History of Imperial China

Chapter 1: The Origins of Chinese Civilization

Geography

The Yellow River
- The Yellow River is so called because of the yellow loess silt that it carries, providing rich nutrients for agriculture, 12
- This loess is also very easy to work with primitive tools, hence explaining why it became one of the first regions to be settled, 12
- The Yellow River, however, is prone to flooding, and when it did so it tended to inundate enormous settled regions, 13

The Yangzi River
- The basin of the Yangzi river to the south is warmer and wetter than the north, 13
- This is why the south of China is more suited to crops like rice, while the north is better for wheat and millet, 13
- The Yangzi and many of its tributaries are navigable, whereas the Yellow River is not, 13

Chinese Geographic Isolation
- China was long isolated from other early civilizations by the ocean to the east, the Tibetan plateau to the west, and the Gobi and other deserts to the north, 13
- The Chinese did not see themselves as sitting on the edge of a vast Asian continent, but rather as being the central civilized region of the world, surrounded by vast oceans, deserts and mountains that were largely unimportant, 13

Chinese Mythology

The Three Sovereigns
- Chinese mythology associates the origins of their civilization with several ‘great men’, as opposed to other cultures who credit gods, 10
- Fu Xi domesticated animals and invented the family, Shen Nong invented the plough and the hoe, and Huang Di invented the bow and arrow, boats, carts, ceramics, writing and silk, while Yao devised the calendar and rituals, 10
- The first three of these great men are called the ‘Three Sovereigns’: Fuxi, Nüwa and Shennong

The Five Emperors
- Afterwards came the Five Emperors: Huang-di or the Yellow Emperor, Zhuanxu, Emperor Ku, Emperor Yao, and Emperor Shun
- The following Emperor, Yu the Great, was said to be the founder of the Xia Dynasty, 10
- This dynasty was in turn supposedly overthrown when its tyrant king was overthrown by a subordinate who founded his own dynasty, the Shang, 10
Impact of these Legends

- These legends show that the idea of ‘China’ was from the beginning constructed on the basis of technology and the state, including such things as agriculture, writing, flood control, and a virtuous monarchy, 10-12
- China’s past was thus viewed like the geology of a family, with links running back from one ancestor to the next in a continual, single line, 12

Prehistory

The Birth of Agriculture

- Homo sapiens first appeared in China around 100,000 years ago, probably spreading from somewhere in Africa, 16
- By 5000 BC, Neolithic cultures with agriculture, pottery, textiles and villages had emerged in many of the river valleys in what is now China, 17
- The move towards agriculture was facilitated by the beginning of the most recent interglacial period, and consequent move of the climate to warmer and wetter, 17
- Domestication of animals accompanied this shift towards agriculture, with dogs and pigs appearing in both areas by 5000 BC and sheep and cattle in the north and water buffalo and cattle in the south appearing by 3000 BC, 17

The Third Millennium BC

- The third Millennium BC was a time of increasing contact between these different regions
- Pottery shapes and designs spread over larger areas, 20
- During this time we also see the evidence of the rise of more powerful chieftains, who had the power to do such things as build thick walls around settlements and instigate human sacrifices at their elaborate burials, 20
- This all suggests a growth in the scale of political power and organisation, and concordant rising social stratification, 20

Cultural Divisions

- These early cultures can be divided into the southern rice zone, and the northern millet zone
- Early China can also be divided along an east-west axis based on differences in pottery and art styles, 17-18
- Various elaborate forms of pottery and jade artefacts have been discovered from this time

Were they Really Chinese?

- Even by 2000 BC, however, the Neolithic tribes of China were still probably as varied as those of pre-Columbian north America, speaking many different languages and having very different cultures, 20
- As such, it would be inaccurate to identify all of them as proto-Chinese, 20-22

The First Dynasty

The Beginning of the Bronze Age

- Around 2000 BC, a more complex bronze-age civilization emerged in northern China out of this patchwork of Neolithic chiefdoms and cultures, 22
• Properties of this new civilization included domesticated horses, metal-working, class stratification, and a stable political-religious hierarchy that administered a large area from a capital centre, 22

**Bronze Working**
• The earliest bronze vessels in China date to around 1600 BC, about the beginning of the Shang dynasty, 28
• Many of these early surviving bronze objects are cups, steamers and cauldrons, all with elaborate decoration and shaping, and probably used in sacrificial rituals, 29
• Over the course of the dynasty bronze-working technology spread outwards, even into areas that the Shang would not have considered to be Chinese at all, and who did not practise Chinese religion, 29
• Many of these bronze objects, as well as other artistic forms like jade objects, knives, axes, ivory, carved wood, and silk, were used in elaborate noble or royal burials, and often showed continual of Neolithic artistic patterns, 30

**The Shang Dynasty**
• The earliest dynasty for which we have written evidence is the Shang (around 1600 to 1050 BC), however they were likely preceded by some number of predecessor states, 23
• Whether or not there was a fully-fledged Xia dynasty is still not known, 23
• Though Shang political control did not extend very far, its cultural influence was much broader, being felt throughout the Yangzi valley, 23
• The Shang ruled from a succession of five capitals, which were large complexes of palaces, temples and altars built on a raised earthen centre, surrounded by shops, artisanal workshops and houses, 24

**Military Technology**
• Though agricultural technology was fairly stagnant, military technology was making significant advances, 24
• Bronze-tipped spears, composite bows, and horse-drawn chariots all came into use during Shang times, giving significant advantages to the wealthier states and warriors that could afford them, 24
• Chariots were also used in royal hunts, in which deer, bears, tigers, wild boars and even elephants were hunted, 24

**The King as a Religious Figure**
• Shang kingship was not only based on military supremacy, but also upon religion and ritual
• The king acted as an intermediary between the people and his own ancestors, who in turn were believed to be best able to communicate with the high god Di, 25
• To discover his ancestors wishes an, the king had professional diviners to heat bones to form cracks, which the king himself then interpreted to make prophesies and gain advice, 25
• The king also travelled frequently throughout the kingdom, often stopping to make sacrifices, 25
• Animal and human sacrifices played an important role in placating the gods, 25
• Servants were often buried alive or sacrificed with their masters burials, especially for the royal family; burial sites with dozens of human and animal bodies have been found, 25
• The power of the Shang rulers is further manifested by the enormous city walls and burial chambers they left behind, which would have required thousands of labourers to construct, 25

**Early Cultural Developments**

**Ancestral Grave Burial**
• In ancient times, it was common for many peoples to bury containers of food, drink and other precious objects with the dead, 21
• This was related to the belief that the dead needed the support of the living through offerings and sacrifices, and in exchange would provide the living with protection from harm or other types of aid, 21
• In China, evidence of such practices dates back to Neolithic times, 21

**Shang Oracle Divination**
• The Shang kings used divination to communicate with their dead ancestors, 21
• The most common technique involved the diviner applying a hot metal poker to a cattle shinbone or turtle shell, causing it to crack, 21
• These cracks were then interpreted as representing either a positive, negative, or neutral answer to a question previously posed, 21
• Inscriptions on these bones show that the king often asked questions about the appropriate sacrifices, and questions about whether they were causing an illness or strange dream, 21

**Other Ancestral Rites**
• Ancestors were also approached to act as intermediaries between the king and the other gods, especially Di, who had the power to grant such things as bountiful harvests and assistance in battle, 21
• During Zhou times, bronze tablets were inscribed with the achievements of notable individuals to show their ancestors the accomplishments of their descendants, 21
• Such beliefs were closely linked with notions of filial piety and authority within families, as parent-child relationships would later become ancestor-descendant ones, 21
• During early Zhou times, ancestral rites became increasingly elaborate, with the ancestor often represented by a descendent, and the other descendants performed rites and made sacrifices using the exactly correct protocol, in order to obtain ancestor blessings of long life and many descendants, etc, 21

**Oracle Bone Script**
• The first evidence of writing in China (full sentences) comes from oracle bones of the late Shang, 27
• These show that the language used at the time was a direct ancestor to modern Chinese, and that the characters used developed into modern Chinese characters, 27
• About one thousand of these characters have been deciphered, demonstrating that they used pictograms, phonetic and picto-phonetic symbols, 27

**Cultural Uniformity and Chinese Characters**
• The fact that the Shang developed a logographic rather than phonetic script had enormous consequences for Chinese history, 28
The difficulty of mastering the script put an additional premium on the skills of those elites who were able to do so, 28

The fact that characters were gradually divorced from any of the spoken languages also gave the scholarly elite a greater sense of unity across time and space, as they could read and understand the ideas of those long dead or living far away, even if they would not have been able to understand their spoken language, 28

Learning of the Chinese script by peripheral barbarian groups was also very effective in assimilating such groups, hence partly explaining the integrity of Chinese culture over time, 28

This is largely because it was impossible to learn the Chinese script without also picking up much of the history and philosophy of the classical texts one had to read in order to learn it

Also, it was much harder to adapt the Chinese script to local or foreign cultures or languages than it would have been if they used a phonetic script, 28

Chapter 2: The Zhou Dynasty

The Zhou Conquest

How the Shang Fell

- The Shang were constantly at war with the Qiang, barbarian tribesmen who lived to the west and spoke a proto-Tibetan language, 30
- Between the Qiang and the Shang was a frontier state called Zhou, which had inherited much of the material culture of the Shang, 30
- Around 1050 BC, the Zhou rose up against the Shang and defeated them and founded their own dynasty, 30-31

Zhou Texts

- The early Zhou period is the earliest period of Chinese history for which we have surviving texts, 30
- In these texts, the Zhou describe how they, just and noble warriors, defeated the decadent and dissolute last Shang king, 31

Three Ideal Zhou Kings

- Three Zhou kings in particular are responsible for the conquest, and in subsequent Chinese history were commonly viewed as the paradigm rulers, demonstrating loyalty, sound administration, skill in battle, and morality, 31-32
- King Wen formed alliances of nearby states and tribes in preparation for attacking the Shang, while his son Wing Wu undertook the actual conquest of the Shang capital, 31
- The Duke of Zhou, regent for King Wu’s underage son, consolidated the new territories, built a new capital at Luoyang, to which the old Shang nobles were moved, 32
- When King Wu’s son came of age, the Duke graciously stepped down and became a loyal subject, thus establishing his reputation for loyalty and honour, 32

The Mandate of Heaven

- The concept of heaven also developed around this time, representing the moral power of the cosmos and the gods, which had been delegated on earth to the Zhou rulers, 31
A king and dynasty could only rule so long as they had the favour of heaven, and this favour could be lost through tyrannical rule or neglect of obligations, 31

Heaven would send down warnings of its displeasure in the form of bad omens and natural disasters, 31

If the king ignored these warnings, then social and political disorder would increase, and the mandate would be conferred upon someone else, 31

In this way, the virtue of the ruler was crucial in mediating between heaven and the people

These ideas do not appear in Shang philosophy, and so may have been developed by the Zhou as justification for their conquest, 31

The Zhou Feudal System

The early Zhou rulers established a semi-feudal system, in which relatives and trusted subordinates of the monarch were granted land and power in peripheral regions, with hereditary titles, 32

When this was not possible, the Zhou negotiated vassal status with local chiefs, 32

Lords were obliged to send tribute and soldiers to the Zhou, who in turn retained their own power by maintaining their own central army, and establishing a primitive bureaucracy, 32

The Aristocratic Hierarchy

By 800 BC there were around 200 lords, though only about 25 of them were of significant size

Within each domain, the lord appointed various officers under him to govern administrative, ritual and military affairs, 33

These offices also often became hereditary, thereby forming another layer of nobility, 33

As a result of all these vassal relationships, society was perceived in a very hierarchical manner

Cultural Developments

With the beginning of the Zhou, the scale of human sacrifice at burials declined substantially, as did the use of oracle bones for divination, 31

This latter system was replaced by a new system set out in the Yijing, which involved generating random patterns of lines, producing hexagrams that each had a specific meaning

The Zhou king was the only one who had the right to make sacrifices at the capital, and was also the intermediary in rites to all royal ancestors, 32

Lords conducted similar sacrifices to their ancestors and to the original holders of their fiefs, 33

The nobility were also linked together by marriage, enforcing a common ethic of familial loyalty and respect, 33

The Zhou period saw a shift from the traditional Shang forms of art and pottery; in particular, writing upon pots became longer and longer, perhaps indicating that they were increasingly kept as family heirlooms rather than used in burial rites, 33

The Book of Songs

The Book of Songs (Shijing) also dates from the early Zhou period, 33

It contains many poems and songs that were performed at court during important ceremonies

Many of these poems praise accomplishments of the Zhou, the importance of sacrificing for ancestors, while some seem to have descended from folk songs about farming and war, 34
Rival States

- Over time, the regional lords of the Zhou state gradually grew more independent from the king, as local power relationships were established and kinship relations with the king diminished over the generations, 38
- In 771 BC, the Zhou king was killed in battle. His son came to the throne in his stead, and for safety the capital was moved to the east, 38
- This revived Zhou dynasty never fully regained control over its vassals, and over the succeeding centuries central authority gradually deteriorated, 38
- The Zhou kings continued to have ritual functions as the intermediaries with heaven, but militarily they were now weaker than most of their vassals, 38
- The initial period of this decline, 770-403 BC, is called the Spring and Autumn Period, 38-39
- Though violence, the states during this time still adhered to strict codes of chivalrous conduct in warfare, such as not attacking during times of mourning the dead leader, 39
- Also, victors seldom eliminated any of their rival ruling houses, always ensuring that at least some successors remained alive to continue the ancestor sacrifices, 39
- Also during this period, several states at different times managed to get the other states to recognise them as the hegemon, by means of attaining leadership over an alliance of states
- The need to form such alliances led rulers to regularly marry their sons and daughters into the houses of rival states, 39
- This practise was especially common because the more concubines a ruler had, the greater was seen to be his status and power – hence the ability of rulers to have many children, 39
- This practise also led to very frequent succession disputes, as the sons of different concubines struggled and plotted against each other to gain the throne, 39
- Succession was supposed to pass to all the sons of the legitimate wife in turn, and only then to the concubine’s sons, 39
- However, commonly sons not chosen as successor were granted fiefs or posts in outlying regions, where they had an opportunity to establish a powerbase to challenge the succession
- Arrest for such treason was common, and many royal sons had to flee to neighbouring states, either because they were treasonous or because they had simply been accused of such in order to get rid of them as rivals, 39
- During this time, rulers lived and ruled from within cities surrounded by earthen walls, 39
- Much of the warfare of the period focused on sieges of such settlements, often using advanced siege technology, 41
- Many texts were written on the topic of war and sigecraft, 41
- The end of the Spring and Autumn period saw a number of important military advances, including the perfection of cavalry technologies and massed infantry tactics which led to a decline in the use of chariots, formerly the weapon of choice, 41
- Crossbows were also introduced during this period, giving the armies of infantry, which could number in the hundreds of thousands, great firepower, 41
- This change in tactics, however, now meant that the military advantage went not to the ruler who could muster the most chariot-riding aristocrat soldiers, but to the ruler who could raise and equip the largest infantry army, 41
- Hence, rulers began increasingly to worry about increasing their populations and revenues
- To increase the amount of arable land, marshes were drained and irrigation works built, 41
Serfdom declined as rulers sought to reward peasants for military service with land, and also to maintain their direct access to a labour force, 41

Economic expansion was also aided by a rise in coinage, new government promotion of commerce as a revenue earner, and the introduction of iron-working, 41

To expand their control over their people, many rulers began recruiting educated and skilled officials to serve as bureaucrats, rather than relying on hereditary vassals, 41

Social advancement, especially for those of the lower nobility, now came to depend on gaining prestigious advisory and administrative positions, 41

As such, men competed for positions, and states competed for the best men, 41

The states on the periphery had the advantage in this struggle, as they could expand outwards to increase their strength, 42

As rulers sought to find new and better ways to gain the advantage, they were willing and eager to employ scholars, advisors, strategists, and other men of ideas, 42

These men made various proposals about what rulers should do and how the state could be run, recording their ideas in books and in so doing founding schools of thought, which in turn debated between each other, 42

This period is called the ‘Hundred Schools of Thought’, and demonstrates the intellectual creativity of the late Zhou period, 42

**Confucius and His Followers**

- One of the first and certainly the most important of these advisors was Confucius, who lived around 500 BC, 42
- Confucius was dismayed by the greed, injustice and irresponsibility that he saw around him, and sought to develop a moral philosophy that could guide rulers to be better, 42
- Gathering a group of disciples around him, he travelled around amongst the ruling states, trying to find a ruler who would be receptive to his ideas, 42
- Confucius looked back on the early Zhou period as a time when people of all different stations in life, from rulers to peasants, accepted the positions allocated to them, and performed their responsibilities as they should, 42
- The result was a harmonious coordination and operation of society, 42
- Confucius extolled filial piety, or the reverent respect of children towards parents, 42–43
- Filial piety involved both righteous thoughts and resulting performance of correct ritual actions – both were necessary, 43
- He also believed that filial piety could be extended outwards to the state as a whole, thus promoting its smooth operation, 43
- The highest Confucian virtue of all was ren, which is basically the same as Christian charity – such a sincere concern for others that correct action is almost effortless, 43
- As ren applied to all relationships, it did not have the same hierarchical connotations as filial piety, 43
- Confucius was renowned as a great teacher, and he had many students who came to consult him and be trained as government advisors, 43
- Much of the credit for the success of Confucius’ ideas must go to his students and their students in turn, 44
• The most famous of them was Mencius (c. 370-300 BC), who like Confucius travelled amongst the states to offer his advice to rulers, 44
• He emphasised reminding rulers of the Mandate of Heaven, and that if they did not rule well and ensure that their people were well cared for, then they would be punished, 44
• Mencius argued that if rulers focused exclusively on profiting the state, then this would only encourage everyone else to selfishly think about how to profit themselves and their families, 44
• Instead, Mencius argued that rulers should focus on reducing taxes and treating the people kindly, and then the people would be so eager to fight and work for the king in gratitude that the state would profit in the end anyway, 44
• Mencius also argued that officials should be treated well by the ruler, awarded salaries according to their rank, and given a degree of independence, 44
• Mencius also discussed less practical philosophical issues, for example arguing against his major opponent Gaozi that human nature was fundamentally good, 44
• Like Confucius, Mencius left a book (named after himself) of a collection of his sayings and teachings, in no particular order, 45
• The next most influential Confucian philosopher was Xunzi (310-220 BC), 45
• He expanded upon the ideas of Confucius and Mencius, arguing for a purely rational, humanistic interpretation of the cosmos, 45
• Though he did not believe that prayer or divination produced any actual real effect, he argued that these things served an important purpose as an orderly way of expressing emotion and maintaining hierarchical distinctions, 45
• Xunzi attacked Mencius’ argument about the goodness of human nature, instead arguing that desirable traits are only developed after long practise and effort, 45
• The basic concept of Confucian political thought came to be that a ruler would not be able to order the state until he had put in order his own family, and he would not be able to do this until he perfected his own virtue. One must change oneself before one can change the world, 46

Daoism
• Daoists fundamentally opposed the Confucian idea of an activist government, 46-47
• They argued that rulers should leave people alone, 47
• The most important Daoist text is the Daodejing, traditionally ascribed to Lao Dan, supposedly a contemporary of Confucius, but more likely it was written in the third century BC, 47
• This book is highly stylistic and poetic, its meaning open to many different translations and interpretations, 47
• The underlying theme of this work is that deliberate inaction is often preferable to action
• Often a metaphor is made with water, which always flows passively downhill, but yet over time has enormous power even to erode rocks, 48
• Another common thread is the interdependence of everything, and the continual mutual transformation of opposites, 48
• The argument is made that everyone, including the state as a whole, would be better off if people gave up learning, writing, tools, and other such things, 48
• Returning to a state of innocence and ignorance, people would no longer desire to travel or engage in war; they would be content with their lives as they were, 48
• Another important Daoist text is Zhuangzi, probably written in the third century BC, 48
Central to all Daoist philosophy was the concept of the Dao, or the Way, 49
Confucians used this concept to refer to the ethically correct path for rulers and all men, 49
In contrast, Daoists used this word to refer to natural ways of nature, with which men must seek to bring themselves into alignment if they were to ever achieve peace, 49

