Chinese civilization grew up along the banks of the Huang He or Yellow River. They grew rice, millet (grain) and soybean and raised chickens and pigs. Eventually a powerful warlord took control of the region. He established a dynasty or ruling family. This was the beginning of the Shang Dynasty.

**Government**
- Capital: Shang (near modern-day Zhengzhou)
- Controlled the Huang He valley. Was first organized state.
- Feudalism - land based government was used due to shape of river and population spread throughout the extensive valley.
  1. Ruler (god like).
  2. Nobles and important priests.
  3. Warriors and lesser priests.
  4. Artisans, merchants, scribe.
  5. Farmers.
- Slave revolt in 1122 B.C.E led to downfall of Shang dynasty.

**Economy**
- Based on agriculture. Grew rice.
- Fishing
- Silk, bronze, and jade art and weaponry.
- Domesticated animals - dogs, pigs, and sheep.
- Bronze was sign of status, wealth and used in rituals.

**Other Achievements**
- Developed a writing system based on characters
- Developed a calendar.
Modern Chinese writing is based on that developed by the Shang.
Zhou Dynasty
1027 B.C.E. to 221 B.C.E.

The Zhou over threw the Shang around 1027 B.C.E. The new ruler said that he ruled by the Mandate of Heaven. The people believed that the ruler came from god and god would remove him if he became corrupt.

**Government**

Capital: Luoyang in present-day Henan Province.

Established a feudal system in which land was given to nobles in exchange for military service much like that of Medieval Europe.

The nobles grew powerful and tried to overthrow the government causing civil war.

DECLINE: Internal corruption. Natural disasters occurred causing an end in the dynasty. New ruling family.

**Other Achievements**

- The use of iron was introduced.

**Philosophy:**

Li (CONFUCIUS): believed that each person should live in a way to fulfill their social obligations. He stressed order, obedience, and other traditional values.

DAOISM: taught that there was a “way” in nature and that man should accept this and not resist it.

**Economy**

- Agriculture = main industry (Grew soybeans.)
- Iron axes and ox drawn plows replaced stone, wood, and bronze tools.
- First official coins in China
- Developed trade routes
- Merchants benefited from roads and canals which increased the population
Qin Dynasty
221 B.C.E. to 206 B.C.E.

The Qin were the 1st imperial dynasty of China. Shi Huang-di united all of China under his rule following the Warring-States Period. He was a harsh ruler who believed in a strong government. He rejected Confucius teachings and destroyed Confucian books.

Trade, agriculture, and the military all improved under the rule of the Qin. The Great Wall of China was built during this period. Roads and canals were built to connect all of China.

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**Government**

Capital: Xianyang, 20 kilometers northwest of Xi’’an.

The Mandate of Heaven continued

Rule based on LEGALISM, philosophy that states that humans are evil by nature. Harsh and stiff punishments are needed to keep society in line.

China was divided into districts, each with its own military and civil administration.

The feudal system was abolished and peasants were directly controlled by the government.

The Qin developed a strong military

After Shi Huang-di’s death the empire fell apart.

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**Economy**

- Agriculture was the main industry
- Silk and early-stage porcelain were also important

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**Other Achievements**

- Weights and measurements were standardized.
- The writing system was improved.
- Combined several existing protective walls to create the Great Wall of China.
Qin Dynasty composite bow arrows (top) and crossbow bolts (bottom)

Crossbow

Terracotta Army built to protect the tomb of Shi Huang-di

Coins from the Qin Dynasty

The Great Wall of China
Han Dynasty 206 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.

Several years of civil war occurred after the fall of the Qin. The Han emerged and unified all of China around 206 B.C.E.

This period is considered the “Golden Age of China” that lasted 400 years.

Government

Capitals: Chang’an (206 BCE – 9 CE), and Luoyang (25–220 CE).

The empire was divided into regions directly controlled by the central government.

Encouraged Confucianism throughout China. Civil service exam system based on merit (not class) to determine government officials, this weakened the nobility.

Confucianist belief in the relationship of deference to the ruler as ‘father’ of the people

The central government became more powerful while the nobility lost power and influence.

Economy

Agriculture was still very important.

Advanced silk weaving

Began trade along the Silk Road and traded silk, iron, and bronze for gold, linen cloth, glass, ivory, animal hides, horses, and cattle.

Reasons for Fall of the Dynasty

Difficult to rule such a large area. Expensive to defend northern borders.

Corrupt officials and weak emperors.

Increased use of unreliable mercenaries in the military.

Power given to local governors to put down rebellions weakened central authority and led to the rise of powerful warlords with their own armies & power to tax. Led to civil war.

Economic hardships resulting from population growth led to a discontented population.

Other Achievements

Invented paper.

Invented lead-glass ceramics.

Invented nautical steering rudder.

Used negative numbers in mathematics.
The Silk Road & Buddhism enters China

Han painted ceramic mounted cavalryman from the tomb of a military general at Xianyang, Shaanxi province

Han painted ceramic jar decorated with raised reliefs of dragons, phoenixes, and ogres
dated to the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE).

