

A Learning Resource Report

Reading Materials for Participants of The International Forum

December 2003

China – A Selection of Dynastic Histories

In April 2004, The International Forum will travel through three cities of historical significance in China. Beginning in **Shanghai**, one of the younger cities in China – it grew to prominence during the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and during the Republic of China (1911-1949). Now it is the key financial center under the People's Republic. The City of **Hangzhou**, south west of Shanghai, was the capital of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) until it fell to the Mongols in 1276. The city of **Wuhan** dates back to the Shang Dynasty (3,500 years ago) and it was part of the Chu during the Warring States Period (476 BC-221 BC) and during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) it became a busy trading port on the Yangtze River.

Chinese civilized history is re-told through its dynasties – a reminder that nothing remains the same and that everything has a rise and fall, a birth and death. The account of China's history follows a cyclical pattern with the rise and fall of each dynasty, unlike western history which is re-told in a fairly linear progression from the Ancient Greeks onward. The attached reading chronicles parts of China's history from the Shang Dynasty through the forming of the People's Republic. It is a brief overview and a simple introduction designed to peak your interest, yet not tell the whole story.

This material is provided for the participants of The International Forum and is to be used for learning purposes only.

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MAP OF CHINA



Cities in China



(Source: Lonely Planet)

The Shang Dynasty (16th – 11th Century BC)

The Shang was the second hereditary dynasty in China. It lasted almost six hundred years with thirty-one kings over seventeen generations.

Shang used to be an old tribe lived in the lower reach of the Yellow River. It was a tributary of the Xia Kingdom. At the end of the Xia, the last ruler Jie was a tyrant who made his people live in misery. The chief of the Shang tribe, Tang, led an insurgent army and overthrew the **Xia Dynasty** (The 21st to the 17th century BC). Tang then established the Shang Dynasty and made Bo (present Caoxian County in Shandong Province) his capital city.

The Shang Dynasty was the second monarchical state in Chinese history. Tang, the founder of Shang, having drawn lessons from the ruin of the previous dynasty, treated his people benevolently and employed many able and virtuous ministers. The Shang made great progresses in its economy during the reign of Tang.

While, due to political struggle for power in the imperial court and continuous wars with frontier tribes, Shang state moved its capital five times. The most notable move was during the reign of King Pangeng, the seventeenth king of the Shang. He reestablished the capital at Yin, in the neighborhood of present Xiaotuncun, in Anyang City of Henan Province. The new capital contributed a lot to the stable government of the Shang Dynasty afterwards. Once the successful new capital was established, it did not change throughout the remainder of the Shang Dynasty. Therefore, the Shang Dynasty is often called "the Yin" or "the Yin-Shang Dynasty".

Another renowned Shang ruler was Wuding, the nephew of Pangeng. He was an aspirant and benevolent king and always endeavored to make his kingdom strong. Under his leadership, the empire of Shang made great achievements in its economy, which laid a foundation for the continuous development of following dynasties.

Economy and Society

From the findings on the site of Yin, the capital city of the Shang, archeologists found out that the productivity of the Shang Dynasty reached a relatively high level even during the former period. As far as agriculture was concerned, farm implements had been improved. Stone ploughs, spades and sickles were widely used. The primary crops included millet and wheat. More important, the Shang Dynasty thrived in the manufacture of bronze vessels.

Bronze culture has appeared in China before 3,000 BC and achieved its zenith around the 13th century BC. Bronze objects affected not only people's daily life but the arms of the state. Its wide use enabled unprecedented accomplishments of the Shang Dynasty in politics, economy, culture and art. In the reign of King Wuding, the landmark was the appearance of an alloy of copper, lead and tin. Bronzeware was under mass production. They fell mainly into two classifications: cooking vessels and alcohol containers. Among them, the famous works of art include Simuwu quadripod, which is 732.84kg in weight as the largest bronzeware ever found anywhere in the world. It was made in tribute to the deceased mother of Shang king. Another is a wine container that has four goats resting on its rim. The Shang Dynasty marked the coming of Bronze Age.

At the same time, great development came about in other industries as well. In handicraft, the operation went under much subtler division of labor. It was recorded that a hundred lines emerged in handicraft at that time. Shang craftsmen acquired the skill of inlaying and carving and had their jade wares, stone wares and ivory wares brilliantly decorated. Textile workers invented the simple jacquard loom, which could produce high-quality silk fabric with a hidden pattern. Additionally, the Shang people also made significant progress in medicine, transportation and astronomy. During this period, important events were recorded on tortoise shell and animal bone using **Oracle Script**, which is the oldest known Chinese form of written

communication.