Legalism

Legalists, like Confucians, were scholars and thinkers who sought to advise kings about the correct way to rule and achieve success for their state, 49-51
Unlike the Confucians, however, they argued that the success of the state had nothing to do with the morality of the leader, 51
Instead, all that was needed were impartial and effective laws and institutions, that could be applied consistently and predictably to all, and would this elicit desirable behaviour, 51
Legalists were not interested in questions of ethics or cosmology, only power and politics, 51
The first major Legalist work is commonly attributed to Lord Shang (c. 400-330 BC), the chief minister of the state of Qin, 51
Qin adopted Legalist policies to a greater degree than any other state, 51
They abolished the aristocracy, instead determining rank and privileges according to military accomplishments, 51
Fiefs and serfdom were abolished, with lands grants to peasants, who in turn were brought under central government control by a new system of professional bureaucrats, 51
Citizens were required to pay taxes and perform heavy work obligations, and were not allowed to travel without permits, 51
To attract migrants, new settlers were offered free grants of land and houses, 51
In his book, Lord Shang attacked the idea that tradition was effective or desirable, arguing that the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties had all introduced institutional innovations to suit the times
His conception of law was that it bound everyone except the sovereign, so effectively law was whatever the ruler decided – he was above the law, 51
The more comprehensive exposition of Legalism was produced by Han Feizi, who lived about a century after Lord Shang, 51
He argued that the ruler must never trust anyone, as when he trusted someone he came under that person’s control, 51
This applied to ministers, wives and concubines, 51
As such subordinates would always pursue their own interests, the ruler could not be fully open or trusting with any of them, 52
Rather, he should keep them in awed ignorance of his true intentions, and maintain power by carefully manipulating the competition between his subordinates, 52
Feizi attacked the Confucian notion of government by virtue, arguing that even parent-child relationships are filled with selfish and calculating motives, so how could we expect a state to operate on love when even a family cannot, 52
Feizi encouraged rulers to make firm but consistent laws and decisions, with clear rewards and punishments to elicit desired behaviour, 52
He argued that love was irrelevant to political control: “a mother loves her son twice as much as a father does, but a father’s orders are ten times as effective as a mother’s”, 52
- Han Feizi also argued that ordinary people were like infants, unable to realise that temporary hardship (like taxes and labour services) was needed for their long-term benefit, 52
- The opinions and private conceptions of good or morality are irrelevant and dangerous, as diversity leads to disorder and weakness, 52

Other Schools of Thought
- Aside from the major schools of Confucianism, Daoism and Legalism, there were many other smaller competing schools of thought, 53
- For example, the agriculturalists argued that only those who produced food should be allowed to eat, while the cosmologists focused on theories of the forces of nature, and utopians and hermits developed rationales for withdrawing from public life altogether, 53
- One influential scholar who does not fit into any of the three major camps is Mozi, who was active in the fifth century BC, 53
- He based all his conclusions on society and government on an effectively utilitarian examination of their benefits and effectiveness, 53
- On this basis, he argued against aggressive wars as too costly, and instead called for mutual concern for all, with no favouritism for relatives, 53
- At the same time, he advocated for adherence to the rules of superiors, especially the king, who was supposed to rule in accordance with the Mandate of Heaven, 53-55

States and Ethnic Identities
- The political disintegration the late Zhou period fostered the rise of a sense of separate cultural identity amongst each of the warring states, 55
- At the same time, people frequently moved from one state to another and married between states, and the peoples of all the states still saw themselves as part of a broader group of ‘civilized’ peoples, all of whom were at least nominally subject to the Zhou, 55
- This was often defined in opposition to the barbarian peoples, who were not even nominally subject to the Zhou, and spoke completely different languages, 56
- The most important distinction of barbarians was not racial but cultural, 56
- Barbarians were people who did not have writing, cities, respect for ancestors, and who practised strange or different religions or rituals, 56
- This definition in turn fostered a belief (especially in Confucian philosophy) of assimilation: civilizing the savages, 57
- This process of cultural assimilation is quite evident in the cases of Chu and Zhongshan, both frontier states originally founded by barbarians, but which over time came to adopt most aspects of Chinese language and culture, 57
- Because they were permanently recorded in books (actually bamboo strips or rolls of silk), the philosophies developed during this period of Chinese history had a profound impact on Chinese philosophy and culture for all of time, 58
- They provided a common basis of understanding of the world for all Chinese – especially the educated, but many of the basic ideas and sayings eventually percolated down even to the peasants, thus forming an integral part of Chinese cultural heritage, 58
- When compared with other great philosophical traditions of the time, notably those of the Greeks and the Indians, we find that the competing Chinese schools actually share more in common than they disagree, 58
• All Chinese schools shared ideas related to respect for ancestors, heaven, and a general idea of the cosmos as coming into existence by itself, independent of any creator, 58-59
• Rather than focusing on mechanisms of creation and causal relations, the Chinese philosophies tended to emphasise the interconnections and relationships between things, 59
• Chinese thinkers did not comprise categories of mutually exclusive opposites, but rather saw all opposites as complementary polarities, 59
• Another fundamental assumption of all the Chinese schools was that the family relationship was good and fundamental to society, and indeed successful states should have a hierarchy mirroring that of the family (benevolent dictator as a leader, loyal and pious subjects), 59
• In Chinese thought, law was seen as a necessary expedient, a means by which the ruler used his cosmically based powers to reshape and order society, 59
• Unlike in western thought, there was no conception of law as being inviolable, or existing independently of the ruler, 59
• One important difference between Chinese and Indian thought was that the Chinese believed that this life could be improved, often by looking back in the past to the ‘golden age’ of the early Zhou or Yellow Emperor, which they wanted to emulate in the present, 59

Chapter 3: Qin and Han Dynasties

Unification by the Qin
• Qin began as the westernmost royal vassal state of the Zhou, 60
• After the Zhou moved their capital eastwards in 770 BC, the Win were able to expand their territory, and become the major power in the west, 60
• They were not, however, as urbanised or culturally advanced as the other Chinese states, and were often perceived as little different from the barbarian tribes with whom they regularly fought, 60
• To strengthen the state, Qin rulers began recruiting advisors, strategists and diplomats from the other Chinese states, 60
• One such advisor, Lord Shang, arrived in Qin in 361 BC, and soon spearheaded a series of legalist reforms intended to strengthen the power of the ruler, 60
• By the third century BC, the Qin had built up an efficient and effective state, with capable and loyal officials, and a productive and docile populace, 60
• King Zheng came to the Qin throne at the age of nine in 247 BC, 60
• With the aid of two very capable ministers, he began a series of military expeditions, culminating in the lightning conquest of most of the other rival states between 230 and 221 BC
• Now that he ruled all of China, Zheng changed his name to Shi Huangdi, the First Emperor, 61
• Later Chinese historians did not describe the emperor as a great conqueror, but rather criticised him as a cruel, suspicious and arbitrary tyrant, 61
• Shi Huangdi sought to impose administrative uniformity on China by dividing it up into new provinces and counties, standardising currency, weights and measures, and abolishing local writing scripts, 61
• The old states and noble houses were abolished, and wealthy and powerful families of the conquered states were moved to the capital, 61
They were replaced by government bureaucrats, who had to abide by strict administrative regulations, make regular reports to the emperor, and were punished for poor performance.

Shi Huangdi did not tolerate criticism of his government, and ordered the destruction of all writings and texts other than ‘useful’ manuals about agriculture, medicine, divination, and such topics, 61-63.

As part of this campaign to control all knowledge, rival scholars were killed and suppressed, 63.

Ordinary citizens also suffered, being required to provide onerous labour service to build palaces, roads, canals, imperial tombs and fortifications, 63.

Large numbers of such labourers were conscripted to replace the various northern defensive walls with a single, continuous barrier against the barbarians, 63.

Reporting of crimes was rewarded, and punishments were very harsh, often involving execution, mutilation, or hard labour, 63.

Shi Huangdi’s success was in large part attributable to his determination to manage every aspect of the government himself, 63.

He worked tirelessly, going through mountains of paperwork, and touring his empire several times to inspect and maintain order, 63.

Near to the end of his life, the emperor became increasingly obsessed with attaining immortality.

The immense preparations for his tomb were part of this endeavour, 63.

**The Han Government**

- This immense centralisation of power under the Qin made the stability of the government highly dependent upon the strength and character of the emperor, 63.
- Hence, after the death of the First Emperor in 210 BC, the empire quickly fell apart, with the heir being murdered by his brother, and factional fighting over the throne breaking out, 63.
- In the few succeeding years, many peasant revolts broke out in reaction to the harsh penalties and workload imposed by the Qin, 63-64.
- As successor emperors and their ministers assassinated each other, military generals and former Zhou nobles raised their own armies against each other, 64.
- The eventual victor was Liu Bang, known also as Gaozu, who was a minor official under the Qin before becoming king of the Han state, and finally gaining victory in the civil war, 64.
- Gaozu began by awarding domains of land to his followers, restoring the semi-feudal system of the Zhou, 64.
- At the same time, the Han were careful to maintain central authority by appointing central officials to oversee all of the vassal states, appointed by merit rather than birth, 64.
- They had broad powers of administration, including judging of lawsuits, collection of taxes, performance of state ceremonies, commanding of soldiers, construction of public works, and oversight of education and the local economy, 64.
- Those administrators who were successful could be promoted to serve at the imperial court as ministers or counsellors to the emperor, 64.
- Emperor Wudi did much to strengthen the power of the Han government during his long reign (141 – 87 BC), 64.
- Determined to reduce the power of the nobility, he set about confiscating the lands of as many of them as possible, using whatever pretext he could come up with, 64.
He also forced these lands to be divided up amongst the sons of a vassal, thereby ensuring that the estates would shrink in size and power over time, 64

He curbed the power of wealthy merchants, while also increasing state revenues, by introducing a number of state monopolies and commercial taxes, 65

Wudi and the other Han Emperors were essentially autocrats, above the law, 65

However, unlike Shi Huangdi, they sought to justify and maintain their position not through rules and harsh punishments, but rather through appealing to Confucian notions of the moral basis of obeying one’s superior, 65

They recognised this as an easier and more sustainable method of governing, 65

One continual problem, however, was the vulnerability of the state when young or weak emperors came to the throne, 66

Often this led to the rise in influence of the emperor’s wives and mothers, and their male relatives, 66

This is how Wang Mang, relative of the Empress Wang and regent of two successive child emperors, came to power and decided to declare himself Emperor in AD 9, 66

Wang enacted many reforms, returning lands to state ownership, reducing court expenses, expanding public granaries, etc, 66

His policies, however, generated widespread economic upheaval, which was worsened by the shift of the course of the Yellow River in AD 11, and consequent displacement of millions of peasants, 66

Aside from these peasants, Wang also came to be opposed by Confucian, scholars, who regarded him as a usurper, the old royal family, and the landlords, who had suffered from his redistributional policies, 66

This combined opposition led to Wang’s replacement in AD 25 by the Later or Eastern Han dynasty, 66

The Steppes and the Silk Road

Invasion by barbarian people has plagued China since the beginning, not least because many Chinese products, like silk and lacquer ware, were superior to any of those of their neighbours, 68

The rise of nomadism on the steppes made this problem significantly more severe during the mid Zhou dynasty, 68

The Eurasian steppe receives only enough rainfall to support grass for pasturing animals, not enough to raise crops, 68

As such, the peoples of this region raised sheep, goats, camels and horses, moving their camps north in summer and south in winter, 68

Their skill as hunters and horsemen made them formidable warriors, while their clan structure (a tight-knit group loyal to the clan leader) provided an effective military organisation if enough clans could be united together, 68

The first such great confederation of nomads was called the Xiongnu, formed in the late second century BC, 68

Shi Huangdi sent 100,000 troops against them, and constructed the great wall to keep them out

The early Han emperors tried conciliation, granting the Xiongnu gifts of wine, silk, rice, cash, and even imperial princesses as wives, 68
Following a successful Xiongnu raid that reached near the Chinese capital in 166 BC, Emperor Wudi took the offensive, 69
Beginning in 133 BC he launched numerous campaigns against the Xiongnu, attempting to outflank them by occupying and settling the Gansu corridor and North Korea, 69
These campaigns were very expensive, requiring hundreds of thousands of men and long supply lines, 69
Wudi also launched military expeditions into Central Asia, partly in order to obtain new supplies of horses to use in their campaigns against the Xiongnu, 68
These campaigns led to the establishment of a military protectorate over Central Asian trade regions, and also the discovery by China of the existence of other advanced civilizations, 68
Around 55 BC, the Xiongnu federation broke up, and some of the sub-groups became Chinese vassals, 69-70
To cement this relationship, the Chinese required the vassal tribes to send a prince as a hostage to the Chinese capital, where he was educated in Chinese culture and learning, 70
In return, the Chinese government provided their vassals with regular gifts of silk and other goods, 70
Much of this silk was sold on to various merchants, eventually reaching the Roman Empire
The turmoil of the reign of Wang Mang led many of these peripheral regions to break away, but they were restored under the Later Han, 70
The ongoing problem for the Han was how to raise the revenues needed to defend its far-flung borders, 70
It set up horse farms to try to breed more horses, established military colonies that could be self-supporting, and recruited various nomad tribes to serve in their military, 70
This continual drain of resources put pressure on the Han to keep extracting as much tax revenue as possible, and to keep the economy efficient by building bridges, canals, roads, etc

Myth, Magic and the Marvellous

Han literature and art contain many references to spirits, myths, and other dazzling, strange and powerful forces and phenomena, 71
Wudi, for example, had many court astrologers, alchemists, seers and shamans, 71
Both among the general population and the Emperor, there was a widespread interest in portents and omens, especially around the time of Wang Mang, when there was much talk from his allies and enemies about the many extant omens of change, 71
The fate of the dead was also a subject of substantial interest, 71
It was believed that the soul was composed of two parts: a more heavenly part that would rise to the clouds and possibly enter the realm of the immortals, and a more earthly part that would stay in or near the grave, and benefitted from food and grave goods, 71
Furnishing of graves with food and goods was thus both a means of showing respect and goodwill for the dead, and means of warding off dissatisfied ghosts, 71
The Han period also saw the genesis of the belief in a post-death judgement, 71
The Han emphasis on immortality was crystallised in the cult of the goddess of the Queen Mother of the West, who was believed to live in a paradisical land of marvels and supernatural animals, 71
People of all classes expressed devotion to her, and her shrines were constructed all over the country, 71
In a sense, this represented the first Millenarian, messianic movement in Chinese history, 73

The Agrarian Economy
- The Han period was characterised by a number of agricultural advances, 73
- Methods were devised for double-cropping, an improved plough was developed that could adjust the depth of the furrows, oxen came into increasingly widespread use to pull ploughs, 73
- Irrigation was improved by state-sponsored canal projects, and by the development of brick-faced wells, among other techniques, 73
- The donkey and the wheelbarrow also both came into first use during Han times, both useful for transportation, 73
- As a result of these advances, as well as the relative peace of the Han period and the expansion of the borders, the Chinese population rose significantly, 73
- Nonetheless, most Han texts focused on the problems and underlying fragility of the economy
- Much of the trouble stemmed from the new inheritance practise, which became standard during the Han period, of dividing up land equally between all sons, 74
- This replaced the earlier Zhou practise of giving all the inheritance to the oldest son, 74
- This division of land meant that many peasant families became excessively squeezed between their own expenses, plus government taxation, government service obligations, and natural disasters, while at the same time the land they had to support themselves became smaller with every generation, 74
- The rise of divided inheritance in the Han was accompanied by a rise in the degree to which land was bought and sold, 74
- These two factors combined to force many peasants to escape their situation by selling out to larger landowners, and becoming their vassals or workers, 74
- This was a problem for the state because it represented a loss in tax revenues (larger estates often managed to get tax exempt status, and some taxes were levied as a poll tax per land owner), 74-75, Encarta
- The Han tried to stem this loss of revenues by issuing restrictions on the size of landholdings, promoting irrigation works to increase production, keeping the land tax burden as light as possible, and issuing tax breaks during times of famine and poor harvests, 75
- In order to compensate for the lightness of their land taxes, however, the Han had to find other ways of raising revenue, 75
- Wudi was particularly active in raising new taxes in order to pay for his military campaigns, 75
- He took over the minting of coinage, introduced state monopolies on salt, iron and liquor, sold offices and titles, and confiscated land from rich nobles, 75
- Widespread opposition to merchants and commerce also made it easy for the government to levy very heavy taxes on them, 75
- The government also became involved in the purchase, storage and sale of grain, ostensibly in order to reduce private speculation and to raise government revenues, 75
- The long term result of these state monopolies and heavy taxes was the hampering of the development of private industry and commerce, thereby ensuring that the Chinese economy would remain agriculturally-based, 75
Confucianism and the Educated Elite

- The first Han emperors were not very partial to Confucianism, although they did avoid the harshest legalist policies of the Qin government, 77
- Emperor Wendi, for example, favoured Daoism, 77
- Ironically, it was Emperor Wudi, who has often been associated with Legalist tendencies, who first instituted a policy of employing advisors and bureaucrats educated in the Confucian classics, 77
- He did so for pragmatic reasons, recognising the value in employing men of high moral standards, who valued loyalty and compassion, and who practised self-restraint and love of ritual, 77
- These policies were continued by his successors, and by the first century BC it had become well accepted that officials should be men of good character, learned in the Five Classics, 77
- The prestige and influence of government officials gradually rose, and men of wealth and influence all over the country came to compete to gain renown for their Confucian learning and filial piety, 78
- One consequence of this was the rapid rise in importance and status of Confucian schools and teachers, including the Imperial Academy, 78
- Han Confucian scholars also expanded upon and clarified existing beliefs, thereby building a comprehensive cosmology and world theory that explained all of history and nature in terms of continual cycles of yin and yang, 78-79
- It was also believed that all sorts of items and categories (e.g. colours, plants, seasons, feelings, bodily organs, tastes, etc) had states of existence that were interdependent one upon the other,
- Hence, a change in one area could lead to a change in other, 79
- This philosophy was used to provide a clearer and more grounded explanation of the Mandate of Heaven, 79
- The emperor was held to occupy a special place of mediation between Heaven and Earth, and as such his misrule could directly upset the cosmic balance, and lead to such things as floods, earthquakes, and other calamities, 79
- This basic theory of the Mandate became a fundamental tenant of all later dynasties, and never was brought into question, 79
- Confucians of this period also put a lot of energy into recovering and reconstructing the Confucian books that were destroyed by the Qin government, 79
- Some of the books were recovered in hard copy, for example if they had been hidden in the walls of Confucian homes, 79
- Others were preserved in the memories of Confucian scholars who had memorised them, 79
- There was some dispute between scholars as to which of these two versions of the text were more genuine, 79
- Confucian officials were trained to view their relationship with the ruler in moral terms, and so were not really bureaucrats in the modern sense of the term, which implies unthinking compliance with specific rules and regulations, 79
- Rather, their principle loyalty was to their moral philosophy, and so if they felt that the policies of their superiors were contrary to this morality or to the public good, they would not hesitate to criticise the government and resist implementing the policies, 79
- Common policies that they attacked were monopolies over commodities, aggressive military campaigns, and extravagant court expenditure, 80
- During the later Han period in particular, the Confucian bureaucrats were especially active in opposing the growing influence of the court eunuchs, 80
- The spread of education and Confucian ideology during the Han period was aided by the rise of a local elite, who sponsored promising young men to continue their education at the Imperial Academy in the capital, and also by the invention of paper, 80

Colonizing the South
- The Han and Qin period was a time of fairly rapid migration of Chinese peoples to the south
- Peasants moved from the north from the Yangzi river valley, and from further and further south, forcing the native inhabitants southwards or into marginal highlands, 82
- Part of this should be seen as a reaction to the economic upheavals of Wang Mang’s reign, as well as the raids by the Xiongnu, 82
- It seems that about five to ten million people migrated from the north to the south in the first and second centuries AD, 82
- The government encouraged this expansion by sending in military garrisons and government officials, 821
- Of the remaining native populations, those who resisted were punished by force, while others were encouraged to assimilate, 83
- Control over many of these southern regions was precarious during the early Han period, as they were under the control of Chao Tuo, a Chinese adventurer who had originally settled there under the Qin, 83
- Chao reluctantly became a Han vassal, but retained substantial independence throughout his reign (even styling himself as ‘Emperor of the Southern Barbarians’, 83
- Not until his death in 137 BC was the Han able to bring these southern regions more firmly under control, 83
- Another border state, called the Dian, was controlled by horse-riding aristocrats of non-Chinese origin, 83
- They were incorporated into China by Wudi in 109 BC, and despite periodic revolts they were managed to be retained within the imperial structure, 83

The Fall of the Han
- During the second century AD, Han politics increasingly became dominated by the nasty rivalries between the court eunuchs and male relatives of the princesses, 84
- Eunuchs were useful as palace servants because they were recruited from significant families, so lacked an external power base, and being eunuchs could not build a new family of their own, 84
- The trend began in earnest in 124 AD, when a group of eunuchs staged a coup that put a young emperor on the throne whom they could manipulate, 84
- Over the following decades, such continual court upheavals paralysed the government, leaving it unable to stem the decline in its revenues brought about by the renewed trend towards land centralisation, 84
- In 153, swarms of locusts and a flooding of the yellow river displaced hundreds of thousands of peasants, yet the government was too impoverished to do anything significant, 84
In 184, a revolt broke out by a Daoist group called the Way of Great Peace, which offered mystical healings and social welfare programs. It launched attacks on local government offices all over the country, killing magistrates and officials. Although this particular rebellion was soon crushed, many similar ones arose in the following years, stretching the government’s resources further. Many of the generals sent to crush these rebels used their armies to build up their own power, and began fighting other generals. As rival generals made the emperor their puppet, the Han dynasty effectively was brought to an end by around 190 BC. In theory, the Han never repudiated the Qin Legalist attempt to directly control everyone in society down to the local village level. Although taxes and labour contributions were less harsh than under the Qin, taxes were still imposed directly on each subject, while huge numbers were recruited for public labour. In practice, most central government officials did not actually enforce all of the theoretical powers of the state, but rather they offered subordinate positions to members of prominent local families, leaving many matters in their hands, in exchange for their support and cooperation.

