

Tang and Song China

MAIN IDEA

CORE BUILDING During the Tang and Song dynasties, China entered an era of prosperity and technological innovation.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Chinese inventions from this period, such as printing, gunpowder, and the compass, changed history.

TERMS & NAMES

- Tang
- Taizong
- Wu Zhao
- movable type
- gentry

SETTING THE STAGE After the Han Dynasty collapsed in A.D. 220, no emperor was strong enough to hold China together. Over the next 350 years, more than 30 local dynasties rose and fell. Finally, by 589, an emperor named Wendi had united northern and southern China once again. He restored a strong central government. Under the next two dynasties, the Tang and the Song, China experienced a prolonged golden age. It became the richest, most powerful, and most advanced country in the world.

The Tang Dynasty Expands China

Wendi declared himself the first emperor of the Sui (sway) Dynasty. The dynasty lasted through only two emperors, from 581 to 618. The Sui emperors' greatest accomplishment was the completion of the Grand Canal. This waterway connected the Huang He and the Chang Jiang. The canal provided a vital route for trade between the northern cities and the southern rice-producing region of the Chang delta.

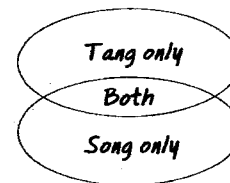
About a million peasant men and women toiled five years to dig the more than 1,000-mile waterway. Perhaps as many as half of the workers died on this project. Thousands more toiled and died rebuilding the Great Wall. The endless labor on state projects turned the people against the Sui Dynasty. Overworked and overtaxed, they finally revolted. In 618, a member of the imperial court assassinated the second Sui emperor.

Tang Rulers Create a Powerful Empire While short-lived, the Sui Dynasty built a strong foundation for the great achievements of the next dynasty, the Tang (tahng). The Tang Dynasty ruled for nearly 300 years (618–907). The Tang emperor who began these achievements was **Tang Taizong**. His brilliant reign lasted from 626 to 649.

Under the Tang rulers, the empire expanded. Taizong's armies reconquered the northern and western lands that China had lost since the decline of the Han Dynasty. By 668, China had extended its influence over Korea as well. The ruler during the campaign in Korea was the empress **Wu Zhao** (woo jow). From about 660 on, she held the real power while weak emperors sat on the throne. Finally, in 690, Empress Wu assumed the title of emperor for herself—the only woman ever to do so in China.

TAKING NOTES

Comparing and Contrasting Use a Venn diagram to note the similarities and differences between the Tang and Song dynasties.



History Makers



Tang Taizong 600–649

The man who restored China to its glory was a distinguished general named Li Shimin. He seized the imperial throne in 626 after killing his brothers and forcing his father, the first Tang emperor, to step aside. As emperor, Li Shimin took

the title Taizong, meaning "Great Ancestor."

Taizong's military campaigns extended China's borders north to Manchuria, south to Vietnam, and west to the Aral Sea. At home, aided by his gifted advisers, Taizong reformed the government organization and law code. These became models for all of East Asia.



Wu Zhao 625–705

At the age of 13, the beautiful Wu Zhao arrived at the court of Tang Taizong to become one of the emperor's secondary wives. After Taizong's death, she became a favored wife of his son and successor. Wu Zhao soon rose above rival wives and became the

emperor's chief wife, or empress.

For many years, Empress Wu virtually ruled China on behalf of her sickly husband. After his death, two of their sons briefly held the throne. Frustrated by their lack of ability, she took the throne herself at the age of 65. She was 80 when she finally lost power. A strong leader, Wu Zhao continued the work begun by Taizong to build and expand China.

Tang rulers further strengthened the central government of China. They expanded the network of roads and canals begun by the Sui. This helped to pull the empire together. They also promoted foreign trade and improvements in agriculture.

Scholar-Officials To manage their large empire, the Tang rulers needed to restore China's vast bureaucracy. They did this by reviving and expanding the civil service examination system begun by the Han Dynasty. The relatively few candidates who passed the tough exams became part of an elite group of scholar-officials.

In theory, the exams were open to all men, even commoners. However, only the wealthy could afford the necessary years of education. Also, men with political connections could obtain high positions without taking the exams. Despite these flaws, the system created a remarkably intelligent and capable governing class in China. Before the Tang Dynasty, a few noble families dominated the country. As the examination system grew in importance, talent and education became more important than noble birth in winning power. As a result, many moderately wealthy families shared in China's government. **A**

The Tang Lose Power To meet the rising costs of government, Tang rulers imposed crushing taxes in the mid-700s. These brought hardship to the people but failed to cover the costs of military expansion and new building programs.