Han gentlemen in conversation, a Chinese painting on a ceramic tile from a tomb near Luoyang, Henan province, dated to the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE).

A wushu (五銖) coin issued during the reign of Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE)

Woven silk textiles from Tomb No. 1 at Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan province, China, 2nd century BCE, Han Dynasty
**Tang Dynasty**  
618 C.E to 907 C.E.

Following the Han, fragmentation existed during the 3 Kingdom period and short rule of the Sui.

The Tangs reunited China under one rule around 618 A.D.

They also revived the feudal system in which nobles controlled the land and peasants worked the land.

As many as 50 million people lived in China at this time.

### Government

Capital: Chang'an (present-day Xi'an) – at the time, the most populous city in the world.

Expanded the empire into Korea, Manchuria, and parts of Central Asia.

Gave tests to government candidates over Confucian texts. (scholar-gentry)

Confucianist government, but increased influence of Buddhism, which was suppressed resulting in the rise of “neo-confucianism.”

Used an accurate census to determine taxes.

DECLINE: Tang decline began in the in the 800s century as a result of disruptions within the imperial family. As central authority weakened, nomads on the frontiers gained control over large portions of China and generals were able to establish regional kingdoms

### Economy

Most citizens were farmers.

Trade along the Silk Road continued and into Persia, Arabia, Japan, Europe, and the Byzantine Empire.

Commercial shipping (junks) improved.

Markets organized by local guilds, but subject to imperial control; merchants had low status;

Exchanges involving money and credit became common; introduction of paper money.

### Other Achievements

**MILITARY TECHNOLOGY:** Combined Chinese crossbow & armored infantrymen with Central Asian horsemanship and iron stirrup (CAVALRY). Between 650-750: SCARIEST ARMY ON EARTH!

Invented block printing.

Literature (such as poetry) and art (such as porcelain, painting, & sculpture) of the period advanced.

Developed a form of garden with streams, rocks, and trees for peaceful meditation.

Developed advanced medicines.

Buddhism became popular as it spread from India into China.
Buddhism spread along trade routes.

The Giant Wild Goose Pagoda, Chang'an (modern-day Xi'an), built in 652, repaired by Empress Wu Zetian in 704.

Tang statue of a civil official dressed in Hanfu, made of sancai glazed earthenware.

“Summer Day in the Mountains”
Lazily waving a fan of white feathers, stripped naked here in the green woods
I take off my headband, hang it on a cliff
my bare head spattered by winds through pines.

by Tang poet, Li Bao

scholar-gentry art concentrated on everyday life, not religious themes.

Tang yellow-glazed pottery horse

Tang Dynasty Kai Yuan Tong Bao coin (開元通寶), first minted in 621 CE in Chang'an, a model for the Japanese 8th-century Wadōkaichin.

Written calligraphy of Emperor Taizong on a Tang stele.
The Song dynasty rose up after the fall of the Tang. Originally in southern China a rival dynasty also emerged in the north. The Song built upon the achievements of the Tang. Population reached 100 million. They were eventually overthrown by invading Mongols.

**Government**

- Capital: Kaifeng (Northern Song) & Hangzhou (Southern Song)
- Neo-Confucianism: blend of Confucianism, Buddhism, & Taoism. However, suppressed Buddhism & Taoism as religions.
- Eliminated forced labor of the peasants which increased farm production.
- Women's status declined during the Song period (foot-binding).
- Used paper money, citizens now paid taxes in money instead of in grain.
- Standardized coins made of iron and copper were used.
- Used gunpowder to fight its enemies.
- Decline: Allied themselves with the Mongols, which eventually overran the empire and imposed foreign rule on China.

**Economy**

- Agriculture was important.
- Trade along the Silk Road continued.
- Sea trade with Korea, Japan, Southeast Asia, India, and Africa increased.

**Other Achievements**

- Invented movable type for printing.
- Improved porcelain-making (called ‘china’ in the west)
- Invented gunpowder.
- Invented the compass.
- Doctors used acupuncture.
- Advanced mathematics.
An illustration of a trebuchet catapult from the Wujing Zongyao manuscript of 1044. Trebuchets like this were used to launch the earliest type of explosive bombs.

The 42-metre (138 ft) tall, brick and wood Lingxiao Pagoda of Zhengding, Hebei, built in 1045.

A red lacquerware food tray with gold foil engraving designs of two long-tailed birds and a peony, dated 12th to early 13th century.

Foot-binding illustrated the decline of women’s status during the Song Period.
The Yuan Dynasty 1260 C.E. to 1368 C.E.

The grandson of Genghis Khan, Kublai Khan, was very fascinated with Chinese culture and traditions.

In 1260 he became emperor and by 1279 he had reunited northern and southern China.

He encouraged the Mongols to adopt Chinese ways. Kublai Khan claimed the Mandate of Heaven.