Chapter 4: Buddhism, Aristocracy and Alien Rulers

The Three Kingdoms and Jin Dynasty

The time between the Han and the Tang dynasties was one of disunity, small courts, and generally weak governments. The period began around AD 200, when the generals assigned by the Han Emperor to put down the Yellow Turbans rebellion became stronger than the Emperor, and began to fight amongst themselves for supremacy. By 205, a general called Cao Cao had made himself ruler over northern China, and circumvented the problem of accumulation of land by hard-to-tax noble magnates by carving out large state farms from land destroyed by the war, and settling there landless peasants and war captives, who thus became workers of the state. For cavalry, Cao Cao recruited large numbers of Xiongnu tribesman. When he died in 220, his son Cai Pei formalised his position by overthrowing the last Han Emperor, and formally founding the Wei dynasty. In the south, however, another powerful general established his own state of Wu, while a relative of the Han dynasty founded a rump Han state in Shu, to the southeast. Because of its much greater population, however, the Wei managed to conquer Shu in 263 and Wu in 280, thus reuniting China. However, in 265, before this process was complete, the son of a victorious general forced the Wei Emperor to abdicate, taking the kingdom for himself and thus transforming it into the Jin dynasty. This time of warfare and upheaval led to a decline of Confucian ideals amongst the elite, and their replacement by a very different culture of extravagant and unconventional living.
- Old Daoist and Confucian classics were reinterpreted, and there was much discussion on abstract philosophical issues, such as the nature of ‘non-being’, 88
- The withdrawal from public service was accompanied by an expression by many elites of an abhorrence of the contemporary political arena, with its violence and elaborate conventions
- There was an explosion in the arts and creativity, especially in poetry, 88
- The Jin, however, were unable to establish a viable, lasting imperial system, 88-89
- The Emperor’s power was threatened by the families of the empresses, and by the imperial princes, who were granted large tracks of land to govern, thereby encouraging them to seek out alliances with generals and non-Chinese tribes in their struggles for power against their brothers
- Such civil wars raged around the capital from 291 to 305, 89
- Making the situation even worse was the degeneration of the civil service system, which had become highly nepotistic, 89

**The Northern and Southern Dynasties**
- During the second and third centuries, hundreds of thousands of Xiongnu and other northern peoples had been settled within the Chinese frontiers, both as an alternative to fighting them off and as a means of raising auxiliary troops, 89
- These former nomads, who now became pastoralists, were much harder to assimilate and govern than other peoples in China, 89
- As such, as the Jin began to destabilise, many of these tribal chiefs rebelled and declared independence, 89
- Northern China thus became a volatile battleground between rival warlords, 89
- The resulting banditry and famine led many from northern China, including large numbers of the nobility, to flee to the relatively peaceful south, 90
- In the south, these refugee nobles refounded the Jin dynasty at the capital of Nanjing, 90
- This Eastern Jin dynasty lasted from 317 to 420, after which it was replaced by a succession of four short-lived dynasties, which controlled basically the same area, but none of which were able to establish a stable state or means of succession (they were all founded by successful generals who failed to keep the state intact for their sons to inherit), 90
- Collectively, these four dynasties are called the Southern Dynasties, the last of which lasted until 589, 90
- Part of the problem that rulers faced was that the hereditary aristocracy, which originally developed under the Wei, became even stronger under the Southern Dynasties, 91
- Noble families judged each other on the basis of their ancestry, and refused to marry those of a lower station, 91
- These aristocrats were able to secure government posts simply by nature of their birth, thereby granting them tax and labour service exemptions, 91
- Many of these aristocrats were also able to build up large estates, manned by refugees from the north pressed into serfdom, 91
- The existence of this highly independent class of aristocrats put a significant restriction on the power of the emperor, 91
- One good thing about these aristocratic families was that they acted as the preservers of Chinese civilization and culture, including the Confucian ideal of the scholar official, 91
In an effort to increase their tax revenues, the southern emperors made great efforts to expand the area of cultivation in the south, settling many migrants from the north on the new lands. After over a century of destructive fighting between rival barbarian clans and states (a period called the Sixteen Kingdoms), the Toba clan (originally from southern Manchuria) managed to unite all northern China in the Toba Wei dynasty (439-534). In order to consolidate their power, they employed many Chinese civil servants and policy advisors. This was necessary simply for demographic regions, as there were only a few million Toba, but about 20-30 million Chinese in the northern regions they were trying to rule. It was on such Chinese advice that the Toba Wei in 486 adopted a new land distribution system similar to some of those proposed and/or implemented under the Han. Under the premise that all land was owned by the state, land was allocated evenly according to the number of ox and male workers per family. The idea was to prevent excessive consolidation of the ownership of land, though in practise many of the more powerful were able to circumvent these restrictions. Near the end of the fifth century, Emperor Xiaowen made a concerted effort to ‘sinify’ his kingdom. He built a large new capital at Luoyang, gave the ruling dynasty and other Toba Chinese names, and encouraged intermarriage and assimilation into Chinese literary and cultural traditions. This policy was amazingly successful, and within only a few decades, Luoyang was a thriving city of over half a million. However, the Toba soldiers left defending the frontier against other steppe peoples came increasingly to resent the signified Toba aristocrats, living in apparent self-indulgent luxury in the distant capital. In 524 they rebelled, and those sent to suppress them began fighting amongst each other. The Wei continued to exist in theory for several decades, but in reality rival powers in the east and west continually fought each other, finally declaring the independent Qi (east) and Zhou (west) dynasties around 550. Both states suffered tension between the sinified Xianbei nobles and the unsinified warriors form the north. In 575, Zhou and the southern Chen kingdom united against the Qi, which was destroyed, most of its territory being absorbed by the Zhou. In 581, the Zhou state was usurped by a general, who founded the Sui dynasty. Unification under the Sui was possible partly because of the introduction of the new divisional militia, which was a new method of military organisation by which peasants (who were infantry) and nobles (cavalry) paid for their own weapons and equipment in exchange for tax breaks. This system increased loyalty to the state (instead of towards generals, as was often the case before), and made the army easier to coordinate.

Clients, Retainers, Serfs and Slaves

The much weaker governments that existed during the period of disunity were even less able to stop the process of land accumulation by the wealthy and enserfment of the poor than the Qin and Han. Many people became dependants voluntarily, in exchange for protection.
• Clients were often used by their superiors to till land and fight in battle, 94
• Various governments tried to limit the spread of this system by restricting the number of such dependents one could have, been it seems these limits were never really enforced, 94
• Slavery also increased, in large part because it was a traditional practise of the northern tribes to enslave their defeated enemies, 94-95
• Slaves were truly the property of their masters, and could be beaten, tattooed for easy identification, killed, freed, sold, or used as concubines at will (children born to slaves were also slaves, and the master also had these powers over them), 95

Buddhism

The Life and Teachings of Buddha
• Buddha lived in India at the time of Confucius, and as such assimilated the basic Indian philosophical notions of the time, including karma and reincarnation, 95
• Buddha believed that along his own personal spiritual journey, he had discovered truths about the human condition that could benefit everyone, 95
• Specifically, he preached that the only way to end suffering was to rid oneself of attachments, which could be done through ethical living and spiritual exercises that enhanced concentration and insight, 96

Basic Teachings of Buddhism
• Note: the following few sections are taken from the supplementary readings notes about Buddhism
• The fundamental truths on which Buddhism is based are not theological or metaphysical, but psychological, 306
• Most basic are the four noble truths, 306
  1. All life in the physical world is suffering
  2. The cause of this suffering is craving or clinging
  3. Sorrow can only be stopped by stopping the craving
  4. This can only be done by following a life of careful moral conduct, culminating in a life of meditation and contemplation of the Buddhist monk, 307

The Transient Self
• The basic idea is that all things are transient, composed of a variety of elements in constant flux
• Until a person gains a proper understanding of this true nature of reality, they will constantly be forming attachments to things, and generating sorrow when these things to which one is attached ultimately pass, 307
• Perhaps the most important application of this is in regard to the nature of the self, 307
• Although we like to see ourselves are permanent and self-existent, in reality ‘we’ are merely the temporary aggregation of a variety of different thoughts, feelings, impressions and matter, 307

Dependent Origination
• Dependent Origination is the fundamental Buddhist concept regarding the genesis and perpetuation of existence and (consequently) suffering, 307-308
• Basically the idea is that ignorance of the true nature of reality leads to ignorant actions and thoughts, which in turn leads to consciousness and connection between one’s mind and various aspects of reality, 308
• This in turn leads to craving of various aspects of reality, and the attempt to appropriate these things to oneself – in particular sexual desire, 308
• Sexual desire in turn leads to intercourse and then pregnancy and birth, which is naturally followed by aging and death, 208

Reincarnation Without a Soul
• Although there is no permanent entity that moves from one body to another during reincarnation, every word, thought and action of our leaves makes an impact upon the various immaterial/psychological constituents of ‘us’, 308
• These effects are then carried over by the immaterial parts of the body, which then obtain a new body accordingly, 308
• Thus, although Buddhism rejects the existence of a soul, this makes little real difference in practise, as much of the belief is predicated upon the existence of at least a quasi-soul, 308

Nirvana
• This cycle of rebirth can only be stopped by achieving Nirvana, which requires: first, a correct view of the world and the nature of reality; second, carefully following a system of moral conduct; and finally, a life of concentration and meditation, 308
• Nirvana is sometimes described as a state of annihilation, but at least in early Buddhist thought it was described in more positive terms, in particular as a state of transcendental bliss that was ultimately indescribable, 308

Mayahana Beliefs
• These original doctrines of the Theravada school were later altered and reinterpreted by the Mayahana school, which arose in India around the first century AD, 309
• The new school styled itself as a more advanced, truer form of the Buddha’s teachings revealed only to a select few, as opposed to the old ways which were a simpler, lower version, 309
• Thus the name ‘Mayahana’, or greater vehicle (to salvation), as distinguished with ‘Hinayana’, or the lesser vehicle, 309

Indian Attitudes about Divinity
• In Indian religion, divinity was not seen as such a restricted, personal and binary state as it is in Abrahamic religions, 309
• Rather, godhood manifests itself in many forms and gradations, which are at the same time all fundamentally merely different manifestations of the same ineffable true nature of reality, 309
• Thus, even from very early times the Buddha was revered as something of a god, 309
• This deification of Buddha was one of the tendencies of the new Mahayana school, 309-310

Origin of the Bodhisattva Concept
• A second development promoting the trend towards deism was the growth in interest in the Bodhisattva, 310
• The term was originally used to refer to the previous incarnations of the Buddha himself, stories of the noble and grand deeds of which became very popular, 310
Perhaps under Zoroastrian influence, the belief gradually arose that there would come other Buddhas in the future (notably Maitreya), 310.

These future Buddhas must even now exist in prior incarnations, and be active for good, 310.

Thus, the idea arose that the world must be full of Bodhisattvas, all doing good and striving for the welfare of other beings, 310.

**The Ideal of the Bodhisattva**

According to the traditional Buddhist teaching, there were Buddhas, those who realised the truth for themselves and then taught it to others, private Buddhas, who realised the truth for themselves but did not teach it, and arhants, those who learned the truth from someone else, 310.

Traditional Buddhist teaching held that one should strive to become an arhant, a perfected being who would not reincarnate after they died, 310-311.

Gradually, however, this ideal came to be seen as selfish, as upon achieving nirvana and dying an arhant would no longer be of any use to anyone else, 311.

Instead, the highest ideal in the Mahayana sect came to be that of the Bodhisattva, the being who achieved enlightenment but voluntarily chose to remain in the world for the benefit of others, 311.

**The Coming of Buddhism to China**

By the first century AD, northwestern India was dominated by Mahayana Buddhism, and as this was the locus of the great missionary journeys of Osaka, it was Mahayana Buddhism which spread most effectively into China, 312.

Unlike most of the regions to which Buddhism spread, China was already home to an advanced, literate culture, with existing belief systems with which Buddhism had to compete, 312.

It seems that Buddhism most likely entered China via Central Asian traders, 313.

The first texts to be translated into Chinese were those dealing with methods of lengthening life and improving the faculties of the mind and body (elixirs, etc), as these were the things the Chinese were most interested in, 313.

Over time, Chinese intellectuals became increasingly interested in the metaphysical debates and philosophies of Buddhism, interpreting it in the light of Daoist philosophy (this was particularly popular amongst the noble exiles in southern China, 313.

Buddhism first arrived in China in the first century AD, brought by traders via the Buddhist states of Central Asia, 96.

The Buddhism that came to China was not uniform, but already encompassed a wide range of beliefs and practices, including the developing split between Mahayana and Theravada, 96.

By the fourth century AD, many upper of the Chinese upper classes came to be attracted to Buddhism, 96.

Some decided to become monks, taking a vow of celibacy and giving up their family surname, thus cutting themselves off from the cult of ancestor worship, 96.

The alien rulers in the north found Buddhism particularly attractive, as its universalist claims did not put them at any disadvantage to the native Chinese in the way that Confucian philosophy did, 96.
Buddhism was initially seen as just a variant of Daoism, partly because early translators of Indian texts used Daoist words to frame Buddhist ideas, 96.
Buddhism gained popularity in part because it addressed questions of suffering and death in a direct way that is not found in Chinese tradition, 97.
Some also found the idea of retreating to a monastery or nunnery to be an attractive escape from life, especially wealthy widowed women, 97.
Buddhism was particularly popular amongst women, as it encouraged women to pursue salvation on nearly equal terms with men, and described Bodhisattvas as being neither male nor female, transcending gender differences, 97-99.
Thousands of Buddhist temples were built across China by the fifth century, with donations of land and goods (believed to generate good merit and show filial piety) coming from the rich and poor, 99.
Confucians and Daoists, however, were not pleased by the spread of Buddhism, 99.
They attacked it as being immoral and incompatible with Chinese culture, 99.
Arguments included that cutting of hair and cremation was desecration of the body that contradicted Confucian practices, that clerical celibacy was a direct violation of the responsibility to continue the family line, and that the enormous sums spent on temples and statues were a drain of resources from the state, 99.
The biggest threats to Buddhism came when certain rulers occasionally sought to close the monasteries, which owned huge tax-free estates, and force the monks back to work, 100.
For the most part, however, the Buddhists managed to stay in cooperation with the state, and maintain their tax-exempt status, 99-100.
One thing that the Chinese governments never did was suppress private Buddhist beliefs, or insist that its officials renounce Buddhism, 100.

Daoist Religion
The development of Buddhism into a fully-fledged religion in China stimulated the emergence of Daoism as a proper religion also, 100.
Daoism drew inspiration from the Daoist philosophies of the Zhou period, but also took much influence from folk religious practices and elite traditions concerning the pursuit of immortality.
Religious Daoism as an organised movement began in the countryside in the second century AD, as the Han was beginning to collapse, 100-101.
The Daoists held that immortality was possible through strengthening of the body’s yang, which could be done through special controlled diets, breath control, sexual techniques, and the use of elixirs, herbs and talismans, 101.
During the Age of Division, many Daoist religious texts came into existence, in large part dealing with heavenly visions, liturgical rituals, and so on, 101-102.
In these early days, however, scriptures were only shared with the initiated, unlike the widely circulated Buddhist texts, 102.
By the end of the Age of Division, Buddhism and Daoism were in competition with each other for the patronage of ordinary rural and urban people, 102.
Daoists argued that they had better spells and hygiene techniques for attaining immortality, and more control over evil spirits and gods, 102.
Buddhists argued that they had loftier moral principles and better techniques for attaining salvation for oneself and one’s ancestors, 102
That said, both religions tried to accommodate popular belief by accepting local deities into their pantheons, 102
Overall, there were more Buddhist monks and temples than Daoist ones, but both had an important impact on each other and Chinese society as a whole, 102

Differential Regional Development
- The long political separation of north and south China led to gradual cultural divergence between these two regions, 102-103
- In the north, noble families remained well entrenched in their traditional lands in the countryside, seeking out government posts both out of Confucian sense of duty and also in order to prestige, power, and connections to other elite families, 102-103
- They often began taking low-level jobs near their home, which positions were usually granted almost automatically, and then gradually moving up through the ranks, 103
- Those aristocrats who worked in the courts were expected to be especially knowledgeable of the classics and histories, 103
- In the south, most of the wealthy families were exiles who were nostalgic for cultural life back in their northern homelands, 103
- As such, they spent much time cultivating the arts, especially witty conversation, wine, poetry, painting and calligraphy, all of which were thought to conotate good taste, refinement, and intellectual content, 103
- Daoist-inspired interest in nature and immortals led to the beginnings of landscape painting, 103
- Overall, the division was beneficial for Chinese culture, stimulating developments in Buddhist philosophy and political theory, 104
- The latter was often centred on arguments as to which kingdom was the legitimate heir of the Han, holding the true Mandate of Heaven, 104
- The northerners argues that they occupied the traditional geographic location of the Han and Zhou, while the southerners emphasised their more pure Chinese ethnicity, and also that they had inherited the Han mandate through the correct ritual procedures, 104
- That said, there was significant contact and movement between the two regions of China, with intellectuals reading the same books and competing in their ideas, 104
- Later Chinese historians viewed the Age of Division as being a failure, with no ruler having the true Mandate of Heaven, and the country falling into disorder through tyrannical rulers, enslavement and bloody court struggles, 104
- It was used as a case study to show why a strong centralised government was needed, 104
- At the same time, the lack of a powerful, centralised or intrusive state was highly conducive to the cultural experimentation and flourishing that occurred during this period, 104
- Many have drawn comparisons between the Age of Division and the Dark Ages of Europe, citing the similarities of a barbarian invasion, collapse of a large empire, political fragmentation, decline in urban life, and the rise of a salvation religion, 105
- Although these are interesting, we must not lose sight of the many differences, including the fact that China did not return to feudalism or experience a decline in intellectual culture as Europe did, 105
Chinese culture and language also did not die out or change nearly as much as occurred in Europe, and later Chinese dynasties could claim a much clearer link with the Han than any Europeans could with Rome, 105

