Sui - Tang - Song - Yuan

Post Classical Chinese Dynasties

c. 581 – 1450ish CE
During the Classical Era, the emperors of Han China created a large empire and developed numerous innovations. Civil service exams for government employees were based on Confucian teachings, and the silk-making technology attracted trade from outside China. The Silk Road trade route brought Chinese luxury goods to Europe and Asia and increased cultural diffusion.
Like the Roman Empire, Classical China under the Han Dynasty entered an era of decline & eventually fell.
After the Han Dynasty collapsed in 220 A.D., no emperor was strong enough to unify China. Over the next 350 years, more than 30 local dynasties rose & fell.
Sui Dynasty  581 – 618 CE

- **Wendi** - A Noble from Northern China formed the Sui Dynasty.
  - Re-unification of China under one ruling family
- Sui Yangdi (last of only 2 Sui Emperors)
  - Used forced, peasant labor to complete a 1400 mile canal linking the Huang He and Yangtze Rivers
  - His brutal rule caused him to be murdered and the Tang Dynasty to be founded
In 589, China was unified again & a strong central government was restored. The restoration of the examination system allowed intelligent bureaucrats to help manage the empire.

During the Tang & Song Dynasties, China experienced an extended “golden age” & became the richest, most powerful, & most advanced country in the world.
Emperors did their best to try to protect the routes along the Silk Road.

Chinese merchants relied on ocean routes as well to trade with India & Arabia.

Increased trade led to the spread of Chinese culture (centralized gov’t, Confucianism, & writing) to Korea, Japan, & Southeast Asia.

For the 1st time in China’s history, emperors encouraged foreign trade.
Increased trade helped spread Buddhism throughout China.
Tang Dynasty 618 – 907 CE

• Return of Organized government
  • Civil Service System exams brought back & restored the capital, Chang'an

• Economic Reforms
  • Large estates broken up, land given to peasants & trade increased w/ SE Asia, India, Japan, Middle East

• Cultural Elements
  • Poetry and Painting (printing) become elaborate & Buddhism is accepted and practiced in China

• Increase in Territory
  • Re-unification of Han areas (“inner China”) & Inclusion of lands in Mongolia, Turkestan, Vietnam and Korea

• Factors Leading to the End of the Tang Dynasty
  • Infighting and excess as w/other dynasties & Revolts of Turkic peoples between the 8th - early 10th centuries
Li Yuan- (Emperor Gaozu/566-635)
• Duke of Tang, he assumed power
• Forced nomadic tribes to submit to his armies
• Forced the sons of tribal leaders to be held captive
• Took over the Silla Dynasty (Korea) and forced it to become a tribute state

Empress Wu- 690- 705
• She tried to make Buddhism main religion
• Promoted the building of temples/pagodas, Buddhist statues, and Buddhist art
• Was the 1st and only female Empress to maintain power
Song Dynasty (Northern & Southern) 960 – 1279 CE

- Reunited under military commander Zhao Kuangyin
- Changes in the Bureaucracy
  - Military Leaders were subordinate to civilian bureaucrats
- Three different levels of Civil Service exams, every three years
- Kind of like Renaissance
- Revival of Confucian thought
  - Neo Confucianism- Personal Morality, Personal Virtue (attained through book learning), respect for the wise, hatred toward foreign philosophy, and focuses on tradition.
- Reinforced class/gender distinctions
Chinese Innovations

The Tang & Song dynasties were eras of major technological advancement:

- The technologies helped make China the most advanced country in the world
- Much of China’s technology spread to other people across trade routes
1. Mechanical Clock
2. Magnetic compass
3. Gunpowder
4. Printing Press
5. Paper money
6. Chinese writing

琴 (Music)  飛 錢 (Paper Money)  瓷 (Porcelain)

長城 (Rebuilding of the Great Wall)  驛站 (Roads and Relay Hostels)  船 (Ships)

天花 (Smallpox Inoculation)  纡 車 (Spinning Wheel)  運河 (Waterways)
7. Ship building
8. Vaccination
9. Silk weaving
10. Porcelain
The End of the Golden Age

• Despite the wealth & culture during under the Tang & Song Dynasties, the Chinese were briefly overthrown by the Mongols.
The Mongols were among the numerous nomadic tribes who lived in Central Asia.
Yuan Dynasty  c.1271 – 1368 CE
The Mongols were among the numerous nomadic tribes who lived in Central Asia.
The Mongols lived in the harsh climate of the Eurasian steppe, an area with little rain & extreme temperatures.

Mongol life centered on herding animals, especially horses.

