

## Chapter 13

# Imperial China in Its Golden Age

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# Chapter Chronology

221–206 B.C.E.

*Qin Dynasty*

202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.

*Han Dynasty*

220–580 C.E.

*China divided*

580–618 C.E.

*Sui Dynasty reunifies China*

618–907 C.E.

*Tang Dynasty*



# **Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE)**

- **Era of Warring States (500-220 BCE)** preceded Qin
  - Period of disorder and chaos as Zhou dynasty declined
  - Central government ceased; warlords fought
  - Confucian, Daoist, and Legalist philosophies matured
- **Qin Dynasty**
  - Adopted Legalist principles
  - Reunified China through military force and administrative reorganization
  - Short-lived, but left lasting legacy





# First Emperor (Shih Huangi-di) (Slide 1 of 2)

- Reigned only 11 years (221-210 BCE)
- Used military might to dominate 6 largest states and unify China
- Centralized along Legalist principles
  - Eliminated feudal aristocracy
  - Prime Minister Li Si guided policies
- Imposed standardization
  - Weights and measures
  - Currency
  - Road size
  - Writing system



# First Emperor (Shih Huangi-di) (Slide 2 of 2)

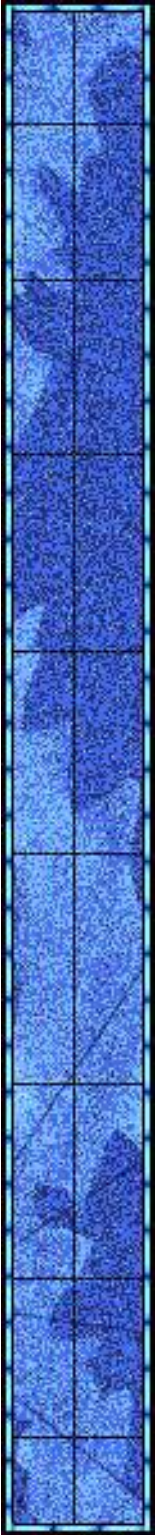
- Building projects required heavy taxes and labor levies
  - Began to connect Great Wall to defend against nomadic invaders
  - Imperial palace at Xian
  - Emperor's tomb (with 7,000 terra cotta warriors, discovered in 1974)
- Expanded China's borders to north and south
- Ruthlessly suppressed non-Legalist philosophies
  - **Burning of books and burying of scholars**
- Widespread resentment against his rule; son overthrown



# Han Dynasty (202 BCE to 220 CE) (Slide 1 of 6)

- **Han Dynasty** and Roman Empire -- similarities
  - Contemporaneous
  - Urban orientation with large rural population
  - Non-hereditary officials
  - Invasions and regional revolts led to collapse
- Han monarchs shaped Chinese identity, “men of Han”
  - Expanded borders to Korea, Vietnam, Central Asia
  - Increased commercial contact and cultural influence in Asia
  - Built on foundation of Qin centralized state
  - Blended diverse philosophical traditions





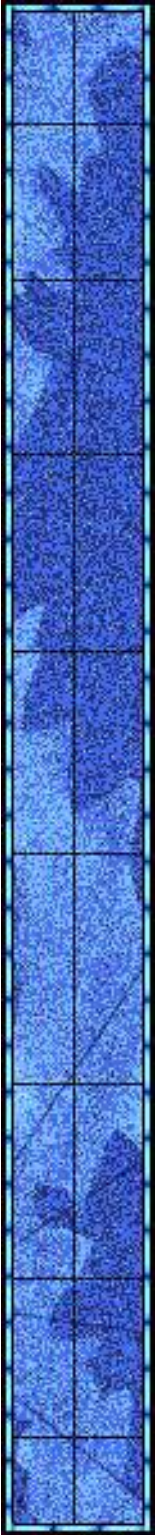
# Han Dynasty (202 BCE to 220 CE) (Slide 2 of 6)

- **Han Synthesis**

- Blended elements of Legalist organization and administration, Confucian ethics, and Daoist metaphysics
- Created efficient unified government with ethical constraints on emperor
- Ideology of Emperor Wudi (147-87 BCE)

- **“Mandate of Heaven” emphasized**

- Theory that emperor held power by virtue of ruling in harmony with natural order of things
- Gave emperor semi-sacred status
- Justified overthrow of unsuccessful emperor

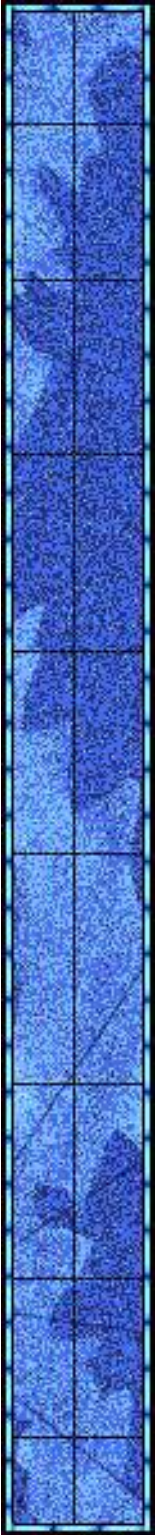


# **Han Dynasty (202 BCE to 220 CE) (Slide 3 of 6)**

Han Arts and Sciences – upsurge in quality and quantity

- Kept excellent historical records; Sima Qian noted historian
- Inventions: sternpost rudder, magnetic compass, paper
- Medicine: pharmacology, acupuncture, knowledge of body
- Luxury items and fine arts: silk, ceramics, bronze, jade, landscape painting
- Standard writing system shared by all ethnic groups contributed to national unity