Although trade and the use of coinage in China did decline in the fourth century, it was not nearly as disrupted as it was in Europe, and began to recover by the late fifth century, 105

Chapter 5: The Tang Dynasty

Empire-Building

The union of north and south China was far from inevitable, as they had been divided for well over two centuries, with differing cultural and geographic features and habits, 108

Indeed, it is quite possible that they could have gone on to develop distinct versions of Chinese culture, much like the eastern and western Roman Empires, 108

The reunification of China, however, seemed to further consolidate in Chinese people’s minds that this was the natural and ‘right’ state for their nation, given that this was the third separate time it had been achieved (after Zhou and Han), 108

The reunification of China occurred through conquest of the southern kingdoms by the Northern Wei kingdom between 553 and 589, though in the course of this a palace coup led its name to change to Sui, 108

When the Sui conquered the south they destroyed the southern capital, and forced the southern nobles and officials to move to the new Sui capital north at Changan, 108-109

This was designed both to prevent separatist movements, and also to reintegrate northern and southern cultural traditions, 109

The Northern Wei/Zhou dynasty had originally been xianbei, but in 581 a Chinese general ousted the heir to the throne, killed off a large portion of the royal princes, and established himself as founder of the Sui dynasty, 109

We became known as emperor Wendi, and tried to legitimate his actions by styling himself as a Cakravartin King, or a Buddhist monarch who uses military force to defend the faith, 109

He and his successors were so eager to rebuild China and expand its influence, however, that they imposed excessively cruel tax and labour burdens on the population, leading to a series of rebellions in the 610s that led to the toppling of the dynasty, 109

Although the rulers of the Sui and early Tang dynasties all descended from old xianbei noble families, by the time they came to power they had become increasingly sinified, taking Chinese names and customs, abandoning old nomadic ways and intermarrying with Chinese women, 109

Hence, the Sui and Tang dynasties presented themselves as Chinese successor of the Han, and not as nomadic conquerors, 111

Both dynasties, however, depended for their power on an institution originally established by the Northern Wei, namely an equal-field system with relatively low taxes and military duties, which allowed them to martial large armies while simultaneously keeping the maximum possible number of peasant households on the tax rolls, 111

Despite this military force, the Turks of Central Asia continued to pose a problem, and so they were dealt with using the traditional methods of bribery and trade missions, investiture of their nobles, fomenting discord between rival tribes, strengthening fortifications, and marriage diplomacy, 111
Military successes enabled China to gain military overlordship of the central Asian trade routes in the 640s and 650s, 111

The Sui and Tang also worked in standardizing and codifying the legal institutions and criminal penalties derived from northern and southern legal traditions, 111-112

Like previous legal codes, penalties were graduated in harshness in inverse proportion to the social standing of the perpetrator, 112

The Sui and Tang also instituted various policies to re-establish control over the government, including forbidding officials from serving in their home provinces or in any area for more than one tour, and also enforcing central appointment of even the lowest civil servants, 112

In order to ensure that their bureaucrats were as loyal and honest as possible, the Tang introduced civil service examinations to root out true Confucians by testing knowledge of Confucian classical texts, 112

The government also established state schools and authorised versions of the Confucian classics, 112

Though it did not end the influence of the old aristocratic and wealthy families in government, it did influence the way they prepared for government service, 112-114

Book learning came to be much more important than horse riding or martial skills, 114

The examination system also helped to standardise the cultural outlook of elites from different parts of China, 114

The empire was also drawn together by the construction of many new roads and bridges, and especially the grand canal, built in the early 7th century to connect the Yangzi and Yellow River valleys, 114-116

The latter half of the seventh century was dominated by Empress Wu, who began as empress to emperor Gaozong, and eventually became de facto ruler after he suffered stroke in 660, then after his death during the reign of two of his sons, before finally she crowned herself as emperor in 690, justifying her rule on the basis of a Buddhist story about a female monarch who would bring peace to the world, 116

**Life at the Centre**

The early and mid Tang period was probably the most self-confident and adventurous of all the Chinese dynasties before the 20th century, 117

Possible contributing factors may have included the rise of a foreign religion that promoted contacts with other civilizations, the infusion of the non-Chinese aristocratic and wealthy families, and the expansion of Chinese military presence into central Asia, 118

The capital at Chang’an, as with previous capitals, was a planned city build around a grid design.

It was unique, however, in its enormous size, with a large palace and huge city walls, 118

Although southern nobles were forcibly located there after the reconquest, before long Chinese elite families were flocking to move to his centre of power and culture, 118

This culture was highly cosmopolitan, stimulated by the presence of envoys, merchants and pilgrims from the tributary states in central Asia as well as Japan, Korea and Tibet, 118

Fashions, foods, goods and religions (including Judaism, Nestorian Christianity and Islam) were introduced and to an extent adopted by those in the capital, though none of these religions spread amongst the general population as Buddhism had, 118
This cultural liveliness was no doubt stimulated by economic growth, which in turn was stimulated by the reunification of the country, rise in trade with central Asia and across the seas, and completion of the grand canal, 119-120.

Economic growth was most impressive in the south of China, in particular the result of a rise in tea-drinking amongst Chinese elites, and also the development of Southeast Asian maritime trade, much of it in the hands of Arab merchants, 120.

Confucian scholarship flourished during Tang times, including writing of histories and commentaries on Confucian classics, 120.

Calligraphy and poetry were also popular, with Emperor Xuanzong even establishing an academy for poets, 121.

The Penetration of Buddhism

- The exuberant, cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Tang provided a prime environment for the spread and consolidation of Buddhism, 121.
- Buddhist monasteries and schools were established all over the country, providing lodging for travellers and social gathering sites for intellectuals, 121.
- Monasteries also came to own huge tracts of land and other financial enterprises like mills and oil presses. This often led them to expand into activities of trade and money-lending, thereby contributing to the commercialisation of the Chinese economy, 122.
- Buddhist monks evangelised to illiterate lay persons by showing pictures and telling them stories of Bodhisattvas and so on, 122.
- As Buddhism grew, it also changed and adapted to Chinese culture and tastes, 123.
- For example, the Chan school of Buddhism (later adopted in Japan as Zen) developed the idea that book learning from the sutras was not necessary, that enlightenment could only come through direct revelatory experiences, 123.
- During the late Tang period, China’s weakening international position led to a backlash against the ‘foreign’ religion of Buddhism, 124.
- The periodic state-sanctioned persecutions of Buddhism in the 9th century were also motivated by fiscal concerns, as the monasteries owned a great deal of tax-free land, slaves and peasants, 124.
- The combination of these persecutions, the decline of Buddhism in India, and the cutting off of Chinese Buddhism from contact with Indian Buddhism owing to the rise of Islam in central Asia, all contributed to the decline in the importance and variety of Buddhist sects, 124.

Life Far from the Centre

- Documents recovered from the outskirts of China near the silk regions show that even in these remote regions the equal-field system was active, in that households received a set amount of land which reverted to the state upon their death, 125-126.
- However, these documents also show that some people found it inconvenient to work the land granted them by the state, so they rented it out to someone else and instead worked someone else’s land rented to them, 126.
- Monasteries were large landlords, often owing many tenants in a serf-like bondage, preventing them from marrying freely or moving away, 126.
- The state was involved in setting the prices of goods in certain markets, including foodstuffs and textiles, 126.
- Much small-scale local repair work seems to have been performed by mutual aid associations of the farmers most affected, overseen by men performing their labour-service duties, 126
- The first use of block-printing appears in the 9th century, many used to print Buddhist texts and mantras, educational materials for children and scholars, manuals for warding off evil spirits, calendars, and duties for exam candidates, 127

**Political and Economic Realignments**
- After eight years of civil war, the Tang emperor was forced to make a compromise peace with the An Lushan rebels, 127
- Rebel leaders were pardoned and often appointed as military governors in the areas where they had surrendered, 128
- Thus there came to be a large number of regions controlled by military governors who were basically independent of the centre, paid no taxes and appointed their own subordinates, 128
- Under these circumstances, the government was forced to abandon the equal-field system, and substituted it with a twice-annual tax on landholders, 128
- All regions were given quotas of how much tax to raise, and had substantial leeway in how to raise these taxes, 128
- This withdrawal of the government from direct control of land facilitated the renewed rise of large estates, 128
- The government also began to raise revenue by levying a surcharge first on salt, and later on other commodities such as wine and tea, 128
- Ironically, the government withdrawal from the intense control of the economy actually led to a revival in trade and commerce, 128
- As the rebellion was more severe in the north, there was also a renewed migration to the south, which led to an increase in agricultural production, as the south had more productive land, 128
- In an attempt to counter the growing independence of the military commanders, the Tang emperors created a new Palace Army and put their own servants, the eunuchs, in charge, 129
- It was not long, however, before the eunuchs themselves were engaged in political power struggles, forming alliances with and plotting against one another, 129
- In 835 the Emperor and a group of officials plotted against the eunuchs, but this was discovered, and the eunuchs peremptorily executed one thousand of the officials, including the three chief ministers, 129
- Also over the course of the ninth century the Tang were threatened increasingly powerful neighbouring states, including the Tibetan Empire, Nanzhao, Bohai and the Turks of Central Asia, who had to be kept at bay with tribute, 129
- The Tibetans took advantage of the Anshan rebellion to seize Chinese possessions in Central Asia; these were not recovered even after the collapse of Tibet in 842, 129
- After 860, the central government proved unable to maintain even a semblance of order, with bandit gangs ravaging the countryside and attacking small cities, 129
- These gangs engaged in smuggling (especially salt), and preyed upon tax convoys and traders, 129
- In 881, one of these rebel armies captured Changan and established a new government, although it was not for another twenty years that the pretence of Han rule was totally abandoned, 129
Reassessing China’s Culture and Institutions

- Toward the end of the Tang period, the declining authority of the central government and concomitant obvious rise of the cultural and political development levels of surrounding states led to somewhat of a crisis of belief amongst the Chinese intellectual elite, 130-131
- They questioned what had gone wrong such that China was now surrounded by states of a similar level of development to itself (India, Tibet, Nanzhou, Korea, Japan), 130-131
- Two competing schools of thought arose, one led by Du You and a second by Han Yu, 131
- Du You took a very pragmatic approach to the situation, arguing that an activist central government was needed to retain control of the economy and reign in the local interests, 132
- He opposed the trend towards excessive emphasis on cosmic philosophising about the place of the emperor and emphasis on elaborate rituals, 132
- He also attacked the literalist Confucians who argued that government should be patterned on the ancient institutions described in the classics, 132
- He asserted that these early Chinese governments were hardly better than the barbarians that had surrounded them, and that the centralised government of the early Tang was far superior to the feudalism of the Zhou, 132
- Han Yu, in contrast, took a more cultural approach to the problem, believing that a rejuvenation of Confucian learning was what was needed to bolster the central state, 132
- He also attacked Buddhist as being a foreign cult that encouraged the common people to give up their proper tasks and instead pursue Buddhist aims, to the ultimate detriment to the state, 132-133
- Han Yu saw Chinese history as the transmission of Confucian learning and practical knowledge (which was basically synonymous with civilization) from the Zhou down through Confucious and Mencius, 133
- The reason for Tang’s problems was precisely because the transmission of this Confucian ideal had become disrupted with the rise of Buddhism, 133
- Although Du You and Han Yu disagreed on many things, they both agreed on the ultimate possibility to improve the system of government and hence society, and their ideas did much to stimulate intellectual debate, 133
- The rise and decline of the Tang was consistent with the general cyclical view of history espoused by most Chinese historians of the premodern period, 133-135
- The idea was that the dynasty was founded by strong and ambitious men who governed capably and fairly, but that eventually less able men came to the throne who proved unable to prevent power struggles in the court or maintain national defence and administration, 133-135
- It was thus the moral credentials of the ruler that made the difference, 135

Chapter 6: Shifting South

The Embattled State

- During the century following the collapse of the Tang (around 860 to 960), political and military power devolved to local military strongmen, many of them from very humble backgrounds, 136
- In the south, none of them was able to gain any significant consolidation of large areas, and thus this period is referred to as the ‘Ten Kingdoms’, 136
• Political fragmentation in the south did not, however, impair the economy, which indeed flourished as a result of the rival ruler’s promotion of trade, 136
• The north was ruled by a succession of six short-lived Turkish dynasties, with the area under constant threat by the Khitan and Tangut Turkish tribes to the north, 136
• Unification was finally accomplished during the reign of Taizu (960-76), who was a northern general promoted to become emperor by his troops, who were unwilling to follow the seven-year-old successor of the previous empire, 137
• Over the course of his reign, he was able to consolidate his power in the north and then subjugate most of the kingdoms in the south, 137
• He was able to do this because of his success in putting an end to the two hundred year old existence of independent regional armies, 137
• He consolidated control over his own army by inducing his generals to retire on generous pensions, and regularly rotating their successors, 137
• The best units in the regional units were concentrated in the palace army, which was kept under his personal command, and was used to protect the capital, 137
• To prevent the rise of new regional military strongmen, he placed the army under civilian control in a system incorporating overlapping and regularly rotating positions, 137
• However, the existence of the powerful Tangut Xia and Khitan Liao states to the north prevented any significant expansion, and indeed meant that the state had to divert immense resources towards military defence, with a standing army some 1.25 million strong, 137-138
• These states were ruled by non-Chinese, but used many Chinese officials and administrative methods, and governed populations of both Chinese and non-Chinese people, 137-138
• In the early 11th century the Song also made peace agreements with both of these states, whereby the Song paid tribute in exchange for peace, 138
• The need for strong defence led to a number of military innovations, most significantly the use of gunpowder, first in grenades and then in true canons, 138
• Such advances only gave the Song a temporary advantage, however, as before long its enemies would capture craftsmen and engineers and use them to produce the new weapons, 138
• The Song dynasty was also a time of remarkably stable and effective government, with no arbitrariness on behalf of emperors, no coups by eunuchs, no insidious political meddling by empresses, and effective cooperation between emperors and officials, 138
• The Song period thus represents about the closest to the Confucian ideal of government that China ever attained, and indeed many of the officials were genuinely committed to the Confucian ideal, 138
• One problem was the trend toward bureaucratism and excessively complex rules and regulations over even the most trivial matters, made worse by the increasing ease of printing, 138-139
• This complexity of laws stifled reform, which was seen by many officials as simply too much trouble, 138-9
• Political disagreements and factionalism between officials with conflicting opinions was also a significant problem, as each side would try to rally as many supporters as possible in an effort to convince the emperor to adopt their policy, 139
• One prominent example of this was the reforms of Wang Anshi, which (though supported by the emperor) were so sweeping, pervasive and rapidly-enacted that they antagonised many officials, and led to bitter disputes, sacking, and political unrest, 139-141
The Burgeoning Economy

- In 742, China’s population was still fifty million, about the same as it had been in AD 2,
- The expansion of rice cultivation in southern China, however, allowed the population to double by 1100,
- With growing population density, many farmers were increasingly drawn into commercial relationships, selling their grain surpluses in exchange for goods such as charcoal, tea, oil, and wine,
- Some farmers in particular regions even began to specialise in the production of cash crops such as sugar cane, silk worms, oil seeds, tea, bamboo, hemp, and timber,
- This in turn stimulated the growth of land and coastal trade,
- When he visited China in the late 12th century, Marco Polo noted that the volume of traffic on the Yangzi river was far greater than anything he had seen in Europe,
- Increased trade meant a greater demand for money, and hence led the Song government to begin minting silver coins at a rate far exceeding that of the Tang,
- In the early 12th century, the state took over the issuing of paper money, which had begun as a private practice between merchants who used certificates instead of bulky metals,
- Over time, trade became increasingly more specialised and sophisticated,
- Partnerships were common, and some business ventures were even organised as joint stock companies, with a separation of managers from shareholders,
- Money lenders and brokers provided credit, while merchants in the large cities were organised into guilds, which sometimes set prices and also acted as the merchant representatives when dealing with the government,
- From the beginning, the Song dynasty encouraged foreign trade, even sending out diplomatic missions to southeast Asian countries to encourage their traders to come to China,
- Improvements in ship-building technology and the invention of the compass in 1119 also aided the expansion of maritime trade,
- Trade became a very important source of revenue for the Song, especially the southern Song,
- There were also substantial developments in industry, as rural silk workshops became increasingly common (in addition to government ones), urban centres turned out more and better ceramics, and production of such things as books, money, and paper flourished,
- Development of new technologies like hydraulic machinery to drive bellows, explosives to excavate mines and the use of charcoal in smelting instead of wood all contributed to a sixfold increase in iron production between 800 and 1078,
- All this commercial and industrial growth in turned fuelled the rise of cities, with the capital at Kaifeng (later Hangzhou in the south) being dominated by houses and markets rather than palaces and government offices, as had past capitals,
- Marco Polo was amazed that all the people in Hangzhou could possibly get enough food,
- Even provincial cities grew, with dozens attaining more than 50,000 citizens and several passing the 100,000 mark,

The Scholarly Elite

- The Song dynasty saw the rise of the distinct ‘scholar-official’ class that was to define China for centuries to come,
This was spearheaded by several developments, including the revival of Confucianism, the increase in wealth, and most importantly, the enormous increase in the importance of the examination systems, 145.

The examination was only used on a small scale in the Sui and Tang dynasties, but was greatly expanded by the early Song emperors, who were very concerned with avoiding the domination of government by military men, 145-146.

Efforts were made to prevent nepotism (not even considered wrong in Tang times), by recopying all papers and having them identified by number alone, 146.

This ensured that for the first time in Chinese history, a significant number of people from central and southern China entered government service, thus ending northern dominance.

Prestige of exam-success was so higher that even many of those who could get appointments through family connections chose to take the exams, as passing the top exams was often necessary for gaining the highest government posts, 146.

Examinations thus became very competitive, with the number of annual applicants rising from 30,000 to 400,000 over the course of the dynasty, 147.

By this late period, only one in two or three hundred would pass the exams, 147.

To prepare for such exams, candidates needed to memorize the classics so as to be able to recognize even the most obscure passages, and master forms of poetic composition, 147.

One factor that aided this process was the spread of printing, which made books much more widely available – rich families could have personal libraries of thousands of books, 147.

Nevertheless, local wealthy elite families still dominated most of the government posts at a local level, as once one family member was in government employ, it was possible to get others in directly to lower positions, and also the income helped to fund education for additional examination attempts, 148-149.

Often, counties of a hundred thousand or so people had their government positions dominated by a few dozen families over the course of one or two centuries, 149.

Of course, families frequently lost their standing as land was divided amongst sons, 149.