The tradition of ancestral worship has a long history in China. Archeologists have found it was practiced even in **Prehistoric Times** (1.7 million years to the 21st century BC). With the emergence of farming, people worshipped the heaven in hope of favorable weather for crops. It actually was a kind of nature worship. Another kind of worship was ancestor worship, also called soul worship. People offered sacrifice to their ancestor, praying for blessings bestowed by their ancestors. From the Xia Dynasty onwards, Kings were endowed with supreme authority. In order to secure his power, the king combined ancestral worship and nature worship to create the God or the Heaven, and proclaimed himself the agent or the worldly descendent of the God.

In the Shang Dynasty, slavery system prevailed. The aristocrats enjoyed all the luxuries while the slaves lived a dog' life. They belonged to their lord. After the slave owner died, the slaves were often buried alive as human sacrifice together with animal offerings.

After the death of King Wuding, the prime day of the Shang Dynasty did not go on a long time. Toward the end, internal conflicts intensified and ducal states rebelled. The last Shang ruler was a despot. A rebellious army of slaves dethroned him in the 11th century BC.

Western Zhou Dynasty

After defeating the Shang, King Wu founded the Zhou Dynasty, making Haojing his capital city, near the present city of Xi'an in Shaanxi Province. Historians call this period Western Zhou Dynasty (the 11th century BC - 771 BC).

Like the Shang kings, the Zhou kings worshipped their ancestors, but they also worshipped Heaven. The Shujing (Book of History), one of the earliest recorded texts, describes the Zhou's version of their history. It assumes a

close relationship between Heaven and the king, calling the king "the Son of Heaven." It explains that Heaven gives the king a mandate to rule so long as he does so in the interest of the people. The last Shang king had been decadent and cruel, so Heaven withdrew the Mandate of Heaven from him and entrusted it to the virtuous Zhou kings.

In order to reassure and pacify the people of Shang and consolidate the new regime, the Western Zhou introduced a feudal system. During the Zhou Dynasty, all the land and people were nominally the property of the king. Kings, as supreme rulers, distributed both land and the people on it to their relatives, meritorious ministers and generals founding many small vassal states. These kingdoms had to comply with the orders issued by Zhou emperors. This entailed providing an army to fight for the emperor and regular payment of tribute and homage to the emperor. Each of these vassals could pass his title down to a son, thus making each domain a hereditary vassal state. Within each state, there were noble houses holding hereditary titles. King Wu's enfeoffment of dukes was the first practice of the feudal system during the Western Zhou Dynasty. Under this system, the Western Zhou Dynasty strengthened its rule and became a powerful slave owning country with vast lands.

Valuable lessons were learned from the collapse of the Shang. Consequently, Zhou established a complex state machinery to effectively control the entire country. Systematic criminal laws were instituted and a larger standing army was maintained than had been under the rule of the Shang Dynasty.

Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770 BC - 221 BC)



In its early days, the Western Zhou Dynasty (The 11th century BC to 711 BC) was sufficiently powerful to be able to control the vassal states. In particular the states were prevented from fighting each other in order to annex their neighbors. However, from the time that King Ping moved his court to Luoyi (now the city of Luoyang in Henan Province) establishing the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, the Zhou influence went into decline. Although the king retained his position as nominal overlord he was no longer able to control the activities of his vassals. Economic imbalance meant some states were stronger than others. In turn this led to the stronger states declaring war on the weaker ones and annexing them regardless of the prohibition of such activity by the Zhou.

So, from the beginning of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty to the unification by Qin, China was marked by disunity and continuous conflicts. Historically, this is recorded as two periods: the Spring and Autumn Period (770 BC - 476 BC) and the Warring States Period (476 BC - 221 BC).

Spring and Autumn Period (770 BC-476 BC)

Marked by overlord politics, this period was named after the book Spring and Autumn Annals (the history of Lu) adapted by Confucius.

After the eastward move of King Ping, some vassal states progressed in social economy. They became stronger while the royal authority took a nosedive, gradually losing its control over them.