# Han Dynasty (202 BCE to 220 CE) (Slide 4 of 6)

- Economic Development
  - Canals, roads improved communications, commerce
  - Large cities, numerous market towns
  - Expansion of iron production and agriculture
    - Expanded use of the plow and horse harness
    - Use of fertilizer
    - Most productive agriculture in the world
- Government
  - Active recruitment of educated elite into bureaucracy
  - Recommendation system, supplemented by exam
  - Promotion based on merit



# Han Dynasty (202 BCE to 220 CE) (Slide 5 of 6)

- External Affairs
  - Traders, diplomats, and Buddhist monks made contacts with western Asia and India
  - Emperor Wudi sent emissary to organize allies against the aggressive Xiongnu in northwest
    - Zhang Qian later called “Father of the Silk Road”
  - China’s economic and security interests focused on inner Asia
- Internal Disturbances
  - Heavy burdens on common people led to popular unrest
  - Wang Mang temporarily usurped throne, 8 BCE



# Han Dynasty (202 BCE to 220 CE) (Slide 6 of 6)

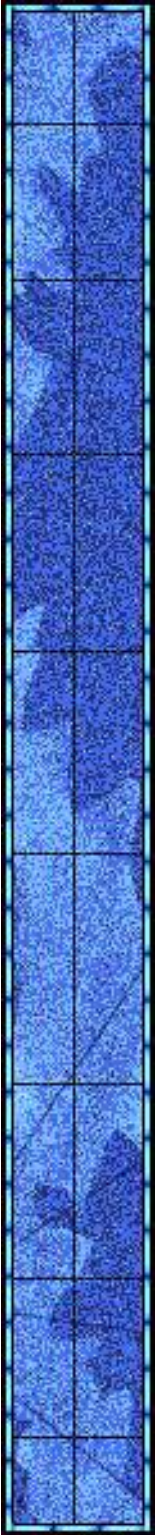
- Era of Transition
  - Land ownership became basis of power
  - New strains of rice in south led to population growth and regional improvement
- End of Han Dynasty
  - Corruption, intrigue, manipulation of weak emperors at court
  - Warlords and peasant rebels in countryside
  - China fragmented into three kingdoms





# Sui Dynasty (580-618 CE)

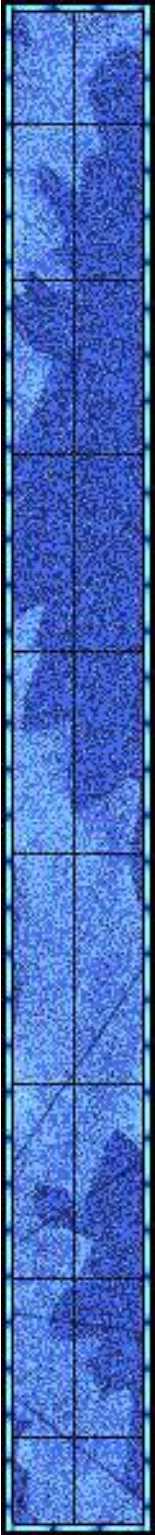
- Reunified China
- Imposed **well-field** system
  - Land reallocated every few years
  - Goals: improve lot of the peasants and break power of landed elites
- Failed military expeditions against northern nomads
- Widespread rebellion; Tang took over, 618



# Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) (Slide 1 of 3)

## Policies

- Continued Sui **well-field** system to help peasants
- Re-created efficient bureaucracy based on Confucian ethics and merit
  - Recommendations and “shadow principal” (like nepotism) influenced recruitment
  - Expanded Imperial university to prepare men for the bureaucracy
- Secured north
  - Bought off Turks and Mongolians
  - Played one tribe off against another
  - Expanded westward



# Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) (Slide 2 of 3)

- Expanded trade along the Silk Road to Southeast Asia
  - Brought unprecedented prosperity
- Completed the Grand Canal
  - Benefited north-south trade
- Opened cultural contacts with Japan
  - Korea, Tibet, Vietnam less enthusiastically
- Greatest era in Chinese literature
  - Poets: Li Po, Du Fu, Wang Wei



# Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) (Slide 3 of 3)

## Emperor Xuanzong (712-765)

- Period of greatest prosperity and cultural achievement
- Reign coincided with rise of Islamic caliphate, increased trade
- Chang'an – cosmopolitan center of trade and commerce
- Decline
  - Rivalries and intrigues at court
  - Weak rulers, strong generals, greedy imperial in-laws, and manipulative eunuchs
  - China broke apart, after 907
  - Finally northern warlord induced rivals to support his takeover
  - Chinese regarded fragmentation as aberrant

# Buddhism and Chinese Culture

(Slide 1 of 2)

- Buddhism
  - Originated in India
  - Greatest single foreign influence in China
  - Dealt with enlightenment, afterlife of eternal bliss
  - Valued self-mastery and serenity
  - Accommodated existing Chinese beliefs
  - Translation of Buddhist texts stimulated literature, poetry
  - Greatly influenced cultural arts in 800s

# Buddhism and Chinese Culture

(Slide 2 of 2)

- Guwen Movement
  - Han Yu criticized Buddhist influence on Chinese intellectual and political life
  - Urged return to Confucian ethics, primacy of family
  - Government banned Buddhism and confiscated tax-exempt monasteries, 845
  - Ban lifted after confiscation
- Mandarin (**shidafu**)
  - Ideal official was scholarly, well-rounded
  - Knew poetry, calligraphy, philosophy, painting, music