Airplane-based**

**Lijiang and Zhongdian, Yunnan, China**

We reached the eastern edge of the Himalaya Mountains in Yunnan Province, located in southwestern China. Following nearly three decades of phenomenal economic growth (national income in China has grown at an average annual rate of 9 percent since 1980 and thus is now about ten times its 1980 level), even the remote provinces of the world's most populous nation (1.3 billion people) are booming. Construction cranes are visible almost everywhere, new highways are connecting formerly remote regions to the center, and new national parks feature enormous visitors' centers and newly-constructed boardwalks. Recently affluent Chinese people have become active tourists in their own country, and holiday weekends attract mobs of visitors to the remote parts of China that have pleasant climates, interesting minority ethnic

groups (Han Chinese constitute 94 percent of the country's total population), and newly refurbished tourist facilities. In both of the towns that we visited in northwestern Yunnan Province – Lijiang and Zhongdian, we discovered that the “old towns,” the city centers that once housed ethnic minorities, had very recently had full makeovers and been converted from ethnic housing to tourist shops, bars, and restaurants. Booming China is on the march, and Chinese entrepreneurs rarely pass up an opportunity to make a sale.

Lijiang is located in northwestern Yunnan, near the border with Sichuan Province. The town is sited at 8,000 feet elevation, due east of the Himalayan range. To the north are the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (13 peaks, some at elevations of over 18,000 feet) and the Tiger Leaping Gorge of the Yangtze River (over 12,000 feet deep). Lijiang is home to the Naxi people, an ethnic minority of 250,000, who speak a Tibeto-Burman language and have their own script. The Naxi have patrilineal descent but matriarchal inheritance, and Naxi women control family assets. Naxi religion is a syncretistic blend of Tibetan Buddhism and shamanistic ancestor worship. The cobble-stoned Naxi old town in Lijiang (Dayan) is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Nevertheless, Dayan is overrun with tourist shops, mostly owned by Han Chinese (who constitute two-thirds of Yunnan's 40 million residents). Our group toured Dayan (and especially enjoyed the reconstructed Mu Mansion, which houses the belongings of Lijiang's former warlord-ruling family), strolled through Naxi villages (including the one in which the brilliant but eccentric botanist/anthropologist, Joseph Rock, lived for three decades), and hiked in Spruce Meadow (beneath the beautiful Jade Dragon Snow Mountain). En route to Zhongdian, we stopped to photograph the impressively deep Tiger Leaping Gorge.

Zhongdian is on the southeastern corner of the Tibetan Plateau, 120 miles north of Lijiang and very near to the borders with the

Tibetan Autonomous Region and Burma (Myanmar). Zhongdian is higher than Lijiang, with a mean elevation of 10,000 feet. The name of Zhongdian (Gyelthang in Tibetan) was officially changed to Shangri-la (Xianggelila in Chinese) in 2001. (Shangri-la in Tibetan means “sun and moon in the heart” and connotes idyllic beauty.) Zhongdian is still inhabited mostly by Tibetans (who make up three-fourths of the town’s 70,000 residents), but in recent years Han Chinese have migrated in to trade and exploit the region’s mineral resources (gold, silver, copper, and iron). Evidence of the Tibetan religion is prominent – lamaseries, prayer flags, and Buddhist scriptures in Tibetan script. We visited the Sumsanling Monastery, the largest Tibetan Buddhist lamasery in Yunnan, which was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Fifth Dalai Lama, ravaged during the Cultural Revolution, and rebuilt recently to house 900 monks. We also spent a delightful morning in the new Potatso National Park – hiking for a mile on a boardwalk alongside Shudu Lake, watching yaks and dzos (yak-cattle cross-breeds) graze, and enjoying spectacular scenery as our bus climbed over 13,500 feet through a mountain pass. One evening, we were chilled with an early-Spring snowfall.