During the Spring and Autumn Period, there were over 150 kingdoms coexisting with Zhou, among them Qi, Lu, Jin, Yan, Qin, Chu, Wu, Yue, etc were the stronger. These powerful states, relying on their military and economic advantages, launched wars to expand their territories, forcing small states follow them so as to establish their dominance as overlords.

In the early to middle stage of the Spring and Autumn Period, five dukes, namely Huangong of the Qi state, Xiangong of the Song, Wengong of the Jin, Mugong of the Qin and Zhuangwang of the Chu, once fought for the "overlordship", known as the "the Five Overlords of the Spring and Autumn Period", in which Huangong of Qi was the first one to establish his hegemony by advocating "respect the king and repulse the alien tribes."

Continuous wars brought enormous balefulness to the people giving rise to wide opposition in the small states. Finally, in 579 BC and 546 BC, two treaties were made between Jin and Chu kingdoms, resulting in a short peace in the Central Plains.

In the epilogue to the struggle to become overlord of the Central Plains, Wu and Yue, two kingdoms located in the downstream area of the Yangtze River, rose up. Firstly defeated by the kingdom of Wu, Goujian, the king of Yue, applied himself to the development of agriculture and training his army. He finally got an opportunity to conquer the Wu and became the last overlord during the Spring and Autumn Period.

According to historical records, during this period, a total of thirty-six kings were killed and fifty-two vassal states were demolished.

This constant conflict and annexation of one state by another during the Spring and Autumn Period hastened social and economic change and had the effect of integrating people of different tribes and nationalities.

The consequence of this period of drastic upheavals, reshufflings and regroupings, what had been several hundred states were reconstituted into seven mega-states. China entered the Warring States Period.

Warring States Period (476 BC - 221 BC)

After long-term wars, seven kingdoms, namely Qi, Chu, Yan, Han, Zhao, Wei and Qin, appeared as the most powerful states in this period, known as the "Seven Overlords" in history. To expand their forces and territories, the seven overlords, on the one hand, carried out reforms in their own states to strengthen themselves and, on the other, were warring against each other and scheming to annex other states, which gave rise to the situation of seven powerful states existing side by side and struggling against each other.

Qin, situated in the remote west, used to be a vassal state enfeoffed by King Ping for Qin Xianggong's contribution of escorting the king on his move east. During the Spring and Autumn Period, Qin Mugong annexed twelve states, largely expanding his territory, making himself an overlord. During the Warring States Period, Qin, because of its outlying position, was more backward than the states in the Central Plains.

When Qin Xiaogong was in power, Shangyang, an aristocratic descendant of the Wei kingdom, was entrusted by the monarch to carry out a series of reforms in 359 BC and 350 BC to strengthen the power of Qin. Shangyang's reforms include abolishing the outdated well-field system, legalizing the private ownership of land, canceling the hereditary system of rank and initiating a county system.

In addition, Qin also paid attention to the development of agriculture. Around 250 BC, Libing, a governor of Shu prefecture (present Sichuan Province), together with his son, directed the construction of Dujiangyan Irrigation Project, which not only controlled flooding but also irrigated the whole Chengdu Plain.

Qin, based on the reforms and improvements, quickly became a powerful state, laying a solid foundation for the future unification of China by Emperor Qin Shi Huang.

At the end of Warring States, the royal house of Eastern Zhou existed in name only. In 256 BC, Qin dispatched army and defeated the Eastern Zhou Dynasty. Before long, after King Yingzheng succeeded to the throne, he expedited his project of annexation and finally in 221 BC united China and established a unified, multi-national, autocratic and power-centralized state, putting an end to the Warring States Period.

At the end of Western Han Dynasty (206 BC - 24 AD), Liuxiang, based on the information about this period, compiled a book and named it the History of Warring States according to the character of this period. Later generations then named this chaotic era the Warring States Period.

Culture and Religion (The Hundred Schools of Thought)

In this turbulent period, each regional lord competed in building strong and loyal armies and in economic production to ensure the advantage over others rivals in the struggle for survival among warring regional wars. Kingdom rulers sought the advice of teachers and strategists. Thinkers and intellectuals, besides teaching their disciples, were employed as advisers of the various kingdom rulers concerning methods of government, war, and diplomacy procedures. This fueled intensify activities and debates in the intellectual and ideology system. The golden age of China - philosophy came along thereafter. The five most influential schools of thought that evolved

during this period were Confucianism, Taoism (Daoism), Mohism, Legalism and Militarism.

