

Historical China through Ming Dynasty (221
BC-1644 CE)
The Traditional Economy
Econ 43750

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Outline

- 1 Kissinger chapter 1–presentation template
- 2 Circle back for more detailed discussion
- 3 The traditional economy

Key themes

- 1 Inward looking. Uninterested in the larger world.
- 2 Rulers interested in staying in power.
- 3 Relatively wealthy, highly developed civilization promoted view of Chinese exceptionalism
- 4 China declines when Europe was rising. Humiliation by the West and Japan.
- 5 Xi Jinping wants to return China to rightful place of “greatness”

Some key dates and names

Dates

- 221 BCE Unification (Qin Shi Huang)
- 1911 Xinhua Revolution (Sun-Yat Sen, Chiang Kai Shek, Mao Zedong)
- 1949 Communist Revolution
- 1976 Mao dies
- 1978 Economic reforms (Deng Xiaoping)
- 1989 Tianamen square

Key Leaders of Modern China (Surname first)

- Deng Xiaoping 1978-1992
- Jiang Zemin 1993-2001
- Hu Jintao 2003-2012
- Xi Jinping 2013-present

Discussion Template: Kissinger Ch 1

- Chinese civilization seems to have no beginning.
 - Competing warring kingdoms
 - Scant written history
 - Myths and legends abound
- Unification by Qin 221 BC
- Geographic inaccessibility. Ocean, Himalayas, desert. China knew about India, the Roman empire, but didn't get to know.
- Advanced nautical technology (Zheng He)
- Confucian philosophy
- Chinese exceptionalism
 - Superior civilization, not for export but let others come to seek ideas.
 - Non Chinese people were barbarians
- Sun Tzu's Art of War. Barbarian management. Military conquest not their comparative advantage (people mostly farmers, civil servants memorizing Confucian texts)

Circle back: Confucianism

Confucius lived 551-479 BC, during a turbulent time.

- His ideas were about societal norms and rules. Proper behavior among people.
- Does not talk about God or the afterlife. Not a religion.
- Strict hierarchy of superiors and inferiors

The Confucian system

- ① Emperor. The supreme being. The **Son of Heaven**, an intermediary between heaven and earth. Rules by **Mandate of Heaven**. What dat?
 - Son of Heaven lives a scrupulous life and is held responsible for disasters, bad harvests, and the like.
 - Heaven withdraws mandate from bad ruler. People are then allowed to revolt.
 - What is heaven? Its where the ancestors went after they died. Evidently everyone gains admission. Everyone happy there.
- ② Family hierarchy
 - Father at the top
 - Eldest son obeys the father
 - Younger son obeys older son
 - Wife obeys the husband
 - DIL obeys MIL
- ③ Bottom line: Strong national leader, strong family leader. Family and nation is more important than individual's wants and desires.

Circle back additional discussion: Qin Emperor

Warring States 476-221 BCE. Then “Unified” by Qin 221 BCE



Qin Emperor



Qin Emperor



Qin Emperor: What else is he famous for?

- ① Enslaved the nation. Either grow food, work on the Wall, or assigned to military. Brutal guy
- ② Made Xian the capital
- ③ Established enduring governance structure
 - Partition country into 36 provinces, administered by appointed governors.
 - Governors collected taxes for central government, conscript soldiers and labor for public works
- ④ Conducted the first census (for tax collection)
- ⑤ Burned the Confucian texts, and probably many of the scholars
- ⑥ Standardized currency, weights, measures, written language.

Sun Tzu's Art of War

- Came to be used under Han rulers.
- Used to manage the barbarians, keep them divided
- Place premium on psychological advantage over military
- Avoid direct conflict
- Undermine enemy's morale
- Try to defeat enemy with minimum of fighting

Han Dynasty 206 BC–202 CE

- ❶ Freed the people from slavery. A relatively prosperous era. Population increased. Hence the term Han Chinese.
- ❷ Maintained, expanded Qin centralized government
- ❸ Confucianism becomes the state philosophy
- ❹ Introduced exam system based on Confucian texts for civil service jobs.
 - Origins of Chinese people's respect for education.
 - Gateway to the gentry, escape harsh life of physical labor.
- ❺ Advanced technology
 - Paper (50 AD)
 - Advancements in iron smelting. Good for making tools, and ploughs pulled by oxen.
 - Seismonitor (detect earthquakes)
 - Negative numbers (mathematical sophistication)
 - Anesthesia