### Loss of the North

- In 1115, a nomadic herding people called the Jurchens rose up in eastern Manchuria and attacked the Khitan Liao state, declaring the Jin dynasty, 149.
- The Song quickly allied with the Jin and entered the war against the Liao, 149-150.
- However, very quickly the alliance collapsed and the Jin attacked the Song capital Kaifeng, 150.
- The capital was taken and sacked, and the emperor and his family captured and held captive in the north, 150.
- However, Song loyalists regrouped in the south of China, and re-established the dynasty under the emperor’s younger son, 150.
- For the remainder of the dynasty, Song officials were very concerned with retaking what they saw as the historical and cultural heatland of China, home to all the tombs of the earlier Song emperors, 150.
- However, despite occasional invasions by both parties, overall the frontiers changed very little over the course of the 12th century, and the Song helped to maintain peace by payment of tribute to the Jin, 150.
• Loss of the north did not disrupt economic activity, as trade with the north still continued as before, while the movement of the capital of the south actually seems to have reduced the amount of resources needed to keep it provisioned, thus freeing them up for alternative use, 150

A Turn Inward
• The inability of the Song to achieve military dominance of the Han and Tang was deeply troubling for many Chinese scholars, and led to an increasing hostility and suspicion of everything foreign, 150
• This in turn led to something of a reaction against Buddhism, 151
• This was reinforced by the fact that all three northern barbarian states were Buddhist, 151
• One particularly good means of consolidating Chinese culture was to revive Confucianism, a process that was also encouraged by the rise of the examination system, 152
• Some Confucian thinkers expanded Confucian philosophical frameworks to include the ideas of li and qi, which helped to explain certain inconsistencies and elevated Confucianism in its competition with Buddhism as a comprehensive cosmological system, 152-153

Local Society
• One important development during the Song period was the rise of intensive rice agriculture, which unlike wheat did not experience economies of scale, 155
• This meant that wealthy landlords generally did not build up large estates, but just left their tenants to manage their fields alone, paying a fixed portion of their crop as rent, 155
• Rural life was far from serene, with case records indicating that banditry, kidnapping of wealthy family’s children for ransom and suing of neighbouring and family members over land rights were all fairly common, 155
• Improved communication and transportation also enabled the more rapid and complete diffusion of customs and cultural practises, including new patron deities, 155
• The rise of printing meant that books were more available for the elite to more easily examine and critique traditions and works previously passed down only orally, while even ordinary people had a prospect of being to access some of these books and hence dabble in some fields of learning, 158
• Despite the enormous economic and technological advances of the Song times (putting China far ahead of contemporary Europe), this did not translate into the same political and intellectual change that occurred later in Europe, 161
• Chinese cities did not become places identified with personal freedom, run by merchants at odds with the lords in the countryside, 161
• In china, both cities and rural areas were under the control of the central government, 161
• Unlike most other elite classes of the time, china’s elite class was based on ideology and education, instead of being the usual priestly caste, hereditary aristocracy or military class, 161

Women’s Lives
• More information is available about women in Song times owing to the large number of preserved books, 158
• Generally we find that women were very influential within the home and family, but in external society were not, 1587
The expansion of the educated class did lead to some women being taught to read and write and help tutor their children, but they were not expected to write poetry or do other such literary activities, 158-160

Chapter 7: Alien Rule

Steppe Nomadism and the Inner Asian States

- Inner Asia was always much less densely populated than China proper, owing to its unsuitability to crop agriculture, 164
- Song China had about 80 million inhabitants, while all of Mongolia, Tibet and Manchuria had only about 5 million, 164
- Even this small number was only able to survive because of their ability to sell animals and animal products to the Chinese in exchange for grain, textiles, metals and ceramics, 164
- When they were unable or unwilling to trade for such things, they often resorted to taking them by force, 164
- Although the specific tribal identifications changed over time, the basic tribal structure of the steppe remained remarkably constant, 165
- Families camped in clans, which in turn grouped into tribes, which selected military chiefs, 165
- Clans and tribes were regularly at odds with one another, seizing cattle, horses and women and conducting revenge attacks for previous such acts committed against them, 165
- Captives were generally incorporated into the victor’s clan as slaves or serfs, 165
- Sometimes instead of fighting, tribal leaders would try to build up large coalitions or federations of many tribes, which they achieved through a combination of military conquest and alliances, 165
- Such structures were held together by vassalage and loyalty, although chiefs were generally not autocrats, with major decisions being reached collectively at assemblies of leaders, 165
- Successful leaders could accumulate large armies by keeping them happy though the spoils of conquest, 165
- However, expansion obviously could not continue forever, and squabbles over succession often led to the breakup of these confederations within a generation or two, 165-166
- Between the nomad and Chinese heartlands there was beginning in late Han times a border zone inhabited by a mixture of Chinese and non-Chinese peoples, 166
- Some of the latter became farmers or served in military units, while others continued with their more traditional nomadic way of life, 166
- There was some degree of intermixing and assimilation into both groups, 166
- The Khitans, Jurchen and Mongols were the first nomadic peoples to overthrow a Chinese dynasty during a time of strength, 166
- The Khitans were a proto-Mongol group from the fringes of the steppe around Manchuria, 166
- They sent envoys and tribute to China during the Tang dynasty, but also fought with and raided the Chinese when circumstances allowed, 166
- Seizing the opportunity of the collapse of the Tang, the Khitan ruler seized control of part of northern China, and established his own hereditary (unusual for Mongols) kingdom based on a quasi-Chinese model, 166
At their peak, there were probably about 750,000 Khitans ruling over two or three million Chinese, 166

The kingdom was essentially split into two, with the Chinese southern part run by semi-independent Khitan nobles using a nominal bureaucratic system dating from the Tang, while the north was governed according to the nomadic traditions of the Khitans, where the king rode about from place to place conducting administration, 166-167

Although small in population, the Khitan armies were so effective that the Song found it easier just to buy them off, 167

Probably because they maintained their northern half, the Khitans were able to resist Sinification, although the elites did become culturally dual, adept in both Chinese and Khitan ways, 167

In 1125, the Khitans were defeated and their lands taken over by the Jurchen (or Jin dynasty), a people who originated from eastern Manchuria, and who were united in a confederation in the early 12th century, 167

The Jin then turned on the Song, employed Chinese engineers to construct the siege engines that they used to capture the northern Song cities, 168

The Jin adopted the dual government system of the Khitans, though over time they progressively moved their capital further south and hired more Chinese officials, 168

However, the Jin government did not adopt all aspects of Chinese rule, particularly the respect that Chinese emperors traditionally had for the civil servants, 168

Because most of the Jin population was resettled into northern China so as to help maintain Jin control, most of the Jin soon adopted Chinese language, dress and customs, 168

Some of the earlier Jin emperors introduced policies designed to resist this trend, but by the early 13th century hardly anyone claiming to be Jurchen was left in China proper, though there were still some in Manchuria, 168-169

**Ghengis Khan and the Mongols**

Over the course of the late 12th century, Mongol chief Chengis Khan gradually built up an alliance of Mongol and Turkic tribes, with the most prominent of these lords gathering to proclaim him their overlord, or great khan, in 1206, 169

Ghengis then set about reshaping Mongol society into a war machine, 169

Ignoring tribal distinctions, he established a cavalry army based on decimal units, with commanders specially chosen as being loyal to him, 169

He also created an elite body guard of 10,000 that served directly under him, 169

He adopted the Uighur script for writing Mongolian so that he could administer more effectively, though he himself was illiterate, 169

Ghengis then set about on a campaign of conquest, 169

His method was to send out envoys threatening destruction and demanding submission, 169

If they agreed, they were treated as allies and allowed to remain as subordinate leaders, 169

Those who resisted were treated with total brutality, with entire cities murdered or burnt, and their populations sometimes used as human shields in the next battle, 169

After Ghengis’ death in 1227, the empire was divided amongst his four sons, who continued his expansion into central Asia, Russia and southern China, 170
The Mongols probably numbered only about 1.5 million, and so incorporation of other groups and peoples into their government and armies was essential for this success, 171
In their campaigns against the Jin, for example, they employed Chinese and Khitan subjects of the Jin, 171
Uighurs, Tibetans, Chinese, Persians, and even Russians all came to hold important positions in the Mongol government, 172
The purpose of Mongol conquest was self-enrichment, 172
Initially, this mostly took the form of appropriating lands and assigning them to military commanders and nobles, and capturing skilled working and taking them back to Mongolia to produce material goods for the Mongolian elite to enjoy, 172
Mongol methods of exploitation became more sophisticated over time; for instance, they moved from a model of direct taxation to using competing Arab merchants who bid against each other for tax licences; they soon gained a reputation for rapaciousness and were hated by the Chinese, 172

The Mongol Conquest of the Song
Khubilai became great khan in 1260, 172
He employed many Chinese advisors, moved the capital to Beijing, instituted Chinese court rituals, and even renamed the dynasty Yuan, 172
Southern china had never before been captured by peoples of the steppe, largely because of the many rivers, canals and streams that stood in the way, 172
With the help of Chinese and Persian advisors, the Mongols constructed a river fleet and siege weapons that allows them to transverse the Yangzi and begin attacking Song cities in 1268, 173
Although Song officials were largely committed to stopping the Mongols, the emperor at the time was a child, and court intrigues inhibited effective defensive policies, 173
After great slaughter and destruction, the Song were finally defeated in 1279, 173
Although the Mongols enjoyed many of the material benefits of Chinese civilization, they purposely avoided many of the social and political practices that might lead to assimilation, 173
They conducted business in Mongol, spend summers in Mongolia, and mostly only married Mongolians, 173
Mongols also continued to chose their rulers by (often violent) competition rather than succession, 173

Life in China Under Alien Rule
The Mongols did not force the Chinese to adopt their ways or customs, and so Chinese scholarship and religion continued during Yuan and Jin times, 173-174
The lot of the ordinary Chinese worsened, as many of them lost property, were sold into slavery, had to pay much heavier taxes, and were treated very poorly by Mongol or Muslim governors, 174
All of the foreign dynasties attempted to foster trade (the Yuan even reopened the grand canal inoperative since the Jin conquest), but the immense destruction of their conquests and heavy taxation exacted an enormous toll, 174-175
Society also became less open and fluid, as the overlords were concerned with maintaining control and their privileged status, 175
Each ethnic group was taxed differently and treated differently before the court, 175-176
- The Mongols were paranoid about the possibility of Chinese rebellion, so they banned Chinese from congregating in public, owning weapons, or taking Mongolian names, 176
- The Mongols also enforced a rigid system of hereditary occupations for virtually everything, from farmers to astrologers and soldiers, 176
- At first some Chinese scholar-officials were reluctant to work for the Mongols, but as they came to see that Mongol rule was going to last for some time, many were willing to take up government posts as the best means by which to preserve Chinese culture and Confucian practise, 176-177
- However, access to administrative posts was restricted, especially under the Mongols, as many positions were reserved for non-Chinese, 177
- As such, the examination system, while not totally eliminated, became much less important, 177
- Many of the educated elite who could not or would not work for the Mongols often took up positions as doctors, Daoist priests, fortune tellers, teachers or playwrights, 177
- Literati were still viewed by most ordinary Chinese as the natural leaders of Chinese culture and local society, 177-179

**Ethnicity, Loyalty, and Confucian Universalism**

- Chinese culture and ideology was traditionally not racial, but based upon the idea that Chinese superiority was based on Chinese cultural, ethical, and scholarly superiority, 179
- As such, foreigners and barbarians who adopted these things could become legitimately Chinese
- However, this is not to say that there were not some racial and parochial overtones, such as the fact that having a long Chinese ancestry certainly brought a great deal of prestige, 179
- Although the Khitans and the Mongols did not fully assimilate, they did adopt some of the terminology and ritual of Chinese universalism and Confucianism in order to supplement their legitimacy, 179-180
- Although the foreign dynasties always arrived at workable accommodations with the native Chinese, hostility and suspicion between them never went away, and there are stories of massacres of the Jurchen and Khitans when they were replaced by their successor foreign dynasty, 180-182
- The north was much more consistently and hence adversely affected by the foreign conquests than the south, with the constant warfare and changes in governance and land ownership proving significantly disruptive, 182
- The peoples of northern and southern china were actually considered by the Mongols to be so different that they were placed in separate ethnic categories and administered differently, 183
- All three conquest dynasties were Buddhist, though this seems to have had little or no impact on either revitalising or undermining Chinese Buddhism, 183
- Interestingly, the immense influence of and contact with foreigners during Yuan times stimulated a conservative, isolationist backlash, not an increased interest in other cultures, 183
- Much more foreign music, clothing and art was assimilated into Chinese civilization during Tang times than in the Yuan, 183
- The Jurchen and Mongol invasions undeniably led to demographic and economic decline, 184
- Overall Chinese population fell from about 120 million in 1200 to 60 million in 1300, and was still at about that level a century later, 184
• Causes of this included the Mongol destruction and the bringing of plagues by increased trade and movement of soldiers, 184

Chapter 8: The Limits of Autocracy

Ming Taizu and Despotism
• Zhu Yuanzhang, also known as Taizu, was a commoner born to very impoverished peasant parents, 190
• He spent some time in a Buddhist monastery before it was destroyed by Yuan militia, at which point he joined one of the many rebel groups affiliated with the millenarian White Lotus Society and Red Turbans, 190
• Taizu rose quickly within the rebel group, especially after he married by the foster daughter of the commander, 191
• He became leader of the band in 1355 after his father in law’s death, and went on to capture the major city of Nanjing, 191
• Using Nanjing as a base, Taizu gradually became supreme in the southeast, finally succeeding in driving the Mongols out of Beijing and back into Mongolia in 1368, 191
• Taizu razed the palaces at Beijing, and instead chose to keep his capital at Nanjing, which soon swelled to a population of about one million, 191
• Taizu sought to construct a fairer and more efficient government and nation, registering the entire population and all land for taxation and governance, and cutting expenses wherever he could so as to minimise the burden on the poor, 191
• For instance, the army was made largely self-supporting by granting their families land to farm, while administration costs were kept down by assigning better-off village families the obligation to perform low-level judicial, police and tax-collecting services without pay, 191
• Taizu also hoped that these powers would help local communities to protect themselves from rapacious tax collectors, 192
• Taizu’s sympathies did not extend to commercial or scholarly elites, whom he subjected to high taxes, and many of whom he forced to relocated closer to the capital, 192
• Taizu became increasingly autocratic and paranoid as his reign progressed, suspecting conspiracies all around him, and using his palace guard as a secret police to spy on officials, 192
• On several occasions he had his chief minister and thousands of others killed in widespread purges, 192
• Like the first emperor of the Qin, Taizu had a heavily legalistic attitude towards the populace, believing that harsh punishments were necessary in order to keep the people from committing crimes, 192
• He also exhausted himself with mountains of paperwork in his attempt to manage as much as possible by himself, 193

Management Problems
• The third Ming Emperor, Chenzu or the Yongle Emperor, moved the capital back to Beijing, which thereafter became the residence of the court and seat of military power, 193
• Beijing was rebuilt in a series of walled concentric squares, with the palace compounds (the Forbidden City) in the centre, the government district (the Imperial City) surrounding it, and the outer city surrounding that, 194
• To supply the city, the grand canal was extended northward using a system of fifteen locks to bring it up to the needed altitude, 194
• Taizu’s efforts to minimise government size actually made administration significantly more difficult for later emperors, 194
• Legal sources of revenues were so limited that often it was necessary to resort to extra-legal ones just to keep the government operational, thereby instigating the very abuses Taizu wanted to prevent, 194
• The requirement to provide government services without pay was a great burden for many households, and was eventually replaced with monetary taxes, 194
• The soldier-farmers proved unable to support themselves, and had to be replaced in large part by paid mercenary soldiers, 194
• Under the Ming, monetary management proved to be so poor that the use of paper money had to be abandoned, 194
• The power of the eunuchs greatly increased over the course of the Ming dynasty, with the eunuchs having their own school, parallel bureaucracy, and having significant powers in managing the palace quarters, managing the civil service examinations, and even military affairs, 194
• When the emperor allowed them to do so, for example during the long reign of Wanli (r. 1573-1620), the eunuchs were able to effectively dominate the collection of taxes and enforce their will on the civil servant bureaucrats, 194-195
• Despite these political problems, China’s economy continued to grow, with population under the Ming increasing from some 70 million at the start to over 160 million by the end, 195
• Economic developments included increased regional specialisation (aided by the increased availability of water transport), development of cotton and silk production around the Yangzi, and the rise of porcelain manufacture around Jiangxi, 195

The Southwestern Frontier
• The southern areas of Yunan and Guizhou were only incorporated into China proper during the Yuan and Ming dynasties, following the Mongol conquest of the region and subsequent flood of Chinese military and peasant settlers into the region, 195
• In these regions as in other frontier provinces, the Chinese employed a system of dual administration, with direct bureaucratic control over the areas with large numbers of Chinese settlers, but acceptance of tribal rule over areas where they were dominant, in exchange for tribute and recognition of suzerainty, 195
• Despite these measures, friction between the natives and the Chinese settlers in these frontier regions was fairly common, 197
• In a manner somewhat reminiscent of the American west, Chinese settlers would often exploit or enslave the locals, while when they had the opportunity the tribal peoples with fight back with military force, 197
• These periodic revolts were put down by the military, but led to widespread debate amongst the officials about the best means of dealing with the problem, 197
• Over time there was a significant amount of intermingling between the two groups, leading to
the simultaneous dominance of a broadly uniform Han Chinese culture alongside an increasing
number of local dialects and customs, 197-198

Literati Life
• The civil service examinations became more important than ever during the Ming period, 198
• There were even regional quotas introduced to ensure that the wealthiest and most developed
regions of the country did not monopolise all the positions, 198-199
• However, the exams did become much narrower in their focus, primarily testing knowledge of
the four Confucian classics as interpreted by Zhuxi, 198
• This made grading easier, but also increased the disconnect between actual scholarly pursuits
and preparing for examinations, 198
• The Ming also introduced a new lower tier to the degree system, where a degree could be
obtained by passing a local examination, 199
• About 100,000 people (one in three hundred adult males) held this degree at any one time, 199
• It enabled them to avoid labour service, wear distinctive caps and sashes, enter educated
circles, gain community respect and leadership, and also helped them to secure jobs as tutors if
no government posts were forthcoming, 199
• At the provincial level there were about 10,000 more advanced officials who had more
important posts and privileges, 199
• At the very top are the two to four thousand jinshi, top officials who worked at the capital, 199
• Because government office brought greater wealth, there tended to be a strong correlation
between wealth and power, especially because both tended to run in families, 199
• Many wealthy families lived in walled urban or rural estates with meandering garden paths and
retreats, quiet unlike the ostentatious exhibitionism of contemporary European gardens, 201
• Great painters and poets attracted many students, both interested (and wealthy) literati
amateurs, and also an increasing number of professional painters, who if they became well
known could sell their works to wealthy clients for substantial amounts, 201

Popular Culture
• Popular literature expanded greatly during Ming times, with Italian missionary Mateo Ricci
commenting on the large number or cheap books that were available for purchase, 201
• Printers employed large numbers of crafts men and produced thousands of different titles, 201
• Books also came increasingly to use the grammar and language of the vernacular of ordinary
people, rather than the classical literary language used in government circles that could only be
mastered after years of study, 22
• Types of books published included home reference books, guides for commercial contract,
religious tracts, school books, and examination guides, 202
• The audience for this more popular brand of literature included all those of at least some level
of education, such as merchants, upper-class women, and chop keepers, 202
• Plays and novels also became increasingly popular, especially those dealing with love stories
and social satire, 202
Philosophical Currents

- Zhu Xi’s interpretation of Confucianism was accepted as orthodox by virtually all Confucian scholars until around 1500, when a scholar called Wang Yangming challenged his interpretations, 203
- Others then challenged him, thus instigating a period of vigorous intellectual debate, 203-206
- Some sought greater synthesis with Buddhism and Daoism, while others argued for the elimination of distinctive class barriers between scholars and merchants and farmers, 206
- Some of the more radical thinkers were arrested and jailed for spreading dangerous ideas promoting unconformity and the end of the family unit as the core of society, 206

Local Society

- Over the course of the Ming, local society became less isolated, with villages increasingly tied together in the nationwide economic and intellectual system, 206
- Community organisations like religious associations, schools and descent groups also increased in number and importance, providing more opportunities for contract between villages and educated persons, 206
- Descent groups were essentially alliances of related families living in a particular area, 206-207
- More common in the more recently settled south, they banded together for purposes of collective defence, settling disputes, and promoting morality through mutual enforcement and accountability, 207
- Many literati promoted such organisations as a means of promoting virtue and social harmony, 207
- These descent groups, however, often proved difficult to maintain, and required the presence of a strong and continuous family leadership, 207