Among numerous schools, the oldest, and the most influential school of thought was Confucianism. It traced its origin to K'ung Fu-tzu or Confucius (551-479 BC), a member of the lower nobility and a minor official in the small state of Lu and was later extended by Mencius (372-289 BC), like Confucius, an itinerant scholar teaching his disciples in different states and offering advice to their rulers. He repeatedly tried to convince rulers that the ruler should cultivate moral perfection in order to set a good example to the people and the ruler who governed benevolently would earn the respect of the people. He held the view that human nature was fundamentally good as everyone is born with the capacity to recognize what is right and act upon it. Just opposite to his view, Xunzi (about 313-238 BC), also a Confucian of the state of Chu argued that people are born selfish and that it is only through education and ritual that they learn to give up evil and return to good. He intensively negated the role of Heaven. Xunzi stressed the importance of the inner faith and belief of human beings exceeds any other spiritual beings.

Another school, the Mohism founded by Modi flourished in the latter half of the fifth century. It resembles Confucianism in its reverence for humanism. Master Mo called for a universal love encompassing all human beings in equal degree. He suggested a harmonious relationship between people on a reciprocal basis. Thus he is an assertor of unionism who suggested a practice of a political relationship of mutual benefit or dependence between states.

In contrast to these doctrines, and utterly opposed to them, were the tenets of the Legalist school, which sought by every means possible to strengthen the state and increase its military might. It began to take shape late in the fourth century. Legalists sought by every means possible to strengthen the state and increase its military might. They defined the duties of people in society by framing out detailed laws and figured out penalties accordingly to

punish those who failed to fulfill them. Old customs and moral codes were to be replaced by those laws. Shangyang an aristocratic descendant of the kingdom Wei, was a representative of this school. He carried out a series of reforms in 359 BC and 350 BC to strengthen the power of Qin. Later in the Warring States Period, another legalist named Hanfei or Han Fei Zi who advocated harsh rules and laws was also an adviser to the ruler. He bent on organizing society on a rational basis and finding means to strengthen their states agriculturally and militarily. They devised elaborate means for controlling people's lives and actions through laws and punishments.

The doctrines of Daoism, the second great school of philosophy emerged during the Warring States Period. The Chinese word tao (pronounced "dao") means a way or a path. Considering it much too limited that Confucians use the term tao to speak of the way human beings ought to behave in society, the Taoists preferred to understand the tao as the Way of Nature as a whole. They tried to tell people that do not exaggerate the importance of man too much. Because human life is only a small part of the universal and the only way can human actions make sense is to act in accord with the principles of Nature. They hold disapprove of the over and unnatural mode of behavior and advocated the way of spontaneity and harmony. Many Taoists denounced violence as reflecting the ultimate ignorance of the Way of Nature. Tao-te Ching (Classic of the Way and Its Power) which is attributed traditionally to Laozi and later compiled by Zhuangzi is a Taoist bible in which many theories mentioned above were narrated.

Due to the disunity and disturbance state, the earliest known treatise on war and military science, Chinese classic Bing-Fa (The Art of War) came out. It was traditionally attributed to Sun Tzu also spelled SUN-TZU or Sunzi (4th century BC), a military strategist and general who served the state of Wu near the end of the Spring and Autumn Period (770 - 476 BC). The Art of War is a systematic guide to strategy and tactics for rulers and commanders. The book discusses various manoeuvres and the effect of terrain on the outcome of battles.

Besides the glory achievements in the ideology field, another noted man you should not miss is Qu Yuan (340 BC - 278 BC) - a great poet and politician served as a chancellor to King Huai of the Kingdom of Chu. Two poetic essays written by him named Chu Ci (Chu Songs) and Li Sao (The Lament) exercised great influence on poetry writing of later ages.

Qin Dynasty (221 - 206 BC)



The king of the Qin state, Yingzheng, conquered the other six dukedoms through ten years of wars and brought an end to the Warring States Period (476 BC - 221 BC) in 221 BC. He built up the Qin Dynasty, the first unified, multi-national, autocratic and power-centralized state in Chinese history, making Xianyang, a city near Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, as his capital city. Although Qin is a short dynasty with a span of only fifteen years, it opened 2,000-year-long imperial history in China and exerted a far-reaching influence on the subsequent dynasties. Except for frontiers in the west, southwest and northeast, Qin's territory has been fairly intact up to the present-day. To protect the northern frontier, the first Qin emperor ordered the construction of the Great Wall. He instituted centralism and a strict set of rules by which people lived oppressively. An army of peasants overthrew the harsh Qin regime just one year after the death of the Emperor Qin Shi Huang in 207 BC.