Moreover, the Tang struggled to control the vast empire they had built. In 751, Muslim armies soundly defeated the Chinese at the Battle of Talas. As a result, Central Asia passed out of Chinese control and into foreign hands. After this time, border attacks and internal rebellions steadily chipped away at the power of the imperial government. Finally, in 907, Chinese rebels sacked and burned the Tang capital at Ch'ang-an and murdered the last Tang emperor, a child.

The Song Dynasty Restores China

After the fall of the Tang Dynasty, rival warlords divided China into separate kingdoms. Then, in 960, an able general named Taizu reunited China and proclaimed himself the first Song (sung) emperor. The Song Dynasty, like the Tang, lasted about three centuries (960–1279). Although the Song ruled a smaller empire than either the Han or the Tang, China remained stable, powerful, and prosperous.

Song armies never regained the western lands lost after 751. Nor did they regain northern lands that had been lost to nomadic tribes during the Tang decline. For a time, Song emperors tried to buy peace with their northern enemies. They paid hefty annual tributes of silver, silk, and tea. This policy, however, ultimately failed

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to stop the threat from the north. In the early 1100s, a Manchurian people called the Jurchen conquered northern China and established the Jin Empire. The Jurchen forced the Song to retreat south across the Huang He. After 1127, the Song emperors ruled only southern China.

The Song rulers established a grand new capital at Hangzhou, a coastal city south of the Chang Jiang. Despite its military troubles, the dynasty of the Southern Song (1127–1279) saw rapid economic growth. The south had become the economic heartland of China. Merchants in southern cities grew rich from trade with Chinese in the north, nomads of Central Asia, and people of western Asia and Europe.

An Era of Prosperity and Innovation

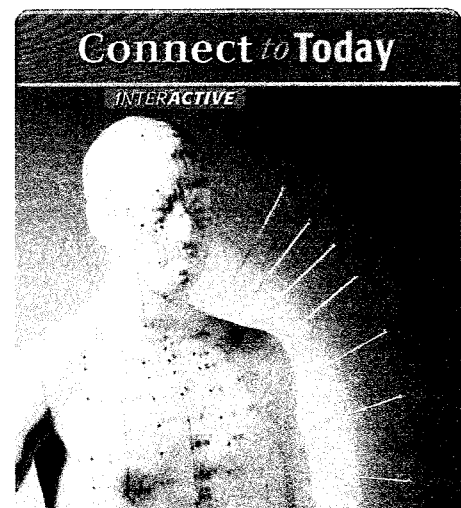
During the Tang and Song dynasties, China's population nearly doubled, soaring to 100 million. By the Song era, China had at least ten cities with a population of 1 million each. China had become the most populous country in the world. It also had become the most advanced.

Science and Technology Artisans and scholars made important technological advances during the Tang and Song eras. Among the most important inventions were movable type and gunpowder. With movable type, a printer could arrange blocks of individual characters in a frame to make up a page for printing. Previously, printers had carved the words of a whole page into one large block. The development of gunpowder, in time, led to the creation of explosive weapons such as bombs, grenades, small rockets, and cannons. Other important inventions of this period include porcelain, the mechanical clock, paper money, and the use of the magnetic compass for sailing. (See the Social History feature on pages 328–329.)

The 1000s to the 1200s was a rich period for Chinese mathematics. The Chinese made advances in arithmetic and algebra. Many mathematical ideas, such as using negative numbers, spread from China southward and westward. **B**

Agriculture The rapid growth of China resulted in part from advances in farming. Farmers especially improved the cultivation of rice. In about the year 1000, China imported a new variety of fast-ripening rice from Vietnam. This allowed the farmers to harvest two rice crops each year rather than one. To make sure that farmers knew about this improved variety, Chinese officials distributed seedlings throughout the country. The agricultural improvements enabled China's farmers to produce more food. This was necessary to feed the rapidly expanding population in the cities.

Trade and Foreign Contacts Under the Tang and Song emperors, foreign trade flourished. Tang imperial armies guarded the great Silk Roads, which linked China to the West. Eventually, however, China lost control over these routes during the long Tang decline. After this time, Chinese merchants relied increasingly on ocean trade. Chinese advances in sailing technology, including use of the magnetic compass, made it possible for sea trade to expand. Up and down China's long coastline, the largest port cities in the



Acupuncture

During the Song Dynasty, the Chinese carefully studied human anatomy and created charts and models of the body. These helped to improve the practice of acupuncture, a system of treatment that involves inserting slender needles into the body at specific points, depending on the nature of the problem.

In recent years, this ancient practice has gained some acceptance in mainstream Western medicine. More and more practicing doctors are seeking training in acupuncture methods. And mainstream doctors are increasing their referrals to acupuncture specialists. In 2001 alone, Americans made about 20 million visits to acupuncturists, seeking treatment for everything from migraine headaches to drug dependency.