Relations with the Outer World

- The Ming dynastic rulers had no interest in returning to the multi-state situation of the Song, but wanted to reassert Chinese dominance as it had existed in the Han and Tang, 209
- One of the methods for achieving this was the reconstruction of the tributary system, whereby foreign states were enrolled as tribute-paying subordinates to China, 209
- Taizu actually banned all foreign trade, as he wanted it all to occur through the mechanisms of this tributary system, 209
- The third emperor Chengzu sent out a series of ocean voyages led by his trusted eunuch Zheng He, whose purpose was to seek out new potential states to enrol in the tribute program, 209
- Conducted by a large flotilla of ships between 1405 and 1433, the ships visited southeast Asia, India, the Persian Gulf, and even East Africa, 209
- These voyages were eventually abandoned when court officials persuaded later emperors that they were not cost-effective, 209
- The tribute system worked best for small or remote states, and so could not be effectively applied to the northern frontier, 209
- This northern border was porous, with Mongols and Chinese living on either side, trade (legal and illegal) occurring, and no clear Chinese military domination of the region, 209-210
- In 1449 one Chinese emperor was even captured by the Mongols when he led his army into the region, 209
• About a century later, a single Mongol raid killed over 200,000 Chinese citizens in less than a month, 210
• Events like these prompted the Ming to invest heavily in the construction of the Great Wall, 210
• China also faced significant problems from pirates and bandits who plagued the eastern costal regions, 210-211
• In large part this was caused by very strict Chinese trade rules, which allowed only very limited contract with diplomats from other nations at specific predetermined ports, 210-211
• Only after these laws were relaxed was the piracy problem (many of whom were Japanese or Chinese) brought under control, 211
• This reform occurred in the late sixteenth century, and led to the granting o Macao as a trading base to Portugal in 1577, 211
• In this growing global trade, china mostly exported silk and porcelain and mostly imported American silver, 211
• Many Chinese merchants migrated to such placed as the Philippines and Borneo in order to take advantage of such trading opportunities, 211
• This new trade also brought new food products to china that could be grown in previously submarginal hilly and dry areas, including potatoes, maize and peanuts, 211
• Beginning with the arrival of Italian Jesuit Matteo Rici in Macao (though he later moved to Beijing) in 1583, European missionaries came to have a noticeable impact on the Chinese elite, 211-212
• These religious figures hoped to earn greater respect and influence by learning Chinese language and customs, and presenting themselves in the guise of chinse literati, 212
• In large part they succeeded in this, and a number of monks and friars were accepted into the literati elite circles, 212
• However, most of the Chinese elite, while interested in their knowledge of science, were hostile to and largely perplexed by many of the European religious and philosophical beliefs, including the idea that the universe had a single creator, and calls to give up their concubines, 212

**Factionalism and Political Protest**

• Throughout the Ming dynasty, many scholar officials imbued with the Confucian public service ethic publically opposed the emperor in various policies they considered to be unwise, 212
• Many of the Ming emperors responded very harshly, often imprisoning and flogging such officials (death from these injuries was not uncommon, but direct execution of officials was), 212
• Many officials increasingly came to debate the source of the dynasty’s perceived problems, with some proposing that a return to classical Confucian though was what was needed, 23
• Officials constantly argued with each other concerning such issues, and so it is perhaps not surprising that the emperor grew tired of them, 213
• Confucian officials generally characterised these debates in moral terms, which tended to factionalise any issue as they often restored to casting doubt on the moral credibility of their opponents, 213
Fiscal Collapse

- Despite the economic expansion of the Ming, over the course of the 16th century the government became increasingly less solvent, and by the mid-17th century it was effectively bankrupt, 214
- Military campaigns in Korea and against the Japanese can explain part of this trend, 214
- Also important was the tendency, as occurred in other dynasties, for peasants to lose their lands over time, and the large landlords who took over to find ways of minimising their tax revenues, 214
- The increasingly cash-strapped government was thus left unable to effectively deal with periodic crises, such as occurred in the early 17th century with the ‘Little Ice Age’ that caused lakes to freeze and the growing season to shorten, 214
- In 1627, famine led to the formation of bands of deserts and laid-off soldiers roaming the countryside, 214
- Over the succeeding years these bands spread, and the government proved unable to check their progress, 214
- The situation became increasingly worse as a result of a string of floods, draughts and epidemics around 1639, 214
- In this same year, the Japanese government banned export of silver to China, while hostilities between Chinese and Spanish in the Philippines also restricted the Spanish silver inflow, 215
- This disruption in silver supply led to deflation and consequent financial unrest, which made it even more difficult for the government to collect taxes, 215
- In 1642, a group of revels cut the dykes of the Yellow River, causing a flood that killed several hundred thousand people and triggered a major famine, 215
- As order collapsed and the major rebel groups took more and more territory, the last Ming emperor took his own life in 1644, 215
- Although the Ming dynasty does have some positive accomplishments, overall most of its emperors were unable to effectively control the government, either becoming too autocratic and arbitrary (like Taizu), leaving governance up to the officials and eunuchs, or blocking the action of these latter forces without providing any real leadership themselves, 215-216

Chapter 9: Manchus and Imperialism

Manchu Rule

- The Manchus were not nomadic horseman like the Mongols, but a hunting, farming and fishing people of central Manchuria, descended from the Jurchen peoples of the Jin dynasty, 220
- During Ming times, many Manchus had settled in northern China, acting as traders or soldiers for the Ming, 220
- The Manchu people were crafted into a state under Nurhaci in the late 16th century over a period of thirty years, 220
- He established a bureaucratic form of government, adopting a writing script based on the Mongolian alphabet, and utilising administrative and legal practices of the Chinese, 221
- Nurhaci took advantage of declining conditions in the Ming by renouncing fealty to the emperor in 1616, and subsequently attacking and annexing areas in northern China, 221
• This policy was continued by his son Hong Taiji, and was aided by the defection of Chinese generals with their armies, 221

• Also beneficial to the Manchus was their ability to build up a stable state base outside of Ming territory, something none of the Ming rebels were able to do, 221

• Following the suicide of the last Ming emperor in 1644, the surviving Ming generals thus hoped to use the Manchu armies to restore order to the country, 221

• The Manchus, however, proved to be more interested in ruling the country themselves, 221

• The Manchus confiscated large swaths of land in the north in order to support their armies, much of which was assigned to Manchu noblemen, 223

• All Chinese men were required to demonstrate their submission to the new dynasty by adopting the traditional shaved head with queue hairstyle, 223

• Though humiliated by the decree, most Chinese felt they had little choice but to obey, 223-224

• Ming loyalists continued to resist in southern China for some time, but the last of them were put down by 1673, leaving the Qing in firm control of all of China, 223-224

**Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong**

• Between 1669 and 1799, China was ruled by only three emperors, 224

• All three of them were outstanding rulers, and contributed greatly to the stability that contemporary Europeans saw of China, 224

• These leaders were so successful in part because they were able to win over the Chinese gentry class by allowing them to continue to dominate lower civil service posts, and also because they restored law and order, 224

• At the same time, they kept control over the country and the loyalty over their countrymen by ensuring that all the highest posts were dominated by Manchus, 224

• Kangxi patronised Chinese scholarship and literature, and was also interested in western science and mathematics, even appointing Jesuits to the Imperial board of Astronomy when their predictions proved more accurate than native scholars, 224

• Kangxi’s son Yongzheng was a capable administrator, and made important fiscal reforms that kept the empire on good financial footing, 225

• Qianlong was determined to play the part of the ideal sage emperor, showing great filial devotion to his mother, attending to state business all day, and using his spare time to paint, write poetry and read, 225

• At the same time, he also made efforts to preserve the Manchu identity by patronising projects that glorified Manchu history and culture, 225

• Qianlong did, however, crack down harshly on any anti-Manchu activities, and at one point went on a campaign to destroy thousands of books that he believed contained disparaging references to the Manchus, 225

• He became increasingly paranoid and senile in his later years, promoting a young favourite personal bodyguard to a variety of official positions normally reserved for the most experienced officials, apparently oblivious to his blatant corruption, 226-227

**Territorial Expansion**

• The entity now known as Greater China was established over the 150 course of the reign of these three great emperors, 227
• The first region to be taken was Taiwan, which had been occupied by Portuguese and Dutch settlers since the early 17th century, who in turn were driven out by Ming loyalists in the 1640s.

• The Qing sent a naval expedition to oust these Ming remnants and bring the island into the empire proper in 1683.

• Being equipped with cannons and other modern weaponry, the Qing were finally able to subdue the Mongols, thereby ending 2000 years of northern defence problems.

• As they were under Manchu attack, the Dzungar Mongols tried to expand their territory by invading Tibet in 1717.

• The Qing responded by invading Tibet in 1720 and establishing a permanent Manchu garrison, though local leaders were able to continue in relative autonomy.

• Muslim regions of Central Asia that had been occupied in Han and Tang times were once again reoccupied, their native peoples governed rather lightly and allowed to retain their own religious leaders and not wear the queue.

• In the process of this expansion the Chinese came into contact with the Russians expanding southwards, with whom they made a number of boundary agreements.

• Chinese hold of this region throughout the 19th century was in part maintained because the Russians and the British felt Chinese served as a useful buffer state between them.

**Culture and Society**

• Culture, politics and society during the Qing took a generally conservative trend.

• This may have been partly caused by population growth, which made competition over fixed land and civil service posts more fierce, hence encouraging those in power to enact laws that buttressed and helped maintain the status quo.

• The collapse of the Ming also seemed to be heavy condemnation of the more open and fluid society that emerged at the end of the Ming.

• Finally, the Manchu themselves were in some ways more conservative, and so promoted these trends.

• Social conservatism was manifested by stricter penalties against ‘deviant’ practices such as homosexuality, a turning away from literati interest in drama and fiction, a greater banning of theatre and novels, and a greater concern for the purity of women.

• Non-remarriage of widows, even those engaged as teenagers, reached an all-time high.

• Many Confucian scholars turned against the ‘moral laxness’ and spontaneity of the Wang Yangming school of thought, and increasingly turned to the stricter discipline of the Zhuxi and even original Han texts.

• In line with this trend, there was increasing interest in analysing Han texts and commentaries, particularly to try to identify the oldest and most genuine versions.

• Certain artistic innovations continued, however, as demonstrated by the writing of the famous novel Honglou meng, and the development of a much more expressionist painting style of Zhu da.

**Maritime Trade and Relations with European Nations**

• The balance of power and technological superiority slowly shifted from away from China and towards Europe over the course of the 18th century, without anyone in China really noticing.

• By this time the English had replaced the Dutch as the main European traders with China, mostly via the East India Company.
• After 1759, Europeans were only allowed to trade with the city of Canton, and could only stay there for a few weeks at a time, 234-235
• Trade continued, however, owing to the continued high European demand for silk and porcelain, with a new demand for tea building up over the course of the 18th century, 235
• At the same time, European perceptions of China and Chinese culture became increasingly less complementary, 235
• While 17th century Jesuits had sent back glowing reports of Chinese society to scholars in Europe, by the 18th century scholars like Montesquieu and Rousseau were deriding the antiquity and lack of concern for progress in China, 235
• As relative power and European attitudes shifted, the British became increasingly frustrated with the manner in which they were forced to conduct diplomacy and trade with China, 235
• In particular, they wanted to abolish the tributary system and deal with China with ordinary treaties and ambassadors, 235
• They also wanted easier access to the source of tea production in the Yangzi, and also to offset some of their expenses by selling goods to China, 235
• Charged with making headway in these aims, distinguished ambassador George Macartney was sent to China in 1793, taking a retinue of scholars, artists and musicians, along with hundreds of cases packed with scientific instruments, carpets, knives, glass, and other products designed to attract Chinese interest in European manufactures, 235
• After some difficulty, Macartney was able to see the emperor, but was very displeased at his total lack of interest in diplomatic representation or increased trade with Europe, 235-236

Opium and the Opium War
• The practise of smoking opium along with tobacco spread to China from south-east Asia in the seventeenth century, 236
• Methods for smoking pure opium sap in a pipe for its pain relief and relaxing effects soon were developed, and spread rapidly throughout the eighteenth century, 236
• The trouble was that opium was addictive, with withdrawal symptoms including muscle cramps and twitches, chills and nausea, 236
• The British rapidly expanded the production of opium following their conquest of India, thinking that it would make a good import to offset their payments for Chinese products, 236
• Controlled by the EIC, imports of opium into China were 200 chests in 1729, 4500 chests in 1800, and 40,000 chests in 1838, 236
• Open trading in opium ended after its smoking was banned by the Chinese government in 1813, but importation continued by means of sale of the drug by the EIC to Chinese smugglers, 237
• The government became increasingly concerned about the problem, in part because by the 1830s it had led to the outflow of large amounts of silver from China, 239
• In 1839, the Chinese official Lin Zexu began a strict crackdown, confiscating opium from smokers and importers, arresting Chinese, barricading foreigners in their factories to get them to hand over their stocks, and even writing a letter to Queen Victoria asking for her assistance, 239
• In England, commercial interests began lobbying for war with China to prevent these incursions into trade, 239
• To this end, a British expeditionary force left India in 1840 with sixteen warships, 239
In a series of skirmishes over the next two years, the British managed to capture and occupy several strategic coastal cities, forcing the Chinese to sue for peace and sign the Treaty of Nanjing, 239.

This treaty paid the British a large indemnity, opened five treaty ports to British trade, fixed tariffs at 5%, and allowed British nationals to be tried by British law, 239.

Over the course of the century many more such unequal treaties were forced on the Qing government by the European powers, opening up many more treaty ports, and establishing consulates and embassies in Chinese cities, 240.

A number of treaty port cities also had large areas leased out in perpetuity to Europeans, while Christian missionaries were allowed to preach in Chinese territory and businessmen to build factories, 240.

Another consequence of the Opium War was the continued rise of the opium trade, which was legalised once again after 1860, 240.

By the end of the century it was estimated that 10% of the Chinese population smoked opium, 240.

Internal Adversaries

Until the 1860s, Chinese officials were still much more concerned with internal threats than external European incursions, 240-242.

Rebellions occurred repeatedly throughout the early 19th century, many of them proving very costly and taking years to put down, 240.

Worst of all was the Taiping rebellion, which began in southern China in 1850, 242.

It was led by a discontented religious leader named Hong Xiuquan, who had failed the civil service examinations and subsequently claimed to have received visions from god telling him that he was the younger son of Jesus Christ, 242.

Taking ideas from the bible and Christian missionaries, he established an austere religious movement based on ideas such as giving up alcohol and opium, destroying idols and ancestral temples, and ending foot binding, 242.

In 1850 he instructed his 20,000 followers to sell their property and pool the proceeds into a common treasury, which was used to help fund the military force that he would use to begin his rebellion against the Manchus, declaring himself to be the rightful Heavenly King, 242.

Other discontented individuals and groups joined with the Taipings as they expanded into surrounding territories, while they were also strengthened by the weapons and money that they captured upon taking cities, 242.

The Taipings captured Nanjing in 1853, and there established a capital city for their new state, 242.

There they established a state which equalised land holdings, had total equality for men and women, and had civil service examinations based on the bible and the writings of Hong, 242.

The Taipings held Nanjing for over a decade before the Qing finally managed to put down the revolt at the cost of many lives, 243.

In the end, the rebels suffered from internal dissention in their upper leadership, lack of support from the Chinese gentry (who saw their teachings as anti-Confucian), and lack of support from the westerners (who saw their brand of Christianity as heretical), 243.
• The apparent weakness of the dynasty encouraged other disgruntled groups from all over the country to rise up in rebellion too; it took until 1879 before the last of them were put down, 243
• Although the very fact that the Qing had been able to survive an uprising of this magnitude demonstrates their strength, as many other dynasties had fallen to similar sized revolts, the rebellion did weaken central control over the provinces, and ended Manchu monopoly over military commands, 243-244

Self-Strengthening
• The troubles of domestic uprisings, Russian encroachment from the North and repeated interference of Western Europeans led many officials by the 1860s and 1870s to consider ways to reform the government, 244
• They sought to reduce taxes, repair transportation infrastructure, and induce peasants to return to abandoned farmland, 244
• Certain officials encouraged the establishment of factories and dockyards to produce western-style weapons and warships, 245
• Even these small measures, which failed to produce any significant results, were strongly opposed by many conservative Confucian officials, 245
• All classes of society just seemed to hope that the west would eventually go away, and that copying western technology or political practices was just a sign of defeat and humiliation, 245
• Over the course of the 1870s and 1880s knowledge of western language, culture and institutions did slowly increase, largely due to the posting of Chinese diplomats abroad and the printing of modern newspapers with coverage of world affairs, 245
• Local and some central government officials began sponsoring programs in economic development, including the construction of the first steamships in 1872, the Kaiping coal mines in 1877, a telegraph network in 1879, a cotton spinning factory in 1882, and the first railroad track in 1880, 145
• Such programs, however, were hampered by the continued tight bureaucratic control over the economy, and also the fact that many poor people resisted these government-supported projects, considering them to be unfair use of their tax dollars that would benefit only a small elite, 246

Population Growth and People’s Livelihood
• Between 1650 and 1850, the Chinese population tripled, 246
• This enormous increase can be attributed to the introduction of new world crops, global warming that produced longer growing seasons, and advances in state organisation that increased the effectiveness of famine relief, 246
• This population growth put pressure on land resources, while increased deforestation and use of marginal land contributed to environmental damage, 246-247
• Many peasant families attempted to use some of their surplus agricultural labour by engaging in sideline production at home, often in production of textiles, 247-248
• Feuds between villages, ethnic groups and lineages over land and resources naturally became more common, 248
• Many young men either emigrated to the cities to engage in menial work or joined bandit gangs, 248
• The slow introduction of machine powered manufacturing beginning in the 1870s also initially caused much social disruption by putting many people out of work, 249

**The Chinese Diaspora**

• Millions of Chinese emigrated in the nineteenth century, mostly to South-east Asia, but also to the Americas and Australia, 250
• Largely they were driven by the same factors as contemporary European migrants, including population growth and economic opportunities abroad, 250
• Chinese merchants had settled throughout south-east Asia as early as Ming times, 250
• In Buddhist areas like Thailand and Vietnam they tended to assimilate, but assimilation was much rarer in the Catholic Philippines, or the Islamic and Tribal Malaysia and Indonesia, 250
• Chinese communities in these areas tended to remain separate and distinct, with their own autonomous government, 250
• European colonisation of Malaya, Indonesia and Singapore in the early 19th century generated job opportunities that led to the influx of thousands of Chinese, 250
• Chinese came (mostly from southern China) to work on the tin mines of Malaya, the mines of Borneo, and the sugar and tobacco plantations of Sumatra, 250
• By 1900 there were half a million Chinese living in the Dutch East Indies, 250
• The end of slavery by the 1840s led to the importation of large numbers of Chinese cheap labourers (so-called coolies) in plantations and mines in Cuba, South America, Hawaii and Indonesia, 251
• They were often promised quick riches only to be forced to work in very harsh conditions with little pay, and sometimes no way of actually ending employment, 251
• Thousands migrated to California, Australia and British Columbia in the gold rushes of the 1850s, many of them subsequently moving on to other lines of work such as railway construction, 251
• In 1882 Chinese labourers were banned from obtaining American citizenship, and immigration of their wives and family members was made exceedingly difficult, 251-252
• In 1888 President Cleveland declared that the Chinese people could not assimilate, and posed a threat to America, 252
• Although most of the Chinese immigrants were illiterate and would not have spoken any common language, most were careful to ensure that their children were educated in reading Chinese, thereby forming the linguistic link between diaspora members that spoken language could not, 252

**Total Humiliation**

• In 1894, the Japanese provoked a war with China by intervening in a Korean rebellion, 253
• The Chinese navy was defeated easily, largely because of poor leadership and tactics, as they used foreign-bought weapons, 253-254
• In the subsequent peace treaty the Japanese forced China to give them Taiwan, pay a large indemnity, and allow Japan to open factories in China, 254
• As this was the time of the colonial scramble for Africa, western European nations were soon rushing to secure similar trade, economic and territorial lease rights, 254
• As it now seemed that China was about to be dismembered, a group of officials presented a proposal to the Guangxu emperor for drastic reform, including the building of a railway network and commercial fleet, raising taxes and the establishment of a state bank, 254
In 1898, the emperor enthusiastically set about implementing many of these reforms, only to be stopped after a mere three months by the Empress Dowager Cixi, the real power behind the throne since 1861, 254