Economy

- ① Agriculture (Naughton calls traditional economy).
 - Intensive application of labor to small land plots. High land productivity, low labor productivity. $APL > MPL \simeq 0$.
 - Developed early-ripening rice. Two crops per year
 - Irrigation projects
 - Organic fertilizer (poop)
- ② River system used to conduct commerce
- ③ Dense population conducive to markets.
- ④ Competitive markets
 - No aristocracy. No special advantage through birthrights. Socially mobile society. Contrast inheritance system with Europe.
 - Sophisticated institutions
 - Widespread use of money, even paper currency
 - Rule of law—established contract law, good for business.
 - Merchant associations
 - Manufactured goods, done by households, not firms. Artisans. Small scale production.

The Central Country

zhōng guó

中国

China

- ① Chinese people viewed the country to be center of world.
- ② China did not export ideas, but let others come to seek them (Kissinger).
- ③ Chinese viewed theirs as superior civilization. All others were barbarians. Chinese court aware of India, Roman empire, but uninterested.

Why do dynasties change?

- Lose mandate of heaven
- Bad management, bad harvests, poor treatment of peasants, famine, oppressive taxation

Foreign invasions

- Illustrates superiority of Chinese society, culture, and governance.
- Foreign conquerors became Chinese, rather than trying to change China. Shows how deep the identity and culture and institutional makeup of the society is.
- Mongols (Yuan dynasty 1271-1368)
 - Gengis Kahn. Not enough grass for animals to graze. Went to China
 - “No greater joy than to massacre one’s enemies, steal their horses and cattle, and rape their women.”
 - Died when a princess got revenge by castrating him
 - Kublai Kahn- Gengis’s grandson. Took the Chinese name Yuan
- Manchurians (Qing overthrew Ming) 1644-19192

Trade and exploration

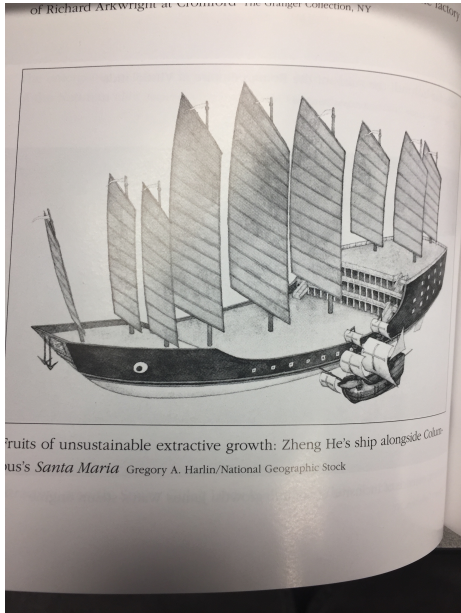
China, mostly inward looking. Outward looking during a short window.

- **Zheng He 1371-1433** (Admiral during Ming dynasty) A **eunuch**. What dat?
 - Practice began 6th century BC as punishment for criminals, prisoners of war. Castrate and remove penis, forced into work in imperial court. (European castration was just removal of testicles)
 - Over time, demand for eunuch services increased and practice became voluntary, as condition for employment. Pathway to better material life, but there are tradeoffs
 - Why? Emperor had 000's of concubines
 - Candidate given opium, genitals washed with hot pepper water, then whack! Takes 100 days to heal
 - Eunuchs had reputation for being power hungry, conniving (must be self-selection). Also, smelled bad, because they could not direct their urine flow.

Zheng He

- Commanded huge fleet, 28000 sailors
- 7 expeditions to extrade trade, economic relationships. A tributary system. [▶ Zheng He's Ship](#)
- Went to south-east Asia, India, Middle east and Africa
- The emperor died. Next Ming emperor ended it all, had the fleet dismantled.
- Abandoned seafaring at exactly the time the Portugese started exploring, then the British
- ❶ End of Ming, due to corruption (23,000 people, many family, on the Imperial court payroll). Bankrupted the government, famine. Overthrown by the Qing, from Manchuria.
- ❷ Europe forging ahead. The Renaissance, other innovations and social change. China stagnated and withdrew.

Zheng He's Ship



► Back to Zheng He