

# Thematic Timelines: Chinese Civilization

## Period 1: 1200–1450 CE

- Buddhism, northern nomads, and Daoism's influence allow greater **egalitarianism** in China, although it is still firmly patriarchal
- Some concubines and wives of emperors exert political power and influence (**Empress Wu** – 690-700s BCE)
- **Sui Dynasty** 581-616 – reunited China after warring state period following the fall of the Han
- Sui Dynasty constructs **Grand Canal**, connecting northern and middle China economically
- **Tang Dynasty** – 618-907 – established the lasting state system of China, expanded its borders into Central Asia (stopped by Umayyad caliphate)
- Chinese conquests were absorbed and made ethnically Chinese through **acculturation** and **intermarriage**
- **Edicts Against Buddhism** initiated in Tang China in 843 by **Emperor Wuzong**, banning and demolishing many Buddhist shrines and temples for Tang profit, but also opposed (by Han Yu) to Buddhism's social opposition of Confucian hierarchy and social structure
- **Song Dynasty** (960-1279) considered the Golden Age of Imperial China, as Chinese population, land, and economics flourish, with Chinese iron and steel production growing and remaining #1 until the I.R. in Europe
- Han Yu promotes **Neoconfucianism** (a revived and renewed focus on Confucianism) reinforced in Song Dynasty with examination systems and spread to Korea and Japan
- **Foot binding** a sign of upper-class women, and sexist practice continued until 20<sup>th</sup> century; it was a sign of feminine beauty and kept women indoors, fragile, and dependent on men

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- **Tribute system** developed (originated in the Han Dynasty) wherein trade with China only granted by the offering of immense gifts, and submission to the Chinese emperor, also requiring his permission
- The idea of the '**Middle Kingdom**' (originally from Han China) developed as China saw itself as the 'civilized' center of the world, with all other peoples and culture views as inferior or barbaric
- Tribute states established in Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia (**Champa**), providing tributes to China in return for guarantees of sovereignty and protection
- **Chinese Diaspora** – thousands of Chinese traders disperse across East and Southeast Asia, forming Chinese-based trade cities and settlements, such as **Singapore**, spreading Chinese influence and power
- Northern invaders from **Manchuria** conquer much of the Northern Song dynasty, starting the Northern Jin Dynasty (later conquered by Mongols)
- **Mongols** conquer the Southern Song Dynasty, issuing the **Yuan Dynasty** and 100 years of Mongol / Khanate rule (1271-1368), started by **Kublai Khan** and the **Great Khanate**
- **Ming Dynasty** overthrows the Yuan Dynasty, ruling as the last and most affluent Han Chinese dynasty from 1368-1644
- **Zheng He**, a Chinese admiral, led a massive Chinese fleet around the Indian Ocean and Africa to demonstrate Chinese power, influence, collect and provide gifts, and brought back many exotic goods and animals to China
- **Xuanzang**, like Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo, traveled to other cultures and was often negative and critical of foreigners and their customs



# Thematic Timelines: Chinese Civilization

## Period 2: 1450 CE–1750 CE

- **Ming Dynasty** established as the last Han Chinese Dynasty
- Ming continued the practice of the **Tribute System**, as well as seeing China as the superior, **Middle Kingdom** to all others as 'barbarians'
- Ming textiles, silks, porcelain, and teas all highly sought goods by non-Chinese (especially Europeans)
- While the Portuguese and other Europeans controlled trade in the IOTN, Chinese navy defeated the Portuguese navy in 16<sup>th</sup> century; European activity in China limited to certain ports and rents/tributes paid to Ming gov.
- **Christian missionaries** from Spain entered and converted many Chinese
- Modern China's borders formed with the Ming conquest of **Tibet** in the 17<sup>th</sup> century
- The Ming Dynasty abandoned naval and international spending, focusing instead on bolstering the Great Wall and spending on defense in the north of China
- In order to fund military and defense spending against northern enemies, the Ming Dynasty adopted a **silver-only tax policy**, which caused inflation, and moved Chinese production from necessities (food, clothes, etc) to goods Europeans would buy for silver (silk, porcelain, etc.)
- In 1644, the Ming Dynasty fell to the invading northern Manchu people, and establishing the **Qing Dynasty**—the last dynasty of China
- With a severe minority, the Manchu ruler persecuted the Han Chinese heavily, **forbidding intermarriage** and using the examination systems to exclude Han officials from government
- Han Chinese considered the bottom of the Qing social hierarchy; force Han men to wear Manchu queue

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## Period 3: 1750 CE–1900 CE

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- **Opium Wars** (1830s and 1850s), imperialism in China forced by Britain, France, and other Western powers, including Russia and Japan in 1880s and 1890s
  - **Spheres of Influence** and economic imperialism imposed by West, Russia, and Japan (1890s)
  - Surpassed economically by West during industrial revolutions of 19<sup>th</sup> century in total production and manufactured goods
  - **Boxer Rebellion** in response to European, American, Japanese, and Russian imperialism in 1898; Qing gov. supports rebellion, but rebellion crushed by coalition forces
  - Loss of tribute states—Indochina to French, Taiwan and Korea to Japan in 1895
  - **Self-Strengthening Movement** begun for independent industrializing
  - **Prince Gong** heavily advocated industrial, economic, and militaristic reforms in the model of the West; **Empress Cixi** and other conservatives opposed adopting foreign ideas and focused only on industrial reform along the Chinese model
  - **Sino-Japanese War**; Korea and Taiwan lost to industrialized Japan in 1895; China humiliated as a result, and the weakness and failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement shown



# Thematic Timelines: Chinese Civilization

## Period 4: 1900 CE – Present

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- **Chinese Revolution** 1911 and **Sun Yat-sen** overthrow Qing Dynasty
  - **Chinese Civil War** (twice), nationalists (**Chiang Kai-shek**--capitalist) vs. communists (**Mao Zedong**) – 1920s-1937
  - Civil War halted temporarily for WWII, **Rape of Nanking** and Allied funding for effort vs. Japan from US and Britain – 1937-1945
  - Civil war continues after WWI until communism and Mao victorious in 1949
  - China joins **Soviet communist bloc**, funding and supported N. Korea and N. Vietnam
  - China fights US and UN forces in **Korean War** – 1950-53
  - China supports Ho Chi Minh and Vietcong in **Vietnam War** – 1954-1975
  - **Cultural Revolution** and **Great Leap Forward** by Mao Zedong fail to industrialize or reinvigorate the Chinese under Mao's regime- 1960s and 1970s
  - China joins the **Non-Alignment Movement** in the 1970s
  - **Deng Xiaoping** becomes president in 1980s, state-run capitalism, export-oriented adopted as economic strategies; China now #2 world economy
  - Western economy adopted but politics still strictly one-party state (**Tiananmen Square** student protests put down by force in 1989)