She had her nephew Guangxu imprisoned and executed as many of the reformist scholars as she could find; she was afraid that these reforms would undermine the authority of the Manchus, 254

Only two years later, a secret society called the Boxers, which combined martial arts, shamanistic beliefs in special powers and intense xenophobia and hatred of western missionaries, rose up in rebellion around Shandong, 255

They attacked western missionaries and their converts and destroyed their property, 255

The group attracted many of the poor and disenfranchised, including peasants, discharged soldiers, and unemployed workers, 255

Soon the Boxers began harassing foreigners and converts in Beijing and other major cities, the western nations protested and prepared for war, 255

The Empress Dowager decided to support the rebels in the hope that they would end the foreigner problem for her, 255

In the end, all that happened was that the Boxers were put down by some 20,000 foreign troops, and the Chinese government was forced to pay a massive indemnity equal to twice its annual revenues, and agree to a variety of other punishments, 255

Chapter 10: Taking Action

Undermining the Qing Dynasty

By the first decade of the twentieth century, the moral authority of the Qing dynasty had been greatly undermined by the defeat by Japan, the Empress Dowager’s coup against the emperor, and the western intervention in the Boxer rebellion, 262

By this time, Chinese students were studying in the west, and translations of important western political, scientific and philosophical works were being published in Chinese, 263-264

Such thinkers became increasingly ashamed by the backwardness of China, and many of them argued that more western forms of governance would be required to remedy the problems, 264

This does not mean that all these thinkers were pro-democratic; many favoured authoritarian but populist models found in Germany and Japan, 264

A few small reforms were introduced by the imperial government, such as the abolition of the civil service examinations in 1905, the formation of a modern police force in 1908, and discussion about introducing a constitution, 264

These minor reforms were not enough for the more radical intellectuals, who by the 1890s came to be led by Sun Yatsen, who was a Christian and western-trained doctor who had travelled extensively throughout the west, 264-265

His ideology was strongly anti-Manchu and pro rapid modernisation, slogans that were attractive to many of the younger sons of official families whom he came to associate and discuss his ideas with, 265

Sun spent much of his time abroad, attempting to gather funds and support for his movement, which back in China made several unsuccessful attempts to foment rebellion and overthrow the Qing, 265
In 1911, however, one of these revolutionary groups and the army officers with whom they associated finally managed to take control of their city in a coup, 265
They then telegraphed all the provinces, and convinced many of them to declare their independence, 265
The imperial court then turned to the general Yuan Shikai, but rather than launch a counter-insurgency campaign, the general decided to negotiate with the rebels, 265
In the end an agreement was reached whereby the empire would be abolished, and a republic established with Yuan as president, 265
The speed with which the Chinese monarchy was overthrown is indicative of how much Chinese society had changed even since the Taiping rebellion, when the local elites had rallied around the throne, 266
By the early 20th century, however, almost no one thought it in their best interest to keep the empire going anymore, as modernisation seemed to be the only means of advancement, 266
The new republican government never really worked, however, as Yuan Shikai acted very dictatorially and did not accept the results of the 1913 elections – a number of provinces also refused to recognise his authority over them, 266
In January 1916 he even declared himself emperor (a very unpopular move), though this situation was remedied by his death in 1916, 266

Dislodging Authority

The next twelve years are generally referred to as the warlord period, when military commanders, provincial governors, gangsters and local strongmen all build up their own local powerbases, 267
External regions like Mongolia and Tibet declared their independence, 267
Warlords waged destructive wars across northern China, while at a local level bandits caused a great deal of disruption and necessitated the formation of local defence forces, 267
In the meantime, intellectuals debated amongst themselves about what root China should take, 267-270
Some argued for the rejection of traditional Chinese practices and culture, such as Confucian ideology and deference to authority, 270
Others argued that a reform of the Chinese language so that it better represented vernacular usage was necessary to overcome the oppressive weight of traditional thinking, 270
In 1917, China joined the allied war effort, and although they did not send any soldiers, they did send 140,000 laborers who performed non-combat war duties in France, 271
As a result, when news was received that the Versailles peace conference announced that the German concessions in Shandong would be granted to Japan rather than back to China, there was a wave of student and worker uprisings and protests across the country, 271
Intellectual ferment about the correct path for China continued throughout the 1920s, 271-272
Although there was widespread attraction, especially amongst young people, to western liberal values, philosophy, democracy, patriotism and science, there were also some who worried about western culture being too materialistic, and argued for renewed emphasis on Chinese cultural heritage and national essence, 271-272
• Others were more attracted to socialism, which was even further removed from traditional Confucian ideology than liberalism, but was staunchly anti-imperialist and had seemingly proven itself in Russia, 272
• A number of early Marxist study groups were established in Chinese universities, attracting young intellectuals such as Mao Zedong, 272-273
• These study groups might not have amounted to much if they had not come to the attention of Comintern, who quickly sent agents who help the communists organise themselves into a tightly disciplined and centrally controlled political party, which was formally founded in 1921

Building a Party-State
• Ironically, Comintern advisors were also assisting the Nationalists, the main rivals to the communists, in building up their party structure and military power (by 1925 there were about one thousand Russian military advisors in China), 273-274
• The Soviets were supporting the Nationalists because of their broadly socialist ideology, and because a weak china could invite Japanese expansion, which would represent a threat to Russia, 274
• In 1922, the Communists, at Comintern insistence, allied with the Nationalists, 274
• Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Communists were never as large or as powerful as the Nationalists, 274
• After World War I, Chinese industrialisation began to take off, perhaps partly because of reduced competition from Europe and increased foreign investment from Japan, 274
• Many new textile factories were founded, many of them with appalling working conditions, low wages, and often employing child labour, 274
• Unsurprisingly, this led to an increase in strikes and union violence, 274
• The early 1920s also saw a number of incidents of demonstrators and stikers being killed by foreign police, 274-275
• In these circumstances, the time seemed ripe for the Nationalists and the Communists to launch an uprising with the support of the populace to overthrow warlordism, capitalism and imperialism, 275
• The planned military expedition of the Nationalists to the north had to be delayed because of the death of Sun Yatsen in 1925, but was commenced in 1926 with Chiang Kaishek as military commander, and the communists assisting, 275
• In mid-1927, however, the coalition between Communists and Nationalists (shaky to begin with, as many of the latter were strongly anti-communist) broke down, 275
• Chiang Kaishek led the nationalists in a brutal huntdown of communist leaders and sympathisers, many of whom were killed or driven into hiding, 275+
• Meanwhile, the Nationalists proceeded with their reunification project, which was finally completed in 1928 when the last few warlords were won over, 275-276
• This apparently progressive government was quickly recognised the west, and western powers even agreed to begin making reductions of their special privileges, 276
• From 1928 onwards, Chiang Kaishek was the key leader of the Nationalists, 276
• He came from a prosperous land-owning background, and had studied military science in Japan before returning the china and joining the party, 276
Over the course of his first few years of power, Chiang moved to modernise the military and use it to eliminate the remaining warlord rivals, 277.

In this he was fairly successful, utilising arms and advice from Germany, 277.

He also employed western economists and engineers to modernise the banking, currency, taxation and transportation systems, 277.

He also tried to indoctrinate the populace via a fascist-inspired ‘New Life Movement’, 277.

In the early 1930s China seemed to be in the process of modernisation, with an increasing number of intellectuals receiving training at overseas universities, more western goods and modern conveniences in the cities, and western dress often used for work and school, 277.

Even those who remained in China to study increasingly studied western subject matter, authors, and even under western teachers, 278.

Such educational opportunities, however, were only available to the urban elite and middle classes – life for the urban poor was still fairly grim, 278.

One problem with the Nationalist’s modernisation campaigns was that they were focused on the cities and not the countryside, 278.

Population growth continued to put enormous pressure on available land, while many of the technological improvements of modernity had yet to make much of a rural impact, 278.

The demand for Chinese tea and silk also declined owing to increasing Indian and Japanese competition and also the impact of the Great Depression, 278.

Some of the reasons for the lack of rural reform included the fact that many local rulers and powers who had chosen to side with the nationalists were left with significant autonomy, and also because after the defeat of the communists such things as rural land reform were looked upon with suspicion, 278.

**Liberating Women**

These economic and political changes were accompanied by significant social changes, most notably the changing status of women in society, 279.

One of the biggest targets of the reformers was the practise of footbinding, which was seen as evidence of Chinese backwardness and increasingly a source of embarrassment, 279.

The earliest anti-footbinding societies were established in the 1890s, and by the 1930s the practise was only being continued in a few scattered outlying areas, 279.

There was a rise in feminist activism, with such pioneers as Qiu Jin calling for an end to arranged marriages, wife-beating and efforts of women to please men, 279.

The number of schools and universities accepting females also increased dramatically over the early twentieth century, with an increasing number of women entering careers such as nursing and the civil service, 279-280.

Female activists also fought for changes to women’s legal rights, 281.

This led in 1930 to the introduction of a new law by the Nationalists that gave women divorce rights, the right to refuse arranged marriages, the right to equal inheritance of property with sons, and the right to equal pay for equal work, 281.

While important for urban women, these changes had little impact in the countryside (nor was there much effort to enforce them there), and indeed most rural dwellers did not even know the law had been changed, 281.
The growing industrial cities provided large employment opportunities for women, especially in prostitution and cotton mills, 281

Many of these female employees were young and illiterate, recruited from the countryside and paid very low wages, working in virtual debt servitude, 281

By the end of the 1920s, most rural villages had given up footbinding and allowed their children to attend modern schools, but that was about the extent of the modernisation, 284

Defending Against Japanese Invasion

The Japanese gained a dominant position in Manchuria after defeating the Russians in 1905, 282

In 1915, Japan was able to wrangle a variety of economic privileges out of Yuan Shikai, as well as the right to place troops in Manchuria, ostensibly to protect the railroads and other Japanese economic interests, 282

In 1931, Japanese soldiers set off a bomb in Manchuria to give them an excuse to occupy the entire region in 'self-defence', 282

China complained to the League of Nations, but nothing was really done, 282

Chiang was of the opinion that they should not even bother trying to resist the Japanese until they had achieved internal unity, 282

After being kidnapped by soldiers in 1936, however, he was finally convinced to form a united front with the communists against Japan, 282

In 1937 Japan instigated another incident in attempt to expand their territory further, but this time Chiang decided to offer resistance, hoping to win a quick victory and shock Japan into negotiating, 283-285

Instead, the Japanese launched a full-scale invasion of China, 285

Within a year, the Japanese had captured all of eastern China, an area encompassing 40% of the population and 95% of the industry, 285

What with this lack of industry, the closure of the Burma road in 1942 and constant Japanese bombing, the Chinese were unable to rebuild their forces, and most of their army continued to consist of poorly trained conscripts, 285

Following a tactical disagreement in January 1941, cooperation between the communists and the Nationalists largely ended, 285

Meanwhile, the US increasingly came to China’s aid, which was helped greatly by Chiang’s American wife, and also Roosevelt’s lobbying to include China in the major allied conferences, 285-286

The Communist Victory

The three critical factors for the success of the Communists were the failings of the Nationalists (widespread corruption, warlordism, poverty, inflation, etc), the successful local policies and programs of the Communists to assist villagers and use the political and military situation to convince them that communism and radial change was needed, and also the charisma and organising ability of Mao Zedong, including his ability to mould the Communist party into an effective and obedient force, 286

Mao was from a fairly well-off farming family. He attended school in the new education system, and worked for a time in the library of the University of Beijing, coming into contact with newly formed communist meetings there, 286

He was the Hunan delegate to the first Communist party meeting of 1921, 286
Following the Nationalist Purges of 1927-28, the Communists who survived scattered, some hiding in major cities, and others seeking rural strongholds, 286

Mao led a few thousand men to establish the Jiangxi Soviet, which soon gained popular support through their programs of land reform and other social actions, 286-287

These years were highly uncertain times, especially owing to the risk of betrayal by their own members to the Nationalists, 287

By October 1934, the surviving communist soldiers and cadres were forced to break out of the Nationalist soldiers who were encircling their base in Jiangxi, and begin the ‘Long March’ north in search of a new base – most wives and children had to be left behind, 287

By the time the year long retreat, which covered six thousand miles and had to fight against the Nationalists virtually the whole way, reached its new base in Shaanxi, only ten percent of the original 80,000 men were still alive, 287

During these years at Yanan, Mao read the Marxist classics, composed many of his own famous writings, and began giving lectures about his own version of Chinese history and Marxist theory, 287-288

Having failed in the cities, he was forced to reinterpret Marxist theory to make the peasants the vanguard of the revolution, 287-288

Also during these years, Mao used a combination of political machinations and intense propaganda/thought reform campaigns to manuver himself and his own ideology into paramount position, while also crushing all dissent, 288

The Japanese invasion also provided the perfect opportunity for the Communists to begin building up their popular support with the peasants, 288

The Japanese forces were only able to effectively control the large cities and railways, and so there was plenty of room for communist and non-communist guerrilla forces in the rural areas, 288-289

The Japanese were highly unpopular with the peasants as a result of their seizing of women for prostitution, men for forced labour, and for responding to any signs of resistance with extreme brutality, 289

The communists gained popularity by not stealing peasant’s crops, helping with the harvest, and implementing slow but popular economic changes, such as land reform through graduated taxes rather than land redistribution, 289

Class struggle was not emphasised, and persons of all backgrounds were encouraged to participate in the party meetings, 289-290

Following the defeat of Japan, the US tried to avert a civil war by convincing Chiang to establish a government that allowed other parties, but this was unsuccessful, 290

Despite the enormous military advantage of the Nationalists, however, they had grown so unpopular with the people (largely as a result of rapid inflation, maladministration and widespread corruption), that the communists were able to win in less than two years of actual fighting, 290
Chapter 11: The People’s Republic

Imposing Control

- Upon gaining control of the country, the communists followed the organisation model of the Soviet Union, with an extended hierarchy of communist bodies extending from the level of villages, school, army units and factories up though county and provincial levels, the Central Committee and the Politburo, with Mao as the paramount leader, 295-296
- Immediately the communists took control of the currency and the banks, and nationalised all key industries, including the railways and foreign trade, 296
- The Five-Antis campaign of 1951-52 was launched to root out the less cooperative capitalists still in control of various businesses, 296
- Through this process, the government forcibly gained control of many more factories and other businesses, 296
- Although many smaller shops and plants were still in private hands, the state soon gained control over them through its domination of the distribution of supplies and labour, 296
- The five year plan for 1953 to 1957 strongly emphasised heavy industry, with development funded by Soviet loans and assisted by Soviet technicians, 296
- The Chinese involvement in the Korean war had the effect of increasing the legitimacy of the Communist government, as they had successfully stood up to the imperialist powers, 297
- However, it also had the effect of firmly cutting off China from the west, thereby intensifying and prolonging the conflict with Taiwan (now under US protection), and hence leading to a campaign to round up former Nationalist officials (suspected of being spies) that led to the death and imprisonment of hundreds of thousands, 297

Collectivizing Agriculture

- Land reform began with the sending of cadres out to villages with the task of assigning the population into one of six class rankings, which were based on whether or not the family rented out some or all of its land, and whether or not they worked part or full time for others, 298
- Thenceforth the land reform process different depending on the region and the local circumstances – sometimes it was more violent than others, though often local grievances (many of which had nothing to do with land ownership) were used to the communist’s advantage, 298
- The number who died in this process probably numbered in the millions, 298
- Land redistribution was followed by organisation of the peasants into collective co-operatives, usually one per village, though some larger villages were divided into several, 298-299
- At first families were compensated based on their inputs of labour, tools, land and animals, but before long only labour inputs were renumerated, thereby effectively eliminating all inequality, 298-299
- Many of the old landlords who had had their lands confiscated were publically humiliated, with party members encouraging peasants to speak out against them, and then often beaten or executed, 298-299
- The state took five to ten percent of each cooperatives output as tax, allowed each peasant to retain a meagre portion as rations, and then ‘purchased’ the remainder at prices set by the state, 299
They also banned all interregional trade as capitalist ‘speculation’, leading to the decline of trade and the loss of many peasants of side-income activities like operating oil presses, paper mills or other small enterprises, 299-300

A new class of elites arose in the villages, generally those who became party cadres and hence local leaders for one reason or another, 300

Some were selected because of the zeal they showed in persecuting the old landowners; other better off middle peasants were selected because they were literate and so could keep books, 300

These new leaders were successful when they could effectively balance the demands of the central government for higher production whilst also keeping the local population motivated and settling any disputes that arose between them, 300-301

New China

Part of the goal of the communists was to spread their ideas of the new vision of ‘liberated’ china and its role in the world, 301

As such, a Ministry of Education was established to control school curriculum, textbooks, and promote the use of the common language, 301

Numerous mass organisations were established, including the Youth League, Women’s Federation, and the Labour Union Federation, 302

Party workers who organised and ran these meetings were to simultaneously learn from the peasants, keep an eye on them, and get them on the side of the new policies, 302

The city of Beijing was remodelled as the capital of new China, with new monuments and builds to the people and the revolution erected, the walls around the city torn down, and Tiananmen Square constructed, 302

An attack was launched on many aspects of traditional Chinese culture, which were labelled as feudal superstitions, 302

The 1950 Marriage Reform Act reintroduced many of the same gender equalising laws that the nationalists had introduced in 1930, but the communist’s much greater efforts to publicise and implement them meant that they had much more impact, 302

Other factors which contributed to the decline of the old familial loyalty included the end of property division owing to collectivisation and nationalisation of businesses, the entry of more children into schools and communist party organisations, the mobilisation of more women into the workforce, 302

China as a Multi-National State

Communist china was remade from an empire into a multi-national state of distinct but equal ethnic groups, 303

This policy was copied from the USSR, which had devised it as the best method of justifying retaining all the old lands of the Russian Empire, 303

Identifying and labelling all of china’s ethnic groups was an important task completed mostly over the 1950s, and resulting in the creation of some fifty ethnic groups and the establishment of many autonomous provinces and counties, 303

Satisfaction with this new arrangement was by no means universal, especially in Tibet, 303
Subordinating Intellectuals

- Although Mao insisted that being red was more important than being expert, in practice most intellectuals and experts were kept in their positions regardless of their class background, 305-306
- Indeed, many of the intellectuals in the cities were initially highly supportive of the new communist government, with many volunteering to help however they could, even returning overseas to do so, 305-306
- At the same time, the regime went to great lengths to retain control of this new group of intellectuals, subjecting schools, universities and publishing houses to ‘re-education’ programs, 306
- Independence of intellectuals was also greatly diminished by the abolition of private property and investments off of which intellectuals could earn a living, as well as any independent presses or colleges for whom they could work, 306
- By 1956 Mao was so confident that he had won over the educated that he invited them to help identify problems with the party by launching criticisms of it in the ‘Hundred Flowers’ campaign, 307
- Mao was shocked by the enthusiasm and amount of response, and so quickly called off the campaign and replaced it with an anti-rightist purge, 307
- Many intellectuals or even those who had been heard to express sympathy with some of their criticisms were condemned to hard labour, sent to re-education programs, or banished to the countryside, 307
- Mao was determined to put the intellectuals in their place, as employees of the state with no culture of their own separate of that of the working classes, 307