Birds and flowers were favorite subjects for Song painters. ▲

Chinese painting reached new heights of beauty during the Song Dynasty. Painting of this era shows Daoist influence. Artists emphasized the beauty of natural landscapes and objects such as a single branch or flower. The artists did not use bright colors. Black ink was their favorite paint. Said one Song artist, "Black is ten colors."

TU FU, "Moonlight Night"

The same moon is above Fuzhou tonight;
 From the open window she will be watching it alone,
 The poor children are too little to be able to remember Ch'ang-an.
 Her perfumed hair will be dampened by the dew, the air may be too chilly
 on her delicate arms.
 When can we both lean by the wind-blown curtains and see the tears dry on
 each other's face?



PRIMARY SOURCE

world bustled with international trade. Merchant ships carried trade goods to Korea and Japan. They sailed across the Indian Ocean to India, the Persian Gulf, and even the coast of Africa. Chinese merchants established trading colonies around Southeast Asia. Many foreign traders, mostly Arabs, resided in Chinese cities. Through trade and travel, Chinese culture spread throughout East Asia. One major cultural export was Buddhism. This religion spread from China to Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. The exchange of goods and ideas was two-way. For example, foreign religions, including Islam and some Eastern sects of Christianity, spread to China and won followers.

A Golden Age of Poetry and Art The prosperity of the Tang and Song dynasties nourished an age of artistic brilliance. The Tang period produced great poetry. Two of its most celebrated poets were Li Bo, who wrote about life's pleasures, and Tu Fu, who praised orderliness and Confucian virtues. Tu Fu also wrote critically about war and the hardships of soldiers. Once he himself was captured by rebels and taken to Ch'ang-an, the capital city. He had sent his family to the village of Fuzhou for safety. Here he describes their separation:

MAKING
 Analyzing
 Primary Sources
 What does Tu Fu mean in this poem?

Changes in Chinese Society

China's prosperity produced many social changes during the Tang and Song periods. Chinese society became increasingly mobile. People moved to the cities in growing numbers. The Chinese also experienced greater social mobility than ever before. The most important avenue for social advancement was the civil service system.

Levels of Society During Tang and Song times, the power of the old aristocratic families began to fade. A new, much larger upper class emerged, made up of scholar-officials and their families. Such a class of powerful, well-to-do people is called the **gentry**. The gentry attained their status through education and civil service positions rather than through land ownership. Below the gentry was an urban middle class. It included merchants, shopkeepers, skilled artisans, minor officials, and others. At the bottom of urban society were laborers, soldiers, and servants. In the countryside lived the largest class by far, the peasants. They toiled for wealthy landowners as they had for centuries.

The Status of Women Women had always been subservient to men in Chinese society. Their status further declined during the Tang and Song periods. This was especially true among the upper classes in cities. There a woman's work was deemed less important to the family's prosperity and status. Changing attitudes affected peasant families less, however. Peasant women worked in the fields and helped produce their family's food and income.

One sign of the changing status of women was the new custom of binding the feet of upper-class girls. When a girl was very young, her feet were bound tightly with cloth, which eventually broke the arch and curled all but the big toe under. This produced what was admiringly called a "lily-foot." Women with bound feet were crippled for life. To others in society, such a woman reflected the wealth and prestige of her husband, who could afford such a beautiful but impractical wife. **D**

The social, economic, and technological transformations of the Tang and Song periods permanently shaped Chinese civilization. They endured even as China fell to a group of nomadic outsiders, the Mongols, whom you will learn about in Section 2.

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1 ASSESSMENT

KEY NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.
Song • Wu Zhao • movable type • gentry

<p>YOUR NOTES</p> <p>Describe the accomplishments of the two dynasties similar?</p> <p>Tang only Both Song only</p>	<p>MAIN IDEAS</p> <p>3. How did the Tang Dynasty benefit from the accomplishments of the Sui?</p> <p>4. What steps did the Tang take to restore China's bureaucracy?</p> <p>5. Describe the urban social classes that emerged during the Tang and Song periods.</p>	<p>CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING</p> <p>6. RECOGNIZING EFFECTS What impact did improvements in transportation have on Tang and Song China?</p> <p>7. FORMING AND SUPPORTING OPINIONS "Gaining power depends on merit, not birth." Do you agree with this view of China under the Tang and Song? Explain.</p> <p>8. PRIMARY SOURCES How do the feelings expressed in Tu Fu's poem on page 326 still relate to life today?</p> <p>9. WRITING ACTIVITY EMPIRE BUILDING Write two short paragraphs, one discussing how Tang and Song emperors strengthened China's empire, and the other discussing how they weakened it.</p>
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IT TO TODAY **CREATING A LIST**

Fireworks are used in the making of fireworks. Conduct research to find interesting facts about fireworks in the United States—the number produced in a year, the amount of gunpowder in a year's work, and so on. Present your findings in a list titled "Fun Facts About Fireworks."