Mongols lived as nomadic clans, constantly searching for better pasture lands.
As a result of their lifestyle, the Mongols were tough warriors who occasionally raided nearby settlements.

From 1200 to 1206, a clan leader named Genghis Khan unified the Mongols.

Genghis Khan built a powerful Mongol army & began a 21-year conquest of Eurasia.
Under Genghis & later khans, the Mongols conquered...

- Russia
- Korea
- China
- the Islamic Empire
How Big Was the Mongol Empire?

The Mongol Empire stretched from the Pacific Ocean to Eastern Europe.
How did the Mongols create this massive empire?

Mongol soldiers were excellent horsemen; Used the horse saddle to shoot arrows while riding.
How did the Mongols create this massive empire?

Genghis was a brilliant military organizer & strategist, but his greatest tactic was terror & fear. If an enemy refused to surrender, Genghis would order the death of the entire population. As the Mongol reputation spread, many towns surrendered to Genghis without a fight.
“In the countries that have not yet been overrun by them, everyone spends the night afraid that they may appear there too.” (Arab historian)
The Impact of the Mongol Empire

The Mongols were merciless in battle, but tolerant as rulers.

Mongol khans (rulers) often adopted parts of the culture of the people they conquered.

In the East, Mongols embraced Chinese culture.

In the West, Mongols converted to Islam.
The Impact of the Mongol Empire

Mongol khans brought stability & order to Eurasia.

The era from the mid-1200s to the mid-1300s is called the Pax Mongolica (“Mongol Peace”).

During the Pax Mongolica, the Mongols guaranteed safe passage across the Silk Road. As a result, trade & cultural diffusion increased between Europe & Asia.

Chinese technologies like gunpowder & the magnetic compass reached Europe. But diseases like the plague (Black Death) reached Europe too.
After the death of Genghis Khan, the Mongol Empire was divided into 4 major khanates each ruled by a son or grandson of Genghis.

- The khanate in Persia helped control the Silk Road.
- The Mongol destruction of Kiev increased the importance of Moscow in Russia.
- The Mongols were the first non-Muslims to rule over the Islamic Empire.
After the death of Genghis Khan, the Mongol Empire was divided into 4 major khanates each ruled by a son or grandson of Genghis. But the most significant khanate was the Mongol rule over China. In 1279, Genghis’ grandson Kublai Khan became the first foreign leader to rule China.
Kublai Khan began a new era in China called the Yuan Dynasty.

Kublai enjoyed Chinese culture so much that he moved the Mongolian capital to China.

But, he excluded the Chinese from serving in high gov’t offices & relied on foreigners to serve in his government.
Kublai proved to be a good emperor for China. He built roads & extended the Grand Canal to help improve transportation in China. Under Kublai, foreign trade with China increased due to the Pax Mongolica.
In 1275, a European merchant named Marco Polo visited Kublai Khan’s court. Kublai was so impressed with Marco Polo that he employed him in the Yuan gov’t for 17 years. When Marco Polo returned to Italy in 1792, his stories of China increased European demand for Asian trade.
By the time of Kublai’s death in 1294, the entire Mongol Empire was growing weak.

In 1330, the Mongols lost control of Persia.

In 1368, the Chinese overthrew the Mongols & started the Ming Dynasty.

In 1370, the Mongols lost control of Central Asia.

In 1480, under Ivan III Russia gained independence from Mongol rule & started the Romanov Dynasty.
The End of the Golden Age

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The Ming emperors encourage overseas trade...
...and began a series of explorations led by Zheng He to demonstrate Chinese superiority.
Zheng He had better ships & traveled farther than any European explorers would for 100 years.

Zheng He led 7 different expeditions.

Zheng He explored areas along the Indian Ocean & Africa, expand trade, & collected tribute from foreigners.
• After the 7th treasure fleet voyage in 1433, Chinese leaders unexpectedly ended the expeditions & retreated into isolationism
• Scholar-officials complained that Zheng He’s voyages used valuable resources that were needed to defend China
• China’s official trade policy was to keep the influence of outsiders to a minimum
• China’s geography & gov’t policies kept it relatively isolated for the next 300 years until European merchants in the 1800s demanded access to Chinese trade
Ming Dynasty  1368 – 1644 CE

- Founded by Zhu Yuanzhang- peasant turned general during rebel revolt
- After Yuan Dynasty, eradicated most evidence of Yuan Dynasty
- Ming means brilliant in Chinese
- Considered a golden age in some scholar’s eyes
- Organized Bureaucracy & wealthy economy
- Confucianism