

China Overview: A Brief History of Chinese Dynasties – Outline

I. Geography of China

- a. Larger than the United States
- b. Climate varies
 - i. North
 - 1. Temperate and cold
 - ii. South
 - 1. Subtropical
 - 2. Erosion
 - 3. Floods and droughts
- c. Important rivers
 - i. Hwang ho (Yellow River) – north
 - ii. Yangtze River – central China
- d. Enclosed by high mountains, hot deserts, and wide oceans

II. Ancient history

- a. By 4000 BCE
 - i. Village settlements along the Hwang ho River
 - ii. Farming, stone tools, weapons (bow and arrow), animal domestication, pottery
- b. Circa 1500 BCE
 - i. Picture writing (oldest writing in existence)
 - ii. Now circa 40,000 characters

III. What are dynasties?

- a. A dynasty is a series of rulers from the same family
- b. Historically, royal rule was descended from father to son
- c. Dynastic cycle
 - i. Emperor comes to power and gains the Mandate of Heaven
 - ii. Upward rise (wealth and population increase) to peak
 - iii. Downward spiral (natural disasters, corruption, etc.)
 - iv. Emperor loses the Mandate of Heaven
 - v. Civil war until a new emperor, with the Mandate of Heaven, comes to power
- d. Mandate of Heaven
 - i. Described by philosopher Mencius
 - ii. Belief that the emperor was chosen by heaven to rule

IV. Xia (a.k.a. Hsia) dynasty

- a. Circa 2070-circa 1600 BCE
- b. China's first dynasty
- c. Founded by Yu

- d. Built roads and irrigation projects

V. Shang dynasty

- a. Circa 1600-1046 BCE
- b. Writing began
- c. Developed bronze, glazed pottery, and silk industries

VI. Zhou (a.k.a. Chou) dynasty

- a. 1045-256 BCE
- b. Invaded China from the northwest
- c. Set up a loose central government
- d. Feudal power held by strong nobles
- e. Philosophers
 - i. Confucius
 - ii. Mencius (his follower)

VII. Qin (a.k.a. Chin) dynasty

- a. 221-206 BCE
- b. Military dictatorship centralized China
- c. Emperor Shih Huang Ti
- d. Destroyed nobles' feudal power
- e. System of taxation
- f. Established weights and measures
- g. Great Wall (1500 miles)

VIII. Han dynasty

- a. 206-220 CE
- b. Conquerors
- c. Empire – central Asia to China Sea, Indochina to Korea
- d. Trade
 - i. Chinese fruits, silks, and spices sold in Rome (1st century CE)
 - ii. Buddhism came from India
- e. Civil service system
- f. First paper made

IX. Tang dynasty

- a. 618-906 CE
- b. 400 years of warfare between Han and Tang dynasties
- c. Tang reunited China
- d. T'ai Tsung
 - i. Emperor in 627 CE
 - ii. Education and government reforms
- e. Extended boundaries

- f. Alliances and peace treaties with neighbors
- g. Industry and trade
 - i. Jade porcelain, and silks to Arabia, India, Japan, and Persia

X. Song (a.k.a. Sung) dynasty

- a. 960-1279 CE
- b. Disorder between Tang and Sung dynasties
- c. Culture superior to that of medieval Europe
- d. Powerful only in southern China

XI. Mongol rule

- a. 1259-1368
- b. Central Asian nomads
- c. Genghis Khan
 - i. Conquered Asia, including China
- d. Kublai Khan
 - i. Grandson of Genghis
 - ii. Visited by Marco Polo (Venetian)
- e. Ruled for circa 100 years
 - i. Capital – Peking (modern-day Beijing)
- f. Trade with Europe begun

XII. Ming dynasty

- a. 1368-1644
- b. Overthrew Mongols
- c. Chinese natives
- d. Beautified Peking (Beijing)
- e. Encouraged trade with Europe
- f. Gave Europeans:
 - i. Gunpowder
 - ii. Jade
 - iii. Playing cards
 - iv. Porcelain
 - v. Silk
 - vi. Tea

XIII. Qing dynasty (Manchu rule)

- a. 1644-1912
- b. Manchurians conquered China, Indochina, Korea, Mongolia, Tibet, eastern Turkestan
- c. China prospered
- d. British imperialism
- e. Western pressure brought about Manchu overthrow in 1912
- f. Ended with birth of Chinese republic

XIV. Philosophy and religion

- a. Late Zhou (Chou) period (1100-256 BCE)
 - i. Suffering produced influential philosophers
- b. Lao-Tse (6th century BCE)
 - i. Men should be left alone to work out their own lives with the fewest possible laws of government
 - ii. Men should make their own lives simple and desire nothing, but should submit to all that comes in life
 - iii. Taoism
- c. Confucius (551-479 BCE)
 - i. Considered China's greatest philosopher
 - ii. Ethics – correct way to live
 - iii. Human nature – good
 - iv. Men should be kind, tolerant, and love their elders and ancestors (filial piety)
 - v. Golden rule: "Do not do to others what you would not have others do to you."
 - vi. *Analects*
 - vii. Confucianism – code of behavior and religion
 - 1. Education, good manners, right morals, respect for others, love of tradition, obedience to one's parents

XV. Culture

- a. Literature, poetry, history, philosophy
- b. Tang dynasty – poet Li Po
- c. Printing invented – books produced cheaply in great numbers
- d. Paper – 1st century BCE
- e. "China" or "Chinaware"
 - i. Known for glazed pottery and porcelain
- f. Music
- g. Paintings

XVI. Science

- a. 1000-1500 CE – civilization superior to that of medieval Europe
- b. Paper and ink
 - i. "India" ink really Chinese ink
- c. Movable type
 - i. Movable blocks with cut-out raised characters
- d. Compass
- e. Gunpowder
 - i. Originally for firecrackers
- f. Silk manufacturing
- g. Irrigation and farming techniques