**Economy**
- Trade recovered
- Promoted trade along the Silk Road.
- Used primarily paper money, few metal coins were used.
- Cities and ports prospered.
- Merchants flourished.

**Government**
- Capital: Beijing
- Period of peace and prosperity – PAX MONGOLICA
- Centralized the Chinese government and made the emperor an absolute monarch
- Divided China into provinces which continued under the Ming and Qing dynasties
- Reorganized the tax system (tax-farming)
- Mongols held all important positions in government
- Confucians had weak role while merchants and doctors were elevated.
- Roads, canals, granaries were built to improve commerce.

**Other Achievements**
- The arts flourished especially drama and literature. However, as a nomadic people, Mongols generally adopted cultural aspects of their conquered territories.
- Religious tolerance allowed Christianity and Islam to gain some significance in China.
- Exchange of scientific, technological, and mathematical knowledge was common between Iran and China.
- Marco Polo’s visits to China encouraged European interest in the region.
A Yuan Dynasty jade belt plaque featuring carved designs of a dragon

Hand cannon from the Yuan Dynasty

A Yuan Dynasty blue-and-white porcelain dish with fish and flowing water design, mid-fourteenth century

A white porcelain Buddhist statue from the Yuan Dynasty
In 1368 the Ming overthrew the unpopular Mongol rule.

Under the Ming China enjoyed 300 years of peace and prosperity.

The empire expanded into Korea, Burma, and Vietnam.

In Beijing they built a large palace known as the Forbidden City.

**Government**
- Capital: Nanjing; in 1421, moved back to Beijing. (Forbidden City used for religious, governmental, imperial residences)
- Tried to reject Mongol culture, but kept provincial structure, hereditary professional categories, Mongol calendar
- Closed off trade relations with Central Asia and the Middle East.
- Reassert Neo-Confucian ideology

The Ming society consisted of two classes, a scholar-gentry class and peasants. Peasants were poor, illiterate, and worked the land. The gentry were well educated, owned the land, and respected learning.

There were also merchants and craftsmen but they were a very small percentage of the population.

The government was very organized and structured and allowed for rapid growth of the empire.

**Economy**
- The main economic activity is still based on agriculture.
- Trade along the Silk Road increased and goods as far away as South America began to arrive in China. Items such as chili peppers, corn, and potatoes were brought to China by the Portuguese. (Result: population growth)
- Silver coin and paper money were both used at this time in China. (Spanish silver → inflation)
- The tea and salt industries were privatized instead of being state owned as it was under the Song.
- Peasants were now paid in coin instead of in rice.
- Porcelain, silk, and spices were still the most popular items that China exported to other areas.

**Other Achievements**
- The Chinese explorer Zheng He sailed to India and Arabia, and eastern Africa.
- Catholic missionaries to China arrived during this period.
- The basic fundamentals of trigonometry were developed in China at this time.
- The Forbidden City was built and the Grand Canal and Great Wall were repaired.
A Ming Dynasty red lacquer box with intricate carving of people in the countryside, surrounded by a floral border design.

Spring morning in a Han palace, by Qui Ying (1494–1552); excessive luxury and decadence marked the late Ming period, spurred by the enormous state bouillon of incoming silver and by private transactions involving silver.
1644: Qing (the Manchu) conquered China → peace, stability, expansion of the agricultural economy → doubled population

**Government**
- Capital: Shenyang, then Beijing
- The Manchus continued the Confucian civil service system. Although Chinese were barred from the highest offices.
- Government regarded as weak, corrupt, and perhaps in collusion with the foreign merchants and missionaries in Canton and Macao.
- RESULT: internal rebellions
  - White Lotus rebellion (1794–1804)
  - Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864)
- Decentralization
- Collapse in 1911; China becomes a republic.

**Economy**
- By 1800: population pressure caused environmental damage & contributed to more itinerant farmhands, laborers, and merchants.
- Opium War
- Treaty of Nanking

**Other Achievements**
- There was tremendous growth in areas of literature and the arts. 26,000 volumes of the encyclopedia were accomplished.
- Additionally, one of the best novels written, "Story of the Stone" broke ground as very explicit in the expression of emotion, which is not typical of the Chinese.
- Poets expanded their programs, and one play encompassed 240 acts that took over two years to perform on stage.
- In 1803 they built the first suspension bridge with wood and chains called The Anlan Bridge.

Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang, dated 1666
Wang Shimin (Chinese, 1592–1680)
Portrait of the Imperial Bodyguard Zhanyinbao, Qing dynasty (1644–1911), dated 1760
Unidentified Artist (Chinese, 18th century)

Fish bowl, Artist Unknown

The Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour, Scroll Six: Entering Suzhou and the Grand Canal, Qing dynasty (1644–1911), dated 1770
Xu Yang (Chinese, active ca. 1750–76)

Anlan Suspension Bridge, also named "Husband-and- Wife Bridge", 1803.