

The Tang dynasty was largely a period of progress and stability, except during the An Lushan Rebellion and the decline of central authority in the later half of the dynasty. Like the previous Sui dynasty, the Tang dynasty maintained a civil service system by recruiting scholar-officials through standardized examinations and recommendations to office. This civil order was undermined by the rise of regional military governors known as *jiedushi* during the 9th century. Chinese culture flourished and further matured during the Tang era; it is considered the greatest age for Chinese poetry. Two of China's most famous poets, Li Bai and Du Fu, belonged to this age, as did many famous painters such as Han Gan, Zhang Xuan, and Zhou Fang. There was a rich variety of historical literature compiled by scholars, as well as encyclopedias and geographical works.

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