The first Qin emperor lived from 259 BC to 210 BC. He was crowned at the age of 13 after his king father died. Since he was too young to administer his country, the real power was in the hand of the prime minister, Lu Buwei, who, as was said, was the real father of the young emperor. Emperor Qin remained silent and kept strengthening his own force. When proper occasion came, he arrested the prime minister and sentenced him to death. At the news, the prime minister did nothing but roared out laughter, "Well done, well done, that is my boy."

The first Qin emperor seized power at the age of 22 in 238 BC. Soon after, he launched a unification campaign from 230 BC to 221 BC. The emperor was a great politician. After he unified the country, he carried out a series of political reforms. He divided the country into 36 prefectures, and subdivided into more counties. All the regional governments were subordinate to the central government, which was in the charge of the emperor himself. The first Qin emperor standardized the measurement of weight and length, written script, legal system and currency. He migrated thousands of people to southern border areas to pioneer the virgin land. As the northern tribe, the Xiongnu kept plundering the northern frontiers, Emperor Qin appointed one of his excellent generals, Mengtian, to the northern areas. Mengtian beat back the Xiongnu tribe and supervised the construction of the Great Wall.

Anyway, despite all great jobs he did, Emperor Qin ruled as a ruthless tyrant. In order to standardize human thoughts, he burnt most of the books in the country to prevent freethinking. Furthermore, the emperor imposed heavy tax and constrained thousands of people to work on the Great Wall. In the second year after his enthronement, he started the construction of his mausoleum, which took almost 700,000 conscripts over 30 years. In order to continue his reign after his death, he also ordered the construction of the Terra-Cotta Army east of his mausoleum.

The tyranny of Emperor Qin Shi Huang and his successor resulted in the

wide oppose in the country. Present uprisings continually struck the regime of the Qin. Finally in 207 BC, Xiangyu's army inflicted heavy losses on the Qin army and in the following year, Liubang broke Xianyang, the capital of Qin, and ended the notorious Qin Dynasty.

Later, in pursuit of the domination of the country, a four-year war, known as Chu-Han War, broke out between Xiangyu and Liubang. Finally, in 202 BC, Liubang defeated Xiangyu and established the Han Dynasty (206 BC - 24 AD), proclaiming himself the emperor of the Han.

Han Dynasty (206 BC – 24 AD)



At the end of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), a present army led by Liu Bang conquered the Xianyang City in 207 BC, putting an end to the despotic period.

After four years war with his rival, Xiangyu, Liu Bang finally got command of the whole country and established his reign - Han Dynasty in 202 BC.

The new dynasty has been divided into two historical periods. The first period is called the Western Han (206 BC - 24 AD) as the capital was Chang'an (the present city of Xi'an in Shaanxi Province). The second period is known as the Eastern Han (25 AD - 220 AD) as Luoyang became the capital city.

The Han Dynasty ruled over the second unified Chinese empire. Based on the unification created by Emperor Qin Shi Huang, a variety of different cultures were integrated. This laid the foundation for what became the common culture of Han. It was during this period that the Han ethnic group established itself as the core nation of China. It was as a consequence of their more advanced civilization that the Han people assumed a dominant position. This dominance still exists in China today, regardless of the many changes that have taken place over the centuries.

Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)



The founders of the Tang dynasty inherited the accomplishments of the Sui, including the large capital at Chang'an, now Xian. The Chinese bureaucracy continued to develop. During the Sui-Tang era, seven ministries were established - personnel, administration, finance, rites, army, justice, and public works - as was a censorate, an agency responsible for inspecting and reporting on official and even imperial conduct.

Under the second emperor, Tang-dynasty armies expanded east into Korea, south into northern Vietnam, and west into Central Asia. This was the great era of the Silk Road. As trade expanded along this route, contacts with the people and cultures of Central and West Asia increased. Chang'an was developed into a great international metropolis. Between AD 600 and 900, no city in the world could compare with it in size and grandeur. People from

Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Persia, and West Asia seeking trade, Buddhist enlightenment, or simply adventure injected their energy into Tang urban life.

