China: A Snapshot of an Ancient Culture

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World History

Limitations to Discussion

- Too much information to share completely
- Vast history outweighs time allotted
- China’s early history linked to dynasties:
  - a succession of rulers who are members of the same family for generations
- The SURVEY will provide info needed to understand how dynasties contributed to prehistory (4,000 BCE – 500 CE)

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What role did dynasties play in early Chinese history?

China – Background

- Capital – Beijing
- Official Language – Chinese/Mandarin
- Government – Communism
- State controls media + economy
- Population – 1,306,313,812 (1)
- Currency – Renminbi
- Religions – Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity
- Literacy Rate – 96%

China’s Geography

- China is isolated
- Reason: GEOGRAPHY
- Protected by Pacific Ocean/Himalayas, but open to north
- Three rivers develop Chinese civilization:
  - Hwang Ho, Yellow
  - Yangtze
- Dike system created when flooding became severe

Major Dynasties of the Chinese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynasty</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shang</td>
<td>1600 – 1027 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou</td>
<td>1027 – 256 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qin ('Chin')</td>
<td>221 – 206 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>207 BCE – 220 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song</td>
<td>960 – 1279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>1368 – 1644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Prehistory

- Before China developed the ability to write down their history, stories were passed down orally from one generation to the next. The story of the Xia Dynasty is such a case. For decades historians have believed that the Xia Dynasty was just legend.
- Then in 1959 evidence was found that showed that this dynasty may not have just been legend, but may have really existed. The truth about whether or not the Xia Dynasty really existed is still being debated.

Xia Dynasty

- The Xia family would have ruled China from around 2000-1600 BCE. They are believed to have been Anyue, who migrated into the area, and who were able to conquer the local peoples using their superior weaponry and technology.

China’s Early Dynasties

- 1st Chinese called Peking People (Northern China)
- Chinese civilization started from Yangshao + Longshan People
- Shang Dynasty – 1ST DYNASTY IN CHINA
- Arose in 1600 BCE
- Established 1st system of writing
China’s Early Dynasties
- Zhou Dynasty (1122-256 B.C.E.)
  - Overthrew Shang
  - Claimed the Sheng had lost The Mandate of Heaven
  - This is the period in which Confucius was born and lived.
  - Zhou Dynasty overthrown when landowners became more powerful than the kings who put them there.

“The Qin Dynasty” in China:
- The Qin Dynasty would only last about 11 years, yet this dynasty would make changes that would affect the history of China for thousands of years. It seemed as if Qin, the name of the nation, China, was a derivative of his name.

China’s Early Dynasties (cont.)
- Qin Dynasty – 1st EMPIRE (221-206 B.C.E.)
  - Qin Shihuang set up strong govt where he completely controlled every aspect.
  - Created the first uniform system of written laws to keep noblemen from rebelling against him.

The Great Wall of China
- Qin ordered his people to connect the existing walls together to expand them eventually covering a distance of over 4000 miles.

Peasant Labor
- Over 300,000 peasants were forced to build the Great Wall of China. Many of them died during the construction, yet, working for several years, the Great Wall of China was completed, and still stands today as one of the great building projects in human history.

Chinese Exploration
- In 139 B.C.E., the Han emperor sent out one of his generals, Zhang Qian, to explore other nations. His army marched through vast distances遇见, destroyed many of Zhang Qian’s men and animals and only a few survivors returned.

Attacked by Nomadic Tribes
- The armies of Zhang Qian were seized by the nomadic tribes, as a result, these tribes attacked and destroyed many of Zhang Qian’s men and animals. He was captured and kept in captivity for a period of 10 years. After 11 years, Zhang Qian was able to return to the emperor and report.
He told Wudi stories he had heard from the nomadic tribes of a great civilization to the West that equaled the glory of China. This was the first time Wudi had heard anything of any other civilizations. Wudi was a smart and wise ruler, who saw the potential for trade between the two cultures.

As a result, Wudi began to develop what has been called The Silk Road. Following this route merhcant traders took silk from China to the West, and brought glass, linen, and gold back to China.

Wudi Aspires to Trade with West

The Silk Road

Expansion of Trade

The silk road would become instrumental in the development and expansion of trade, and the accumulation of wealth in both China and Rome, as well as in Egypt and other nations.

Wudi

Aspires to Trade with West

The Silk Road

Expansion of Trade

China's Early Dynasties (cont.)

• Reasons for collapse
  • Dishonest leaders - took bribes
  • Greedy leaders - wanted empire for themselves
• Empire breaks up into competing kingdoms (220 B.C.E)
• Powerful landownery controlled for 360 yrs
• Maintained own armies
• People exchanged work for protection

Reunification of China

• Early 500s - Emperor Wudi conquered border states
• Founded Sui Dynasty
• Traditional religions thrived under Wudi
• Buddhism, Confucianism, + Daoism revived to unite people

Impact of Sui ('Sway') Dynasty

• Wudi unified China
• Restored religious traditions
• Created Grand Canal (1,104m), expanded Great Wall
• Expanded capital at Chang'an
• Improved education
• Made government more effective by consolidating it
• Established exams for public officials
• Empire brought 400 yrs of stability to region

Chinese Dynasties and Their Achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynasty</th>
<th>Notable Rulers</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xia Dynasty</td>
<td>Aryan</td>
<td>Migrated into the area and conquered the local peoples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shang Dynasty</td>
<td>Thirty separate kings</td>
<td>Developed superior weaponry and technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou Dynasty</td>
<td>Kings, Noblemen</td>
<td>Expansion of empire得到了 development of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qin Dynasty</td>
<td>Qins</td>
<td>Centralized authority, written laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han Dynasty</td>
<td>Han Wudi</td>
<td>Eternal peace, + Expansion of trade, + Silk Road, + Food Reserves, + Merit-based appointments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Mandate of Heaven

1. The Chinese believed each emperor received from heaven a mandate, or order to govern that gave him total power.
   a) The leader must be named by ability and virtue.
   b) The dynasty's leadership must be justified by succeeding generations.
   c) The mandate could be revoked by negligence and abuse; the will of the people was important.
The Dynastic Cycle

- A new dynasty comes to power.
- Lives of common people improve; taxes reduced; farming encouraged.
- Problems begin (extensive wars, invasions, etc.).
- Taxes increase; men forced to work for army.
- Farming neglected.
- Govt. increases spending; corruption.
- Droughts, floods, famines occur.
- Poor lose respect for govt.; they join rebels & attack landlords.
- Rebel bands find strong leader who unites them.
- Attack the emperor.
- Emperor is defeated!!
- Emperor reforms the govt. & makes it more efficient.

In 1407 C.E., an explorer named Zheng He ('Chung Huh') sailed west to demonstrate the splendor of China, and to open trade alliances with other countries. His massive fleet brought back rare wares, maps, and even plants. Over 7 voyages, Zheng He and his companions, sailors, and patients advertised all Chinese wares forbidden to leave by later Ming Emperors.

Chinese Exploration

- Zheng He's voyages took him to edges of the known world, establishing trade alliances from Mogadishu to Malacca. His journey would set the stage for Columbus' voyage to the New World in 1492.