The Great Leap Forward

- By late 1957, it seemed to Mao that growth using the soviet model was too slow, too dependent upon experts, and too constrained by lack of capital, 308
- Mao wanted to use China’s vast labour force to modernise more rapidly; he wanted to unleash the creative energies of the Chinese masses to overtake Britain within fifteen years, 308-309
- Peasants were re-organised into massive communes, which it was believed would be more efficient and allow the peasants to gain modern benefits like schools and hospitals, 309-310
- Economists, engineers and other experts had been removed in the anti-rightist campaigns, so the plans for the Great Leap Forward were instead formulated by party cadres, 310
- Peasant men were mobilised military-style for major construction and engineering projects, while schools, factories and communes were all encouraged to establish their own small steel furnaces, 310-311
- Some of the bridges, railroads, mines, irrigation works and power-stations that were built proved to be useful, but often the projects were undertaken with such haste and so little technical expertise that serious mistakes were made, 311
- Furthermore, with so many men removed from agricultural labour, much of the 1958 harvest was left to rot in the fields, 312
- Food production also fell over the next two years, although the effect of this was hidden by party cadres who continued to report large increases to show their revolutionary zeal, 312
Because government requisitions were based on these reports, far too much food was taken from the countryside; between 1959 and 1962, about thirty million people died due to lack of food, 312

Another long-term result of the Leap was the introduction of population registrations which bound rural dwellers to their local villages and particularly prevented them from moving to the cities, 312-313

Life in the cities was far better than that in the countryside, as urban dwellers had access to education, state jobs, subsidised food and rent, pensions and health care, 313

The Cultural Revolution

The Great Leap Forward was based on the idea that mobilization of the people could be used to achieve great ends and transform society – this was Mao’s belief, 313

Somewhat ironically, this contradicted the traditional communist materialist interpretation of history, which held that ideas were largely irrelevant, and what counted was the structure of the economic and social system, 313

Cultural and ideological change would thus naturally follow from economic change, 313

Following the failure of the Great Leap, Mao withdrew from much of the active decision making, and many other party men adhering to more traditional communist beliefs came to the fore, 313

Mao feared that this represented an end to the revolution (which he believed should be a perpetual process), and the beginning of the rise of a new technocratic elite, as had occurred in the soviet Union, 314

The Cultural Revolution began when a group of radical students criticised the Beijing mayor for allowing the performance of a play that they construed as critical of Mao, 314

Mao encouraged these students and demoted those party officials who tried to keep them under control, thereby leading to the rise of many similar ‘Red Guard’ student groups across the country, 314-315

In late 1966, eight massive Red Guard rallies were held in Tiananmen square, 315-316

Many young people responded with enthusiasm to Mao’s calls to make revolution, directing their attentions to alleged revisionist and capitalist burgeois, 315-316

Red Guards roamed the streets, breaking into the homes, publically humiliating and destroying the property of teachers, intellectuals, cadres, and those of bad class backgrounds, 316

Mao encouraged the students via the newspapers and public appearances, and even sent the students to factories to try to get the workers to join the students in helping Mao over throw the ‘corrupt and revisionist’ party officials, 316

As the cultural revolution spread increasingly out of control, Mao turned to the army as the only organisation capable of restoring order, 317

He ordered the army to both help the leftist groups seize power, and also ensure that industrial and agricultural production continued, 317

In practise, the army often pursued its own interests by opposing the radical student groups, 317

Mao in turn responded by calling upon the Red Guards to seize military power from the ‘capitalist inroaders’ in the army, 317
By mid 1967, the situation had deteriorated into a confused struggle between different factions of the Red Guards and workers movements, and between these movement and the national and local military forces, 317

Communications and transport came to a standstill, and consumer goods became scare, 319

Faced with the prospect of imminent civil war, Mao in July 1968 was forced to moderate the movement by disbanding the Red Guards and sending the students out into the countryside to ‘learn from the peasants’, 319

Mao used the army to regain control and restore order, but this only led to the rise of a period of ‘state terror’, when the military began a paranoid campaign of seeking out traitors amongst the party and intellectuals, 319

The Cultural Revolution also had an important effect on the countryside, as the promotion of extreme collectivism and suppression of all side activities (even raising chickens) as incipient capitalism led to increasing dominance of the local party leaders over the peasants, and increasing hostility between the two, 319

This was in stark contrast to the participatory revolution espoused by Mao, 319

After the death of Jin bao in 1971, Mao’s wife Jiang Qing became the leader of the radical faction, pursuing her ideology by emphasising strongly ‘Proletarian’ art and culture, 319

The more moderate Zhou Enlai was still in control of foreign affairs, and in the more fluid environment following the death of Jin Bao he made efforts to balance the perceived threat of the USSR by making overtures to the United States, 320

He also rehabilitated expelled leaders like Deng, before his death in 1976, 320

This led to the brief revival of the radicals led by Jiang Qing (Deng was ousted again), but this came to an abrupt end after the death of Mao, when the ‘Gang of Four’ were promptly arrested, 320

Daily Life under Socialism

The victory of the communist party in the civil war produced a substantial change in how ordinary people lived, 321

Street life in the cities changed considerably, as virtually all men and women adopted similar clothing (for men mostly buttoned-up jackets) and hairstyles, and beggars and prostitutes disappeared, 321

The building style imported from the soviet union was employed even long after the break, and buildings were always festooned with political slogans and posters in the ‘socialist realism’ style, 321

Loudspeakers often played news and political information to reinforce these posters, 321

People in the cities benefitted from inexpensive state health care and lifetime guaranteed government employment at one of the state shops, factories or offices, 322

There was no risk of being laid off when work slowed, and no incentive to work particularly hard, 322

In the cities, most people finished middle school or high school, and then were assigned a job, with the state guaranteeing full employment by compelling factories to hire more workers than they needed, 322

Accommodation was often provided by the workplace, 322
Most people lived in cramped two to four storey housing, with many families having only one or two rooms and sharing bathrooms and kitchens, 323

Housing was cheap, usually only representing about 10% of the worker’s income, but in order to get a new housing assignment one had to persuade the bureaucrats responsible to grant you special favors, 323

Most people used their remaining wages to save for manufactured goods like watches, thermos bottles and bicycles, 323

Neighbourhood associations, women’s and youth groups all formed an important part of life, in some extent substituting as the focus of community life for the Buddhist and Daoist temples that the state had forcibly closed down, with their clergy laicized, 324

Some of the elderly persisted in religious practise, but young people were taught to see religion as a feudal superstition, 324

Many urban couples had both parents working, and so required childcare, which was usually provided either by a grandmother or by workplace childcare facilities, 324

Some of these lasted all week, with children dropped off on Monday mornings and picked up after work on Saturday, 324

This was necessary because many people worked long six-day weeks, with substantial commuted, and in the absence of fridges had to shop every day, often having to wait for long periods on queues, 324

Life in the countryside was very different, as most people were not state employees but members of farming cooperatives, whose income fluctuated with the harvest, 324-325

Collectives invested in machinery to make work easier, but did not provide pensions, so the elderly depended on their sons to support them, 325

Rural areas had elementary schools funded by local regions, but education beyond this level was very difficult unless one joined the army or the party, 325

Medical care was much more rudimentary than in the cities, although the party took pride in providing ‘barefoot doctors’, who were sent out to work in rural areas with three to six months training, and could handle only simple cases, 325

Migration to the cities was effectively banned in 1958, thereby making advancement for country people very difficult, 325

Many of the young people sent out into the countryside in the 1960s and 1970s found the prevalence of disease and rough food intolerable, and greatly disliked the manual labour they had to do in the fields, 325

The government had told them they would be helping the backward areas by bringing them higher levels of education, but the rural people in reality found little need for them, 325

Family bonds were weakened under the communists, in part because father’s no longer had property to pass on to their sons, in part because of easier divorce laws (actually the laws were similar to the Nationalist ones but were more widely publicised), and also because of government encouragement of children to separate from flawed parents, 325-326

Some degree of parental matching in marriages continued in the countryside, but to a lessened extent and severity, while in the cities young people increasingly chose their own spouses, and waited a few years before getting married so that they could move into their own apartment, 326
Large families of four to six children were the norm under Mao, who encouraged population growth as a sign of national strength, 326-327

Birth rates initially rose as a result of reduced infant mortality, but gradually started to fall (at least in urban areas) owing to free access to free abortions and sterilizations, 327

There was a widespread public outpouring of grief when Mao died in 1976, 328

Mao’s achievements in China include the elimination of inflation, unemployment, increasing the proportion of the population in school, providing housing for everyone, and improving the public health system sufficiently to increase life expectancy substantially, 328

On the downside, life became much more uniform, regimented and controlled, with no real opportunity to express one’s opinion, or chose where to work or were to live, 328

Several decades of tight government control over the media and education also did much to homogenise Chinese culture and identity, 328

Chapter 12: China Since 1976

Deng Xiaoping and the Reform Programme

The death of Mao led to a power struggle between the radical egalitarian ideologues (represented by Mao’s widow Jiang Qing), and the technocratic and pragmatic victims of the Cultural Revolution, led by Deng, 332-333

Immediately following Mao’s death, a relatively obscure compromise figure was placed in power (Hua Guofeng), however after only one month, Hua arranged for the arrest of Jiang and three of her closest associates, the so-called ‘Gang of Four’, 333

They were blamed for all the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, 333

Deng Xiaoping had twice been outed from power during the Cultural Revolution, but managed to take over as supreme leader at the end of 1978, 333

Deng denounced the anti-intellectualism of the 1960s, blaming it for the creation of a ‘generation of mental cripples’, and pushed for reform of the universities, 333-334

He admitted that China was poor and backward, and called for the use of technology and scientific education to improve the nation, 334

Thousands of students sent out into the countryside by Mao were brought back, western teachers were brought to China to teach English, while Chinese students were allowed to leave to study abroad, 334

The system of collective agriculture was dismantled, with land and assets divided between the peasants, and after 1987 they were allowed to buy and sell land, 334

Though some complained about unfair distribution, food output dramatically increased, 334

Over the course of the 1980s, the government loosened its control over vegetables, meat, and other commodities, allowing peasants to open their own private ventures, fish farmers, and small factories, 334-335

Similarly, although heavy industry and central planning remained dominant, private restaurants, beauty parlours and other small businesses were allowed to be established, 335

Deng abandoned Mao’s push for self sufficiency, and created special economic zones and new diplomatic and cultural exchanges with the west in order to stimulate foreign investment, 335

By the late 1980s, many foreign manufacturing firms were flooding into China to take advantage of the low wages, 335
Particularly in the eastern coastal provinces, the construction of new highways enabled the rise of many industrial centres in medium sized interior cities, often specialising in the production of a single good, 336-337

For example, Shengzhou produced 40% of the world’s neckties by the early 2000s, while Qiaotou produces 60% of the world’s buttons and 80% of its zippers, 336-337

Other cities produce clothing, socks, cigarette lighters, electric plugs, umbrellas, playing cards, faucets and lightbulbs, 337

The collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s renewed Deng’s conviction that central planning had failed, 336

He told the people not to worry if policies were capitalist or socialist, just so long as they would make China prosperous, 336

Indeed, soon the constitution was rewritten to describe China as a ‘socialist market economy’, 336

Chinese GDP and foreign trade grew rapidly over the 1990s and 2000s, especially helped by Chinese entrance into the WTO in 2001, 337-338

This rapid economic development brought about a steep decline in illiteracy, the number of people living in poverty, and infant mortality, 338

The transition towards capitalism, however, was far from complete, as even by 2008 the state retained control of such key sectors as banking, energy, steel, and the media, 338

Also, state-firms and those connected with them had much easier access to credit, construction permits, and other such things that did those who were not, 338

Smuggling, fraud, counterfeiting and inflation have also proven to be significant problems, 338

With the death of Deng in 1997, China no longer had a single supreme leader, but rather was ruled by a collective group of high party officials, 339

The Party-State and its Critics

Beginning in 1978, the government tried to regain support by reverting past wrongs, 339

Many of those who had been declared ‘rightist’ were rehabilitated, and if relevant were released from exile or prison, 339

The party was progressively purged of many of its older, poorly educated ideologues, while new, better educated young blood was sought in the form of recruits, 339

Centralization within both the party and the government was relaxed in favour of increased local control over funding and programs, 339

Under Mao, the legal profession had effectively been eliminated, with the minister of Justice being abolished in 1959 and all government legal experts losing their jobs – the country was thenceforth run by bureaucrats rather than by codified laws, 340

Because such a system was inimical to foreign investors (who required enforceable contracts), the government began in 1979 to begin training lawyers and restablishing the legal code and the concept of the rule of law, 340

Although more and more people began turning to the court system to restrain the arbitrary decisions of government bodies, the judges often failed enforcing their dictates against the party leaders, hence the rule of law concept remained more of a goal than a reality, 340

Another problem facing the government beginning in the late 1970s was the genesis and dispersion of new ideas and ideologies that threatened the party line, 340
While the party was willing to give up its monopoly over information, they retained the right to censor publications and condemn writers and thinkers who expressed ‘counter revolutionary’ thoughts, such as the ‘big character poster’ pro-democracy activists of 1978 and 1979.

In 1986, students at 150 campuses across China launched a protest demanding for democratic reform and improved living standards in dormitories.

The protests were suppressed, and Deng dismissed the party secretary general Hu Yaobang for being too conciliatory towards the students.

Student protests began again in April 1989, first with a modest student parade to commemorate the death of Hu Yaobang.

Encouraged by the support of the Beijing citizens and the opposition of the government, the students progressively increased their demands, calling for more democracy, political openness and an end to corruption.

Student protests, especially in Tiananmen square, continued throughout May, with student numbers ranging from a few thousand up to one million.

Newspapers put out by the students indicated that the majority of the public were sympathetic to their demands, and indeed some of the worker’s groups even joined in the demonstrations.

This was a humiliation for Deng and other party leaders, and so near the end of May the more conciliatory party secretary general Zhao Ziyang was ousted from office, and martial law declared.

In early June, troops, tanks and artillery were brought into Beijing to forcibly break up the protests, leading to the death of several hundred civilians.

In the aftermath, all of the party’s 48 million members had to submit a self-evaluation, in order to root out sympathizers.

Since the protests, political discourse in China has been fairly subdued.

There is some opposition – farmers regularly complain about the imposition of new taxes or forced relocation as a result of government protests, while other groups organise on behalf of workers rights.

Journalists are allowed to write about corruption and the decadent lifestyles of some of the officials – indeed, it is often not clear where the censors will draw the line, and on several occasions writers have been banned, rehabilitated, and then banned again.

The 1990s also saw the rise of a new religious organisation called Falun Gong, which mixed Buddhist and Daoist beliefs with physical exercises supposed to nurture one’s qi.

In 1999, the group was banned by the government following its passive protest outside the party leader’s residential complex in Beijing, asking for recognition for their teachings.

In essence, the group had shown themselves to be too independent and politically organised, and so represented a threat to the government.

Why China is Traditional

If you want to preserve power rather than seize it, you want to emphasis tradition and stability.

This has been very evident in the Chinese government since the 1980s, which has effectively ceased being a revolutionary party, and tends to emphasise the Imperial past.

This emphasis on the past and classicism is why Chinese history doesn’t seem to involve very many changes.
• Instead of emphasising substantial change, it seems to emphasise periods of strength and weakness

Diverging Standards of Living
• Early on, Deng declared that he would tolerate increasing inequalities, as it was acceptable that some should get rich before everyone else, 343
• This remark proved to be prescient, as there quickly arose a wealthy class of individuals (many of whom with good political connections) who could afford lavish homes and imported luxury goods, 343
• Because industrial growth was concentrated in the coastal cities, tens of millions of rural Chinese migrated to the east in search of work, leading to the rise of shanty towns and increased urban crime, 343-344
• From the death of Mao to 2008, the urban portion of the Chinese population increased from 20 to 50 percent, 344
• Many of this growth occurred in medium sized cities, such that by 2008 China had 92 cities with one million people or over, compared to 26 in the US and EU combined, 344
• The 1980s and 1990s were a time of an enormous construction boom, especially after the private buying and selling of houses was fully legalised in 1992, 344-345
• Many small residential homes were replaced by high-rise flats, and so much extra housing became available that the average living space per person doubled, 344
• Now it became increasing rare for urban families to have to share bathrooms or use public toilets, something very common in Mao’s time, 344
• Consumer culture did not really reach China until the 1990s, when newly wealthy urban dwellers finally gained access to consumer goods like TVs, washing machines, refrigerators, mobile phones and cars, 345-346
• By 2006, already about one in ten Chinese people had internet access, 345
• There were, however, some downsides to modernisation, especially the rising unemployment of older manual workers caused by the closure of many of the old state industries – these workers were often unable to find jobs in the midst of competition from younger workers, 346
• Many rural areas also remained stuck in poverty, which in some respects was worsened, as the collapse of the commune system meant the end of free provision of health care by ‘barefoot doctors’ and free schooling which had previously been paid for by the commune, 347
• Now, families increasingly had to pay for their own medical care and schooling, something they were often simply not capable of doing, 347-348
• Many schools in the countryside are in very poor condition, with their teachers poorly paid, 348

Environmental Degradation
• Mao pushed for agricultural expansion programs such as terracing mountains, plowing grasslands and damming rivers with little thought for the ecological consequences of such actions, 348
• Under Deng, industrial development led to increased water and air pollution levels, leading to more deaths from cancer and respiratory diseases, 349
• Runoff from farms and factories has made the water of many rivers unsafe to drink, while the increased number of cars has further contributed to air pollution, 349
• Use of river and groundwater for irrigation has also lowered the water tables in many areas and caused old rivers to run dry for part of the year, 349
• The Chinese government, in part moved by increasing citizen activism on environmental issues, has since 2000 become more committed to solving these problems, although enforcement of new programs often lagged as a result of conflicting goals at a local level, 350

**Shrinking Families**

• Under Mao, ancestor worship and strong family solidarity were discouraged, while the traditional male domination of women was undermined by increases women’s rights to divorce and promotion of women doing traditional men’s jobs, 351-352
• These policies, which were not reversed under Deng, do seem to have had a significant social impact, especially in the countryside, as people increasingly select their own spouses and seek for more privacy and independence from their parents, 352
• However, increased economic pressures and diminished government role in the economy during the reform era seem to have impacted women more harshly than men, and women’s suicide rates are very high in China, 352
• While Mao had promoted population growth, the rise to power of Deng meant that the Chinese leadership increasingly saw the need to limit China’s population, which was then approaching one billion, 352-353
• A policy was adopted where urban families could have one child, and rural families one or two, 353
• Birth quotas were set for specific regions, and during the harshest phases, pregnant women who already had a child were strongly encouraged by local officials to have an abortion, 353
• The consequences of this policy included a drastic drop in the birth rate, an increasingly aging population (especially in future decades), and an every greater discrepancy of male to female births, which thanks to ultrasound and selective abortion reached 119 to 100 nationwide by 2005, 353

**Culture and the Arts**

• During the reform period, religion underwent a revival, with the government helping to rebuilt churches, mosques and temples that had been destroyed during the cultural revolution, 354
• The relaxation of censorship also permitted a revival of investigative journalism (especially in relation to corruption), philosophical re-examination of Marxism, publishing of novels and poetry, exploration of sexuality (previously taboo), and even criticism of the harsh treatment of the cultural revolution, 354
• Western popular culture made significant inroads in the 1980s, especially in the form of rock music, short skirts and outrageous hairstyles, and so on, 354
• The government made an attempt to suppress such ‘bourgeois liberalism’ in 1983 and intermittently since, but this has not met with much success, 354
• In the 1980s, painters, artists and sculptors increasingly abandoned socialist realism and began experimenting with more modern and provocative avant-garde styles, 354-355
• Chinese cinema, which had been dominated by the boring and formulaic state-produced films during the Mao era, saw a rapid revival in the 1990s, 355
• Although many domestic and foreign films were banned, there arose an enormous circulation of pirated DVDs and VCRs, 355
China and the World

- China was angered at the Vietnamese invasion of the Khmer Rouge regime that it supported in Cambodia in 1979, and so ordered an invasion of Vietnam, 356
- The Chinese suffered many casualties but failed to achieve their objectives and soon withdrew, the incident serving to highlight the need for modernisation of the military, 356
- Chinese foreign policy since Deng has concentrated mostly on building friendly foreign relations in order to promote its economic objectives, including joining the WTO, IMF and World Bank, 356
- Beginning with the lifting of travel restrictions to China in 1987, many Taiwanese visited and even moved to the mainland, partly in order to take advantage of the lower wages available there, 357