The strength of the Tang supported creative vigour in literature and the fine arts. Tang poetry is looked in particular as a model. The writing of poetry became a requisite in the civil service exams for higher qualifications and promotion can be credited to China's only female ruler, Empress Wu Zetian, who reigned from around 690 to 705 and the sole empress in china's history.

Empress Wu's reputation was affected by Confucianism's aversion towards women with authority (though this historical antipathy is not exclusive to China), with tales of murdered officials and other intrigues the most often told. Like many emperors before and after her, she manipulated those around her to gain power. However, she was an intelligent politician, selecting talented scholars who passed the civil service examinations for key posts. The growing importance of the examinations in the late Tang period served to weaken powerful, aristocratic families of the northwest and presented greater opportunities for those from other areas to be involved in government. Scholar-officials who earned their rank through success in the examinations started to become a minor elite within the imperial bureaucracy. The influence of great families began to correspond to the placement of their members in high office. A powerful family could soon fall apart if two or three generations passed without a member attaining a high position in government.

The height of Tang dynasty splendour was attained under Emperor Xuanzong, who reigned from 713 until 755. Nevertheless, failings accumulated. Military campaigns became overextended and expensive. Powerful generals meddled in court politics. Officials became involved in factional infighting, and the emperor increasingly turned to court eunuchs for support. In his old age, Xuanzong let his control deteriorate when he fell for a beautiful concubine - Yangguifei. A military rebellion weakened the throne but was put down, Tang rule was restored but its power never fully

recovered. In 845, the emperor ordered the repression of Buddhist monasteries that, by this time, had acquired large, tax-exempt estates with glorious temples housing thousands of residents. Buddhism's growth was checked by the court's issuing of ordination certificates for monks.

Song Dynasty (960 - 1127)

Anarchy reigned during the final half century of Tang rule, but eventually regional states emerged out of the political and social chaos called the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.

The Song dynasty was founded by the palaceguard commander of the last of the Five Dynasties in northern China. While constantly under threat by non-Chinese groups in the north in fact, the capital was moved from Kaifeng to Hangzhou after invaders took over northern China in 1126 - the song dynasty is considered one of China's most creative and artistic periods.

Population growth promoted urbanization, particularly in the capital. Coal and iron industries developed, and foreign trade was a large source of government revenues in the latter Song era, not to be matched again until the 19th century. Foreign trade lessened the land tax and increased the use of paper money, a practice initiated in the Tang dynasty. Chinese ships could carry 500 men on as many as four decks, powered by a dozen sails on four or six masts; in fact, China led the world in nautical expertise.

Paper was invented in the first or second century B.C., and the Song was the first society with printed books, the key to the era's educational development. The civil service examination system became a huge and elaborate institution crucial to upper-class life, at least until the abolishment of the system in 1905. A majority of officials still gained office by recommendation from a highly-placed relative, but the Song bureaucracy was staffed by more exam graduates than ever before. In theory, nearly any male could take the exams, but of course it was usually only the wealthier

families who could afford the time and money on tutors.

The expanding educational system revived the study of Confucianism and fostered its reinterpretation by a number of scholars, characterised by its Buddhism-inspired focus on individual self-cultivation.

Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279)



The military weakness of the Northern Song (960 - 1127) eventually took its toll. In 1127, the Jin army sacked the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng, taking Emperor Huizong and most of his family hostage. Huizong's ninth son, Zhaogou, fled to the south. That same year, the Song court re-established itself in Lin'an (present Hangzhou City), where it continued to rule for another 150 years as the Southern Song Dynasty. Zhaogou is known historically as Emperor Gaozong.

The period of the Southern Song is neither a period of power nor stability and the dynasty only controlled the area south of the Yangtze River. When the dynasty was newly established, instead of appointing competent people to carry out reforms and devise effective defensive strategies, Emperor Gaozong did the opposite. By blocking the efforts of his talented Prime Minister Ligang he reversed the dominant military strategy from one of active resistance to passive defence. In addition, talented people were supplanted and less able and often incapable ones were appointed to very important

positions.

The Jin army continued its attempts to conquer the area south of the Yangtze River. In order to avoid further hostilities, following the founding of the dynasty, Emperor Gaozong made peace with the Jin, accepting humiliating terms that included the payment of tribute.