## **Chengdu, Sichuan, China**

We had originally planned to visit Lhasa in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. But the Chinese authorities closed Tibet to tourism after the violent March demonstrations in which Tibetans were demanding greater political and cultural autonomy within China. At the last minute, therefore, we had to change our itinerary. We chose instead to visit Chengdu, the capitol of Sichuan Province, China’s most populous (87 million people). To fly from Zhongdian to Chengdu, we had to connect through Kunming, the capitol of Yunnan Province. We took advantage of a half-day stop-over in Kunming to visit another UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Stone Forest. Our visit to the Stone Forest was fascinating. The site features extensive karst formations (naturally

eroded limestone rock sculptures, akin to stalagmites). Because we were there on a holiday long-weekend, we were swept in a high tide of Chinese tourists (the Stone Forest receives 3 million visitors annually, and most seemed to be squeezing through the rock formations with us).

In a day and a half in Chengdu, we managed to see three of Sichuan's most notable attractions. (Those of us who were adventuresome or foolhardy enough to sample the genuine Sichuanese cuisine, correctly reputed to be the spiciest in China thanks to a judicious use of red chili peppers, wondered if we were ever going to see anything again.) The world's largest stone-carved image of the Buddha is in Leshan, about 100 miles south of Chengdu. We drove to Leshan, took a boat down the Min River, and observed all 71 meters (230 feet) of that monumental statue. We also took pedicabs up to the top of the statue so that we could observe the Buddha's head (adorned with jack-fruit-like curls) at close range. Upon returning to Chengdu, we visited the new Jinsha Museum, a remarkable creation, which houses the recent archaeological finds from the capitol of the 3000-year-old Shu Kingdom. Historians of China had been unaware that the Shu Kingdom in Sichuan was so old and wealthy. In 2001, a construction crew began digging up fabulous jewelry and implements made of gold, bronze, and jade. The articles in the new museum are breath-taking and beautifully presented. On the last day of our expedition, we went to the Panda Research Institute near Chengdu. The Institute is much more than a zoo for visitors to observe both giant and lesser pandas. It also serves as a breeding facility. In 2007, nine baby giant pandas were born there – four pairs of twins and one individual – and all are doing very well. The Institute has more than 50 adult pandas (adult males weigh up to 300 pounds and adult females up to 250 pounds), but breeding is very difficult because females are in heat for less than a week per year. China estimates that it now has about 3200 pandas in the wild, and most of them reside in the mountains of Sichuan

Province at elevations of 6,000-13,000 feet. Wild pandas are nocturnal and thus are extremely difficult to observe.

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**A Cruise in East Asia – Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Vietnam**

**Clipper Cruise Line**

**September 8-October 6, 2002**

**Ship-based, Aboard the *Clipper Odyssey***

**Putuoshan Island, China**

On the third cruise, the *Clipper Odyssey* and its 51 passengers sailed from Shanghai on September 27 through Taiwan and Hong Kong and arrived in Haiphong, Vietnam on October 6. Highlights of the third cruise began with a full-day tour of Suzhou, the canal-filled center of China's ancient silk industry, where we visited silk spinning and embroidery factories. We then spent a day in Putuoshan Island, China, the legendary home of Guanyin, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, and visited significant Buddhist monasteries.

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**Ancient Crossroads Expedition By Private Jet**

**TCS Expeditions**

**January 12-31, 2001**

**Airplane-based**

**Urumqi and Turfan, China**

Our penultimate stop was in northwestern China. We flew to Urumqi and drove by bus to Turfan in Xinjiang Uighur Province. Turfan is a fascinating oasis, formerly a key stop on the Silk Road

and today a major producer of raisins (and of bad wine). (Sandra and I had visited Turfan in October 1998 while on the Silk Road train trip, and enjoyed the grape harvest then; the oasis is less attractive in the heart of winter.) At dinner, we received a taste of unusual Uighur folklore from a small orchestra and dance team. The main tourist attraction was the ruins of the ancient city of Jiaohe, a fortress city originally built by the Han Dynasty of China in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Jiaohe, still well preserved, was destroyed by the Mongols in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Turfan declined as well after long-distance trade on the Silk Road ended in the 15<sup>th</sup> century due to Ming Dynasty isolationism and the rise of maritime trade around Africa.

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