After the emergence of the Mongols, the three powers in the north - the Mongols, the Western Xia and the Jin - constantly fought against each other. Ideally, this presented the Southern Song with its best opportunity for expansion. However, as a defensive strategy had been adopted, no action was taken at all. It was not until the Western Xia vanished and the Jin, having lost most of its northern territories, turned to attack the Southern Song that they were forced to fight. Although the Southern Song troops held the southward marching Jin army at bay, they also suffered heavy losses. Meanwhile the Mongolian forces advanced on to the northern bank of the Yellow River, but the Southern Song lacked sufficient strength left to march against these new invaders. Even worse, with the Jin virtually defeated, the Southern Song foolishly decided to unite with the Mongols to continue to resist them. Sadly, the Song was quite unaware that their new allies were going to be far more dangerous than the Jin.

Soon after conquering the Jin, the Mongols then set their sights on the Southern Song. In 1276, the Mongolian army captured Hangzhou, putting an end to the Southern Song Dynasty. Some of the Song ministers went south to Fujian and Guangdong to reestablish the mini-Song court which was short-lived, ending in the 2nd year of Xiangxing (1279) at Yashan.

Despite the precarious military situation, the Southern Song period was one of prosperity and creativity.

The art of the Southern Song Dynasty developed in an urban culture characterized by active foreign trade and the emergence of a merchant class

eager for diversions and entertainments previously available only to the nobility. These new patrons particularly enjoyed painting with a realistic style that depicted the pleasures of daily life.

Printing had been invented during the late Tang. By the time that the Southern Song assumed power books were more widely available and much less expensive. Increased access to education and the expanded civil service examination system brought more scholars into government service than ever before. The Song period also saw a revival of Confucianism, known as Neo-Confucianism.

Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368)



During the 13th Century a great leader, Temujin, was to emerge from among the nomadic tribes of the Mongolian steppes. These tribesmen occupied the area between the northern Daxing'an Mountains and the eastern bank of the Argun River. As skilled horsemen, they were to become a formidable fighting force once the tribes had united under Temujin's leadership. In 1206 Temujin was formally elected as ruler over Greater Mongolia, encompassing the Mongolian Plateau and the Gobi Desert, and he adopted the name and title of Genghis Khan. The newly elected Khan set about extending his empire and set his sights on China. In 1227 he defeated the Western Xia and in 1234 he defeated the Jin. This was to open the way to unify the whole of China for the first time under a non-Chinese regime, a people who eventually

were to become a ethnic group.

Following Genghis' death, his grandson succeeded him and as Kublai Khan, the new leader established the Yuan Dynasty in 1271, with his capital city at Dadu (present day Beijing). Kublai, who was known as Emperor Shizu continued to annex Chinese territory and in 1279 the Yuan forces captured Hangzhou, the capital city of the **Southern Song** (1127 -1279). The Song Emperor Gong, together with his mother the Empress Xie was taken into captivity. Three years later in 1279, the Yuan engaged in a maritime war in Yashan and crushed the "New Song" which had been formed by exiled officials and survivors from the Southern Song. With their dynasty now firmly established in the Chinese empire, the Yuan found themselves rulers of a complex group of peoples who inhabited the largest land based empire ever to exist, stretching from what is now Korea and western Russia in the north and from Burma to Iraq in the south. But they were rulers with no experience of administration. Consequently, they adopted Chinese political and cultural models.

Ruling from their capital city Dadu, the Mongol Khans increasingly adopted the role and style of Chinese emperors. However, they failed to unite the people and caused further dissension by forming them into clearly defined ethnic groups. The four classes created were firstly, the Mongols themselves, next came their allies and non-Chinese people from Inner- Asia, a class to be called the Semu. The third class was made up of the people of Northern China and they were called the Han. Lastly, came the people of Southern China, who were referred to as the Nan. The Mongols in the first group enjoyed the greatest privileges under the regime, while the fourth group, the Nan were to have the least. The same applied in so far as taxation and the penal code were concerned as this had a very divisive effect on the population as a whole. Mixed marriages were forbidden and it was impossible to gain promotion from one group to another.

During the 1340's and 1350's, internal political cohesion disintegrated due to

rivalry between various factions at court, rampant corruption and a succession of natural calamities. These elements all fuelled the fires of rebellion. Mutinying workers, pirates, smugglers and rebel peasants ultimately were victorious in their fight with Mongol troops and the Yuan Dynasty was overthrown. The last Yuan Emperor together with his court fled from the country while many of the Mongols were content to remain and become integrated with the Chinese population. The man who led the final onslaught against the Yuan was Zhu Yuanzhang and he was to become the first Ming (1368 - 1644) Emperor. The Mongols were so weakened that it was not until the 15th Century that they gained sufficient strength under a leader known as Dayan Qaghan to attack the Empire's frontiers once again. The Manchu emperors of the Qing Dynasty (1644 -1911) accepted the final submission of the Mongol rulers and thus Mongolia became a part of China.

The Yuan Dynasty lasted ninety-eight years with eleven emperors. From then on, Beijing gradually ascended as the political, economic, and cultural center of China.

Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644)



After a long period of insurrections, the Mongols were overthrown by Han Chinese troops under Zhu Yuanzhang, who became the first emperor of the Ming dynasty in 1386. Sponsored by Emperor Yongle (1360-1424) and under the command of the Moslem eunuch Zheng He, the Ming naval fleet

made seven expeditions between 1405 and 1433 to Southeast Asia, India, the Persian Gulf, and the east coast of Africa.

Although some trade was conducted, the missions were mainly of a diplomatic nature, intended to foster the tribute system whereby China granted large gifts to tributary states who in turn acknowledged China's supremacy and offered tribute (usually smaller gifts than what they received from China). After Yongle's death in 1424, state support of overseas trade and diplomacy ceased. The fleets of immense ships - larger than any European - were dismantled.

During the rule of the Ming, the first Christian missionaries came to China with the arrival at Guangzhou, in 1516, of Portuguese ships. The danger to the Ming emperors' rule, however, continued to come from northern and central Asia. The Great Wall was once again reinforced to protect China from the nomads, and the wars against the Mongols lasted into the 16th century.

Towards the end of the Ming dynasty, intrigues of the palace eunuchs paralysed the court and sometimes its foreign policy, and the secret police suppressed even the slightest signs of opposition.

Qing Dynasty (1644 - 1911)



The Qing dynasty was founded by a chieftain of the Manchu, a non-Han Chinese people from Manchuria, the area of northeast China now called Dongbei. The Manchu rulers faced the most serious challenges yet posed by increased contact with Europeans. Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong were famous emperors in China. Although the Manchus were foreign conquerors of China, their rule did not break with Chinese traditions, unlike that of the Mongols in the Yuan dynasty. Instead, they adopted the terms, structure, and ideology of Confucianism to support their political authority. They also promoted the veneration of ancestors and the study of the traditional Chinese classics, and also accepted the Confucian theory that rulers ruled by virtue of their moral uprightness. The Manchu used a system of dual appointments in their civil administration, having both Han Chinese and Manchu in important positions and relying on civil service examinations. While the Manchu attempted to maintain their own identity and customs, they also promoted many Chinese traditions. The arts flourished, as did scholarship, and basic literacy was relatively high for that time, even in rural areas.

The Opium War, which started in 1840, was a turning point in Chinese history. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the major countries of Europe were looking around for markets for their merchandise and colonies. To protect its opium in trade, Britain launched the war of aggression against China in

1840. In 1842 the corrupt Qing court signed the humiliating Treaty of Nanking with Britain, bartering away China's national sovereignty. This marked the reduction of China to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country. In 1860, British and French troops burned the Summer Palace in Beijing; Kowloon Peninsula ceded to Britain. In 1894-1895: China lost Sino-Japanese War.

The Revolution of 1911, a bourgeois democratic revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, ended the rule of the Qing dynasty. Thus, the monarchy that had existed in China for 2,000 years came to an end, and the provisional government of the Republic of China was founded.

Republic of China (1911 - 1949)

In 1919, the May 4th Movement against imperialism and feudalism took place. In this movement, the Chinese working class for the first time appeared on the political scene. In 1921, at its first National Congress, delegates representing Communist groups from all parts of China including Mao Zedong, Dong Biwu, and Li Da etc, met in Shanghai and founded the Communist Party of China. The Chinese people led by the Communist Party participated in a bitter struggle for many years, which included four periods: the Northern Expedition (1924-27), Agrarian Revolutionary War (1927-37), War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-45), and the National Liberation War (1945-49). In 1949 the Chinese people finally ended the rule of the Kuomintang headed by Chiang Kai-shek, achieving the victory of the New Democratic Revolution.

(Source: TravelChinaGuide.com)